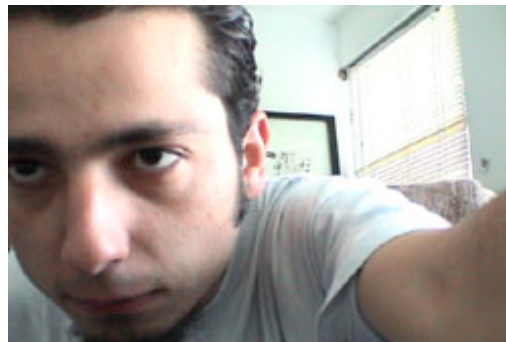


**A Perfect Day at Cityvisions 2004  
By Lauren Wissot**

While the East Coast spotlight shines on expensive, private film schools a hidden gem lies in the public sector quietly building an international student body that would impress even the most jaded NYU grad. For two days in June, The City College of New York sparkled with its annual Cityvisions Film & Video Showcase at the uptown Clearview Cinema where even keynote speaker Sigourney Weaver was taken with the caliber of the film that directly preceded her address. And it's no wonder since it was Bernardo Loyola's *The Perfect Day* -- a 16mm, 12 minute satire detailing one man's struggle to commit a "spectacular suicide" -- that went on to win Best Film (Fiction), Best Screenplay and Best Editing. But for the Mexican director and Fulbright scholar himself it was the enthusiastic audience response that surprised the most.

"Cityvisions was the first time we screened the film for an audience," said Bernardo who received his MFA in Filmmaking the day after the event. "I guess I didn't really know what to expect from the showcase, I didn't know how an international audience would respond to the film. In the end the experience was great. People started laughing from the second line to the last frame. Ornella Jaramillo who produced the film and came from Mexico for the screening and me were completely surprised by the way the jokes, the irony and the dark humor of our film worked with subtitles. It was a great time and I really can't wait to show again on the big screen!"

Which shouldn't take long with Bernardo putting his total prize money of \$1400 towards furthering the cause. "We will use some of the money to distribute the film. By that I mean sending it to festivals, making copies and organizing a screening in Mexico City and Queretaro (my hometown) in Mexico during the summer. Part of the money that we got for Best Screenplay will go to Hector Falcon, a friend of mine who co-wrote the film with me, and if there is anything left we will maybe use it to go to whichever film festivals accept it!" the director enthused.



*Director, Bernardo Loyola*

---

Bernardo added that he is "very curious to know how people would react in other countries, especially in Mexico. The film was made in Mexico and is in Spanish but the story could have happened anywhere else. It is not that kind of foreign film that tries to portray the folklore or the color of a country. We tried to portray two characters living in a huge city that feel lonely. I guess that is something that people can relate to -- death and loneliness, all portrayed with irony. Maybe that's why people like it. I guess also the film feels stylistically very contemporary, like a music video or a magazine. I don't know ^ maybe the audiences here like irony!"

But that irony would be nothing without Bernardo's sharp comic timing. When asked about the story's inspiration he replied, "I guess my own bad luck with girls! Actually it started as an adaptation from a serialized novel published a couple years ago in a Mexican magazine called 'Complot.' The story was about a suicide hotline in the future. But as we worked on the script the story changed and changed until the only thing that was still there was the suicide. When we started writing I had a clear idea that the topic would be loneliness and that it had to be ironic."

And it is this strong sense of focus that has allowed Bernardo who holds a BA in



Communications Science from ITESM (Monterrey Tech) located in his native Queretaro, Mexico to obtain a wealth of experience in such a short time in the United States. "I came to New York on a Fulbright Scholarship that allowed me to live and study in the city for two years. It was a great experience and the people that managed my grant were wonderful and very supportive. In terms of internships I worked as a PA on *Dirt*, a DV feature directed by Nancy Savoca and produced by Rich Guay. I also did PA work for one of my favorite music video directors Floria Sigismondi. Then I had a paid internship working as an editor at CUNY TV and a couple months ago I started an internship at Dog Eat Dog Films working for Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*. This last internship eventually became a full time paid job doing graphics and titles."



Scene from *The Perfect Day*

"One of the good things about CCNY is that the school isn't very expensive so I managed to finish without any loans or debts and I had enough time to make my film," the director continued, making him the envy of film students the world over. "Also through some people I met in school I was able to work on some great projects and ultimately get a job before graduating. He admitted that, "academically, I wish the program was more intensive, more rigorous and better organized." This is not surprising since structure and discipline are integral to Bernardo's own filmmaking process.

The director went on to reflect. "In 1997 a film class began at my college in Mexico and short films started to be produced. Some people became regulars on the production teams and took turns playing different roles in the productions. Eventually after we all graduated this group became a film production collective called El Circo Producciones ([www.elciscoproducciones.com](http://www.elciscoproducciones.com)). *The Perfect Day* was produced by this collective (more as an independent short film than as a student film since I was the only one working on a Masters and because we didn't really use any of the resources offered by City College). *The Perfect Day* is our eleventh short film together. So far we've produced seven shorts on film, two on video and two in animation. I've worked on these productions as a script supervisor, a screenwriter, a director, an editor, and for most of them I've done the graphics and titles. Before *The Perfect Day* I directed *Malaire* (2000) and *Savior* (2002)."

"In the end we spent about \$8500 dollars to make the movie," Bernardo added. "About 40% came from my savings, 10% from an extra grant I received from Fulbright, 20% from family and companies and 30% from a grant we got from the Ministry of Education in Queretaro (even though the film was shot in Mexico City). That was the money we spent in cash but we received a lot of discounts from all the rental companies and the post house/lab," he



Scene from *The Perfect Day*

explained. "I knew from the beginning that I wanted to shoot most of the film handheld. To do so I thought it would be a good idea to use a light camera so we chose the Aaton XTR Prod which is a beautiful Super16mm camera with great Carl Zeiss lenses and a Canon Zoom. DP Carlos "Soli" Aldana and I were very happy with the results. Also the place where we rented the camera ([www.aatomo.com](http://www.aatomo.com)) has a partnership with a great post house in Mexico City that also has a lab so renting-developing-posting in the same place streamlined the whole process and also made it more cost effective. We shot the exteriors using Kodak Vision 100 and the interiors using Vision 500. Both stocks worked out very well since I was looking for a grainy look shot using minimal lighting."

Bernardo also said he is "looking forward to a year at the festivals and hopefully during that period someone will get interested in buying the film maybe for European TV or for cable in the U.S. In the meantime El Circo Producciones is sending it to festivals." As for his own career, "In the short term I'll continue working for awhile at *Dog Eat Dog* (Michael Moore's production company) and when that project is over I'll try to either do graphics for film or at a post house here in New York. Next year I'll move back to Mexico

and then I'll try to work in the local film industry, hopefully directing music videos, editing or working as a script supervisor on sets. At the same time with El Circo Producciones we are developing one more short film project (to be directed by Hector Falcon, co-writer of *The Perfect Day*) to be shot late this year or early next year. In the long term (hopefully not that long!) I'm aiming to direct a feature length project in Mexico written again by Hector and myself. Development on this project will start very soon."

No doubt for Bernardo there will be many more perfect days to come.



[Home](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Copyright](#)