

INDIANS, a comedy by Daniel Martín Novel

Statement of intention

A Chinese teenage GIRL and her two little brothers wander, bored, about the deserted streets of one of the American Western towns in Tabernas, Almería. They are part of a group of Asian tourists visiting the dusty town.

Something magical happens to them: the two small ones find out, in awe, that they are able to shoot real bullets just by pointing with their fingers, and they begin a shooting match across the town.

This surprising occurrence is the only thing that manages to pull the girl's eyes away from the screen of her mobile phone. This, together with the strange presence of an astronaut holding an American flag at the end of the street, finally grabs her attention.

The astronaut happens to be an amazed old man, a sort of traveller lost in time, in whose lapel is a label with the name "Clint E."

The girl and the astronaut start a strange conversation. Clint is surprised to find Chinese people in the middle of what he believes to be America. When he finds out that he is in Almería, in the South of Spain, his confusion only increases; he comes to the conclusion that the whole world has been finally invaded by the Chinese, as he himself predicted decades ago.

Resigned with the fall of America, he asks the GIRL to take care of his flag. Then he says goodbye and walks away, melancholic. The GIRL watches him go, convinced that she has met the legendary Clint Eastwood. Or at least somebody very much like him.

THE "SPAGHETTI" AND I

My first contact with the Western genre was through my father's old Video 2000 tapes. They were all films bought at clearance sales at old video shops. Most of them were action or comedy films from Spain, Italy or Asia; all of them could be classified as B-Movie films. I remember Bruce Lee's kung fu films, those of the malevolent Fu Manchu, or those with the rowdy Charles Bronson and Chuck Norris. I also remember the Italian peplum films, one or two Spanish comedies with Tony Leblanc and Concha Velasco, and, of course, the Spaghetti Western films. My favourite collection was that of Bud Spencer and Terence Hill films, among which one in particular stood out: "They Call Me Trinity," a Spaghetti Western filmed in Almería in 1970. It is the first Western I ever saw, as far as I remember. I was a teenager by the time I finally discovered Sergio Leone. I already knew about Clint Eastwood, an actor I admired for other films, sacred to me, like "Where Eagles Dare" or "Kelly's Heroes." Leone's films, and Spaghetti Western in general, were, to me, Clint Eastwood's films.

WHY CHINESE AND AMERICANS?

The Western genre is an artistic projection of a country's particular identity, the United States of America. Historically, countries have felt the need to justify their identities basing them on determined historical facts. In the case of the United States, a young country founded by European emigrants and born out of a war for independence, their need for legitimizing their own identity was even more pressing. The solution came from their borders. The conquest of the West as a concept became a crusade for the identity of a country. Later, after the Second World War, it would also become a product, a colonising element. The Western had an essential role in the United States' plans for expansion and propaganda. Its influence was felt in films practically all around the world, including the oriental world. It can be seen, for example, in films about

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warriors and samurais, like Kurosawa's, intentionally conceived in the style of the Western. The Western also became a profitable product. That same profitability got Europe, and Almería in particular due to its unique geographic characteristics, to start producing Western films. The decadence of the American Western was determined by the Cold War and by the beginning of the Space Race. The Moon became the new frontier, the new West, a new concept to allow the legitimizing of the American essences. This supplantation has been quite well reflected in a wonderful film called "Toy Story," in which the main protagonist, a cowboy named Woody, is replaced by an astronaut named Buzz Lightyear. These ideas about generational shifts and frontiers are the ones that justify the story of Indians, conceived as a fantastic comedy, with strong doses of surrealism, which focuses on concepts like the origins and the decay of the genre rather than on its aesthetics and themes. I propose an imaginary encounter between an astronaut from the early seventies and a Chinese teenage girl addicted to technology from the present day, in a real setting as is the one of the Western towns in the Tabernas desert, in Almería. The same way the Western was substituted by the space dreams, these were later lost to the passivity of a new generation addicted to new technologies and virtual social networks, and foreign to those imaginary frontiers built by old dreams of adventures. These frontiers have disappeared, substituted by economic and political borders which have created a new identity for every country involved. Clint, the Astronaut in Indians (clear homage to Clint Eastwood), believes that the world has been invaded by the Chinese. Which is true in a way: the same way the United States once spread out its tentacles all across the world, China is now the one expanding, albeit in a different way; more subtly, less imaginatively, more in tune with these times in which there is no need to make people dream to attract their favour, simply because people aren't essential anymore in the present equation of dominance and subjection.

But why "Indians?" The title Indians makes reference to those big duels between cowboys and the evil Indian tribes which stalked them to steal their cattle, kill their sons, rape their wives... In this case, I turn the story on its head: the cowboy is the loser this time, defeated, without having been any fighting, by a quite peculiar "Indian," a teenage girl. In a way, this is an homage to the figure of the Indian tribes, the great losers of the Western genre, and to the American History in general.

INDIANS, THE STORY

The basic approach for INDIANS, regarding photography and image planning, does not keep a strict link with the aesthetic of the Spaghetti Western. The fact that it is actually a surrealist comedy brings it closer to the aesthetic of the contemporary European and Asian comedies. In spite of it, I remain attached to the Western theme all the time. I take as a reference directors who have also cultivated the genre, one way or another, like Akira Kurosawa or Takeshi Kitano. I also suggest an approach to the comedic interpretation of other Asian directors like Naoko Ogigami, as well as European ones as is the case with Aki Kaurismäki. It is, in a way, a Western with an entertaining and surrealistic aesthetic, awash with vivid colours, mainly based in a palette of bright reds and blues; in the use of wide-angle lenses and long shots, combined with always static close-ups, reminiscent of those famous duels between gunfighters, or of cameras with harmonic, fluid motions achieved with travellings in long tracking shots that will provide tension to the film and will communicate the passing of time and bring attention to the silence and the unique sounds of the Almería setting. Because, after all, the setting is one of the main characters of the story. A place that once was a factory of dreams, abuzz with cinematographic activity, now abandoned, forgotten. The sound of the Tabernas desert and the way chosen to portray the place seem vital to the success of the project.

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Light on ...



Daniel Martín Novel is a Spanish writer, director and video artist, dedicated to the audiovisual world since 2000. He has worked for several companies in the areas of production until joining the team of Grupo Prisa TV (CNN + / Plural) as a director. He has participated as a director and as a producer in Spanish and international productions for companies such as the BBC (UK), Producciones Transatlánticas, Teyso Media, Loasur, Widescope or Impronta Films. He has also developed his own fiction and documentary projects, some of which have won awards like Síndrome Arconada at the 2006 Málaga Film Festival or El Frontón at the International Film Festival of Pamplona. In 2013, he directed Solsticio. Daniel Martín Novel is currently in pre-production for his first feature film: Mudo, produced by Impronta Films (Spain) / Man's Films (Belgium) / Germinia Films (Argentina).

Crew members
(in the process of being
selected)