



Academy President Cheryl Boone Isaacs as she speaks during the press view at the 'Hollywood Costume' exhibit in Los Angeles. — AP

Head of Hollywood academy: Diversity debate at top of agenda

The president of Hollywood's movie academy says criticism of the lack of diversity among Oscar nominees has helped spark a vital global discussion about how to make the entertainment industry more inclusive. Cheryl Boone Isaacs said "the whole discussion about diversity is a great discussion, because now it's at the top of everybody's mind, not just the academy's." "It is now a global discussion, and that's really important," she said during a reception at the US ambassador's London residence for new European members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Wednesday's event - whose guests included actors Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara, directors Ridley Scott and Tom Hooper and former "Dynasty" star Joan Collins - was part of a push to boost the international profile and reach of the organization, best known for handing out the Oscars. An all-white roster of acting nominees at the 2015 Academy Awards inspired the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite on social media and increased scrutiny of the lack of diversity in the ranks of the organization, whose 7,000 members are largely white and male.

In June the academy announced 322 new members, including actors Benedict Cumberbatch and David Oyelowo, musicians Common and John Legend and actress Gugu Mbatha-Raw. Boone Isaacs, the first African-American woman to head the academy, called it a more diverse and inclusive list than ever before. Academy chief executive Dawn Hudson said Wednesday that the invitation-only academy was urging all its branches to look more widely for potential new members. US ambassador Matthew Barzun praised trans-Atlantic cooperation at the reception, where guests were served canapes, drinks and bourbon-based Cary Grant cocktails amid the chandeliers and ornate Chinese wallpaper of the residence's Garden Room.

Movie industry

The cocktail choice was apt Barzun recounted how British-born Hollywood star Grant persuaded his wife, Woolworths heiress Barbara Hutton, to sell her London home to the US government for \$1 after World War II. Winfield House, set amid 12 acres (5 hectares) of grounds in Regent's Park, has been the American ambassador's residence since the 1950s. The academy's forays beyond Los Angeles and New York - with the London reception and a Paris gathering later this week - reflect an increasingly globalized movie industry. Hudson said 40 percent of nominees for the most recent Oscars were from Europe - half of those from Britain.

British "Star Trek" and "X-Men" star Patrick Stewart said there remains a lack of roles for older women and black actors, and a "shocking underuse of women directors." But he said he was struck by how international the movie business had become. "I wrapped a movie four days ago in New York and of the four leading actors, two were American, two were English," he told the AP. "But we also had a Brazilian actress, a Portuguese actress, a Canadian and a Spanish female director of photography, which was marvelous." — AP

'Bull,' 'Hopefuls,' 'Kill Me' top Rio Festival

Movies from three of Brazil's most talked-up new or on-the-rise talents - Gabriel Mascaro's second feature "Neon Bull," and Ives Rosenfeld's "Hopefuls" and Anita Rocha da Silveira's "Kill Me, Please," both debuts - swept top plaudits at 2015's Premiere Brazil, the centerpiece Brazilian-film-focused section of this year's Rio de Janeiro Intl. Film Festival. Two other first-time directors - Filipe Matzembacher and Marcio Reolon - scooped with "Seashore" both Rio's New Trends best film award and a Special Jury Prize at its Felix Awards. Sold by Memento Films International's Artscope, a leading European art film label, Mascaro's "Neon Bull" swept Premiere Brazil's top best film plaudit, plus screenplay (Mascaro, plus Marcelo Gomes, a director in his own right ("Cinema, Aspirins and Vultures"), Cesar Turim and Daniel Bandeira), cinematography (Diego Garcia) and supporting actress (child actor Aline Santana). Lead-produced like "August Winds," Mascaro's first feature, by Rachel Ellis at Recife-based Desvia Films, "Neon Bull" weighed in at Rio with much in its favor: Co-producers such as Rodrigo Pla and Sandino Saravai Vinay's Montevideo-based Malbicho Cine and Marleen Slot at Netherlands' Viking Film; Mascaro's status as one of the illustrious names to recently emerge on Brazil's regional cinema scene, here Pernambuco; and enthusiastic reviews and a Special Jury Prize in Venice Horizons, where it world premiered, in September.

High artistic ambition

Turning on a "vaqueiro," a stable hand feeding and caring for bulls at Vaquejadas, a traditional rodeo in North-East Brazil, "Neon Bull" also combine social reflection - the vaqueiro dreams about becoming a fashion designer as modernization kicks in even in Brazil's strongholds of machismo - high artistic ambition, especially in its cinematography, and a pervasive sexuality. Like Autumn Winds, "Neon Bull" "similarly exudes hormones from every pore, sure to seduce many a festival with its helmer's gift for frank sexuality and unforgettable imagery," Peter Debruge wrote in Variety. "Selected at random, any given frame of the film might stand alone powerfully as a Dutch genre painting (think Brueghel or Vermeer), communicating the very texture and smells of each environment - some so oppressive the nose wrinkles at the sight." Not for nothing has Carlos Reygadas tapped DP Garcia to work on his upcoming "Where Life is Born." Underscoring the building diversity of Brazilian new generation cinema - as that of Latin America's at large - "Hopefuls" - which shared director and won actor (Ariclenes Barroso) and supporting actress (Julia Bernat) ex-aequo, is also set in a larger social framework - the flipside of the Brazilian dream of soccer as a get-out-of-poverty card - but is shot in a far more traditionally realist style.

Barroso (seen in 2013 Rio Fest top winner "Tattoo") limns Junior who plays for a small club in a small town in the state of Rio. Rather too acquiescent, he pushes the clock at a day job, isn't talented enough to make the big time, gets his girlfriend pregnant, and his Brazilian Dream fades, as he seethes with jealousy at his best friend, now a rising soccer star. "I wanted to tell a story not about Brazilian soccer players who are successful but the ones who don't make the big-time, the vast majority of players," Rosenfeld told Variety.

Serial killer

Produced by Rio's Bubble Project and Luis Alberto Gentile's Crisis Productivas, "Hopefuls" won a coveted Brazil-focused First Look prize at Locarno last year, marking Rosenfeld as a talent to watch. Also trackable, Anita Rocha da Silveira's "Kill Me Please" shared best director for a flamboyant feature debut. Lead Valentina Herszage, who looks uncannily like a teen Demi Moore, also nabbed best actress for her turn as a 15-year-old student in Rio de Janeiro's rich Barra de Tijuca, whose exclusive high-school is terrorized by a serial killer. Skewering the Brazilian dream, and half serial killer thriller half coming-of-age drama-comedy, "Kill Me, Please" is produced by Vania Catani's Bananeira Films and co-produced by Argentina's REI Cinema, headed by Benjamin Domenech and Santiago Gallelli, as pan-regional Latin American co-production builds. "I wanted to highlight how developing countries, their new middle classes, deal with these new spaces. Also, I wanted to bring some of my own experiences as a teenager to the film, but making them over the top, fantastical,"

Rocha da Silveira told Variety. Cinematographer Joao Atala, like Rocha and most of the crew, is an alum of Rio's Pontifical Catholic U, colors are increasingly lively. Group scenes sometimes look - comically - like Benetton ads. Championed by LA-based FiGa Films, and one of the first titles on its FiGa/Br line-up, "Seashore," a Wolfe Releasing pick-up for North America, turns on two childhood friends who have drifted apart and, now late teens, embark on a trip to a beach-house outside Porto Alegre. One is gay, the other not: the trip forces them to recognize their distance, the effect of time, caught in the rolling waves outside. Fipresci Best Latin American Award went to "I Promise You Anarchy," sold by Latido Films. Guatemalan-Mexican Julio Hernandez Cordon's most confident title to date, it depicts two young skateboarders' friendship and love in a near surrealistic Mexican City. The Rio de Janeiro Intl Film Festival ran Oct 1-14.

2015 RIO International Film Festival winners

BEST FICTION FEATURE

"Neon Bull," (Gabriel Mascaro)

BEST FEATURE DOCUMENTARY

"Olmo and The Seagull," (Petra Costa and Lea Glob)

BEST DIRECTOR - FICTION (ex aequo)

Ives Rosenfeld ("Hopefuls")

Anita Rocha da Silveira ("Kill Me Please")

BEST DIRECTOR - DOCUMENTARY

Maria Augusta Ramos ("Future June")

BEST ACTRESS

Valentina Herszage ("Kill Me Please")

BEST ACTOR

Ariclenes Barroso ("Hopefuls")

SCREENPLAY

Gabriel Mascaro, ("Neon Bull")

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

(ex aequo)

Alyne Santana ("Neon Bull")

Julia Bernat ("Hopefuls")

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Caio Horowicz ("California")

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

Diego Garcia ("Neon Bull") Gabriel Mascaro)

BEST EDITING

Sergio Mekler ("Campo Grande" Sandra Kogut)

SPECIAL JURY PRIZE

"Oblivious Memory", (Ruy Guerra)

OTHER MAIN PRIZES:

NEW TRENDS JURY PRIZES BEST FEATURE FILM

"Seashore," (Filipe Matzembacher and Marcio Reolon)

BEST SHORT

"October Is Over," (Miguel Seabra Lopes)

SPECIAL JURY PRIZE

"Jonah" (Lo Politi)

PUBLIC AUDIENCE AWARDS BEST FEATURE FILM

"Nise the Heart of Madness," (Roberto Berliner)

BEST FEATURE DOCUMENTARY

"Betinho - Hope on the Line," (Victor Lopes)

BEST SHORT

"Sheeliton," (Mara)

FURTHER FESTIVAL AWARDS:

FIPRESCI AWARD

FIPRESCI BEST LATIN AMERICAN FILM

"I Promise You Anarchy," (Julio Hernandez Cordon) FELIX AWARDS

BEST FICTION FILM

"Tangerine," (Sean Baker)

BEST DOCUMENTARY

"The New Man," (Aldo Garay)—Reuters



Photo shows a scene from the movie 'Neon Bull'.



Photo shows a scene from the movie 'Kill Me, Please'.