

PRESS RELEASE

Screen Cuba: Films to change the world Festival of Cuban Cinema 16-29 March 2025 London & beyond



TICKETS ON SALE NOW

"The USA has tried every method to destroy the independence of Cuba, and as their politics swing dangerously to the right, we need to show our support for the Cubans now more than ever. And we know there will be some brilliant films to enjoy!"

Ken Loach, Film Director

"I am thrilled that we get to experience this second wonderful film festival bringing Cuban films to the UK ... I am so happy to support fellow creatives in telling of our shared humanity through their stories and perspectives."

Adjoa Andoh, Actor

Screen Cuba: Films to Change the World presents an exceptional line-up of films by some of the Caribbean island's most revered directors, alongside newly emerging talent. For two weeks, *Screen Cuba* presents a selection of films rarely screened in the UK - ground-breaking features, shorts and documentaries.

Participating in the festival will be two guests from Havana, specialists in Cuban film. Gladys González Martínez is Vice President of the Cuban Film Institute, ICAIC, and also a video producer and director of programmes for television. Silvia Padrón Durán is the Director of La Manigua, a film and culture centre in Havana for children, and a guardian of the archive of Juan Padrón, the godfather of Cuban animation.

A highlight of the Festival will be the award-winning road movie, ***Guantanamera*** (1995). Directors Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío of *Strawberry and Chocolate* (1994) fame, have created this splendid satire on life (and death) at a difficult time for Cuba, following the Soviet Union's demise. The Festival's Gala Reception follows the screening.

Memories of Underdevelopment (1968) by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, often cited as Cuba's greatest director, is the most internationally renowned work in the history of Cuban cinema. The film explores Sergio's ambivalence about the new post-revolutionary reality and is a prime example of the innovative cinematic techniques of the 1960s. Exquisitely crafted, a collage of vivid impressions is created through the use of experimental editing techniques, archival material, and spontaneously shot street scenes.

Revolutionary techniques combined with powerfully interlaced music are equally evident in the work of Santiago Álvarez, the most influential documentary filmmaker the revolution produced. Three shorts by him will accompany ***Accelerated Underdevelopment - A Film in the Idiom of Santiago Álvarez*** (1999), a tribute to the director and his work by US film director Travis Wilkerson.

Portrait of Teresa (1979) sparked widespread debate when it was released in Cuba. It was the first film to address women's situation after the 1974 Family Code ruled household chores and childcare should be shared equally when women held a job. As Teresa, a factory worker and union activist, attempts to gain control over her life, her plight was seen as a narrative for all of society, trying to discard entrenched attitudes of the past.

A Night with the Rolling Stones (2023) is set by director, Patricia Ramos, in the era Cuba featured regularly in the international media with Obama's visit, the Chanel fashion show, and the famous Rolling Stones concert. The drama follows Rita as she navigates troublesome relationships and on the eve of the concert, takes decisions that will affect her future. Universal relationship issues are also addressed in ***Blue Pandora*** (2024), a tender short about a transwoman by young emerging director Alan Gonzalez.

Sara Gómez, the Cuban film institute's first female director, was passionate about capturing everyday life in the revolution's early days with her focus on class-race-gender intersections. ***The Isle of Pines Trilogy*** (1968-69), recently restored documentaries, explores how education focused on winning youth away from the streets to participate in the revolution.

A multiple award-winning film ***Behaviour*** (2014) by Ernesto Daranas, was also submitted to the Oscars. The film has echoes of Ken Loach's *Kes* as 11-year old Chala, who trains pigeons, is the focus of a controversy over how "challenging" children should be approached. The film kindled an intense national debate and eventually the Ministry of Education promoted its discussion in schools.

The World of Nelsito (2023) the latest film by Fernando Pérez, one of the most important directors in Cuba today, is narrated by autistic 16-year-old Nelsito. After suffering an accident, his world from his bed becomes his closely observed friends, neighbours, and passers-by. The world of his imagination produces surreal and funny tales about each of them.

Clandestinos (1987) is another extraordinary work by Fernando Pérez. His first feature film, it is a tense action-packed political thriller set in the 1950s. A film of love and sacrifice, *Clandestinos* is based on real events experienced by young clandestine fighters from the urban underground that supported the rebels in the mountains.

The screening of ***The People of the Documentary*** (2022) is especially fitting at a time when the Trump government is tightening their blockade against Cuba. When young director Inti Herrera and his Cuban film crew team were refused permission to film a historic cultural event in Washington DC, they instead delved into the artistic ties that connect the two countries. The resulting documentary is a moving collective testimony of artists and musicians, historians and politicians.

As well as providing Cuban filmmakers a rare platform in the UK, Screen Cuba aims to counter the effects of the US blockade with a special fund to support projects of the Cuban film institute such as the restoration of classic films in Havana's archives. A newly published book about the work of Juan Padrón and Festival posters designed by young Havana designer Potto, will be on sale to raise funds for restoration projects. Screen Cuba 2024 funded the restoration of two of Padron's early cartoons which will be screened at this year's Festival.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Venues (London)

The Garden Cinema, 39-41 Parker Street, London WC2 5PQ; Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), The Mall, London SW1Y 5AH; Birkbeck University Cinema, 43 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PN

Beyond London:

Wales One World (WOW) Film Festival collaboration with Screen Cuba, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3DE; UPP Cinema Oxford. Check website for more venues outside London.

Tickets: £12-16 On sale now from venues. See all links at: <https://screencuba.uk>

Short description: Screen Cuba celebrates Cuban cinema presenting films rarely shown in the UK: inspiring shorts, ground-breaking features, documentaries, and Q&As with Cuban film specialists. Including Tomas Alea's iconic masterpiece *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), Fernando Perez's passionate portrayal of the 1950s underground struggle *Clandestinos* (1985), Pastor Vega's *Portrait of Teresa* (1979) and Patricia Ramos's *A Night with the Rolling Stones* (2023) exploring women's lives, plus a focus on the "urgent cinema" of revolutionary documentary maker *Santiago Alvarez*.

Images for press: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1nohvRNs5UczAYeLCbUgVK3JKf-gZseNV?usp=drive_link

Further information about the Festival, the Cuban film specialists, interviews with specialists or curators, the Gala Reception, and for images contact Trish Meehan and Dodie Wepler, Festival Coordinators.

Screen Cuba: Films to change the world 16-29 March 2025, London
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More about the Festival at <https://screencuba.uk> @screencuba.uk

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