



Babenco: Tell Me When I Die

Director: Bárbara Paz

Production Company: HB Filmes

In co-production with: Gullane, Ava Filmes, Lusco Fusco, Globo Filmes, GloboNews, Canal Brasil

Producer: Bárbara Paz

HB Filmes Producer: Myra Babenco

Co-producers: Caio Gullane, Fabiano Gullane

Associate Producers: Willem Dafoe, Petra Costa

Written by: Maria Camargo, Bárbara Paz

Cinematographers: Stefan Ciupek, Carolina Costa, Bárbara Paz

Editors: Cao Guimarães, Bárbara Paz

Consultant Editors: Yael Bitton, Karen Harley

Production Designer: Lara Tauzs

Original Soundtrack: O Grivo

Supervising Sound Editors: Miriam Biderman, Rodrigo Ferrante

Brazil 2019

73 mins

Digital

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Brazil on Film

Babenco: Tell Me When I Die

The screening on Sunday 21 June will include a Q&A with director Bárbara Paz

Director's Statement: Bárbara Paz

I decided to make the documentary when I saw my much-loved companion one day in one of the many hospital beds he occupied, and became fearful that there would not be enough time to tell the story of the man whose strength so impressed me. Basically, I wanted everyone to hear what he was hearing, to get to know the thinker over and above the filmmaker, this man who fought to survive because he lived to make films. Every time Hector was on the verge of death he would think of another film to make.

In his final years, after the cancer returned, he was in an increasing hurry, he wanted to be filmed all the time. The idea was to capture the man, the human being, the filmmaker, who was above all a thinker. We made some of the decisions together, Hector and I for example, the decision to go for black and white.

I always wanted to make a film in black and white. He used to say his memory was in b&w because each time he thought about cinema he thought in b&w. So that's why the film is in black and white. His life and his work were one and the same thing. I made this film as a comprehensive testimony, a ball of thread. Shortly before he died I showed him a teaser of the film and it really touched him. He said: 'Yeah... I'm actually quite an interesting guy. Who knew?' He was really pleased with it. He said: 'Do what you want with this film. You've got free rein.'

None of us wanted a conventional documentary with interviews. That would be too easy. Babenco was alive and wanted to speak. He had that thing about filming so he'd never die. But how do you film someone at death's door? We had so many hours of footage in hospitals, I could really have made a film about the end alone. But I wanted to show who he was throughout our relationship. It's an intimate portrait of a couple in which he tells me his story. In one of the most touching moments of the film for me, I dance smilingly in pouring rain, reinterpreting Gene Kelly's movements in *Singin' in the Rain* for him. That was a very powerful day. I was re-presenting a scene I did for him on a day when he was very sick. At the end he had said, 'That will be the last scene of my next film, and I don't know what it will be. I want my last scene to be full of life, let there be sunshine!' We both knew deep down that it would indeed be the last.

I wanted to make an ode to his body of work and make him accessible to generations that may not have seen his films, conveying the essence of the man, the filmmaker, the thinker. And it makes us think it is possible that he is, as he says at a certain moment, still alive, living in Hong Kong in an apartment overlooking the sea, reading his obituaries, with a broad grin all over his face.

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Producer's Statement: Myra Babenco

I am very honoured and grateful to Bárbara Paz for having faith in me to produce this brilliant, personal and unique documentary.

Since my father died I have felt certain that my mission was to support Bárbara throughout this creative work and await its completion, like a seamstress waiting for more thread. So my role as producer of this independent film is very personal and unconventional. The film was made with love and affection, primarily between Bárbara and Hector, and it spread to everyone involved.

Working through her grief and at her own pace, Bárbara embraced her role as filmmaker, and found her voice as documentarian, working from a powerful screenplay written by my childhood friend Maria Camargo and intimately sharing this authentic man who expressed himself through the art of filmmaking.

Hector's own desire and willingness to hand over to Bárbara his inner thoughts revealed on camera, sharing with us his vulnerability and fragility are truly remarkable. She embraces him with this emotional work of art that is filled with tenderness and absolute devotion, as a joyful way for him to come to the end of his life.

Babenco: Tell Me When I Die evokes the legacy of the visionary and groundbreaking filmmaker and human being.

As much as death is very present in the film, so is love and joy. This is especially pertinent at a time when we are all reflecting on what a privilege it is to be alive, to live with love and joy, and above all to live with a purpose. I'm convinced that, as is said in the film, 'Those who have a dream to fulfil, have a better chance of survival.' *Babenco* is our way of ensuring that Hector and his films will stay with us forever.

It is also an opportunity for those who did not have the privilege of knowing him personally to see excerpts of his remarkable filmography that speaks so profoundly about global issues such as poverty, social inequality, prejudice, the environment and other relevant human themes that are very present in our societies today.

Production notes