

ELLA ES EL MATADOR

[SHE IS THE MATADOR]

A film by Gemma Cubero and Celeste Carrasco

Silverdocs AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival
Screening Wed, June 17 @ AFI Silver Theater 1
Screening Fri, June 19 @ AFI Silver Theater 3



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A FILM BY GEMMA CUBERO AND CELESTE CARRASCO

SYNOPSIS



Photo Courtesy of Talcual Films

For Spaniards – and for the world – nothing has expressed the country's traditionally rigid gender roles more powerfully than the image of the male matador. So sacred was the bullfighter's masculinity to Spanish identity that a 1908 law barred women from the sport. ***ELLA ES EL MATADOR (SHE IS THE MATADOR)*** reveals the surprising history of the women who made such a law necessary, and offers fascinating profiles of two female matadors currently in the arena, the acclaimed Maripaz Vega and neophyte Eva Florencia. These women are gender pioneers by necessity. But what emerges as their truest motivation is their sheer passion – for bullfighting and the pursuit of a dream.

ELLA ES EL MATADOR (SHE IS THE MATADOR) is the recipient of the 2008 Tribeca All Access Creative promise Award for Documentary and will be broadcast on PBS's Emmy Award®-winning P.O.V. series on Sept 1, 2009. More info [here](#).

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CREDITS

2009, 62 minutes, Color
Spanish, Italian, Subtitled

WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Gemma Cubero and Celeste Carrasco

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Talcual Films

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Sheila C. Johnson
Suzanne LaFetra
Gemma Cubero

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Celeste Carrasco

EDITORS

Carla Gutiérrez
Vivien Hillgrove
Jennifer Chinlund
Celeste Carrasco

MUSIC

Michael Galasso
Todd Boekelheide

STILL PHOTOGRAPHY

Tanit Plana

TITLE DESIGN

Relja Penezic

ONLINE EDITING AND POST PRODUCTION

Video Arts/San Francisco

POST PRODUCTION SOUND DESIGN AND MIX

Berkeley Sound Artists

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LATION PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Luis Ortiz and Patricia Boero

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY P.O.V.

Simon Kilmurry

Produced in association with American Documentary | P.O.V.

FESTIVALS, SCREENINGS & AWARDS

Creative Promise Award, Tribeca All Access

World Premiere, Guadalajara Int'l Film Festival

U.S. Premiere, AFI Silverdocs

Broadcast Premiere, PBS's P.O.V. Series



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DIRECTOR BIOS

GEMMA CUBERO, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, WRITER, is a Spanish filmmaker with a journalism background. Gemma worked as Associate Producer and Investigator on the award-winning documentary *Señorita Extraviada*, Lourdes Portillo's film about the killing of women in Juárez. She also produced with Julio Medem the feature length documentaries *What's Under Your Hat?* and *One Percent: Schizophrenia*, both with theatrical and DVD release in Spain. In 2006 she founded Talcual Films, an independent production company based in the United States and also operating in Spain. *Ella es el Matador (She is the Matador)* received the 2008 Tribeca All Access Creative Promise Award for Documentary.



Photo Courtesy of Talcual Films

CELESTE CARRASCO, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, CINEMATOGRAPHER, EDITOR, WRITER, is a native of Barcelona, Spain. Celeste's credits include First Assistant Director on Marta Balletbó's film, *Honey, I've Sent the Men to the Moon*, Production Manager on Lourdes Portillo's *Señorita Extraviada*, and Producer on Lisset Barcello's *Both*. Previously, Celeste received sponsorship from the Smithsonian Institution to conduct research at the Film and Media Department at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. She currently works at the technical department in the Madrid Opera House, combining her film work with theater. *Ella es el Matador (She is the Matador)* received the 2008 Tribeca All Access Creative Promise Award for Documentary.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Bullfighting is the quintessential symbol of masculinity and bravery in Spanish culture. For the directors, born and raised in Spain, making this documentary about female matadors means changing this symbol and shifting the gender roles that have been defined for centuries. It has also been a personal journey of exploring and questioning a culture. After working on the film for 8 years, the goal is an intuitive, provocative and intimate film. In this directorial debut, the intention is to open a window for viewers to enter into a unique world without judgment, focusing on the universal struggle of our two protagonists. *Talcual Films*, meaning "as it is," will continue to produce character-driven documentaries and thought-provoking films that shed light on universal themes of human struggle and hope.

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SUBJECT BIOS

Born in Malaga, Spain, **MARIPAZ VEGA** started fighting bulls at the age of nine. Raised in a family of all men with a passion for fighting bulls, but who never became successful matadors, she rose to become the first woman in Spain to receive the title of “matador” at the age of 22. More than 10 years later, after great success in Latin America, she is still fighting for a place in the top rankings in Spain. As of today, Maripaz Vega is the only active professional female matador in the world.

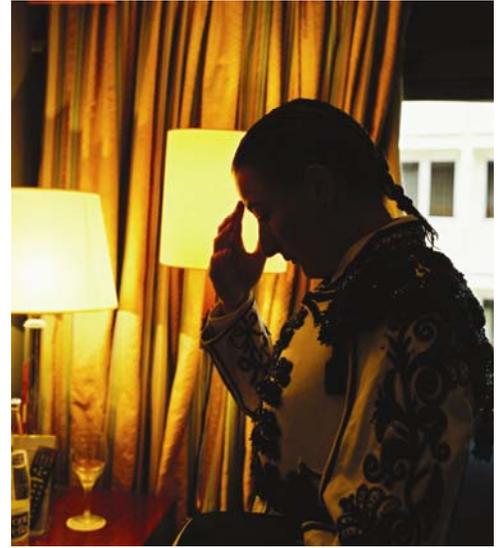


Photo Tanit Plana

EVA FLORENCIA, originally born Eva Bianchini in Italy in 1978, traveled to Spain at the age of 14 and fell in love with Spanish culture and the art of bullfighting. Against her parents will, she ran away from her Italian home at the age of 16 with only one desire - to become a matador. In Spain, she became Eva Florencia. Throughout her dramatic journey, Eva has discovered the determination and difficulties of the profession. The struggle and her love for the animal has led her on her own unique path towards expressing her dream.



Photo Courtesy of Talcual Films

MORE INFO

Hi-res photos are available for download on this film’s web catalog page at www.wmm.com.

For press and exhibition booking requests please contact:

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SAN FRANCISCO FILM SOCIETY, "In Production"

WHEN WOMEN CHALLENGE THE BULLS(---)

BY MICHAEL FOX

November 11, 2008



The great Western director Budd Boetticher returned to Mexico in 1951 to make a semi-autobiographical movie, "Bullfighter and the Lady." If the crusty, charming coot were still with us, I suspect he'd try and badger Gemma Cubero and Celeste Carrasco into naming their upcoming documentary "Bullfighter Is the Lady." Not that he'd get anywhere with the spirited Spaniards, who wisely chose a less awkward and more assertive title: **She Wants to be a Matador.**

The doc, which blends history with up-to-the-minute profiles of acclaimed Spanish bullfighter Mari Paz Vega and Italian neophyte Eva Florencia, is not the gritty feminist empowerment story some might expect, but, according to Carrasco, it's "more about pursuing a dream and being passionate about something [when] you have all the obstacles to get there." You might say it's a universal saga.

"It began as a gender story," Cubero acknowledges, "and we wanted to explore the changes in bullfighting when you change the gender of the protagonist. We're used to seeing mothers or lovers of matadors, who suffer and live in the shadows of matadors. [Mari Paz and Eva] enter the arena and they are the protagonists. That role has changed and that's what compelled us to do the story. But why would they want to do it? It's all about who they are. When you have passion, the gender doesn't matter. If you're good, when you're in front of the animal, it's beyond gender. It's about dreams."

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(*"When women challenge the bulls" continued...*)

In one of those fortuitous meetings that may enter the annals of Bay Area film history, the dynamic duo were introduced in local doc maker Lourdes Portillo's office during the production of **Señorita Extraviada**. Carrasco had come to San Francisco in 1997 after finishing film studies in her native Barcelona, and ended up working in the Exploratorium's film and video department. She was just 21 when she joined Portillo as an assistant.

Cubero, who was born in Segovia and grew up in the Valladolid region, began a journalism career after graduating from college in North Carolina. She met Portillo in 1999, and signed on as a researcher. "**Señorita Extraviada** was the first film I worked on and I realized that was the right fit for me," she recalls. "No film can prepare you for the next, but it gave us a really good experience and motivation to say, 'We want to do our own film.'" And the topic? "The fact that we were here gave us the perspective on our own culture," Cubero explains. "We've always heard about bullfighting, but we weren't very knowledgeable about it."

Carrasco and Cubero operated as a two-person crew for the entire production of **She Wants to Be a Matador**, with all the difficulties you might imagine. But something vitally important was gained. "We could move faster," Carrasco relates, "we could get into the fights and the ring without calling attention, we got really close to our characters, shooting in their hotel rooms, in their bathrooms. What would have changed if we had men in our crew? Access and intimacy."

They shot **She Wants to Be a Matador** in Spain and Mexico, with a side trip or two to Portugal, but the funding to date has been raised entirely in the U.S. (including a grant from Latino Public Broadcasting and a Tribeca All Access Award). Their company, Talcual Films, is now bi-continental, with Carrasco based in Madrid and Cubero in San Francisco. They just finished cutting the one-hour doc here, and were in their Berkeley office this past Sunday prepping for a meeting the next day with the sound designer when they took time out to conduct an interview via speakerphone.

Cubero and Carrasco say they're aiming to complete postproduction "by the second week in January." That's a singularly refreshing statement; the second week in January happens to coincide with the opening of Sundance, and 99.9 percent of filmmakers with works-in-progress will say the festival is driving their schedule. But not these two, and they mean it.

"We want to be done no matter what," Carrasco declares. "We are not finishing the film because of a particular festival. Yes, we applied to Sundance, and we also sent it to Berlin and Rotterdam. But it's been nine years working on the film. San Francisco or Tribeca would be great places to premiere."

In **Bullfighter and the Lady**, Budd Boetticher undercut Hollywood cliches and shallow romanticism with a solid dose of reality. He would have appreciated the fidelity and integrity of **She Wants to Be a Matador**, and its directors.

"We don't want to empower young girls to bullfight," Carrasco says. "[The film] doesn't have a happy ending. It's a pretty tough profession."

To watch the trailer, and for more information about the film, visit www.talcualfilms.com.

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