

KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

PRESS KIT



INDEPENDENT CINEMA RESTORATION ARCHIVE PRESENTS A DAVID WEISMAN PRODUCTION A FILM BY HECTOR BABENCO
WILLIAM HURT RAUL JULIA SONIA BRAGA KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN EDITOR MAURO ALICE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY CLOVIS BUENO
SET DESIGNER FELIPE CRESCENTI COSTUME DESIGNER PATRICIA BISSO DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY RODOLFO SANCHEZ MUSIC BY JOHN NESCHLING
IN ASSOCIATION WITH NANDO CARNEIRO ADDITIONAL MUSIC WALLY BADAROU EXECUTIVE PRODUCER FRANCISCO RAMALHO JR. BASED ON THE NOVEL BY MANUEL PUIG
WRITTEN BY LEONARD SCHRADER PRODUCED BY DAVID WEISMAN DIRECTED BY HECTOR BABENCO

PRODUCTION BY HB FILMS LTDA (SAO PAULO) IN ASSOCIATION WITH SUGARLOAF FILMS INC. (LOS ANGELES)
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS: MICHAEL MAIELLO - JANE HOLZER - CENA FILMES - GUSTAVO HALBREICH - JAYME SVERNER - STUDIO ARTES VISUAIS - ALTAMIRO BOSCOLI - PAULO FRANCI

© COPYRIGHT 2005 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT

www.kissofthespiderwoman.com

OR WRITE TO

kissofthespiderwoman@earthlink.net

KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

BACKGROUND NOTES

In a prison cell somewhere in Latin America, two very different men warily confront each other. Molina (William Hurt) is first seen wrapping his head in a towel, in the shape of a turban, while Valentin (Raul Julia), bearded and classically macho in appearance, watches with a mixture of fascination and revulsion. On the walls behind Molina's make-shift dressing table are pin-ups of Rita Hayworth, Lana Turner, Garbo, Dietrich. On Valentin's face are deep cuts and bruises, and a large scar as yet unhealed.

Thus begins *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, a film starring William Hurt, Raul Julia and Sonia Braga, directed by Hector Babenco and produced by David Weisman, adapted for the screen by Leonard Schrader from the 1976 novel of the same title by Manuel Puig. A collaboration by a handful of obsessed film-makers from both North and South America, brought together by the novel and the script, this film was not only a unique hybrid, but also a turning-point in independent cinema. Shot in Brazil in English over a five-month period, its million-dollar-budget was financed by private investors from both American continents -- without the safety-net of distribution deals or any other film-industry involvement. It was rejected by the New York Film Festival Selection Committee in August of 1984, about the same time the money had run out. But after fourteen solid months of editing in Los Angeles, on May 17 1985 it finally had its world premiere in Competition at the Cannes Film Festival, where William Hurt won the Best Actor Award. Ten months later, on March 24 1986, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* became the first independent film ever to receive Academy Award® Nominations for Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Director, and Best Screenplay. Looking back, William Hurt's Oscar®-win that night sixteen years ago truly appears to have been a watershed moment in American film.

A complex and universal story of friendship and love, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* explores the enforced relationship -- through imprisonment -- of two men with radically different perspectives on life. Molina, an openly homosexual window-trimmer, entertains his revolutionary cellmate with fanciful narratives drawn from some of his favorite movies. Valentin, a political prisoner who has been systematically tortured, is at first diverted by Molina until he realized that the movie being "told" (which the audience sees in muted tones of vintage color) is a Nazi propaganda film, the politics of which Molina knows or cares nothing, because "The part about the lovers" is, as he says, "so beautiful!" When challenged to a plot-point by Valentin, he haughtily defends himself by saying, "I don't explain my movies; it just ruins the emotion." Later, Valentin warns him

"fantasies are no escape" -- and thereupon are drawn philosophical swords for skirmishes on fundamental issues dealing with individual identity and personal responsibility. Along the way, a remarkable relationship evolves.

Manuel Puig: "I wanted to explore the basic dynamics of human behavior and show that sometimes a person becomes trapped in a role when there are possibilities of being many other things."

Leonard Schrader: "I liked the book because Puig's clichés are different, his story is extremely clever, like playing a chess game with the viewers. I like it that the film ends by saying 'yes, romance exists, but only in our dreams or in our movies.'"

Hector Babenco: "What attracted me to the novel was the magical way it showed how men of totally different social, political and psychological backgrounds became friends, and how their personal involvement affected their lives.

David Weisman: "Puig's book was the magnet, like an exotic plant that titillated, seduced, polarized, and entrapped each of us in a most organic way. Once enveloped by it, it was as if the project absorbed us all, then took on a life of its own."

Puig, Schrader, Babenco and Weisman are each singular artists with as many differences as similarities. The two born in Argentina spent inordinate amounts of time at the movies as young children. The two born in the United States didn't really discover their life-passion for film until well in their 20s. But all four left their homeland as early as they could, wandered various parts of the globe, and ultimately wound up in Brazil.

While both Americans had separately obsessed for years to make biographical films about narcissistic and suicidal cult figures (Schrader's *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*, and Weisman's *Ciao! Manhattan* about and starring Edie Sedgwick), their individual aesthetics -- like those of the two Argentinians, Puig and Babenco -- are almost antithetical, however. Babenco's film *Pixote*, realistic and impassioned, provoked strong and emotional critical responses which included words such as "horrific," "anguish" and "a scream from hell" -- whereas Puig's writing is purposefully obtuse, dry and highly innovative. Puig's novels, compared to Joyce, Nabakov, and Faulkner, distance the reader and reveal their characters and situations slowly. "His style allows him to write about tumultuous events or people without becoming sentimental," comments Schrader.

Yet something in Puig's novel struck each of them -- Schrader, Weisman, and Babenco -- like a thunderbolt. Closer examination of their personal histories and past creative themes illuminates their commonality and passion for *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. Each of them felt "invaded" by it. Puig at first resisted fellow Argentine Babenco as the film's director, having been terribly disappointed in the

past by what other "regional" movie-makers did to his work. Moreover, Puig felt that Babenco's naturalism was directly at odds with the romanticism of his novel. However, with Weisman aboard as producer -- plus Burt Lancaster on the horizon for the Molina role -- the author acquiesced.

With Lancaster's interest, the director assumed that financing would soon follow -- but the combination of style and subject matter proved too avant-garde and commercially unimaginable for Hollywood studios in 1982-3, when "independent" funding sources were practically non-existent. One studio coverage log-line read: This project is a total marketing nightmare, A Fag and a Commie in a Jail-cell -- Who do you hate the most? "How many nights I spent in a hotel waiting for a decision, a lunch, living on rumors," Babenco later told Variety.

The meticulous Schrader's screenplay took well over a year to evolve, during which time Lancaster -- who'd come to revere the novelist although he'd never once met Puig -- kept rejecting the latest script-pages. Pacing the room, Burt would wave the paperback-novel and bellow in Weisman's face: "Here's your script, dammit! Puig! Puig! Puig!"

However, it was Leonard Schrader's taut 108-page script that persuaded extraordinary performers like William Hurt and Raul Julia to work for scale (plus deferred equity shares in the film), and lured Sonia Braga to play three different roles. In March 1983, two months before Lancaster left the project for health reasons, Weisman received a call from a Gene Parseghian in New York, who introduced himself as Hurt's agent. Having obtained the *Kiss of the Spider Woman* script from fellow agent Jeff Hunter (who represented Raul Julia), Parseghian told Weisman it was "the finest screenplay I've read in ten years," then asked if he'd ever considered William Hurt. Baffled, the producer assumed the agent was suggesting Hurt for the Valentin role -- to which Raul Julia had recently committed. Sensing his confusion, Parseghian clarified that he was proposing Hurt for the role of Molina. "I was then even more baffled because the icon of Burt Lancaster as Molina had dominated my mind for over a year," Weisman recalls. Parseghian understood, and gently requested that if for any reason Lancaster did not do the part, would the film-makers please consider William Hurt?

In early July 1983 they all (Hurt, Julia, Babenco, Weisman and Schrader) met in New York and decided to do the film together. After a month of rehearsals in New York then São Paulo, filming was scheduled to start October 4 1983; On the eve of shooting, having swapped parts as an acting-exercise, Hurt and Julia had an epiphany and sought to switch their roles for the film. Babenco was elated by the idea -- up to then, Hurt had not shown anyone even a hint of the character he'd been mentally preparing during the rehearsals -- but Weisman persuaded Babenco to ignore Hurt's pleadings while the actor raged for hours: "You're not listening to me!" Then finally, on the morning camera rolled, Hurt calmly

confessed: "Hector, you've been very patient with me. And I'm grateful for that. So today, I'll have a big surprise for you."

Exteriors were shot at an abandoned prison and elsewhere in the Brazilian megapolis -- "*Blade Runner* without the smoke" as Weisman described 1983 São Paulo. Molina's and Valentin's cell was built on a sound-stage at local Vera Cruz Studios and, for the film-within-the film, "Nazi-occupied Paris" was somehow conjured up (in the heat of the Brazilian summer) on various locations around the gritty subtropical city. Repeatedly during filming, Puig flew into São Paulo from Rio, generously embroidering a thousand suggestions and wonderful details for the film-makers, particularly for the "Nazi Movie."

Manuel Puig's position as an independent socialist made living in the evermore-repressive climate of Argentina untenable -- so he left his native country forever in the mid-1970s, living for years in Mexico and New York before settling in Rio de Janeiro. His *Kiss of the Spider Woman* was never published in Argentina though copies of it are found in bookstores there. Ever since his childhood, Puig much preferred American films "because the Argentine ones were too much like la horrible Argentine reality," he mused. He was fondest of the star-studded vehicles from MGM, especially the musicals, because they were the most fantastical.

As a foreign student in 1956 Rome, dreaming of a film-directing career at a time when the neo-realist movement still dominated Italian cinema, Puig found himself at total odds with prevalent ideology: Revulsion toward movies from hedonistic Hollywood -- then a trendy attitude in Europe -- drive Puig mad. Surrounded by snobby left-leaning European intellectuals who insisted that "A film must live strictly through its social consciousness and social meaning" -- who disdained the craft and story-telling techniques of American movies -- Puig found many of their films self-indulgent, and the whole experience terribly castrating: "Art should never be submitted to political custody," he said.

Puig moved to Paris where *Les Cahiers du Cinema* had recently pronounced American cinema entirely worthy; prowling the Left Bank, he felt at home and exuberantly wrote one screenplay after another. "But unfortunately," he later lamented with a coy sigh, "they were all copies of the glorious films I saw over and over in my childhood." While in his mid-thirties, taking friends' advice to write about his own roots, he began a script which eventually evolved into *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*, his first novel. Thus, at the very onset of his artistic endeavors, Puig learned (a) to be ever wary of politics, and (b) to always write from the heart.

The conflict in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* is very clear: Which is more important - - politics, or love and romance? Valentin has devoted his life to political causes, and staunchly defines himself entirely in terms of "the struggle." Molina, on the other hand, is an eternal romantic who constantly uses cinema as his waking dreamscape. Night after night, he re-creates movies as a means of lifting himself

and Valentin out of the degrading confinement of a cell. So potent are Molina's re-creations, that Valentin reacts in spite of himself: "No more talk about food or naked women," he implores.

Kiss of the Spider Woman endows the cinema with an almost mystical aura. In that way, it has something in common with Woody Allen's *Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) and Herbert Ross's *Pennies from Heaven* (1981). Interestingly, both those films are set in a period of economic hardship, the Great Depression of the 1930s, whereas *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, set in the politically-turbulent and narcissistic 1970s, reflects a contemporary angst -- both personal and societal.

Manuel Puig: "It's very much about the ideological and social repression of Argentina in 1973, but what I mainly wanted to talk about was the possibility of people changing."

Leonard Schrader: "Puig detested politics. For him, what was important in life was simply romance and passion -- but of course, his story calls his own attitudes into question. The two extreme positions are embodied by characters who failed to achieve them. Valentin is not an effective revolutionary and Molina hasn't found a perfect love, but what's important is that they keep trying."

David Weisman: "When you spent time with Puig, he was always serving you and taking care of you in a very maternal way, but without ever once losing his place in the conversation. There was never the slightest doubt to anyone who ever met Manuel that he was gay -- and that was precisely how he wanted to be perceived; mockery and derision by others meant nothing to him; he had long since made peace with who he was, and in that respect he was untouchable."

Molina was the most autobiographically-inspired character Puig had ever written, in the opinion of Leonard Schrader -- who, from his time at Iowa Writer's Workshop in 1968, studying with José Donosa and Jorge Luis Borges, is quite knowledgeable about Latin American literature in general and was familiar with Puig's novels long before his involvement with the film.

Writing the screenplay was a real challenge. "In the novel, Puig used hyphens instead of quotation marks to indicate dialogue -- so it takes awhile before you know who is speaking, or even how many people are speaking. He does not provide much hint of physical description of the characters, allowing the reader to create his or her own image."

After meeting the novel's structural challenge, Schrader faced another, that of the Molina character's highly emotional makeup. "David and Hector both kept pushing me to write more openly sentimental than I ever have before," he remembers.

Leonard Schrader: "I was always more comfortable with American male stoicism as exemplified by stars like McQueen, Wayne and Eastwood. But there is a total

absence of that in Puig's version of machismo in Latin American culture and, in writing *Kiss*, I achieved much more emotional density to my work than I am used to. I felt Babenco, in turn, complimented me by saying what I wrote was much more real than even he ever imagined, and more powerful."

Schrader and Weisman felt Babenco was, like themselves, drawn to *Kiss* because its two central characters are social outcasts forced together in an extreme situation, and, according to Schrader, "because they are 'real' and 'humble' - two key words in Hector's vocabulary; He's very interested in the beauty of sadness; for him there is beauty in sadness because it is true; Life is sad but beauty is possible." In an interview, Babenco has said: "My aim was to make a picture about people who have nothing to give to each other but themselves."

Finally, the film's deepest theme is implied by the very title, which refers to the second narrative spun by Molina -- brief segments of which are intercut with the on-going film, in a way that, transcendently, the end of the "make-believe" movie is also that of the "real" movie as well.

Thus on two levels, two distinct layers of movie-magic merge. Myriad interpretations may be placed upon this enigmatic ending which, among other things, reflects the manufactured optimism of so many Hollywood films of the 1940s.

Kiss of the Spider Woman is a testament to the global influence of American cinema of the past upon other cultures -- and upon other cultures' ability to absorb and reflect it in a way that is uniquely theirs. It honors the American cinema's gift of story-telling and the sureness of its craft.

Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to conjecture that Manuel Puig's Spanish-language novel written in New York about two radically different men trapped in a Buenos Aires prison-cell was always meant to be cinematically invented exactly as the uniquely trans-national film that it has become: Performed in the now-nearly-universal voice of the English language, made by artists from opposing ends of both North and South American cultures, working side-by-side. It provokes a poignant image: Two small boys living at opposite ends of one very large country scurrying to a movie theatre to see the latest flick from Hollywood.

KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

SYNOPSIS

Molina, a flagrant homosexual window trimmer convicted on a morals charge, shares a dreary prison cell with Valentin, a clandestinely-held revolutionary who has been endlessly tortured by prison authorities in a non-specific Latin American metropolis, in a vain attempt to extract information on his subversive activities.

Both men could not be farther apart in personal attitudes, lifestyles and emotional makeup: Molina is a marvelously glib raconteur, who dwells in a fantasy world of glamorous movies from yesteryear, of romantic screen heroes and tragic heroines. Valentin is intensely withdrawn a self-disciplined intellectual who is stubbornly devoted to his humanistic dreams and political cause. In the late night of darkness of their cell, Molina spins a fantastic yarn of celluloid romance and intrigue, a Nazi propaganda film he once saw, involving the unlikely love affair between a ravishing French chanteuse caught up in the Resistance, with the handsome Chief of German Counter-Intelligence for Occupied France. Each night, Molina continues to weave the intricate web of his story, ever embroidering the details to draw out the manipulate Valentin's emotions, never once betraying his true motives to his audience.

At first, Valentin is repelled but hypnotized by Molina and his tale. Their relationship is like a constant sparring match between two radically different but equally desperate human beings to maintain their identities and dreams under terribly confining and numbing traditions. But gradually, circumstances force them both to each undergo an unexpected transformation and to be drawn ever closer to each other, finally forming a remarkably touching bond of friendship, fraternal love and self-sacrifice.

KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN
BIOGRAPHIES

ABOUT THE CAST

WILLIAM HURT (Luis Molina)

William Hurt trained at Tufts University and New York's Juilliard School of Music and Drama. He spent the early years of his career on the stage and between schooling, summer stock, regional repertory and Off Broadway, appearing in more than fifty productions including *Henry V*, *5th of July*, *Hamlet*, *Richard II*, *Hurlyburly* (for which he was nominated for a Tony® Award), *My Life* (winning an Obie Award for Best Actor), *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* and *Good*. For radio, Hurt read Paul Theroux's *The Grand Railway Bazaar*, for the BBC Radio Four and *Shipping News* by Annie Proux. He has recorded *The Polar Express*, *The Boy Who Drew Cats*, *The Sun Also Rises* and narrated the documentaries, *Searching for America: The Odyssey of John Dos Passos*, *Einstein-How I see the World* and the English narration of Elie Wisel's *To Speak the Unspeakable*, a documentary directed and produced by Pierre Marmiesse. In 1988, Hurt was awarded the first Spencer Tracy Award from UCLA. He has been nominated for four academy awards, including his Best Actor win for his role in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.

RAUL JULIA (Valentin Arregui)

Born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Raul Julia was discovered while performing in a nightclub in San Juan by actor Orson Bean who inspired him to move to the mainland to pursue other projects. Julia moved to Manhattan in 1964 and quickly found work by acting in small and supporting roles in off-Broadway shows. In 1966, he began appearing in Shakespearean roles, creating a deliciously conniving Edmund in *King Lear* in 1973 and a smoldering Othello in 1979. Julia also made his mark on the musical stage playing one of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* during its run in 1971, and a chilling role of Mack the Knife in *The Threepenny Opera* in 1976 and as a Fellini-esque film director in *Nine* (1982). The stage successes led to his movie works where he is better known. One of his best movie roles is as the passionate political prisoner, Valentin, in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985). Julia also appeared as dramatic heroes and memorable villains in a number of films and made-for-TV-movies. His later roles included the loopy macabre Gomez Addams in two *Addams Family* movies. With his health declining from 1993 onward after being diagnosed with cancer, Julia kept on acting, playing Brazilian Amazon forest activist Chico Mendes in *The Burning Season* (1994), for which he posthumously won a Golden Globe and an Emmy Award. On October 16, 1994, the weakened and gaunt Raul Julia suffered

a stroke in his New York City apartment where he fell into a coma and was put on life support. He was transferred to a hospital in nearby Manhasset where his weakened body finally gave up the struggle on October 24, 1994 at age 54. His body was flown back to Puerto Rico for burial where thousands turned out for his state funeral to remember him.

SONIA BRAGA (Leni Lamaison, Marta, Spider Woman)

A sultry and sensuous brunette, Sonia Braga began her career in her native Brazil as a teenager and made her stage debut at 17. From the late 1960s, she began to amass an impressive body of work. Braga became an international sex symbol as a woman torn between her living spouse and the ghost of her dead one in Bruno Barreto's *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* (1977). She and Barreto reunited in 1983 for a film version of one of her most famous TV roles, *Gabriela*. Braga made her English-language debut playing three roles in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. Braga demonstrated her comic gifts as the mistress of a dead Latin American dictator who coaches an impostor being groomed to replace him in the Paul Mazursky-directed *Moon Over Parador* (1988). Braga and frequent co-star Raul Julia were teamed in the Clint Eastwood vehicle *The Rookie* (1990) as well as in the HBO biopic *The Burning Season* (1994). Having spent more than a decade appearing in English-language features and TV projects, Braga returned to her native land to produce and star in *Tieta do Agreste/Tieta* (1996), based on a novel by Jorge Amado and directed by the great Carlos Diegues. In one of those ironic moments, the film's plot mirror reality as Braga was cast as a wealthy, mature but still sexy woman returning to Brazil after years of living abroad.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

DAVID WEISMAN, Producer

Born in upstate New York, after one viewing of *La Dolce Vita* David Weisman dropped out of Syracuse U's School of Fine Arts in the early 1960s to design film-posters in Rome -- where, by learning fluent Italian, he managed to meet Fellini, create the poster for *Otto e mezzo (8 1/2)* and work for Pasolini. The teenager's linguistic skill also enabled him to freely work as an artist in Québec, France, Holland, Israel, Germany, and Brazil. Back in New York, Weisman was discovered by Otto Preminger who hired him to replace Saul Bass to create the titles for *Hurry Sundown*. Having interned as Preminger's assistant on the Paramount movie, Weisman turned to experimental film-making with a splinter-group from Andy Warhol's Factory and in 1967, he began the five-year-long production of underground cult classic *Ciao! Manhattan (1972)*, a chronicle-à-clef about and starring sixties-icon Edie Sedgwick (featuring Isabel Jewell, Roger Vadim, plus Factory luminaries Brigid Berlin, Viva, and Paul America) which Weisman co-wrote and co-directed with Warhol alumnus John Palmer.

Weisman then worked as associate director on avant-garde film *The Telephone Book*, and created an English-language film edited from a series of Japanese samurai-movies which was successfully released as *Shogun Assassin* by Roger Corman's New World Pictures. In 1981, after producing *Growing Pains* (a comedy with Martin Mull and Karen Black), Weisman's collaboration with Leonard Schrader began on *The Killing of America*, a feature documentary created for Japanese theatrical release about the evolution of U.S. violence. Schrader's background in Latin American literature and Weisman's familiarity with Brazil prompted them to look for a film project they could make "below the equator." In 1982, when *Ciao! Manhattan* was re-released (breaking boxoffice records at The Quad Cinema in New York upon publication of bestseller *Edie: An American Biography* by Jean Stein & George Plimpton), Weisman used the proceeds to acquire the *Kiss of the Spider Woman* screen rights from Manuel Puig, then develop the screenplay with Schrader and commence pre-production on the film with Burt Lancaster and Raul Julia in the lead roles.

In October of 1983, with William Hurt replacing the ailing Lancaster, Weisman began *Kiss of the Spider Woman* in São Paulo Brazil with director Hector Babenco -- financed only by private investors on two continents who believed in the project. After Babenco's health crisis in mid-1984, Weisman completed the film's problematic editing with Schrader. Post-production took 14 arduous months, much of it (for lack of funds) done in Weisman's home. He was obliged to re-dub most of the film's dialogue, re-cut the negative and mix the soundtrack twice, before *Kiss of the Spider Woman* was accepted in Official Competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 1985, where William Hurt won the Best Actor award.

Weisman subsequently collaborated with novelist Manuel Puig on two original screenplays (*Seven Tropical Sins*, *Chica Boom*); They were working on Madrid '37 for Milena Canonero to direct, at the time of Puig's death in 1990.

After the international success of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, in 1986 Weisman was recipient of an Academy Award® Nomination for Best Picture -- a first for an independent film made for little more than a million dollars. Weisman began producing the \$40-million *Ironweed* for Taft-Barish but left the production in early 1987 over creative differences with director Babenco. Weisman then produced the indie film *Spike of Bensonhurst* (1988) with Sasha Mitchell and Ernest Borgnine, directed by ex-Warhol associate Paul Morrissey. Continuing his Latin American-themed collaboration with Leonard Schrader, Weisman produced Schrader's directorial debut *Naked Tango* (1991), a mythic love-story set in the bordellos of 1920s Buenos Aires, starring Vincent D'Onofrio, Mathilda May, Esai Morales, and the late Fernando Rey.

Working with Schrader, Weisman adapted *Spirit Break* (1997) from the novel *The Long Walk*, and co-wrote *Girl On Fire* (2001), an original screenplay based on his experiences with Edie Sedgwick during the making of *Ciao! Manhattan*. Weisman recently co-authored a book, *Edie: Girl on Fire* (Chronicle Books, 2006).

LEONARD SCHRADER, screenwriter

Leonard Schrader is undoubtedly the world's only writer of both English-language and Japanese-language films. He also became the first American screenwriter to have two films in Official Selection at the same Cannes Film Festival when *Kiss of the Spider Woman* competed against *Mishima* (which Leonard co-wrote with his younger brother, writer-director Paul Schrader) in 1985.

Born in Grand Rapids Michigan to a Dutch Calvinist family where film and other forms of pop-culture were strictly forbidden, by 1968 Leonard Schrader escaped his repressive upbringing and finished his MFA at the University of Iowa's Writers Workshop (where he studied with Nelson Algren, Kurt Vonnegut, Robert Coover, José Donoso, as well as Jorge Luis Borges). Between 1969-73 he escaped even further, slipping by night into the subculture of the Yamaguchi-Gumi (the dominant Yakuka gangster Family in Kyoto) while by day teaching American Literature at Doshisha University and Kyoto University in Japan.

Early in his career, Schrader collaborated often with his younger brother Paul, beginning with Leonard's first film *The Yakuza* (1975), co-written by Paul Schrader, starring Robert Mitchum and directed by Sydney Pollack. Leonard and Paul also co-wrote *Blue Collar* (1978), a story of defiant auto-workers in Detroit, directed by Paul Schrader starring Richard Pryor and Harvey Keitel, and *Old Boyfriends* (1979), about a woman's cross-country trek to visit old flames,

directed by Joan Tewkesbury and starring John Belushi, Talia Shire, Keith Carradine, John Houseman.

Schrader's other screenplay credits include such popular Japanese-language films as Tora-san's *Dream of Spring* (1979), *The Man Who Stole the Sun* (Japan's Best Film of the Year in 1980), and *Shonben Rider* (1983). In 1982, with wife Chieko Schrader he co-wrote *The Killing of America*, a documentary tracing the origins of U.S. violence. During this production Leonard Schrader began his collaboration with New York experimental film-maker David Weisman.

Schrader's background in Latin American literature and Weisman's experience with Brazil led them to develop *Kiss of the Spider Woman* together. Schrader's screenplay adaptation, based on the avant-garde novel by Manuel Puig, earned him an Academy Award® Nomination in 1986.

Schrader met renowned Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima while living in Japan. For a decade after the author's suicide in 1970, Schrader pursued the rights to Mishima's life, and working with his wife Chieko and brother Paul, he co-wrote the Japanese-language bio-pic *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* -- produced in 1984 by Mata Yamamoto, executive-produced by George Lucas and Francis Ford Coppola, and directed by Paul Schrader.

Schrader made his directorial debut with *Naked Tango* (1991) for which he also wrote the screenplay. Produced by David Weisman in Argentina, with 1925 period "look" overseen by Oscar-winning designer Milena Canonero, the independent film starred Vincent D'Onofrio, Mathilda May, Esai Morales, and the late Fernando Rey. More recently, Schrader wrote *Bonhoeffer & Canaris* (2000) for director Ulie Edel; He has also adapted *Spirit Break* (1997) from the George LaFountaine novel *The Long Walk*, and co-wrote *Girl On Fire* (2001), the Edie Sedgwick Story, with David Weisman. Schrader set up the Screenwriting Department at Chapman University and taught Screenwriting at the AFI. Schrader passed away in 2006.

HECTOR BABENCO, director

Ever a risk-taker, Hector Babenco began his English-language film career with *Kiss of the Spider Woman* even before he had actually mastered the language. A shy youth raised in Argentine seaside resort Mar del Plata, his Russian-Polish Jewish family emigrated to São Paulo Brazil when Babenco was 16. Abject poverty and an acute imagination drove him to flee his working-class roots and spend six years wandering Europe. In Spain, seeking to break into the movies as an extra in spaghetti westerns, he married an Italian woman who bore him a child, his daughter Janka. "Those were very painful years," he recalls, "but at that time I found the strength and tone of discourse for the rest of my life."

Returning to Brazil, to support his new family the young Babenco had to work double-shifts, as a door-to-door salesman by day, taking Polaroid photos for restaurant customers by night. Wealthy art-gallery owner Raquel Arnaud Segall helped Babenco make his first film, *King of the Night* (1975), and bore his daughter Myra; His second feature, *Lucio Flavio: Passenger of Agony* (1978), a thriller about a notorious Brazilian bandit and the death-squads of the early '70s, became a local box-office sensation, but it was *Pixote* (1981) that established him internationally. Using acting-coach Fatima Toledo to work with actual homeless children, Babenco shot this raw and often shocking portrayal of São Paulo street life based on the book *A Lei do Mais Fraco* (*The Law of the Weakest*), and later even he was astounded how extraordinarily well *Pixote* was received outside of Brazil. Critics and audiences everywhere found the film searing. "It came from my heart," Babenco acknowledges, "There were three million abandoned children in Brazil. I could not resist the presence of such an incredible amount of pain." While promoting *Pixote* in Los Angeles, he met producer David Weisman who developed the *Kiss of the Spider Woman* script with writer Leonard Schrader for Babenco to direct.

Awaiting an English-language screenplay from Manuel Puig's avant-garde novel was a long grueling process for Babenco, who required each of Schrader's pages to be translated into Portuguese. "It was my intense English lesson," he recalls. Weisman had put him together with Burt Lancaster for the role of Molina, until Lancaster dropped out for health reasons. Babenco then sought to do the film in Portuguese with Brazilian actors, but in June 1983 Weisman convinced him to meet William Hurt in New York -- then four months later, after his Father's funeral on the eve of a month-long rehearsal with Hurt and Raul Julia, Babenco began filming in São Paulo. Two years later (during which period he was stricken with lymphatic cancer), Babenco went to the 1985 Cannes Film Festival with *Kiss of the Spider Woman* in competition, where William Hurt won the Best Actor Award. In 1986, Babenco received an Academy Award® Nomination for Best Director, the first South American ever so honored.

Following the success of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Babenco directed Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep in William Kennedy's screen adaptation of his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Ironweed* (1987), for which Nicholson and Streep received Nominations. In 1991, Babenco directed *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, for producer Saul Zaentz, starring Tom Berenger, John Lithgow, Darryl Hannah and Aidan Quinn. After recovering from a bone-marrow transplant, in 1998 he completed *Foolish Heart*, a Spanish-language semi-autobiographical film Babenco co-wrote with Ricardo Piglia and filmed in his hometown Mar del Plata Argentina, starring Miguel Angel Sola, Maria Luisa Mendonça, Walter Quiroz, and Babenco's current wife Xuxa Lopes.

He directed *Carandirú*, about the 1992 Prison Riot in São Paulo, based on a book by his Doctor and friend Drauzio Varella and *El Pasado*, a film about the end of a marriage. Babenco has appeared in cameo roles in *The Venice Project* (1999) and *Before Night Falls* (2000).

ABOUT THE NOVELIST

MANUEL PUIG

Juan Manuel Puig was born on December 28 1932 in the flat dusty Argentine town of General Billegas (p. 15,000) -- but, as he put it, "I grew up in the Pampas in a bad dream, or rather a bad western." Obsessed by movies since early childhood (his Mother took him for repeated viewings of the latest Garbo or Joan Crawford at the one local cinema), Manuel was always hoping to wake up and find that real life was the daily matinee imported from Hollywood. While loving and living in the movies were precisely the same dream to him, he always wanted to be not a movie hero but a film diva, "like Norma Shearer."

Having fled Argentina for Rome in the 1950s -- to study at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Cinecittà where he established a life-long bond with a fellow student from Havana, the late cinematographer Nestor Almendros -- Puig drifted for years, surviving off the pittance he earned doing commercial translation work in Spanish and Italian. Living in Manhattan (working in Air France's first-class lounge at Idylwild where on occasion he met childhood icons like Garbo as they were en route to Paris), from his movie-dreams and painful real-life longings sprang his first novel, *Betrayed By Rita Hayworth* (1968). Puig said: "I didn't choose literature. Literature chose me."

His second novel *Heartbreak Tango* (1969), inspired not by movies but the world of pulp-novelettes, became popular throughout the Spanish-speaking world (and became an Argentine film that Puig deplored). But Puig's fourth novel *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, written in a highly experimental style of almost pure dialogue, is considered by most critics as his greatest achievement. The original was published in 1976 in Barcelona by Seix Barral, and Thomas Colchie's English translation by Knopf in 1979.

Puig published eight novels that were translated into 27 languages, wrote numerous screenplays, and abruptly died in Cuernavaca Mexico on July 22 1990. At the time of his death (which, like the death of kindred star-gazer Andy Warhol a few years before, was caused by toxic shock following gall-bladder surgery), Manuel Puig had become widely regarded as one of the most important Latin American writers of our time, his name increasingly mentioned in conjunction with the Noble Prize.

Puig remained for two decades in perpetual self-exile from Argentina. After publishing *Kiss of the Spider Woman* he moved with his Mother to the quiet Leblon section of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Fassbinder and other Europeans wooed Puig for the Spider Woman movie-rights without success, before he entrusted this most personally-revealing of all his works to an American film-maker, his friend and collaborator David Weisman.

Two years after Puig died, Hal Prince's production of *Kiss of the Spider Woman: The Musical*, created by Terrence McNally, with music by John Kander and lyrics by Fred Ebb, opened on Broadway (after runs in Toronto and London's West End) with Chita Rivera, eventually winning seven Tony Awards.

Puig was a film-buff of the first rank: his vast collection of movies on video-cassette (consisting mostly of titles which pre-dated 1945) numbered over 6000 at the time of his passing.

Film references abound in *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*, *Heartbreak Tango*, *The Buenos Aires Affair*, *Pubis Angelicis* (1979), *Eternal Curse on the Reader of These Pages* (1980), *Blood of Requited Love* (1982), as well as his final novel, *Tropical Night Falling* (1988) and the numerous narratives told by Molina in the *Kiss* novel amount to a virtual homage to Hollywood's "B" movies. The latest of several biographies on the author -- *Manuel Puig and the Spider Woman* -- was published in August 2000, by Farrar Strauss Giroux.

CAST & CREDITS

INDEPENDENT CINEMA RESTORATION ARCHIVE

Presents

A DAVID WEISMAN Production

A Film By
HECTOR BABENCO

WILLIAM HURT

RAUL JULIA

SONIA BRAGA

KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

Editor: Mauro Alice

Art Director: Clovis Bueno

Set Designer: Felipe Crescenti

Costume Designer: Patricia Bisso

Director of Photography: Rodolfo Sanchez

Music By: John Neschling

In Association With: Nando Carneiro

Additional Music: Wally Badarou

Executive Producer: Francisco Ramalho Jr.

Based on the Novel By: Manuel Puig

Written By: Leonard Schrader

Produced By: David Weisman

Directed by: Hector Babenco

CAST

Luis Molina	William Hurt
Valentin Arregui	Raul Julia
Leni Lamaison Marta Spider Woman	Sonia Braga
Warden	José Lewgoy
Pedro	Milton Gonçalves
Mother	Miriam Pires
Gabriel	Nuno Leal Maia
Americo	Fernando Torres
Greta	Patricio Bisso
Werner	Herson Capri
Michelle	Denise Dummont
Leader of Resistance	Nildo Parente
Clubfoot	Antonio Petrin
Flunky	Wison Grey
Lieutenant	Miguel Falabella
Agent #1	Walter Breda
Agent #2	Luis Guilherme
Agent #3	Walmir Barros
Prison Doctor	Luis Serra
Lidia	Ana Maria Braga
Molina's Friends	Benjamin Cattan Oswaldo Barreto

	Sergio Bright Claudio Curi
Bank Cashier	Lineu Dias
Judge	Joe Kantor
Male Nurse	Luis Roberto Galizia
Prison Guards	Pericles Campos Edmilson Santos Walter Vicca Kenichi Kaneko
Jewish Smugglers	Geogers Schlesinger Carlos Fariello Frederico Botelho
Rabbis	Sylvio Band Paulo Ludmer
Leni's Maid	Elvira Bisso

PRODUCTION CREDITS

In Brazil

Production Company
HB FILMES LTDA

Production Manager: Liza Monteiro

Sound Engineer: Ismael Cordeiro

First Assistant Directors: Amilcar Moneiro Calro, Flavio Tambellini

Assistant Art Directors: Berta Segall, Miqui Stedile, Solange Magerowski, Cecilia Riberio

Production Assistants: Rene Silber, Murilo Carvalho, Carla Schertel, Oscar Veliz, Marcal De Souza, Deborah Zilber, Rui Lima, Edgard Zilberberg

Script Supervisor: Alberto Gieco

Assistant Camera: Felipe Davina, Odair Guarani

Second Unit Camera: Lucio Kodato

Gaffer: Jamelao Medeiros

Grip: Lelio Rodrigues

Props: Nanci Audi

Makeup: Nena De Oliveira

Hairdresser: Nilda De Moura

Ms Braga's Makeup: Guilherme Pereira

Ms Braga's Hairdresser: Marco Simon

Wardrobe: Marico Kawamura

Dressmakers: Therezinha Ferreira, Jacira Marciano

Ms Braga's Dressmaker: Zeze Braga

Mr Hurt's Choreography: Mara Borba

Assistant to Mr Hurt: Jorge Carcavallo

Assistant to Mr. Julia: Daniel Gomes

Secretary: Carmen Rodrigues

Accountant: Janete Tsuha

Musical Score Recorded at Nosso Estudio/São Paulo

"Je Me Moque De L'Amour" Lyrics By
Manuel Puig & David Weisman

Filmed at TVC Studio/Vera Cruz/São Paulo

In The United States

Project Development
Pre-Production
Post-Production Services By
SUGARLOAF FILMS INC

Additional Editing: Lee Percy

Assistant Editor: Rebecca Nauert

Supervising Sound Editor: Susan Dudeck

Sound Editors: Allen Hartz, Lorrie Oschatz, Jeff Rosen, Hugo Weng

Adr Editor: Val Kuklowsky

Assistant Sound Editor: Cathy Welch

Foley Mixers: Scott Ganary, Gary Gegen

Re-Recording Mixers: Paul Coombe, Peter Waggonger, Mark Berger

Re-Recorded At: Sound One Corp., Saul Zaentz Film Center

Post Production Facilities: JDH Sound

Unit & 1985 Publicity: Clein + Feldman

Assistant to Producer: Tony Payne

Negative Cutter: Helen Hahn

Timer: Dennis McNeill

Color By: MGM Laboratories, Inc.

Main Title Sequence By: Robert Dawson & David Weisman

Key-art Design By: David Weisman

Opticals: Movie Magic

Associate Producers: Michael Maiello & Jane Holzer, Studio Artes Visuais, Jayme Sverner, Cena Filmes, Gustavo Halbreich, Altamiro Boscoli

Special Thanks

Burt Lancaster
Peter Dekom
Gene Parseghian
Jeff Hunter
Fabiano Canosa

MPAA Rated "R"

RUNNING TIME: 1 hour 58 minutes

© COPYRIGHT 2009, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
INDEPENDENT CINEMA RESTORATION ARCHIVE LLC