

“Lloro.”

Could you briefly describe the music-making process?

The process is rather simple. Someone comes to the group with a song they want to play. We listen to it on CD a couple of times and then the person who brought the song in teaches it to the rest of us. Then we play it a couple times and it is added to our list of songs.

What are your rehearsals generally like? Do you have a set time each week in which you practice or is it more spontaneous?

Rehearsals are very relaxed and, for me, therapeutic. I love playing music and it helps me with the stresses of everyday life as a PCV. We practice every Tuesday and Thursday from 7 p.m. until we want to go to bed around 9 or 10 p.m.

What has been your biggest challenge as a band? Have you been able to overcome that challenge? If so, how?

The biggest challenge is getting gigs. Being a small folklorica group out in the campo with little resources for publicity is hard.

What’s the ultimate direction for the band? Are you seeking fame and fortune? Road trips around South America?

Our ultimate aim is to play a lot of music to a lot of people and

have a great time at the fiestas.

What advice do you have for people who want to form their own bands?

Just do it and always have fun with it.

“The music is directly from the soul.”

How can fans-to-be gain access to your music? Do you have a website with sample songs or a demo CD?

Wish I could say we did, but again we have little to no resources. A PCPP maybe?

Are you the only gringo in the band?

Yes I am the only gringo in the band.

What’s it like being the lone ranger?

It’s not a big deal. I definitely started out behind everyone in terms of knowledge of this genre of music, but as time goes by I learn more. The music is directly from the soul and just makes me want to dance!

Do you guys have a following?

Ha! No.

What about groupies? Have things been easier with the ladies due to your musical gift and witty charm?

No groupies, but it has certainly made it easier with the ladies.

What is the best thing about being in a band with

Ecuadorians?

Great people. We have a lot of fun playing music together. The culture here is so relaxed and easy-going. All can be seen during our rehearsals which include a lot of dancing and yelling out in joy.

Any cultural differences you have witnessed due to this unique experience?

I studied a lot of music in the states, which obviously has made

me a better musician. The musicians in my group are all self-taught. It just makes you wonder

how much better they would be with a music education.

Sure to become a hot sensation with PCV Alfred joining the group, start booking Rascos Andinos early for the festivals. Ben is currently taking offers for a band hair stylist.

-Leach, an HIV/AIDS Volunteer from Omnibus 104, lives in Guayas. She is El Clima’s Arts & Entertainment Section Editor.

Cinema

American Rebels: Oliver Stone Sits Down With Latin Leaders in South of the Border

By J. Grigsby Crawford

Like someone else you may know, Oliver Stone came to South America looking for something. Fans of the Writer/Director/Producer/Vietnam

Veteran already know he has a passion for the region—in fact, he'd be better off making more films like *Salvador* (1986) rather than more sequels about assholes on Wall Street. And those who've seen his 2003 interview with Fidel Castro know he's adept at sitting and chatting comfortably with rogue leaders (though at this point, he'd do well to learn at least a smidgen of Spanish).

In 2010's *South of the Border*, Stone returns to Latin America to interview some of the leaders that rose to power in the last decade as part of the so-called New Left. (When he's not at his mansion in Vail, Stone loves hanging out with socialists.) The film, as it turns out, isn't about attacking one system over another. If something is attacked, it's the televised American media's ignorance about current events in countries so close by. Stone sits down with the presidents of six nations to talk about how and why the last decade has seen an emergence of democratically-elected left-wing leaders who, at least on the surface, reject US influence.

Interviews range from the subtly awkward (Bolivia's Evo Morales) to the sexually taut (Argentina's Christina Fernandez). Viewers previously familiar with Morales, perhaps from the stellar documentary *Cocalero*, already

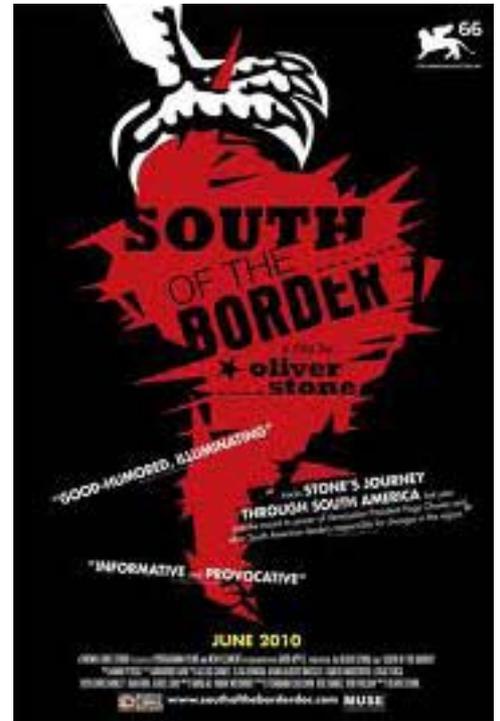
“When he's not at his mansion in Vail, [Oliver] Stone loves hanging out with socialists.”

know he's probably the least charismatic leader ever elected; and viewers already privy to the effortless foxiness of Argentine women shan't be surprised by Fernandez's lips-glossed/legs-crossed/lashes-batting sex appeal.

In between, you have Venezuela's Hugo Chavez playing so gregarious I thought he and Stone might give each other a chest bump by the end of their visit. Then there's Brazil's Lula (who nearly *does* give Chavez a chest bump) showing fieriness even as his tenure draws to a close. Ecuador's Rafeal Correa plays coy while recounting his proposal that if the US keeps its military “base” in Manta, they should let his country keep one in Miami (har har har). Lastly, there's a brief chat with Cuba's Raúl Castro (nicknamed *la china* in his home country—seriously) and a too-short visit with Paraguay's Catholic-bishop-turned-President Fernando Lugo.

Stone's first point is that if you were to rely on televised American media for your Latin American news, you'd only see the region through the same old stereotype: a savage and unstable land overrun by

“There is a certain tragic irony in seeing the writer of *Scarface* clumsily devour coca leaves with the president of Bolivia—the world's second-largest cocaine producer.”



brutal dictators. First off, this oversimplification ignores other (richer) nations' roles in the instability. Second, it ignores the fact that currently all but one country in the entire region are constitutional democracies with regular elections. And ultimately, if you're only getting your news from US television, you have bigger problems.

The most notable contrast between perception and reality is with Venezuela's Chavez. The film begins with images from TV news outlets in the US calling Chavez a dictator and characterizing the 2002 coup attempt against him as a comeuppance for a non-US-friendly regime. The overarching irony here is that Chavez has been elected several times (in votes certified as free and fair

even by the Carter Foundation!), and like any coup attempt, the one against him was literally undemocratic. Whether or not you're a fan of his policies—and Stone does gloss over them—you don't see many “dictators” elected thrice over, as Fernandez points out in the film. Yes, there's a point to be made about civil society, transparency and participation—i.e. not confusing *elections* with *democracy*—but that's another (long) film for another time.

One fun moment is seeing a couch full of Fox News cretins confusing the word *coca* for *cocoa*, as in Cocoa Puffs, while they try to lambaste Morales and Chavez for opposing the US's use of toxic defoliants on their countrysides. The “news” “anchors” go on to suggest that chewing coca leaves is akin to ingesting the narcotic cocaine (I can assure you: it is not). However, there is a certain tragic irony in seeing the writer of *Scarface* clumsily devour coca leaves with the president of Bolivia—the world's second-largest cocaine producer.

The second major theme is the demonstration of the New Left's ambition to unify and reject policies they view as neo-colonialist and hurtful. Front and center are the International Monetary Fund strategies that have “treated [these countries] like guinea pigs in its economic experiments.” Again, as the details are glossed over, this comes off as more of a plea for



cooperation and fairness than good old US-bashing: After all, it takes only an elementary understanding of economics and history to know that most of these monetary trials have resulted in large debt and turmoil.

Those seeking hard-hitting questions or derogatory portrayals of either the left or the right will not find them here. The ultimate thrust of Stone's interviews is that compassion and open dialogue, not demonization, should drive hemispheric relations in this century. None of the New Left leaders are out to get the US; they oppose policies that hurt them. So if you're ready to forgive Stone for *Evita* (I can't blame you if you aren't) and are interested in where Latin America is headed, *South of the Border* is a good starting point.

-Crawford, a Natural Resource Conservation Volunteer from *Omnibus 101*, is the Editor-in-Chief of El Clima.

Sports
From Coconuts to Rugby Balls
By Tristan Schreck

While rugby has been growing in popularity in the United States for quite some time, in Ecuador it is just taking off. Right now there are only nine teams in the entire country, and I am on one of them.

I have had the pleasure of working with the Aguilas Rugby Club in Cuenca for a few months now. When the team was first formed, they were using coconuts as balls. When I heard this I thought, “Wow, here we have a group of guys who really want to learn this sport.”

The rugby players in Ecuador are not playing to become super stars. If they wanted to be famous, we know Ecuador has other avenues, like soccer or surfing. This group of young men is playing because they love the game; it's as simple as that.

As the weeks have progressed, so have the team's skill and fitness. I was impressed with how hard