

FILM

WORDS DAVID TIANGA

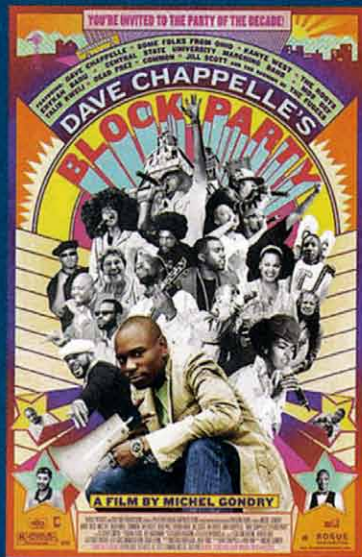
BLOCK PARTY

Director Michel Gondry
2005/Documentary/Comedy/103min/USA

Very early on in Dave Chappelle's *Block Party*, he looks at the camera and earnestly states that this is a "dream come true" for him, setting the tone for this timely, important, and well put together documentary/musical. With *Block Party* Chappelle comes back stronger than ever, finding purpose by bringing us a fresh out look on life and black music. The film begins with two men trying to start a stalled car and having no luck doing it. Chappelle tries to assist, but it seems to be that they can't hear him. So he takes out his bullhorn and shouts. This movie is his bullhorn and the music is the message. And the message is loud and clear "black people- get up and be proud!" There is also a message to the record industry that there is a changing of the guard that is about to take place in hip-hop. Finally we are going to go back to a more progressive and political style of MC'ing and music. The new warriors, Mos Def, The Roots, Erika Badhu, Common, and a host of others, filled the streets of Brooklyn with good vibes that screamed

for change and positivity. The stand out performance that came from Dead Prez, the most truthful and most unknown act of the night, could start a small revolution by young MC's everywhere.

Chappelle is a true fan of every single act that played, he believes in his message whole heartedly, and he is damn funny which is what makes the film work so well. Like Lenny Bruce, Richard Pryor, and Eddie Murphy, before him, Chappelle is revolutionary and progressive in his comedy while staying very connected to the street. This connection to "real" people will propel him to do bigger and bigger things, and if this film shows us anything is that Chappelle has a bright future as a producer. It takes genius to bring the likes of Big Daddy Kane, Jill Scott, and Dead Prez together, and make it work. Chappelle achieves something that only a few artists the likes of James Brown and Bob Marley have been able to do, he keeps it "real" and "grimy," yet accomplishes to relay a positive message at the same time. There is no doubt that MTV will be calling him after they see his performance as the host of this "impromptu BBQ" that is sure to become an instant classic. I just hope Dave says no, and creates his own TV channel instead, BITCH!



DUCK SEASON

(International: English title)
Director: Fernando Eimbcke
2004/Comedy/90min/Mexico
Warner Independent Pictures and Alfonso Cuarón's Esperanto Filmoj

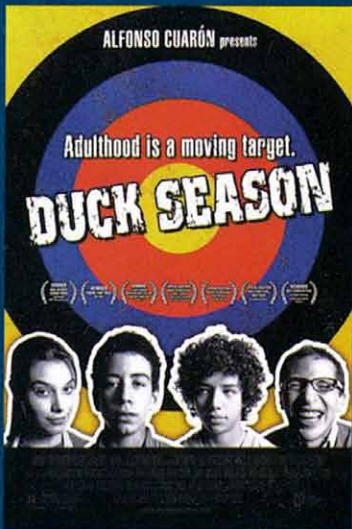
The enjoyable journey that is the film *Duck Season* begins when 14-year-old Flama and Moko are left home alone to their own devices. The two friends plan to have the usual Sunday filled with video games, soda, pizza, and TV. But when the electricity goes out and two uninvited guests arrive, the fun begins.

Their teenaged neighbor, Rita, forces her way into their kitchen seemingly wanting to bake a pie, but soon enough we see she seeks more from them than she lets on. Ulises, a pizza delivery guy, performs a "sit-in" when the boys refuse to pay him because he was a minute late in delivering their pizza. These two "intruders" help set off a chain of events and conversations that will force the boys out of their "ignorant" youth.

Duck Season tackles sexuality, loneliness, divorce, and friendship with a bittersweet tone that will make you smile more than cry. Flama and Moko's awkward confidence in the things they know will remind you of a time when confusion seemed to

always be followed by adventure. They are not seeking a selfish goal, but rather, they are pushed forward by life to achieve emotional survival. In his feature film debut, writer/director Fernando Eimbcke rarely wastes a moment with his just-long-enough hanging camera shots that feel more like moving black and white photographs. He turns a small apartment into a metaphysical world being explored by these bumbling characters. His use of humor is the heart of the film. He clearly makes the deliberate choice to present the characters "hardships" with an open mind that finds wit in tragedy. The acting is first-rate and unforced. The emotional and comedic depth that the young cast brings to the story speaks well for their future careers.

The clever and hilarious video game sequence that takes place between the boys and Ulises is reason enough to watch the movie. Eimbcke masterfully builds a bridge between youth and adults in Latin America through video games and soccer. But most of all, it's a pleasure to watch such a universally appealing and comedic movie coming out of Mexico. It is a refreshing change from the usual regional and violent themes that Mexican filmmakers rely on these days. *Duck Season* reminds us that while life is sometimes tragic, it's also a series of magical and funny events.



WRITER'S PICK

Director Sebastián Cordero
1999/Drama/107min/Ecuador

If you enjoy owning the obscure shit that makes you the envy of your friends- cause you "had it first"- then you need to go out and buy the DVD, RATAS, RATONES, RATEROS. This hustler's journey follows Salvador and his cousin Angel as they run through the back alleys of Ecuador trying to make ends meet on street wit and petty crime. *Ratas* is a testament to regional realism and great story telling. Just when you think it is about to fall into cliché and redundancy, it becomes much

more real. Lead actors, Carlos Valencia and Marcos Bustos, command the language of the script with an ease and composure that can only come from a real connection to the story. Screenwriter Sebastian Cordero triumphs where most indie writers' fail, he makes a powerful movie with a clear storyline that is easy to follow. You'll feel like you're hearing a story about some around the way cars as told to you by cousin Alberto who just arrived from the motherland. The camera work is cool, but never overshadows the stories slow progression into tragedy. Like in the Hughes Brothers classic *Menace II Society*, *Ratas* will leave you saying, "Damn, that shit can really happen."

