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BLOG

Exploring Cuban Free Speech at the Louisville International Festival of Film

By ASHLIE STEVENS

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The 6th Annual Louisville International Festival of Film, which began Thursday and runs through Saturday evening,

invites filmmakers and film lovers to experience a weekend of over 150 screenings. The LFF screens artistic films not usually presented through commercial venues, and giving independent filmmakers a place to showcase their work.

One of those filmmakers is Lloyd Frost, a Canadian singer-songwriter, whose short musical film “In Everyone’s Eyes (en todas las miradas)” screens Saturday at the Galt House. [\(Here’s a schedule.\)](#) The film, which falls at just over six minutes, takes a subversive look at the silent politics in Cuba—where freedom of speech is obviously a contentious issue. It is based on a song of the same name written by Frost.

I spoke with the filmmaker about his process in creating the musical short.



What specifically inspired you to produce this film?

“In Cuba, free speech and human rights don’t exist, and haven’t, since the revolution in 1959. If you say or do something the state doesn’t like they call it counter-revolutionary, and this can affect your ability to work, or you can be detained, beaten up or even sent to prison. So most people learn to keep certain thoughts or desires to themselves, and instead put on a facade of outward happiness, even show outward agreement with the state. It’s simply safer for them.”

Which came first—the song or the film?

“I’ve made 10 visits to Cuba, and I’m impressed at how strong and resourceful Cubans are in dealing with how the state controls them, and so that’s what inspired me to first write the song, and afterwards make the short film.”

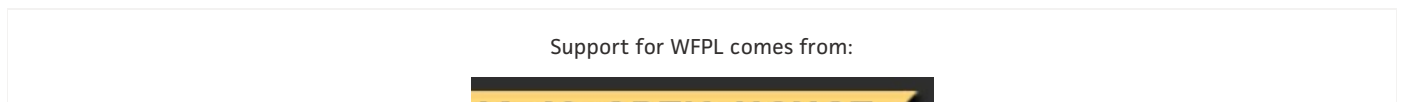
What was the most poignant experience you had while filming in Cuba?

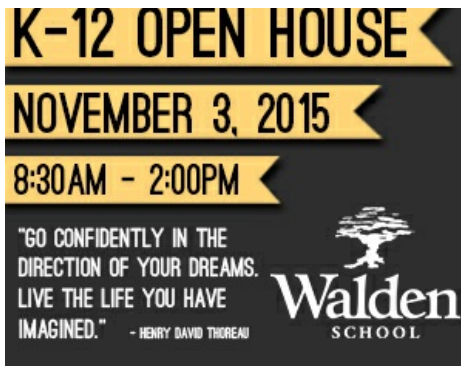
“On one of my recent visits a Cuban guy told me, ‘We live on a beautiful island, but it’s an open prison,’ and I think that’s a pretty strong message.”

What do you want viewers to take away from the film?

“The message of my film is hidden by a facade, just like the facade Cubans need to use so they can get by. In my case, the facade is an upbeat melody that you can dance to, and I filmed mostly in sunny, colorful places in Cuba. But the lyrics give the message: obey or else. And the infamous Modelo Prison on the Isle of Youth makes several grim appearances through the film. Today it’s empty and derelict, but you see the tiny cells and the massive courtyard where the prisoners would walk, watched over by the lone guard tower in the center of the courtyard. It took very few guards to control the large cell block population.”

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