

## Document Citation

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**FADED GLORY:** *Ricardo Darin is featured in the story of a once-thriving social club, Juan Jose Campanella's "Avellaneda's Moon."*

## AVELLANEDA'S MOON

(LUNA DE AVELLANEDA)

(ARGENTINA-SPAIN)

A Distribution Co. release (in Argentina) of a Pol-ka Prods., 100 Bares Prods., Tornasol Films production. (International sales: Menemsha Films, Los Angeles.) Produced by Fernando Blanco, Jorge Estrada Mora, Gerardo Herrero, Mariela Besuievsky. Executive producer, Juan Vera.

Directed by Juan Jose Campanella. Screenplay, Fernando Castets, Juan Pablo Domenech, Campanella. Camera (color, Super 35mm widescreen), Daniel Schulman; editor, Camilo Antolini; music, Angel Illaramendi; production designer, Mercedes Alfonsin; costume designer, Cecilia Monti; sound (Dolby Digital/THX), Carlos Abbate, Jose Luis Diaz Ouzande (Abbate & Diaz); assistant director, Fernando Alcaide. **Reviewed at Montreal World Film Festival (competing)**, Sept. 3, 2004. Running time: 142 MIN.

Roman ..... Ricardo Darin  
Graciela ..... Mercedes Moran  
Amadeo ..... Eduardo Blanco  
Cristina ..... Valeria Bertuccelli  
Veronica ..... Silvia Kutica  
Don Aquiles ..... Jose Luis Lopez Vazquez  
Alejandro ..... Daniel Fanego

With: Atilio Pozzobon, Francisco Fernandez de Rosa, Alan Sabbagh, Micaela Moreno, Maria Victoria Biscay.

By EDDIE COCKRELL

**F**rank Capra's spirit lives on in the cheerfully maizey "Avellaneda's Moon." Sprawling saga of a ragtag group of spunky Argentinians who keep the spirit of their local social club alive in grim economic times overstays its welcome but feels like one from the heart for "Son of the Bride" helmer Juan Jose Campanella. Though it didn't replicate that work's 2001 achievement of copping the Montreal fest's main prize, aud's frenzied cheers following at least one screening suggest that pic could move from strong May domestic bow to decent, if not stellar, theatrical orbits in advance of sturdy homevid life.

Colorful prologue evocatively presents the 1959 Carnival in the Avellaneda Social and Sporting Club, a bustling community hub founded in the 1920s by Galician immigrants to Buenos Aires. Final shot of celebrants on the dance floor fades to the ballroom today, a dingy all-purpose gymnasium being mopped by the mournful Roman (Ricardo Darin).

Roman was awarded the social club's very first lifetime membership card immediately after his birth during that long-ago party and has spent his life watching the club's ranks dwindle as the neigh-

borhood deteriorates. But he remains determined to preserve what's left of Avellaneda.

Even as Roman's 20-year marriage to wife Veronica (Silvia Kutica) begins to crumble, his friends on the club's board of directors grapple with their own problems. Dumped by her husband for a younger woman, take-charge Graciela (Mercedes Moran) struggles to raise her orthodontically challenged adolescent son. Lonely oddball Amadeo (Eduardo Blanco), a scruffy, alcoholic nice guy and Roman's childhood chum, becomes smitten with graceful new dance instructor Cristina (Valeria Bertuccelli). The elderly Don Aquiles (Jose Luis Lopez Vazquez) is the voice of reason that binds the board.

Outside conflict intrudes in the form of Alejandro (Daniel Fanego), another childhood buddy using his City Hall post to get his hands on the club.

As in his previous work, Campanella invests these lovable losers with just enough tattered dignity to ensure their appeal. The David-and-Goliath elements of the story are so obvious that one half expects Jimmy Stewart or Gary Cooper to wander in to the climactic showdown between Alejandro and the membership.

International pop culture references once again pepper the dialogue, and an almost stand-alone gag involving the comeuppance of Graciela's ex rewards those who dawdle over the closing credits.

Pic's chief challenge is its overlength, especially in the plot strand involving the on-again, off-again courtship of Cristina and Amadeo. As skilled a comic actor as Blanco is (he played the flaky Juan Carlos in "Son of the Bride"), he can't cover up the fact that the Amadeo character as written overwhelms the main story. Darin's weary dignity suits and Fanego's oily charm fits the fable like a glove, with all other perfs in the underdog spirit.

Beginning with the "romantic reconstruction" of the 1959 carnival, Campanella's production team, most of whom have worked with him previously, deliver the goods. Four real-life clubs were pressed into service to create Avellaneda, though exteriors were filmed in the actual Buenos Aires neighborhood. After nearly a decade of helming American TV (the "Law & Order" franchises chief among them) Campanella announces in pic's press kit that he's returning to work in Argentina for good, "to water my roots again."