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## Oscar® Nominee *Amores Perros* Director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu

by jose martinez photography jennifer gregori  
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**F**ilmmaker Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu has made quite a name for himself with his first full-length feature, *Amores Perros*. Heralded as one of the best films to come out of Mexico in years, *Amores Perros* tells the story of three people (each with a dog) in the ever-changing, often violent world of Mexico City.

"I thought the characters were alive," the director says about the first time he read the script for *Amores Perros*, written by Guillermo Arriaga. "They were flesh and bone. I could feel their breath and smell them. I was very enthusiastic."

Gonzalez Inarritu was so enthusiastic about the project that he dedicated the next three years of his life working to get the film off the ground. Since then the film has gone on to be a smash hit in Mexico (even beating *MI2* at the box-office). It has garnered numerous awards around the world, including a Best Foreign Film nomination for an Academy Award.

"I don't want to have any illusions about winning," the director confesses. "This isn't

a very easy film for the Academy members. This is a very strong film to watch and might not have the characteristics that most members like. I'm happy that we got nominated. It's been 37 years since a Mexican film was nominated, and I find that to be very sad.

"I wanted to make a film about life," Gonzalez Inarritu continues. "Our actions have consequences that can be difficult and painful. I wanted to do something about that, as well as something that had to do with me. I think a film is an extension of yourself and this film is about me."

Raised on international films, Gonzalez Inarritu cites such notable filmmakers as John Cassavetes, Jim Jarmusch, Wong Kar-Wai, Martin Scorsese, Sergio Leone, Fellini, Coppola, and Truffaut as influences. What irks the young director are the comparisons some critics have made between *Amores Perros* and another maverick filmmaker, Quentin Tarantino.

"I don't think my movie has anything to do with *Pulp Fiction*," Gonzalez Inarritu declares. "I think it's a comparison made

by lazy critics. I think the structure of *Amores Perros* is based on the style of William Faulkner and the structure has been used for years, including the work of Kurosawa. It's an old style that Americans think was invented by Tarantino, and Tarantino's use of violence is something he's learned from videos and magazines. I live in a very violent city and I've experienced it. I can't use violence to make people laugh. I take the topic of violence very seriously."

Like his American counterpart, the Mexican director won't mind if his film is a crossover success in the States. "I think this is a very exciting and entertaining movie," Gonzalez Inarritu says, "but it also raises questions. I always thought it was a film for a certain audience but it quickly connected with the masses and I was very happy about that. When you make a movie you want to communicate with people, express an emotion, and I was very happy they enjoyed it." ▼

*Screening at the Santa Barbara Film Festival.*