

## FILM ON MAIDS' LIFE GETS BRAZIL TALKING

A Brazilian film about a maid in a wealthy home is not only making waves as Brazil's Oscars entry, but stirring painful debate over inequality and racism in a country in crisis. "Que Horas Ela Volta?," released in English as "The Second Mother," is a long way from the violence-filled depictions of drug gangs, like "City of God," that foreigners have come to expect from Brazil. But director Anna Muylaert's outwardly quiet movie has hit a raw spot in using a live-in maid's story to bare the hypocrisy behind the idyllic facade of the upper class household where she works.

Released at a time when Brazil is reeling from economic decline, corruption and the crumbling of President Dilma Rousseff's leftist agenda, the film whose title translates as "What Time Will She Come Home?" challenges the biggest country in Latin America to examine its soul. The film "has all the chances of becoming a milestone in contemporary Brazilian cinema, as 'Central do Brasil' and 'City of God' were in other contexts. It's a film completely in sync with the pulse of the country," critic and blogger Jose Geraldo Couto wrote. Actress Regina Case has won rave reviews at home and in Hollywood for her portrayal of Val, one of Brazil's largely invisible army of domestic workers. Living in the tiny servant's room of a luxurious Sao Paulo house, Val not only feeds the family and cleans, but looks after the dog, garden, swimming pool and all but raises the sweet, but spoiled son.

Her employers say she's "practically family." But the film ruthlessly shows how Val in reality is second class and will remain so until inspired by her estranged daughter's independence—she quits and starts a new life of her own. For Carl Maria dos Santos, a veteran maid who is now president of the Rio de Janeiro Domestic Workers' Union, that story of social upheaval captures real trends. "I thought the film was very good, especially the end where the servant finally frees herself and goes off," dos Santos said in an interview. "Things are changing."

### Bitter sweet

There are just over six million domestic workers in Brazil, according to government figures. By comparison, UN and labor union estimates show the United States, with a population a third bigger than Brazil's, has only 1.8 to 2.6 million domestic workers. The European Union, with more than double Brazil's population, has an estimated 2.5 million such workers, according to the International Labor Organization. Servants in Brazil—most of them black women—are so woven into the social fabric that architects design even middle-class apartments with a designated bedroom for the live-in help.

These jobs can be a chance to escape extreme poverty in the outlying regions of the world's seventh biggest economy. But to critics, the domestic service industry also holds back society, reinforcing racism and other legacies of slavery which flourished in Brazil right up to 1888 — two decades later than in the United States. Dos Santos, who is 62 and started working at 10, said her experience has been bitter-sweet.

"When you're with a family that is educated and good, you benefit too—it's like going to a school. It has a good side," she said. But maids embedded in rich families, housed in "the very small room with no window," have constantly to remind themselves that the "beautiful house, the swimming pool, the sauna—that is not their reality," she said.

### 'It's over'

Under Workers' Party president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his successor Rousseff, tens of millions of people have been lifted from poverty in the last decade. And in 2013 constitutional changes finally extended normal rights, like overtime and the minimum wage, to domestic workers. Given those seismic shifts, some Brazilians wonder

how long it will be before the country's long-suffering maids follow fictional Val out the door. "It's already over," said Francisca Ciambarelli, who was among the well-heeled crowd watching "Que Horas Ela Volta?" in Rio's swanky Leblon neighborhood.

Ciambarelli, a 45-year-old economist, said she has a devoted live-in maid, but that the system is on its last legs. "People don't want to live like that anymore." Just like in the film, Ciambarelli's maid has a child in the process of getting a higher education and moving into another social class where working as a servant would be unthinkable. "The mother will not change. She will live in our house and die there," Ciambarelli said. "But the son, he is always trying to persuade her to leave."

### Old habits die hard

Dos Santos said eventually the new laws "will change a great deal" in Brazil. "We will end up like France where people are paid by the hour and this working 24 hours a day will end." But Brazil's economic crisis may yet rewrite that script. The number of people in domestic service fell steadily from around 2008, when the Workers' Party welfare program was at its most effective. However, this year, with recession eating away at economic opportunity, the numbers have started to climb again.

With salaries for live-in maids in the wealthy parts of Rio de Janeiro reaching around \$500 a month, even women from the new generation might think twice about rejecting the opportunity. The really poor, meanwhile, are unlikely even to see "Que Horas Ela Volta?" Cinema tickets in Brazil typically cost between 30 and 40 reais (approximately \$7 to \$10). The minimum hourly wage is just 3.58 reais (90 cents). "That's the reality. I saw the film because I was in a seminar," dos Santos said. "Otherwise, I wouldn't have gone." —AFP



George Strait announces four concert dates at the new Las Vegas Arena, scheduled to open in 2016, during the "Strait to Vegas" press conference. —AP

## George Strait drops new album, will play Las Vegas in 2016

Country music king George Strait wants to be clear. His upcoming four shows and likely more at MGM Resort's new Las Vegas Arena next year aren't some re-emergence from retirement. The 63-year-old may have hung up his touring boots last year after four-decades and his record-setting "Cowboy Rides Away" shows, but he's hardly done singing or performing. "Some people that I have told, that I'd be doing some dates in Vegas in 2016 at the Las Vegas Arena, they go 'well you retired, I thought you retired.' Ooh, I just wanna grab 'em and shake 'em. I never said that," he said Tuesday with a flash of his pearly white cowboy smile.

Straight announced Tuesday that he would perform four upcoming shows at the 20,000-seat arena - April 22-23 and Sept 9-10 - and release a new album, "Cold Beer Conversation," available on iTunes and at Walmart stores starting Friday. It's an album with ballads and toe-tappers for those "dudes and dudettes" reminiscing about high school football games, family and life over a cold beer. His first choice for a cold beer chat? His father, John Byron Strait who died in 2013 at 91.

### Good swing

It was Strait's wanting to talk with his dad that led him to write "Everything I See" with his son Bubba. "I wish I would have stuck a phone in his shirt, as ridiculous as that may sound," he said of the death of his father, as he pondered the information cloud and being able to com-

municate with his dad from the beyond. The Grammy winner and repeat Country Music Association entertainer of the year said he's always looking for a good swing tune and found one, writing the tongue-in-cheek, "It Takes All Kinds" with lyrics such as, "Some got a boat they like to float/ Some got a story they sugarcoat / some got a clue and then some don't / it takes all kinds." Strait said he traded lyrics in texts with his son and his song-writing buddies.

"Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys were a big influence on me," he said. "At one point I thought I was going to do a big band record of standard songs like Sinatra-type songs, and that's still a possibility." The Las Vegas Strip has been many things to many people but has increasingly become a hub for country music fans whether seeing Reba McEntire and Brooks & Dunn at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace or seeing The Judds reunite at upcoming shows at The Venetian. "George retired from touring at the top of his game," said Gary Bongiovanni with concert industry tracking firm Pollstar. "He has a very loyal fan base that will be delighted to hear the news they have a chance to see him again."

Straight has been no stranger to Vegas and its many casino venues. "The crowds are great and they come from all over the place," he said. When the Las Vegas Arena opens in April, Strait will be among the first to play the new \$375 million venue being built by MGM Resorts and AEG. Tickets will cost \$75-\$200 and go on sale Oct 20. —AP

## Bowie pens music for European crime thriller

David Bowie has written a song for an upcoming French-British crime series, in the rock icon's first foray into television music in two decades. Bowie in a statement Tuesday said that he had written an original song for "The Last Panthers," a six-part thriller on Balkan jewel thieves that debuts in November. "I was looking for one of the icons of my youth to write the music for the title sequence, but was presented with a God," director Johan Renck, a Swede best known for his music videos, said in the statement. "The piece of music he laid before us embodied every aspect of our characters and the series itself—dark, brooding, beautiful and sentimental (in the best possible incarnation of this word)," he said.

A collaboration between Britain's Sky Atlantic and France's Canal Plus, "The Last Panthers" stars Tahar Rahim—best known for the French film "A Prophet"—and Samantha Morton, whose credits range from blockbuster "Minority Report" to Woody Allen's

"Sweet and Lowdown" to "Control," a biopic on late Joy Division singer Ian Curtis. The television series revolves



British musician David Bowie arriving for the 17th Annual Glamour Women of the Year awards at Carnegie Hall in New York. —AFP

around the Pink Panthers, criminal elements from the Balkans—ironically nicknamed after crime comedy films—who pulled off major heists starting in the 1990s.

The music will be Bowie's first for a television series since 1993 when he recorded a soundtrack for a BBC serial based on Hanif Kureishi's novel "The Buddha of Suburbia." A pioneer of glam rock, Bowie has long pursued interests in art and theater and, at age 68, has recently announced a series of new projects. Bowie is writing for a musical based on cartoon character SpongeBob. He also penned the music for "Lazarus," a play that premieres in New York in November that is inspired by the science fiction novel "The Man Who Fell to Earth." Bowie starred in a 1976 film version of "The Man Who Fell to Earth" but did not write the music amid contractual disputes. Bowie's works include the music for a BBC television version of Bertolt Brecht's play "Baal," in which he acted. —AFP

## Perez Hilton gets onstage again in 'juicy' part

Celebrity blogger Perez Hilton is taking his skills mocking celebrities to the stage. He's starring in an unauthorized off-Broadway musical parody of the '90s sitcom "Full House," playing Danny Tanner. "I've been doing what I do now for 11 years," Hilton says, "So it's fun to challenge yourself and take advantage of all the opportunities that present themselves." Hilton relocated to New York from Los Angeles in 2013, in part to reconnect with the stage. Long before doodling on his first celebrity photo, he graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts' acting program.

"Would I love to do Broadway? Yes. Do I think it's likely going to happen in the immediate future? No," he said. "And if it doesn't happen, I wouldn't be disappointed." He started blogging in a coffee shop in September 2004 and now has about a dozen employees feeding five websites, a radio show and a weekly podcast. Hilton, who starred in the 2012 off-Broadway revue "Newsical the Musical," has been taking voice lessons and is a fixture in the audience at most Broadway shows. "I see every musical. The plays? I have to be sure they're good before I go to," he said.

When he heard - online, naturally - there was going to be a musical parody of "Full House," he reached out to

the creators, asking for a role. But not the one you might expect. "He wanted to be one of the Olsen twins, but we talked him into Danny Tanner. We thought it would be more age-



Perez Hilton attends the 2015 GLSEN Respect Awards in New York. —AP

appropriate," said co-creator Tobly McSmith. Hilton, whose real name is Mario Lavandeira Jr., was a fan of McSmith's previous parodies of "Saved by the Bell" and "Showgirls."

In the new show, he plays both the squeaky-clean and fictional Tanner in Act 1 and the foul-mouthed real-life actor who played him, Bob Saget, in Act 2. (Hilton remembers watching the show (1987-1995), while growing up.) What he misses from the '90s is not having a cellphone or being on social media, a strange admission from someone whose sites have kept us online: "While I enjoy social media, it's just become another job." The musical is on three nights a week at Theatre 80 downtown, leaving Hilton plenty of time for his "day job" and raising two young boys.

He says fatherhood and being 37 has mellowed his style. "I've become less snarky," he said. He doesn't scrawl inappropriate things on photos anymore and has created Perezitos, a cleaned-up site for parents and children. His bite is still present, however. He recently went through a three-week, Kardashian detox cleanse, refusing to talk about reality TV's favorite family. "It felt really good. Now I've reintroduced them into my diet, but in a more sensible fashion," he said. —AP

## Diddy tops rapper earnings list with \$60 mln

Diddy is said to be working on a long-awaited album but, even without his music, he was the top-earning rapper of the past year. Releasing its annual list on Tuesday, Forbes said that Diddy-whose real name is Sean Combs and whose stage names include Puff Daddy—took in \$60 million from June 2014 to June 2015. His earnings come mostly through his business projects, especially his venture selling French-made Ciroc liquor, the wealth magazine said.

Diddy rarely performs and last released an album, "Last Train to Paris," in 2010. But Gizzle, an artist signed to his label, recently told the Rap-Up website that Diddy was working on a sequel to his debut 1997 work "No Way Out." "No Way Out 2" would be the final album from Diddy, Gizzle said. Another rapper turned mogul, Jay Z, was close behind at number two by raking in an estimated \$56 million, Forbes said. Jay Z put on a series of sold-out arena shows with his wife Beyonce and has earned money through assets such as Armand de Brignac, a champagne that he bought last year.

Canadian rapper and Apple collaborator Drake came in third at \$39.5 million, with Forbes estimating that he earned \$1 million per show. Drake is the only artist to go platinum in the United States, or sell more than one million copies, with an album released this year—the mixtape "If You're Reading This It's Too Late." Drake released a new mixtape, "What a Time To Be Alive," with fellow rapper Future late Sunday, with Billboard magazine expecting the work to top the latest album chart.

In 2013-14, Forbes said that Dr Dre topped the list and set the record for an entertainer of any genre in a year-by-earning \$620 million. Dr Dre had sold Beats, the company he co-founded that is best-known for headphones, to Apple, where he has taken on a corporate role. Forbes estimated that he came fourth in 2014-15 with \$33 million in



Photo shows musician Sean Combs in Beverly Hills, California. —AFP

earnings. Dr Dre last month released "Compton," which he has described as his final album, to accompany the blockbuster film "Straight Outta Compton" about his former band N.W.A. —AFP

## Sean Penn files \$10 million suit against 'Empire' co-creator

Sean Penn on Tuesday filed a \$10 million defamation lawsuit against "Empire" co-creator Lee Daniels over comments Daniels made comparing him to the show's star Terrence Howard, who's been repeatedly accused of domestic violence. Daniels' comments appeared online about a week ago in the entertainment publication The Hollywood Reporter in a story about the upcoming season of the popular Fox television show. "That poor boy (Terrence) ain't done nothing different than Marlon Brando or Sean Penn, and all of a sudden he's some ... demon," Daniels said in the article. "That's a sign of time, of race, of where we are right

now in America." Penn's lawsuit, filed in Manhattan civil court, says Daniels' statements were egregious and injured Penn's credibility and reputation personally, professionally and in his philanthropic activities. Penn has won two best actor Oscars, for "Mystic River" and "Milk." He has made a major humanitarian push in Haiti after it was devastated by an earthquake, co-founding the J/P Haitian Relief Organization. But he also has a reputation for angry behavior. In 2010, he pleaded no contest to vandalism after he kicked a celebrity photographer, but the case later was dismissed.

In the 1980s, he was in court in connection with fisticuffs and spitting. He beat a man he thought was trying to kiss Madonna in a nightclub, and he admitted driving recklessly and punching an extra on the set of the movie "Colors." His attorney Mathew Rosengart said the lawsuit isn't just about Daniels' comments. "Sean has been the subject of numerous baseless attacks over the years, as the complaint provides, and this is only the most recent example," he said. Daniels is the Oscar-nominated filmmaker of "Precious: Based on the Novel 'Push' by Sapphire," "The Paperboy" and "The Butler." The new season of "Empire," which he created with Danny Strong, started yesterday. —AP