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TIFF 2019 Interview: Klaudia Reynicke

“I wanted to create a character trapped by her own demons but who was able to confront them. A sort of superhero who could both inspire us with her firmness and courage, aggravate us with her bad temper but who could also touch us with her fragility and vulnerability.”

Siân Melton

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Sep 5 · 8 min read

Love Me Tender

Storytelling tropes truly know no bounds but when it comes to women, we surely carry the weight of the worst of them. Women in stories seem to exist on a binary: they're either good or bad and nothing in between. And don't get me started on "strong female characters," because what even is that.

It's always such a struggle to articulate the kind of women we want to see on screen.

Difficult? Weird? Normal? Just...women.

Filmmaker Klaudia Reynicke saw something missing too. She finds inspiration in "non-conformist superheroes, the ones who stand out for their excess of humanity, their mistakes, their fears," but didn't see any women on screen she felt embodying this. So, she made one and *Love Me Tender* and *Seconda* were born.

Love Me Tender is a film that instantly pulls you in and keeps you hooked until the very end. *Seconda* is 32 and hasn't left her home in

a very long time. Tragedy strikes and she's suddenly left to fend for herself and pretty soon all that's left to eat is cat food. This has all the set-up for either a roaring comedy or depressing melodrama but Reynicke crafts something far more special. At times surreal and eccentric, through it all it's a coming-of-age story of a woman just trying to get her shit together. And that we can all relate to.

You can see the International Premiere of **LOVE ME TENDER** at this year's Toronto International Film Festival, screening as part of Discovery on September 6th at 6:15PM, September 7th at 5:45PM and September 13th at 9:30AM.

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Klaudia Reynicke

Klaudia Reynicke is a Swiss Peruvian scriptwriter and film director. Before dedicating herself to film, she studied visual

arts and sociology. In 2005 she attended the Tisch School of Arts at NYU where she directed her first short. In 2010 she obtained a M.A. in filmmaking from the ECAL-HEAD.

Love Me Tender is her 2nd feature film.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got involved with filmmaking.

When I was younger, I wanted to be a visual artist. I went to some art schools but the desire for travel and discovery finally led me to study anthropology and sociology. At the end of these studies I realized that I needed to “create” by doing, to be an artisan of my desires, and that led me to take an interest in cinema and above all in documentary making. Writing and directing fiction is a new step that came later. Filmmaking allows me to make a bridge between my desires for experimentation mixed with the social context

that surrounds me. For me, filmmaking is the result of a journey of both simple and complex experiences but it is also a unique form of expression in order to translate a certain vision of the world.

Tell us about Love Me Tender. Where did the idea come from?

I wanted to create a character trapped by her own demons but who was able to confront them. A sort of superhero who could both inspire us with her firmness and courage, aggravate us with her bad temper but who could also touch us with her fragility and vulnerability. The truth is that I have always preferred non-conformist superheroes, specially the ones that seemed very “real” and close to us, those who could change something important but who could also be scared and make stupid mistakes... the superheroes or anti-superheroes “out of step.” I grew up

watching “ El Chapulín Colorado” if you know who that is, you will understand.

These type of characters are difficult to find in the feminine gender, so it became clear for me that I needed to create one. This is how Love Me Tender was born.

Love Me Tender

The story is funny, fantastical, and yet still incredibly sensitive regarding mental health. How did you balance all of these elements?

Love Me Tender is a story about an existential quest. In order to balance the story it was important to talk mainly about the journey of the character and not about her mental health issue, which is why there is not a formal diagnose of any mental illness during the film. This was the only way to make all these

elements go together in this story.

Seconda's costume design is superb, particularly the blue jumpsuit. How did it come to be?

I worked very closely with Laura Pennisi, our costume designer. Laura's creative ideas and odd propositions helped build a stronger character of Seconda.

The blue jumpsuit was an idea I had from the beginning when I started imagining Seconda finally interfering with the outside world, the jumpsuit was meant to be her "protection costume." I wanted to create a strong visual impact but to remain "down to earth" away from the typical batman-perfect-like costumes. Once I started working with Laura we decided to go for a very "homey" jumpsuit, something anyone could relate to, a jumpsuit we would actually want to wear to feel good on

a cold winter night. The right choice of fabric and shape gives that sensation but at the same time it also gives that unquestionable superhero look.

Love Me Tender

Can you tell us about some/all of the other amazing women who worked on this film?

Love Me Tender was accompanied by a majority of women. The three producers of the film, Tiziana Soudani, Michela Pini and Gabriella de Gara, supported me from the beginning almost unconditionally and this is the greatest gift a production can give to an author-filmmaker. There was never any hesitation about the story and how I wanted to tell it, on the contrary, they accepted the most eccentric ideas and all three, fought with me to move forward.

Our set designer Sara B. Weingart and her

small team have allowed Seconda's house to become a character in itself, down to the last detail. Make-up artist Assunta Ranieri understood the essence of the character and the importance of highlighting her wild and natural side.

The editing phase was crucial for the film and I was lucky enough to work with Paola Freddi, an extraordinary film editor of exemplary rigor. Paola immediately understood the essence of what I wanted to tell and together we built the film.

Tell us about why you are a feminist and why it's important to your filmmaking.

Like most people, I grew up with dreams, desires and ambitions. In the end, I ask for the same things as any normally constituted person would: to be treated at the same level as others.

But the reality is that it's not that easy. Since the dawn of time, women have worked as much as men without being treated in the same way; they are paid less, they are rarely promoted to positions of power and they are often led to believe that their main role is to support men by staying at home with the children. This last example is not a bad thing, but it would be better if it was a choice for men and women to have and not to be imposed culturally and socially to women.

I am in favor of individual's personal growth, independence and access to free choices.

Social acceptance is important for individuals and in this sense I think feminism is crucial because it leads to a certain awareness, for both men and women, of the imbalances that still exist in our societies, still very male-dominated.

Unfortunately, there is, still today, and maybe even more than 30 years ago, a lot of confusion about feminism and for many

people — both men and women — this term is still misunderstood and in this misunderstanding, reductive discourses stick to it like “feminists are against men.” No, feminists are not against men but with them for the same struggle for gender equality. Feminism is about trying to ensure that the world recognizes gender parity in the political, cultural and social sphere and that is why it is important in any profession, whether it’s film or any other.

Love Me Tender

Who are your favourite women working in the film industry?

The list is long but to give a few name there is Lena Dunham because I love anything she does; Maren Ade, who gave me rollercoaster of emotions with both of her features; Ava DuVernay who is one of the stronger filmmakers I know; Sofia Coppola because of

her unique way of telling stories; and Claudia Llosa who's film *The Milk of Sorrow* kept me awake at night for weeks.

What's the best advice about filmmaking you've ever received?

To listen to my stomach instead of my head.

What are you working on now / next?

Two features: one that will take place in Florida (USA), in the Latino community that I know well. And the other one will take place in Peru, back in the 90s.

What three people, living or dead, would you invite to your fantasy dinner party?

Agnes Varda who inspired me to make films in an unconventional way. Paolo Sorrentino because I am a big fan of his work and would love to know more about him. And Cate Blanchett because she is Cate Blanchett.

What's your good luck charm?

I work very hard, I don't have any.

Finally, recommend one #MUFFApproved film for our blog readers!

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WRITTEN BY

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