

FILM

IBIZA DREAM
Strand Releasing



The Spanish island/tourist spot Ibiza is famous for its nightlife and polyrhythmic house music, which launched a giant (and, if you ask me, unfortunate) international music trend more than a decade ago. It's Europe's version of Palm Beach—a playland where hard-bodied, empty-headed young adults can “go wild,” as those videos they sell on TV put it.

With this in mind, the title of Igor Fioravanti's film is misleading, which is probably for the best, since that means it's not a movie about frolicking, Ecstasy-soaked disco/beach bunnies.

Instead, the yearning and ennui-ridden twentysomethings of *Ibiza Dream*—spiritually seeking straight (in all senses of the word) guy Nacho; hedonistic, bisexual Carlos; and restless, also bisexual Chica—experience the island as the same sort of existentialist backdrop the French found in northern Africa: a vast, beautiful landscape where anything goes and where one can get a clear view of exactly what place human beings have in the universe. (Hint: Foregrounded against deserts, mountains, and oceans, we homo sapiens can appear awfully tiny and lost.)

It all looks more compelling than it actually is. There are few things more cinematic than doomed, beautiful young people indifferent to imposed sexual, societal and interpersonal boundaries, but Fioravanti's style is too glib, his characters too flat and mechanically drawn.

Our three protagonists spend a lot of time posing for sore-thumb slo-mo and fast-mo whims, which feel like nothing more than cynical con-

La bella tierra Spain (and its people) on dazzling display in DVD releases

BY CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN

cessions to the MTV generation, and Fioravanti's loud camera and editing tricks appear tacky once you realize he's trying to philosophize with them. Scenes play painfully like a Michelangelo Antonioni film filtered through the *Baywatch* style.

That's not to say *Ibiza Dream* is a total failure. Fioravanti does have a good sense of composition, and that, along with cinematographer Miguel Leal's crisp use of light and color, certainly gives the viewer something interesting to look at.

Ibiza Dream is, however, exactly the sort of halfway-there film that can make one wonder, even while admiring the visual proficiency, if that's really enough.

—Christopher McQuain

AMOR DE HOMBRE
TLA Releasing



Esperanza, a preschool teacher, is the only woman at her 40th birthday party; every last one of her friends is a gay man, including her closest confidante, Ramon. The two have an ongoing, affectionate discordance: Esperanza believes in true love but has no love life, while arrogant Ramon has an endless parade of lovers, whom he finds ever more petty reasons to dump.

Their friendship is complicated by

Ramon's obsession with Roberto, a P.E. teacher who works with Esperanza, looks like Russell Crowe and is such an asshole, he actually makes you feel sorry for Ramon. Suffering Ramon's neglect, Esperanza decides it's time she started being there for herself, not just for her increasingly unreciprocating friend.

That *Amor de Hombre* was co-written and directed by a woman and a man (Spanish filmmakers Yolanda García Serrano and Juan Luis Iborra) may explain why it transcends its homophobe concept. What sounds like a *Will & Grace* episode (Ramon is even a lawyer!) is given added dimension through little glimpses of perspective in Esperanza's sympathetic but impatient relationship to her milieu, and the filmmakers manage to avoid shallow caricaturing by giving her group of gay friends an unusual diversity. In addition to Ramon, there's a bickering couple at a 10-year crossroads, a doctor whose sexual bravado is all talk and a Catholic who becomes indignant when friends mock his devotional celibacy.

Appearances would seem to indicate *Amor de*



Ramon and Esperanza traverse the rocky roads of love and friendship in the worthy *Amor de Hombre*

Hombre is just another gay-romantic-comedy hunk parade (supremely tacky DVD cover), so it's a pleasant surprise that it's not just a throwaway. Serrano and Iborra unwrap Esperanza and Ramon's conflicting, evolving needs and desires with an earthy, grounded astuteness, all while maintaining a lighthearted tone.

The underlying human frailty and complexity are smoothly alluded to, without breaking pace. No revelations are spilled out in big speeches, and the world doesn't stop for our characters to arrive at earth-shattering resolutions.

It also doesn't hurt that Loles León, who plays Esperanza, has the put-upon, likably vulgar presence of a Spanish Bette Midler, or that the film visually pops with primary colors, reminding us that Spain is, after all, the land of Almodóvar.

—Christopher McQuain

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