



Venice Golden Lion winner **“The Woman Who Left”** finds distributor

Description



(Photo courtesy of ASAC Images/Biennale Cinema/Hazel Orencio)

PanARMENIAN.Net — Despite skepticism that it would ever make it into cinemas, Filipino auteur Lav Diaz’s nearly four-hour-long opus **“The Woman Who Left”**, which won the Venice Film Festival’s Golden Lion, is set for theatrical release in Italy by local niche distributor Microcinema, Variety said.

Microcinema has acquired Italian rights to the revenge drama from Berlin-based Films Boutique and plans to distribute it theatrically in coming months, in spite of comments in the press and on social media that the movie’s 228-minute running time made it too hard a sell.

Sam Mendes, who presided over this year’s Venice jury, said during the awards ceremony that one of the jury’s jobs is “to encourage people to come to the cinema and see original films,” while also noting that the jurors in discussions talked about all movies the same way.

“Mendes and the jury chose to give the Golden Lion to a film that thinks outside the box,” said Microcinema managing director Roberto Bassano. “And we are also planning to think a bit different.”

Bassano acknowledged that releasing *The Woman Who Left*, which stars Charo Santos-Cancio as a wrongly convicted schoolteacher facing the outside world after 30 years behind bars, would be a business challenge both in terms of finding ticket buyers and exhibitors unfazed by the double screen time taken up by the movie.

But he said that several art-house exhibitors, and also some Italian multiplexes in metropolitan areas, have already expressed interest. It's a slow burner, the kind of film you open small and expect to have legs on a few screens, Bassano said.

An Italian release of *The Woman Who Left* would mark the first time a movie directed by Diaz made it into Italian cinemas, and also a rare release of one of his films in Europe.

Upcoming Italian releases by Microcinema, which uses a satellite transmission system to beam movies into movie theaters, include Argentinian romcom *No Kids*, directed by Ariel Winograd.

The Woman Who Left, shot in black-and-white with long fixed-camera takes, is considered one of Diaz's more accessible works, with a restrained run-time by the Filipino director's standards, as Variety critic Guy Lodge put it.

Earlier this year, the prolific Diaz won the Berlin Film Festival's Silver Bear for his eight-hour historical epic, *A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery*. That film was released theatrically in the Philippines by Star Cinema and elsewhere only screened in festivals.



Ang Babaeng Humayo (*The Woman Who Left*) director/filmmaker, Lav Diz. (Photo courtesy of ASAC)

(Source: <http://www.panarmenian.net>)

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Date Created

September 20, 2016

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