



No Lights, No Problem The Bronx Rising! Series Defies the Odds

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Everyone knows Bobby Sanabria likes music, but the Grammy Award-nominated percussionist is also a film buff.

For Sanabria, music and movies go hand-in-hand, and he appreciates movies in which the music melds perfectly with the plot and the visual elements.

Sanabria names *Rosemary's Baby* as a prime example of this.

In the 1968 horror movie, a simple, haunting lullaby is used to set the stage for the film. "My molecular structure changed as soon as I heard that music," he said last week at the Bronx Music Heritage Center (BMHC) Lab.

Since October 19th, the Bronx Rising! Series, as focused on music, film, and spoken word from the borough and as presented by the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco), has been operating out of the BMHC lab.

For the series, BMHC has partnered with City Lore to provide free music, movies and spoken word events every Thursday, Friday and Saturday for three months.

That the series takes place at the BMHC Lab, located on 1301 Louis Niñé Boulevard, is a result of creative collaboration between many Bronx partners.

Sanabria is just one of the many talented artists who have been orbiting around BMHC Lab for the Bronx Rising! Series; he serves as co-curator of the series.

Elena Martinez co-produced the documentary *From Mambo to Hip Hop*, and as a member of City Lore, is also one of the organizers, and co-curator, of the series.

As a testament to its resilience, The Bronx Rising! continued its programming despite Sandy.

Martinez understood travel might be difficult this past Friday, Nov. 2nd, when Bronx Rising! had planned a Día de los Muertos offerings for the dead – but attendees and organizers decided to make do with just the movie screening.

Despite the light attendance, the event suited filmmakers Edwin Pagán and Julio Antonio Toro, whose 13-minute short film *Repentance* was screened.

“The ones who come are the ones who matter,” said Toro.

The 2008 film has already been in several film festivals, including the New York City International Film Festival, the New York Latino International Film Festival, and the Chashama Film Festival.

Friday marked the first time the film was screened for a Bronx audience.

The film is about a priest dealing with a big secret as he nears the end of his life.

If there were a “locally grown” equivalent to filmmaking, *Repentance* is as close as it gets. Pagan and Toro, and his production company, HollyHood productions, filmed locally. Bronxites and Northern Manhattanites will recognize St. James Park on Jerome Avenue and the façade of Good Shepherd Church in Inwood.

Due to budget concerns, the crew found themselves jerry-rigging their tools and constructing props rather than rent expensive equipment.

“When you shoot with no money, it’s like *Inspector Gadget*,” said Pagan, who is the founder and editor of online portal Latin Horror.

“Even if one person comes and enjoys the film, it’s worth it,” said Toro.

Fortunately, several people came to BMHC Lab to enjoy the movie, and one of its fans was Sanabria. “I’m very impressed,” he said.

Jamie Camino, who lives near the BMHC Lab and was present for the screening, was glad to have a cultural center nearby.

“People usually have to go to Manhattan for this kind of thing. They need to know that we’re doing it here too, and it’s free,” she said.

Froilan Kali Ramirez, a Bronx-based teaching artist, made it to the screening, said the BMHC Lab was a long-awaited dream come-true. “In the 1970s we were talking about a place like this. That this has come to fruition is amazing.”

“This has expanded my world,” added Camino.

For more information on The Bronx Rising! Series, visit www.whedco.org