

Embrace of the Serpent

Cert 12A Colombia 2015 124 mins

Crew

Director	Ciro Guerra
Screenplay	Ciro Guerra & Jacques Toulemonde Vidal
Cinematography	David Gallego
Film Editing	Etienne Boussac
Original music	Nascuy Linares

Cast

Nilbio Torres	Young Karamakate
Antonio Bolívar	Old Karamakate
Jan Bijvoet	Theo
Brionne Davis	Evan
Luigi Sciamanna	Gaspar
Yauenkü Migue	Manduca
Nicolás Cancino	Anizetto

Synopsis

Colombia, 1909. German explorer Theo is on the trail of yakruna, a sacred plant said to have healing properties. He recruits young mystic Karamakate, the last of his tribe, as a guide.

Thirty-one years later, American scientist Evan takes up Theo's quest. He starts by tracking down Karamakate, now living alone in the jungle painting rocks.

And so like Theo, Evan must face the ghosts of a tribal past and the horrors of a colonialist present.



Booking Information

Distributor: Peccadillo Pictures

DVD bookings: contact Kahloon Loke
0207 831 5688

kahloon@peccapics.com
www.peccapics.com

Available: Now



Reviews

Every now and then, with great infrequency (alas), a film comes along that is like no other and completely knocks you for six, and that is *Embrace of the Serpent*. The first Colombian film to be nominated for an Oscar - it lost to *Son of Saul*, should you set any store by such things - it was filmed in the Colombian section of the Amazon basin, with a script developed in consultation with native tribes, and tells the story of a shaman's encounters with two white scientist explorers, which unfold in different time periods.

....Simply informing you what happens, incident by incident, does the film a massive disservice, as it does not reveal the depth of Guerra's vision, or the beauty of that vision, as realised via strangely lush black-and-white compositions that burst into colour, only momentarily and hallucinogenically, at the very end.

....Although this will likely be compared to Roland Joffé's *The Mission* and Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*, isn't, in fact, similar to either as here neither the film-maker nor the protagonist is a white European - this is the inside looking out, rather than the outside looking in - and also no extra was paid a dollar a day to pull a ship over a hill and die for his trouble. This is extraordinary, audacious cinema that comes at its subject from a unique angle and is compellingly interesting for every minute of its two, colossally sad hours.

Deborah Ross, The Spectator, June 2016

This extraordinary, hypnotic work by Colombian director *Ciro Guerra* seems at first glance to be a dreamy inversion of the themes of Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, turning a generic heart of darkness into a crucible of light, as seen from the perspective of indigenous Amazonian tribespeople.

Mixing fact and fiction in fable-like fashion, Guerra's third feature offers both a bold indictment of colonial imperialism and a powerful celebration of disappearing cultures.... there is such vivid life in this film; an artifice perhaps (Guerra's work echoes some of the philosophies, if not the forms, of Chilean film-maker *Patricio Guzmán's* documentaries) but as real and vibrant as anything I have seen on screen. I was utterly mesmerised, captivated and transported.

Mark Kermode, The Observer, June 2016

FILM FACTS...

- ☆ The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival 2015, where it won the Art Cinema Award.
- ☆ The story is based on the journals of two 20th century explorers, Theodor Koch-Grunberg, a German ethnologist, and Richard Evans Schultes, an American biologist