

Film Review: Tribal Side of Drug Trafficking in ‘Birds of Passage’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 17, 2019 - 9:31pm

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CHICAGO – One of the overriding characteristics in the movies, when it comes to drug traffickers, is the stereotypical image of a fat and corrupt cartel leader who usually have machine gun wielding henchmen and bikini clad groupies. “Birds of Passage” goes back to the business of the drug trade, but it is about the families that controlled the territorial borders during that key era, and the basis of that control in ancient tribalism.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

That era was the 1970s and early ‘80s, when marijuana was the game, and the thirst for this mainstreaming high was at its illegal peak ... these were essentially the folks that controlled the drug trade before some powerful pot heads were able to get big money and legitimacy/legality into the game. The tribes that controlled the territories had their own issues, and was involved in a chess-like power play of their own. The film uses a different approach, showing the old ways of an ancient Columbian tribe members becoming greed heads and capitalist pigs in just one decade. Their guilt over the corruption seems to be their downfall, coupled with a bizarre honor that says war is imminent at any moment, and executions are carried out without tears.

The film begins with a traditional mating dance. Zaida (Natalia Reyes) seduces Rapayet (Jose Acosta) in this ritual, and they immediately become a Romeo and Juliet (different tribes) couple. Rapayet manages to win over the “Wayuu” by gaining a cash flow through marijuana transport to the U.S.– pointedly and cynically shown with American hippie Peace Corp volunteers in partnership.

The film is divided into five “chapters” (cantos) ... Wild Grass, The Graves, Prosperity, The War and Limbo. The titles are clues to the action, as a poor-but-united tribe is slowly ripped apart by the influx of new drug money. The higher they fly, the deeper they go into isolation and fear – especially the Wayuu matriarch Ursula (Carmina Martinez) –until it ends up in Limbo.

“Birds of Passage” continues in Chicago through March 21st at the Music Box Theatre, 3733 North Southport. For more details and tickets, [click here](#). [14] See local listings for theaters and show times in other markets. Featuring Carmina Martinez, Natalia Reyes, Jose Acosta, Jhon Narvaez and Jose Vincente Cotes. Written by Maria Camila Arias and Jacques Toulemonde Vidal. Directed by Cristina Gallega and Ciro Guerra. Rated “R”



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The Tribe that Couldn't Traffic Straight in 'Birds of Passage'

Photo credit: The Orchard



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