

## Devil thrown off the ring, but...

*Diablo* treads familiar territory — winner down on his luck — but hits the right note

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Juan Palomino in a scene from *Diablo*.

The champ is no longer a champ. All the signs of middle age have long started to settle in: his face contour sags under the weight of so many evenings on the ring, so many bouts against unrecognizable bodies and faces. Marcos Wainsberg, a.k.a. “El inca del Sinaí,” is beginning to feel the torpor of a life spent dealing blows, winning most matches, losing some, and bearing the burden of guilt as his last opponent never recovered and died on the ring. It’s both a stigma and a compliment, being brutally labelled a murderer while he mutters that the other guy decided to fight against his doctor’s advice.

This is *Diablo*, the stage name he himself chose or some manager came up with as it sounds fast, snappy, infallible. This morning *Diablo* is not feeling at ease, has a hangover, his place is a mess, and his former girlfriend phones in to make peace, which is not that bad after all. But life is unpredictable and seems to have a will of its own. When you’re down nobody calls, but this morning *Diablo*’s ultra-fast cleanup is interrupted by the door ring. On this morning of all mornings *Diablo*’s cousin Huguito, always up to his nose in deep trouble and involved in shady dealings, has come a-callin’.

It’s not a courtesy visit: somebody’s after him to collect an unpaid bill, any currency is accepted, even a dead body. Speaking of which, a few doorbell rings later, bodies start to pile up in the bathtub behind the shower curtain. There’s no blood splatter, though: only tons of ketchup, courtesy of an unknown sponsor, probably trash movie studio Troma, who specialize in absurd humour and comically gruesome gore.

*Diablo*, at first, is a misguiding movie with a misguiding title and even more misguiding opening shots, artsy to the point of camp, with slow-motion scenes in tinted b&w. True, *Diablo*’s makeup as he sits on his corner of the ring is overdone, a black eye popping out in 3-D fashion. But, as we later realize, this is just a series of flashbacks. *Diablo*’s current preoccupation is the clutter and wreck he calls home, the prospect of boycotting the reconciliation with his girlfriend, the possibility of landing in jail now that his cousin Huguito has left a trail of dead bodies in *Diablo*’s house.

Once the point has been made that all *Diablo* cares about is coming out clean you begin to get the idea. For non-initiates, *Diablo*, with actor Juan Palomino in an unusual lead role, is the kind of romp that draws a smile on your face and even elicits a hearty laugh.

Two stupid thugs, a policeman who doesn’t know the meaning of “bad moment,” a couple of botched jobs, an aborted make-or-break plan — everything’s there, in *Diablo*’s kitchen, in his fridge, his bathtub. Feels like home.

And *Diablo*, the movie, feels like a loser on his way to standing back on his feet, ready to put up a fight, ready to knock it off and start from scratch. After all, it's been only three hours from his girlfriend's wakeup call to the moment Diablo makes a grandiose exit, all dressed up for lunch after meticulously cleaning the bloody melee at home.

*Diablo*, need we say this, is a winner, whether on the boxing ring or out in the street after fixing some unexpected dirty business.

### PRODUCTION NOTES

*Diablo*. Argentina, 2012. Written and directed by: Nicolás Galvagno, Nicanor Loreti, in collaboration with Martín Bousson and Javier Diment. Cinematography by: Claudio Sabino Beiza. Edited by: Martín Bousson, Nicanor Loretti. Music: Nauro García Barbe. With: Juan Palomino, Sergio Boris, Vic Cicuta, Jorge D'Elia. Distributed by: KAF Films. NC16 PG. Running time: 85 minutes.