

SUNDAY CALENDAR

GLITZY 'COOL SPACES!' COULD USE A CHILL PILL
TELEVISION, D11

IT'S WHO SHE IS
MOVIES, D7



A FORMER HOLLYWOOD EXILE WHO STOOD HER GROUND
CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD, D6



THE SUNDAY CONVERSATION



RICARDO DEARATANHA Los Angeles Times

DEMIÁN BICHIR, an immigrant advocate, says he aims to explore myriad issues on both sides of the border in FX's "The Bridge."

At ease in a gray zone

BY YVONNE VILLARREAL

Demian Bichir is an actor who likes to work in the shades of life. A prolific star in his native Mexico, the 50-year-old Bichir has steadily left a dent across the border in Hollywood on film and TV, earning a lead actor Oscar nod for his role in 2011's immigrant worker drama "A Better Life." The television-inclined might remember him for his three-season stint on Showtime's "Weeds" as the crooked mayor of Tijuana and beau to Nancy Botwin (Mary-Louise Parker).

But it's his role on FX's gritty crime saga "The Bridge," which returned for a second season last week and whose subtext lies in the tensions between the U.S.-Mexico border, that has him seeing gray in a new light. He plays psychologically tortured Mexican detective Marco Ruiz, who works with an El Paso detective (Diane Kruger) to solve each season's central mystery. Executive produced by Elwood Reid and Meredith Stiehm, the show is based on the Danish-Swedish series "Bron."

How was it getting back in the mind-set for this role? You've done multiple seasons on "Weeds," but is it a bigger adjustment when you're front and center?

It's a funny thing because I've never done sequels to films. So for me, I'm used to doing a job, going home, then forgetting about it. I'm not used to having a second round of this or that. I did once in Mexico, we did this series where my character was a good cop, and we did a second round of that character. But to me this thing about doing it over and over again every year is a new thing. It is tricky because you can lose track of a character. I remember my first two weeks of this second season, I couldn't find it. I looked in every drawer of my house. I couldn't find it. I couldn't find Marco in me — even though I had the script. And it terrified me.

So what do you do?

Panic. In film, I'm used to mourning the character after I've finished. It's a healing process after you kill that character.

Marco is someone who is trying to make a difference in a complicated environment.

That's part of the beauty of him. It's a big

challenge because you have so many obstacles constantly that you have to deal with. That's what I love about a character like this. Marco is no angel. He has many different tonalities and many different layers of emotions and feelings and ways of thinking.

Well, and we see bad decisions from his past catch up with him. The season ended with the serial killer targeting Marco's family and ultimately killing his son. How will we see him coming to terms with that?

I think that's one of the interesting things about Season 1 — how do you take that situation to the extreme of how much human beings are willing to kill in order to get even and hurt someone else? That's evil. Falling in love with someone else is only nature. It's life. Killing someone, *that's* crossing the line. There's a big, huge difference between the harm that Marco created and how that was perceived on the other side and how much they wanted to get even through killing, because Marco never killed anyone. The whole thing was an accident.

I think no one wakes up in the morning thinking, "I'm going to do some harm." There are some people who do, maybe. Marco is not one of them. And of course, when you go all the way down into this type of inferno, your life will not be the same again. Doesn't matter how hard you try. You can recover from killing someone as part of your job. You can even recover from losing your wife, getting a divorce. But I don't think anyone can recover from losing a child. The death of his son is not part of nature's plan. So Marco begins Season 2 in that very place. That is the darkest zone any character can be in. The interesting thing about Season 2 is how much Marco's willing to honor his son's death in trying to do the right thing and how much he will become very, very dangerous to the bad guys because he has nothing to lose anymore.

What was the reaction about taking on this project in terms of its portrayal of Mexico?

When this thing first started, all I had was the pilot. And that is why the names involved in the project are crucial, because you trust those names. One of the promises was Mexico would not be portrayed in a stereotype kind of way with Hollywood clichés. ... Asking Hollywood to

stay away from stereotypes and clichés is challenging. And I think we have achieved a couple of interesting points, agreements, but we still have to work hard with some others. The problem isn't having corrupt cops or drug kingpins — it's how you explore the undertones of those kind of characters. I'm not an ambassador for Mexico's greatness. I think Mexico is great because Mexico is great. We have our own issues, our own problems. But I'm not an actor because I'm only willing to portray heroes. I'm interested in telling both sides of the coin, and I'm interested in talking about everyone's problems, not only Mexico's.

You've been outspoken about immigrant issues — and you're a former undocumented immigrant. What are your thoughts on where things stand now?

What really needs to happen is education. There's a lot of misinformation out there, and that creates fear, that creates panic. The American people need to seek out the real facts, not just take what politicians are feeding them because they're branding these hardworking people as the villain. Are we blind? Don't we see that they move this country, they move our economy, they make our lives better and easier? It's stupid. We're shooting ourselves in the foot. There needs to be an end to deportations. And so what needs to happen is people need to question President Obama on where is the immigration reform that was promised. Where is it? This can't just be viewed as a political issue. It's a human issue. Families are being ripped apart. That's why I talk about it everywhere. I want to be an ambassador for this issue, to be a voice for those who aren't being heard.

You're a household name in Mexico. Here in the U.S., you've mentioned being mostly known for "Weeds." How has that changed?

I love being anonymous. Every time I travel to a country where no one has any clue, that's my happiest time. I nurture my acting from observing. And if people know you, you become the observed. There's nothing I see more than just sitting outside a cafe and enjoy walking by right in front of me. I love human behavior. I guess Brad Pitt can't do that.

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SHOW TRACKER

Things will get hot at the Streamys

BY SABA HAMEDY

The Emmys are just around the corner, but YouTube fans have a different awards show on their minds: the fourth annual Streamys.

Designed to honor excellence in online video and those who create it, the Streamy Awards, scheduled for fall in Los Angeles, opened submissions Wednesday.

This year, to ensure "the broadest participation by the YouTube and online video community," the awards show put nominations in the hands of fans, who are responsible for picking one nominee in each category.

"YouTube's mega-influencers are now becoming household names, and they owe their success to their highly engaged audiences," Streamys executive producer Joshua Cohen said in a news release. "Fans ... are part of online video's DNA."

As online content has evolved, so has the awards show — with new categories to reflect new content platforms.

The show now has categories devoted to Vine (comedian, creativity and viner of the year), categories that reflect YouTube trends (collaboration, public service, cover song, indie and first-person series) and a television category recognizing traditional TV shows that engage with audiences through original online video and social media.

"This year has proved that online is the place to be — for both creators and audiences alike — as original online programming continues to soar to new heights," Streamys executive producer Drew Baldwin said. "The Streamy Awards are about relevance, excellence, and diversity, which is why our new categories reflect the current state of the industry and embrace the incredible enthusiasm and engagement of the online video community."

Last year's two-hour show generated more than 7 million live and video-on-demand views. It also trended on Twitter throughout the entire live stream.

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YouTube

LAST YEAR'S Streamy Awards, at which Grace Helbig was named personality of the year.

On the cover

Photographs by Carolyn Cole, Ricardo DeAratánha, Bob Chamberlin, Mel Melcon, Jay L. Clendenin, Luis Sinco and Rick Loomis / Los Angeles Times; Yoshikazu Tsuno / AFP / Getty Images; Virginia Mayo / Associated Press; Jim Spellman / WireImage; Vera Anderson / WireImage / Getty Images; Ben Pruchnie, Alberto E. Rodriguez, Lisa Maree Williams, Ian Gavan and Larry Busacca / Getty Images; Fred Duval / FilmMagic / Getty Images.

UNDERRATED

Grantland's 'Men in Blazers': With the World Cup ending, fans of what we call soccer can work through withdrawals with this podcast. Hosted by pop culture-obsessed fan Michael Davies and Roger Bennett, the British duo who brightened ESPN's coverage with quick-witted post-match commentary including nicknames for tactics (the passive defensive posture of "not in the face") and the gutsy but outgunned U.S. team ("The Von Trapps").



Bobby Avey's 'Authority Melts From Me': Haiti has been on the pop radar of late, with Arcade Fire's dance-leaning 2013 record "Reflektor" and Swans' epic track "Toussaint L'Ouverture" looking to the island for inspiration. But this young pianist may have released the most beguiling listen. Backed by a band that includes saxophonist Miguel Zenón and guitarist Ben Monder, Avey delivers an engrossing work that, like the best of jazz, transcends borders.

OVERRATED

Mystery TV: Nothing against the average "Poirot" potboiler, but we're entering a period of diminishing returns when it comes to serialized whodunits or, in the case of HBO's "The Leftovers," what-is-going-ons. Television that makes us curious is the best kind, but the field is littered with twist-heavy shows whose final reveals ("True Detective," "Lost," "The Killing") couldn't live up to expectations. If only answers were as easy to write as questions.



'New' Pink Floyd music: Proving that no band of a certain size can stay dormant, a new studio album is coming from Pink Floyd, the group's first since "The Division Bell" in 1994. But even if "The Endless River," a collection of mainly instrumental tracks from sessions 20 years ago, somehow lives up to Pink Floyd's legacy, the fractious band's true lineup hasn't existed since "The Final Cut." If only that record lived up to its title.

— CHRIS BARTON