



- ✓ Spanish with English subtitles
- ✓ Available in High Definition (720p) with 5.1 Surround Sound
- ✓ #1 movie for two weeks in local art-house theater Fine Arts Café
- ✓ Critically acclaimed and considered by major local newspaper as "one of the best of 2008."
- ✓ Based on one of the most popular/well-known short stories in Puerto Rico read by high school and college students each year (the Puerto Rican "Red Badge of Courage")

Title: Seva Vive
Genre: Documentary
Runtime: 90 mins
Director: Francisco Serrano
Production Company: Cine con eñe, LLC
Theater Release: December 11, 2008 (Puerto Rico only)

Aspect Ratio: 16:9
MPAA: Not rated
Language: Spanish with English subtitles
Color: Color
Filming Location: Puerto Rico
Sound Mix: Dolby Digital Surround Sound 5.1

Seva Lives is the first Puerto Rican documentary feature that has been digitally released in a commercial theater in Puerto Rico. It opened on December 11th, 2008 to widespread critical acclaim.

In 1983, a Puerto Rican newspaper published the story "Seva: History of the first U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico in May 1898," which contained letters from a historian who unearthed evidence that the United States did not enter Puerto Rico peacefully during the Spanish-American War, as history dictates. Instead, the Americans invaded through a town named "Seva," massacred its people, and covered it up by changing the town's name to "Ceiba," its current name.

This story, as the newspaper tried to make clear, is fiction. Yet readers around the island believed it and a scandal ensued. *Seva* is Puerto Rico's version of the Orson Welles *The War of the Worlds* radio transmission fiasco, when thousands of people panicked after listening to a made-up Martian invasion on the airwaves. In this case, it happened with the publication of *Seva* in the newspaper. Both the story of *Seva* as well as what happened after its publication have become part of Puerto Rican culture, a literary phenomenon never before seen on the island. Today, the story is taught in high school and college classrooms in Puerto Rico.

"Seva Lives" redefines Puerto Rican history in this update of the classic Puerto Rican short story "Seva". It mixes fictional elements with actual archival footage and real interviews with historians to discuss the significance and impact of the short story today. But, most significantly, "Seva Lives" deconstructs the sociopolitical debate of the facts and myths surrounding the history of Puerto Rico and explores the issues that arise when fiction meddles with recollections of the past.

Springboard for the socio-political debate

Francisco Serrano's documentary explores how fiction challenges history

By Juanma Fernández-París for *El Nuevo Día* (*The New Day* newspaper)
December 11, 2008

Despite being the first genre of film, the documentary never seems to be the first choice when the average cinephile is looking for an offer that seduces the audience with promises of entertainment.

The prospect of sitting down to watch a documentary, on whatever issue, seems to have the appeal of a lecture given by the world's most boring Professor. "Seva Lives," (★★★★) the excellent documentary that premieres today in Fine Arts Café, easily collapses all these prejudices.

Director Francisco Serrano clings to the classic codes of the genre, all kinds of visual text intercut with interviews from experts on the topic that is being discussed, but the handling of the medium succeeds in creating a hypnotic spectacle that entertains at the same time that it creates a well-deserved place for the socio-political debate of the facts and myths that build the history of Puerto Rico.

The film's title refers to a story by Luis Lopez Nieves published in 1983 in the newspaper *Claridad*, which generated a wave of controversy challenging the fictional facts on how the United States invaded Puerto Rico in 1898.

This theme serves as a springboard so that the likes of Fernando Picó, Juan Manuel García Passalacqua, Carlos Pabón, Gervasio García, Estelle Irizarry and Jose Manuel García Leduc enter into an interesting discussion about the different perspectives on the history of Puerto Rico, the job of a writer, and the different responsibilities and dilemmas faced by historians.

Although these topics could provide for a dense and tedious discussion, "Seva Lives" never ceases to be fascinating. This is partly due to the variety of opinions amongst all the testimonies used in the film and that Serrano, as the creator of this documentary film, never forgets to stimulate the public. The film is an effective fusion of animation, drama, music, photos, graphics and every possible text that illustrates the power of the audiovisual medium.

That the film creates a space for discussing an issue as important as the history of our country is reason enough to celebrate. That this goal has been achieved with a film of excellence makes "Seva Lives" a memorable cinematic experience.

'Seva Vive,' a film to make you think

By Peggy Ann Bliss, for the *Puerto Rican Daily Sun*
December 11, 2008

What would it be like if we found out that George Washington didn't really cross the Delaware on Dec. 25, 1776, or the Italians that discovered the allies didn't really storm Sicily on July 10, 1943?

It's somewhat like Puerto Ricans discovering that the Americans had really wiped out an entire town in the northeast of the island two months before the touted Guánica landing on July 25, 1898 – in which the townspeople, led by their mayor, welcomed the invading Americans with open arms.

Such is the story of "Seva Vive," opening today at island theaters. Based on "Seva," the book by Luis López Nieves, it probes the theory that a northeastern town was annihilated, a U. S. Navy fiasco long before the ships made their triumphal entry through the south. Any resemblance to the present town of Ceiba, once home to a Navy base, is purely coincidental.

The film can have a similar impact on someone who has based more than a century of assimilation, proselytizing, and brainwashing on a history written (as it always is) by the victors.

According to López Nieves' fictional account, written in 1983, history professor Víctor Cabañas has been missing since Aug. 13, 1981. Cabañas had written that he would be digging into the ruins of Seva, accessible to Puerto Ricans since the ousted Navy turned it over to the commonwealth. The U. S. Coast Guard has kept apart some lands and neighbors believe they are hiding something. Now they wonder, where is Professor Cabañas?

The film uses letters, official documents, old film footage, e-mails, narration, animation, and interviews with prominent living historians.

The first by producer/editor/director Francisco Serrano, "Seva Vive" does not lean in one political direction, but it does raise a lot of questions about what really happened when the Americans "liberated" the little Caribbean island from the Spanish "tyrants." Despite not being dramatized extensively, it holds the attention, in much the way "An Inconvenient Truth," the hugely successful documentary produced by former vice president Al Gore, did.

The premise of the book, originally published by *Claridad*, the independence-oriented newspaper, is that there was a massacre in Ceiba in early 1898 and American troops did not enter Guánica peacefully in June as the history books say.

Seva, the fictional theory claims, was the original name of the town before the massacre was covered up, both literally and intellectually.

A quarter of a century later, new evidence would indicate that truth is stranger than fiction. During the clean-up of Ceiba, which started in 2001, a team of local moviemakers found more than just munitions.

The movie picks up here with interviews of well-known historians, reviewers, and professors such as Fernando Picó, Juan Manuel García Passalacqua, Carlos Pabón, Gervasio García, José Manuel García Leduc, and Estelle Irizarry.

One film technique, employed with great skill, is the separate interviews, which are so well interlaced that it appears they are all together discussing the subject in the same room. Another interesting technique is the e-mails, with director Serrano at the controls of the computer he built for the film.

"Seva Vive" does not preach or rant or proselytize, but rather it respects the intelligence of the audience, to which he provides interesting data, including popular songs from the period and memories passed on from father or mother to son, or daughter. Therein lies its impact. It makes you want to discuss it and to go on investigating this interesting subject. That, for a 29-year-old director, is a great achievement.