

Che Guevara's widow helped actress play her in movie

Colombian actress Catalina Sandino, who plays the role of the wife of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara in the Steven Soderbergh movie about the revolutionary, was helped by Guevara's widow in making the portrayal realistic, EFE has reported.

'She helped me a lot, especially in the small details of her personality, like for example how she would bite her nails when she was nervous. In films, those little things are magnified,' Sandino said.

Sandino told EFE in an interview that when she was offered the role in Soderbergh's four-hour, 17-minute movie 'Che' she began looking for information about Guevara's widow Aleida March, 72, and decided to travel to Cuba to meet her.

'I was there for two weeks with her, talking about what she lived through. I'm very different than she is physically, and the first thing she asked me when I told her I was going to portray her in a film was: 'And what are they going to do with your hair?'" the Colombian actress recalled.

'She's an incredibly strong person, and very lucid for someone over the age of 70. She never forgot a name or a date, she was very clear on how everything unfolded.'

The actress best known for her role as a drug mule in 'Maria, llena eres de gracia', ('Maria Full of Grace') - for which she received an Oscar nomination in the best actress category, the first Colombian to do so - said she was 'very satisfied' with her work in the movie.

She added 'it's very difficult to play a person who is still alive'.

'When I was leaving Cuba, Aleida told me: 'lots of strength'. I don't know if I put the necessary force in her eyes, I hope so, I think so, because for me her opinion is very important. I don't want to disappoint her,' Sandino said.

According to the 27-year-old Colombian, the most intriguing thing for her about playing the widow of Guevara (1923-1967) was the chance to put herself inside the skin of a revolutionary woman.

'I wanted to play a female rebel like her, who went as far as to hide bombs under her skirt and was always at Che's side, risking her life; that's why he named her his personal secretary, even though she never fired a weapon,' Sandino said.

She also praised Benicio del Toro, the actor who played the title role and won the best actor prize at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival for his performance.

'I love his seriousness. He knows what he's doing, he had the confidence to play that role and did it perfectly. He made me feel really at ease ... and always was giving me advice and helped me a great deal during the filming. It was great working with him,' she said.

Cuban activist Aleida March was the second wife of the Argentine-born revolutionary; the two married in 1959 in Havana and had four children.

She currently heads the Che Guevara Studies Centre in Havana and owns the rights to his writings,

including several texts that have not yet been published.

Guevara helped Castro overthrow dictator Fulgencio Batista in the late 1950s and served for several years in the new Cuban government before heading off to Africa to aid rebels. He was later killed in Bolivia while trying to start a rural insurgency.

Soderbergh's film has received mixed reviews in the West and theatres showing the film in South Florida have been the target of protests by Cuban Americans.

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