

“La Fiesta Nunca Termina”

Short film “Acento Latino” shines the spotlight on unifying Latin culture

By Charlotte Trattner

There are many words that can be used to describe Hispanic culture, but it seems like the most popular one is “party.”

“In my experience, Latin culture is about making a holiday every weekend — just pulling one out of thin air and just to celebrate life constantly,” said UCF alumna Shannon Gallagher, who was featured in “Acento Latino.”

It’s this spirit of celebration that inspired UCF alumni Andres Gomez and Angelo Guevara-Malavé to create “Acento Latino”, or in English, “Latin Accent.” The five-minute film, released during Hispanic Heritage Month, captures different people, nationalities, qualities and elements of Hispanic culture.

“I’m really proud of Latin culture and I thought why not celebrate it by making a short film,” Angelo Guevara-Malavé said.

The filmmakers chose to release “Acento Latino” during Hispanic Heritage Month to honor the unity they feel within their culture, even though it was filmed last year.

The filmmaking trio had time to perfect it and edit it with a fresh perspective for its 2019 release.

“To be of Latin heritage is to be united. Everybody [on set] was from separate backgrounds. A lot of people didn’t know each other and then as time went on, it turned into a party,” Angelo said. “They all started getting to know each other. There was a lot of dancing and singing — that was all improvised.”

The short features the directors’ friends and family telling stories about their culture, what they remember from growing up or why they

came to the United States as they stand against bright-colored backgrounds of red, yellow and green.

Angelo said he believes those accents make the film since those backgrounds symbolize the pop of color visible in Latin culture.

Gomez and Angelo met when they were both UCF students and bonded over a shared love of filming and movie making, but it was their cultural background that solidified their friendship.

“We had always wanted to work together, at least direct together, because we’ve had different roles in the past films, but we’ve never really directed anything together ourselves,” Gomez said. “We thought of that, plus adding a Latino flair to it.”

Although the two directors come from different backgrounds, they understand the importance of celebrating all Latin cultures, which is what they intended to do with the “Acento Latino.”

members and different Hispanic organizations around Orlando.

It’s this unity and acceptance Gallagher loves about her culture, and she said she carries it with her wherever she goes.

“It’s about more so your relationship with other people, and you can really, at least in Latin culture, you adopt other people so easily and so fluently it’s really beautiful,” Gallagher said.

Overall, the creators said the film has been well received and widely viewed since those of Hispanic Heritage had the opportunity to see themselves represented.

“I think it was nice and important for people to see their culture and not just like the sad aspects of it but to celebrate the beautiful aspects of it,” Isabella said.

Isabella said the demographics from the video show people from other Latin countries have watched the film. Angelo said he received messages from viewers saying it reminded them of home and empowered them. The five-minute short includes both English and Spanish subtitles since not every Hispanic speaks fluent Spanish and the filmmakers wanted those individuals to still feel as though they were “part of the party,” Angelo said.

Gallagher, although fluent in Spanish, at times feels as though she has to justify her heritage since her dad is an Irish and Native-American mix and her mom is Venezuelan. It is because of this that she feels nervous speaking in front of older generations of Hispanics.

Despite being nervous about her Spanish speaking, she still enjoyed the opportunity to tell her story, as did the other individuals involved in the film.

“It was about us hanging out, people telling their stories, feeling heard, having something to say, and having the platform and room to actually have that moment to really reflect and go inside and think about your own story and how it relates to the larger picture,” Gallagher said.

The trio said they have several potential projects they are tossing around from suspense thrillers to telenovelas. Regardless of deciding what story to tell, they said they know they are excited to lock down a project.

“We’ve gotten this great reception,” Gomez said, “and we don’t want to stop.”

To be of Latin heritage is to be united.

Gomez is from Colombia while Angelo and his sister Isabella are from Venezuela.

“We wanted to make something because we always related to each other with our culture even though [Gomez] is Colombian and we’re Venezuelan,” Isabella said, a junior studying integrated business.

“We always realize there are so many similarities that we wanted to make a film with people that we know that also reflects these similarities and tells their stories.”

Isabella said the similarities range from food to music and dancing. Although one culture might use a different word to describe something, it is still a similar concept Hispanics can share.

Since its release, the creators shared it with friends, family

Directors Andres Gomez (far left) and Angelo Guevara-Malavé pose with their mothers Sury Romero (second from left) and Sorelena Guevara (second from right) behind the scenes of Acento Latino. All four are in the film and were part of the creative process. “Our moms mean the world to us,” Gomez said. Photo courtesy of Andres Gomez.

Christian Arroyo, a subject of Acento Latino, was nicknamed “The Puerto Rican Superman” by his older cousin. While filming he brought a similar costume to include in the film. Photo courtesy of Andres Gomez.



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