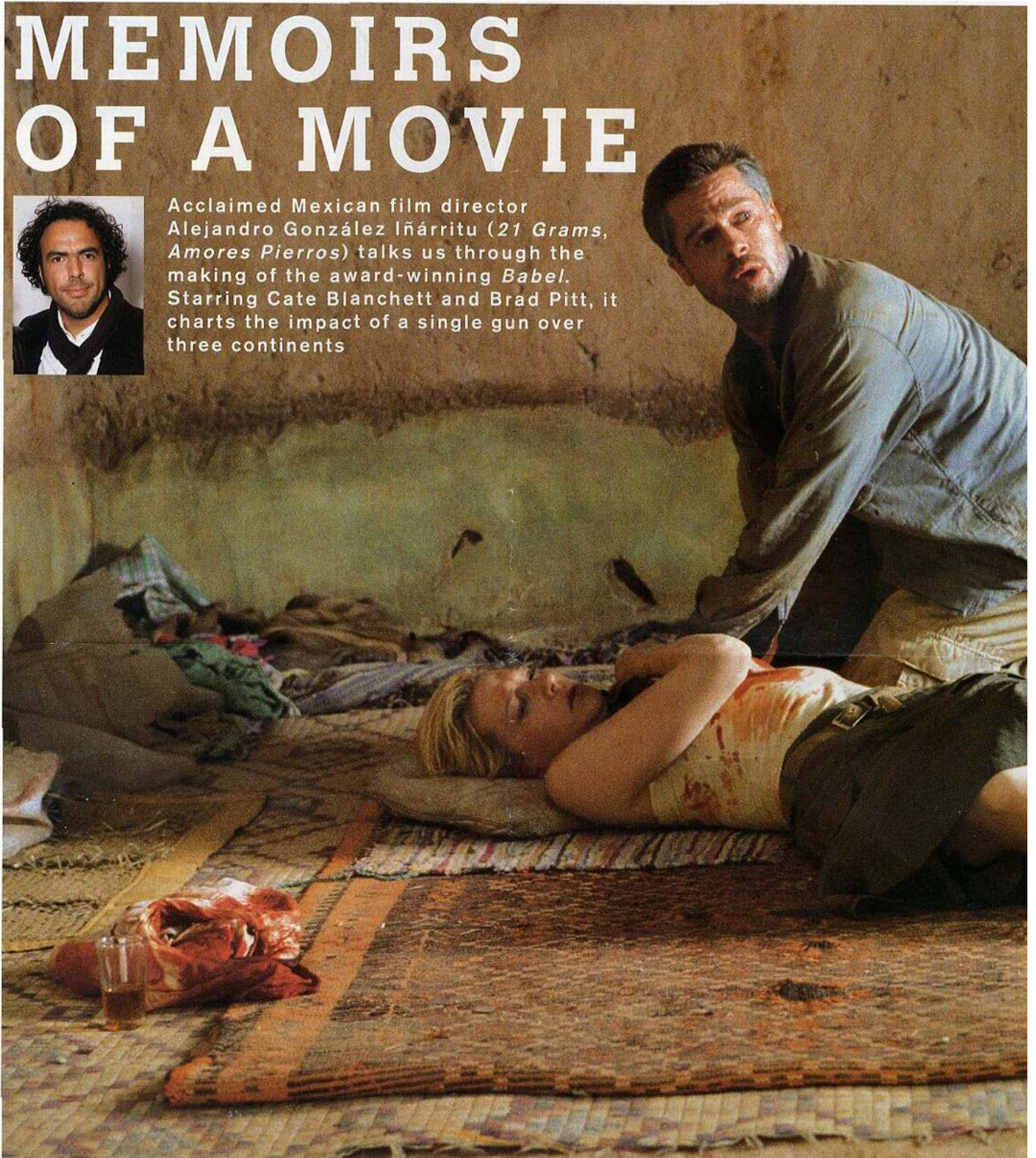


# MEMOIRS OF A MOVIE



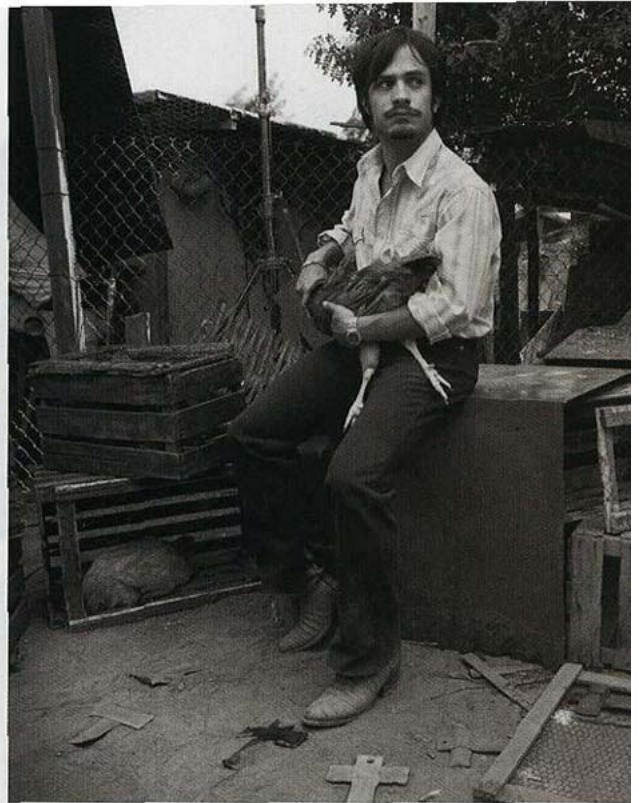
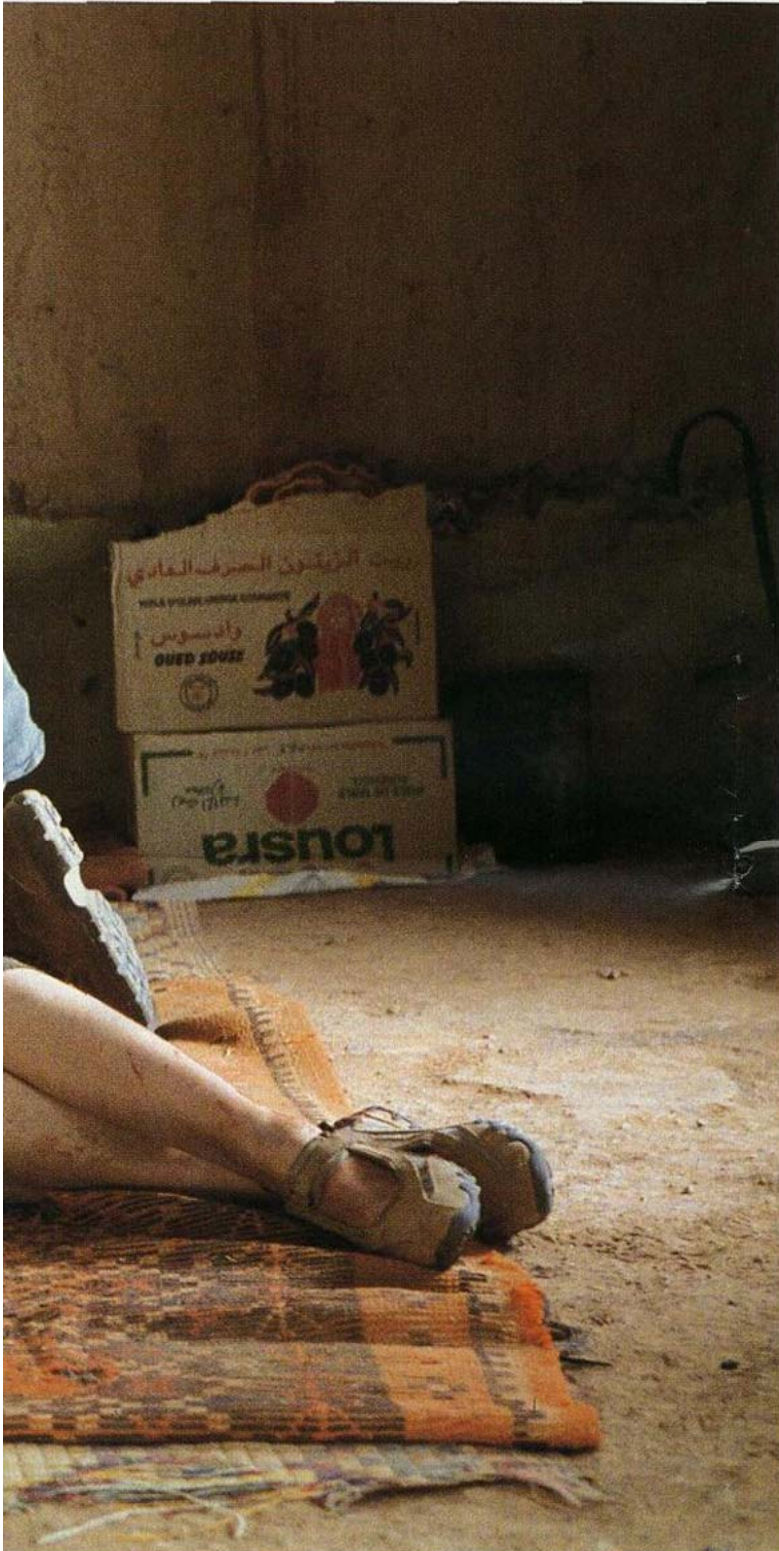
Acclaimed Mexican film director Alejandro González Iñárritu (*21 Grams*, *Amores Pierros*) talks us through the making of the award-winning *Babel*. Starring Cate Blanchett and Brad Pitt, it charts the impact of a single gun over three continents



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## Brad and Cate

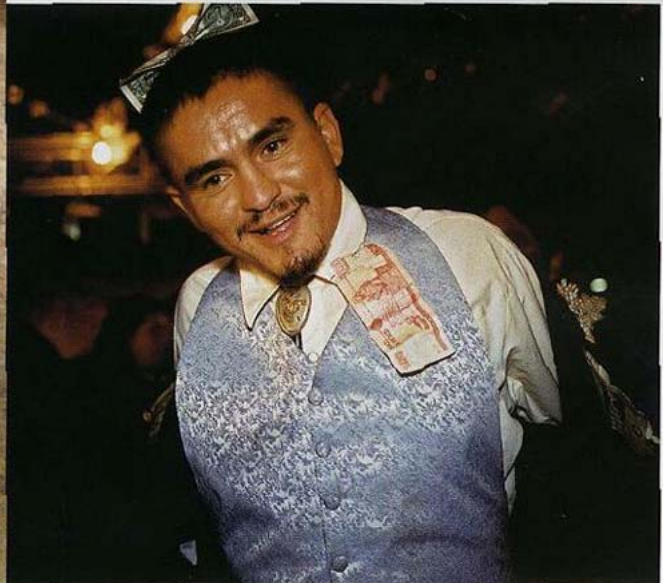
"I like Brad – I felt he was a great icon to represent the American people. And I think this is a tender moment between him and Cate, but also very primitive. It asks the question: how would a first-world citizen survive in a third-world country? It's something I think about often."



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### The art of killing chickens

"A rancho! This was taken at a little rancho that we were shooting in. We were just rehearsing here the way Gael [García Bernal] would kill the chicken in the wedding scene. Actually, he killed seven! [Laughs] Nah. We were just rehearsing how he could do it without harming the chicken, before changing it for a dummy. We Mexicans are not so dangerous. We kill chickens, but the same way Kentucky Fried Chicken does. I don't know how they kill them but they kill thousands and millions."



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### Talking the talk

"This is a guy we found in the streets. I talked to him for an hour and a half, because I was fascinated by his eyes and his hip-hop haircut. He's so Tijuana, that guy. He was always inventing stories. He said he'd been a policeman, a drug dealer, that he'd been in jail. Everything you could mention, he'd done it. So he ended up with the role of Amelia's son. Behind the tough guy that he plays, there's a tender kid there."

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### **Sleeping policeman. And vet**

"The guy on the right is a policeman. He had a role in the film, but I cut it out. They were waiting for their turn to perform. To be honest, they were not easy to direct. They were guessing what I wanted, and I was trying to tell them, through an interpreter. They were challenging but they were beautiful. The guy in the middle is the real veterinarian of the town. The only veterinarian there, and I cast him as a veterinarian."



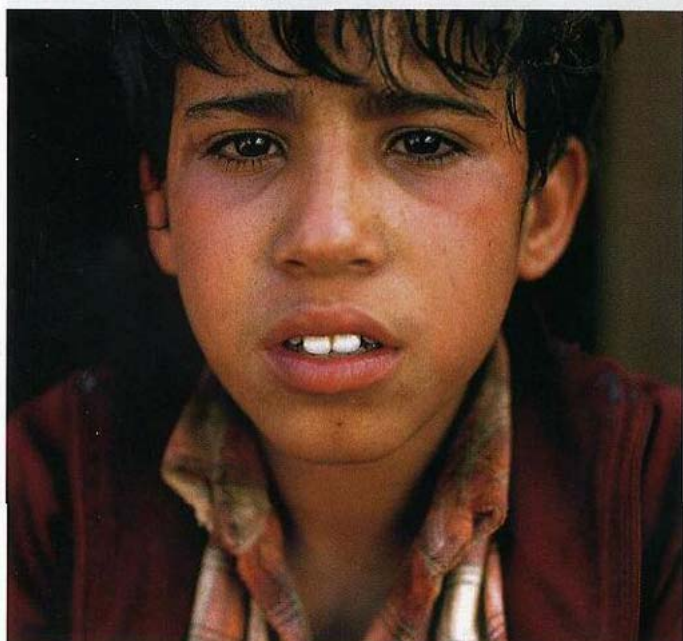
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### **Desert ravens**

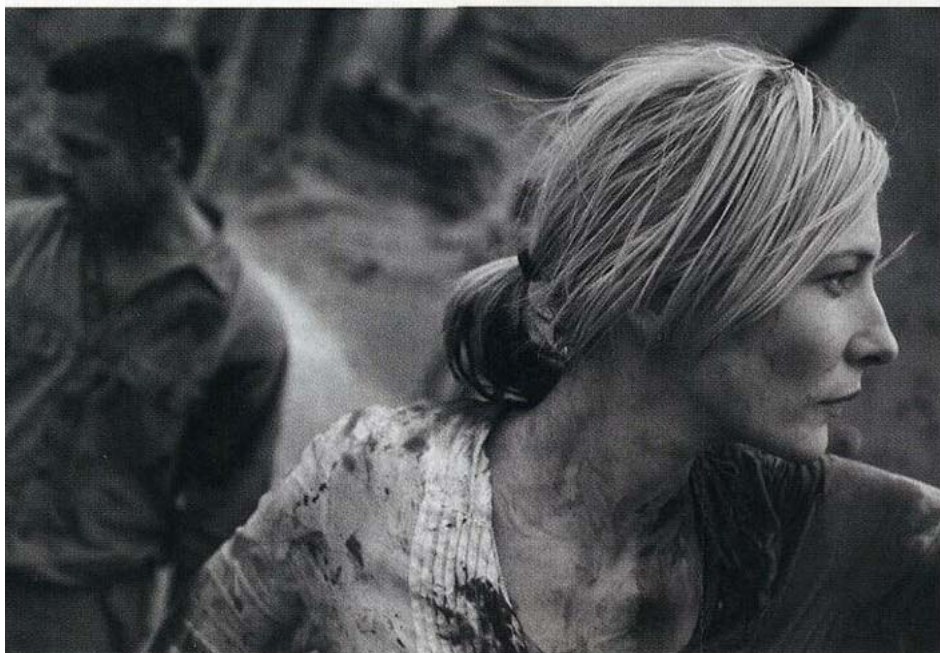
"These women were walking in the desert towards our location, while we were filming in Morocco, and it was beautifully captured on film. I was inspired by these women. We saw them all the time when we were going from one location to another. I always figured them as ravens: they're like a sign of death, or bad luck. There's something that scares me about those women – something mysterious. You can't see their faces. I don't know who they are. They could be witches! That's why I wanted to have a point in the film where Cate sees them from the bus. They're like a portent of what's to come."

### **Meet Boubker**

"This is Boubker Ait El Caid, a kid I found in the village where we were shooting in Morocco. He was playing football. Before I cast him I told him I would give him a cue, and he would have to answer me not with words but with reactions. So I said, 'Your mother has died.' His eyes filled with tears and I was blown away, because he was not overacting. And then I said, 'Your favourite football team has just won the world cup.' We went wild. He was a natural. In that moment I said, 'This is the guy to play Youssef.' He's living under very tough conditions, Boubker. His mother died seven years ago and his father is a small man, almost a dwarf, who never visited the set. Never. He lives with his uncle now. After the film ended he bought a computer with the money he made. He's a very smart, sensitive guy."



**BABEL**



**< Extreme movie-making**

"It was always very intense and very uncomfortable for Cate and Brad. So sometimes they spent time in silence, thinking how they were going to approach the scene. The blood was made of syrup, so flies would gather. The smell wasn't so good, either. We were filming in 100 degrees, with lights, in a room without air conditioning, and Cate couldn't move. So it wasn't a comfortable, fancy film to make. And the process and the intensity of emotional scenes were very demanding too, so it wasn't easy."

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**The more things change...**

"This is a very funny thing. This is a house where we shot a scene, but I took it out in the end. There was a whole subplot, where the American couple's nanny, Amelia [Adriana Barraza], arrives at the Mexican wedding and the bride hasn't appeared. She's worried, so she goes with her son to look for her. They go to the house and find out that she doesn't really want to get married. She's not convinced. And she's feeling bad because she's pregnant. So all that happened in this house. And when I was scouting locations, every time that I came here, this little boy – who lives in this house, with a giant fishtank – was sitting there, in front of the TV. The four or five times that I went there, in different parts of the year, he was always sitting there. For hours. With a big bowl of crisps. I found that fascinating."





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### The eyes have it

"I chose Cate for this role because she's one of the best actresses in the world. We had to have an actress who could give something from her eyes only, because her body was not an option. Cate is very expressive with her eyes, and in the end, film-acting comes down to that."

