

“El Grupo”, a documentary full of insight!

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Thursday, 29 October 2009
Last Updated Thursday, 29 October 2009

Its 1941, just before the United States enters World War II. In the midst of a strike by artists and animators at Walt Disney Studios along with the possibility of the studio closing, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sends Walt Disney and a group of his artists, on a mission, to visit Latin American countries. The mission, win the hearts and minds of Latin America to keep Hitler from similar designs. Documentary filmmaker Theodore Thomas traces the footsteps of the group, “El Grupo”, which presents an intertwined story of art and politics, and Walt Disney as he faced the turning point for his studio, would it go under because of the economic times, the strike, and the possibility of the US entering the war.

Archival footage of the group while in South America, photographs, letters, and interviews with the descendents of the artists involved makes for a very compelling documentary. The time in South America resulted in two movies by Disney with Latin themes, “Saludos Amigos” and “The Three Caballeros”. The title “El Grupo” (the group) the name used by the locals for the Disney group became their moniker as they traveled South America! The two films saved Disney Studios, and the trip to South America was a highly successful goodwill mission for the US!

Written & directed by Theodore Thomas; Rated PG for historical smoking; Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures release. Runtime: 106 minutes.