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Fest mines riches

Pair shines at San Sebastian

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SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain -- John Boorman's "A Tiger's Tale" didn't disappoint. And "El camino de San Diego" has been judged a worthy addition to the oeuvre of Carlos Sorin, now one of Argentina's foremost helmers.

Lacking a dominant film figure -- such as Woody Allen, whose "Melinda and Melinda" opened San Sebastian in 2004 -- most of the action and talk over the first four days of the 54th San Sebastian Film Festival has centered on its preem-studded main Official Section competition.

And "Tale" and "Camino," for critics at least, have proved the standouts so far.

One of the most awaited pics world-preeming at San Sebastian, Boorman's "Tale," a prince-and-the-pauper-style yarn set in contempo Ireland, was judged by some scribes to be one of Boorman's most successful films since 1998's "The General," also starring Brendan Gleeson.

"Camino," a near-mockumentary about a man obsessed with soccer star Diego Maradona, lacks the sentimentality of Sorin's last pic, "Bombon, el Perro." But it may be all the better for that.

Other early fest hits include Heddy Honigmann's docu "Forever" and, in the main Zabaltegi sidebar, "Proibido Proibir," from Brazil's Jorge Duran, as well as docu "La silla de Fernando," from Spaniards Luis Alegre and David Trueba.

As ever, companies and institutions from Spain, and increasingly abroad, have used San Sebastian's first weekend, its busiest for announcements, to tubthump their latest activities:

- Fernando Sulichin's new Paris-based company, Central Films Prods., will produce the next films by up-and-coming Argentine helmer Adrian Caetano, whose "Cronica de una fuga" played in competition at Cannes, and "I Come With the Rain," from Tran Anh Hung ("The Scent of Green Papaya"). Pics are part of an attempt to move into higher-end auteur pics, with commercial punch budgeted at \$9 million-\$20 million, Sulichin said at San Sebastian.

Caetano's next, as-yet-untitled-pic will be co-financed by Wild Bunch, he added.

- Confirming its status as one of Spain's biggest producers, Mediapro presented an 11-pic slate of films awaiting release, shooting or in development, including Jean-Jacques Annaud's "His Majesty Minor" and Woody Allen's summer 2007 project.
- Spain's FAPAE producers association has submitted a 16-point wish list -- including risk capital incentives and a Unifrance-style agency -- to the Spanish government, which aims to pass a new Spanish film law by 2008, FAPAE prexy Pedro Perez announced.
- Jorge Algora's "The Mud Boy," Paula de Luque's "El vestido" and Fernando Nogueira's "Algo habran hecho" have been granted E150,000 (\$191,940) apiece from the Raices co-production fund, backed by the film authorities of Galicia, Catalonia and Argentina. Andalusia has entered the fund, pumping its total budget up to a yearly \$767,000.
- Fest sponsor RTVE, Spain's giant public broadcaster, will plough some \$47.3 million into pre-buying around 80 Spanish films this year, RTVE director general Carmen Caffarel said at a press conference Friday.

