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Capsule reviews: 'El Tinte de la Fama' and more

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Alejandro Bellame Palacios' "El Tinte de la Fama" ("The Color of Fame") reveals in "El Tinte" how in becoming swept up in a Marilyn Monroe look-alike contest, a beautiful but naïve young woman ultimately has a possibility for discovering herself -- if she doesn't destroy herself first. It is an assured, graceful film -- Venezuela's entry into the foreign film competition in the 2008 Oscars -- alternately amusing and unsettling, affectionate yet clear-eyed.

Elaiza Gil's lovely Magaly works at a fast-food restaurant and lives with her handsome husband, Arturo (Alberto Alifa), in a large old apartment house in central Caracas that is slated for demolition. When failed singer Arturo's attempt to be a manager of a Luciano Pavarotti impersonator backfires tragically, he insists that Magaly, much against her will, enter the Monroe competition. Gradually, she becomes caught up in the venture, especially when Arturo enlists as an advisor Hector (Miguel Ferrari), who walks the streets in Marilyn drag and is convinced that he is Monroe's reincarnation.

Arturo is smart enough to realize that because nobody actually looks like Marilyn, it doesn't matter that Magaly resemble her all that closely, but what none of them seem to realize or consider is that Magaly's greatest strength is her natural projection of a crucial Marilyn-like vulnerability that sets her apart from her brassy competitors. Bellame Palacios has visual flair and inspires affection for his emotion-charged characters -- even for Arturo, to whom desperate straits quickly inspire desperate measures yet who comes to discover just how much he loves his wife.

-- Kevin Thomas **"El Tinte de la Fama."** MPAA rating: Unrated. In Spanish with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hour, 25 minutes. At Laemmle's Music Hall, Beverly Hills.