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Bicycle Spoon Apple

Bicicleta cuchara manzana

(Documentary -- Spain) A Cromosoma presentation of a Cromosoma, Televisio de Catalunya, Television Espanola, XTVL production. (International sales: Cromosoma, Barcelona.) Produced by Oriol Ivern. Executive producers, Tono Folguera, Toni Marin, Joan Salvat, Muntsa Tarres, Andres Luque, Pere Gilbert. Directed, written by Carles Bosch.

With: Pasqual Maragall, Diana Garrigosa, Airy Maragall, Guinn Maragall, Cristina Aragall, Ronald Petersen, Teresa Gomez Isla, Fidel Bellmunt, Frank Gonzalez, Eva Nebot, Queco Novell, Jordi Cami, Virginia Lee, Jordi Clarimon, Gerard Schellenberg, Monique Breteler, Suvarna Alladi, Zaven Khachaturian, Ernest Maragall, Merce Boada. (Catalan, Spanish, English, Telugu, Kannada, Dutch dialogue)

By [JAY WEISSBERG](#)

Just in time for the release of a major report on the skyrocketing costs of dementia, along comes helmer Carles Bosch with an Alzheimer's docu that's touching, uplifting, and informative. At first, "Bicycle Spoon Apple" seems very local, focusing on popular Catalan politico Pasqual Maragall and his determination to battle Alzheimer's with every weapon in his charismatic arsenal, but then Bosch broadens the scope by bringing in medicos to discuss the current state of research. Docu fests with homegrown auds as well as cable webs will benefit from their efforts.

When Maragall, a popular ex-mayor of Barcelona and governor of Catalonia, was diagnosed with early Alzheimer's in 2007, he decided to go public and spearhead fund-raising campaigns that would foster research for a cure. The far-from-shy Maragall is an ideal spokesman: High-profile, well liked and dynamic, he sets up the Pasqual Maragall Foundation to coordinate research and help find a treatment that works.

Bosch ("Balseros," "Septembers") cleverly balances the personal with the medical, keeping Maragall and family front and center while weaving in the science via people like Zaven Khachaturian, the "father of Alzheimer's research," and heroic doctor Suvarna Alladi, who helps educate rural populations in Andhra Pradesh. Occasionally the docu tips into infomercial territory,

especially with recurrent scenes on a large black soundstage, with blazing spotlights on five seated researchers. More like a latenight pseudo-highbrow quiz show than a meeting of the minds, these segments could easily be axed.

The docu's odd-sounding title comes from a mental exercise used by doctors in which patients are told three unrelated words and asked to recall them several minutes later; Bosch's decision to use it for his title is in line with Maragall's wishes to demystify the disease. Most of all, the film advocates for patients in the early stages to be allowed a role in decision making, and Bosch is especially good at personalizing how his illness affects the entire family. By the pic's end, Maragall has been diagnosed for two years, and though the symptoms are only just becoming noticeable to viewers, it's clear his wife, Diana Garrigosa, and their children struggle to maintain the optimism that allows them to keep fighting.

Visuals are extremely sharp, and apart from the soundstage sequences, the docu is very well edited. Saccharine piano music, designed to touch the emotions in ways the docu studiously and properly avoids, should be eliminated.

Camera (color, HD-to-35mm), Carles Mestres; editors, Ernest Blasi, Carlos Prieto; music, Josep Sanou; sound, Dani Zacarias, Juan Sanchez "Cuti," Albert Royo, Joan Redondo, Quico Abarquero. Reviewed at San Sebastian Film Festival (noncompeting), Sept. 19, 2010. Running time: 110 MIN.

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