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SBIFF
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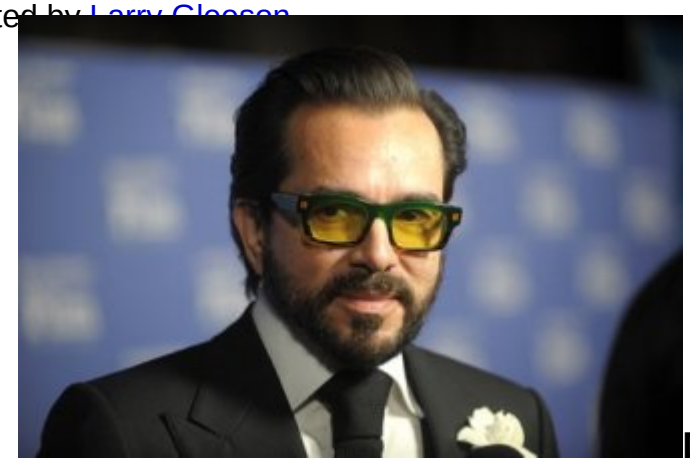
FILM SERIES

Note from Roger â?? Neruda

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson



Dear Cinephiles,

NERUDA is an extraordinary film about the extraordinary poet Pablo Neruda. It makes the beautiful connection that film owes a lot to poetry. Itâ??s one of the best films of the year, and I would encourage you not to miss it. Iâ??m attaching the New York Times review below. Seeâ?¦ its last showingâ?¦(Wednesday) at 7:30pm at the Riviera Theatre.

See you at the movies!
Roger Durling

Get Tickets Here

â??Nerudaâ?? Pursues the Poet as Fugitive
By A. O. Scott â?? New York Times

â??Neruda,â?• Pablo LarraÃnâ??s semifantastical biopic, is a warmhearted film about a hot-blooded man that is nonetheless troubled by a subtle, perceptible chill. Blending fact with invention, it tells the story of a confrontation between an artist (the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda) and an emerging dictatorship, and more generally illuminates the endless struggle between political authority and the creative imagination. For anyone who believes that poetry and democracy spring from the same source and provoke the same enemies, this movie provides both encouragement and warning.

It starts, cameras whirling and swooping, in 1948, with Neruda (Luis Gnecco), a prominent leftist politician as well as a literary celebrity, in a rhetorical war with Chileâ??s president, Gabriel GonzÃ¡lez Videla, an erstwhile ally in the process of moving from left to right. When Videla bans the Communist Party, Neruda â?? who represents that party in the Chilean Senate â?? goes from opposition figure to outlaw. Much of â??Nerudaâ?• is a shaggy-dog cat-and-mouse game, as Neruda and his wife, Delia (Mercedes MorÃ¡n), are pursued by Oscar Peluchonneau (Gael GarcÃa Bernal), a preening police inspector who stakes his professional honor on his ability to track down the countryâ??s most famous fugitive.

Peluchonneau is an invented character, a creature conjured from crime fiction and touched with philosophical melancholy as well as ruthlessness. Whippet-thin and strait-laced, he stands in dour contrast to Neruda, a plump sensualist with a robust sense of mischief and an inexhaustible appetite for pleasure. With and without Delia, the poet manages to stay one step ahead of his nemesis, executing a series of escapes that seem equally inspired by Hitchcock and those old Peter Sellers â??Pink Pantherâ?• movies.

Neruda also composes â??Canto General,â?• his great, Whitmanesque work on the glories and miseries of Latin America. Pages are distributed clandestinely, and committed to memory by workers and peasants. Their popularity, and Nerudaâ??s easygoing populism, are a rebuke to the arrogance of the ruling class and the Chilean state. And Mr. LarraÃnâ??s eye for the rugged beauty of Chileâ??s protean landscapes implies a similar argument. The poet is open to nature and humanity. The policeman is consumed by rules, tactics and procedures.

Peluchonneau is a tragically constricted soul, but not an entirely unsympathetic character. Neruda is a heroic figure â?? comic and Dionysian, brilliant and naughty â?? but his personal Javert is in some ways the filmâ??s protagonist. Neruda is annoyed and sometimes amused by the detectiveâ??s doggedness, but Peluchonneau is haunted by the poetâ??s mystique, and by a growing sense of his own incompleteness. A curious symbiosis develops between them, a dynamic more complex and strange than the simple conflict of good and evil.

Mr. LarraÃn is a master of moral ambiguity. His previous films about Chile â?? â??Tony Manero,â?• â??Noâ?• (which also starred Mr. Bernal) and â??The Clubâ?• â?? are interested in collaboration as well as resistance, in the inner lives of the corrupt as well as the actions of the virtuous. Those movies, in particular â??Tony Manero,â?• set during the military dictatorship in the 1970s, and â??The Club,â?• about a group of disgraced priests, are studies in claustrophobia, with cloudy cinematography and grubby behavior.

â??Nerudaâ?• has a looser story, richer colors and a more buoyant spirit. It is less abrasive than Mr. LarraÃnâ??s Chilean trilogy, and less intensely focused than â??Jackie,â?• his new English-language film about Jacqueline Kennedy in the aftermath of her husbandâ??s assassination. But like that unorthodox foray into history, this one approaches political issues from an oblique angle, looking for the idiosyncrasies and ironies that humanize the pursuit of ideals and the exercise of power.

The period details cast a romantic glow over Nerudaâ??s flight, which feels more swashbuckling than desperate. But the film casts a shadow forward in time, into the darkness of Chileâ??s later, bloodier period of military rule, and beyond that into the political uncertainties of the present, in Latin America and elsewhere. Mr. LarraÃn invites us to believe that history is on the side of the poets and the humanists, and that art will make fools of politicians and policemen. But he is also aware, as Pablo Neruda was, that history sometimes has other plans.

(Source: sbiff.org)

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