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Note from Roger â?? Neruda

Description

This one is at the top of the list for my must-see, year-ending films for 2016!

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Dear Cinephiles,

NERUDA is a fireworks display of a movie about poetry and politics â?? directed by brilliant Chilean director Pablo Larrain who also directed this yearâ??s JACKIE. Just like the latter film, NERUDA â?? about the Nobel Prize winner for Literature, Pablo Neruda, this film is not your typical biography. Do not miss one of the best foreign films youâ??re likely to see this year.

Below is an article about the film from the Los Angeles Times. NERUDA is currently playing at the Riviera Theatre.

See you at the movies!
Roger Durling

Click here for tickets



Pablo LarraÃnâ??s â??Nerudaâ?? is a richly imagined biographical fantasia
By Justin Chang â?? Los Angeles Times

â??Neruda,â?• an intoxicating puzzle of a movie directed by Pablo LarraÃn, chronicles a strange, harrowing episode from the late 1940s, when the Chilean governmentâ??s crackdown on communism drove the great poet and politician Pablo Neruda underground. Specifically, the film unravels the tricky game of cat-and-mouse between Neruda and an ambitious police inspector named Oscar Peluchonneau, who sought to track down the dissident artist whose writings had struck a dangerously resonant chord with the working class.

There was, in fact, no Oscar Peluchonneau â?? or at least, none who fits the description blithely concocted by LarraÃn and his screenwriter, Guillermo Calderon. The charm of â??Nerudaâ?• lies in its insistence that there may well have been, and that it scarcely matters if there wasnâ??t. Drolly and persuasively, the movie demonstrates that when it comes to evoking the artist and the nature of his art, historical fidelity and literal-minded dramatization go only so far. Fiction, lovingly and imaginatively rendered, can bring us much closer to the truth.

â??We must dream our way,â?• Neruda once wrote, and it is nothing short of enchanting to encounter a biographical drama that, rather than merely shoving that quote into its protagonistâ??s mouth, treats it as a guiding aesthetic and philosophical principle. Like (and yet completely unlike) â??Iâ??m Not There,â?• Todd Haynesâ?? fragmented 2007 cine-riff on Bob Dylan, â??Nerudaâ?• is less a straightforward portrait of a great contemporary poet (and eventual Nobel laureate) than a rigorously sustained investigation of his inner world.

Although informed by the busy workings of history, politics and personal affairs, â??Nerudaâ?• proceeds like a light-footed chase thriller filtered through an episode of â??The Twilight Zone,â?• by the end of which the audience is lost in a crazily spiraling meta-narrative. Who exactly is the star and author of that narrative is one of the filmâ??s more enticing mysteries.

Initially it seems both roles must be filled by Pablo Neruda, played with prickly, preening brilliance by Luis Gnecco (â??Narcosâ?•), who donned a wig and gained more than 50 pounds to achieve his remarkable physical resemblance to the real deal. The key to the performance is that, despite the shimmering inspiration of Nerudaâ??s poetry, neither Gnecco nor LarraÃn seems to feel any obligation

to make Neruda himself a particularly inspiring figure.

From the opening scene, a political gathering wittily set in an enormous public lavatory, Neruda, a senator and member of the Chilean Communist Party, is shown to be a proud and vociferous critic of his countryâ??s leadership. But in the very next sequence, a lavish party crammed with half-naked revelers, the film presents the idea of Neruda as a Champagne socialist â?? a vain, hedonistic hypocrite who, like so many left-wing elites, loves â??to soak up other peopleâ??s sweat and suffering.â?•

That damning bit of mockery is delivered by the aforementioned detective, Oscar Peluchonneau (played with mustachioed elan by Gael GarcÃa Bernal), who slyly complicates the filmâ??s notions of authorship and agency. When Chilean President Gabriel GonzÃ¡lez Videla (Alfredo Castro) outlaws communism in 1948, responding to mounting Cold War anxieties, Peluchonneau eagerly leads the manhunt for Neruda, who has gone into hiding in the port city of ValparaÃso with his second wife, the painter Delia del Carril (Mercedes MorÃ¡n, excellent).

Many of the individual scenes in â??Nerudaâ?• serve a fairly clear narrative purpose. We see the poet consorting with his allies, arguing with his wife, and disobeying his party-appointed bodyguard (Michael Silva) to slip out for a frolic at a nearby brothel or bohemian enclave. We rarely see him writing, though his poems are shown being secretly distributed and playing a huge role in keeping the communist movement alive underground. But even these relatively simple moments are transformed and complicated by the sheer audacity of LarraÃnâ??s stylistic conceits.

In the hands of the editor HervÃ© Schneid, an extended conversation between two people might span three or four different locations, transporting the viewer without warning from a private room to a perch overlooking the Chilean countryside. Elsewhere, Sergio Armstrongâ??s sensuous digital photography evokes the mood of the past even as it encourages us to view the film as a formalist construct, from the faded, purplish coloration of the images to the use of phony-looking rear projection in the driving scenes.

In one of LarraÃn and Calderonâ??s most telling flourishes, it is Peluchonneau who provides the filmâ??s running voice-over commentary, often in contrapuntal harmony with Nerudaâ??s journey. The two men are almost never seen in the same frame, and yet the ever-mobile camera seems to ping-pong restlessly between them, as though blurring them into one shared, active consciousness.

Peluchonneauâ??s words may be sardonic and self-flattering, but as the film advances and his own footing in the narrative begins to shift, they also take on their own mysterious, downright Nerudian poetry. (A few verses from his posthumously published â??For All to Knowâ?• might seem appropriate here: â??I am everybody and every time/I always call myself by your name.â?•)

â??Nerudaâ??sâ?• formal spryness and nontraditional appreciation of history will come as little surprise to admirers of â??Jackie,â?• LarraÃnâ??s other great bio-experiment of the moment, or his 2012 drama, â??No,â?• a compelling snapshot of the end of the Augusto Pinochet regime that also starred Bernal (with Gnecco and Castro in prominent supporting roles). His filmography, which includes such festival-acclaimed favorites as â??Tony Manero,â?• â??Post Mortemâ?• and â??The Club,â?• has sealed his reputation as one of the most distinctive and continually surprising talents in world cinema, though nothing heâ??s done to date has forced him to take such intuitive leaps, to abandon realism so completely, as â??Neruda.â?•

Unspooling the picture earlier this year at the Cannes Film Festival, LarraÃn confessed that, even after making the movie, he wasnâ??t at all sure he knew who Neruda was. And in a typically counter-intuitive gesture, â??Nerudaâ?• doesnâ??t pretend to know, either. It keeps the man at a playful distance, firm in its belief that the art will sustain our interest, long after the passing of the artist and his historical moment. Itâ??s possible that Pablo Neruda himself would have concurred with this sentiment, though Oscar Peluchonneau might have begged to differ.

(Source: sbiff.org)

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1. Venice International Film Festival

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1. #SBIFF
2. Art
3. Cinema
4. Conversation
5. creativity
6. entertainment
7. Film
8. Film Festival
9. Filmmaking
10. inspiration
11. marketing
12. Media
13. Neruda
14. News
15. Pablo Larrain
16. platform
17. Programming
18. Society
19. The Showcase Film Series
20. writing

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