

Film Review: 'Neruda' Turns the Biography Film Into Fine Art

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 4, 2017 - 8:30am

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CHICAGO – “In me nothing is extinguished or forgotten...” is a single line from a poem by Pablo Neruda (“If You Forget Me”), and succinctly describes the film tribute to him, written by Neruda’s fellow Chilean countryman Guillermo Calderón, and directed with grace by another Chilean, Pablo Larraín.



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Hot off Larraín’s other superior biography, “Jackie,” this exploration of an important life moment of Pablo Neruda is finely tuned, literary and archly cinematic. It’s a dreamlike journey, but never floats away, and is anchored by passionate characterizations from Luis Gnecco as the title character, and the always interesting and sharp Gael García Bernal. It is a cat-and-mouse game that may be just cat or just mouse, depending on how your point of view actualizes the story. Although bordering on vague, it ultimately is entrancing, and makes for a variable comparison to the equally virtuous “Jackie.” Larraín might have one of the greatest one-two film punches ever released in the same year.

It is 1948, and Pablo Neruda (Luis Gnecco) is the poet laureate of Chile, and possesses one of the most romantic and artistic souls in literary history. He also is part of the political scene in Santiago, and served as Senator representing the Communist Party. President Gabriel González Videla (Alfredo Castro) – who was at first a Neruda ally – turned the tables on him after the poet condemned the leader in a speech during a miner’s strike. Videla made Communism against the law, and forced Neruda to fugitive status after calling for his arrest.

Neruda and his wife Delia Del Carril (Mercedes Morán) go into exile, first being hid around Santiago and then escaping to Southern Chile. Neruda is being pursued by Inspector Oscar Peluchonneau (Gael García Bernal), a virulent fascist and toady to President Videla. In his pursuit of the prey – and to understand him better – the inspector begins to read Neruda’s poetry, and finds a strange kinship that results in a resolution neither man expected.

“Neruda” continued its limited release in Chicago on December 30th, at the Music Box Theatre, 3733 North Southport. See local listings for other theaters and show times. Featuring Luis Gnecco, Gael García Bernal, Mercedes Morán and Alfredo Castro. Written by Guillermo Calderón. Directed by Pablo Larraín. Rated “R”



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Luis Gnecco Portrays the Title Character in 'Neruda'

Photo credit: *The Orchard*



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