

Las acacias

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RESUMEN

Matheou reviews *Las acacias* directed by Pablo Giorgelli and starring German de Silva, Hebe Duarte, and Nayra Calle Mamani.

TEXTO COMPLETO

Las acacias

Argentina/Spain2011

Director: Rabio Georgejl

Certificate 12A 86m 6s

Winner of the *Caméra d'Or* at Cannes this year, Pablo Giorgelli's first feature as director is in the vein of the realist, minimalist dramas of lower-class life that characterise the strongest strand of contemporary Argentine cinema. If following in the footsteps of such filmmakers as Lisandro Alonso, Carlos Sorm and Pablo Trapero might seem a fool's errand, Giorgelli has enough integrity and class in his own right to overcome comparisons. This is an extremely accomplished and affecting debut

It may be that Giorgelli has even less going on, on the surface of his film, than any of those mentioned, with the possible exception of Alonso. *Las acacias* is a road movie that hardly gets out of its vehicle, gives only the barest glimpses of its topography and offers no more than a trace of a supporting character. The focus is inside the cab of a truck and on the faces of driver Rubén and his passenger Jacinta, the camera alert for clues to their inner lives and immediate feelings. At 84 minutes, this is a lean, economical exercise in human mapping. And with able performers (Germán de Silva a professional, Hebe Duarte following in the region's fine tradition of non-actors) it's a reminder of what can be achieved with so little.

Essentially this is a portrait of loneliness and parenthood, those two conditions being inextricably related here. De Silva looks like a greyhound gone to seed - wiry, fit once but now grizzled and greying. His feelings are buried deep (taciturn doesn't cover his unwillingness with words) but the skill of the actor is such that in Ruben's watchfulness we suspect a human being still lurks. Eventually we learn of the son he didn't know as a child and barely sees now; and in his growing rapport with Jacinta's baby we glimpse the father he might have been. It's unclear why he wasn't present for his own child, but obvious that the lack of such shared love has left him trapped within himself.

Duarte's performance is equally subtle, her sphinx-like face nevertheless showing plenty of character, not least Jacinta's self-possession. This only cracks when the character thinks she is unobserved; while crying at night, she has no idea that Rubén is awake beside her, but the revelation of her grief helps to thaw him and bring the two together. Again, we don't learn where the father of her child is; it's enough to know of the absence, and the

unhappiness that is driving her towards a new life.

The dialogue in Giorgelli's script, written with Salvador Roselli, is unsurprisingly bare. The information is in the eyes, and in the passing details: Ruben's offer of tea signalling the end of hostilities; his allowing the absurdly cute baby to bite his hand in the night; the lonely ritual of his truck-stop routines.

The director's willingness to stay within the restricted cab reminds one of some of Abbas Kiarostami's best work. And when the story steps it's to good effect, whether offering a glimpse of the trucker's life or the meagre society on this umbilical road between Paraguay and its wealthier, not always friendly, neighbour.

Incidentally, Giorgelli is a graduate of Buenos Aires's superb film school, the Fundación Universidad del Cine, along with Trapero, Alonso and Las acacias executive producer Ariel Rotter. Giorgelli edited Rotter's first feature in 2001, Solo por hoy. His own debut may have been a long while coming but it does the pedigree proud. * Demetrios Matheou

SYNOPSIS Argentine truck driver Rubén is returning to Buenos Aires from Paraguay. At the border he picks up a woman, Jacinta, and her five-month-old daughter, having agreed with his boss to take them to the capital.

At first Rubén is rude and unfriendly, uninterested in his passengers or their comfort. At one stop, he considers buying Jacinta a bus ticket and abandoning her. But he decides against it and gradually softens towards the mother and her child. Jacinta is friendly but wary, and plays along with Ruben's silence; as he begins to relax, she responds. He talks about the son he hardly knows; she vaguely acknowledges that the girl's father is not in their lives, and that she is heading for a new life with her cousin in Buenos Aires. When they reach their destination, Rubén asks if they can see each other again, and Jacinta agrees.

DETALLES

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