

NERUDA

Chile (2016) 108 minutes

Director: Pablo Larraín

Cast: Luis Gnecco (Pablo Neruda), Gael García Bernal (Óscar Peluchonneau), Mercedes Morán (Delia del Carril)



Screening 22 November 2017 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

When Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (Luis Gnecco) is declared an enemy of the state in 1948 for his Communist leanings, a determined police investigator (Gael García Bernal) launches a search to apprehend him. Neruda seizes on the opportunity to make a larger political and literary statement, and engages the investigator in a game of cat and mouse in this intelligent and inventive biopic directed by Pablo Larraín.

Reviews



Director Pablo Larraín had a stellar 2016 year. An unconventional drama about the revolutionary and Nobel-prize winning Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, this is no mere birth-to-death biopic. Instead, in the spirit of its subject, *Neruda* weaves a tapestry of fact and fantasy that gets us closer to a literary appreciation - rare for any film.

Neruda, Chile's most famous celebrity, is on the run from right-wing goons when the tale picks up in 1948. A champagne Communist, Neruda rarely thinks of the people first but has plenty of time for nice clothes and adoring women. But the most fascinating figure here is not Neruda himself, but the film's largely fictional predator, Óscar Peluchonneau. He's a fedora-wearing inspector obsessed with detective novels, a comically insignificant doofus whose pursuit of the great man ennobles him.

As Peluchonneau nears his quarry, *Neruda* reminds us of the very real stakes at hand, with a scene spent in the company of the future dictator Pinochet. The endgame set on a snowy mountainside is as abstract as the final moments of *The Shining* - a film that's also about the life of the mind.

Joshua Rothkopf, Time Out

The film constantly plays with artificiality and moments of abrupt realism, serving as a reminder that the Communist Party's struggles in Chile had very real meaning for the mistreated working class.

All the performances are outstanding: Gnecco plays Neruda with a sense of entitled vanity, which occasionally slips to reveal the character's idealism and solidarity. As his wife Delia, Morán does an enormous amount with just her presence, using her warmth-giving smile as protection for both herself and her husband. But perhaps it's García Bernal who makes the greatest impression, since his is by far the most carefully constructed role. Humorous, straight-faced and channelling any number of noir detectives with a post-modern twist that finally gives that misused concept a good name, the actor quite simply shines, once again proving himself one of the smartest performers around.

Equally worthy of celebration is the cinematography, sumptuously gliding through rooms and landscapes in long sweeps of meticulously choreographed movement.

Neruda doesn't have the anger of *The Club* or *Post-Mortem*, but its emotional grace makes it every bit as powerful.

Jay Weissberg, Variety

Film Facts

- Pablo Neruda (1904-73), Chile's most popular poet, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971 "for a poetry that with the action of an elemental force brings alive a continent's destiny and dreams."
- Neruda was a close advisor to Chile's socialist President Salvador Allende. After his Nobel Prize award, Allende invited him to read at the Estadio Nacional before 70,000 people.
- Gabriel García Márquez called Neruda "the greatest poet of the 20th century, in any language."