

SCREENDAILY

Southern District (Zona Sur)

27 January, 2010 | By Tim Grierson



Dir: Juan Carlos Valdivia. Bolivia. 2009. 109 mins

***Southern District* is a ravishing look at a bourgeois Bolivian family undergoing quiet emotional turmoil. Writer-director Juan Carlos Valdivia has shaped this domestic drama as a commentary on Bolivia's decadent, crumbling upper class, but his themes are so accessible that *Southern District's* ruminations on generational divides and the challenges of raising a family transcend geographic borders.**

Bolivia's entry for this year's foreign language Oscar, *Southern District* may have a difficult time theatrically due to its unknown cast and elliptical, poetic approach, but festival exposure seems assured.

In La Paz, Bolivia, a well-to-do family headed by mother Carola (Ninon Del Castillo) is beset by problems: money is tight; oldest son Patricio (Juan Pablo Koria) is a drunk and a gambler; daughter Bernarda (Mariana Vargas) is rebelling against her family's posh lifestyle; and youngest son Andres (Nicolas Fernandez) enjoys walking on the roof of their house when nobody is looking.

Though *Southern District* addresses familiar subject matter, Valdivia's technique is anything but. With the help of cinematographer Paul de Lumen, the director composes each scene as one unbroken shot with the camera slowly rotating around the action, lending a graceful elegance to the depictions of everyday joy and sadness.

Admittedly, nothing momentous occurs during *Southern District's* running time, but the accumulated interactions between family members, which include an unlikely trip to a funeral, start to acquire a resonance that only occurs when a filmmaker so deeply understands his characters that their behaviour resembles the mysteries and rhythms of everyday life.

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Production company

Cinenomada

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Producer

Gabriela Maire

Screenplay

Juan Carlos Valdivia

Cinematography

Paul de Lumen

Production designer

Joaquin Sanchez

Editor

Ivan Layme

Music

Cergio Prudencio

Main cast:

Ninon Del Castillo

Pascual Loayza

Nicolas Fernandez

Juan Pablo Koria

Mariana Vargas

Viviana Condori

