

Film Notes

By Chris Baker

Cielo

2025 | 109mins

Director: Alberto Sciamma

Starring: Fernanda Gutiérrez Aranda

The Bolivian Altiplano; At 1,000km north to south and an elevation of 3,600m, the second-largest and second-highest plateau in the world. Salt flats, flamingos, volcanoes, vicunas and condors. Unearthly silence and light. If miracles have worldly reality, this might be one of the few places to find them. UK-based Spanish filmmaker Alberto Sciamma presents all this in his latest breathtaking film *Cielo* (Heaven).

Previously known for gore-heavy horror (*Killer Tongue* (1996), *I Love My Mum* (2018)), with *Cielo*, Sciamma gives up trying to scare or amuse us, and delivers one of the most wildly imaginative and visually arresting fables of recent years. Santa (Fernanda Gutiérrez Aranda) is blessed with miraculous powers from birth and guided by a fish living in her belly. What follows may be the fever dream of an intelligent but isolated, hungry and abused 8-year-old, or it may be real. Either way, Sciamma and his cinematographer Alex Metcalfe concoct a believable supernatural world of jaw-dropping beauty peopled by realistic characters whose emotions and motivations we recognise — powerfully and spectacularly rendering ‘magic realism’.

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Sciamma was working on the idea of a miracle-working child traversing a vast desert in search of Heaven for some years before the Bolivian wife of his producer suggested he set the film on the Altiplano. This proved to be an inspired move and the tightly-budgeted location shoot took place there over a period of only five weeks. This is testament to the director’s meticulous preparation as the film betrays none of these constraints. It includes moments of touching tenderness and flamboyant celebration as well as of visceral violence and nail-biting tension, but it could well be the staggering portrayal of the vast Bolivian landscapes that remains with you long after the film has ended.

‘A magical piece of filmmaking bursting at the seams with heart, vibrancy and originality. What Sciamma has crafted here is a film that may not always make sense in the moment, but washes over you with an unbridled sense of purpose with what it sets out to do’

-Aaron Gillingham

Excellent

Fair

Poor



What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

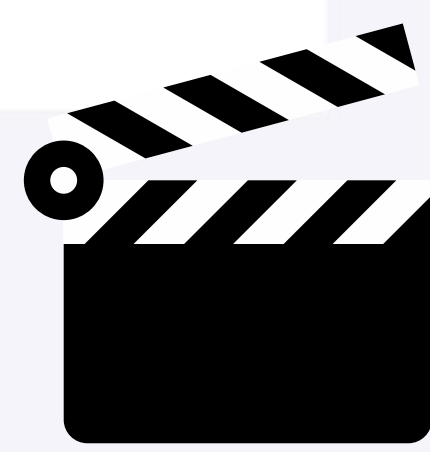
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Did You Know?

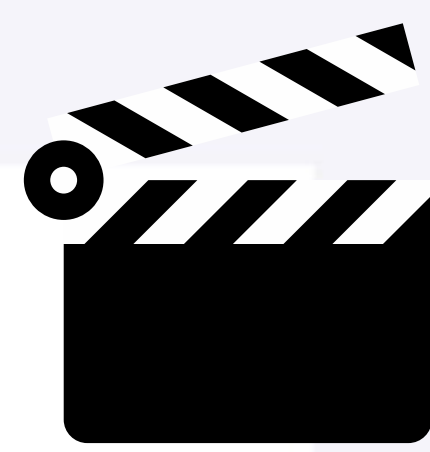
- Alberto Sciamma was scouting for a young actress to play Santa when he discovered Fernanda Gutiérrez Aranda in a music school. She was seven at the time.
- Bolivia has little infrastructure for making movies — there is only one company that hires lights, for instance — but Sciamma found inexhaustible resourcefulness amongst the locals who were able to find creative solutions for just about every challenge.
- Only two of the performers are professional actors, playing the two policemen.

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A young girl experiences the repercussions of violence in 21st century Mexico.

SCAN ME



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