Celluloid Fun - An arthouse and independent films blog

2010 Spanish Film Festival: Leo’s Room (El cuarto de Leo); drama film review

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Seeking Sexuality by Linh

SUPPRESSED SEXUALITY: Leo (Martín Rodríguez) wonders about his sexuality in the film Leo’s Room (El cuarto de Leo). Image: Lavorágine Films.

Leòn’s Room (El cuarto de Leo) is the debut feature film from Enrique Buchichio with a focus on exploring and discovering sexual identity. The film follows young twenty-something student, Leo who lives in a rented apartment, experiencing sexual dysfunctions with his girlfriend, talks with his
psychologist and trawling the internet chat-rooms for male companionship and possible intercourse.

SEXUAL SURENESS Leo (Martín Rodríguez) comes to terms with his homosexuality in the film *Leo’s Room (El cuarto de Leo)*. Image: Lavorágine Films.

It’s an insightful and sympathetic look at a young man’s gay awakening and how he deals with it secretly and within the confidential walls of his psychologist’s room. Leo is initially reluctant to tell his psychologist about his sexuality, following his break up with his long-term girlfriend Andrea; only revealing a feeling of confusion about his sexual dysfunction. After meeting several of the men he communicated with on the internet and declining to bed them, Leo continues to feel frustrated about his sexuality. A chance meeting with Caro, a girl he had a huge crush on throughout Primary School, brings a renewed sense of motivation to actively recognise and confront his own homosexuality. This leads to Leo finally meeting a potential lover in twenty six year old Sebastian, who prefers to be called Seba.

FIRM FRIENDS: Leo (Martin Rodriguez) reunites with Caro (Cecilia Cósero) his friend since Primary School in the film *Leo’s Room (El cuarto de Leo)*. Image: Lavorágine Films.

*Leo’s Room (El cuarto de Leo)* is an impressive debut for director Enrique Buchichio and he parallels Leo’s journey of
sexual awakening with the lighting in the film. Many earlier scenes where Leo is still unsure about his sexuality appear darker and cast in many shadows as if very little light is let into his room. As the film progresses, the scenes become more brightly lit as Leo’s certainty and acceptance of his sexuality increases. This could be an analogy to signify Leo’s sexual awakening with the light representing his increasing awareness and confidence in expressing his homosexuality. The room in which Leo entertains his sexual desires with Seba, may correspond with Leo considering telling his family and friends of his homosexuality. After spending many weeks concealing his sexuality inside his room, Leo is gradually feeling comfortable with meeting his lover in public places.

ACTIVE ACCEPTANCE: Seba (Gerardo Begérez) and Leo (Martín Rodríguez) become more than friends in the film Leo’s Room (El cuarto de Leo). Image: Lavorágine Films.

The young cast is excellent and handles the complex subject of sexuality with sensitivity and understanding. Martín Rodríguez is convincing as the sexually confused university student Leo, bringing affability and genuine interest in creating a character that moves away from the stereotypical mainstream homosexual representations such as campiness, extravagance in appearance and lifestyle. Gerardo Begérez plays Sebastian with an irresistible charm and self-assuredness in his own sexuality and life choices. Sebastian’s confidence makes Leo reassess his own choices and perhaps to stop lying to his friends, family and to himself about his homosexuality. Cecilia Cósero gives a strong and solid performance as Caro, the former object of Leo’s affections. Caro is suffering from depression and despite reuniting with Leo after several years of losing contact, she still feels lonely. Their friendship helps Leo realise that other people’s problems are as frustrating, confusing and complicated as his own.

Leo’s Room (El cuarto de Leo) is a passive film about male sexuality but actively shows support and understanding for young men who feel compelled to hide or lie about their sexuality for fear of shame, ostracism and violence. It’s a wonderfully acted and engaging film with believable
characters dealing with issues stemming from sexual identity such as friendship, family and relationships.

Trailer takes a few seconds to load:
*Leo’s Room (El cuarto de Leo)* film trailer in Spanish with English subtitles (courtesy Lavorágine Films)

Director: Enrique Buchichio

Cast: Martín Rodríguez, Cecilia Cósero, Gerardo Begérez, Mirella Pascual, Arturo Goetz, César Troncoso, Rafael Soliwoda, Carolina Alarcón, Leonor Svarcas, Sylvia Murninkas, Sebastián Serantes, María Victoria Césperes, Ana Pouso, Pablo Dive, Diego Arbelo

Screenplay: Enrique Buchichio

Producers: Natacha López, Jorge Rocca

Music Composition: Sebastián Kramer

Cinematography: Pedro Luque

Film Editors: Guillermo Casanova, Julián Goyoaga

Language: Spanish with English subtitles

Running Time: 1 hour and 32 minutes