

"The 33"—The great Chilean mining disaster

<http://nyti.ms/1HDmXIA> (NY Times review)

This is a good and fair review of “The 33,” the interesting new Patricia Riggen film about los mineros—the 33 Chilean miners who were caught underground for over 60 days in the mining accident of 2010, where a series of drills were inserted and they were miraculously retrieved one by one. Even with the ending known to most viewers, this is a well-constructed and riveting film, one that reminds me of my own occasional claustrophobia. I also could not help but admire how she dealt with the difficulties that the filming must have presented, with the dank and dark mine shaft and cavern. Not since the 1988 original movie “The Vanishing” have I felt as physically constricted as I did in this movie.

Riggen is from Guadalajara, and she joins a growing number of other successful Mexican-born directors. (I recently wrote about this phenomenon in *New Insights into Latino Film History – and the Future*, SOMOS En Escrito.com (September 2015), <http://www.somosenescrito.com/2015/09/we-have-talent-but-where-are-roles.html> and also posted as a PDF--http://lawofrockandroll.com/Meet_Professor_Olivas/Articles/index.html.) Riggen, who did her MFA at Columbia, is a very talented filmmaker, and has had a prolific and varied career. She directed “La Misma Luna,” “Ansiedad” (also released as “Girl in Progress”), “Lemonade Mouth,” “Revolución,” (2010) and several other documentary and feature films. As I wrote earlier, I am delighted to see Mexican filmmakers doing so well in the United States and world film markets, but as I have asked: where are the U.S.-born Mexican Americans?

And she has a very accomplished international cast playing Chileans: Filipino Lou Diamond Phillips (who played Ritchie Valens in “La Bamba” and Henry Standing Bear in “Longmire”—making him today’s pan-ethnic Sal Mineo), the Spaniard Antonio Banderas, Juliette Binoche (French and improbably Chilean), and a number of Latinos, some of who might well be Chilean or Mexican American. I guess I would not expect a film about Chilean miners to feature only Chileans or miners, and I am delighted when Latinas show such skill in directing. However, I have seen and enjoyed almost every film in which Antonio Banderas and Juliette Binoche have appeared—very good, bad, and ugly films—and once again, I have to ask, where are the Mexican American actors and directors?

Michael A. Olivas