



Country: Argentina/Spain/France

Cert: 15

Runtime: 91 minutes

UK release: 9th May 2008

Language: Spanish with English subtitles

Directed by Lucía Puenzo

Produced by Luis Puenzo & Jose María Morales

Written by Puenzo, based on a short story by Sergio Bizzio

Director of Photography, Natasha Braier

Edited by Alex Zito & Hugo Primero

Music by Andrés Goldstein & Daniel Tarrab

Cast

Kraken	RICARDO DARÍN
Suli	VALERIA BERTUCCELLI
Ramiro	GERMÁN PALACIOS
Erika	CAROLINA PELERITTI
Alvaro	MARTÍN PIROYANSKY
Alex	INÉS EFRON
Juan	GUILLERMO ANGELELLI
Washington	CÉSAR TRONCOSO
Esteban	JEAN PIERRE REGUERRAZ
Roberta	AILÍN SALAS
Vando	LUCIANO NOBILE
Saul	LUCAS ESCARIZ



The potential for this film to go very wrong was great. After all, hermaphroditism – more commonly referred to as intersexuality these days – is a subject that could easily end up being played for its ‘freak’ value. That XXY explores the issue carefully from the emotional viewpoint, without being exploitative makes it all the more remarkable when you consider that this is Lucía Puenzo’s directorial debut.

Without a hint of titillation or exploitation, the director holds back nothing, her style just as blunt as 15-year-old Alex (as ambiguous as her name).

XXY was chosen to represent Argentina at the Oscars, for the Best Foreign Language Film category. Its shots are beautifully composed, the editing paces the process of self-discovery, the dialogue is spare and heartfelt, the performances are deeply human -- especially by Efron, who was 22 when the film was made, but never looks it. Nor does she look too distractingly male or female, and so is convincing as both.

Director Lucia Puenzo has said that after reading the short story *Cinismo* written by her husband Sergio Bizzio that she "couldn't get it out of her head." Asked about the adaptation she commented

"It was very hard. Sergio Bizzio is my husband, so that was a new difficulty. But the good thing is that he told me the very first day: "You have to absolutely betray my story and make it yours. If you make an adaptation that is faithful to me it won't be good." I was very comfortable in the area of literature because I always wrote novels and even screenplays for others, but then when I started to imagine that the story would be directed by me it was very hard. I knew about words but not about film directing. It was a lot of learning, like walking on eggs (laughs). The big surprise was that once you have the script and think about how to shoot it, you must then run a team. That's a big challenge and a key difference between literature and cinema: solitude vs. teamwork. A big percentage of a director's work is to have a happy and passionate crew. That was a huge learning experience."



A film of haunting beauty and compassion that says that every human being deserves to be loved for who they are regardless of gender, physical deformity, or sexual orientation, it will also be hard to forget.

Puenzo's real achievement, however, is to make her film less about Alex's gender than about families and unspoken anxieties. Unexpected and wonderfully thoughtful.

"Intersex" is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types.

Though intersex is spoken of as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy doesn't always show up at birth. Sometimes a person isn't found to have intersex anatomy until she or he reaches the age of puberty, or finds himself an infertile adult, or dies of old age and is autopsied. Some people live and die with intersex anatomy without anyone (including themselves) ever knowing.

Shortly after we selected this film, at the World Athletics championships last year the South African athlete Caster Semenya won the women's 800 metres race. Shortly afterwards questions as to her gender were raised, which led to her being shamefully treated by the International Amateur Athletics Federation and turmoil in her own country when it was revealed that Athletics South Africa had subjected her to tests.

Sadly at the time of tonight's film the IAAF have still yet to notify Miss Semenya of the test results and she has not competed since winning the gold medal.

Iain McGlashan