

THE MOVIE REVUE

Independently Minded News and Reviews for the Film Aficionado.



Emanuele Crialese's "[L'immensità](#)" is an emotionally raw tale born of the filmmaker's own experiences as a youth. This is a film rich in feeling and emotion and one that bleeds with the spectacular bond between a mother and her children.

Set in the 1970s, a captivating Luana Giuliani stars as Adriana, a teenage girl who is now identifying as a boy, taking the male 'Andrea' (Italian for Andrew). Carrying the unfair weight of being raised Catholic, Andrea finds guilt to be causing the most discomfort.

Penelope Cruz plays his mother Clara, who is shouldering her own bouts with depression and dissatisfaction with her husband (Vincenzo Amato), a father and spouse with no skill or desire to connect.

Clara's [devotion to her children far outweighs her to commitment to her husband](#), who is physically and psychologically abusive and constantly unfaithful. He cannot connect to his wife

and doesn't show interest in his offspring. Clara's children have earned her bond. The husband has long broken it.

Cruz is (as always) fascinating to watch. This is a performance of heartbreak and purity. Clara is the type of character who, long ago, would be played by Monica Vitti or Sophia Loren. To put Cruz's work here among those great actresses is to pay her the highest of compliments. Penelope Cruz finds her most challenging roles in foreign productions and Clara deserves to lead her to many award nominations come year's end.

Andrea finds a peace in befriending young gypsy girl, Sara (Penelope Nieto Conti) who becomes the only person in his life to fully accept him. Even his mother cannot fully understand, yet she defends him to others.

Crialese's screenplay (co-written with Francesca Manieri and Vittorio Moroni) is skillful in connecting both Andrea and Clara as misfits. Andrea identifying as a boy and Clara's Spanish background (and sometimes heedless personality) make them outsiders to friends and family but partners in pain for one another. The two are prisoners of the sexism of the time and the male dominated world in which they live.

"L'immensità" is a deeply personal work. Crialese has spoken on the character of Andrea, proclaiming, "There is no doubt that that's me."

The character and performance are hypnotic. Newcomer Giuliani shows real depth. She and Cruz play off one another very well, as if they had always known one another.

Giuliani makes Andrea tough and smart and wise beyond his young years. Dealing with more than any child his age should shoulder, Andrea is certainly the one to hold the family together, as much as it can be.

If the film has a misstep, it can be found in Andrea's flights of fancy; Fellini-esque daydreams set in Black & White, where he lives out musical numbers with songs that fit the emotion of the scene.

Costume designer Massimo Cantini Parrini and cinematographer Gergely Pohárnok do excellent work in these dreamlike moments while their designs of 1970's Italy invoke the era perfectly.

These sequences are fun but distract from the quiet drama that plays so strongly throughout. The moments are too obvious and the film did not need them.

Crialese ends his film ambiguously, leaving us with the hope that Andrea will find acceptance in being himself.

Through the director's intimate connection to his main character, "L'immensità" is a film that speaks our time. As bigotry in politics and religion is causing the worldwide LGBTQ+ communities to fight for the most basic human rights, Andrea represents that struggle.

Emanuele Crialese's film is a vibrant and affecting tale and a mirror to the very real issues of so many today.

L'immensità

Written by Emanuele Crialese, Francesca Manieri, & Vittorio Moroni

Directed by Emanuele Crialese

NR, 97 Minutes, Wildside/Chapter 2/Pathe