



THE CLUB

CHILE 97 MIN

PABLO LARRAIN

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If the Pope has Netflix, we doubt he'll be adding this dark Chilean drama about exiled priests to his watch-list anytime soon...

The Vatican won't be organising any special screenings of *The Club* anytime this side of the Second Coming. Chilean director Pablo Larrain's savage but sardonic new film about patterns of abuse and subterfuge in the Catholic Church plays like *Calvary* with all the colour drained away and the gags removed – replaced by a sharp, well-buried streak of even blacker, more subversive humour. It also lands a horrifying blow on a sick culture of institutional self-protection and cover-ups.

A contained local parable in the manner of the recent Russian film *Leviathan* – and just as bleak – *The Club* gives us four ageing former priests living with a creepily serene nun in a back-of-beyond Chilean coastal town. At first this motley gang's only vice seems to be greyhound racing as they take their dog to scruffy local tracks and make cash off the success of their trim mutt. But we soon realise something else is afoot: the men have all fallen foul of scandal, including paedophilia, and have been put to pasture out of harm's way by their masters. When a new priest arrives to stay with them, a damaged homeless man arrives in his wake.

The man screams accusations at the window, a tragedy occurs, and soon the church has sent a clean-cut emissary to find out what's happening and maybe shut the place down for good. But, no, that's not how chronic dysfunction works...

As grey and moody as the weather on the horizon, *The Club* is also as murky as Larrain's unadorned, haunting visuals: in a series of interviews between the visiting interrogator and the priests he literally refuses to bring these men into focus. It's a terrifically smart film as Larrain – whose last three films (*No*, *Post Mortem*, *Tony Manero*) explored his country under the dictatorship of Pinochet – refrains from demonising his subjects while at the same time making zero apologies for them. He's more concerned with the complex web of lies and hypocrisy, much of it officially sanctioned.

What's most winning about *The Club* is how Larrain manages to allude to the wider structures, behaviour and corruption of the church without ever making this claustrophobic, moody and very local story feel anything but crucial, thrilling and disturbing. It's all built on a foundation of mystery and discomfort that keeps you thinking, worrying and guessing right to the final moments.

Dave Calhoun, Time Out

WRITERS: Guillermo Calderón, Pablo Larraín, Daniel Villalobos | **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Sergio Armstrong | **MUSIC:** Carlos Cabezas
Padre Vidal Alfredo Castro | Sandokan Roberto Farías | Hermana Mónica Antonia Zegers | Padre Garcia Marcelo Alonso

VOTING FOR *Victoria* A44 | B38 | C4 | D1 | E6 | Rating 81% | Attendance 95

Our next screening | ***The Propaganda Game*** | Tuesday 21 February 2017. 8.00pm

'...Whatever you know about North Korea, you're probably wrong...'