



WE VANISH

BY ENRIQUE ACOSTA | SEPTEMBER 16, 2019

I cannot say enough good things about *We Vanish*. Is it a tense thriller? Yes. Is it a piece of agitprop? Yes. Is it a masterfully crafted piece of cinema that pays homage to the film noir genre while keeping a unique perspective? HELL! YES!

I can't wait for the end of the review; I'm just going to say right now that you should see *We Vanish*. You should track it down, and you should devour it. Though at less than 30 minutes, it's a light snack that is incredibly filling, satisfying, and delicious.



“...has to fight her local police and the criminal element to discover what exactly happened to her daughter...”

Set in modern-day Mexico, *We Vanish* touches on the subject of “Feminicidios.” A horrifying and genocidal trend of young women being kidnapped and murdered. Happening with such frequency that it becomes easy to get overwhelmed by the numbers. This might be why director Astrid Dominguez decided to humanize those numbers by focusing on one family.

Patricia Meneses plays Rocio, a single mom raising her daughter in this climate of fear. The daughter Mia, full of the confidence of youth, doesn't believe anything bad will ever happen to her and that her mom overreacts to everything. Unfortunately, Rocio is proven right and has to fight her local police and the criminal element to discover what exactly happened to her daughter.

You will see a lot you recognize in this story. You will see a haggard investigator (the mom), inept and/or corrupt police, a powerful criminal element, and of course a mystery. Despite using several tropes from the film noir genre, *We Vanish* somehow avoids being a recycled piece of pulp fiction. The genius of Dominguez is in how she presents her story in a non-linear fashion. Bouncing back and forth in time while still maintaining a sense of tension and discovery is no mean feat. But under Dominguez's deft direction, you are never lost, or given information too quickly. Instead, she picks the perfect moments to show you. She shows you a moment of tragedy then jumps back in time to give added context and make that moment more powerful.

At the same time, it could have been a heavy-handed “message” film. This is really happening every day all over Central and South America. But instead of burying you in statistics and emotional testimony, Dominguez tells you one heartbreaking story. She puts you in the shoes of our main character and forces you to feel what she's going through: the anger, the desperation, and the unrelenting fear.

“Her heartbreaking portrayal of Rocio deserves an Oscar.”

Of course, I really have to bring up the performance of Patricia Meneses. Her heartbreaking portrayal of Rocio deserves an Oscar. Every aspiring actor should study her fearless and powerful performance. Made up of equal parts strength and terror, she grounds the narrative and makes the perfect vehicle for the audience to experience the story.

So I have to amend my previous statement. Yes, by all means, see *We Vanish* as soon as you can. But also keep an eye out for the further work of Astrid Dominguez and Patricia Meneses. Personally, I cannot wait for whatever they do next.

We Vanish screened at the NewFilmmakers Los Angeles (NFMLA) Latinx 2019.

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WE VANISH (2019)

Directed and Written by Astrid Dominguez
Starring Patricia Meneses, Luisa Huertas, Estaphany Henanez, etc.

MOVIE RATING 10/10