

What We Are Watching

NFMLA's Latin & Hispanic Cinema Festival Features Women on the Edge

by [Zyortza](#) ♦ September 19, 2025

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Film festivals are always a window into other worlds, and [NewFilmmakers Los Angeles](#) aka NFMLA's [2025 Latin and Hispanic Cinema Festival](#), taking place Saturday, September 20, is no exception. The titles that stand out to me all have women at the edge, close as a mirror. These [films](#) aren't about grand, abstract ideas of freedom or power. They're about the small, intimate battles that women fight every day just to claim a little space: over their bodies, their families, their futures, even their sense of identity.

These films unfold in three striking directions: autonomy over the body in [Punta Salinas](#), over one's fate in [The Vote](#), and over identity and liberation in [The Fish Tank](#). Together, they sketch out a portrait of what it means to live at the edge, sometimes gaining control, sometimes losing it, but always feeling the risk of being on the verge.

There's something so raw and immediate about *Punta Salinas* that it almost doesn't feel like a movie. Alba and her best friend don't play like characters – they feel like the girls you grew up with, the ones you laughed with, the ones you snuck into bathrooms with.

Alba's story is about transition – the messy, confusing shift from being a virgin to having sex for the first time – and the ripple of fears and realizations that follow. The scene that stays with me most is her sneaking into the bathroom to take a pregnancy test. She's stressed, scared, just trying to grab a quiet moment to herself. And then, bam! Someone from the family starts pounding on the door. That moment of privacy she's craving vanishes instantly, and she explodes in frustration.

It's such a familiar picture for anyone raised in a Hispanic household. The bathroom was never just yours. There's no such thing as “alone time.” And when it comes to sex, forget it, our families rarely talk about it openly. We have to figure it out ourselves, piecing together advice from friends or whispered conversations. That silence makes autonomy even harder, because you're learning about your own body in secret.

For Alba, the stress breaks only when she gets her period, and you can feel the release. It's not just relief at not being pregnant, it's that fleeting sense of getting her body back, of reclaiming herself.

Where *Punta Salinas* feels young and intimate, *The Vote* is heavy with the weight of life and death. The entire story revolves around a brutal choice: should the siblings disconnect their mother from life support or keep her hooked to the machine despite the doctors' certainty that she won't recover?

What fascinates me is the way the film places the siblings in contrast. The sister is the one who sees things as they are: she's been handling the logistics, paying attention to the medical realities, and shouldering the quiet burden of responsibility. The brother, on the other hand, clings to hope, even when it's clear that hope has no ground.

Whether the director meant to or not, this sibling dynamic feels like a reflection of many Hispanic families I've seen. Women are the ones expected to manage the hard stuff, to face reality, to make the painful decisions. Men, meanwhile, are often cushioned from that responsibility, allowed to drift a little more freely, sometimes in emotional oblivion. It's not that they don't care – it's that they've been protected from having to know the depth of every struggle.

In that sense, *The Vote* isn't only about deciding a mother's fate. It's about how women are constantly the ones asked to carry that kind of weight, to be the practical backbone, while men get to look away.

Then comes *The Fish Tank*, which throws subtlety out the window and dives straight into metaphor. The protagonist is a woman who, quite literally, becomes the fish in the fish tank.

One of the most striking images is her wrapped in clear plastic film, the kind used to package seafood. She lies there with her mouth open, tied up, as if she's being prepared for sale. When the customer enters, the chef casually asks if he wants her face covered, because some buyers prefer not to see it. It's grotesque, chilling... and brilliant. The parallel is so sharp: in fish markets, the first thing they ask is, “Do you want me to cut the head off?” Here, women's bodies are treated with the same transactional indifference, existing for male consumption.

The cinematography pushes the metaphor even further. The neon colors at the start create a moody, nightclub vibe, charged with lust. Later, the sickly yellows and greens undertones of the market make the images nauseating, mirroring how repulsive the “sale” of women's bodies truly is. It's impossible to watch without feeling unsettled, and that's the point.

The Fish Tank isn't just critiquing exploitation. It's showing how women's identities get trapped, packaged, and stripped down until they're nothing but product. And yet, by exaggerating the metaphor, the film also forces us to confront just how violent and absurd that reduction really is.

Seen together as they are at NFMLA's 2025 Latin & Hispanic Cinema Festival, these films are three variations of the same struggle. *Punta Salinas* shows us the battle over the body, learning, fearing, and finally reclaiming it in small ways. *The Vote* gives us the fight over fate, where women are asked to carry responsibilities men are spared. *The Fish Tank* exposes how women's very identities can be commodified and sold, but also how that dehumanization can be resisted through art.

What I loved most about NFMLA's Latin festival is that it doesn't present women as passive victims. Instead, it highlights the moments of reckoning, the edges where power is tested and autonomy is demanded, even in environments stacked against them.

These aren't just stories on screen. They're reflections of lived realities, familiar in different ways to so many of us. And that's what makes them unforgettable.



Catch all three films – *Punta Salinas*, *The Vote*, and *The Fish Tank* – at [NFMLA's 2025 Latin & Hispanic Cinema Festival](#). It takes place Saturday, September 20 from 2:00-10:15 pm at the South Park Center on Hill St in DTLA.