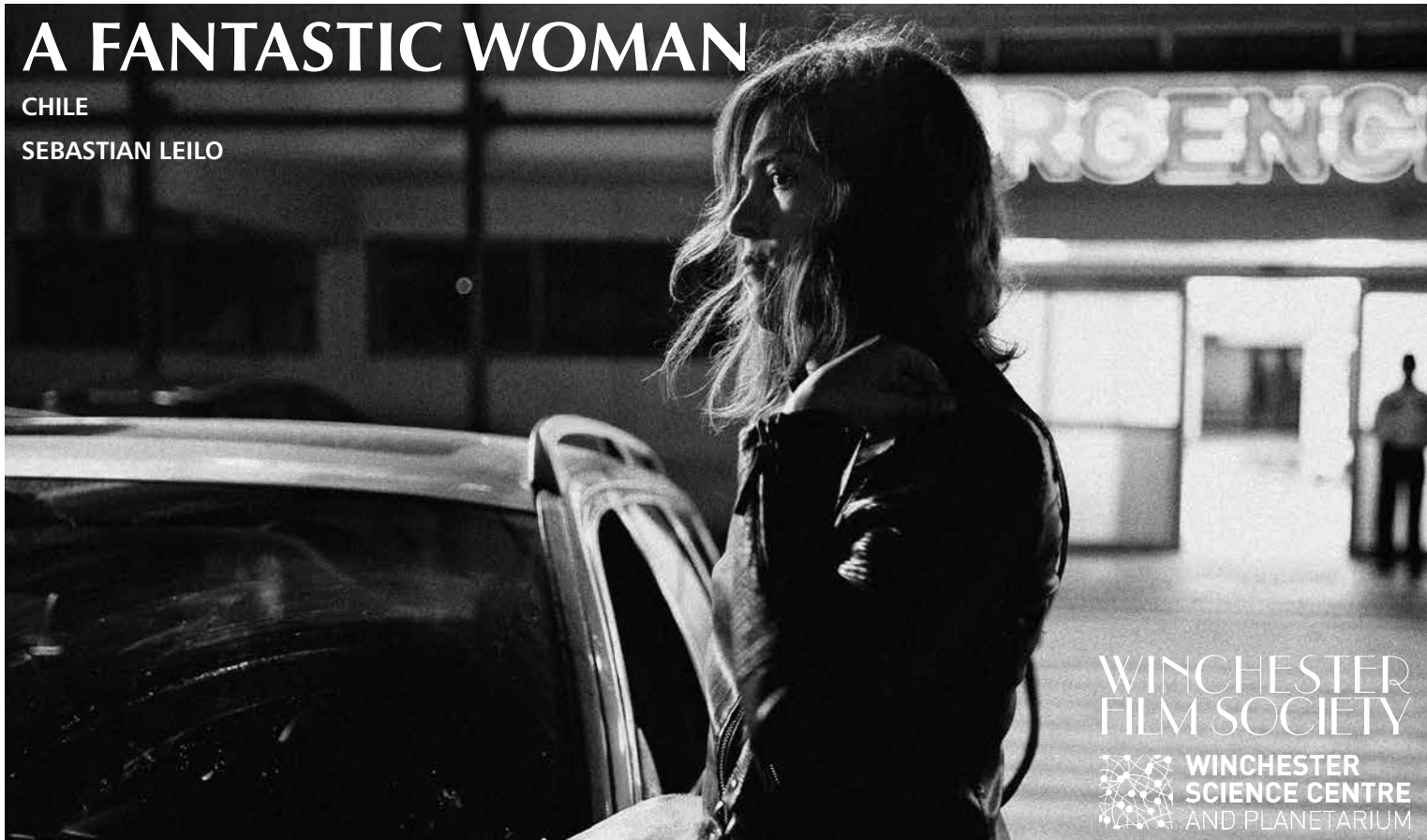


# A FANTASTIC WOMAN

CHILE

SEBASTIAN LEILO



WINCHESTER  
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The viewer first encounters Marina Vidal (Daniela Vega), the defiant, enigmatic protagonist of Sebastián Leilo's fifth feature, as she sings a jaunty 1970s number immortalised by Puerto Rican salsa star Héctor Lavoe. "Your love is yesterday's newspaper," she serenades, sharing complicit glances with the man identified as her partner, Orlando (Francisco Reyes), the 57-year-old owner of a textile company who has come to the hotel club where she is singing to pick her up for dinner. The film's opening scenes focus on Orlando in both work (office) and leisure (sauna) spaces, leading the viewer to believe he is to be the film's protagonist – one of numerous false pointers impishly dropped into the screenplay. It is, however, Marina who quickly takes over as the film's lead as she deals with the aftermath of Orlando's sudden demise.

Early sequences work to establish the relaxed intimacy of the couple's relationship: the informal birthday dinner at a Chinese restaurant; their tender dance; the passion of their lovemaking back at Orlando's flat. They are palpably at ease in each other's company. But from the moment Orlando suffers an aneurysm 12 minutes into the film, everything changes. Marina, a trans woman, is shut out of his affairs by both his family and by the authorities: framed peering through the window of the hospital emergency room where Orlando is being

treated; left standing in a space designated an 'área sucia' (dirty area); made to leave the apartment she shared with Orlando; confronted and thrown out of his wake at the pointedly titled Church of the Sacred Family.

*A Fantastic Woman* is, in many ways, a tale of emotional survival in the wake of verbal, physical and psychological abuse. Undermined, ostracised and even criminalised, Marina is made to feel a social pariah – by the doctor (Alejandro Goic) who informs her of Orlando's death, asking if 'Marina Vidal' is her nickname; and by Cortés (Amparo Noguera), the female detective from the sexual offences unit, who assumes that theirs was a violent, abusive relationship. "You don't need to treat me like a criminal," she tells the doctor, who has asked the police to bring her back in after she runs out of the hospital in shock. The frequent side-view filming of these encounters points to a confrontational hostility that marginalises Marina, repeatedly pushing her out of conversations. The complicit mutterings between the policeman and the doctor at the hospital find a later echo in the whispered encounter between Cortés and the forensic services doctor who is asked to examine Marina.

**Maria Delgado, Sight & Sound, BFI**

**WRITERS:** Sebastian Leilo & Gonzalo Maza **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Benjamin Echazarreta **MUSIC:** Nani Garcia & Matthew Herbert  
**CAST:** Marina Vidal Daniela Vega | Orlando Francisco Reyes | Gabo Luis Gnecco | Sonia Aline Küppenheim

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