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10,000 KM (Long Distance): Malaga Review

10:52 AM PDT 4/7/2014 by Jonathan Holland

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The Bottom Line

The distinctions between human connections and Internet connections are the focus of this distinctive, perceptive and bang up-to-date two-hander.

Venue

Malaga Spanish Film Festival (competing) [malaga-693929#comments](#)

Director

Carlos Marques-Marcet

Carlos Marques-Marcet's debut is a take on the trials of long distance love which won five awards at Spain's recent Malaga festival.

A well-crafted, tightly controlled and emotionally probing X-ray of the attempts of one couple to use

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sona example or form and content working together. It teems with wondrous ideas about the relationship between love and technology that have probably at some point flashed through the minds of social media users – how can you be the “friend” of someone you’ve never met? – whilst revealing how though tech can support us in our illusions, it can also brutally expose them.

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'Long Distance' Wins Top Prize at Malaga Film Festival »

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Kamikaze: Malaga Review »

[\(/review/darkness-we-fall-la-cueva-691714\)](#)



In Darkness We Fall (La cueva):

Its Malaga awards and SXSW screenings should open the way to festival and arthouse screenings for this first feature by Lastor Media and **Carlos Marques-Marcet**, one of La Panda, a collective of Spanish film makers who have relocated to LA and who, it's probably fair to say, know what they're talking about when it comes to leaving home.

The opening shot seems like an opportunity for D.P. **Dagmar Weaver-Madsen** to show us what she can do before she hands over to Skype. It's a superbly-controlled and choreographed 23-minute record of intimacy, shot inside a Barcelona apartment in which a couple – photographer Alex (the bilingual **Natalia Tena**, Harry Potter's Nymphadora Tonks and Osha in *Game of Thrones*) and student Sergi (**David Verdaguer**) slowly and intensely make love (they're trying for a baby) and play around before she reveals that she's been offered a year-long residency in L.A. It's a similar prospect to that faced by many young Spaniards today, in the harsh economic climate: do I stay, and put my relationships before my professional future, or do I go?

Already, as Alex admits that she's known about the offer without telling David, the first crack has started to appear. David is studying for state exams, which Spanish viewers will realize makes him the kind of person who's opted for an easy, stable life rather than for adventure, but Alex is restless, seeing no future for herself in Spain. She leaves, and for a while, things are just fine as she uses a range of software – mainly Skype and Google Maps -- to show David her new life in Silver Lake and to prevent

herself from feeling lonely.

He amusingly teaches her to cook a meal for her new guests, and there's even a little tragi-comically awkward sex play: however close technology can bring people on opposite sides of the world, Long Distance insists, it can't bring us that close, no matter how good your Internet connection is (luckily for the film, the Internet connection between these two works surprisingly well.)

Apart from its opening and closing sequences structured as a partial diary record -- "Day 1", "Day 16" etc. roll by seamlessly thanks to the precision-tooled editing -- *Long Distance* is a sharp critique of the powers and limitations of technology. Designed to bring people closer -- it's even possible that without the existence of Skype, Alex would either not have left David at all or forgotten about him sooner -- technology is forensically revealed as a phenomenon that can indeed bring people together at the informational level, but can be no substitute for their physical presence.

"We didn't have the obligation to talk before," David complains, and in doing so he's indirectly commenting on technology, which causes so much of a relationship to go missing. Indeed, the technology, rather than bringing the lovers closer, drives them apart, with Alex for the first time able to observe her boyfriend from a distance and to gauge what he's really like. She doesn't too much like what she sees.

Tena shared the best actress award at Malaga for a soul-bearing performance as Alex, whose sufferings are painfully natural and nuanced, aided by dialogue that some viewers will find joltingly familiar from their own experience.

"Can we talk about something that isn't our relationship?" she irritably asks David at one point, and the viewer starts to ask the same question. Alex's move has given her a life outside the relationship, while David stays locked into his, and essentially he doesn't change from first frame to last. David is very good looking but not particularly appealing, and at one point there's a touch of the psychopath about him. (One scene sets him up to destroy his computer, though naturally he can't quite go that far.) But the bigger issue is that David is too emotionally limited to sustain interest through the whole running time.

The film's use of multiple screens is sometimes telling, sometimes nicely ambiguous. When for example David's Skyped face is plastered over with images of Alex's photos because she's looking at them as she chats to him, there's already a sense that the writing is on the wall. A hand crosses over moment of beach footage of Alex: whose hand is this? Is Alex having an affair? And as David leafs morosely through an old photograph album, there is the sense that he's been left behind not only by his cutting-edge, image-driven photographer partner, but by a new world of tech which has outstripped him.

Production: Lastor Media, La Panda

Cast: Natalia Tena, David Verdaguer

Director: Carlos Marques-Marcet

Screenwriter: Marques-Marcet, Clara Roquet

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Review » (

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Producers: Tono Folguera, Sergi Moreno, Jana Diaz Juhl

Executive producers: Mayca Sanz, Pau Brunet, Danielle Schleif

Directors of photography: Dagmar Weaver-Madsen