

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Alsino and the condor</b>
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Daily Californian (Berkeley, Calif.)</i>
Date	1983 Oct 07
Type	review
Language	English English
Pagination	9, 15
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Alsino y el cóndor (Alsino and the condor), Littín, Miguel, 1982

# Alsino and the Condor

Nicaraguan cinema has taken a giant step after just four years on its feet with the release this year of its first feature-length film, *Alsino y el Condor* (Alsino and the Condor).

Produced by the Nicaraguan Institute of Cinema (INCINE), with help from Mexico, Cuba and Costa Rica, and directed by Miguel Littin, the activist Chilean director of *The Battle of Chile*, *Alsino* has been honored with an Oscar nomination for best foreign film. This Latin American collaborative effort has already entered the international film circuits, and received a warm reception at its American debut at the 26th Annual San Francisco Film Festival.

Littin's sixth film, *Alsino y el Condor* is a skillful blend of youthful fantasy and political realism. Alsino, a peasant boy in rural Nicaragua during Somoza's last year of rule, dreams of flying like a condor, of being free to

soar above the poverty and pain of his daily life. His daydreams — which include admiration of the distant city of Amsterdam, based on a picture postcard he finds — are persistent, if inadequate. As the film unfolds, we see Alsino's coming of age, highlighted by three key scenes.

In the first, a stern U.S. military advisor abducts Alsino and his young companera, and flies them by helicopter to headquarters for questioning. Upon their return, the officer tries to befriend the boy and, never removing his dark sunglasses, suggests that Alsino, too, can fly a helicopter someday if he "studies hard" and joins the Nicaraguan National Guard. Alsino has seen dead bodies thrown from these helicopters and understands that the fulfillment of his dream to fly lies elsewhere.

Later we find Alsino, utterly discouraged, high atop a gnarled, sprawling tree which

serves as a lookout on the world below. He decides to test his fantasy of flight, and hurls himself into the air. The resulting injury leaves him a hunchback for life.

Further experiences lead Alsino to join the popular movement. In the final scene of the film, Alsino's search has ended. Surrounded by villagers and the fluttering red and black banners of the Sandinista Front, Alsino is asked his name. Swept by the spirit around him, he jumps up, rifle in hand, and shouts "Manuel!," his new guerrilla name. He is soaring.

Through Alsino, we begin to see the dreams and awakening of the Nicaraguan people.

Much of the power of this film lies in its simplicity and innocence. "This is one of those films where we meet a people in the spring of their liberation," Littin told a capacity crowd at the San Francisco premiere. Filmed on location, *Alsino* also offers stunning views of the Nicaraguan terrain.

Born of the insurrection that toppled the hated regime of Anastasio Somoza, INCINE has taken on two tasks: first, to help forge a national identity and culture for a country buried under decades of U.S. cultural domination; and second, to project that identity and experience to the world.

Until recently, INCINE has focused on short documentaries. The 800,000 feet of film shot during the insurrection, and later footage of the Literacy Crusade, health campaigns and other mass initiatives, have recorded the achievements, and some shortcomings, of the revolution in a creative but essentially factual manner.

INCINE produced *Alsino* with what Littin calls "a small economic budget, but a large human budget." This piece of entertainment will help convey the Nicaraguan experience to the world, a useful cultural weapon for Nicaragua as it defends itself against U.S.-sponsored counter-revolution.