

## 20,000 Species of Bees [12]

2023 Spain 128 mins

UK released **27 October 2023**

Director **Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren**

Screenplay **Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren**

Cinematography **Gina Ferrer**

Music

Cast **Sofía Otero** (Lucía); **Patricia López Arnaiz** (Ane); **Ane Gabarain** (Lourdes); **Itziar Lazkano** (Lita); **Sara Cózar** (Leire); **Martxelo Rubio** (Gorka); **Miguel Garcés** (Jon); **Unax Hayden** (Eneko); **Andere Garabieta** (Nerea)

A few years ago, at a Seville European Film Festival ravaged by the wretched pandemic, this columnist was deeply moved by Sébastien Lifshitz's documentary *Little Girl*, which showed how a courageous mother fought for her daughter to be accepted at school with the gender her daughter identified as. Last December, the Spanish Marta Nieto travelled to the French festival Les Arcs to present her short film *Son*. In it, she narrates how a mother and her son get lost in a maze which is a great metaphor for the problems of identity and acceptance faced by transgender children (this actress is working on her first feature film as a director, on the same subject, entitled *La mitad de Ana*). The protagonist of this short film is Patricia López Arnaiz, the same actress who plays one of the main characters in *20,000 Species of Bees*, Estibaliz Urresola's debut feature film competing in the official section of the 73rd Berlin Film Festival. And I think I am right in thinking that Carla Simón, who a year ago won the Golden Bear and now forms part of this Berlin jury, will find similarities with her *Alcarràs* in this film, which also focuses on the rural life, changes and the home, although the conflicts it raises are different, but equally universal.

In *20,000 Species of Bees* we meet a married couple and their brood during the summer: the youngest of which starts to want to be called Lucia. This will

cause a hecatomb both in the rigid social structure of which she is a part and in how others see themselves, especially her mother.

Urresola, who also wrote the script, sets the action in a Basque village. A microcosm where women of different generations interact, hiding murky aspects of their past, accustomed to inertias of shame and modesty that prevent them from living their lives to the full and bravely facing the metamorphoses that the future presents them with. This is why the emergence of the transsexual daughter/sister/niece/granddaughter will act as a trigger for all of them. Each one will react in different, opposing or confrontational ways, as change is not always accepted when we encounter it.

The filmmaker, whose short film *Cuerdas* was screened at the Cannes Critics' Week, now addresses plurality, exploration and transformation with a stratospheric sensitivity, a narrative rich in subtleties and symbols (albeit with an excessive two-hour running time) and superb work by her actresses. Patricia López Arnaiz and Ane Gabarain are tremendous as in *Ane* and *Patria*, respectively, but there are not enough adjectives to commend Sofía Otero (keep an eye on her, it is impossible not to succumb to her talent).

**Alfonso Rivera**, *Cineuropa*, 22 February 2023. Translated from the Spanish by Vicky York

**Coming soon....**

Monday 22/1: *The Eternal Memory*

Monday 29/1: *Fallen Leaves*

**For details and more – visit our website**

**[www.buxtonfilm.org.uk](http://www.buxtonfilm.org.uk)**

**Buxton Film is a Registered Charity no. 1165040**

 [admin@buxtonfilm.org.uk](mailto:admin@buxtonfilm.org.uk)  [@buxtonfilm](https://twitter.com/buxtonfilm)