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-Richard Schickel, TIME MAGAZINE



only human

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FILMCLIPS



ONLY HUMAN

To the list of sentences that have probably never been uttered in prior human history, you can add "There's a duck in the bidet!" which appears in the Spanish comedy *Only Human* (*Seres Queridos*). It arrives onscreen this weekend after a delay of a few weeks from its originally scheduled opening, just in time for the more fervid among you to note rather a lot of similarities to *Little Miss Sunshine*. Both are tales of dysfunctional families featuring a lost-in-fantasy young girl, a more seriously obsessed teen brother and a grandfather who urges his grandson to sow more wild oats. Oddest of all, both films were directed by a husband and wife team, a rare category indeed. (I can't think of any others.)

Only Human's comic engine is driven by the arrival of daughter Leni (Marián Aguilera) with her fiancée Rafi (Guillermo Toledo) in tow. The family is Jewish, and though Leni has told everyone that Rafi is an Israeli, that's only technically true: he's Palestinian. That cat remains in the bag about as long as the duck in the bidet, and while the young lovers claim to be unbothered by their differences, less so mother Gloria (Argentine star Norma Aleandro, barely changed from 1985's *The Official Story*) and teen brother David (Fernando Ramallo), who is going through an Orthodox phase ("Don't touch me," he bleats when his sister tries to hug him, "you could be menstruating!").

What sounds like a heart-warming journey of family discovery thankfully veers off into light-weight slapstick, set into motion by the eager-to-please Rafi's clumsiness with a hunk of soup. Refreshingly free of religious and ethnic stereotypes, *Only Human* is at its best when it stays in a screwball vein. Brightly colored (just this side of garish) in the manner of all post-Almodovarian Spanish comedies, it stumbles only when the screenplay slips back into family therapy mode halfway through the third act, by which point it had made me laugh enough to overlook its attempt at uplifting my spirit.

—m. faust



LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

The finale of *Little Miss Sunshine* made me laugh so hard that it brought tears to my eyes, which was not the case with the rest of the film. I thought at the time that if ever a movie was redeemed by its ending, this was it. In retrospect I don't think that's the case: This is a too-often sloppy movie that slacks off just because it knows it has a killer ending in store. It also counts on a terrific cast to take up far too much of that slack.