

**PAGEANT**  
THEATER  
NOVEMBER 1 - 7

**MONOS**

FRI - SAT: 4pm and 7pm / SUN: 1pm and 4pm  
MON - THU: 4pm and 7pm

**THE WICKER MAN** THE FINAL CUT

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**in focus film festival**  
Sunday, November 10th  
3 Films 3:00-4:45 pm  
Panel 5:15-6:00 pm  
Small Plates by Chico Natural Foods  
@ Chico Women's Club  
Admission Free/Donations Accepted

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Image by Peter Thoerny

## REEL WORLD



## Fierce fantasia

### Mostly unknowns fill cast of trippy child-soldier drama

**This spectacular fever dream of a film begins with a** group of blindfolded young people playing a spooky version of soccer on a mountain somewhere in Colombia. Soon enough it becomes evident that the game is a training exercise and its players are teenage commandos hiding out while awaiting orders from the commanders in something known only as The Organization.

There's a story in all that, of course, with echoes (though not the political specifics) of recent history in Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia. And the dramatic action that does unfold in *Monos* has provoked apt comparisons with the likes of *Lord of the Flies* and *Apocalypse Now*. But it's the sensuously stylized presentation and the sustained aura of fever dream that prevails and also impresses most.

These child soldiers are known collectively as Monos and individually as Bigfoot, Rambo, Smurf, Lady, Swede, Wolf, Dog and Boom Boom. The names sound farcical, but the Monos have serious (and potentially deadly) responsibilities. On the farcical side, they are charged with protecting a milk cow named Shakira; on the increasingly serious side, they're holding a hostage, an American engineer named Sara Watson (but called only "Dotora" by the

Monos). Absurdities abound with both tasks, and fatal consequences are suddenly all around them.

Most of the cast are first-time actors, with the main exceptions being Julianne Nicholson as Sara Watson and Moisés Arias as Bigfoot. Both are American-born performers with lengthy résumés. The only other professional in the cast is Jorge Román, who plays a kindly gold prospector in one of the film's more memorable sequences. I think Arias delivers the film's most striking performance, with the other acting standouts being Nicholson, Sofia Buenaventura (as the curiously androgynous Rambo), and diminutive Wilson Salazar (as "The Messenger," the tiny but fierce and authoritative emissary who periodically brings the Monos orders from The Organization).

Writer-director Alejandro Landes brings it all back to a powerful political and moral point in the film's final remarkable moments. But for the most part, *Monos* is a lush, stylish combination of trippy fantasia and violent outdoor (and sometimes underwater) action movie, all of it in settings that are harsh, perilous and weirdly seductive. □

