

REVIEW

'Where the Tracks End' is a poetic yarn about growing up

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Any child-centered movie runs the risk of its lead stars stumbling in their roles, but some directors have made a name for themselves due to their ability to get the best performances out of their young charges. Mexican director Ernesto Contreras is certainly one of those and his latest outing on Netflix with its lyrical sounding title, "Where the Tracks End," is a marvelous example of talented young actors coming to the fore.

The story unfolds in a remote part of Mexico that is set to see the first train arriving. Dozens of workers are furiously toiling



away to lay the tracks while young boy Ikal (played with charming innocence by Kaarlo Isaacs) lives with his parents in a railway carriage. His father works on

the railroad construction site and the family has been moving from place to place, denying Ikal a chance to go to school or make friends. But the present site seems

'Where the Tracks End' is now streaming on Netflix. Supplied

a little more steady, and the boy befriends Valeria (Frida Cruz) and Diego (Montessoro Chico), who is the town's bully.

Intercutting all this is school teacher Georgina (Adriana Barraza), who is bent on getting children of the workers to attend school.

Contreras has the ability to turn his movie into something poetic, and the way he spins his growing-up yarn into a lovely piece of work is just superb. The children act with panache and the director gets them to capture a kind of truthful tenderness. There is poetry in his script, but where he slips is his inability to translate it into

cinematic language.

The classroom scenes are dull — there is very little drama here and the film loses a great opportunity. The scenes are not organic and often appear unsteady and with rather unimaginative editing playing spoil sport, a fascinating plot begins to totter. Storylines about young love that could have been explored with sensitivity are wasted with what seems like pandering to an older audience in a sudden change of tone that does not sit well with the rest of the film. The scenes are hurried, moving away in a flash that leaves viewers little time to pause, ponder and savor.