

CHULLACHAKI PRODUCCIONES  
present

# DIAS DE SANTIAGO

*(Peru, 2004)*

*a film by Josué Méndez*

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**\*\*NOMINATED\*\***

**TIGER AWARD**

*Rotterdam Film Festival, Rotterdam, The Netherlands*

**\*\*WINNER\*\***

**BEST FILM / REGARD D'OR, FIPRESCI JURY AWARD,  
ECUMENICAL JURY AWARD, E-CHANGER YOUTH JURY AWARD**

*International Film Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland*

**\*\*WINNER\*\***

**BEST ACTOR: PIETRO SIBILLE**

*Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente, Buenos Aires, Argentina*

**\*\*WINNER\*\***

**BEST DIRECTION, AUDIENCE AWARD, SIGNIS / CATHOLIC MEDIA AWARD**

*Infinity Film Festival, Alba, Italy*

**\*\*WINNER\*\***

**BEST FILM**

*Transylvania International Film Festival, Cluj, Rumania*

**\*\*WINNER\*\***

**BEST FILM**

*International Film Festival, Innsbruck, Austria*

**\*\*WINNER\*\***

**BEST FILM**

*Festival International du Nouveau Cinema, Montreal, Canada*

**\*\*WINNER\*\***

**BEST FILM**

*International Film Festival Kerala, India*

**\*\*WINNER\*\***

**BEST IBEROAMERICAN FILM**

*Miami International Film Festival, USA*

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# **DIAS DE SANTIAGO**

**a film by Josué Méndez**

*Perú 2004 – 35mm – Fiction – 83 Minutes – Color / B&W – 1: 1,66 – Dolby Digital  
with support of the Hubert Bals Fund (The Netherlands)  
and the participation of Cachoeira Films & MilColores Media*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A production of Chullachaki Producciones, Lima, Peru, DIAS DE SANTIAGO was developed in workshops funded by the Peruvian Government's film council. The film was also selected to participate in the Festival des Trois Continents' *Stage des Jeunes Producteurs* Workshop (France), and was a grant recipient of the prestigious Hubert Bals Fund for Postproduction (The Netherlands). DIAS was the first Peruvian film ever selected for competition at the Rotterdam Film Festival (2004), where it was nominated for the BEST FILM / *Tiger Award*, as well as for the AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AWARD. In addition, it has won numerous awards at other major festivals, including BEST FILM / *Grand Prix Regard D'Or* at the International Film Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland, BEST ACTOR at the Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente, Buenos Aires, Argentina, BEST FILM at the International Film Festival, Innsbruck, Austria and the *Prix de l'Avenir* at the Rencontres Internationales de Cinéma, Paris. DIAS DE SANTIAGO currently has distribution in several European markets, including Spain, Andorra, Switzerland, Austria and France.

## **BRIEF SYNOPSIS**

Santiago Roman, a rugged, 23-year-old soldier of the Peruvian Navy, returns home to Lima after years of fighting in the jungle. Combat-weary and searching for hope, Santiago is a member of a lost Peruvian generation – his spirit scarred by futile wars with Ecuador and constant fighting against terrorists and drug traffickers. He quickly finds his native Lima an unwelcoming place – his army buddies have taken to bankrobbing; the decadent club scene offers only noise and lights; prospective employers won't hire him; his applications for credit are refused. But worst of all, Santiago learns that his friends, family, and young, professional wife have become decadent or distant—and that they are, each in unique ways, unable to understand him. As his troubles converge in the film's riveting climax, DIAS DE SANTIAGO asks the question, what escape for a discharged soldier, who returns home full of hope, but finds only disappointment and inner turmoil?

## **STYLE AND THEMATIC NOTES**

DIAS DE SANTIAGO explores the inner life, frustrating contradictions, and traumatic moral suffering endured by its protagonist. Santiago's experience in the Peruvian navy included service in his country's war against Ecuador, as well as participation in its struggle against anti-government terrorists—a brutal and tricky war which pitted him against civilian men, women, children, and peasants. These memories allow him no peace.

The film paints an intimate portrait of its central character's dilemma, which is evoked with honest, intense cinematography. In the words of the Rotterdam Film Festival Director, Simon Field, "Josué Méndez has created a distinctive portrait of life in Lima... A close and following camera, tight compositions and an intermittent voice-over positions the audience close to our hero and the frustration, anger and tragedy of the situation is brought vividly to life."

## **REVIEWS**

**[Variety, Posted on Variety.com, Sun., Feb. 1, 2004, 2:33pm, PT ]**

***Days of Santiago*** (Peru)—A Chullachaki Producciones production in association with Cachoeira Films/Milcolores Media. Produced by Enid Campos. Directed, written by Josue Mendez. Santiago - Pietro Sibille

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By **DEBORAH YOUNG**

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**A surprisingly intense debut from Peruvian director Josue Mendez, "Days of Santiago" details a young war veteran's tragic inability to adjust to civilian society. Though convincingly set in the lower depths of Lima, the story embodies a universal truth about the experience of former soldiers in many times and places. Edgy camerawork and a volcanic perf from lead Pietro Sibille should appeal to international distribs looking for smaller, quality fare.**

At 23, former Navy Seal Santiago (Sibille) has returned to Lima's slums after fighting for years against Ecuador and terrorists. He and his buddies (one in a wheelchair) are far from genre stereotypes -- they're reasonable young men who want a normal life far from the killing fields. Every door seems closed to them; on their soldiers' pensions, they can't buy a refrigerator, much less an education.

While his friends plan to rob banks, Santiago refuses to return to the stress of living in constant danger. He starts driving a cab and doing computer training part time. Underneath, however, he's a tumult of suppressed rage and paranoia.

Santiago's marriage breaks up not for lack of love, but because he can't control his violent reactions. He struggles to impose a maniacal order on his life and those around him. Failing that, he desperately tries to imitate the young people who flock to an all-day discotheque.

Unable to handle any kind of incident without exploding in frustration, he grapples with his overwhelming inner contradictions until the tension explodes. Finale sidesteps predictable cliché in favor of psychological complexity.

Sibille earns sympathy in a tough, gritty role that still leaves room for kindness and noble sentiments. Supporting cast creates a realistic wall against which he slams his traumas. His feuding slum family is particularly unforgettable.

Mendez adopts a mixed style of color and B&W photography, which is alternated without apparent reason. A constantly moving camera and fairly rapid-fire cutting give film a jagged, modern look.

Read the full article at: <http://www.variety.com/story.asp?l=story&r=VE1117922977&c=31>

**[Buenos Aires Herald, Sun., Apr. 18, 2004]**

By **Pablo Suárez**, for the *Herald*

Fortunately, filmgoers at the VI edition of the booming Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Films didn't have to wait long to find a truly remarkable feature running in this year's official competition. *Días de Santiago*, the film debut of 28-year-old Peruvian director José Méndez, spins the tale of Santiago, a war veteran who strives hard to find a place in civil society, yet feels everything around him is hostile, menacing, and on the verge of collapse. To him, the only way to survive in this urban human jungle is to keep fighting, as if he were still a soldier at war.

As the director himself stated at the end of a quite successful screening, he took the legendary Martin Scorsese's lead character in *Taxi Driver* as the basis for the construction of Santiago. That, and a few other parallels in the

plot are reminiscent of Scorsese's film, but that's as far it goes. *Dias de Santiago*, indeed, is by no means a case of copycat filmmaking. Instead it takes *Taxi Driver* as a star off point to draw an altogether different picture of Peruvian outcasts. This is an unflinching indictment of the way the Army can only destroy what's human in a human being. It is also a grim and never condescending depiction of a society gone awry, with no way out for those abandoned by society itself.

With a most brilliant performance by Pietro Sibille as Santiago ( and a great ensemble cast as well), the film is narrated from his subjective viewpoint and this it intertwines grainy black and white photography (which renders the protagonist's inner turmoil) with colour aimed at depicting everyday reality as it is, as opposed to how the protagonist perceives it.

Moreover, Santiago, is the first person narrator of the film, and thus his voiceover is the main vehicle to convey the traits of this semideranged mind. And yes, the voice over functions quite well since it never illustrates what the images show, but rather provides a counterpoint to them. Above all, what makes this film so valuable is its astounding verisimilitude and the way it grasps reality - bluntly. And, at the same time, it avoids blows below the belt and never hammers its message into views. Instead, it casts an utterly lucid gaze upon so complex a subject matter. (...)

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**[*Cahiers du Cinéma*, May 2004, "Cinéma en DV-loppement"]**

**By Elisabeth Lequeret (Trans. Gudula Meinzolt, Asa Greenberg)**

In DIAS DE SANTIAGO, Méndez presents Lima as a large city (pubs and nights of drunkenness for some, unemployment for others, weariness for all); it is also the territory for a mental battle, which pits Santiago against his surroundings. Méndez conveys this tension by alternating black/white and coloured sequences. This somewhat naive modernism has enabled DIAS to generate significant praise (it's been showered with prizes in Toulouse, Fribourg, Alba). But the film's real force is in the elegance of the actors' direction, and in its precise mise en scène.

In interviews Méndez expresses an eclectic love of cinema, mentioning – in no particular order - Wong Kar-Wai, Lelouch, Trapero (*Mundo Grua/Crane World*), Gutierrez Alea (*Memories of Underdevelopment*) and *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*. Prior to his work on *Dias de Santiago*, Méndez worked as an editor on films (directed by his compatriot, Alberto Durand), and as an assistant director on commercials. Like most of his colleagues, closely connected to cinemathèques and maniacally in love with DVD, Méndez' life is cinema, but he is living on publicity.

Interview with Josué Méndez, Peru:

"The writing of this script took me three years. Then I followed Coppola's method: lock up the actors in a house for two months and ask them to improvise. During the rehearsals I threw away 70% of the script. I got inspired by the actors, especially by Pietro Sibille [his main actor, NDLR] who enriched the script a lot. The real Santiago by whom my film is directly inspired, stayed with us during all the rehearsals and the shooting. When we arrived to the point we wanted to get, we began with the shooting which took 24 days.

I made the film with my own resources, some sponsors, the Hubert Bals Funds (Rotterdam) and the support by the workshop Produire au Sud (Festival of the 3 continents, Nantes). I filmed in Super 16mm for economic reasons but also because I prefer this grain to the one of 35mm. Today in Peru, a whole generation of young filmmakers is going to be well known. Last year, a first film, *Palomas de Papel*, by Fabrizio Aguilar, drew 300.000 spectators. *El destino no tiene favoritos* by Alvaro Velarde was presented in Rotterdam. Many other filmmakers are about to finish their first films: Eduardo Mendoza, Baltazar Caravedo, Jorge Carmona and Claudia Llosa who won the prize for the best script at the Havana Film Fest."

## Press Vancouver

This sure-handed immersion into the mental state of a young Peruvian war veteran is as disturbing as it is subtle. Filmmaker Josué Méndez gets right into the cortex of shell-shocked 23-year-old protagonist Santiago (Pietro Sibille, in a stellar performance), who has trouble grasping that the home to which he dreamed of returning while fighting in the jungle is as much of a hellhole in its own way. That's not too surprising from an outsider's perspective, given that home is the slums of Lima, with its mouldering pastel-coloured concrete, public washing stations and utter lack of social mobility. It's a soul-destroying setting, and the film delivers an unflinching look - occasionally contrasted with cathartic visits to a clean, powerful, crashing ocean beach. Beyond describing the hopelessness of male youth in Santiago's situation - despite their service to the country they don't qualify for educational bursaries - the story also shows the plight of lower-class women, whose only bargaining chips are sexuality or abnegation through hard work, as well as the tragedy spawned by a senseless cultural fealty to machismo. Grainy black and white images alternate with colour in increasing frequency as Santiago finds that the paranoia and despair lodged in his brain becomes intertwined with his daily reality. The various members of Santiago's believably dysfunctional family, the implosion of which leads to the inconclusive climax, are also startlingly memorable.“ *Gudrun Will, The Vancouver Courier, September 26, 2004*

„Although he's nowhere near as antisocial, and he's much more attractive to women, the hero of this neorealist drama is basically a Peruvian Travis Bickle. Somewhat predictable in places, DIAS DE SANTIAGO is nonetheless more than redeemed by Josué Méndez's dynamical directorial style, informed not by the usual hyperkinetics but by a deep sense of moral integrity. Cesare Zavattini would doubtless approve. „  
*MH, www.VanRamblings.com: 23rd Annual Vancouver International Film Festival Guide*

## Critiques presse, France

### **L'Humanité** (Michael Melinard)

Véritable tableau de la fin de l'insouciance, dépuçelage tardif, douloureux et nécessaire, c'est le film d'un observateur malicieux et privilégié, réjouissante réussite du contraire d'un donneur de leçons.

### **Positiv** (Matthieu Darras)

La caméra de Josué Méndez, vissée à son anti-héros comme les Dardenne à Rosetta, (...) dégage une force exceptionnelle. Un premier film choc, tout aussi limpide dans son propos que haletant dans sa forme.

### **Studio Magazine** (Thomas Baurez)

Le réalisateur Josué Méndez (28 ans seulement !) brosse un portrait brut et sans concession de son pays. Pietro Sibille, l'interprète principal, au magnétisme rare, suggère parfaitement les conflits intérieurs de son personnage. Sa force évoque celle de De Niro dans Taxi Driver, dont ce long métrage peut aisément se réclamer.

### **Cahiers du Cinéma** (Nicolas Azalbert)

Par une maîtrise et une rigueur impressionnantes pour un premier film, le finale se soustrait (...) aux conventions et à l'idéologie à l'oeuvre chez Scorsese, conférant à Dias de Santiago une indépendance et une droiture rares, seules bases possibles pour l'édification d'un cinéma péruvien.

## Press Release New York

DIAS DE SANTIAGO - New York Times, December 8, 2005

### MOVIE REVIEW | 'DIAS DE SANTIAGO'

In Lima, Cab-Driving Veteran Boils With Rage of Alienation

By NATHAN LEE

Santiago Roman (Pietro Sibille) can't buy a refrigerator. The money he earns from taxi driving won't meet the minimum monthly payment, and when it comes to lines of credit, his status as a recently discharged sailor in the Peruvian Navy adds up to exactly nothing. Worse things have happened, and there is worse yet in store, but this latest hurt is one too many, and Santiago nearly cracks up with rage.

Written and directed by Josué Méndez, *Dias de Santiago*, his first film, zeros in on the disconnect between Santiago's sense of entitlement and the unforgiving realities of life in contemporary Lima. If *Taxi Driver* is one obvious model for this earnest, compact drama, Mr. Méndez also appears indebted to films of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. He hasn't the formal chops of those master cinéastes, but he shares their empathy for the dispossessed, and a tight, nervy point of view that hews close to the actor.

Mr. Sibille breaks no sweat under the scrutiny, giving a quiet, concentrated performance that lends heft to less than revelatory material. The frustrations of *Dias de Santiago* mount to an unresolved climax that grips you with sympathy for its beleaguered veteran - and leaves you wondering what its promising director will do next.

DIAS DE SANTIAGO - New York Post, December 8, 2005

### HAIL 'TAXI' FROM PERU

By V.A. MUSETTO

Rating: \*\*\*

DIAS DE SANTIAGO, Peruvian Taxi Driver.

SOMETIMES peace can be more of a hell than war. Case in point: Santiago Roman, the unlikely hero of *Dias de Santiago*, directed by Josue Mendez, a Yale-educated Peruvian. Santiago is a hunky 23-year-old veteran who has just returned to Lima after years in the jungle, fighting in Peru's war with Ecuador. I fought three years for my country, he tells anyone and everyone. But nobody cares. When Santiago and his wife try to buy a refrigerator, the salesman wants Santiago to show him the money, not his navy ID.

Family life is a mess: Santiago's wife is a nag; his father, a pedophile; his brother, a wife-beater. Santiago is barely able to contain his rage over his plight and the state of society in general. He stalks the streets, ready to take on anybody who looks at him the wrong way. Always be ready to reduce the enemy, he mutters, as if he were still in the navy.

*Dias de Santiago* arrives in New York after winning several prizes at international festivals. (I first saw it in Transylvania in 2004.) Comparisons to Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* can't be helped, especially when Santiago gets a gig driving a cab. In fact, Mendez admits that Travis Bickle was the basis for his angry young man.

Pietro Sibille is exceptional as Santiago, and the rest of the cast turn in dynamic performances. The jump cuts and grainy Super 16mm photography add atmosphere. If only Mendez hadn't chosen to alternate between color and black-and-white. The innovation is distracting and serves no readily apparent purpose.

DIAS DE SANTIAGO - Village Voice, December 6, 2005

Exact Fare: Peruvian Drama Takes 'Taxi Driver' Route  
by David Ng

Peru may not have the same world-cinema cachet as Lat-Am heavyweights Brazil and Argentina, but judging by Josué Méndez's assured feature debut, the country has more than enough socioeconomic discontentment to foment a new wave of angry young cineastes. Set in a sweltering Lima slum, *Días de Santiago* recounts several weeks in the life of Santiago Roman (Pietro Sibille), a 23-year-old Peruvian navy veteran who returns home only to face unemployment, crime, and less than welcoming parents. His attempts at landing a respectable office job prove humiliating, and Santiago soon sinks into a debilitating depression. The movie's similarities to *Taxi Driver* (young war veteran, urban filth, pressure-cooker psychodrama) reach a thematic apex when Santiago accepts a gig as a cabbie. Like Travis Bickle though far less nuts, Santiago holds the sleazy world at a contemptible distance only to be gradually drawn in by the specter of lost girlhood in this case, a gaggle of club-going nymphets ranging in temperament from madonna to whore. Méndez contrasts his protagonist's highly subjective journey with a neorealistic visual style. If the movie lacks narrative originality, it leaves a singularly raw impression of having spent time inside someone's sweaty, ill-fitting skin.

## Awards and Festivals 2004/2005

### Awards:

- **Grand Prix Regard d'Or, Ecumenical Jury - Award, Fipresci Jury Award, E-changer Award (Youth Jury):** Fribourg International Film Festival
- **Best direction, Audience Award, Signis Award (catholic award):** Infinity Film Festival Alba, Italy
- **Best actor:** Buenos Aires, Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente
- **Best Film:** Transilvania International Film Festival, Cluj
- **Best Film:** International Film Festival Innsbruck
- Prix de l'Avenir.** Rencontres internationales de cinéma, Paris
- Best actor, Best Film (critics jury, together with „Los muertos“ by Lisandro Alonso), Best Peruvian film (CONACINE), Best Peruvian film (FXSOUND), Conamcos Award (catholic church):** Festival Iberoamericano „El cine“, Lima, Peru
- **Best Film:** Montreal Festival International du Nouveau Cinema-
- **Best actor :** Cuenca Film Festival, Ecuador
- **Critics Award, Special Jury Mention :** Festival Iberamericano “Cero Latitud”, Quito
- **Special Jury Mention:** Festival Intl. del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, Habana, Cuba - Opera Prima
- **Best actor, Jury Special Mention :** Bratislava International Film Festival, Slovenia
- **Best Film:** International Film Festival Kerala, India
- **Best Director :** International Film Festival Pune, India
- **Best Iberoamerican Film :** Miami International Film Festival
- **Premio Tre Castelli,** Bellinzona, Switzerland (Youth Festival)
- **Best First Film, best director, best actor, best script, best editing, best soundtrack:** Irvine Latin American Film Festival, Providence, USA:
- **Best Film:** Vladivostok International Film festival
- **Best script :** Festival Valdivia, Chile,
- **Best script :** World Film Festival Bangkok,

### Festivals

- International Film Festival Rotterdam 2004 - Tiger Competition (World premiere)

- Berlin Film Festival (European Filmmarket)
- Rencontres Cinémas d'Amérique Latine, Toulouse
- Fribourg International Film Festival - *Grand Prix Regard d'Or, Ecumenical Jury - Award, Fipresci Jury Award, E-changer Award (Youth Jury)*
- Infinity Film Festival Alba, Italy - *Best direction, Audience Award, Signis Award (catholic award)*
- Buenos Aires, Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente - *Best actor*
- International Istanbul Film Festival
- Open Doek Film Festival, Belgium
- Transilvania International Film Festival, Cluj -*Best Film*
- International Film Festival Innsbruck - *Best Film*
- Festival Iberoamericano de cine „El cine“ Lima, Peru:
- Karlovy Vary International Film Festival
- Munich International Film Festival
- Jerusalem International Film Festival
- Sydney Film Festival
- New Zealand Film Festivals
- Melbourne International Film Festival
- Rencontres internationales de cinéma, Paris: *Prix de l'Avenir*
- Toronto International Film Festival
- Biarritz Festival Latinoamericain, France
- Rio de Janeiro International Film Festival
- Pusan International Film Festival
- Vancouver International Film Festival
- Montreal Festival International du Nouveau Cinema- *Best Film*
- International Film Festival Valladolid, Spain
- AFI Film Festival, Los Angeles
- Leeds International Film Festival, UK
- International Thessaloniki Film Festival
- Internationales Filmfestival Mannheim- Heidelberg
- Cuenca Film Festival, Ecuador - *Best actor*
- Stockholm International Film Festival
- Oslo International Film Festival
- Festival Iberoamericano "Cero Latitud", Quito - *Critics Award, Special Jury Mention*
- Festival Intl. del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, Habana, Cuba - Opera Prima: *Special Jury Mention*
- Mar de Plata Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente, Argentina (Marfíci)

- Bratislava International Film Festival, Slovenia - *Best actor*
- International Film Festival of India (IFFI) (Cinema of the World), New Delhi/Goa
- International Film Festival Kerala - *Best Film*
- Black Night Film Festival Talinn, Estonia
- International Film Festival Chennai, India
- International Film Festival Mumbai, India
- International Film Festival Pune, India *Best Film*
- Palm Springs International Film Festival
- World Film Festival Glasgow
- Miami International Film Festival *Best Film*
- Portland International Film Festival
- Festival du cinéma peruvien Paris, France
- Cinema Novo Festival, Belgium
- Human Rights Watch Film Festival London
- Festival Internacional de Cine Contemporáneo de la Ciudad de México
- Hong Kong International Film Festival
- Festival Internacional de Cine Guadalajara, Mexico
- San Diego Latino Film Festival, USA
- International Film Fest San Francisco
- Festival Cinematografico Internacional del Uruguay
- Cine Las Americas, Austin, USA
- Minneapolis International Film Festival, USA
- Providence Rhode Island Film Festival, USA
- Natfilm Festival Copenhagen, Denmark
- XXI Reflets du Cinéma Ibérique et Latino-Américain de Lyon, Francia.
- IndieLisboa International Filmfestival, Portugal
- Cleveland International Film Festival
- Cinequest Film Festival, San José, USA
- Philadelphia Film Festival
- Irvine Latin American Film Festival, Providence, USA: *Best Film, best director, best actor, best music*
- Jacksonville International Film Festival, USA
- Isola Film Festival, Slovenia
- Seattle International Film Festival, USA
- Split International Film Festival
- San Francisco International Film Festival
- Latin American Filmfestival Varsovia, Poland

- Cinedecouverte Filmfestival Belgium
- Raindance Filmfestival London
- International Filmfest Taipeh
- Milwaukee International Film Festival
- Latin American Film Festival Varsovia
- Durban International Film Festival, South Africa
- New York Latino Film Festival
- Tulipanes Latino Art & Film Festival, Holland, MI, USA
- Vladivostoc International Film Festival, *Best Film*
- Festival Valdivia, Chile, *Best script*
- International Filmfestival Milwaukee, USA
- World Film Festival Bangkok, *Best script*
- Brasilia International Film Festival
- Filmfestival CCBB, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
- Santo Domingo Film Festival
- San Juan Cinemafest, Puerto Rico
- Festival de Cine de Asuncion, Paraguay
- Kolkata Film Festival, India
- Discovering Latin America Filmfest London
- Cinémas d'Espagne et d'Amérique Latine de Bruxelles
- Mostra di Cinema iberoamericano, Bologna, Italy
- Ethnographic Filmfestival Turku, Finland
- Puerto Vallarta Film Festival, Mexico
- Palm Springs International Film Festival

## **COMMENTS**

### **[Simon Field, Director, Filmfestival Rotterdam 2004]**

“Modern, gritty realism from Peru gives an impressive face to the energy and hopelessness of life in a large third-world city. Skilfully interweaving black and white and colour footage in a way that both heightens the film’s realism and the sense of despair and frustration of his protagonist, this young Peruvian director has created a distinctive portrait of life in Lima. He makes very palpable the way the young man’s training has circumscribed his life, made him the victim of assumptions in the reactions of others, in spite of the fact that his army career has been in their service. A close and following camera, tight compositions and an intermittent voice-over positions the audience close to our hero and the frustration, anger and tragedy of the situation is brought vividly to life.”

### **[Jury Reviews, Fribourg International Film Festival]**

#### **BEST FILM / GRAND PRIX «LE REGARD D’OR**

The International Jury appreciated the cinematographic quality and the performance of actor Pietro Sibille, who excelled in portraying the obsessional and psychotic vertigo of the main character. *Días de Santiago* takes up the classic subject of the difficult return of veterans, placing it, with dexterity and brio, in the context of today’s Peru. *Días de Santiago* is a first film and without a doubt, the best film of the selection.

#### **ECUMENICAL JURY AWARD**

After three years of war during which he learned only to kill, a man returns to civilian life in Lima. In an original and powerful style that describes the character’s inner world and the terrible social reality all at once, this film recounts a man’s desperate resistance not only to the violence of society, but to his own inner violence as well. The unfolding of the narration shows that this violence is not a fatality.

#### **THE FIPRESCI JURY AWARD**

[...This award is given for] the psychological development of their characters done through outstanding and affirmative acting and fluent direction.

#### **E-CHANGER AWARD**

The Youth Jury was impressed by the way in which the director constructed his film on the story of Santiago, its main character, whose acts and psychology are intricately analysed and developed. Director Josué Méndez casts a critical eye on the army as well as on the social and economic situation of his country, which has practically no perspectives to offer its youth. The dramatic build-up of the film is reinforced by the masterful use of cinematographic techniques in the aesthetics of the image, the editing and the sound track. Very convincing acting, sustained tension, a capacity to move the soul and very promising artistic potential all contributed to justifying this choice.

### **[Jury Reviews, Infinity Film Festival, Alba, Italy]**

#### **BEST DIRECTOR**

The award "Albacinema" for Best Director [goes] to the film "Dias de Santiago", by Josue Mendez, for the expressionist strength with which it describes the road of an individual destiny, at the bottom of a world and of a reality sealed by a tragic and dramatic instinctive strength.

#### **SIGNIS AWARD**

“*Días de Santiago*” by the Peruvian director Josué Méndez describes with visual strength an attempt from the main character Santiago to get out of his war nightmares to deal with a chaotic environment where no one can help him and he can’t help anybody. In this dramatic situation Santiago keeps faith in his own desperate mission of changing himself and the others. While paying an extreme attention to details, Méndez harmonizes different styles to build a powerful symbiosis with the protagonist.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

After years of fighting Ecuadorian soldiers, terrorist forces, and druglords in the Andes and Amazon, the young Peruvian veteran Santiago Roman is back in Lima. He wants to fit in. He wants to settle down with his wife, his family, and be at peace with himself.

Obstacles appear at every turn: despite the recognition he received in the military, he's denied the free state education promised to soldiers by the government. He visits a private three-year technical institute, but can't pay the fees with his miniscule discharge pay. His dream of holding a professional job, and providing for his young wife are vanishing fast.

Walking the streets of Lima, Santiago becomes sensitive to the city's hostility. He imagines an amorphous "enemy" surrounds him, and has paranoid fantasies about beating innocent people who walk the street next to him. Plagued with a crisis of identity and unable to conform, Santiago can't free himself from his past. His perspective understands the world in terms of enemies and friends, ambushes and rescues.

Eager for solidarity, Santiago gets together with his Navy buddies in a small, local park. During their service, the young men harbored high expectations for their return. Now they realize that without formal education their prospects are bleak. They don't want to work as bodyguards or cab-drivers in the frenetic city, but the government doesn't help them find more substantive positions. How will they attain the levels of recognition and success they enjoyed as soldiers? Some suggest robbing a bank, but Santiago wants no part of it. He's tired of danger and conflict.

At home in his simple but clean apartment, Santiago has difficulty dealing with the pressures of married life. He feels inadequate for not managing to provide for his wife, Mari, and ends up quarrelling and beating her. Eventually, he leaves his apartment and goes to stay with his parents.

Santiago moves into the dirty flat shared by his parents, sister Ines (15), big brother Coco, and Coco's wife, Elisa. But life in this home is anything but harmonious. Santiago's father makes Ines wear tight clothes to impress the men in neighborhood; Coco, never works, and beats Elisa whenever he comes home drunk. Meanwhile Elisa flirts awkwardly with Santiago. A few days later, Santiago's parents tell him to move out. They have enough troubles, and he's an extra mouth to feed; he should go back to Mari. So he returns to his wife and their simple apartment..

One day, tragedy strikes: Santiago goes to the apartment of Rata, his navy buddy, but finds that he's hanged himself from the rafters. Flustered, Santiago decides to make every effort to adjust to life in Lima—no way he'll end up like his friend.

Santiago takes Rata's car, puts up a 'Taxi' sign, and drives through the city looking for fares. It's tough to make a living, but he uses his earnings to pay for computer classes at a technical institute. Then he meets a group of party girls. At first Santiago enjoys flirting and partying with them at a flashy dance club. But soon their flippant view of life dissapoints him. Despite their flirtation, Santiago's relationship with the girls goes nowhere. Then, after an argument with Mari, Santiago hits her, and later returns to the apartment and finds she's moved out.

One day Elisa, the wife of Coco (Santiago's brother), shows up in Santiago's bedroom. She's been beaten, and begs Santiago to help her run away. Realizing the only way to feel useful again would be to rescue and protect somebody, And Elisa is in need of help. So Santiago grabs his gun and rushes to his parents' flat, with the intention of taking Elisa away with him.

Then Santiago makes a shocking discovery— opening the door to one of the rooms in the flat, Santiago finds his father, bent over his teen sister, Ines. Santiago points the gun at his father; his mother begs him not to do it—he'll only ruin all of them forever. Santiago puts the gun down, and leaves the flat. He should just go away.

Back in his apartment Santiago reflects on his fate. He stares ponderously, coldly at the pistol, turning it round and round in his hand. He places the pistol in his mouth. Has the reality of society defeated him? Will he pull the trigger and find an escape in death? Or can he somehow find a way to abandon his convictions, and continue amidst the decadence, chaos, and depravity of the modern city? The question is left unanswered, and the dilemma continues...

## **DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

Seen scrawled on a wall in Lima:

*“They call wild the river that overflows, but not the fucker who oppresses it.”*

Two things drove me to make this film. One is the previous quote, which I saw one day as I walked through the streets of my native city. The other was my encounter with the real-life Santiago, a young Peruvian ex soldier. His generosity, humanity, and sympathy, made me aware of the terrible indifference of my country's government and society toward people who had believed in their country.

For me, Santiago Roman, the character, represents a deceived Peruvian generation, which traded youth for combat experience, and then returned home to fight for survival in a society with no memory of their heroism – a society in which the governing system prepares children for war, only to abandon them in peacetime.

“Días de Santiago” is an intimate and urban film about the city that has always been my home. It deals with the grittiness of urban life, the streets, the smog, the traffic. It has, therefore, no flashbacks. The memory of war is always in Santiago's head, and is expressed in his voice-over. So this world, which we only hear, is contrasted with the world we see.

“Días de Santiago“ is a story about a man's search for order and balance in a chaotic world.

Both the visual style and structure of the film are eclectic and at times fragmented, as is the story's protagonist. As Santiago lacks direction at the beginning of the story, likewise the film struggles to find direction. There is no clear path, no clear end. Only when he makes the decision to begin his new life does the film gather a faster pace— and from there, the story flows rapidly, following the main character as he struggles to fit in and rescue the people he encounters in civilian life.

The camera is most of the time hand-held, the intention being an attempt to get the audience closer to the mental state of the character, to his paranoia, instability, and social fragility.

Likewise, the editing is at times jumpy, to convey the anxiety of the impulses that rush through his mind.

## DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

With DIAS, director Josue Mendez makes his feature film debut. Mendez is an up-and-coming Latin American director, and was recently selected (with five other filmmakers) for the Cannes Film Festival's prestigious *Residence* program, which provides young filmmakers with housing and a 4 ½ months' living stipend, to be used for completion of a new script. His short films have appeared at major festivals such as Oberhausen, Sao Paolo, Tampere, and MoMA New Directors/New Films. Other credits include work as Editor on several feature films, including *Doble Juego* ("The Con Game"), the first Peruvian film ever selected for the Sundance Film Festival (2004), as well as other production positions on Peruvian documentaries, commercials, and TV projects. Mendez is also a teacher of film in his native Lima. He is a graduate of Yale University, where he helped found the college's first undergraduate television station, and obtained a double-BA in film and Latin American Studies. Josue is currently working on his next film project, entitled GODS.

## FILMOGRAPHY

### As Director

#### Short Films

1997 – "Solo Buenos Amigos", 16mm

1998 – "Dreams & other adagios", 16mm

1999 – "Parelisa", 16mm

#### Feature Film

2004 – "Días de Santiago", 35mm

### As Film Editor

2001 - "Bala Perdida", director Aldo Salvini, Iguana Producciones

2003 - "Páramo", director Daniel Rodríguez, Cinecorp

2004 - "Doble Juego", director Alberto Durant, Agua Dulce Producciones

2004 - "Muero por Muriel", director Augusto Cabada, Iguana Producciones

## CAST DESCRIPTION

**Pietro Sibille**, one of the most talented young actors of the Peruvian stage, after making his big-screen debut on Taylor Hackford's "Proof of Life" (Warner Bros, 2000), heads the cast of "Días de Santiago" in the role of Santiago Roman. He's supported by **Milagros Vidal (Andrea), Marisela Puicón (Elisa), Alheli Castillo, Lili Urbina, Ricardo Mejia, Erick Garcia and Ivy La Noire**, all highly regarded in Peru for their work in television and theater.

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Feature Film Title:	Días de Santiago
Director & Screenwriter:	Josué Méndez
Producer:	Enid Campos
Director of Photography:	Juan Durán
Sound Designer:	Francisco Adrianzén
Art Director:	Eduardo Camino
Film Editor:	Roberto Benavides
Casting:	Jorge Sánchez Freundt
Production manager:	Karen Carrillo
Set decorator:	Claudia Aguirre
Duration:	83 minutes
Character:	fiction, drama
Format:	35mm, Color / b&w, 1:1,66, Dolby digital
Original version:	spanish, english subtitles
Production Company:	Chullachaki Producciones Malecón Cisneros 910, apt. 1801 Miraflores, Lima – PERU Phone: (511) 242.2253 Fax: (511) 242.2252 e-mail: chullachaki_cine@hotmail.com Website: www.diasdesantiago.com