

REDEEMER

A FILM BY ERNESTO DIAZ ESPINOZA

World Premiere
2014 Fantastic Fest

Press Notes
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LOGLINE

Martial arts legend Marko Zaror stars as a vigilante who offers thugs a chance to plead forgiveness for their crimes or pay the ultimate price. After years in exile, he returns to the streets to save the woman he loves from a drug kingpin.

SYNOPSIS

After years in isolation, Pardo (martial arts legend Marko Zaror), a vigilante desperate for redemption and earning it by offering criminals the chance to ask forgiveness for their crimes or pay the ultimate price, returns to the streets to mete out his unique form of justice. When his bloody path crosses that of would-be drug lord Braddock (Noah Segan, *Looper*, *Deadgirl*) he must fight an entire criminal organization while also protecting the woman he loves.

Director Ernesto Diaz Espinoza (*The ABCs of Death*, *Bring Me the Head of the Machine Gun Woman*) and Zaror team up once again to provide a jaw-dropping action spectacle with genre-savvy humor that offers an impossibly violent, often humorous and thrilling take on the action film.

Under the Influence: A Conversation with Redeemer Writer-Director Ernesto Díaz Espinoza

Redeemer, like your previous films, is firmly rooted in its genre influences—it's clearly the work of a longtime cinephile. What kinds of films and filmmakers spoke to you when you were younger?

I started making homemade movies with a Super 8 camera when I was around 10 years old. Instead of playing with toys I played with the camera. Those days I was a huge fan of *Star Wars* and James Bond movies. But after watching *Pulp Fiction* I realized there was a whole new world behind moviemaking: the world of the author. That realization made me want to dedicate my life to this, to keep exploring and keep playing with the camera.

Your films are all modern-day homages to "exploitation cinema." What is it about that style of filmmaking and storytelling that excites you?

The main element was the music of those movies. I remember listening to Curtis Mayfield's tracks made for *Superfly* and I wanted to watch the movie so badly. I saw it and I loved how low-budget movies could feel awesome with a good soundtrack. So, that was it. In my country the reality is that we have low budgets to make movies, so playing with exploitation-style music over our reality kind of works, and it's incredibly fun to do.

Where did the concept for Redeemer come from originally?

I was looking for a new story to shoot with Marko [Zaror], and I didn't want to repeat the same motivations for his character that we'd done already, like protecting a woman in *Kiltro* to healing his brother in *Mirageman* and vengeance in *Mandrill*. So I finally got to "redemption"; our new character wants to find his redemption. Then came the idea of making him a former hitman who's now trying to pay for his sins by helping people, and then how religion can be played in a very violent way.

Were there any specific influences you wanted to pay homage to with Redeemer? The visual homage to A Clockwork Orange in the first big fight sequence, in particular, is a nice touch.

I'll say, beside the very explicit homage to *A Clockwork Orange*, this is my least-influenced movie. My mentors for this one were Osamu Dezaki, Takeshi Kitano, David Lynch, Sam Peckinpah, and many others, but I'm not sure if you can see that clearly in the scenes.

How long was the shoot, and how did this shoot compare those of your previous films?

It was a four-week shoot in a little beach town called Pichidanguí. It's my favorite town in Chile because I've gone there for vacation since I was born. I always wanted to shoot a movie there but I never got to a story that could happen there, until I got

to *Redeemer*. The difference between this and my other movies was mainly in the fight scenes, because we wanted to make them look much better than before, but we had the same amount of time to make them. So, the experience was the key, knowing how to really prioritize. That made us able to shoot in a very frenetic but controlled way, being capable to shoot more than 80 camera settings in one day, with only one camera.

Your films also have a distinct sense of humor to them. In *Redeemer*, Noah Segan's character provides a nice break from the film's otherwise heavy tone.

I think that sense of humor you're referring to is what redeems the brutality of the movie. In some way, that humor makes you feel that you know this is a movie, and we are having fun with this specific genre. If you see, some jokes are kinds of meta-language.

How did you and Marko Zaror first meet? And what makes the partnership so special for you?

We first met when we were 4 years old, but we became friends like at 15, making a martial arts short film for our English class. Our work relationship is just two friends making movies—that's the chemistry. I think we both have a clear sense of what we love to do: Marko loves the martial arts, and I love making movies. We have very similar ways of seeing our specific paths.

The action and fights in *Redeemer* feel real, a definite byproduct of their absence of special effects or CGI. How would describe your approach hand-to-hand fight choreography.

Well, that only could happen when you have a martial artist like Marko Zaror. If you, as a filmmaker, have access to that talent in front of the camera, you for sure will want to exploit that reality instead of altering it with CGI. We're not in Hollywood—we have no sense to try to imitate it. It's better to find a different way of doing things because that's going to bring the uniqueness to your movie.

What do you hope audiences take away from *Redeemer*? What sorts of reactions to the film would make you the happiest?

I hope they can see that authenticity in our fight scenes, and also see that behind this martial arts movie there is a story that goes beyond the genre.

BIOGRAPHIES

Director/Writer: Ernesto Díaz Espinoza

Ernesto Díaz Espinoza, 36, is perhaps the world's most exciting young genre filmmaker that you've never heard of—until now. With *Redeemer*, his fifth and most accomplished film, Espinoza is primed to reach a whole new audience. As versatile behind the camera as his films are wickedly entertaining, the Santiago, Chile, native continues to one-up himself with each new feature, bouncing around from one classical genre trope to the next without losing his penchants for black comedy and balls-to-the-wall violence.

In 2006, along with his regular star/collaborator Marko Zaror, Espinoza made a name for himself with the brutal martial arts film *Kiltro*, paving the way for his even more audacious sophomore effort, the wild and subversive superhero film *Miragemen* (2007). He tapped into his love for 007 films with his third feature, *Mandrill* (2009), before merging grindhouse nostalgia with his Latin American culture for *Bring Me the Head of Machine Gun Woman* (2012) and tapping into *Twilight-Zone*-like fantasy for his grim *The ABCs of Death* segment, "'C is for Cycle."

Actor: Marko Zaror ("Pardo")

Consider Marko Zaror the Robert De Niro to Ernesto Díaz Espinoza's Martin Scorsese—only with much less scowling and much more ass-kicking. Hailing from Santiago, Chile, the 36-year-old Zaror has turned his childhood affinity for cinematic fighters like Bruce Lee, Jean-Claude Van Damme, and Jackie Chan into a successful and diverse martial arts career. In addition to starring in four of longtime friend Espinoza's films (*Kiltro*, *Miragemen*, *Mandrill*, and now *Redeemer*), Espinoza is also a veteran fight choreographer, having overseen the elaborate fight scenes in all of the films he's made with Espinoza.

Along the way, Zaror has found success away from Espinoza as well. In 2003, he worked with Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson as the A-lister's stuntman and martial arts double on *The Rundown*, and in 2013 he was handpicked by Robert Rodriguez to co-star in *Machete Kills*.

Actor: Noah Segan ("Bradock")

Noah Segan is one of the independent film community's hardest-working and most prolific young actors. A New York City native, the 31-year-old scene-stealer has been working steadily since the early 1990s, holding down multi-episode arcs on TV shows like *KaBlam!* and *Days of Our Lives*. Segan's career trajectory shifted, however, in 2005, when he co-starred in Rian Johnson's breakout indie sensation *Brick*.

From then onward, Segan has been the indie genre world's very own Samuel L. Jackson. Among his countless films, highlights include *Deadgirl* (2008), *Undocumented* (2010), and *Starry Eyes* (2014). He's also become a go-to actor for

Rian Johnson, having co-starred alongside Bruce Willis and Joseph Gordon-Levitt in *Looper* (2012) and appearing in the critically acclaimed, Johnson-directed *Breaking Bad* episode "Ozymandias."

