

Entertainment Weekly for El Paso • Juarez • Las Cruces

what's up

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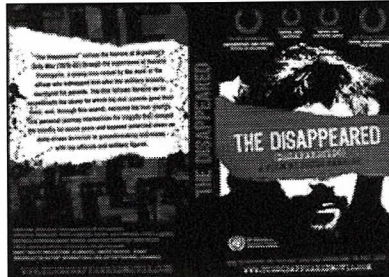
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'The Disappeared'

The Political Weight of the Dead

By Cheri Pearson



Thousands vanished - pushed out of planes into the Rio de la Plata or the Atlantic Ocean, kidnapped in the middle of the night, held captive in concentration camps, thrown into mass graves, raped, tortured and murdered. They were students, activists, trade union members and guerrilla fighters who opposed the repressive military dictatorship that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. They wanted a voice, a democratic vote. They paid for their sometimes violent and aggressive resistance

with their lives and their infants, who were confiscated and placed with military families.

"The Disappeared," a documentary by Peter Sanders showing at UTEP Friday and Saturday to coincide with the closing of an exhibit of the same name, follows the journey of one such child, Horacio Pietragalla, as he searches for his true identity as an adult. Pietragalla never felt that he belonged, followed his intuition and uncovered his past. Taken as an infant while his mother lay dead with eight bullets in her body, he was raised by the maid of a military officer and never knew about his biological parents. But he says, "there are things you get from your mother, when they hold you, kiss you, sing to you - the military could not sever that" and these whispers from the grave propelled him to seek the truth. "I'm alive today, not only to tell the story, but also to understand it," reflects Pietragalla in the film.

While following Pietragalla's efforts to piece together his past, Sanders tells the story of the Dirty War with disturbing archival footage and first-person interviews. He endeavors to present both sides of the conflict by obtaining statements from military officials to leaders of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, advocates for the disappeared. "I wanted the voiceless people who died for an important cause and all the other versions and angles of the truth be heard, so that people can draw their own conclusions," Sanders says.

El Pasoans will get to see the film this weekend in conjunction with the collaborating exhibit at the Ruben Center for the Visual Arts, Centennial Museum and Union Gallery. Sanders, whose film has won critical acclaim and received the 2007 Best Documentary Award by the Festival of Hollywood, will give a lecture on Friday at 6 p.m. before the film's presentation. A Q&A session will follow. "That is where it becomes more rich," he says of the dialogue that ensues from these sessions.

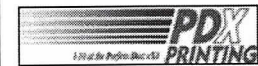
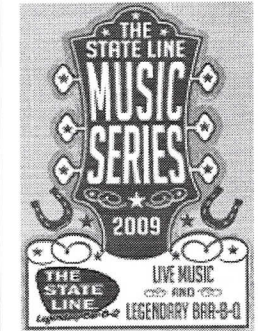
Sanders has lectured at more than 20 colleges and sold his documentary to 200 university libraries. He believes this is where he can make the biggest impact. "I would like others to understand how Argentina is such a beautiful, sophisticated, elegant culture and how something so horrible such as statewide terrorism could occur," he says. "I would like people to fight for their right to have a voice in society, to make a difference in their community, and recognize the importance of due process."

'The Disappeared'

A documentary showing in conjunction with "The Disappeared" exhibit at the Ruben Center, Centennial Museum and Union Gallery
 UTEP Union Cinema
 Friday and Saturday, Sept. 11-12
 7 p.m. (Friday, 6 p.m. lecture with filmmaker Peter Sanders)
 For info call (915) 747-5481

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