



¡Viva! presents...

To kill a man

Director: **Alejandro Fernandez
Almendras**

Country: **Chile**

Date: **2015**



This season is partly supported by Film Hub North West Central, proud to be part of the BFI Film Audience Network.

A review by Guy Lodge for *Variety*:

Alejandro Fernandez Almendras' slow-burning revenge thriller bears some of the eerie social disquiet of Pablo Larrain's work.

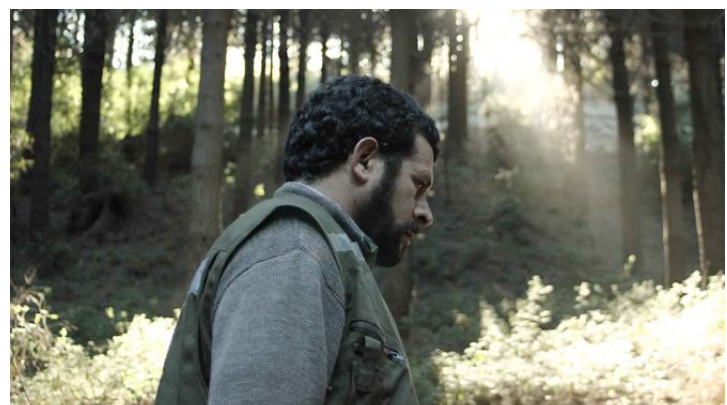
Two wrongs don't make a right — nor any clear dramatic resolution — in “To Kill a Man,” a grim, fat-free revenge thriller that extracts an impressive degree of moral equivocation from its exceedingly simple premise. A story of a family man, tormented by neighborhood thugs, who resorts to unseemly measures when the authorities fail him, Alejandro Fernandez Almendras' debut feature is a slower burn than most street-justice dramas, bearing some of the eerie social disquiet of pre-eminent Chilean auteur Pablo Larrain's work, though with less symbolic sophistication and political subtext. A grand jury prizewinner at Sundance, this hard-edged pic should travel in Spanish-speaking markets, though a muted approach to violent subject matter will limit its arthouse-crossover potential.

Unusually, Fernandez Almendras chooses not to announce upfront that this unhappy contempo fable is based on a true story, saving that instead for a closing title card that serves as a solemn chaser to an already upsetting finale. This belated revelation, inviting audiences to reconsider the events they've just seen in a non-narrative context, is typical of the film's avoidance of salacious true-crime storytelling. Revenge is a dish best served tough in a story that derives no perverse pleasure from vigilante action: As implied by the title, the psychological weight and practical difficulty of taking a single life are the overriding concerns here.

The film wastes little time putting the moral wheels in motion, though Fernandez Almendras' script is terse enough that viewers may find themselves playing catch-up in ascertaining certain character dynamics. From the outset, protagonist Jorge (a sterling Daniel Candia) is at once sympathetic and wholly opaque: A mild-mannered forest guard who suffers from diabetes, he is humiliatingly mugged by local hoodlums one his way home one evening, but seems coolly unfazed by the incident. More aggravated is his teenage son, Jorgito (Ariel Mateluna), whose attempt to retrieve the stolen goods from chief heavy Kalule (Daniel Antivilo) sees him shot and hospitalized for his trouble.

Kalule is imprisoned for 18 months — the maximum term for an attempted murder, but not enough to appease Jorge's wife, Marta (Alexandra Yanez), whose anger is directed equally at the indifferent legal system and her compliant, emotionally numbed husband. The action then unceremoniously jumps two years forward, with Jorge divorced, Kalule released, and his men still haranguing the family with increasing viciousness. The police issue an ineffective restraining order, but when Jorge's young daughter is sexually assaulted by the gang, Jorge quietly resolves to take matters into his own hands.

His unspectacular but artfully plotted act of vengeance is dramatized over two



remarkable, inventively tense sequences, one of them a lengthy, stomach-knotting scene that recalls the finale of Larrain's "Post Mortem" in its distancing of the audience from the action. Indeed, it's the blank spaces that provide much of the power to "To Kill a Man," be it an unseen but audible act of violence, the unexplained but poignantly understandable collapse of a marriage, or the protag's unreadable response to his own acts of brutality.

Tech credits are as efficient and economical as the rest of the package. Favoring an oil-yellow filter that keeps proceedings suitably queasy, Inti Briones' lensing is heavy on symmetrical compositions, often framing shots through doorways and windows to maintain an arm's-length atmosphere. Pablo Vergara's restrained, rumbling score offers the odd strain of mournful harmonica, but pathos is stringently rationed throughout.

From: <http://variety.com/2014/film/global/film-review-to-kill-a-man-1201085026/>

HOME



¡viva!

¡Viva! Spanish & Latin American Festival is presented by HOME, Manchester, with the support of the BFI Film Festival Fund, awarding funds from The National Lottery, the Instituto Cervantes (Manchester) and the Office for Cultural and Scientific Affairs, Embassy of Spain in the UK.