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itvs.org/pressroom/

Program companion website:
www.pbs.org/independentlens/lasierra/

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[i]NDEPENDENT LENS

**ACCLAIMED DOCUMENTARY LA SIERRA TO PREMIERE ON INDEPENDENT LENS
HOSTED BY EDIE FALCO, ON TUESDAY, APRIL 18 AT 10 PM
(CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS)**

**A HARROWING, UP-CLOSE LOOK AT THREE YOUNG PEOPLE IN A COLOMBIAN BARRIO RULED BY
TEENAGED PARAMILITARY ARMIES AND THEIR EXPERIENCES OF WAR, LOVE AND DEATH**

(San Francisco)—LA SIERRA, during the production of which a lead participant was murdered and the filmmakers were shot at by snipers, is an intimate look at violence, youth and community in a Colombian barrio wracked by constant conflict. Produced and directed by Scott Dalton and Margarita Martinez, LA SIERRA will have its television premiere on the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Edie Falco, on Tuesday, April 18, 2006, at 10 PM (check local listings).

More than 30,000 people have been killed over the last 10 years in Colombia's bloody civil war in which left-wing guerrillas fight against the government and illegal right-wing paramilitary groups. Recently, as guerrillas and paramilitaries have sought to control marginal city neighborhoods, urban gangs have aligned themselves with each side, transforming the national conflict into a brutal turf war that has pitted adjacent barrios against each other. Through the prism of three young lives, LA SIERRA explores life over the course of one year in one such barrio, La Sierra in Medellín.

Twenty two-year-old Edison, a.k.a. "The Doll," is a paramilitary commander in La Sierra, the de facto mayor of the barrio and a playboy who has already fathered six children by six different young mothers. He is openly excited by his life of violence, and he is also an intelligent and charismatic young man. We follow him through the fighting and hear his dreams for himself, his children and his country, up until he pays the ultimate price for his way of life.

Cielo moved to La Sierra from the countryside when her brother and father were murdered by guerrillas. At age 17, she is already a mother and a widow. Now Cielo is devoted to a new boyfriend, a jailed paramilitary. Having little money, Cielo begs downtown and sells candy on buses, but when it proves not to be enough, she gives in and takes a job in Medellín's red light district.

Jesus, 19, is a mid-level paramilitary. Badly wounded when a homemade grenade blew up in his hands and face, Jesus claims to be ready for death but is hoping for more in life than just continuing his indulgence in marijuana and cocaine. As the year in La Sierra comes to an end and the paramilitaries begin a government-sponsored disarmament process, Jesus begins to actually dream of a life without war, a life with a future.



LA SIERRA is an intimate and unflinching portrait of three lives defined by violence and a community wracked with war and death. Over the course of the year, we see these lives undergo profound changes, experiencing victory, despair, death, love and hope. In a place where journalists are seldom allowed, filmmakers Dalton and Martinez spent a year interviewing, filming and building trust. The result is a frank portrayal that includes not only startling violence, but also intimate moments of love and tenderness, showing the everyday life that amazingly manages to co exist in a state of constant uncertainty.

The LA SIERRA interactive companion website (www.pbs.org/independentlens/lasierra) features detailed information on the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, and links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

Scott Dalton (Producer/Director)

Scott Dalton, a native of Conroe, Texas, is a freelance photographer and filmmaker based in Colombia, where he has covered the conflict for five years. A nine-year veteran of photojournalism in Latin America, Dalton has worked extensively throughout Central and South America. In 2003, while on assignment in one of Colombia's most dangerous war zones, he was kidnapped by leftist rebels. He was released after 11 days. Dalton has also spent time in the Middle East. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Time* and *Newsweek*, among others, and he has reported on many stories for the Associated Press.

Margarita Martinez (Producer/Director)

Margarita Martinez is a reporter for the Associated Press in Bogotá, Colombia, where she covers the civil conflict, gangs, and negotiations between the government and insurgent groups. She graduated from the University of the Andes (Bogotá) in 1994 with a law degree and worked at the Foreign Affairs ministry. She was a Fulbright scholar in journalism and international affairs at Columbia University in New York, graduating in 1998. After a stint at NBC News, Martinez moved back to Colombia. Her work for the Associated Press eventually led her to Medellín's poor barrios, which are a window into the roots of Colombia's violence.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

The images found in this release are available to the press as high resolution downloadable photos with captions at www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos/

PAGE 1:
Left: Edisón Florez of LA SIERRA with his girlfriends.
 Photo: Scott Dalton / ITVS
Center: Jesús Martínez practicing his shot.
 Photo: Scott Dalton / ITVS
Right: Cielo Muñoz, age 17, visits the grave of her husband.
 Photo: Scott Dalton / ITVS

PAGE 2:
Left: At age 19, Jesús Martínez is a mid-level paramilitary member
 Photo: Scott Dalton / ITVS
Center: Cielo Muñoz dancing at a bar in the Medellín's red light district for money.
 Photo: Scott Dalton / ITVS
Right: Filmmakers of LA SIERRA, Scott Dalton and Margarita Martínez.
 Photo: Steve Osborn and Zoe Selsky / ITVS

