

## VARIETY MAGAZINE ARTICLES - FILMING IN GALICIA 2009

### *Galicia's famed pilgrimage attracts filmmakers*

3D 'Apostle,' Estevez's 'The Way' shot in Santiago

By MARTIN DALE, JOHN HOPEWELL

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, Spain -- With its cobbled alleys, old convents and Gothic-Baroque cathedral, Galicia's Santiago de Compostela seems plucked, Brigadoon-style, from the Middle Ages as Catholic pilgrims mill outside the place where St. James the Apostle is allegedly buried.

This summer, however, Santiago was buzzing with new energy.

In a downtown garage, Fernando Cortizo was completing an exquisite thatched-roof cottage miniature for Spain's first digital 3-D stop-motion movie, "The Apostle."

Meanwhile, Alfonso Cabaleiro, Galicia's new media minister, met with Martin Sheen and Emilio Estevez to discuss Galician support for Estevez's film "The Way."

All these events are connected.

In 2010, Santiago de Compostela celebrates its Holy Year. The next won't come until 2021. Galicians are taking it very seriously.

"The Holy Year's the best calling card possible to give Galicia the international profile it merits," says Galicia's president, Alberto Nunez Feijoo.

In its ancient pilgrimage route, the Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James), Galicia has discovered a 1,196-year-old movie brand.

With Rome and Jerusalem, Santiago was once Christendom's most important city. Santiago Cathedral's extraordinary Portico de la Gloria, which Estevez aims to film, ushered in Gothic architecture.

For Estevez, "Way" coincides with a global "spiritual crisis."

"The Camino's principal facet is its spiritual component, a rich well of personal stories and tales of living together," Cabaleiro adds.

This year has already generated four Camino movies: Estevez's Sheen starrer "Way," "The Apostle," "Where Is Happiness?" and Roberto Santiago's "Road to Santiago."

"Way," "Happiness" and "Road" -- it's no coincidence -- are journeys of self-discovery.

But how can producers' monetize the spirituality of the place? There have been some bestselling books -- German TV presenter Hape Kerkeling's Camino diary "I'm Off Then" sold 3 million copies while Paulo Coelho's "The Pilgrimage" is an international hit.

"Former pilgrims represent an avid Camino movie fanbase," says Gonzalo Salazar-Simpson, producer of "Road," which, helped by this, has grossed \$3.6 million in Spain.

That base will grow. Via Google Travel, the Xacobeo 2010 org will launch the biggest campaign ever for this unique destination.

"There's probably \$50 million worth of locations along the Camino," Estevez says, adding that the vistas from O Cebreiro, a mountain village, are "absolutely extraordinary" and that Muxia's Atlantic-coast Nostra Senora de la Barca Sanctuary, where "Way" ends, is "spectacular."

"The growth of a Galician film industry also explains Camino movie production," Cabaleiro says.

Galicia, with Catalonia, boasts Spain's most vibrant regional film hub.

On "Road," the Xacobeo org put up \$285,000-plus in sponsorship.

A Galician co-production can trigger Galicia government subsidies (up to \$285,000), Brazil-Galicia and Galicia Audiovisual Consortium's Raices co-production funds (at \$171,000 per pic), and maybe investment (\$1 million-plus) from SempreCinema risk equity fund, says Galician Audiovisual Consortium director Ignacio Varela.

Coin from pubcaster TVG averages \$285,000.

Written off as Spain's deep north, the Camino's growing recognition may allow Galicia to walk into the future with a spring in its step. It may also reboot the economy.

The local tourist org calculates that 9 million visitors in 2010 would hike tourism's contribution to the Galician GDP by 1.5%. Galicians -- including Sheen and Estevez, who are of Galician heritage -- share a sense of mission.

"This is a place people ought to see," Estevez says. In film and in larger terms, the Camino is one way forward.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118008865.html>

## *Galician production lures with regional coin*

Savvy producers tap into array of co-prods, funds

By MARTIN DALE

Molded for centuries by the centripetal force of Madrid, Spain is increasingly powered by its once-peripheral regions - from Andalusia in the south, to Catalonia in the northeast and Galicia in the northwest.

In terms of financial muscle, Madrid and Catalonia remain Spain's pre-eminent filming regions.

But Galicia has cannily carved out a pivotal position in the country's film matrix, providing a vital gateway to Spain's E427.5 million (\$610.8 million) film funding pie by leveraging regional coin.

"I definitely aim to shoot in Galicia again," says Gonzalo Salazar-Simpson, producer of national hit "Road to Santiago." "The locations are spectacular, the financial incentives extremely attractive."

"Galicia has six key advantages as a film hub," says La Coruna-based producer Manuel Cristobal: "It's the best possible co-production partner, has excellent technicians, extensive financial incentives, great actors, good producers and an open funding system."

The hottest production to come out of a Galician producer right now is Vaca Films' "Cell 211," which screened at Venice and Toronto. Vaca also has drama "Retornos" in post.

In a decade, the region has built up a mix of well-established producers -- Continental, Filmanova, Voz Audiovisual and Filmax Animation -- plus a younger generation: Vaca, Artefacto, Cinematografo and Perro Verde.

Public policy has played a critical role. As an autonomous community with a significant degree of self-government, Galicia is keen on establishing a distinct identity in the international panorama.

Film plays a key role in this process.

"Feature films can easily have a far more powerful international impact than a book or a stage play," explains Galician Audiovisual Consortium director Ignacio Varela.

The org now serves as the anchor of regional film funding, complemented by venture capital fund SempreCinema, that invests \$1 million-plus per pic in local productions and to attract international co-productions.

Regional pubcaster TVG is also a key partner. Additional funding is available from Xacobeo, managed by Ignacio Santos, that aims to build a strong brand image.

Over the last 24 months, the company has sponsored three major productions: "Road to Santiago," reality TV show "O Gran Camino" and National Geographic docu series, "Camino de Santiago."

For Galician Media Minister Alfonso Cabaleiro, the "Camino de Santiago's core spiritual component has tremendous storytelling potential, fueled by a wide array of well-preserved monuments, including churches, monasteries, bridges and Santiago de Compostela itself."

Media investor-producer Rosalia Mera highlights the region's wealth of stunning locations, citing the Roman lighthouse in La Coruna and the Playa de las Catedrales in Ribadeo.

The magical world of the St. James Way and current cluster of Camino projects is sure to further consolidate Galicia's international presence and provide a vital step forward for the burgeoning local industry.

American DP Matthew Hazelrig, currently working on the region's 3-D stop-motion "The Apostle," segueing from "Coraline," is amazed by local skills, facilities and standards and sums up the prevailing spirit: "They want the world."

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118008864.html>

## *Spiritual 'Way' is a family affair*

Estevez's fourth feature stars father, Martin Sheen

By MARTIN DALE

"The Way," Emilio Estevez's fourth feature as a writer-director, begins at the Camino de Santiago's start, in St.-Jean-Pied-de-Port, below the often-snowbound Route de Napoleon over the Pyrenees.

Starring Martin Sheen, Estevez's father, it takes in Galicia's improbable-looking Santiago de Compostela, a huge piece of medieval real estate topped by a jaw-dropping cathedral.

"The Way" ends near the Camino's end, at Muxía, on the Atlantic seaboard near Finisterre, which the Romans thought was the end of the world.

"Way" is about family, inspired by the Estevez-Sheen clan. As Galicians, the story is close to their hearts.

"My father said: 'How about going to Santiago? You take a couple of cameras, we'll just roll.' " Estevez recalls. "But I'm not a documentary filmmaker. I'm not good on the fly. I need a playbook."

Sheen plays Tom, an American widower who's in St.-Jean to reclaim the body of his estranged son, who died, lost on the Route de Napoleon. Tom cremates the remains, puts them in his son's backpack and starts off to complete the young man's journey.

"The Camino's a place of healing, of getting to the spiritual center of who we are, and ultimately how much we need," Estevez says. "The (current) downturn's not just an economic crisis. It's spiritual. We've been taught to want more: two cars, better clothing. But aren't relationships with others -- isn't family -- more important?"

The \$5 million "Way" rolls Sept. 28.

Julio and Carlos Fernandez's Filmax Entertainment will produce "Way" out of Spain, with producers Estevez and Elixir Films' David Alexanian, who produced-directed road trip docu "The Long Way Down," with Ewan McGregor. They'll use entirely Spanish crew, Alexanian says.

That typifies the film's spirit.

"'Way's' a modern-day Yellow Brick Road, a four-hander: An American meets a Canadian woman, a Dutch man and a British writer. And off to Santiago they go," Estevez says. "America's built a wall around itself. Tom's emblematic of Americans becoming citizens of the world once again."

He hopes "Way" can work in Spain, so he has to get details right. He laces his conversation with Spanish, talking enthusiastically about his son, Taylor, living in Madrid. "He's completely, how you say, Madrileño."

Estevez rolls the word in his mouth, as if savoring a good Rioja wine.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118008863.html>

## *Unger, Nesbitt join Estevez's 'Way'*

Drama stars Martin Sheen as grieving dad

By EMILIANO DE PABLOS

MADRID -- Canadian thesp Deborah Kara Unger ("88 Minutes," "Crash") and the U.K.'s James Nesbitt ("Bloody Sunday," "Match Point") have joined Martin Sheen to star in the Emilio Estevez-directed family drama "The Way."

The \$5 million pic, which is produced by Spain's Filmax Ent., is set along the thousand-year-old Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route.

It tells the story of Tom Avery, played by Sheen, a Californian ophthalmologist who travels to France to reclaim the body of his estranged son, who died in a storm in the Pyrenees, at one of the startpoints of the Camino de Santiago.

Avery cremates his remains, puts them in his son's backpack and starts off on his son's journey to Santiago.

Apart from Estevez, who also plays an acting role in the film, other thesps added include Spain's Angela Molina ("Broken Embraces"), Simon Andreu ("The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian"), Eusebio Lazaro ("Pan's Labyrinth") and Carlos Leal ("Broken Embraces").

"The Way," which is Estevez's fourth feature as a writer-director, is produced by Filmax chairman Julio Fernandez, Estevez and Elixir Films' David Alexanian.

The pic, which rolled Sept. 28 in St.-Jean-Pied-de-Port, below the Route de Napoleon over the Pyrenees, is skedded to wrap Nov. 13, after taking in a clutch of Camino landmarks such as Roncesvalles, Pamplona, Logrono, Burgos, Leon and Galicia.

Spanish cinematographer Juanmi Azpiroz ("Savage Grace") and art director Victor Molero ("Broken Embraces") have joined to the crew.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118009423.html>

## *Production surge on Camino stage*

Producers discover rich road for film, TV shoots

By MARTIN DALE

No other tradition in Spain has generated so much interest as the St. James Way, or Camino de Santiago, says Galician Media Minister Alfonso Cabaleiro. This decade, and especially 2009, has seen a Camino production surge:

### CAMINO DE SANTIAGO (National Geographic, 2009)

Six-part documentary series following Galician pop star Xael Lopez as he backpacks from Holland's Haarlem to Santiago, using the the region's 12th-century "travel guide," Codex Calixtinus.

### CRIMINAL MINDS (Mark Gordon Co./ABC/CBS)

A Camino trip in the episode titles "Demonology" is the missing link between a demon-possessed murderer and victim.

### ROAD TO SANTIAGO (Lazona/Antena 3/ZircoZine, 2009)

Rodrigo Santiago's \$4.5 million couples-in-crisis romantic comedy -- set against the painterly background of Galicia's hills, dales, barns and the Camino -- bowed in April (Warners) and generated \$3.6 million in box office, landing it in the No. 4 spot of Spanish films this year.

### THE WAY (Elixir/Morena, 2010)

In Emilio Estevez's film, Martin Sheen plays an eye specialist who travels to the St. James Way to recover his son's corpse, and finds spiritual redemption on the Way. Shoots Sept. 28.

### THE APOSTLE (Artefacto, 2010)

Fernando Cortizo's \$10 million digital 3-D stop-motion pic is set in rural village Xanaz, which preys upon unsuspecting foreign pilgrims. Cortizo is currently courting international distribution for his murder-mystery that he believes will "offer a beautiful window onto the magical atmosphere of Galicia and the Camino." Release date is July 25.

### WHERE IS HAPPINESS? (Pulsar/Filmanova, 2010)

Carlos Alberto Riccelli's \$4 million Brazil-Galicia romantic comedy about a betrayed wife who walks the Way to get her life back on track. Filmanova's Anton Reixa has high hopes for the film -- especially in Brazil where there's tremendous interest in the Camino. Shoots by spring.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118008862.html>



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