

In search for a space for Spanish language films

By Alejandro Riera, [HOY Newspaper, ariera@hoyllc.com](mailto:ariera@hoyllc.com) April 21, 2006

*(Excerpt translated from the original Spanish. To read the original visit:
http://www.hoyinternet.com/vidahoy/hoy-04vh_chifestivaldecinelatinoapr21,0,2293097.story)*

I've only had a chance to see a half dozen of the films from the [Chicago Latino Film] festival's first week. From these, one made me jump with emotion, the emotion one feels when discovering a small gem. It's "Thieves and Liars" ("*Ladrones y mentirosos*") (Saturday April 22, 6:15 p.m.; Tuesday April 25, 6 p.m., Landmark Century Center), the first film by Puerto Rican Ricardo Méndez Matta. It is the best film made in Puerto Rico in the last five years since "12 Hours" ("*12 horas*") by Raúl Marchand Suárez, another great discovery of the festival.

Borrowing the structure of films like "Traffic", "Pulp Fiction" and "*Amores perros*", the film weaves the stories of a dozen characters to show the spectator a crude and real portrayal of the impact of corruption on Puerto Rican society. Méndez Matta shows us in simple fashion, with a direct cinematographic language, how corruption has become our daily bread in the "Island of Disenchantment". And how honest folks who want to fight it eventually lose the battle. From an already excellent cast shines Magda Rivera in the role of Wanda, the Quijote-esque owner of an aviation business.