

*'My interest as a director is to find this ancient voice that has something to offer the current social climate. In order to do this, I chose to bring the camera to the remote village of El Condor, at 4,200 metres above sea level between the bordering mountains of Northern Argentina and Bolivia. A place where civilisation as we know it in the Western world has not yet emerged. Where electricity has only just arrived and the way of life is closer to that of our ancestors.'*

– Alejandro Telémaco Tarraf

The debut feature from filmmaker and audio-visual artist Alejandro Telémaco Tarraf, the fable-like *Piedra sola* is set within a small community in the northern highlands of Argentina. Adopting a bare-bones narrative structure, the film follows a native llama herder who sells meat and wool at the nearest town, but finds his livestock under threat from a puma. Evoking ancient tradition, the farmer must engage with his somewhat mystical foe, precipitating an encounter that is perhaps more a journey in search of ancestry. 'I was born as my grandfather died,' says Tarraf. 'I inherited his first name as my second name. For many years, I have had the feeling of carrying some kind of death on my shoulders. A heritage that I am still not able to comprehend.'

Inspired by the archetypes of the tarot and the Andean Cosmovision, where the past is thought to be ahead and the future behind, *Piedra sola* was filmed in a community where the mystical and the mythical still govern the way of life. Tarraf, who also acts as his own editor, spent a lot of time in this remote but visually arresting location, working with local people and non-actors. 'By using non-actors and portraying local conflicts, I am interested in the diffusion between documentary and fiction, dream and reality, and in discovering an image more true to life in all senses. It is a form of narration that encapsulates the essence of human longing.'

With echoes of Patricio Guzmán in its analysis of the relationship between past and present, the film is also evocative of the work of Lisandro Alonso and Carlos Reygadas through its use of natural light and landscapes. A truly mesmerising and sensory experience, *Piedra sola* has that rare ability to transport the viewer to somewhere else entirely.

*Jason Wood is a writer, curator and filmmaker.*