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Mexican Mayans Descendants Make Debut in Apocalypto

Hollywood Geared up to Release Film on Mayan Civilization

/24-7PressRelease/ - CHICAGO, IL, December 11, 2006 - The height of Mayan civilization may have ended some 1600 years ago, but this enigmatic empire seems to be making a come-back. This past Friday, December 8th, movie theaters across North America released Mel Gibson's much-anticipated feature, Apocalypto, filmed in Mexico, bringing the late, great Mayan civilization to life on the big screen.

For centuries, the world has been mystified and intrigued by this unique culture. Considered one of the greatest civilizations of all time, and regarded as the most outstanding intellects of ancient Mexico, the Mayans were a cutting edge society, incredibly enlightened for their time. Not only were the Mayans an incredibly advanced civilization much like the Greeks, but their legacy also remains today in areas that spread from Central Mexico to Honduras, similarly to the Greeks legacy which has transgressed the tests of time.

Mel Gibson's Apocalypto is entirely in the Yucatec Maya language and the cast consists of local indigenous Mayan actors. Filmed in Veracruz, Mexico, the movie depicts ancient Mayan life and also connotes to the Mayan prophecy, "Fin de los Tiempos", in which they prophesized that the world would end its 5,200-year fourth and current cycle on the winter solstice of December 21, 2012. Cycles play a huge role in the Mayan culture and a great amount of their time was spent studying astronomical rotations and synchronicity to human events.

While the major Mayan cities portrayed in the movie are gone, the ruins still remain offering visitors to Mexico a unique piece of history and culture to absorb.

Mayan Culture

The Mayans cultivated the most advanced written language of the hemisphere, excelled as astronomers and were highly-skilled mathematicians, being the first in the world to arrive at the concept of zero, and use complex calculations. They were also admirable urban planners and their grand cities were filled with monumental temples which were built without the use of tools as we know them today.

Mayan cities were carefully designed with temples and places in the center and a nearby ball court, which enabled the Mayans to play a game considered to be the precursor to soccer. The ruins of these amazing cities are found throughout Mexico, specifically in the Yucatan states. Exciting new finds in the field of archaeology are revealing countless treasures from their temples and pyramids as scientists work to unravel mysteries of the past.

The area of the Mayan civilization extended throughout the northern Central American region which includes the present-day nations of Guatemala, Belize, western Honduras and El Salvador, as well as the southern Mexican states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Quintana Roo, Campeche, and Yucatan. Their history can be traced through three major periods: the pre-Classic from 2000 B.C. to 200 A.D.; the Classic from 200 A.D. to 900 A.D.; and the post-Classic era from 900 A.D. to 1521 A.D. As people worldwide are in awe of these advanced people, it is becoming increasingly popular to study them and learn more about the Mayans via travel, literature and now, film.

Chichen-Itza

Of their most notable constructions, Chichen-Itza remains one of the most famous Mayan sites, and is currently a finalist to become a new Seven World Wonder. Located in Yucatan State, Chichen-Itza is one of Mexico's most archaeologically impressive creations, and one of the country's most visited landmarks. When built by the Mayans, these magnificent pyramids were perfectly aligned to the sun and Chichen-Itza was constructed in such a way that during the equinoxes, the setting sun casts a shadow of a serpent descending on the northern steps of the pyramid. This effect was a result of the Mayan's incredibly precise astronomical and architectural measurements and Chichen-Itza was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998.

Chichen-Itza, which reached its peak between 700 and 1200 AD, was the political, economic and military power in the area. It is surrounded by lush green vegetation, underground rivers, natural wells and limestone that the Mayans used to construct their magnificent buildings. There are scenes in *Apocalypto* where the Mayans are completely covered in white limestone dust, showing the intensity of labor that was exhibited while creating their massive pyramids and temples.

Tulum

If Chichen-Itza awes the observer with its size and complexity, Tulum charms with its location on a limestone cliff above the turquoise splendor of the Caribbean. Located about 75 miles south of Cancun in the state of Quintana Roo, Tulum is the only completely walled Mayan settlement known and is so popular that it attracts about 2 million visitors annually.

This small collection of temples on a bluff overlooking the blue-green sea served as a major trading center and port for the 4,000 or so Mayan canoes that plied the seas from Mexico's northern coast to South America. Laden with feathers, furs, jade, medicinal herbs, salt, and honey, these canoes navigated a network of inland canals dug by the

Uxmal

Another important ruin in the Yucatan Peninsula is Uxmal, located 50 miles south of Merida. Uxmal is the peerless example of classic Pu'uc architecture named for the hilly Pu'uc region of northwestern Yucatan where this style attained its ultimate refinement. It's also the largest site, known for its exquisite sense of proportion. The invention of a local type of cement made from seashells allowed for the construction of wide arches, huge gateways and impressive rooms which add to the beautiful proportions.

Yucatan Peninsula

In addition to fascinating ruins and colonial treasures, Mexico's Yucatan State also offers much for ecotourism and the adventure tourist enthusiast. Its climates have produced forest surroundings that support a wide range of fauna. Visitors can enjoy sports in the open sea in Yucalpeten, while birdwatchers can admire the wide range of species found in El Palmar as well as the impressive flamingo population of Celestun. The lack of surface rivers means that the state obtains water from a complex system of underground rivers, which attract scuba divers and snorkelers. Limestone sinkholes, or cenotes, are also great for exploring.

While the Yucatan State may offer a wide range of Mayan culture and fantastic tourism options, Veracruz State is the site where *Apocalypto* was filmed. The footage floats from the jungles of Catemaco to the City of Veracruz, offering an excellent look at the southeastern state which invested 1.8 million dollars into tourism in 2005.

After seeing *Apocalypto*, one will surely be inspired to travel to Mexico and learn more about the country's vast indigenous cultures. From the cinematography to the amazing landscape, *Apocalypto* offers a unique look at prehispanic Mexico, and the influences which remain today.

For more information, please visit www.apocalypto.com and www.visitmexicopress.com.

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About the Mexico Tourism Board

The Mexico Tourism Board (MTB) brings together the resources of federal and state governments, municipalities and private companies to promote Mexico's tourism attractions and destinations internationally. Created in 1999, the MTB is Mexico's tourism promotion agency, and its participants include members of both the private and public sectors. The MTB has offices throughout North America, Europe, Asia and Latin America.

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