

Reviews

'A tale of redemption in downtown New York, it is at times reminiscent of Scorsese's early work.'

VPRO Gids

'Diary of a Times Square Thief is a tribute to the search for peace in life.'

Friesch Dagblad

'And then suddenly – and this is Bense's great merit – they're no longer big losers, but beautifully filmed individuals who each, in their own heroic way, give meaning to their lives.'

Vrij Nederland

'Intriguing from beginning to end, a wonderful documentary with real people, real suffering and real happiness.'

Sapsite

'An intriguing quest.'

De Telegraaf

'A stunning result.'

Trouw

'Diary of a Times Square Thief is enthralled by the scuzzy fringes of pre-Giuliani Manhattan but offers a genuinely fresh and compelling approach. Its Dutch director Klaas Bense, whose first film this is, came across an intriguing journal on eBay, a scrapbook-confession of flophouse life in the 80s by a failed would-be writer with a voice somewhere between William S Burroughs and Travis Bickle. Coming to New York, Bense tracks down some of those mentioned in the diary as he tries to find its author. The thoughts and memories he collects are various, touching, insightful and beautifully presented. The overall mood is one of generosity, humility and acceptance – a tone more in keeping, perhaps with the film's backers, the Buddhist Film Foundation, than its location. It's not often you hear a New Yorker say the words spoken by the final interviewee: "If I were to romanticise my story, er... I won't."

Ben Walters - The Guardian

'Purchasing an unusual journal from eBay, Klaas Bense tracks down the people and places described within, centered around a 1980s Times Square dive hotel. Using clues from the journal's frustrated author's entries, he discovers what has become of them in the intervening years, constructing a bittersweet paean to a lost time and place, while at the same time bringing audiences along for an always-engaging bit of private detective work.'

USA TODAY / indieWIRE

'Bense brilliantly allows his subjects to tell their stories while intercutting various images of the city, people in its underbelly, or aquariums, that confuse at first; but when the reason for these images becomes clear, they pierce the viewer like a knife to the heart.'

Little White Lies - Truth & Movies – UK

'Great film, a must-see.'
Victoria Sinclair – Naked News

'Like a strange peering glance through a keyhole into a world of rooms rented by the week in New York City of the eighties. (...) Artfully keeping its secrets and doling out its surprises like a judicious chocolatier or fascinating parlour act, the film keeps viewers wondering until its final moments.'
Spacing Toronto – Canada

'It's a complete film. It has a beginning, middle and end and covers a lot of ground in such a short space of time. A brilliant work in and of itself.'
Film Beatnik.com

'An exceptional meditation on time's passing and the forgotten things it carries with it.'
Simon Laperrière - Fantasia Film Festival

'There is no romance to the tales of long-ago squalor, no longing for a time when everything wasn't scrubbed clean on a daily basis, nor is there apologies. There is only the past and whether we choose to let that dictate our present and future.'
Exclaim – Canada

'Diary of a Times Square Thief meditates on redemption, fate, and the beauty of human connection.'
Lynne Crocker – Hot Docs

'I saw a film yesterday, Diary of a Times Square Thief, which was amazingly beautiful. I wouldn't have minded working on that one.'
Director Thomas Lien in The National Post

Email responses

'The documentary 'Diary of a Times Square Thief' couldn't have come at a better moment in my life. How beautiful. Thank you.'
Judith

'It's Sunday 12 July 2009, and I'm sitting here with tears in my eyes watching your documentary (Diary of a Times Square Thief). What a work of art. You really know how to touch the hearts of people. You've helped me to love people again, at a time in my life that that was difficult for me. You show that nobody is perfect, that everybody has a past. And that we, in spite of it (or because of it?), can become beautiful people. What a masterpiece of hope! Thanks.'
Alex

'Never before has a film or documentary touched me the way 'Diary of a Times Square Thief' has done. The story is so spellbinding, that every time I watch it, I see, hear and sense new things. Each person in it gives me so much inspiration and almost jealousy of how little I've seen around me so far. In your work you've highlighted the people so beautifully; shown the utmost splendor of human beings. It has opened my eyes further, to everything that is around me. Tremendous thanks for this experience.'
B.J.

'What an exceptional experience to suddenly encounter something so astonishing. Words fail me. How can this be? On Dutch television? And who is this amazing Klaas Bense?'

Erik

'Here are two poems I've written inspired by your film.'

A haiku: a delicate soap bubble
 slowly flying: a life
 till it bursts

A tanka: on the rough wall
 finely painted fish
 a little world of its own
 here lives an artist
 only loved by her work

The lines of the poems can also be read in reverse order.'

Monique