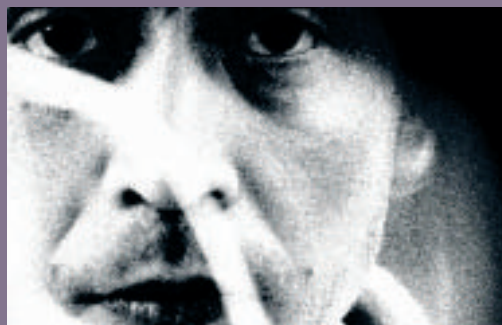
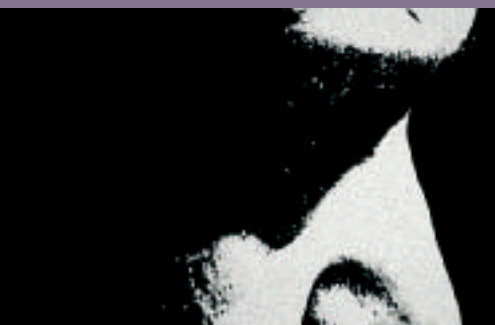


1973



documents hope and disappointment

The visually assertive, high-impact documentary *1973* grew out of a thesis project begun by director Antonino Isordia at Mexico City's Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica. The film looks at the disappointments and tragedies of a generation of Mexicans by examining three case histories. All of the subjects were born in 1973 and each was destined for prison.

Ricardo Benet filmed several of the early sequences in the film. Some of the interviews date back to 1994. Cinematographer Fernando Acuña shot most of the film using a wide variety of formats including 8mm, Super 8, Super 16, and video. The images range from grainy black-and-white to wild, sometimes random color.

"Because of the tragic characteristics of each story, we did not want to create pleasant images," says Acuña. "That's why we augmented the contrast and the graininess excessively, taking the skin tone values to pure white and framing continuously unbalanced compositions in the 1.85:1 aspect ratio."

The cameras used to record interviews included a Super 16mm ARRI SR-3 fitted with a Vario-Sonnar 11-110mm zoom lens. The camera was on its own 90-degree circular dolly track. A hand-held Bolex was also used to catch more specific shots.

The filmmakers felt that the interview footage would be more objective in black-and-white. "We decided to shoot with Eastman Double-X 7222 film with an R29 filter on the lens," says Acuña. "The film was push-processed plus two, and overexposed three-and-a-half stops to get the highest contrast and graininess possible. We couldn't use any red filter with the video camera because the images became solarized. Therefore we just augmented contrast to maximum values and diminished the detail settings."

A 1K Desisti Fresnel lamp with 216 diffusion placed at a 45-degree angle to the subjects was used to light interviews. Framing was purposely off-kilter to boost dramatic tension.

The filmmakers decided not to use re-enactments but they felt that the narrated recollections of their subjects needed some augmentation. "We decided to structure a parallel story that chronologically describes life in Mexico City with nervous, sometimes out-of-focus camera movement to reinforce the concept of memories," says Acuña. "The color of Mexico City is noisy, saturated and not orderly. We chose to portray this by using Eastman Ektachrome 400T 7250 film with an 85 filter on the lens. We overexposed the film by two stops to get the most possible contrast, graininess, color shift and over saturation."

The Ektachrome film footage was shot with an Aaton A-

Minima camera and developed using a cross-process technique. Some other impressionistic footage was captured by using a motion control system with a 35mm Fries camera and Kodak Vision 250D 5246 film overexposed by two stops.

An astonishing street market scene was filmed with the A-Minima

camera shooting one frame per second to create a collage of dynamic and blurred images. "This scene has a weird internal rhythm," says Acuña. "It took 40 minutes to shoot and consists of almost 2,000 frames."

A Spirit DataCine was used to transfer the film to HD 1080i in the 16:9 aspect ratio for editing. The timed master file was recorded onto 35mm Kodak Vision Premier print stock "because of its excellent contrast, deep blacks and pure highlights," says Acuña.

1973 is enjoying a very successful run on the festival circuit. It was nominated for a 2006 Ariel Award for Best Feature Length Documentary. ■

Above and inset:
Scenes from *1973* shot by DP
Fernando Acuña.

