



"Working with Oliver Stone is a unique experience," remarks Mexican Director of Photography Rodrigo Prieto, ASC. "He emits a very special kind of energy on set. His vision forces you to be endlessly inventive, because you don't always know what's going to happen." The pair, who worked together on the documentaries **Comandante** and

production, I ran a series of tests with different filters and special development techniques that would allow Oliver to make his choices on a scene-by-scene basis and help determine the costumes and set design. I always tried to convey his original ideas, for example he wanted an 'innocent' look with primary colours when Alexander is a child in Macedonia, similar to Jean-Luc Godard's film **Le Mépris (Contempt)**. It meant that I had to work without a filter, but the very fine grain of Eastman EXR 50D 5245 gave me a clean, transparent feel. It was the opposite for the scenes in India, when I used Kodak Vision 500T 5279 with a bleach-bypass negative development process to

With the need for so many different looks, Prieto opted for a broad range of Kodak film stocks. "I think I used the whole Kodak line, including Eastman EXR 50D 5245, Kodak Vision 250D 5246, Kodak Vision 500T 5279, Kodak VISION2 5218 and Kodak Vision 200T 5274, among others," he muses. "I was trying for something different for each scene to enhance the sense of travel and passage of time and, thanks to these different negatives, I was able to modify the texture, grain and contrast continuously."

Armed with an ARRI ST, an ARRI LT for portability, an ARRI 425 and a Super High Speed Fotosonic, Prieto

A life of epic proportions

Alexander the Great



Persona Non Grata, have completed a major feature chronicling the life of ancient history's relentless conqueror, **Alexander the Great**.

"The narration of Alexander's story isn't linear," remarks Prieto. "His journey was very long and I had to convey the impression of travelling and discovering as many different things as he discovered. The images need to be readable on two levels: reality and the mythical aspects of his character. The audience has to feel the heat, sweat and grime and experience the places and the times; they need to share Alexander's subjectivity, as well as his mythical dimension, which go well beyond mere reality."

"I used a tobacco filter to convey the idea of both dust and sun. The image is warm, but somewhat aggressive and makes you feel uncomfortable."

Prieto undertook visual research with paintings and photographs, using a combination of artificial and natural light to reproduce specific atmospheres. "During pre-

highlight the grain and raise the contrast of the image. For the battle of Gaugamela, Oliver kept talking about yellow dust and, as we shot the scene in Morocco under white light, I used a tobacco filter to convey the idea of both dust and sun. The image is warm, but somewhat aggressive and makes you feel uncomfortable."

Surreal

At a crucial moment in a battle at the end of the film, shortly before Alexander's death, Prieto suggested to Stone that they change from historical reality to surreal images. "I had a feeling that the reality of the scene could be approached in a different way, so I filmed in infrared colour. The result is strange and a little hallucinogenic, with pink or magenta vegetation and yellow blood and all at once the image changes radically, combining reality and complete fantasy," he states.

used Cooke lenses, a Hawk 420 zoom and a Revolution Lens System for the majority of the shoot, although battle scenes called for up to eight cameras. He gave priority to HMIs, for day exteriors and location interiors and mostly tungsten for stage work with numerous Space Lights for ambient lighting and Mole Beams for very strong sunlight. "We had a huge 100kW softsun for a balcony scene in Alexandria, where Ptolemy is looking out over the city. Given the space separating the balcony from the blue screen, it was the only way I could light this daylight scene in a sound stage" notes Prieto, who admits to suffering nightmares during the shoot, "but **Alexander the Great** was also a fantastic dream," he adds.

Locations for the 94 day shoot comprised the Atlas Mountains and Essaouira in Morocco, Bangkok and Ubon Ratchathani near the Laos border, while the hanging gardens of Babylon, the library of Alexandria, the Palace of Darius and other interiors and backgrounds were recreated at London's Pinewood and Shepperton studios.

During the making of **Alexander the Great**, Prieto became one of the first users of The Kodak Look Manager System. "The system wasn't available before shooting" he recalls, "but during post-production it served as a concrete reference for the special effects people who were in charge of the composite. Being able to refer to a recipe and use an identical image as a reference from one place to another and calibrate the monitors is really a great step forward – a step that's becoming

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even more important as digital and video technologies are more widely used in film production. I always have the same question: how do we communicate the intended colour and density of an image to the lab or telecine? The answers were inevitably subjective because, depending on the telecine timer, an image can change radically. Photo-chemical film dailies don't offer a lot of options for variations and this is still an immense advantage during production because you have printing lights as a concrete reference to see what the negative holds. By helping us to limit an excessively large number of variation options, especially for telecine dailies, digital intermediate grading and visual effects work, The Kodak Look Manager System now allows the entire team to come closer to the Cinematographer's specific vision." ■

