

Cultural perspectives meld with filmmaking techniques

Products

Camera

Aaton with Angenieux 10mm wide angle lens, Zeiss 10:120 zoom

Stocks

KODAK VISION2 100T 7212 , KODAK VISION2 500T 7218

Casablanca Mon Amour explores how media, especially movies, influences our perceptions of cultures, people and places. The documentary focuses on Morocco, where a broad cross section of people frankly discuss their memories and impressions of Hollywood movies about their native land. The non-fiction film is a thesis project that was conceived and directed by John Slattery who is earning a masters at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Slattery served in the Peace Corps in Morocco after earning his undergraduate degree in English. During his tenure, he worked with the education television institute on a pilot for Moroccan television and assisted in the production of Peace Corps documentaries. Those various activities sparked his interest in filmmaking.

After completing his service, Slattery invested in a Super 8 camera and moved to Paris, where he discovered *Me and My Brother*, a 1969 documentary written and directed by Robert Frank that coupled documentary and narrative filmmaking techniques.

"The documentary genre can use fictional approaches to filmmaking," he says. "You are basically choosing scenes and crafting story arcs while you are editing the material you filmed. That discovery was part of my inspiration for *Casablanca Mon Amour*."

Slattery had many conversations about his experiences in Morocco after he returned to the United States. That is when he began to realize the extent to which people's perceptions of cultures are based on the media. The genesis of *Casablanca Mon Amour* came to fruition when Slattery asked himself, "What do Moroccans think about these films?"

Casablanca Mon Amour follows two young Moroccan men trekking across the country, while they document their experiences with other Moroccans. San Franciscan Fara Akrami was the cinematographer. The crew also included UCLA student Jona Newhall, Lotfi Lamrani who was the production's "fixer," and Torben Olander, a journalism student from Denmark.

Slattery's goal was to engage in conversations with Moroccans about their favorite Hollywood films and actors. He focused on locations where memorable American films, including *Othello*, *Jewel of the Nile*, *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Casablanca*, had been produced.



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His camera equipment was borrowed from UCLA. It included a 25 year old Aaton camera, usually with an Angenieux 10mm wide angle lens, and occasionally a Zeiss 10:120 zoom. They recorded daylight exteriors on KODAK VISION2 100T 7212 negative, and interiors and night shots on KODAK VISION2 500T 7218 film. A Panasonic DVX 100 24P miniDV camera was used to document Slattery and the film crew at work, making them part of the story.

"Morocco is a visually powerful place," Slattery says. "This project deserved film. There is nothing like its color rendition. Also, part of the decision to use film was the camera itself. We didn't want to appear as if we were trying to sneak images with a small video camera. We wanted people to come and meet us, and appear as a professional production for whatever reaction that would bring to our story."

The film camera also helped to initiate conversations about filmmaking. For example, Slattery recalls a time when a police officer asked for their permit. Upon producing the documents, the crew asked him about his favorite movie and actors.

"Suddenly, he wasn't a police officer any more but a movie fan, just like anyone else," Slattery says. "Cinema is a universal art."

For more about the making of *Casablanca Mon Amour*, visit the Kodak website at www.kodak.com/go/incamera.

1 The crew for John Slattery's UCLA thesis documentary *Casablanca Mon Amour* prepares to shoot the Moroccan landscape.

Photo by Torben Olander