

# Communicating a colorful vision:

# Love in the



American countries, he decided to make the film in Cartagena, Colombia, in part because of its beautiful, well-preserved colonial architecture.

"I told Mike that an important concept for me was the idea that people in a place like Cartagena live in the shadows," says Beato. "During the day it's intensely hot, and people close all their windows. There's no air conditioning, and many people dress formally in imitation of Madrid or Lisbon. Light brings heat, so people avoid it."

The production schedule included 12 weeks in and around Cartagena and five days on stages in London. The format was three-perf Super 35mm film combined with digital intermediate (DI) post-production, resulting in a 2.40:1 aspect ratio.

"We chose the wide frame in part because of the loneliness of this man with an impossible love, and in part because the story takes place in these incredible spaces that are so generously visual," says Beato. "It would be a sin to not give that to the audience."

Beato used Panavision cameras, Primo lenses, and KODAK VISION2 50D 5201, 250D 5205 and 500T 5218 films.

## 3 perf Super 35mm

"I trusted the VISION2 film technology to provide incredible latitude," says Beato. "We were in the tropics, very close to the equator where the light is strong, flat and high. It flattens things out and creates very hard shadows with almost unbearable contrast. We silked a lot and used bounce light to fill the shadows. Sometimes I had three stops difference between skin tones in the same shot."

"The film retains an amazing amount of information that I brought with me into the DI," he says. "I could use masks and power windows to bring up detail in the highlights and in the shadows. Film was very important in this regard."

Beato used the KODAK Look Manager System (KLMS) to

When Mike Newell was interviewing Affonso Beato, ASC, ABC for the feature adaptation of *Love in the Time of Cholera*, he asked the cinematographer whether he had seen a 1968 Brazilian period film he admired called *O Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro*.

"Yes," replied Beato, "through the viewfinder." Beato had photographed that film for director Glauber Rocha in the late 1960s. Needless to say, Beato, whose more than 60 other credits include *The Big Easy*, *Ghost World*, *Dark Water* and *The Queen*, was hired.

*Love in the Time of Cholera*

is based on the novel by Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez. At the story's center is a man who loves a woman who marries someone else. It is a fictionalized account of how Marquez's parents met, fell in love and waited 50 years to be together. At the same time, an unnamed country that closely resembles Colombia evolves from the ancient folkways of pre-1900 society to the modern, electrified world of the 20th century.

Newell's directing credits range from *Four Weddings and a Funeral* to *Donnie Brasco* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. After surveying many Latin

# Time of Cholera

Tools  
KODAK LOOK MANAGER System (KLMS)

Film Stocks  
KODAK VISION2 50D 5201, 250D 5205 and 500T 5218

DI Colourist  
Asa Shoul, Framestore CFC



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previsualize the look of certain scenes with Newell, as well as to communicate his intentions to the dailies timer and the DI colorist in London. The system uses software to simulate the effects on images of various film stocks, development processes, filters, lift, gamma, gain, et cetera. Beato had an intern take digital still photographs of locations and set-ups, and either manipulated or oversaw the manipulation of the images using a calibrated monitor.

“I encountered an interesting cultural phenomenon on this film,” says Beato. “I found that Europeans’ conception of color wasn’t ready for the vibrant, intense colors of a place like Colombia. You might think that in a period film, I would diminish contrast in an allusion to old photographs. But in Colombia, there is an explosion of light, color and contrast, and it seemed wrong to fight that.”

“But I found that for Asa Shoul, the DI colorist at

Framestore CFC, it was difficult to accept some of these colors as realistic,” he says. “You can sense the Moorish culture that comes from North Africa, through Spain and Portugal, in the architecture in Cartagena. Then there is the foliage, with unbelievable yellows and greens. I depended on KLMS to help convince Asa that these colors exist, and that I wanted them in the film.”

## Colors fall into place

“With today’s technology, you can shift almost anything,” he says. “Interpreting what’s on the negative is totally subjective. That’s why it’s extremely important to achieve great dailies. The director feels confident, and the actors, producers and the camera crew are seeing the results. It helps create and maintain passion on the set. KLMS allowed our dailies timer to approximate my vision,

in spite of being many thousands of miles away. When we got to the DI stage, we were that much closer to our visual goals, which saved us time and money.”

Beato spent a month in the DI suite at Framestore CFC in London with Shoul. They often used the DI to make subtle adjustments to color temperature or contrast to make a variety of skin tones “comfortable” in the same shot or scene. They also used it to perfect a black reference in the frame, or to create brightness to draw the audience’s attention to a certain part of the frame.

“If your eye has proper black-and-white references, the other colors fall into place,” he says. “It’s a part of my visual culture that comes from painting. I need to see a pure, dense black somewhere, and from there I build the rest of the image. The highlights get your attention. In a way, it’s like a vanishing point, only done with contrast.”

The DI stage also afforded Framestore CFC the opportunity to use visual effects techniques to perfect the actors’ make-up as they aged from 17 years to 80 years old. Beato says that the make-up professionals on the set had a difficult task given the heavy make-up, extreme temperatures and high humidity, and the DI was a welcome chance to touch up.

“I love the DI,” says Beato. “It’s really the most gratifying moment of my job. You’re seeing your intentions come to fruition, with the chance to perfect them. You have a high degree of control without all the production problems and challenges that can come between you and your goal. You’re in the air conditioning, looking at moving pictures in the dark. What could be better?”

1 Cast and Crew on the set of *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

2 (L-R) DP Affonso Beato, ASC, ABC and Director Mike Newell discuss a shot.

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