

# Cronicas: On the Trail of Evil



**Cronicas (Chronicles)** is a suspense thriller that follows a sensationalistic TV reporter on the trail of a possible serial killer. Ecuadorian-born director Sebastián Cordero's screenplay won the 2002 Sundance NHK Award for best Latin American screenplay. Cinematographer Enrique Chediak's previous credits include **Brown Sugar**, **The Good Girl**, **Songcatcher**, **3 A.M.**, **Boiler Room** and **Desert Blue**.

Chediak and Cordero began discussing the look for **Cronicas** two years before shooting actually began. They considered cross processing and bleach bypass techniques, but settled on a combination of Antique Suede (number 1 or 2, depending on the scene) and 81 EF or 85 filters, and a stop-and-a-half push.

"We want to take the audience deep inside this world," says Chediak. "Sometimes the technology can get between the audience and that world. The less technology you feel, the better. The combination of the filters and the push is very nice—it increases the contrast and grain a little bit, and it puts a colder, bluish tone into the shadows."

Much of the film is handheld. Sometimes Chediak would operate handheld while riding a crane. There is only one slow motion moment and there are almost no opticals. Chediak used a Moviemax camera with Cooke S-4 lenses. "The Moviemax is a very durable camera," he says. "I knew we were going to be working in third world conditions so that was important."

The pursuit takes the reporter to Babahoyo, a coastal village in Ecuador where the weather often includes a marine layer of clouds or mist, especially in the morning. Afternoons were more likely to be sunny, leaving Chediak with matching concerns.

In designing his approach to night sequences, the cinematographer noted that fluorescent light in that part of the world seemed a little bluer and greener than fluorescent light elsewhere, and that tungsten-type sources also have an enhanced color temperature.

"I don't know why that is," he says. "But I feel it in the visuals when I go there. So for the film, I enhanced the fluorescent look and enhanced the tungsten look, and mixed them both. Whenever

the actors were under fluorescent sources, they really looked blue-green. But we always put a very warm tungsten source somewhere around them to create a contrast. Sometimes the fluorescent is in the faces and tungsten is in the background, and sometimes it's the reverse."

Chediak says that authenticity demanded that the production shoot in an actual remote village like Babahoyo. "It's a perfect place for a killer to prey on children," he says. "Poor children are forgotten in a place like that. Babahoyo has the right feeling. It's poor, but it has an interesting look. The houses are very simple wood structures that made it possible for us to pull away a wall or ceiling and use sunlight and reflectors to light scenes.

"Often I was underexposing a stop, and with the stop-and-a-half push, I had a lot of ASA," he says. "At times I was shooting 1000 ASA, so we had a healthy T-4 or 5.6 stop even though we weren't using a lot of light. I shot the whole film on 5218 (Kodak VISION2 5218 500T film). It was very important to maintain a consistency in order to make this environment believable for the audience."

**Cronicas** has screened at a series of festivals including Cannes, Toronto, San Sebastian and Sundance, and made the short list of potential Oscar nominees for Best Foreign Film. Palm Pictures will release the film this spring. "I'm very happy with my work in the film," says Chediak, whose recent feature work also includes **A Home at the End of the World** and **The Alibi**. ■

**Above:** A scene from *Cronicas*.

**Below:** (L to R) John Leguizamo as Manolo, Leonor Watling as Marisa, and José María Yazpik as Ivan in *Cronicas*, by Director Sebastián Cordero, a Palm Pictures release.



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