

In the criminal underworld, it's **Dog Eat Dog**

When Juan Carlos Gil was a student at Universidad del Valle in Cali, Columbia, he and his classmates Carlos Moreno and Diego Jimenez promised each other that someday they would reunite to make their first feature in their hometown. Gil has compiled more than 500 television commercial credits during the past 18 years. Throughout that time, the promise lived in the back of his mind. *Dog Eat Dog* (*Perro Come Perro*) is that film.

The script is based on a story written by another friend, Alonso Torres. Crime boss El Orejón orders a curse on the killer of his godson. The killer turns out to be one of his employees, named Eusebio. After a shakedown job with Eusebio, the protagonist, Victor, pockets a stash of money belonging to El Orejón, and the stage is set for revenge.

"I felt it was important that the camera always brought us inside the characters," says Gil. "Victor's emotional anguish and guilt had to be unveiled gradually and subtly. We also wanted to use textures and contrasts to portray the heat and sweat of a city that drowns in its own violence."

Documentary-style

Gil says that he and Moreno, who directed, envisioned images with a documentary-style rawness. "That's why we chose the Super 16mm film format," he says. "We felt it would give us strong grain and texture. We avoided extensive planning and worked spontaneously with very little equipment. Our most complicated set-up used eight lamps; many scenes used available light."

Gil used KODAK VISION2 100T 7212 and 200T 7217 films for interiors and night scenes. He chose to render too dark, unlit night exterior scenes onto KODAK VISION2 500T 7218 film.

The camera, an ARRI SR3, was almost always handheld. The shutter angle was very often 90 or 45 degrees, which further stylized the images. "It was important to us that the camera breathe along with the actors," says Gil. "Diego (Jimenez), our operator, is also a Steadicam operator, and he was able to maintain the rhythm, cadence and feeling of a handheld camera throughout."

Heat of the city

Much of the finished film has a strong warm tone to communicate the heat of the city, while cooler tones set off some night scenes and the office of El Orejón. Gil says that for the most part, the texture and look of the film were defined in the camera, but he did make some detailed adjustments to the color temperature and saturation during post-production.

The initial best-light transfer was done at Cineworks in Miami, Florida. Color timing was done at EFE-X in Columbia with colorist

goals. Of course, I can't delegate the placement of the lights and their precise exposure. But I have the confidence to entrust other

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Leonardo Otero. Gil traveled to Los Angeles to oversee the film-out at EFILM and the making of prints at Deluxe Labs.

Gil is grateful to his camera and lighting crew, which has been with him for eight years. "It's crucial to maintain a balance between the artistic and the technical," he says. "Before the movie, I focused on solving all the technical aspects. During shooting, I worried about the continuity, the veracity of the frame, and meeting my aesthetic

tasks to my collaborators, which gives me more time to think about the look, and how each frame helps tell the director's story."

This year, *Dog Eat Dog* was the first Colombian feature film to be an official selection in the Sundance Film Festival, where it earned a Grand Jury Prize nomination in the World Cinema category. The film also won the Best Cinematography prize at the 2008 Gramado Film Festival in Brazil.



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