

HBO prison drama finds Super 16 cost efficient

Capadocia, the HBO Latin America TV series that looks at corruption in the Mexican prison system from the inside, earned three Emmy nominations from the International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, which recognizes outstanding television production outside the United States. The show also earned nominations for Best Actress, Best Actor and Best Drama Series.

The Spanish-language drama is entering its second season, and going strong. The story is set in a women's prison in Mexico City. Locking horns are an attorney fighting for a humane rehabilitation program and a businessman who wants to exploit the inmates as manual laborers. Vivid characters from unsavory operators to saintly mothers keep the interconnected sub-plots humming with action.

Cinema quality TV

Producer Epigmenio Ibarra, a veteran of dozens of television productions for the Latin American market, attributes the success of the show in part to first-rate production values.

"Our show is an HBO production, so we think of it more as cinema than as television," Ibarra says. "We're very happy with the quality and texture that shooting on film gives us. It works with the story. Ambience is very important in our show. Our first season was successful, and we wanted to maintain those qualities for the second season."

The show is shot in the Super 16 format on a combination of built sets and practical locations. After the first season, Ibarra and his colleagues made extensive budget comparisons and shot tests.

"We made a complete, exhaustive analysis," says Ibarra. "We shot some scenes with the

RED ONE camera and with Super 16 film, and we analyzed the post processing involved with taking the film images to HD and taking the RED ONE images to HD. We found that the budget differences amounted to about three percent. In light of the overall budget, three percent is nothing, especially compared to the advantages that film brings."

"We also found that data management is more complicated with the RED camera," he says. "For example, if you are shooting with the RED, insurance rates increase significantly. By shooting Super 16, we maintain the quality, and the images are safer and more dependable. This is especially important because sometimes our production shoots under difficult location conditions, including extreme heat. With ARRIFLEX cameras and Kodak film stocks, our directors of photography work with complete confidence."

Stretch creativity

Capadocia currently uses three cinematographers Alejandro Martínez, Santiago Navarrette and Luis Ávila. Each cinematographer, along with their crew, is paired with a director with whom they collaborate throughout the season. "We work with all three cinematographers to maintain the overall style of the series, with consistent treatment of certain characters," says Ibarra. "But we also encourage each team to stretch creatively within that framework. We like to see some differences from one team to the next."



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Fewer compromises

The production shot about 400,000 feet of Super 16 film during the first season. The emulsions of choice were KODAK VISION3 500T 7219, VISION2 200T 7217, and VISION2 50D 7201. The cinematographers normally shoot with two cameras, but unlike many two-camera shoots, they keep the cameras shooting from nearly the same angle but with different focal lengths and lenses. That makes for fewer compromises in the lighting and a more cinematic feel, according to Ibarra.

"The audience can feel the difference," he says. "They might not be able to say what the difference is, but they can sense quality. So can the people working on the set. I like the environment and the attitude of the cast and crew when we're shooting film. The standard is set higher."

Key Data at a glance

Producer	Epigmenio Ibarra
Cinematographers	Alejandro Martínez, Santiago Navarrette and Luis Ávila.
Cameras	ARRIFLEX
Film stock	KODAK VISION3 500T 7219, KODAK VISION2 200T 7217, and KODAK VISION2 50D 7201

1 L-R Aurelia Sosa 'La Bambi' played by Cecilia Suarez and Consuelo Ospino 'La colombiana,' played by Cristina Umaña, deal with life behind bars in a scene from *Capadocia*. (Photo: HBO Latin America Originals)