

Hitting the architectural

The ambitious documentary feature *How Much Does Your Building Weigh, Mr Foster?* charts the meteoric rise of British architectural phenomenon Sir Norman Foster. From a working class childhood in Manchester, he is now Britain's most prolific architect of landmark buildings with a string of international awards and honours to his credit. This British/Spanish co-production, which was two years in the making, whisks audiences across more than ten countries to Foster's most iconic structures and explores how the art world has inspired him and influenced his aesthetic high tech designs.



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1 Norman Foster at the offices of Ivory Press.

2 Millau Bridge in southern France.

3 Norman in his library.

4 Inside the dome of the German parliament (Reichstag).

5 Shooting at his home in Madrid.

heights

"Co-director Norberto López Amado and I spent much time discussing our visual approach to this groundbreaking documentary. He explained that the architecture would need to be constantly moving and not static," says director of photography Valentín Álvarez. "The poetic emotion of the human vision would be the constant in that aspect of the film but, at the same time, it would present a new perspective on Foster's work; of something great that would last through time and dominate space."

The duo analysed movement on two basic premises: the frame would move or there would be internal movement within it. "We needed a constantly moving camera. Either that or the light that runs through the internal spaces and gives form to the external ones, or the air that flows along external forms, would have to



move," continues Álvarez. Three camera positions were subsequently proposed. Firstly, interior viewpoints in which the architect illuminates and controls the light and gives it direction and texture, and where people interact with the buildings. Secondly, a close exterior vision in which the audience is a spectator and the 3-D structures appear to be in flight. Thirdly, the distant exteriors in which the structures are viewed in 2-D, but in perfect geometric form, and are in harmony with their surroundings.

"We wanted to employ a similar visual approach for the scenes of Norman Foster and so we shot part in a poetic emotional way, with a close, natural and casual style for the story of his past and the immediate reality of the world of interviews," Álvarez explains.

He chose a mixture of different light sources for the interiors. "KODAK VISION2 250D 7205 coped very well with the large amounts of natural daylight entering the buildings and the enormous stop differences within them. For the aerial shots of the Millau Viaduct, the highest road bridge in the world, we installed a GYRON FS/STAB-C stabilising platform on the nose of the helicopter. I filmed with an ARRI 416 fitted with an Angenieux 7-81mm HR zoom lens and KODAK VISION2 50D 7201 stock. The aerial shots of London were shot on KODAK VISION2 50D 5201, but with a Panavision Wescam and a Cooke Varotal zoom. The night exteriors were shot with KODAK VISION3 500T 7219."

How Much Does Your Building Weigh, Mr Foster? followed the digital intermediate (DI) route and was scanned using an ARRIScan 2K scanner and graded in Lustre. The colourist at CATA was Javier Mosqueda. The film data was put through a Cinevator®one - 2K Real Time Film Recorder.

This ambitious international project was launched at the 60th Berlin International Film Festival and selected as the 'director's choice' for the Berlinale Special. It won the TCM Audience Award for 'Best European Film' at the San Sebastian Film Festival and the 'Best International Documentary' at the Docville International Documentary Festival in Leuven. It is expected to be released in February 2011.