

Finding the visual language for



Film Stock
KODAK VISION2 500T 5218

Camera
ARRIFLEX

Processing
Cinecolor, Buenos Aires

Paula Hernandez is an Argentine director whose previous feature, *Herencia (Inheritance)*, earned kudos at 20 film festivals. During extensive preparations for the feature *Lluvia (Rain)*, she wrote and rewrote the script, took hundreds of still photographs, and searched for the right cinematographer. She eventually chose Guillermo Nieto.

Because much of the story plays out in the interior of an automobile, Hernandez spent many hours inside a car, taking pictures and searching for inspiration. The characters are somewhat lost and disoriented in their lives. Rain, fog and steamed windows become visual metaphors for their inability to see the way forward, while drawing the audience into the search for clarity and meaning.

"For me, the process of writing the script and taking the photographs was connected," Hernandez says. "I didn't want to have rain as a romantic element. I wanted the rain and the weather to be oppressive. The characters have no houses. She lives in her car, and he is a total stranger who gets in one day to escape the rain."

Hernandez and Nieto spent two years developing the visual language they would use to tell the story. They sometimes experimented with different techniques on television commercials. They also studied the work of Bill Jacobson and Uta Barth, still photographers who use obscured and out-of-focus images to communicate a sense of mystery and loss.

They chose to shoot in the 35mm film format in a 1.85:1 aspect ratio. "The images we got with 35mm film were more connected to what these two characters feel," says Hernandez.

"We decided that 35mm film was the best thing that could happen to this movie," Nieto adds. "It's a story about two people, and the warmth of film helped a lot, taking the images to the right level."

Nieto shot the entire film on KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 film, using ARRIFLEX cameras. "I like to work with the practicals that exist on the set, and to use as little light as possible," he says. "Having a 500-speed film gives you more freedom, especially at night. It gives you more space in which to work."

The low-light levels were compounded by the constant rain. "We tried to maintain dark backgrounds in order to see the rain," he says. "That seems more natural to me than backlighting the rain in the

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Hollywood style. It was also more in tune with the feel and mood of the movie."

35mm 1:85:1 aspect ratio

"It is beautiful how light behaves when it's coming through rain," he says. "It allows some brightness through, and at the same time it diffuses and distorts it, and changes the contrast like a natural filter."

The filmmakers decided to use a Tilt & Shift lens to selectively affect focus in some interiors where the male character relates to his deceased father. The character's head becomes a focal point in order to bring the audience into

his thoughts. They also chose a particular color for each character, subtly working that into the frame through art direction, gelled light on faces, or a splash of color in the background.

Nieto timed the majority of the film in a traditional photochemical process at Cinecolor Lab in Buenos Aires, an accredited member of the KODAK IMAGECARE Program. Some wider shots will be digitized in order to insert rain, and in one case, to remove a harness safety rig.

"Basic ideas are usually the ones that turn out well," says Nieto. "We find our way to these ideas slowly, and not always in a rational way."

Lluvia was released to cinemas in Argentina earlier this year, and Hernandez hopes to hit the festival circuit beginning in San Sebastián.

1 In a downpour, a crew member prepares for a scene on location in Buenos Aires for *Lluvia*.
Photos courtesy of John Harris.