

# Rodrigo Prieto talks of the Nespresso



Rodrigo Prieto was always fascinated by horror movies. With his brother Antonio, he began shooting with a Bell & Howell 8mm camera during their family Halloween parties. He never thought he would become a cinematographer but he knew he wanted to be a filmmaker. He started to assist still photographer Nadine Makova in her studio which got him interested in composition and lighting but he started to fall in love with the camera in his

apprenticeship in the camera department for a low budget movie in Los Angeles called *Welcome Maria*.

Now Rodrigo is one of the most famous cinematographers in the world. He was nominated last year by the Academy Awards for the Oscar for *Brokeback Mountain*. *InCamera* met him in Milan to talk about the shooting of the Nespresso commercial.

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**A** **Rodrigo, how did you get started shooting commercials?**

**Q** I shot my first commercial when I was just 22. I was in film school at that time and got a job on a commercial as a production assistant and stills photographer. I mentioned to the owner of the

agency that I want to be a cinematographer. He liked the photos I'd taken and on the next commercial he asked the production company to hire me as a cinematographer. It was crazy because I had never shot anything on 35mm, having had experience only of Super 8 and 16mm. I was terrified, but it turned out ok, and after that I continued working as a DP on other small jobs.

# about the shooting commercial

Q

**Do you like working on commercials?**

A

Yes I do enjoy it. I have done many commercials for many brands especially in Mexico. I like it because you get to work with many different directors in a variety of styles in a short period of time so you learn a lot. It's good training.

Q

**How do you compare commercials with features?**

A

I think that the main difference between the two is the approach. When you think about how you will shoot a feature film you concentrate on the drama and how you are going to underline the emotions of the characters, what type of atmosphere is needed in each scene, and how the look will develop as the story progresses.

On commercials you are looking for impact, you try to get the attention of the audience in 30 seconds or less. It doesn't mean you have to do very elaborate lighting or camerawork, but you have the opportunity to just go further in one style or another to be different from other commercials. The aim is that people stop and look.

Q

**Could you tell us, briefly, the story and look of this commercial?**

A

The spot uses George Clooney's self-deprecating sense

of humour, when he enters a Nespresso shop, and no one really recognizes him. We tried to make this commercial look realistic and natural but at the same time we also wanted it to feel delicious like coffee. A combination of naturalism and soft light also gave a feeling of comfort, making these shops a place you want to go to. We wanted to keep it simple in style, but with an edge, combining fast camera moves with static shots. We tried not to do too much with the photography because of course we had great actors.

Q

**Which light are you going to have for it and why the choice of the VISION2 200T & 500T? Are they your favourite stocks?**

A

I don't really have a favourite stock, I choose the negative depending on the look we are after; in this case I was looking for a film for both location exteriors and interiors and I thought that the KODAK VISION2 200T 5217 would be ideal for this purpose. The KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 was chosen only for the high speed shots (we shot 400 frames per second) so I did not need too much light to do it.

Q

**Is this your first time working with Bennett Miller for commercials? How is the shooting going?**

A

Yes it has been my first time with Bennet and I enjoyed the shooting

very much. He has a very good sense of humour and at the same time he is very collaborative. He pushes himself and the crew to find the best possible shot to express his ideas, but keeps a pleasant atmosphere for everyone involved.

Q

**Did he ask for any complex shots?**

A

Yes, the opening shot is complex because the camera starts looking into the coffee shop and then pans around 180° to find George Clooney walking into the shop. We dolly with him, and then whip pan again to a big close up of the product on the counter of the shop. It was not easy to light and operate, but very effective storytelling. I just hope the whole shot is used in the final edit.

Q

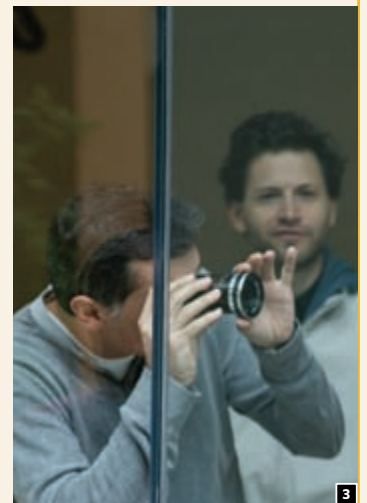
**Did you ever try to shoot on digital? If yes in which format and what did you think of it?**

A

Yes I've used digital twice. First when I did a movie called *Ten Tiny Love Stories* directed by Rodrigo Garcia where we used the Sony F900. In this case the script did not require any difficult situations for the camera so everything went well. I also did tests with the Viper camera for *Babel*, comparing night exterior shots in Tokyo captured on film and on the Viper on "film stream" mode. We preferred the response of film to highlights and skin tone, so we used the KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 pushed one stop for these scenes.



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Q

**What are your plans for the future? Are you starting a new feature?**

A

I will soon start prepping for a film called *State of Play*, directed by Kevin Macdonald. It is based on a critically acclaimed BBC TV series. Also, keep an eye out for *Lust, Caution*, which is my latest film with director Ang Lee and which opens this Fall.