

# Going back through the CITY GATES



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Portas da cidade is Portuguese for "city gates." It's also the title of a new documentary that celebrates the rich, 450-year history of downtown São Paulo, Brazil.

The film follows Reynaldo da Silva Carvalho as he walks the city's fabled streets and recalls the glamorous 1950s, when he saw it all as a hotel doorman. Carvalho's grandson, Alexandre, directed the film, which won the Prêmio Estímulo prize of the Secretariat of Culture of the State of São Paulo and Best Documentary at the NY Brazilian Film Festival.

## Visually rich

São Paulo's downtown district is a visually rich area with British, Dutch, French and Italian influences visible in its architecture.

Cinematographer Cauê Ueda spent two years researching for the film, giving special emphasis to color and framing.

Ueda knew that the city was an equal partner in the narrative with Carvalho.

"We had a very small budget, approximately \$10,000, but we knew that shooting this documentary in 35mm was important," says Ueda. "I was

looking for the sincerity that a classical shooting style could provide. I planned to use symmetrical compositions and smooth movement, with natural colors and tones from the locations we chose."

Ueda chose Kodak Vision 250D 5246 film for daylight scenes and Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 film for night and tungsten-balanced scenes.

One of the film's most critical sequences takes place at the corner of Ipiranga Avenue and São Joao Avenue, the most famous intersection in Brazil.

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"I knew we wouldn't have enough money to rent lights for this large area," says Ueda. "I remember standing near a light pole on Ipiranga and reading my light meter. It read 'E'. There wasn't enough light to expose 'correctly' with an ASA 500 stock. I mounted a fast lens on my ARRI BL-2 camera, loaded it with the Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 film and said a quiet prayer. At the telecine session, I saw that the scene was all there. The film captured the main subject and many other details. I was amazed."

Another sequence found Ueda with his back to the wall due to time constraints. For continuity's sake, the scene had to appear to have been

shot at 2 p.m., in spite of the fact it was shot at 8 p.m.

## 'Night for day' shot

"I knew the scene was important to the director, and it had to be shot then and there or not at all," says Ueda. "I had two Kino Flo lamps close to the dolly track and shot with the 250 daylight film. With the right timing in the lab, that shot cuts well with the previous shot, which had been done at 1 p.m. I called that our 'night for day' shot. The stock handled the manipulation really well."

Latitude is important to Ueda, but it's not the only consideration.

"What makes the stocks different is

the way they treat tones, contrast and gradations," he says. "Kodak knows how to make their technology work with the style and vision of the cinematographer, whose job it is to understand the spirit and feeling of a story and to capture that on film."

The production followed an optical post-production path. The film processing and offline telecine was done at MegaColor and EstudiosMega, and the prints were made at Cinegrafika Lab. "The flexibility of these film stocks was indispensable to the success of our film, especially considering our small budget and tight schedule," says Ueda. "The two films we used helped us create a visual harmony with our characters and story." ■

Above: Cinematographer Cauê Ueda holding the camera in São João Avenue.

Below: Santa Ifigênia viaduct at sunset.



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