

Epitafios 2: Murder in Buenos Aires

Epitafios (*Epitaphs*), the first original series co-produced by HBO-Latin America, was a 2004 miniseries that took place five years after the accidental deaths of a group of students who had been taken hostage. The main character is an ex-police officer who was drawn back into the case when others involved began turning up dead. The show was a sensation, and HBO decided to import it to the United States for airing on its Latino and Signature outlets, where it received further critical acclaim.

In *Epitafios 2*, the sequel, a group of special investigators work to track down a murderer based on a series of anonymously sent photographs. The success of the original series led to an expanded production. The 13 episodes of *Epitafios 2* included 23 weeks of filming in 70 different locations with 180 different actors.

The cinematographer is Guillermo Zappino, ADF. In designing the look of *Epitafios 2*, Zappino and director Daniel Barone wanted to maintain a degree of consistency with the first season, while capturing the grandeur and decay of Buenos Aires, where the show is filmed

"I felt it was important to place the characters inside the city, where the murderer could be passing by at any moment," says Zappino. "At the same time, we wanted to create a climate of solitude and loneliness around the two protagonists, Renzo (Julio Chávez) and Marina (Cecilia Roth). We shot with long lenses and shallow depth of field to convey isolation, even when the characters are in crowded places. We used the 16-by-9 frame to show the characters facing empty spaces, or to create a feeling of instability through composition. In their homes, we included some warm touches to create a more intimate feeling."

Zappino covered scenes with two Super 16mm film cameras and either KODAK VISION2 200T 7217 or VISION3 500T 7219 films, depending on the situation.

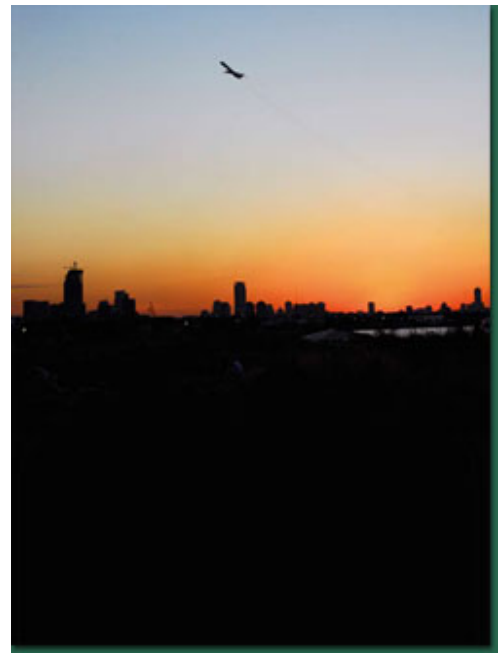
"The city presents dark shadows and marginal places, with contrast and black tones predominant," he says. "The new VISION3 emulsion provided me with deep blacks and great versatility in capturing the city exteriors at night. Often we filmed those scenes in existing light."

Epitafios 2 also emphasizes the presence of the city through the use of sweeping aerial shots. In creating the anonymously sent photographs at the heart of the story, Zappino and Barone took inspiration from the photographs of Arthur "Weegee" Fellig, the famous news photographer whose stark black-and-white images documented the seamy side of New York City life in the 1930s and 1940s. Zappino also credits two of his favorite photographers with sparking his visual ideas.

"Philip-Lorca diCorcia has an interesting treatment of color and composition, and I admire Gregory Crewdson's treatment of spaces," says Zappino. "Just touring Buenos Aires and taking note of the changing shadows and reflections, and the new spaces that are created when light falls differently, was also a great source of inspiration."

Post-production was handled at Cinecolor in Argentina. The Super 16 images were transferred to HDSR format, and color correction was done using ASSIMILATE's™ SCRATCH® software. "Given the vast amount of material that we generated, I decided not to use any deterioration of the image in the production process," says Zappino. "I decided to shoot normally and make a few final adjustments in the digital color correction stage."

Zappino says that he depends on intuition for his most important decisions. "A director of photography must be able to decode images and know how to transmit the drama," he says. "This requires a strong technical background. But when I think of the universe in which the drama unfolds, I try not to limit myself to technicalities."



A scene of the Buenos Aires skyline from *Epitafios 2* (Photo by Maria Antolini)