

Nueva York

an intimate short



Manolo Celi was born in Caracas, Venezuela, and grew up in Boston, Massachusetts. He was that kid in high school, the one that always had a video camera. After seeing films like *8½* and *Cinema Paradiso*, he felt filmmaking was the only career for him. A recent opportunity from Discovery en Español gave him the opportunity to celebrate both his heritage and his passion for cinema.

Discovery en Español contacted a slew of Latino directors nationwide to submit ideas for short films about what it meant to be Latinos in the United States. Celi submitted his proposal for *Nueva York*, and was awarded one of three grants.

"*Nueva York* paints a picture of different Latinos in a variety of situations, and how they all interconnect with each other within the canvas that is New York City," says Celi who directed, wrote and co-produced the film. "The story interweaves their lives, and how they are intrinsically tied to their new city. It shows how their Latino 'know-how' helps them survive and thrive. New York City is as much part of the story as what happens to all of our characters."

Celi looked to frequent collaborator Sherman Johnson to help tell his story. "Sherman is the complete package in what you would want in a cinematographer," Celi explains. "He sees the story as a whole, instead of just as an individual shot or scene."

Celi and Johnson spoke at length about the look of the film beforehand. "Image-wise, we wanted a lot of gradation edged with some subtle contrast," Celi says. "The images needed to be sharp and very true to life. We felt a handheld look would make these stories feel real, almost as if we were shooting a documentary, and it would represent the uncertain, literally unsteady lives of the characters in the film. We also thought the chaos of the city really called for the handheld look." They also both agreed that the story needed to be told on film.

"*Nueva York* is a very human, heartfelt story, and we believed that the quality and texture of film would best support this

feeling," Celi adds. "I really wanted some grain, which is a large part of the reason that we chose to shoot in Super 16 format, and again, only film can truly provide this look."

Celi and Johnson chose KODAK VISION3 500T 7219 film. "We wanted a lot of subtle contrast in the image, but we didn't have time for a lot of carefully-controlled set-ups," says Sherman. "The 7219 film is a low contrast negative with great latitude, and allowed us a tremendous amount of freedom in our exterior set-ups."

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"The emulsion's speed was another huge asset in that we were able to use one stock for the entire shoot. In the past, I've tended to shy away from 500-speed films in Super 16 format because of grain and loss in resolution, but I was beyond pleased with how the 7219 performed in this area."

Sherman had an ARRI SR 3 Advanced camera package from CPT Rental, Inc. in New York. His lenses included Zeiss super-speeds and standard primes that were always filtered to shoot between T1.3 and T2 in order to maximize focus separation from the background. They tended to use focal lengths in the normal to long range in accordance with their verité approach.

Production lasted for three days all around the streets of Manhattan and Queens, and post-production lasted another couple of weeks. The film was processed at Deluxe New York, and then transferred to a hard drive in 1080p high-definition format by colorist Steven Bodner, Jr. on a Spirit HD. Celi edited the film on his laptop with Apple Final Cut Pro.