“AMONGST MEN”: how the recreation of the dark Buenos Aires of the 1990s was done

The year 1996. The suburbs of the Southern zone of the Province of Buenos Aires. A time marked by devastation due to the police opening up the game to crime and pushing a part of society to fall out of the system. AMONGST MEN, HBO’s new original Argentinian miniseries, which debuted in full on September 26th on the HBO Max platform and weekly on HBO, is set on this stage. How was it possible to visually create this atmosphere from almost 25 years ago? Daniel Ortega, director of photography for the series, helps us to take a closer look at the process. “The series' photography seeks cinematography and a raw aesthetic, sometimes realistic, sometimes stylized or affected, in order to convey the emotional universes of the characters, which is mostly completely clouded by drug use and excessive violence,” states Ortega as he describes the general climate that can be seen in the four episodes of AMONGST MEN.To film the scenes, locations outside the city were used. Filming took place in the middle of winter, while very cold and mostly at night. A backdrop that ends up shaping the mystique that surrounds this adaptation of the book by Germán Maggiori, which became a cult classic novel.

ATMOSPHERE: Each location presented a challenge in setting up in order to build the past, in a real and cinematic way.A pattern of colors and textures was designed and the entire series is under a sodium-vapor light: that yellowish and reddish light that used to illuminate the streets. An excess of smoke also appears in the scenes to set the atmosphere and provide immersion into the story.Additionally - and after several aesthetic and technical tests before reaching the final conclusions - there was work done with anamorphic camera lenses and special filters that generate a more organic image, a product of the natural aberrations of the lens and its combination with the lights and filters.Films by Martin Scorsese, Wong Kar-Wai and David Fincher helped to aesthetically find the way. Reference images and paintings were also used, ranging from Goya's black paintings to 15th century Flemish painters. Everything was lit from scratch, since it was mostly shot in semi-abandoned places. Furthermore, everything had to be free of gimmicks because they filmed with two steadicams with angular lenses at the same time that required the work to be done thoroughly.EXTRAS: For the outdoor scenes at the cumbia dance hall and at a gas station, more than 200 extras were present wearing clothing, hairstyles and makeup from that time. COSTUMES: The costumes developed by Patricia Conta had the challenge of re-creating the various urban tribes of the times, such as bikers, rollingas, people from the world of cumbia, among others. Each group of characters is the door to a particular universe portrayed in the costumes. VEHICLES: The car scenes were done combining visual effects (VFX) and real photos. There were almost 100 action vehicles participating in the filming, among them are highlighted: a car used especially for the thieves Mosca and Zurdo (played by Nicolás Furtado and Diego Cremonesi) and a Torino, characteristic of police officers Garmendia and Almada (played by Gabriel Goity and Diego Velázquez).WEAPONS: Weapons and gunfire are the protagonists of the plot. Over 250 weapons and 1000 bullets took part in the production in order to construct the shooting scenes. Furthermore, various fight training sessions were held to give the scenes violence and authenticity.Daniel Ortega summarizes: “HBO Latin America’s high standards mean that we had to be very precise and meticulous in the technical aspects in order to achieve our aesthetic objectives."AMONGST MEN is available in its entirety as of September 26th on the HBO Max streaming platform and weekly on HBO. ### About HBO MaxHBO Max™ is WarnerMedia’s direct-to-consumer streaming platform that offers the best quality entertainment. HBO Max presents all audiences with the widest variety of stories from iconic brands such as HBO, Warner Bros., DC, Cartoon Network and much more. The streaming platform was initially launched in the United States in May 2020. The global launch of the platform began when HBO arrived to 39 markets in Latin America and the Caribbean, and will continue into Europe later this year and the next when HBO-branded streaming services are scheduled to be upgraded to HBO Max.

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