

# Chomyn makes waves with *Sea of Dreams*

Camera and Lenses  
Film stocks

Moviemac Compact with a range of Cooke S4 prime lenses; also an ARRI 535  
EASTMAN EXR 5245 50D, KODAK VISION 200T 5274 and VISION2 500T 5218



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**Jose “Pepe” Bojorquez was a student in a film studies class taught by Christopher Chomyn at University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts. After completing his education, Bojorquez asked Chomyn to read a script he wrote for the feature film *Sea of Dreams*.**

“Pepe was one of the most talented, serious, energetic, positive students I had ever encountered,” says Chomyn. “We discussed a visual style, format and palette for *Sea of Dreams*, and immediately our ideas connected. I was excited to work with Pepe on his feature film directorial debut.”

*Sea of Dreams* is a timeless story that explores the mysteries

and wonders of human relationships in a world where people have beliefs that can fulfill their deepest desires. The cast includes Johnathon Schaech, Seymour Cassel, Sendi Bar, Sonia Braga and Angélica María.

After selecting their locations in and around Veracruz, Mexico, Bojorquez and Chomyn made the immediate decisions to shoot 35mm format framed in 1.85:1 aspect ratio with traditional finish on Kodak Vision Premier print film.

“Our story spans 20 years and is divided into two basic locations, the beachfront and the town that lies inland,” says Chomyn. “Based on the narrative material, we decided to give each setting an individual look, and one way I achieved that was through selection of production design, lighting, choice of camera film and exposure.”

Chomyn covered most scenes with a Moviemac Compact

mounted with a range of Cooke S4 prime lenses, to capture different angles and perspectives. A few scenes were also covered with an ARRI 535 that was primarily being used on second unit work. He chose EASTMAN EXR 5245 50D film, KODAK VISION 200T 5274 and VISION2 500T 5218 films. “I used the slower films for day exteriors and 5218 at night,” Chomyn says. “Our goal was to make the town feel a bit heavier – similar to an oil painting. At the beach, we wanted to create a lighter, more translucent look – like a watercolor. I shot the day for night on 5274 negative, and matched the night for night using 5218.”

Chomyn explains that the sea is an important character in the film, and one whose presence required some effects. In one sequence, the sea becomes jealous and begins to flood the town. Water rises

and floods the streets. Clouds are churning and the daylight begins to darken, until it turns black. It looks like night at midday.

“To make this transition clear, we decided to create this ‘black day’ within a shot,” explains Chomyn. “We made a dolly move around Sonia Braga and, as we crept in, the grips flew a 20X solid overhead to begin the darkening. Then, we began to close the iris, and tilted a light up to edge Sonia out of the darkness. The exposure shifted by five to six stops in that single shot. To further sell the moment, our editor intercut the in-camera effect with some time-lapse images of clouds rolling. We also selected a different color palette from the one we regularly used for night scenes, so we didn’t confuse the audience.”

Chomyn and Bojorquez discussed the merits of shooting practical effects versus creating them digitally in post-production. Striving for a more organic approach, they chose to do as much as possible in-camera, and only used a limited number of necessary digital effects.

The cinematographer explains, “We wanted the audience to experience an emotional journey, so the effects had to feel believable. It shouldn’t be about what we did or how we did it, but about why we did it. The important questions are whether our choices served the story, and did they add to the emotional experience.”

After a successful run on the festival circuit, *Sea of Dreams* is in limited release. You can also watch *The Making of Sea of Dreams* at [www.seaofdreamsthemovie.net](http://www.seaofdreamsthemovie.net)

1 (L-R) Actors Sendi Bar and Johnathon Schaech in a scene from *Sea of Dreams*, shot by cinematographer Christopher Chomyn.