

Buenos Aires/Argentina

In this issue, *Produced by* is proud to premiere a new department, “On Location,” which will provide producers with essential information, both pro and con, regarding the experience of producing on location in both domestic and international venues.

Location, location, location — it is as true in motion pictures as it is in real estate.

Finding the right locations is painstaking, time-consuming work. Sometimes the ideal location creatively, is also the least feasible logistically or economically. It is a process where all of the stars need to align in terms of creative concerns, budget, access to resources — and weather!

As producers search for more cost-effective ways to realize their creative team’s vision, it has become increasingly common to look to South America as a potential option for filming locations, especially given the diversity of locations and ethnicities that can be found there.

Nowhere is this more abundantly true than in Argentina.

*Argentina has a long filmmaking history, dating back to the early 1900s. The country has twice won the foreign language Oscar, most recently for *El secreto de sus ojos* (The Secret in Their Eyes) in 2009.*

*At the center of the Argentine film industry is the city of Buenos Aires, a bustling metropolis with a strong European influence. Separated into distinct neighborhoods called *barrios*, Buenos Aires is celebrated by the Buenos Aires Film Commission (BAFC) as “one place, all places.”*

*The French and Italian architecture throughout Buenos Aires suggest obvious stand-ins for Paris or any number of cities in Italy. The upscale Puerto Madero could pass for many different waterfront metropolitan cities, including Los Angeles. *El Caminito*, the famous street in La Boca, with its bright colors*

and kitschy shops, could be Mexico or Puerto Rico. A few blocks away, La Boca begins to look more like the developing world, with buildings and streets in disrepair.

The key to unlocking the benefits of production in Argentina is working with one of the many qualified production services companies in Buenos Aires. Recognizing its increasing stature in the international film and television industry, the city of Buenos Aires has developed an “audiovisual district” — an official geographic area populated by local production companies. The government has also officially recognized audiovisual production as an “industry,” and provided some key tax exemptions for companies in the District.

These companies have access to experienced local crews, and the local producers know how to navigate the

bureaucracy to maximum advantage. They can also negotiate favorable arrangements with the unions for talent and technicians, and with vendors for equipment, transportation and accommodations.

In January, I had an opportunity to tour some of the major production facilities in Buenos Aires, and it was immediately apparent that Argentina has the capacity and resources to handle even the most sophisticated, large-scale productions.

Camaras y Luces (C&L) in the Palermo barrio of Buenos Aires is one of the largest rental houses in South America, with an excellent selection of cameras, grip and electric equipment for any size production. I was impressed with the quality and maintenance of the equipment, the organization of the facility, and the knowledgeable staff, many of whom were bilingual. It was also almost impossibly clean! C&L has a small on-site stage (suitable for commercials and television), as well as an array of stages at an offsite location, the largest of which is more than 11,000 square feet.

I also toured Cinecolor Argentina, one of South America’s premiere post-production facilities. There I witnessed a coming together of traditional filmmaking and cutting-edge digital technology.

The editing suites were state-of-the-art, as stylish and comfortable as any you would find in Hollywood (I’m almost certain I saw Red Bull in the refrigerator), and there was a casual atmosphere sustained by an inherent professionalism and seriousness of intent.

Last June, I met some of the BAFC staff at the AFCI convention in Los Angeles, and we spoke again during my visit to Buenos Aires. They assist with everything production companies may need from the municipal government for filming in Buenos Aires. The office of the Director General was extremely helpful in making arrangements for facility tours and introductions, and later we had an opportunity to talk in more detail.

The BAFC acknowledges that while there are currently no tax credits for foreign productions, if a production company establishes an office in the Audiovisual District, they will be entitled to certain City tax exemptions for 10 years. As far as filming in other parts of Argentina, the national government entity is INCAA [National Institute of Film and Audiovisual Arts], which can assist producers with filming in other parts of the country.

The best way to ensure a positive experience, suggests the BAFC, would be to work with a local production company

Productions shot in Argentina include...

TELEVISION

- Project Runway Latin America*
- Big Brother Ecuador*
- Fear Factor*
- Vientos de Agua* (miniseries co-production with Spain)
- The Amazing Race*

FILM

- Tetro*
- Seven Years in Tibet*
- There Be Dragons*
- The Motorcycle Diaries*
- Children of Men*
- Lucky Luke*
(French, starring Jean Dujardin)
- On the Road*

in Buenos Aires. While there are local crews available in most of the important cities of every province, the most experienced are in the capital. Typically, foreign productions work with a production company in Buenos Aires — and they take care of everything.

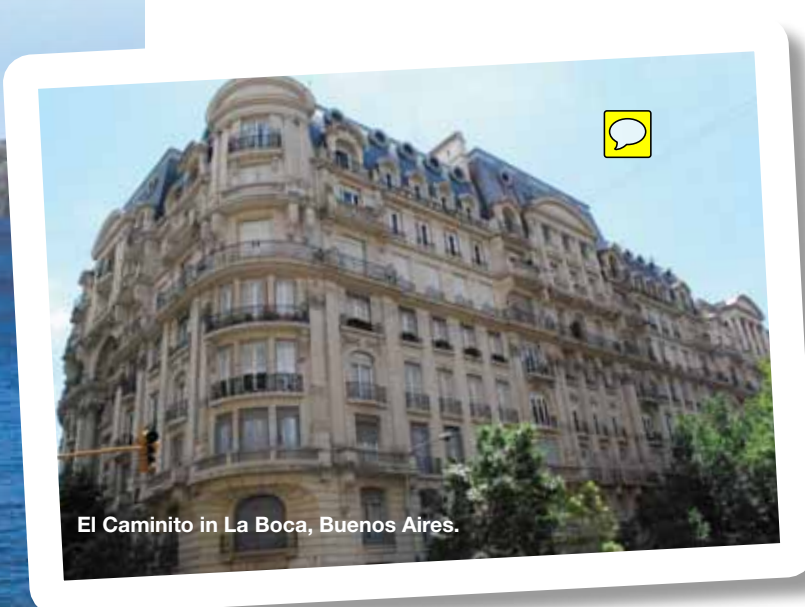
Whether your production requires a substantial amount of shooting or only a few scenes, there are production companies in Buenos Aires with experienced producers and first-class resources to ensure a high-quality, cost-effective positive production experience on location in Argentina.

*K&S Films is a Buenos Aires production company with substantial international credits. They have produced a number of their own projects as well as provided production services for foreign clients across a wide range of budgets and scale. For the French film *Lucky Luke* (budget of \$25 million), K&S Films provided production services over a six-month shooting schedule. On another high-profile project, they provided production services for just a few short scenes.*

It was August 2010, and producer Charles Gillibert (MK2) was looking for a



Bariloche, in the lake district of Patagonia.



El Caminito in La Boca, Buenos Aires.

ON LOCATION

stand-in for Montana in winter. He was producing *On the Road*, directed by Walter Salles, and they needed mountains with snow. South America immediately became an option since it offers winter in August.

Salles was familiar with K&S Films, and the company was hired to provide production services. It was a quick five-day shoot with only 20 days lead time, but *La Angostura* in Patagonia, with its perennial snow-capped mountains, was a perfect match for the terrain that was required.

"Most of the crew were from Argentina," says Gillibert, "and there was a high level of professionalism."

As with many productions filming during the winter, the weather didn't always cooperate.

"The first day was a driving scene," Gillibert recalls, "and it was windy and raining, which was OK for the script. We shot all the scenes, but the last day leaving *La Angostura* there was still no snow. We were disappointed that we did all that traveling and didn't find snow."

As is often the case with weather, things somehow worked out in the end.

"We were making a company move," Gillibert continues, "it was raining — and then suddenly, it started snowing. The snow began and in 10 minutes everything was white. It was amazing!"

Gillibert recommends Argentina as an excellent option for producers looking for a wide variety of locations, professional crew and cooperative government agencies. He also noted that it is less expensive than filming in Canada or the United States. "In Argentina, you go there and trust the country and people you work with and everything is easy with administration. There is great support at every stage."

The shoot for *On the Road* posed some other challenges in addition to the weather. High-profile actors (Kristen Stewart and Garrett Hedlund) were traveling with the company. They also needed to find a 1950s car. "This was



View from the stage, Teatro Colón Opera House, Buenos Aires.

only possible," Gillibert said, "because there was somebody we trust, a true professional, in Argentina."

For those key scenes in *On the Road*, that professional was producer Matías Mosteirín of K&S Films. I talked to Matías about *On the Road* and other aspects of filming in Argentina at K&S's impressive offices in downtown Buenos Aires. The space was upscale modern, with keycard entry and minimalist décor. Matías made himself available on short notice and was refreshingly candid about the process of filming in Argentina.

I proposed to him that the only element missing to make Argentina a superior option as a filming location was some form of tax incentives for foreign productions. He was not optimistic about this possibility. "The government," he said, "while helpful and supportive of the motion picture industry, would be reluctant to favor the industry over other industries where taxes are concerned."

Matías also cautioned against choosing a location purely for economic advantage. "Argentina is a great option for shooting," he said, "because there are wonderful, experienced crew, good locations, good producers, it's easy to travel, good communication, and it's cheaper than shooting in the States. But the most important reason to

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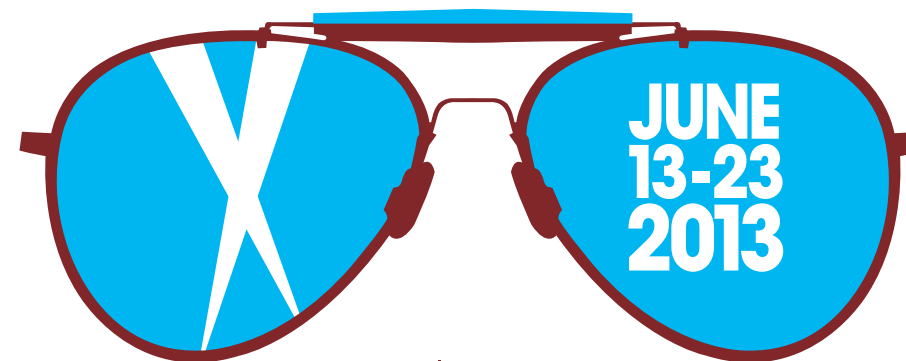
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ON LOCATION

come is because the story requires the locations. Cost should not be the only reason.

"That being said," he added, "Argentina can match many locations around the world."

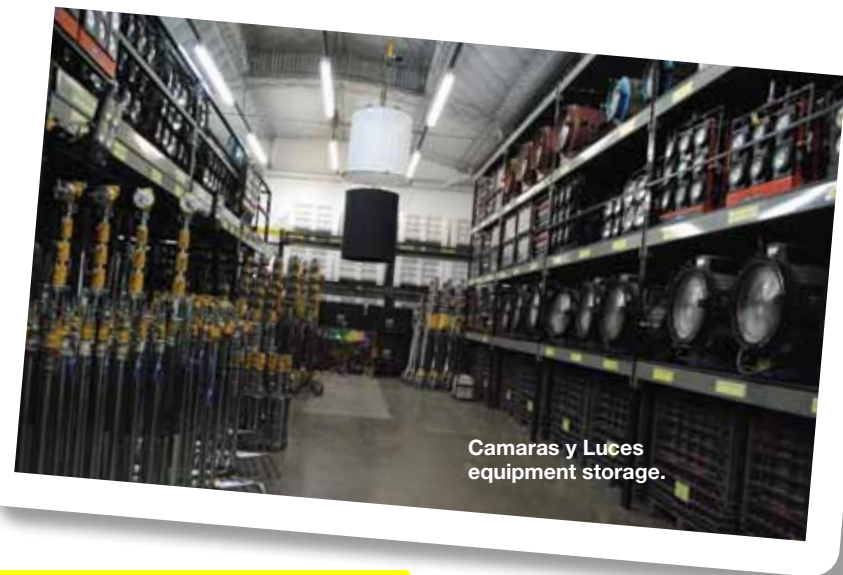
Buenos Aires is also a hub for Latin American as well as international television production and documentaries. In 2008, Ginger Gentile (a native New Yorker) and Gabriel Balanovsky took their years of experience working in the Argentine audiovisual industry and founded San Telmo Productions. They sought to create a company run by creative artists and technicians, where projects could be developed on an individualized and personal level.

"A lot of business is done in person," said Gentile, so the personal contacts of an Argentina-based producer are extremely important. "For example," she added, "many of the rental houses will only rent to local production companies."

Gentile and Balanovsky explained that one of the reasons Argentina has such highly-skilled crew is because students come from all over Latin America to study at Argentine film schools, and there are real mentoring programs to provide a continuity of professionalism for the next generation of filmmakers.

"What Argentina offers," said Balanovsky, "is best value and a 100-year history of making movies." It is also, somewhat surprisingly, the fourth largest exporter of television formats in the world."

San Telmo just finished a feature-length documentary called Goals for Girls, about a group of girls from the slums of Buenos Aires who dream of playing organized football (soccer). As a local production company, they received funding from INCAA, the national film board.



Camaras y Luces equipment storage.

Gentile suggested that an excellent way for U.S. producers to enhance the benefits of filming in Argentina would be to enter into a co-production with a local production company. Co-productions are becoming increasingly more common, and while the subsidies from INCAA are modest by U.S. major motion picture studio standards, the U.S. dollar goes a lot further in Argentina than it does in Hollywood. As an example, the Oscar-winning *The Secret in Their Eyes*, considered a major Argentine production with recognizable stars, was produced for approximately US \$3.5M.

INCAA receives its funding from taxes on audiovisual exploitation, so there is no danger that subsidies for co-productions will end. In fact, increasing sales of audiovisual content in Argentina (i.e. more Argentinians going to the movies and buying DVDs) will bring additional revenue to INCAA for such subsidies. This is a much more reliable model than similar government financing sources in Europe, where funds for such programs are among the first to be cut during an economic downturn.

In addition to production, San Telmo's services include research, casting, scouting and post. Short of filming inside the Casa Rosada with 20 minutes' notice, or sending a car over the Iguazu Falls (both actual requests they have received), Gentile and Balanovsky are confident San Telmo can meet most any challenge and deliver a first-class production for their overseas and U.S. clients.

Whether you are a feature producer looking for a stand-in location or a non-fiction television producer with specific geographic needs, if your project requires locations that are actually in or can be reproduced effectively in Argentina, the first step is to research and choose an experienced Buenos Aires production services company. Then, with assistance from BAFC, and possibly even co-production subsidies from INCAA, you will be well on your way to shooting on location in Buenos Aires/Argentina.

—SCOTT SORRENTINO

Contacts

Buenos Aires Film Commission:
www.buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/produccion/industrias/film_c_eng.php
INCAA: www.incaa.gov.ar
Camaras y Luces: www.camarasyluces.com
Cinecolor Argentina: www.cinecolor.com.ar
K&S Films: www.ks-films.com
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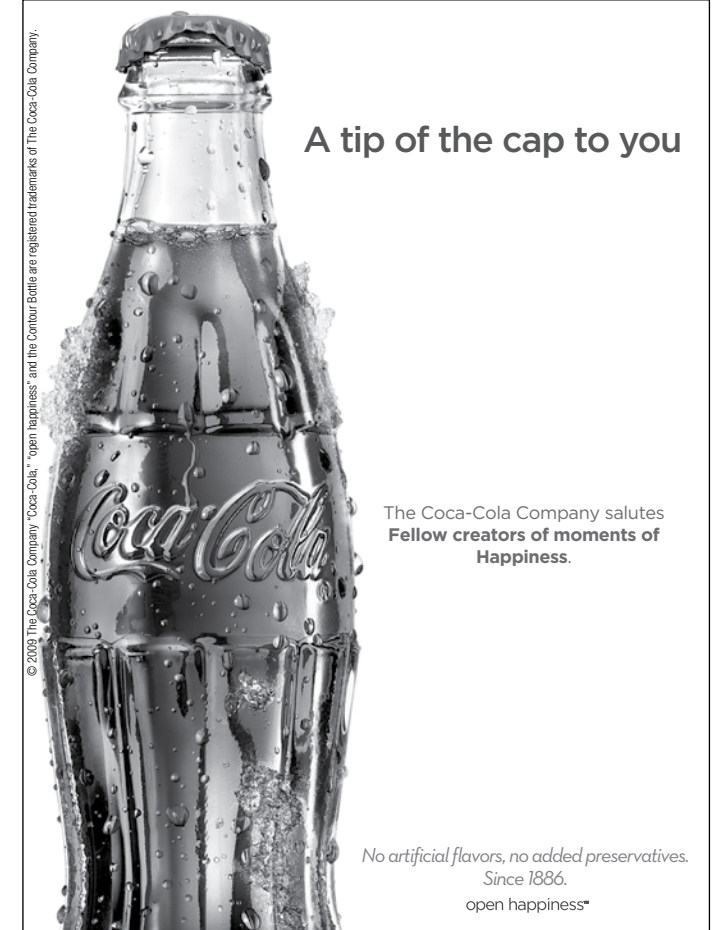


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