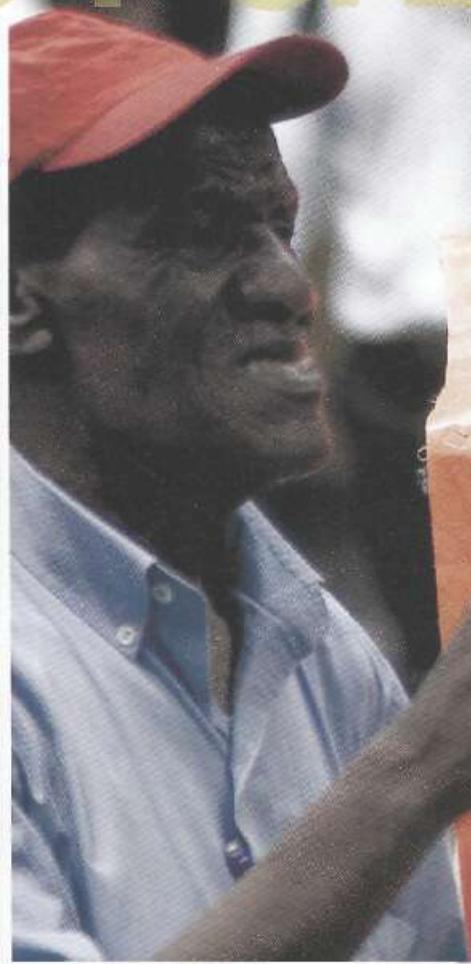


beto
salatini
director
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You don't get more fanatical than Brazilian director Beto Salatini. Salatini is, by his own admission, 'very obsessive'. Take, for example, his collection of commercials from around the world. By his own reckoning he has the largest private archive of TV spots in the world -120,000 at the last count, all neatly stored on a hard drive at home.

Since 2003, he has been scouring the web for spots on a daily basis, which «, he files under two separate categories - clients and directors. Before the advent of the internet, he used to rely on a bimonthly dose of shots. "I was the first person in Brazil to sign up to shots," he boasts, "shots was represented in Brazil only from issue 17. That was in 1992,1993.1 got a contact for shots in the 1991 Cannes festival and I subscribed from issue one. I remember they used to send them by VMS. So I have the complete collection of shots. I used to watch them obsessively."

In his work, he is equally methodical. "Ideas don't come easily to me," he explains. "I have to strive a lot to come up with them. I don't know if I am a perfectionist; maybe enthusiast would be a better word. I watch a lot of

from the airport, he found a bill roll worth \$230 on the pavement.

In San Francisco he worked in a chair factory; he drove a tractor in an apple orchard in Seattle. Eventually he drifted to New York, where he found a job as a projectionist at the Bleecker Street Cinema. "It was heaven," he says. "The Bleecker was an art cinema and many people who worked there were taking cinema classes at New York University. I didn't have the chance to study there myself but, at the Bleecker, I used to screen two different movies each day. So, instead of studying cinema, I watched movies."

He eventually found work as an editor with Globo, Brazil's biggest TV channel, and went to work for them in London.

He says his six years of travelling were the most formative of his life. "Sometimes things are clearer for a foreigner because you're not so involved," he says. "I believe Schopenhauer, the German philosopher, once said that 'the best escape a man can have from his mind is to be a foreigner.' You develop a sort of enquiring eye. Life becomes a documentary."

Salatini had originally wanted to be a musician. He took night classes in Sao

(Left) *Cerpo e Alma*, for Fiat and (right) *O Botiearie Jcr Xerox*



Salatini's free-spirited imagination has produced such images as an artist sneezing colours. But he's also an obsessional architecture graduate with a maths habit who says ideas don't come easily. **Charlie Devereux** tries to make it all add up

commercials from all over the world to get inspiration: from the United States, Europe, Asia, Latin America and Australia."

He says that one of his passions - mathematics - influences his working methods. "I like mathematics because it's very precise - my favourite phrase is '2 + 2 = 4'," he explains. "Cutting a film is related to mathematics. You have to be precise, especially when you work with humour. The most crucial thing when you work with humour is to really focus on the most hilarious moment. You don't want to have people laughing in the wrong places."

Salatini may have his working life organised meticulously but he is also something of a free spirit. As a 21-year-old he set off with four friends from architecture school with the aim of hitchhiking from Brazil to Canada. It took him 11 months. He road the 'train of death' in Bolivia, riding on the roof and having to lie prostrate each time the train entered a tunnel.

He arrived in Nicaragua just after the Sandinista revolution. The capital, Managua, had been hit by a devastating earthquake and he remembers child soldiers at the border chatting about guns as easily as boys in other countries compare cars or video games.

In El Salvador he saw people shot in the street. He arrived in Los Angeles with just \$78 in his pocket, but, heading straight to Hollywood Boulevard

Paolo at the Fundagao das Artes de Sao Caetano and was a baritone in the University of Sao Paulo choir. But a disastrous performance persuaded him he was better equipped for filmmaking. He has worked in Brazil as a director for 17 years. In 2000 he set up Lux Filmes. It's a family affair: his wife, Carla, is the executive producer, while his

19-year-old stepdaughter is his third assistant.

As with everything else in his life he was very sure about the type of company he wanted. He says he chose the other three directors on Lux's roster - David Preizler, Jorge Caterbona and Stanley - because they had gritty but funny documentary styles.

"I don't know if it has to do with the Twin Towers attack of September 11 but I believe that people don't believe in heroes anymore," he says. "The aesthetic has changed to a documentary .style and the protagonist is no longer the model, the nice guy, he's more an anti-hero. I like that and use it in my work and when I started looking for directors I was looking for guys who had the same feeling and approach."

His work is mainly humorous. He is particularly proud of a recent commercial he shot for the Pan American Art School that features an art student who sneezes colours and becomes a kind of latter day Jackson Pollock.

For Salatini, the secret to successful humour lies in making it as true to life as possible. "I hate beautiful spots - spots that are too polished and with fancy art direction. I believe that in order to find something funny you have to believe that it's really happening, especially with the surrealistic humour that I like - surrealism has to be very realistic." 