

## Rural Roots in

# All Hat

There's an old saying that it takes a thief to catch a thief. In *All Hat*, charming ex-con Ray Dokes (Luke Kirby) leaves jail and returns to his rural roots. He concocts an elaborate scheme to foil a corrupt thoroughbred horse owner who's trying to buy up farmland for development. The situation is complicated by an old flame, played by Lisa Ray, as well as by an old friend with mounting gambling debts, played by Keith Carradine. The cast also includes Graham Greene and Rachael Leigh Cook. Brad Smith wrote both the novel and the screenplay.

*All Hat* was directed by Leonard Farlinger and was filmed by Paul Sarossy, BSC, CSC over 27 days in southern Ontario. Sarossy grew up in small-town Ontario, and has compiled more than 50 credits since becoming a director of photography in the late 1980s.

"*All Hat* attracted me because of the tremendous script," says Sarossy. "There were funny, enjoyable, delicious characters, and great dialogue. Leonard and I rapidly fell into a comfortable dialogue about how he wanted to approach the design and structure of the film."

The story takes place against the sometimes seedy but colorful backdrop of the horse track world. "The bulk of the film is a comic character piece but the races required clever and careful attention and planning, especially on our humble budget," says Sarossy.

The filmmakers also had to consider the shortening days of autumn. "The biggest issue we anticipated was the inevitable loss of daylight while we were shooting," says Sarossy. "I had to pick a stock that could cope with all the situations we were likely to encounter. It was a perfect opportunity to use one great high-speed stock that could handle anything we had to throw at it. We picked (KODAK VISION2 500T) 5218 film, which performs brilliantly under all conditions."

Sarossy never had to switch stocks as the sun was fading. "It's always frustrating when you're forced to mix stocks in the middle of shooting a scene," he says. "We already had the high-speed stock in the camera! 5218 is so fine grained, with such beautiful contrast, that there's no compromise when using it in the broad daylight shots. When confronting low light situations, the film's shadow detail is remarkable. We dubbed it the 'miracle stock,' as often Leonard would ask for one more take after the point where photography for the day was, for practical exposure purposes, over. We were continually amazed at the results."

To emphasize the landscapes, the filmmakers chose to shoot in Super 35mm format and a widescreen 2.35 aspect ratio. Gorgeous farmland being rapidly developed into anonymous suburban housing is an important story point.

"It's a real issue we wanted to capture on film," Sarossy says. "We frequently had to change camera angles to avoid the encroaching housing development in the real world."

The digital intermediate post path is planned at Technicolor Toronto. Sarossy plans to fine tune colors and contrast. "For economy we decided on the three-perf Super 35 format, which was a saving for the production and meant that we were committed to a digital finish," he says. "Also, so much of the story takes place outside, completely at the mercy of the elements. On our tight schedule, we had to continue shooting in all weather conditions. We frequently encountered changing cloud cover and sunlight, and often had to split scenes up over several days. The horse-racing sequences are a major example. We will rely on the DI grader to massage the inconsistencies with all the tools at his disposal. Happily, we have the 5218 stock on our side, which gives us every advantage, and a wide range of information with which to work."

1 A horse-racing scene from *All Hat*, shot by DP Paul Sarossy, BSC, CSC.  
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