



A raw look for Chandler Hall

Above: A scene from Chandler Hall shot by DP Ken Stipe (below).

Chandler Hall is an independent feature that follows a group of college friends who are on the edge. The two main characters make a quick pile of cash as small time drug dealers. One is drawn deeper into the world of drugs and the other, Jimmy Bravo, is trying to escape that world. When Jimmy's friend gets caught in a dangerous situation, his attempts to help go dramatically awry.

Chandler Hall director Jeremy Pollack and cinematographer Ken Stipe previously collaborated on two short films. Stipe, a graduate of the American Film Institute, has nine feature credits in addition to numerous telefilms and commercials.

"We wanted to give the visuals a certain edginess," says Stipe. "Jeremy, who works in post-production at DreamWorks, understands the advantages of film. I felt that the Super 16mm format combined with a faster film could give us the edge we wanted within an affordable budget."

Stipe says that most of his work is more fluid and cleaner than the images in **Chandler Hall**. "Usually you're trying to make something look a little bigger than it is," he says. "On this film, I thought it would be appropriate to go in the opposite direction."

He shot the majority of the film handheld, almost entirely with the same Angenieux HR 7-81mm lens mounted on a lightweight Aaton XTRprod camera rented from Hollywood Camera. His film palette was mainly Kodak VISION2 500T 7218 film with some daylight scenes captured on Kodak VISION2 250D 7205 and Eastman EXR 50D 7245 films.

"We wanted more of a documentary feel, like you're finding the shots on the spot," says Stipe. "It was a 15-day shoot, so we anticipated that we would be working fast and compromising on lighting. The faster film allowed me to get by with less light and smaller units. I knew that the blow-up would emphasize

grain but I figured that would work well for the subject matter, even though the 7218 is a fairly fine-grained stock. It has a lower contrast too, so I knew I didn't have to fill in the shadows quite as much as I might have with other stocks."

The majority of the film was shot at practical locations in California, including an elaborate house in Sunland that served as a drug dealer's home. A number of exterior campus scenes were filmed at College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita. Other scenes were filmed on Hollywood Camera's stages in Burbank.

"If there was a deep shadow or a hot spot in the background, I often let it go," he says. "I wanted to keep everything on the real or raw side, so I tried not to over-light. It gives the audience the feeling that they're really there, watching the whole thing unfold. Combined with the handheld camera, and the occasional zoom, it helps to communicate the instability in the lives of these characters."

Stipe has done features in HD video formats in the past. "If we had done this movie using HD, I would have had to put more light in the shadows, and control the highlights a lot more," he says. "That's something film gives you – more range. I think HD is a nice format that's come a long way, but it still doesn't have the subtlety and range of film, even Super 16mm."

Chandler Hall is currently showing at film festivals with a theatrical release planned. ■

