

# The Sweet Smell of Success...



Above: Nicole Kidman in the *Chanel No. 5* commercial.

Inset: DP Mandy Walker ACS on location during the shoot.

**B**az Luhrmann's elaborate commercial, *Chanel No. 5 The Film* reunited the innovative Director with *Moulin Rouge* and Oscar-winning actress, Nicole Kidman but there was another exceptional female attached to this production who played a pivotal role in the resulting seduction.

Director of Photography, Mandy Walker ACS, worked closely with Luhrmann on achieving the stunning and luxurious look of what is essentially a two-minute short film. Luhrmann who wrote, produced and directed the film, which was shot over five days at Fox Studios in Sydney, conceived the campaign from an original idea. Kidman plays the character of "the most famous woman in the world" who enjoys a fleeting but deep romance with a boy who is unaware of who she is. The result was the culmination of months of attention to detail on the part of Luhrmann, his wife, Academy Award-winning Production and Costume Designer Catherine Martin, and his Bazmark team.

For Walker, the job represented the opportunity to expand her horizons and experience first-hand the creativity that both Luhrmann and Martin are renowned for. "Baz and Catherine are incredibly organised but also really creative," recalls Walker. "We had a lot of prep that took place, on and off, over two months.

Miniatures of the sets were created and then we would get the lenses in. We also shot the storyboards on video to be sure things would work. They are always evolving and making things better and better and better."



Certainly working with Kidman, who is in fact, arguably "the most famous woman in the world" brought with it certain challenges. "There was no opportunity to do any camera tests with Nicole," Walker explains. "We had to prep for three days, pre-lighting four or five sets and because we knew we would only have Nicole for four days, we had to light stand-ins - and then she came in."

Walker offers insight into the creative process behind achieving the 'look' of the production "We looked at photos from other films from the 40s and 50s," she

explains. "Much of what we achieved is because it's on sets. I'd describe it like a modern version of a glamorous 50s kind of look. I used ultra-speed lenses that open up to T1 without any diffusion. There was no diffusion created in post either. The soft look was achieved through the lenses."

Responsible for a vast camera crew that comprised both main unit and second unit, the shoot ran everything two-camera with Walker on 'A' camera and cohort, Damian Wyvill on 'B' camera. "We had a camera on a fifty-foot Techno crane working with a Libra 4 head a lot of the time. It was a mixture of that and hand held," Walker says. "I decided to use a combination of the Kodak VISION2 5218 500T and 5217 200T stocks.

The '18 makes skin tones seem to glow and has excellent shadow detail and the fine grain of the 200-speed worked best for Nicole's blonde hair against the blue screen and black backgrounds."

Months later Walker remains enthusiastic as she reflects upon the experience and Luhrmann's style. "Photographic-wise it was a DP's dream," she says. "We used lots of photographic references but if I suggested something they were really open to it. He's really collaborative. It's the best working with him!" ■