

Cinematographer Wong Ping Hung explores redemption through forgiveness.

A commissioned project of Radio Television Hong Kong, *Fable* was financed to the tune of US\$40,000 by RTHK, and the crew shot twenty-two minutes of drama material in only five days! Cinematographer Wong Ping Hung, HKSC, points out that, "the advantage of working with a small crew is the strong team spirit. Nobody minds doing several jobs on the set. I often regard it as a privilege to work with a small crew because all departments have a clear vision and a strong sense of responsibility."

Originally planned as a Digital Betacam shoot, the filmmakers decided to pursue 35mm as the acquisition format which would result in higher production values. Director Larry Lau says that writer/producer Bill Yip was the first person to suggest film instead of video. "He insisted that we should go for quality instead of the profit margin, and his passion for the project was instrumental to its success." Having previously used Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 for a commercial and being impressed with the stock's contrast range and grain, Hung used it for the duration of the shoot. "A fast stock with minimal grain allowed us to save money and shoot faster by having a more modest lighting package. The 5218 also allowed us the stylistic choice of utilizing a deep depth of field, which is not that common in feature films, at least not the ones I've shot. We were also able to maintain a strong continuity of image quality across days with dramatic changes in the weather."

Lau gave Hung the brief that while avoiding the stylistic clichés of ghost stories, the narrative, which concerns

the spiritual journey taken by the protagonist before passing away, required a sense of surrealism.

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"While we often shot in real locations, the main one being an abandoned school, we added a touch of surrealism by using a very restricted color palette, and adding a bluish tone throughout the film. I guess this is how we remember our old days in school

when everybody is wearing white and grey school uniforms." Lau says that, "even though I have known DP Wong for a long time, this is the first time he and I have worked together. Wong was involved in the project since inception, so he knew the story very well, and he already had the picture in mind long before principal photography. I am not really a technical person and prefer to allow my team members to go all the way themselves until I see something. It's more fun to work this way than being a lonely dictator on the set, is it not?"

Fable was shot on an ARRIflex 535 using a basic Zeiss lens kit. An 81B filter was on the lens at all times to acquire a bluish wash. Hung had a small lighting package consisting of several 2.5K HMIs, several 2K blondies and an assortment of smaller units such as 800W redheads. ■



Below: Director Larry Lau shooting the TV series in Hong Kong.
Above: A scene from the series.

