

Paris lives the film experience



Top: DP Randall Tack (Kodak) teaching the workshop audience.

Above: DP Yves Cape, AFC, teaching young videographers.

The banks of the Seine provided the setting for Kodak France's first ever Super 16mm shooting workshop last October. The three day event with the slogan 'Live the film experience!' provided a unique, no-cost opportunity for young European directors with video credits to become acquainted with the techniques of shooting in Super 16mm. 85 participants were selected from more than 250 applicants by Kodak and Maison du Film Court on the strength of their portfolios.

Randall Tack, Rochester-based Director of Photography and Yves Cape, AFC, master Cameraman and former Assistant Professor at INSAS in Belgium, whose roles were 'to demystify film, not oppose digital', admitted surprise that quite so much teaching would be involved. "Neither Randall nor I anticipated how little the participants knew about 16mm," remarks Cape. "You would think that the experience of video would have given them substantial knowledge of depth of field, apertures, sensitivity and so on, but not so. We demonstrated that working with film isn't complicated and can be learnt fairly easily and quickly once a few basic concepts have been grasped. As camera operators we're well aware that HD or other video formats don't match the quality of the film image and it's becoming important that we educate young people who want to make the transition to film and dream of working in the classic 35mm format." "Our goal was to show them how to use a camera, to think about a scene before shooting and the tools to use in order to achieve the desired result," adds Tack.

In partnership with two technical sponsors, Panavision and Ciné Lumières of Paris, the participants split into two teams, one with an ARRI SR111 and the other with an Aaton A-Minima: "a foot and shoulder-mounted camera and a hand-held camera with which they created 'wild' shots," muses Cape. "The chaotic images let them realise they could have fun with film by revisiting the principle of Super 8mm. It's one way to discover the quality of 16mm without having the feeling of being in church!"

As a final exercise, the young directors shot two scenes with Kodak VISION2 250D 7205: an interior on a barge and an exterior by the Seine. "We proved that you don't always need a great deal of lighting to get pretty pictures; that's another myth, along the same lines as 'rigid technicians' or the weight of the hardware!" says Cape. Participants on the interior shoot were tasked with major overexposures and mixed tungsten with daylight. "With almost no lighting, each group could see that extremely beautiful controlled images could be obtained with a quality of grain and definition that one simply doesn't achieve with video," he concludes.

At the end of the shoot, the rushes were screened at Kodak France and each participant had the opportunity to analyse his or her own work – as well as the work of others. "This type of workshop helps put a face to the Kodak label," states Tack. "Young people need to know that if they want to shoot on film we're here to help them select their camera, advise on equipment to rent and put them in contact with people who can help bring their project to a successful conclusion."

"At a time when everyone is talking about digital and video, it's important for students and young directors to learn, or re-learn, the real value of film and its true relationship with silver," notes Director of Photography Darius Khondji. "Kodak France's 16mm shooting workshop is an excellent step forward. More workshops should take place throughout the world so that filming on a silver substrate – something I intend to go on doing – can continue for as long as possible."

A further two European shooting workshops will be held in 2006: Amsterdam in June and Paris in October. ■