

Commercials honored for 2008 AICP Show



Commercials by Joaquín Baca-Asay, Frank Budgen, and John Mathieson, BSC took top honors in the cinematography category at the 17th annual AICP Show, The Art & Technique of the American Commercial. The AICP also recognized Espen Bjørshol Solberg in the Student Commercial Category.

The Show, which is presented by the Association of Independent Commercial Producers, premiered in June at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Nearly 2,000 members of the advertising and production industry gathered to view the hour-long compendium of the best commercials of the year.

Over 300 judges from across the United States, and a blue ribbon Curatorial Committee comprising distinguished members of the industry from advertising agencies, production companies, editorial companies, and many others, selected the winning commercials.

How I Fight

This was the second consecutive year in which Baca-Asay was honored for a Nike commercial. His work on the Air Max spot *Defy* was highlighted in the 2007 AICP Show, and this year he was recognized for *How I Fight*. His credits also include the features *Roger Dodger*, *Super Troopers*, *Thumbsucker*, *We Own the Night*, and *Two Lovers*.

Baca-Asay directed and photographed *How I Fight*, which features a succession of images of famous South African athletes from arresting angles, often at very high frame rates. The athletes' movements, combined with inventive framing, depict the visual metaphor of being shot out of a gun, with the idea of sports being an alternative to violence. The concept for the look was initially inspired by the photography

of Leni Riefenstahl as well as Annie Leibovitz's Olympic portraits.

"We tried to simplify the world by shooting mostly against black backgrounds," Baca-Asay says. "We shot high-speed frame rates, often with a single 50K SoftSun light overhead, allowing the background to naturally fall to black. I wanted the bodies to feel mechanical."

Baca-Asay shot the spot in slow-motion, framed in 1:85, with a Photo-Sonics camera loaded with KODAK VISION2 Expression 500T 5229 film. "I use 5229 all the time because its palette is very soft and realistic," he says. "I like soft blacks and this stock is forgiving."

There is one night scene of an athlete jumping into the pool where Baca-Asay veered from the single light approach. "I wanted him to hit the pool like a bullet through an apple," Baca-Asay explains. "I rim-lit him with a lot of separate lights. We were working with such intense light that we were able to overwhelm any kind of ambient light - everything fell to black."

Baca-Asay looked for unusual viewpoints from which to shoot the athletes. For instance, he used an overhead angle to capture a long jumper landing in the pit. "I'm not a sports guy at all, which I think is advantageous for me because I don't

cinematography at AICP Show



have any kind of agenda on how it should look," he says. "I don't even care which direction somebody runs in. I have a world-class sprinter running in the wrong direction on the track. I don't see it with jaded eyes."

Slots

Mathieson and director/co-cinematographer Budgen were recognized for the Monster.com *Slots* spot, which portrays automatons on their way to work over a dreamy, hypnotic song by The Chemical Brothers. Many of the workers glide slowly on tracks through a soulless urban landscape, communicating a robotic adherence to daily routine. Through the maze of sleepwalkers, a lone rebel strides purposefully against the tide: the man who used Monster.com to advance his career.

Mathieson, who received Oscar® nominations for *Gladiator* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, says, "This project was engaging because there was a strong idea that could be communicated with a visual language."

He used ARRIFLEX cameras and KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 and 250D 5205 stocks. "We used the mixed color temperatures of the existing lighting to enhance the sense of a soulless urban landscape,"

he says. "We found good locations in Buenos Aires, with corporate buildings that felt bankrupt of any spiritual design or architectural soul. The setting was key. You set everything up and then probe for the right shots, depending on how the light and shadow falls."

Unseen cables and rods pulled as many as 50 extras through the shots on steel rails. "We tested shots with rollerblades and skateboards, but the movement was too free," he says. "We wanted to communicate that their lives were restricted and that they followed the slot in life."

"The shot that reveals the man walking against the grain was on a long lens through a stacked-up foreground," he says. "It's one of those shots that you've got in your pocket, and it worked well here."

Sync

Solberg, who graduated from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, directed and photographed the Red Bull spot *Sync*. He came up with the idea for the commercial one day while at the Rose Bowl Aquatics Center. "I saw these elderly women swimming and doing hard tricks in the pool," recalls Solberg. "It was visually beautiful. I started to wonder where they got all

this youthful energy?"

Solberg created a spot that features the women from the Rose Bowl pool performing a synchronized swimming routine. At the end, it is revealed the swimmers had Red Bull before getting in the water.

"I wanted to go for a contemporary look that emulated Esther Williams and Busby Berkeley," says Solberg. "I guess you can say that as soon as you point a camera at synchronized swimmers the association to Esther and Busby is impossible to ignore. All the shots have that feeling, but tweaked like a DJ speeding up an old classic song." The spot has also earned Solberg an Addy Award.

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How I Fight, *Slots* and *Sync*, along with the rest of the AICP Show, have become part of MoMA's permanent film archives, preserved for future generations. In addition, the AICP Show is on tour with screenings at museums and cultural institutions in major cities across the United States and other parts of the world. These exhibitions reach over 15,000 creative leaders worldwide. Kodak has been a corporate sponsor of the AICP Show since its inception. For more information, visit www.aicp.com.