

Monkeying around with Honey Birdette



In a commercial for Australian lingerie boutique chain Honey Birdette, a woman tries on a selection of underwear as her wind-up toy monkey busily clashes its cymbals. But after a while the monkey becomes so engrossed in the lingerie-clad woman that it forgets the cymbals and the woman catches it sneaking a peek.

"I loved the quirky concept to this spot, which needed to be sensual but also a little cheeky to appeal to both male and female audiences," says director Zenon Kohler of *The Post Lounge*. "There's a clear Helmut Newton influence in some of Honey Birdette's branding, but his photography can be quite cold and distant. I needed to introduce some warmth, so I took inspiration from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*. My aim was to capture that film's weird but strangely titillating mood."

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After initially considering HD, Kohler and director of photography Tony Luu, ACS opted for film and KODAK VISION2 200T 5217. "35mm was the obvious choice, especially when John Bowring of Lemac suggested we shoot 2-perf on the new Aaton Penelope and capture the best shots on a limited budget. It actually contributed to the cinematic look of the commercial and increased the voyeuristic appearance," says Kohler. "The camera was quickly converted to 2-perf and allowed us to yield almost ten minutes from every roll," responds Luu. "I've shot 2-perf before and I love it. I try to shoot widescreen as often as possible; it offers a great balance between organic texture and value for budget."

The commercial was the first collaboration between Kohler and Luu, with Kohler as director and Luu as director of photography. The pair had previously worked together when Kohler was VFX supervisor with *The Post Lounge*. "Zenon was eager to hear my views on how to bring an opulent richness

to the scene and show off the lingerie in its best light. He had a clear vision of how he wanted to tell his story, but was very open to my suggestions and comments. It made for a relaxed partnership," reveals Luu.

"I used the versatile Cooke CXX zoom, which lets you shoot on a zoom with a T2 setting. It gave me the ability to 'dial in' a shallow texture to the shots and, in particular, the fabrics and detail on the lingerie. I shot at 40 fps, which rendered a nice smooth slow motion without stretching out the action too much for the cut. I wanted the lighting to have an intimate and private feel, so most of our subject was low key, with soft three-quarter keys to punctuate the lingerie. We had the art department dress in some ornate background practicals to justify the light and create depth" states Luu, who is very pleased with the look of the commercial. "It has a playful feminine feel that's augmented by the environment and the soft lighting. Film rendered the shadow detail wonderfully, with such subtle shadow gradation."

"The grade was incredibly important," notes Kohler. "It needed to convey the warmth and cosiness of a boudoir but also retain a certain opulence. Karen Harborow's brilliant production design and Tony's great lighting were sweetened by colourist Alex Evans at *The Post Lounge*. But let's not forget Sam Bowden's awesome editing and Matt Dye's perfect 3-D monkey eyes." And, in conclusion, what was the most demanding aspect for Luu? "Staying focused on the job at hand!" he says.

This was the first television commercial in Australia shot in 2-perf on the Penelope camera. It raised brand awareness prior to the opening of Honey Birdette's third store in Australia and may be viewed at <http://www.thepostlounge.com/work/view/168/1/brand/honey-birdette>

1 L-R Director Zenon Kohler, DP Tony Luu, ACS and Scott Dolan, 1st Camera Assistant.
2 DP Tony Luu ACS with model Michelle Burstow. 3 A scene from the TVC.

Key Data at a glance

Director	Zenon Kohler
DP	Tony Luu, ACS
Cameras	Aaton Penelope
Formats	35mm 2-perf
Film stock	KODAK VISION2 200T 5217