

When director Rupert Sanders needed a cinematographer to capture poetic, slow-motion images of water droplets for a Propel Fitness Water commercial, Jim Matlosz was his man. The cameraman spent 10 years early on in his career working as a technician on Photo-Sonics high speed cameras.



How Jim Matlosz Makes Every Drop Count

Over the past 15 years, Matlosz has shot music videos, commercials and narrative features. His recent credits include commercials for Burger King, Cadillac and Pellegrino, music videos for Alanis Morissette and Stereo 360, as well as the stop motion narrative film **Oedipus**, which was featured in the 2004 International Cinematographers Guild Film Showcase.

Along the way Matlosz gained proficiency in several specialized types of photography including IMAX® (**The Princess and the Pea**), visual effects, and high-speed macro photography. The latter requires fine control over incredible amounts of light and film speeds as high as 2500 fps.

"I thought that Propel's previous spots featuring water droplets were well done, but felt I could bring a little extra sparkle," says Matlosz. "My goal was to create an organic and intimate feeling."

The water droplets for the Propel spots were recorded on Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 film at a wide variety of frame rates. "That stock is beautiful," says Matlosz. "The grain structure is unbelievable, similar to the medium-speed films of the past. I exposed exactly at 500. Creating spectral highlights are important in this type of work, so I had to maintain precise lighting ratios."

Matlosz explains the most common error with this type of photography is underexposure, which limits flexibility in post-production. At incredibly fast filming speeds, HMI and other lamps can also create flicker problems. Light meters must be recalibrated and crew members on the set must wear sunglasses or even welding goggles in order to see their subject. The heat is intense.

Matlosz chose to work with the Photo-Sonics 4C camera, which uses a spinning four-sided prism to record images onto film that moves over a drum rather than through a claw pulldown mechanism. In this situation, he says that depth of field is an inch at best, while T-stops range up to 256 with the 500-speed film.

"Communication is extremely important," he adds. "Gaffer Stuart Cropley, camera technician John Wagner and I all had to be on the same page, especially with all the maths involved. You've got so much going on that one false move can put you in bad shape."

The transfer was handled by colorist Beau Leon at The Syndicate. Matlosz notes that his photography had to work in harmony with other shots photographed by main unit director of photography Jess Hall.

"We had an excellent working relationship," Matlosz says. "Usually, we would line up the shot, and then Jess and Rupert would come look it over. They would make a few suggestions, but generally they gave me a lot of respect and freedom to do what I felt was necessary to get the shot. It's usually a mistake to try to light by eye in these situations, and I know if I follow the proper methods, the shot will work." ■

