



Justice-for-Hire

Jan Lucanus' 47-minute featurette *Justice-for-Hire* has won numerous accolades for its outstanding representation of the martial arts. Following the film's success, Lucanus introduced the comic book, *JFH: Justice-For-Hire* and also plans feature film and video game versions of *JFH*. *InCamera* asked Lucanus about the making of the film and what separates it from other films of the same genre.

Q **The making of *Justice-for-Hire* is the focus of the book *Making Movies from Pearson Publishing*, which aims to teach high school students about independent filmmaking. Did you first become interested in filmmaking while in school?**

A "The first time I realized there was someone called a director was when I saw *The Killer*, directed by John Woo. I was 11 and my father was a comic book writer, and his friends had introduced him to Hong Kong filmmaking. He exposed me to that. Eventually my parents enrolled me in the New York Filmmaking Academy's high school program. I met a teacher there who brought me to New York University to check it out, and I loved it."

Q **How did you envision the look of *Justice-for-Hire*?**

A "The film had two cinematographers. Lucas Loureiro shot the first and third acts and John Chen shot the second act. We started shooting the day after graduation from NYU. We shot for two weeks, and then another week later that year. We wanted the film to feel stylish, fun and big. A lot of the style actually came from the costumes, which were provided to us by Sean John Clothing."

Q **Can you describe your approach to the photography?**

A "We wanted to emphasize the colors, so we used KODAK VISION2 500T 7218 film. We needed the film to look big, so we made extensive use of a Zeiss 5.5mm lens, a very wide lens. We felt that a lot of martial arts cinema lately brings the action closer and closer without giving you the overall feel of the action. So we decided to shoot more in the style of Bruce Lee and Akira Kurosawa, which is a wide frame where the martial artists can move. The problem that poses is that the choreography has to look real from far away, so our martial artists really started hitting each other."

Q **Were you shooting in practical locations or on sets?**

A "Most of the fighting was done outdoors. But a big sequence in the second act was filmed at our dojo, the space where we do our martial arts training. John (Chen) covered the entire ceiling with a tent of reflective material and bounced light off that. For any particular angle, he could make a few small adjustments and we were ready to go."

Q **How did you move the camera?**

A "My martial arts background in Tai Chi has helped me in understanding fluidity and bringing that into camera work. For scenes in the first and third acts shot by Lucas, we shot mostly with a 13-foot jib. We had a lot of space outside, so we wanted the camera to be as free as possible, yet still have a point of reference. With John on the second act scenes, we had a more standard dolly. He also gave us some great handheld shots."

Q **How did you handle post-production?**

A "We had Colorlab NYC do a one-light transfer and deliver one version in beta format and a second in miniDV, which we used to edit and color correct in Final Cut Pro."

Q **Why was it important that *Justice-for-Hire* be shot on film?**

A "We considered 24P but it's not as beautiful as film. Lucas is a very artistic cinematographer with lots of soul. For him, it was film all the way, and I completely agreed with him."

To find out more, go to www.Justice-For-Hire.com.