

65mm the right format for Microsoft spot



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The Microsoft “Life Without Walls” advertising campaign is catching eyes at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City via a unique display that throws a single moving-image across five HD plasma screens. The images are a visual metaphor for the Microsoft Windows catchphrase, showing that special moments in life can move between cell phone, laptop and home theater screens with ease. Four different five-bank displays show the images in high-traffic areas in the American Airlines concourse.

The Crispin Porter + Bogusky advertising agency asked director Rob Feng of Brand New School and cinematographer Christophe Lanzenberg to create four separate vignettes, each with motion across the frames that moved from right to left at roughly the speed of the people-movers that pass by the displays. The slow-motion “stories” include a motorcycle daredevil arcing across two ramps, and a running child creating a huge soap bubble that pops as he reaches the final frame. “This was a different sort of puzzle,” says Feng. “The technical hurdles were significant.”

Feng and his collaborators considered a five-camera rig with HD cameras but lensing and seamlessly stitching the images together was problematic. IMAX cameras were also considered, but ultimately lacked enough high-speed capability necessary for the right tempo and timing.

Unique production

They decided that shooting with a single ARRIFLEX 765 film camera in 65mm format was the simplest, most effective solution. The 65mm film frames, scanned at 8K resolution at FotoKem, provided the necessary resolution even when the extracted images were spread over five HD screens and blown up 12 percent. The ARRI 765 camera can record at frame rates of up to 75. A custom ground-glass was made with markings indicating a 9.31:1 aspect ratio.

The unique production situations required Feng to do extensive pre-visualization. The single-camera approach allowed him to easily make small adaptations when

necessary. For example, with the extreme distortion of a 30mm lens, chosen in part to ensure that the background was visible, the boy with the bubble had to run in a half circle to preserve the appearance of running in a straight line. “In 35mm format, the lenses have become really great about correcting distortion,” says Lanzenberg. “But the 65mm format is not really designed for that.”

The lenses were Zeiss primes. To capture the motorcycle jump with a stationary camera, Lanzenberg used a 40mm lens. “Again, we wanted to include the incredible landscape,” he says. “We moved the frame up and down imperceptibly in the scan.”

Some sharpening, graphics and additional slow-motion were added during post-production. Lanzenberg used KODAK VISION2 200T 5217 color negative, which he rated for an exposure index of 320. He chose not to use an 85 correction filter. In some situations, he augmented the daylight with large HMI fixtures.

“The 5217 film is a softer, gentler, more cinematic stock,”

he explains. “With the images being scanned, and displayed on HD monitors, we wanted to stay true to the film image and avoid an electronic feeling. I pulled the film one stop in processing to get even tighter grain.”

Incredible format

“It’s every cameraman’s dream to shoot in CinemaScope, but this was even crazier,” adds Lanzenberg. “It’s an incredible format. It enabled us to create a compelling story in one shot from one edge of the frame to the other. The trick was to anticipate and cancel technical problems before they happened. There are many ways to tackle any problem, but 65mm was the right choice for this project. The images look gorgeous.”

1 Cinematographer Christophe Lanzenberg on the set of the *Microsoft spot* with the ARRI 765 65 mm.

2 One of the images shown moving right to left across five HD plasma screens for Microsoft’s *Life Without Walls* campaign.

Photos courtesy of Crispin Porter + Bogusky



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