

# Traveling light works for fashion spot

Camera ARRIFlex 16SR 3 with 16mm Zeiss Superspeed Prime lenses and a Canon 8-64 zoom  
 Film stocks KODAK VISION2 250D 7205 film, KODAK VISION2 Expression 500T 7229

When Mark Williams was asked to direct photography on a high-fashion spot for the designer label Ports 1961, he and director Michael Williams (no relation) knew that moving quickly would be crucial to success. The concept was simple but ambitious: a beautiful model dressed in the sponsor's clothing, photographed in one day at various carefully chosen New York City locations, with soft light and elegant compositions. Exteriors on New York's Brooklyn Bridge and in Brooklyn Heights and Manhattan were in the plans.

"We designed the spot with a fashion print film feel in mind," says Williams, who worked on the crews of Lance Acord, ASC, Robert Richardson, ASC and Salvatore Totino, ASC before becoming a cinematographer. "We looked closely at 1960s and '70s fashion photography and planned our single-day shoot carefully. We had a tight budget and an ambitious schedule. The client and agency trusted Michael and me to deliver what we explained as our vision."

The initial shoot date was postponed in the hope that the images could be captured under overcast skies for a softer look. Once the weather was right, Williams and his crew shot at nine locations, with

an average of four set-ups at each. The Super 16mm film format suited the logistical demands of the shoot, as well as fulfilling the aesthetic requirements.

"Michael and I agreed that video would have slowed down the process," says Williams. "In day exterior situations video just doesn't have the latitude, and you end up compromising. We felt Super 16mm would also be better given the speed at which we planned to work. The Kodak stocks made it very easy to know what could be achieved without a great deal of fuss.

"We also wanted to shoot Super 16 because we knew we could create images with a little bit more grain, which we thought was important to give the spot a look that echoed fashion photography."

Mutual trust between the filmmakers and the clients enabled Williams to work without a video tap, which also added efficiency. "When everyone is confident in each other's abilities, it's about staying focused and getting the job done," he says. "This was easily the most fun I've had on a job in a while. We were exhausted by the end of the day, but it felt like we had done something special."

The camera was an ARRIFLEX 16SR 3 with 16mm Zeiss Superspeed Prime lenses and a Canon 8-64 zoom. Williams chose KODAK VISION2 250D 7205 film in daylight situations and KODAK VISION2 Expression 500T 7229 for other scenes.

The Canon zoom lens was on the camera about 60% of the time, allowing Williams to quickly find the perfect composition for each shot. "When I'm up on a ladder looking down a SoHo street, we don't want to be moving the ladder back and forth as we search for the right frame," he says. "I could finesse the lens a few millimeters, staying away from the long end of the zoom. I enjoy the flexibility of working that way."

The Zeiss Prime lenses were used for a scene shot from inside a car as it moved through Times Square. "We used the Superspeeds at T1.3 a couple stops down, and the interior of the car was lit with one small fixture," says Williams. "The ambient light in Times Square pushes into the car. It's amazing how much information is captured on the negative. Those shots have a beautiful feeling."

The filmmakers envisioned some shots in classic black-and-white.

Williams shot those scenes with the 7229 film. "In some cases I underexposed about two stops to stress the negative slightly," he says. "We transferred the negative as black-and-white, which resulted in a beautiful, timeless feel."

The transfer was done at Encore Hollywood. "I shot the black-and-white footage on the lower contrast stock knowing I could dial contrast back in during post-production," says Williams. "I often use the Expression stock that way. We also used post tools to fine tune the amount of grain."

Williams says he learned the beauty of simplicity in part from working on a number of feature projects with Acord, including *Lost in Translation*.

"That movie was done with minimal equipment," he says. "When I met Lance I had been accustomed to working on large-scale movies and being encumbered and enamored with all of the equipment, so much so that the humanity can get lost. I've since become very interested in working light. It's not because of the economics, but rather because it brings you closer to your subjects. So often the machinery of our industry distracts us, and we lose touch with what we are hired to do. I find it truly rewarding to be able to get the striking results we achieved on this spot with such a simple approach."