

How to capture the perfect storm

A wide shot of dark storm clouds rolling in above a grassy hill. A man wearing a Timberland jacket walks into the frame as a rainstorm draws near. The downpour and the man stop. The man extends his hand into the rain and then zips his jacket, pulls his hood over his head and walks into the heavy shower. This recent Timberland spot, *Rain*, was produced by Brickyard VFX in Boston with footage provided by Prairie Pictures' StormStock® collection.



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Prairie Pictures president/cinematographer Martin Lisius caught the storm on KODAK VISION2 250D 5205 film using his ARRIflex 35-3 with a Nikon Zoom. "I usually lock down for stormy skies and let Mother Nature provide the motion," says Lisius. "I use a heavy and steady Sachtler studio tripod system. It's very weighty, but the results make it worth the effort."

"I look for drama and/or beauty in the sky," says Lisius, "and when I find it, I shoot. I typically don't use filters but on occasion I'll use a polarizer, gray grad or ND filter."

He says the 5205 negative is ideal in these situations because it provides the speed and latitude to record details in the dark stormy

clouds and the environment along with the brightest elements in the frame without any apparent grain. The 35mm negative was transferred to HDCAM format with a Spirit DataCine by Video Post and Transfer (Dallas) colorist Steve Franko. The HD footage was then composited into the spot by Brickyard. "Brickyard wanted something to set a stormy mood and they wanted it in a pristine, high-definition format," said Lisius. "The end effect really captures the feeling of a good rain storm."

Lisius, who founded the Arlington, Texas-based Prairie Pictures, spends the majority of his time shooting the StormStock brand. He shoots lightning,

tornadoes, storm clouds, blizzards, stormy seas, and hurricanes—including Katrina—in-progress. "One of the biggest challenges is capturing the image in time before it goes away," says Lisius. "Lightning is another concern. I like to shoot from beneath the lift gate of my SUV for this reason. The power lines above my head sometimes give me a second or two warning. When they begin to crackle, I know to jump into the back of my car."

Lisius says that 35mm film offers the ability to satisfy requests for storm images in just about any format. "I hate saying, 'No, we don't have that format,'" he says. "I can deliver on film, HD or SD

video, and can compose for 1.85:1, 16:9 and 4:3 at the same time. Sometimes that's a challenge, but I live for creative challenges. I work hard to shoot sharp, beautiful images on film. Advertisers and their creative teams want the public to see their products in the best way possible. That's why I shoot on 35mm film."

"In the case of the Timberland *Rain* spot, Brickyard VFX ordered elements on HD. They wanted perfection, and the end result is a beautiful commercial," notes Lisius.

To read more about how Lisius captures footage for StormStock's library, go to www.Kodak.com/go/motion.