

# Instant Star

## Stephen Reizes uses 16mm for two radically different looks

Following the trials of a teenager who wins an **American Idol**-type contest and is launched into the glamorous universe of the music business.

Stephen Reizes recently put Super 16mm to the test, photographing the Canadian television series **Instant Star**, and the television movie **Tripping the Wire**. Reizes, whose credits include **Little Criminals** and **Cold Squad**, explains that using Super 16mm gave him creative flexibility and efficiency on the sets. "Because we capture more information on the set, we have more control during post-production," he says.

Reizes shot the first four episodes of **Instant Star**, which follows the trials of a teenager who wins an **American Idol**-type contest and is launched into the glamorous universe of the music business.

"For **Instant Star**, we tested some unusual looks like cross-processed reversal film and bleach bypass, but we found we could create those looks in the

tape-to-tape session. It's analogous to doing a digital intermediate. I think the marriage between originating on film and applying electronic post techniques results in a certain quality that is quite particular to what people are going for today."

### Pandora's box

Reizes used Kodak VISION2 500T 7218 film for **Instant Star**. "I think bringing an HD camera on the set opens up Pandora's box," he says. "You're bringing a whole set of other options which are

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more economically handled during post. Film captures so much more latitude and information. Having a second go at it in post makes for a more efficient and flexible process. For drama, I don't think you can get that same look with electronic origination."

Reizes also used Super 16mm for director Stephen Surjik's **Tripping the Wire**, a contemporary police drama that pays homage to classic detective literature. Reizes tried a number of different stocks with normal and skip bleach processing, before choosing Kodak VISION2 500T Expression 7229 film with skip bleach processing. "**Instant Star** is lush, colorful, and glossy, but for **Tripping the Wire** the look was monochromatic, harsh, and stark. Some of the crew on **Tripping the Wire** had just come off an HD shoot and frequently remarked how our documentary-like lighting that included many light sources and blown out windows, would have been impossible to capture on tape.



### Stylistic differences

There are also several other stylistic differences between the two projects, **Instant Star** was shot through a ProMist filter from a constantly dollying and zooming camera. "Show the places and show the faces" was the mantra of director Pat Williams. **Tripping the Wire** was shot without color correction and handheld primarily on a 20mm prime lens."

Shooting with a 500 ASA stock makes creating sunlight and other bright effects much easier, according to the Cinematographer. "You don't have to punch nearly as much light to make those areas bright relative to the dark areas," he says. "You're lighting to natural levels, which takes less time, saves money, and results in a cooler, more comfortable set."

The feedback from **Instant Star's** producers at Epitome Productions has been glowing. Both projects had HD transfers. "These days, 16mm looks comparable to what you could get on 35mm film ten years ago," Reizes says. "That's primarily due to improvements in film stocks, in the transfer technology.

"The key is to find a visual style that is in synch with the script without calling attention to itself. Creating a style that is believable, that looks natural, tells the story and doesn't feel lit is the objective, capturing that on film is easy." ■

Above: (L to R) Actress Alexz Johnson and Cinematographer Stephen Reizes on the set of *Instant Star*.

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Below: Alexz Johnson in a scene from *Instant Star* Shot by Cinematographer Stephen Reizes.

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