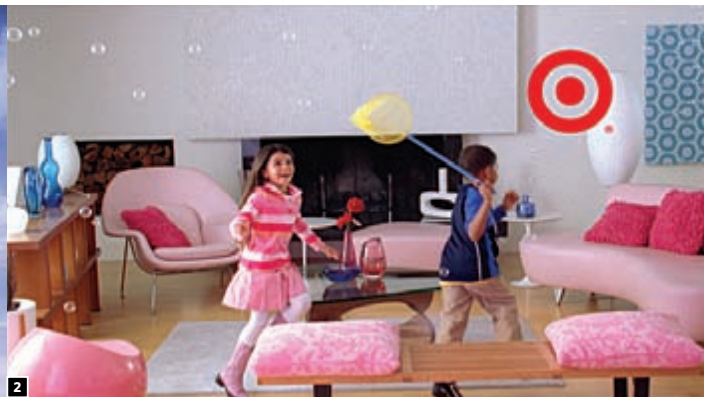


Stefan Czapsky on Target



1

Camera
ARRI 435



2

Film stock
KODAK VISION2 250D 5205

Target Corporation is taking a cinematic approach to showcasing high-definition television sets on display at its more than 1,500 discount department stores in the United States. The retail chain sponsored the production of a series of visually compelling in-store commercials designed to grab and hold the attention of consumers.

The Minneapolis, Minnesota-based corporation brought Stardust Studios and design director Brad Tucker onboard to create the five 20-second commercials. The family-friendly spots feature children playing with bouncing balls against a blue sky background, football players in action and kids feeding a pet rabbit at home. Stardust recruited Stefan Czapsky, ASC to film the imagery.

The cinematographer has created the visual content for hundreds of commercials in addition to such memorable narrative film as *Edward Scissorhands*, *Batman Returns*, *Ed Wood* and *Last Exit to Brooklyn*.

Czapsky explains that the flexibility of the 35mm film format in production enabled him to make the quick moves and set-ups needed to keep pace with a demanding schedule.

"We had a three-day shooting schedule and the budget wasn't extravagant," he says. "I don't think we could have done it as fast in HD video format, because of the set-up time that requires. You need a video engineer to set up a monitor in a black tent and calibrate the camera. With film, you just put the lights up, slap the magazine on and shoot. I didn't feel the need to be cautious in any way."

Czapsky covered the action with an ARRI 435 camera, which enabled him to shoot selected shots in slow-motion at 150 frames per second. He chose to record the spots on KODAK VISION2 250D 5205 film, which is balanced for exposure in daylight. "I had used 5205 for most of *Blades of Glory*, and I think it's great," Czapsky says. "I've been doing a lot of location work with it, and it saves a lot of time. You can work pretty quickly, without having to gel all the windows, for example."

Czapsky says that the equipment and accessories needed for HD video production can bog down production and compromise the intentions of the filmmakers. "Even though the black tent is supposed to be your domain as a cinematographer, it's really more of a shared experience," he says. "The monitor tends to draw a crowd, and

"I don't think we could have done it as fast in HD video format, because of the set-up time that requires."

everyone has an opinion about the subtlest visual nuances. Someone thinks the images are too blue, and someone else says they are too orange, or too bright or dark. The chance of a group of people all agreeing on what they want while you are shooting is unlikely. If you have to go fast, it's better to trust one cinematographer who can say, 'I got it.'"

Czapsky says that he set out to capture a full range of image information on the negative, and leave the fine tuning for post-production in the digital suite. "Given the excellent recording capability of 35mm negative film, you're not compromising the look. You can postpone the finessing to a time when there aren't 20 or 30 people involved. We had little kids and animals on the set. It really makes sense to get more shooting done during that time, and color it as you please when there aren't those pressures and expenses."

The negative was transferred at 2K resolution. The images were framed in the 16:9 aspect ratio native to HD televisions.

Czapsky stresses the advantages of shooting slow-motion sequences on film rather than HD video format. "Unlike video slow motion, which is usually accomplished by duplicating frames in post, shooting film at 150fps actually records a different picture on every frame," he says. "That results in a smoother, more appealing look. We shot at 150 frames, but the director could choose to alter the speed during post-production by simply removing some frames."

Czapsky concludes: "The Target project ran the gamut, from artificially-lit studio work on stages to a practical house location with mixed light to an exterior football stadium in direct sunlight. The film was able to gracefully capture the full array in a very quick, efficient way, while giving us maximum flexibility in post."

1 and 2 Scenes from a Target Corporation commercial featuring bouncing balls against the blue sky, shot by DP Stefan Czapsky, ASC
Photos courtesy of Stardust Studios