February2008

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RED ONE:
Living Up to the Expectations?

A Synchronized Light Show

What is Realistic Cinematography?

Solutions for Actors' Onset SNAFUs

An Interview with Anastas Michos, ASC

Preserving Your Original Video Media

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On the Cover
"RED ONE: Living Up to the Expectations?" Trygve Lode is our warrior in this camera test for *Gathering of Heroes*. Photo by Jeff Deel.



We begin this issue with new and inspiring opportunities and challenges, whether beginning and/or wrapping new projects and productions; testing and utilizing new filmmaking tools and technologies; or editing for distribution, or submission to contests and festivals this year.

One free contest that I highly recommend entering is The Edgewise Media / Panasonic DIGITAL MEDIA Film and Video Shorts 2008 Awards Competition featuring "AMQ". The film/video contest is free to enter. With no entry fees for single or multiple entries, first prize offers a $5,000 cash award – so get started on entering your works today! Guidelines, deadlines, and additional awards and prizes for the top three winning films are listed on the official contest site at www.studentfilmmakers.com/edgewise-media/.

For those seeking a place to showcase work, StudentFilmmakers.com recently launched its Beta Video Section at www.studentfilmmakers.com/videos, and invites all of you, young and old, new and experienced, to upload your films, videos, animation, reels, trailers, and more. Remember, we are all students.

The new beta video section is absolutely free to use, offering a free online distribution vehicle, including bandwidth/transfer, showcasing, comments and interactive networking tools – at no charge to all filmmakers, videographers, and animators around the globe.

I invite you to watch the works of many talented filmmakers here, share yours, and be a part of this growing network. If you haven't yet signed up for a free networking webpage at http://networking.studentfilmmakers.com/, sign up today, and easily integrate your films in the Video Section with your networking webpage. Shoot an email or PM to any of our staff on the site if you need any help! Each month we feature networking members in the networking section of the magazine. You could be in the next issue!

I would like to thank all of you who picked up our magazines and spoke with *StudentFilmmakers* magazine representatives during the Macworld convention in San Francisco, California, and Video 08 in Orlando, Florida. We look forward to meeting you again, and networking with you at the upcoming Hi Def Expo in Beverly Hills, California (March), and the NAB Show in Las Vegas, Nevada (April). Enjoy another awesome issue of *StudentFilmmakers* magazine, and be sure to visit us online.

Truly,
Kim E. Welch
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

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BPA WORLDWIDE

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A Synchronized Light Show

Creative Music Video Lighting to Test and Refine Your Chops

by Kevin Zanit

Music videos offer a great opportunity for cinematographers to try new and interesting things they would never get to do in the narrative world. Couple this with the reality that music video budgets and schedules are extremely tight, and you end up with a way to really test and refine your "chops". To do complex and creative things in this environment requires a very sharp crew and very supportive director, band, and producers.

After reading the treatment by director Brie Campbell and hearing the track for A Skylit Drive's *Drown the City*, I knew immediately that this band would have an energetic live show. We knew we wanted to capture and support the band's live style with an equally dynamic performance section in the video.

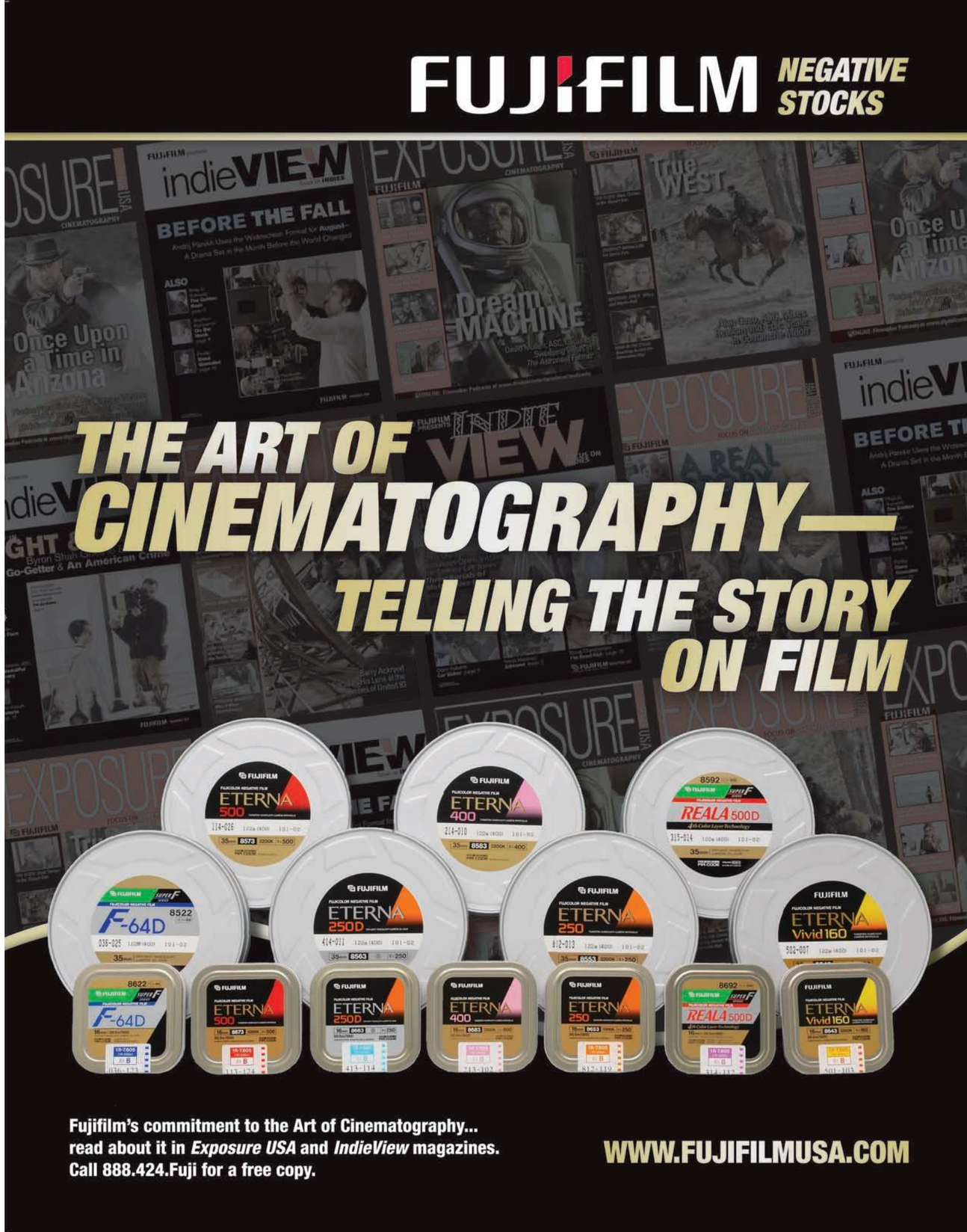
During a late night location scout of a large rooftop of a parking structure, coming up with a lighting plan, I muttered the fateful words, *"You know what would be cool? If we lined the roofline with a bunch of big strobe lights . . ."* I don't think either my gaffer Frank DiPaola or I knew what sort of challenge these easily said words would present. Nonetheless, we took some quick measurements, determined that we would need about 40 strobes set every three feet to cover the 130 foot long structure.



Photo by Kevin Zanit

The goal was to create a massive line of strobes behind the band that could be programmed to do different effects, patterns, and chases to the song. On top of all this, we wanted the program to be driven by the playback system's time code. Doing this insured that the light show was always in synch with the song, and always the same, thus maintaining continuity. Also, when shooting performance sequences, it is not uncommon to pick up just a portion of the song. Being in synch with the time code meant that no matter where we jumped in the song, the light show would be synchronized.

After discussion with the rental house and research, Frank and I went to the rental house for some testing. Based on recommendations and research, we decided to use Martin Atomic 3000 strobes (42 in total) controlled from an ETC Express 240



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channel consol. This consol could be driven by MIDI time code that is easily generated by the software that was being used for audio playback. The Atomic 3000s take four DMX control channels per fixture, thus requiring 168 channels of control (42*4). The units are extremely versatile, able to perform many effects with a full range of dimming and the ability to stay constantly on for a short period of time. The units use a 3000watt xenon globe – an extremely bright source.

Of course, on top of figuring out how to make the strobe lights work, we also had to come up with a plan for lighting the band and the rest of the parking structure. A difficult thing with a band such as this is that all the member's move around a lot. This creates a problem for lighting in the sense that it is very likely one member of the band will be blocking another from the light and/or burn up, or get too underexposed from moving closer and further from the light source.

The solution we decided on was to light the band with sidelight on both sides of the platform they were performing on. We also knew that if we made the light source large enough and far enough away, the physics of "fall off" would be working in our favor; the band would not get a lot brighter or darker as they moved around on the stage. For their light sources, we used two 12-light maxi brutes with twelve 1000watt medium PAR globes in each unit. Key grip Bobby Woo double diffused these sources first with an 8x8 ½ soft frost and then with a 12x12 ¼ grid.

For some extra touches, we placed several daylight balanced 8' Kino Flo Mega Tubes on both sides of the vertical columns behind the band, as well as two 6k HMI fresnels low and in the background to edge out the band and structure some.

The first big step in putting together our strobe rig was to actually track down forty-two of the strobes we needed. Our primary rental house (Olsen) had twelve in stock, and thus the remaining thirty had to come from other sources. The problem with this was that the various rental houses had their units wired for different power configurations. We knew this going in, and planned accordingly.



Photo by by Elhanan Matos


Photo by Kevin Zanit


Photo by Kevin Zanit


Photo by Kevin Zanit


Photo by Kevin Zanit

Due to some scheduling problems, we did not receive thirty of the strobes until very late in the prep day. When we did receive them and their additional power distribution equipment, we found that we were not sent what we ordered. When we checked on getting the right equipment, we were told that they were completely out of what we needed. The guys over at Olsen tried hard to help fix the problem of the other rental house, but unfortunately, were out of what we needed as well. This setback required some serious improvisation and cable surgery. The electric team did a great job of getting the rig to work in spite of not having the proper equipment.

Once the power situation was taken care of, the crew still had to install the massive light rig and wire it for power and DMX control. The DMX control is complex in the sense that all the units need to talk to each other, and if there is a break in the chain, the rest of the units will not work. We planned on the setup taking around six to eight hours to setup and program. Due to the many setbacks, we took it right up to the limit of time.

At the end of the day, we got everything up and running. It was an amazingly large setup and a ton of work for a small crew to accomplish. They did a great job, and the setup looked fantastic. The lesson learned is always that big and interesting setups take big crews and long days; and whenever working with this many units expect setbacks that cost you time, and plan accordingly.

Kevin Zanit is a California-based cinematographer who has worked on numerous commercials and music videos. His filmography includes *Room Service* (2006), *These Days* (2006), *Inner Prison* (2005), and *Passing Moments* (2003). Kevin and his partner, Elhanan Matos, recently launched a production and consulting company specializing in high-speed photography (www.studiobattlerattle.com).


Photo by by Elhanan Matos


Photo by by Elhanan Matos

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