

# Rugby wizardry with Vittorio Storaro

Vittorio Storaro ASC, AIC, rarely shoots commercials. The last was for Francis Ford Coppola. So how did Director, Thomas Krygier, persuade the legendary cinematographer to take care of the cinematography on **You Can**, a new commercial with an epic feel for the 2001 Lions' Rugby Tour to Australia? "Thomas telephoned me and I was touched by the way he explained every single shot in so much detail, exactly as he visualised it," remarks Storaro. "I knew that we would get along well simply from the way he talked." It became apparent they held the same belief that philosophy and the truth of a story matter more than the cinematography style.

**You Can** is a very human story of a nine-year-old boy who can't play rugby. The boy's grandfather appears in his fantasy as a wizard who teaches him to believe in himself. "I am a grandfather, I teach at the Academy of Images in L'Aquila and so this story and its title are very significant for me. I visualise it as a journey from darkness into light, with the four natural elements of life, which are all represented in the film, creating visual energy. It has a magic realism," says Storaro.

The boy (Gabriel Middleton) had no acting experience but was chosen by Krygier for his sensitivity; rugby legend Mike Skinner taught him the game. There was no casting for the wizard; the only actor Krygier envisaged for the role was Peter O'Toole - but he had never appeared in a

commercial. Auspiciously, O'Toole was so impressed with Andy Ray's script that he agreed to participate. O'Toole and Storaro had worked together in 1987 on **The Last Emperor**, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, one of Storaro's three Oscar winning films.

In the editing process, Krygier strove to maintain the reality of the fantasy in **You Can**, so there are no dissolves. The wizard manifests himself in shot and nearly all the special effects have been achieved in camera, crowd duplication scenes at Twickenham rugby stadium being the main exception.

"We were shooting the rugby scrum and it started to rain," says Krygier. "Most people would have stopped but Vittorio moved the light and the timing of the light and it looks wonderful. He didn't fight the elements in terms of lighting - he went with them." Storaro operated the light source from a single computer-controlled board (Lightboard), with every light on dimmers and he used iris remote control on the Technovision camera, adapted by ARRI for his patented

Univisium system. Univisium features a 2:1 width to height aspect ratio and a 3-perforation format, so the entire area of the film negative can be used, saving 25% of stock and increasing



© Peter O'Toole (left) and director Thomas Krygier.



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efficiency and creativity time. Storaro always ensures the iris control is next to him. "It is important to me to control light; it's a visible energy. When I look at a single frame, it's like a living sculpture," he says.

Storaro used 70% 35mm Eastman EXR 50D film (5245) for its clarity and low grain and 30% Kodak Vision 250D (5246) stock. "When I shot in a black corridor at Twickenham rugby stadium," he recalls, "I used 5246 daylight film, which gives colour correction in the proper way so it is already balanced for daylight, but I used high speed because of the low key light. I have a message for every young cinematographer - use a proper film according to the lighting you have in front of you.

"I've always said that Kodak is my mother and Technicolor® is my father, so when I was in Rochester recently, I pushed Kodak about the instability of colour images which fade by 1% every year. I was pleased to discover that they are working really hard on new technology. We must ensure that in future years our century of images doesn't become a cultural black hole. Every director and cinematographer has the right, and the duty, to protect the life they create on film," says Storaro, the latest and youngest recipient of the American Society of Cinematographers' Lifetime Achievement Award. 

**You Can** is being shown on Sky Sports, as well as ITV and Channel 4, until early 2002.

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