

LIGHT AND SHADOW

CINEMATOGRAPHER JAKE POLONSKY
ON HOW FUJIFILM'S ETERNA STOCK
HELPED DELIVER A SPECTACULAR LOOK
FOR KEANE'S *BAD DREAM*



“ I had just completed a video for The Feeling with the director Caswell Coggins from Draw Pictures where we recreated Martin Scorsese's *Casino* in a Streatham nightclub in two days; it nearly killed us. Caswell called me up afterwards and said he'd written a really simple idea for Keane, something that wouldn't overstretch us like the previous one had.

It was a brilliant idea – the lead singer, Tom Chaplin, is standing in an entirely black space in the middle of which a line of brilliant white light opens up. Through the song, the line of light gets wider and wider until he is surrounded by an entirely white environment.

Then, in this white out, a line of black shadow opens up, which gets wider and wider until the whole space around him returns to black. It's a very abstract idea but metaphorically rich, and obviously very centred around Tom's performance.

Simple. Only how the hell do you film it? How do you make a line of shadow open up in a white space? Does a projected shadow have volume? How do you film a lighting effect that could not exist according to the laws of physics?

After many discussions with Cas, art director Ben Ansell, my gaffer Reuben Garrett and post production supremo Jon Burrige at Smoke and Mirrors, we arrived at a two part solution: building a giant set of black

doors in the biggest studio we could find, opening up to reveal a glowing white cyc; then, for the second half, plates of our black doors and white cyc would be tonally reversed in post, with the lead singer composited back into the shots with lighting effects designed to match the reversed post effect.

Caswell's simple idea grew into an incredibly complicated and quite theoretical exercise.

With some very careful planning we managed to pre-light and shoot everything in two days. We used a single 20K backlight to achieve the strong single shadow lines of the doors and of Tom. To project the opening shadow onto his face we used a 6K X Light which projects a very defined shadow edge. All along, I was very keen to shoot in 35mm as it seemed that for such a graphic idea I would want as crisp and clean an image as I could get.

At the eleventh hour, and with much pleading, we upgraded to 35mm from 16mm. In the telecine the day after the shoot, Simone Grattarola at Rushes commented on the extremely clean images we had got from the Fujifilm Eterna 250T: in fact, we were using absolutely no noise reduction in the TK.

Since then, I have found myself returning to Fujifilm more and more. When I first started out shooting, I particularly loved the 500T. For example, when I entered the Fuji

Scholarship in 1996, we got great results with it for our short from the RCA, *The Strouger Switch*.

Recently, I've also used Fujifilm on a Shelter commercial, a Max Factor test and most recently a big Scissor Sisters promo – all on 16mm – and I have been quite won over by the image quality both in terms of tight grain structure and good shadow detail.



At a time when we are being pressured to move over to HD, one of the most ridiculous things is that we now have the most superb film stocks we've ever had. I for one would be very sad to be forced to stop using them! I just hope Fujifilm will keep continuing to improve their range of already excellent products. ■

■ *Bad Dream* was originated on 35mm Fujicolor Eterna 250T 8553



Photos main and above: scenes from Keane's *Bad Dream*; top inset: DP Jake Polonsky on the move