

# Reaching for greatness the story behind the latest Guinness ad



**Known as *Spoken Word*, the latest ad for Guinness Foreign Extra was shot at the peninsula at Bayonne Harbour, New Jersey by director of photography, Martin Ahlgren. Like the company's award-winning *Wild Horses* ad, it features stylized original animation seamlessly blended into the striking visuals as well as a stunning performance by Ainsley Burrows. Martin used an ARRIFLEX 435 Xtreme camera and also the ARRICAM ST for hand-held shots, as well as ARRI lighting. His choice of film stock was KODAK VISION2 200T 5217.**

Discussing his approach and technical decisions, Martin said, "In lighting this spot we wanted to emulate the colors and texture that we associate with Guinness. That meant a base of warm brown and golden tones against white areas that hint at the head of the

beer. While we wanted the look to be very textural and photographic, the concept also called for the lighting to be quite stark and graphic. Initial ideas treated the environment that the talent walks through as quite abstract, mostly falling off into darkness. However, when we locked in our location - a deserted military vehicle depot - it became clear that it would be a shame not to take use of the dramatic space that it offered. Our visual concept evolved into a look of stark bright edge lighting and a dark background, but instead of letting it go completely black we wanted it to be lower in contrast and to contain a full range of dark shades. We described it as having a high-contrast foreground and a dark low-contrast background. Our lighting supplemented the available light that came through windows in the ceiling. The hot edge light in the foreground came from ARRI 12K HMI pars suspended in the ceiling - using no lens for maximum spot - and

an 18K HMI Fresnel through a 12x12 frame of half grid on the ground. Additional 1.2K pars were used to edge light columns in the background and a 12K Fresnel to light up the far back wall."

"Director André Stringer specifically wanted a very photographic look that the graphics could play against. To us that meant a very shallow depth of field among other things. We decided to go with a set of Zeiss Master Primes, lenses that open up to T1.3 and that have an absolutely beautiful out-of-focus bokeh. We ended up shooting everything wide open, using ND filters to reduce the light when needed. The 65 mm lens became our hero close-up lens and I used it hand-held, either letting first assistant Joe Morrones follow focus as best as he could, or by just leaving the focus set at minimum and instead rocking back and forth to determine where focus should be placed. I use a Swedish invention called

Easy-Rig that supports the camera when you operate, and it helped me support the weight when we were doing hand-held shots on the ARRICAM ST with a 1000 foot magazine and a Master Prime lens."

"We choose to shoot this project on KODAK VISION2 200T 5217 for two reasons. Firstly, in working with Shilo, the US creative production company, I know that there is always the chance that they will want to reframe some shots in post and perhaps zoom into the negative. The very fine grain structure of 5217 allows for quite a bit of magnification without really losing any image quality or sharpness. Sometimes that can mean creating a close-up in telecine out of a medium shot, which can prove really helpful when you are working on a tight schedule. Secondly, we needed the greater contrast range that this stock provides to allow us to light for a really dark and moody atmosphere, while still retaining enough information in the shadows that the image later can be tracked visually. This was important since we were not using motion control. Also many of our shots were hand-held and often too tight to allow for tracking markers to be effectively put into frame. Because of the contrast latitude in the film stock we could light the scene the way we liked it, which in this case was on the darker side with bright edge lights, and still know that there would be details in the shadow that later could be used for tracking. In fact, the LED tracking markers that we put into the frame on a few shots were in the end not used at all because it was easy enough to just track to the actual background."

The ad is available on: <http://wemakeitgood.com/article/live/reach-for-greatness>