

Film hits the (spec) spot for Jendra Jarnagin

Cinematographer creates a show reel by shooting her own commercials.

Jendra Jarnagin has been working in film production ever since she graduated from film school at New York University in 1995. Initially, she was a gaffer. More recently, she has been working as a cinematographer, shooting short films, music videos and documentaries. But her efforts to begin shooting commercials were frustrated by her lack of a commercial reel. She decided to shoot her own commercials to create a reel.

Convinced that her spec spots had to demonstrate national, broadcast-quality work, she decided to shoot on film. "If you're going to show a spot to people in advertising, their frame of reference is the best quality," she says. "If you show them a project shot on anything other than 35mm film, they'll view it as inferior to their standards, regardless of how well you shoot and produce it."

Jarnagin uses one of her spec spots *Other Half* to illustrate a point. The 30-second story features a man dressed as an orange, who is seen roaming through Manhattan, searching for something. Finally, he looks across the street and sees the object of his desire. It's a woman in another orange costume — his "other half."

They come together to make a whole, and the sphere shrinks down to the dot in *TangoPersonals.com*. She shot the spot with director Francisco Ordoñez, based on an idea by Carlos Montaña, creative director for the Brand Addict ad agency. Jarnagin chose to record the images on KODAK VISION2 50D 5201 film, mostly with natural lighting on the streets of New York.

When Ordoñez was cutting the spot with editor Jeff Beckerman at Bond, they decided that the shot of the woman across the street was shot too wide. They felt the audience might not realize that it wasn't just another shot of the man in the orange suit. Beckerman suggested re-transferring the negative and magnifying it to 225 percent of its original size to "zoom" in on the woman. Jarnagin was horrified.

"I was really skeptical that you could magnify the image that much and still get an image of acceptable quality," she says, "but we gave the negative back to PostWorks, and our colorist Ira Schweitzer transferred it with a Spirit 2K DataCine."

Jarnagin suggested that Schweitzer make a smaller blow-up to preserve image quality. "To my surprise, he called and told me that not only did it look good at 225 percent, but that he could take it even further, to 250 (the DaVinci software's technical limit), and the images looked fine," she says. "You can't really tell the difference. It really highlighted for me just how amazing the VISION2 stocks are."

Jarnagin says that she chose 5201 for the spot, knowing that the storyline had them shooting all exteriors in daylight, and they wanted as fine grain look as possible.

She was shooting with an ARRI 435 camera on a Steadicam with a lightweight zoom lens as well as some tripod shots with a 100 or 135mm focal length to separate Mr. Orange from the surrounding clutter.

Jarnagin's favorite image is the lone wide-angle shot. It was completely unplanned, but when she reached Herald Square, she saw it. "We used a low angle with a 16mm wide-angle lens on the ARRI

Above: (Behind camera) DP Jendra Jarnagin on location shooting a scene for the *Other Half* spot.

camera, shooting up at the buildings with the whole intersection visible, and Mr. Orange running from one side of the shot to the other. It says 'New York' and evokes the feeling of running around aimlessly on a search in the big city."

The spot has minimal lighting — just a few sun guns and reflectors as fill. "We had great natural lighting that day," she says. "During the parts of the story where he's despondent and searching, it was beautifully overcast. When he spots Ms. Orange and meets his other half, we just happened to have beautiful backlight. The sun was cooperating perfectly."

In telecine, Jarnagin worked with Schweitzer to brighten and saturate the orange of the two main characters' costumes, while subtly desaturating the rest of the frame and moving it toward the blue end of the spectrum. The bottom line: the spot did its job. When Montaña showed the spot to the clients at Tango Personals, they liked it so much that they plan to hire Jarnagin's team for future work.

"It was a great experience that really reinforced all my feelings about wanting to shoot commercials," Jarnagin says, "and the importance of doing them on film."

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