Counter-culture clips

Zenobia Films has succeeded in turning around the ratings of TVR-Cultural, Romania's public television broadcaster; a development lauded by its executives as they work to revamp the station's image.

With telenovellas and music videos fast revolutionising Romanian television, producer-director Pavel Cuzuoic's winning proposal for TVR's new promotional station has transformed its staid image into a mind-blowing symbol for the MTV generation. The campaign, which began airing in April, will run for the next two years and has already proved a hit with young and older audiences alike. Each clip features classical and counter-culture characters singing, skateboarding, DJ-ing and dancing, and incorporates an unconventional twist that challenges viewers' perceptions of what they see, hear and feel.

For 29 year old DP Daniel *Cojanu (Leana si Costel, Concluzie, Pentru o manra de bomboane)*, each clip conveys a message and an element of surprise. "We were very specific about the way in which we shot and our use of parallel editing. We filmed the opera soprano with a rock tattoo on her back; the tuxedoed skateboarder freefalling to the Blue Danube waltz; the DJ film editor; and the break-dancers up-rocking the tango. You would never expect a soprano to have a rock tattoo on her back, but that's the essence of this campaign. We show that you can be a soprano and still like rock-and-roll."

"With a maximum of 35 seconds in which to stimulate the senses, lighting and textures were crucial to each shot, as were reliable film stocks and a flexible vision," remarks Cojanu who had just three days to shoot the six mixed light clips in several different locations. "KODAK VISION2 250D 7205 and KODAK VISION2 500T 7218 are my favourite stocks and I used them for the daylight exteriors and interiors respectively. They are very fast and fine grained, which helped when we improvised... and an extra stop is always useful. It was very much freestyle; we made quick decisions using the natural elements we encountered.

"A combination of natural exterior lighting, classical white pillars and a skateboarder in a black tuxedo were a real exercise in contrasts for the young DP, but he relished this and other scenes for the richness of texture and shadow rendition. "I originally planned to shoot the skateboarder with lights, but there was such beautiful sunshine at the location, that I knew I had to go ahead. I shot at 45° shutter speed and 75 fps. The pigeons flying around look just amazing."

In another clip, which alternates between a softly lit library interior and a close-up in front of a train window, both stocks were utilised. "The train was passing through mountains; one minute there were very bright snowy backgrounds and the next there were deep shadowy forests," says Cojanu whose gaffer, Alex Cozma, had to constantly adjust a bounced Pocket Par. "7205 easily handled a difference of more than six stops and it also cut extremely well with 7218," he adds.

Cojanu used hard, harsh light when he filmed a granny busy knitting while guarding an underground graffiti exhibition and, in contrast, he used soft warm lighting in the scene of a Palm Pilot romance. "If I had used video in these variable light situations, it would have paled in comparison with film."

"The quality of the clips couldn't have been achieved without the assistance of Kodak Cinelabs Romania and the expertise of telecine colourist Claudiu Doaga was an asset in achieving an optimal look for each one," notes Cojanu. "We have built a bridge between connoisseurs and a newer audience. TVR's promotional campaign appeals to younger people and is a breath of fresh air for the older generation. I'm pretty content we have achieved our goal."