



WHEN DAYLIGHT FADES

USING A SMALL KIT ON LOCATION TO AUGMENT NATURAL DAYLIGHT.

While I was working with the Canon EOS 7D for my upcoming review, I was looking for a practical test to put the camera through, so I tapped my friend, director Jamie Neese, to come up with a short project we could shoot in a day. He came back with a five-page script called *Breaking Up Is Hard to Do* and enlisted the help of actors Mark Gerson (*Two Million Stupid Women*) and Lisa Jay (*Days of Our Lives*).

After reading the script, I decided to go with a look that felt like late afternoon warm sunlight. I planned to augment natural daylight with low, soft, $\frac{3}{4}$ back keys and a nice, hot, warm sunlight feel. I had a very small lighting package available to me: an ARRI Fresnel kit with a 650W, 300W and two 150W fixtures.

The scene was all interior in an apartment living room. Anna (Lisa Jay) is visited by Derek (Mark Gerson), who has been employed by her boyfriend to break up with her. I had a roll of full CTO gel and planned on covering the windows to convert the natural daylight to 3,200°K so I could use my tungsten fixtures at their natural color temperature. The idea was to make the most of natural daylight and augment where I had to with the small fixtures.

Unfortunately, rain came to Los Angeles that Sunday afternoon. The day was very gloomy, cloudy and sunless. Ambient color temperature was in the high 9,000°K range. We also got off to a late start, not rolling until after 3 p.m., with the January light fading quickly. Therein was my challenge: could I get the look I wanted with a small kit, all tungsten units, and fading daylight?

The answer was "Yes."

I was working with some slow EF lenses, an 18-55mm and a 28-135mm, both in the f/4.5-5 range. Luckily, the sensitivity of the EOS 7D was in my corner, as I was able to shoot a clean image at an ISO of 2500.

The key here was to get the wide shots as early in the day as we could — while we still had natural daylight to help — and carefully compose the tighter shots to make the best use of the kit I had.

We started at the apartment door, when Anna opens the door to



Derek. The lobby of the location features a French-paned front door that I knew I couldn't fake daylight through, so that dictated where we started. I first covered the door with a sheet of full CTO to help reduce the color temperature of the natural daylight. I then created a "book light" in the corner outside the apartment door by bouncing a 300W into the corner and then taping 250 diffusion behind the fixture so the light would bounce off the walls and then pass through the diffusion. This technique allows me to create a large soft source in a very tight space.



The light from the "book light" created a key on Mark from his left side. On his right side, I used a 150W bounced into an 18" x 24" piece of white foamcore. Inside the apartment, I kept it low, with just a 150W bounced into the ceiling behind Lisa to help bring up her shoulder and the back of her head from the shadows.

As the scene progresses, Derek sits Anna down and explains to her that he has been hired by her boyfriend to "dissolve" the relationship. By the time we got to this coverage, night had fallen.

The front wall of the location has three windows, but I explained to director Neese that I only had enough fixtures to light one window and the inside. We adjusted the composition so that the actor was squarely in front of one of the windows and the other two were out of the shot. I covered the outside of the window with an opaque white shower curtain and lit it with the 650W from about four feet away, covering primarily the lower third of the window that would be seen in the shot.



This created a hot, bright white world outside the window that passed for natural daylight.

To continue this feel, I used a 150W high and behind

Mark to get hot light on his shoulders, as if coming through the window. I used the second 150W off his right shoulder with some 250 diffusion to continue that "window" light around the right side of his face and create a hot $\frac{3}{4}$ back edge. Finally, I used the 300W into a 3' x 3' piece of white foamcore that was positioned low, about his knee height, to create the soft key bounce as if it were coming from hot natural daylight reflecting off the floor onto his face. I snuck in a Litepanels Micro on top of the 7D to get a little glimmer in Mark's eyes.

The same technique, roughly, applies to Lisa's coverage in this

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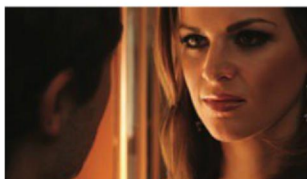


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scene, except that she's sitting opposite the window, so I eliminated the hot edges. She's lit from the 300W bouncing into the 3' x 3' foamcore as her key, again low, and the 150W with the 250 diffusion high and off her left shoulder for fill.

The confrontation comes to a head and she leads him to the door, where he pleads with her to succumb to reason. For the two-shot here, I stretched out the white shower curtain on the floor and bounced the 650W into it from behind Lisa. I double-dutied the 650W by opening the barn doors and making sure the edge of the direct light also hit the



bookshelves and door, to mimic the feel of natural daylight through a window behind them. The hotspot of the light is focused onto the shower curtain and lower part of the door to reflect back on them as a low-side key. The camera side is filled with the 300W into the ceiling to provide a base "room tone."

This same technique tracks into the close here, with Lisa's main key coming from the floor and lower portion of the white door to her right. Her left side is filled from the 300W bounced off the white ceiling and, again, I put the Litepanels Micro on top of the camera to get the sparkle in her eye.

Lighting with a small kit is definitely a challenge but entirely doable if you're careful about how you use it. The additional trick to this particular look is to keep the keys as more backlights and, when possible, on the off-camera side. I rarely use low-positioned sources as key sources, but sometimes it can create really beautiful light. **DV**

LIGHTING PACKAGE

- ▶ 1 650W ARRI Fresnel
- ▶ 1 300W ARRI Fresnel
- ▶ 2 250W ARRI Fresnels
- ▶ 1 Litepanels Micro LED fixture
- ▶ 1 18" x 24" foamcore card
- ▶ 1 3' x 3' foamcore card
- ▶ 1 roll of Lee 250 diffusion
- ▶ 1 roll of full CTO correction
- ▶ 5 C-stands
- ▶ 4 ARRI light stands

▶ CLOSE-UP

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the floor in a sleeping bag. In the morning, I had a choice: shower, more sleep, or food."

He continues, "The band couldn't afford to stay in hotels every night. They'd stay with friends or fans... People they'd just met that night. We'd throw our bedding on any couch or carpet we could. In B.C., I slept in a closet."

The whole time, De Leon maintained a mobile office, which he used for charging batteries and transferring and backing up data from two 16GB SDHC cards. He kept everything in two backpacks: A MacBook Pro laptop, cables, and two FireWire-connected 500GB LaCie Rugged Hard Disks. ("USB was a tremendous time-waster in the field," he notes.) He made his office wherever he had the room: sometimes it was in a kitchen or in a utility closet, sometimes it was in a filthy backstage area, sometimes it was in a greenroom.

Given the lack of time and space in some of the smaller venues, the HM100U's lightweight, compact design came in handy when De Leon needed to move quickly and keep a low profile. In most situations he held the camera from the top handle with his right hand and held a Sennheiser shotgun mic in his left hand.

"The size of the camera allowed me to get up on the side of the stage and get between the audience and the performers. I could use my arm as a crane without inserting my body into the actual show," he relates. "It's small enough that the size doesn't

change people's behavior. People act more naturally around a camera of this size than they would a 16mm or 35mm camera."

After Canada, Misery Signals embarked on a tour of Europe, starting in Amsterdam and continuing on for another 3,000 miles across seven countries. All told, De Leon captured approximately 110 hours of footage for his 90-minute film. For the first seven months of shooting, footage was FedExed or hand-delivered to an assembly editor at Pivotal Post in Los Angeles.

"I'd come back from various travels and we'd discuss scenes in terms of chapters and locations. I interviewed people about the economy of the town, the history of the venue, and came away with some very interesting socio-ecological stories," De Leon explains. "What I particularly love about rock docs — the classic ones — is that they reflect the times that the band lived in. Ten years from now I want people to look at this film and see an era captured."

De Leon is now back in Tucson, reconstructing those chapters into a feature-length cut for the festival circuit. He's enthusiastic, and not just for his own sake. "After knowing Misery Signals for over a year and living with them on tour for seven months, I like them even more now," he reflects. "People who are unfamiliar with this kind of music think that when the band is offstage, they're biting the heads off babies. They're not. They're good, humble people, and above all, they're artists." **DV**