

Around the world in 20 days



In Egypt with the Minima.

Most of us would love to travel the world, but how many of us could do it in less than three weeks? This was the situation facing Cinematographer Jake Polonsky when he was asked to shoot two commercials for news channel CNN.

"The first commercial, **Signs**, was to be a collection of shots of street signs with their names blanked out, as it is the news that often puts a place on the map," Polonsky explains. "The second, **Clocks**, was to be about what is happening around the world at the same moment and for this we had to find clocks in different environments which would all have the same time on them." This meant visiting seven countries, including the United States, Vietnam and Egypt, in 20 days.

Polonsky has been involved with many projects, including music videos and short films, but none so challenging. "One of the interesting aspects of the shoot was that, as we were on a limited budget, we couldn't take a huge crew and so had to travel as lightweight as possible." So, his camera package had to reflect the restricting factors of the project. "I used the Aaton Minima, which is a beautiful piece of equipment. We wanted a kit that wouldn't necessitate loads of flight cases. I managed to whittle it down to three camera bags that we could take as hand luggage, containing camera body, two zooms, video assist and playback, three prime lenses and accessories."

Carefully chosen

The kit may have been small, but it was carefully chosen. "My main lens was a Cooke 10.4-52mm zoom, with a couple of Zeiss primes lenses when I needed the stop, an Aspheron and a doubler. The Minima's integral video assist can run a

mini on-board monitor, with one cable carrying video signal and power, again, a real space saver."

Polonsky has nothing but praise for his kit. "The Minima is very user friendly and didn't malfunction once; without this camera, I don't think I would have been able to shoot this job on film."

Diverse locations

Due to the diverse outdoor locations of the shoot, the choice of film was essential to its success, so Polonsky chose a mixture of Kodak Vision 7248, 250D 7246 and 500T 7279 film stock. "As we were doing a lot of shooting on the fly and I had no lights, it was essential that I had a range of film stocks that would enable us to work in whatever lighting conditions prevailed. These stocks allowed that to be possible."

When the team reached home, there was still some digital post-production to be done. "In **Signs**, the street signs we had photographed all had to be blanked out and for **Clocks**, the clocks all had to read the same time. The effects were done at VTR in London, and Jamie Wilkinson did a beautiful job in telecine, bringing out the range of light and landscape we had experienced."

The experience of this project is one Polonsky will treasure. "It was strange being in a new time zone almost every other day, but we were enjoying shooting so much that we woke up every day at 6am excited about what we were going to see, whether snow capped mountains in the Rockies or arid desert in Sinai!" ■

