



PRODUCTION: POP@Paul Weiland; director: Jeff Thomas; producer: Luke Copeland; prod manager: Sian Johns; location manager: Lee Robertson; 1st AD: George Cobden; DP: Jake Polonsky; focus puller: Rupert Hornstein; loader: Charlotte Ginsberg; grip: Dan Essex; sound: Baines; gaffer: Ruben Garratt; art director: Martin Sullivan; asst: Silke Abedinghoff; stylist: Andy Blake; hair/make-up: Denise Carroll. POST: telecine: Mark Aorribin; off-line editor: Nick Wayman-Harris at NWH; online: MPC. COMMISSIONER: Mandie Harris at Infectious.

## my vitriol: grounded

Jeff Thomas's new video for My Vitriol follows the tormented story of a character as he tries to remember and re-track the events leading up to him waking lying face down in gravel outside a roadside café in the middle of nowhere. Each time he tries to escape, he finds himself back in the gravel, and we follow his increasing frustration and horror as he discovers the extent of his unique prison. The story is genuinely mysterious and enthralling, and keeps the audience on tenterhooks. Occasionally the members of My Vitriol appear, as ghostly guests in the café, but certainly the most striking part of this three-and-a-half minute feature is the presence of Vincent Gallo, who gives a mesmerising performance as the man trapped in a nightmare.

"In the first draft of my treatment I suggested a character like Vincent Gallo," says Thomas. "In the second draft I was told to make it more exciting for the band so I suggested Vincent Gallo himself." Actually acquiring his services for the

video and working with him not surprisingly represented a career goal achieved for the director.

While Thomas was in Australia at the beginning of the year, his interest in Gallo was sparked from seeing him on the cover of *Dutch* magazine. "This spurred me into re-watching Buffalo 66," he says. Around this time he heard that a friend had attempted to book Gallo for a fashion show. The actor had declined, but it meant Thomas became aware of exactly how to approach him. "I had absolutely no idea what to expect," says the director. "He was about to play Charles Manson and then shoot his own film; and he had also apparently turned down \$1m for another film. But we sent him the treatment and he wanted to be part of it."

Obviously there were serious budget ramifications that came with someone like Vincent Gallo's involvement, but Infectious were prepared to raise the budget considerably as a result of the extra publicity such an actor would bring from appearing in the video. "It was like the old Levi's adverts, where they would

get the coolest characters around to be in the film," says Thomas.

The influence for the video came from the classic *Twilight Zone* TV show, which has provided Thomas with the inspiration for several of his narrative-based music videos. "I really wanted to make something that would have the same effect on people as these shows have had on me," he says.

Fortunately, his star shared his enthusiasm. Upon meeting Thomas, his first question was. "Are you a *Twilight Zone* fan?" Gallo, it turns out, has copies of all the *Twilight Zone* shows. "While we talked he seemed to be testing me," says the director. "When we talked about the script and the technical details, I was able to answer all his questions and then he became more comfortable with me."

The video, which looks sufficiently woody, wet and forbidding to be New England or the American North West, was actually shot in the picturesque forests of Surrey – the atmospheric café was located at Ockham Common, near the M25 – over two days. Jake Polonsky's excellent photography gives the video the feel of an indie movie-cum-ghost story.

For Thomas it was not the shoot that worried him so much as everything leading up to it. "I knew that it was possible that Vincent could change his mind at any moment," he says, "so until we were on the set I thought that something would go wrong, that it was to good to be true."

Maybe so, but the result is unquestionably a great step forward for Thomas, who has shown that the short story form can work as a very commercial as well as cool entity. He has also shown that he can work with maverick talents such as Gallo. "I want to get to the point in my career where I can take a year off to make a film," he says. The video for *Grounded* suggests that this point may not be that far off. Scott Weintrob