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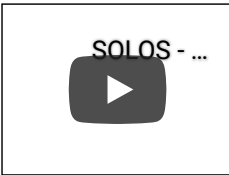
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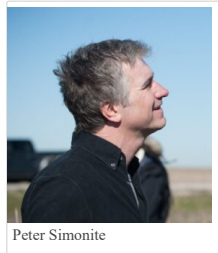
Production News

Weekly

Production Weekly News

Fugitive Dreams DP Peter Simonite Uses Cooke Panchro/i Classic for Vintage Look

December 3, 2020 07:03 | By Staff



Peter Simonite

Cinematographer **Peter Simonite, ASC, CSC**, who shot **Jason Neulander's** new drama *Fugitive Dreams* (currently seeking distribution) needed to create a vintage look that was consistent between lenses, so he chose the **Cooke Optics** Panchro/i Classic.

Based on the play by **Caridad Svich**, *Fugitive Dreams* is an “*allegorical road*

movie touching on themes of homelessness, mental health and addiction, as two lost souls embark across a dreamscape America. Their darkly strange journey confronts them with their traumatic pasts, and bonds them in compassion and love.”

Simonite spoke on Neulander's direction for the look of the film, “*Jason had a strong idea for the visual side of storytelling, as the film takes place in an anachronistic world between past and future. To help evoke vintage photographic references from the American Dust Bowl period, as well as films like The Grapes of Wrath and The Wizard of Oz, he wanted to primarily shoot in black and white using Academy ratio [1.37:1 — the Hollywood standard from 1932-1952]. This helps characters dominate the frame with less negative space on the sides, making them oddly heroic inside their own fractured world.*”

Parts of *Fugitive Dreams* is in color, but the visual references used by Simonite and Neulander covered everything from **Dorothea Lange's** iconic Dust Bowl images, as well as the films *Alice in the Cities* (1974) and *Down by Law* (1986). “*Those references really spoke to me,*” Simonite says. “*It was a great opportunity to create visuals that would underscore the story. Cinematographers get excited about that.*”



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“For lenses, I tested everything, but I have a lot of experience with Cooke lenses going back to when I first shot on the Cooke XTAL,” he continues. “Those lenses were really special. From there I started to fall in love with the unique characteristics of Cooke lenses, especially the S2 Speed Panchros that were converted into Anamorphics. Then I worked with Bruno Delbonnel on Infamous (2006). Bruno was very partial to the Cooke S4/i. All those experiences drew me to the Cooke Look®. Plus, I’ve always appreciated the character of the different sets of lenses. Considering my British heritage, it’s nice using lenses that come from the same place as my mother. There’s just something about that.”

Simonite’s original plan was to get a set of vintage Cooke Speed Panchros, but **Meredith Stephens**, Executive VP at rental house **MPS Studios** in Austin, Texas advised on the perfect lenses to use with the two **ARRI** Alexa Mini cams used for coverage and second unit.

Simonite explains, “Meredith was incredibly helpful. She had just received her set of Panchro/i Classics – she said they had a ‘retro-modern’ look and recommended them. They were beautiful. The Panchro/i Classics had all the character of the Speed Panchros, but with more consistent contrast from lens to lens. Now I had both vintage and modern at the same time, which was perfect for the material. I could rely on the lenses’ creativity to bring a voice to the image. For this story, I knew that the lenses would become an integral part of how people would view the imagery — the lenses work in a powerful but subtle way, like music. The sharpness, the contrast, the beautiful bokeh, the way they flare...I could always count on that to make each image special.”

Simonite ended up renting the full set of Cooke Classic Panchro/i lenses from MPS: 18, 21, 25, 27, 32, 40, 50, 65 MACRO, 75, 100, 135,152mm to be shared between the two ARRI Alexa Minis.

The 65 MACRO was used as both a standard 65mm, as well as a macro for some specific shots, but Simonite’s “hero lens” for *Fugitive Dreams* was the 32mm. *“The 32 is just a beautiful lens. You just can’t go wrong when shooting on the 32. Plus, the /i Technology lens metadata was very helpful on a few shots for matching purposes and to help with green screen work to match angle and focus —the data was really helpful for shooting plates, because it makes the green screen work look like it was captured in the camera.”*

“The Cooke Look® sets the emotional tone of the story,” said Simonite about how his lens choice added to the story in a fairly low-budget film. “This is a very austere film. It’s got a forest, a train, a cornfield — large scope locations, but not a lot of characters, as it was first a theatrical play. I knew I could make this film look beautiful with a minimal set of tools, as long as the tools worked. Cooke added a voice to the imagery that we really needed since we often worked with available light with a very small crew. We knew we could play with the different looks you can make with them. They were the most powerful tool I had on set.”

Fugitive Dreams premiered in Canada at the **Fantasia International Film Festival** on August 31 and then had its US premiere on October 24 at the **Austin Film Festival**.

You can watch the teaser trailer for the film below and learn more about the Cooke Optics Panchro/i Classic at CookeOptics.com.



Photos courtesy of Cooke Optics.

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