

# Short Takes

A man and woman (Julien Borno and Meghan Edwards) embark on a journey of discovery in the music video for Keane's "Silenced by the Night," shot by Alejandro Lalinde and directed by Chris Sims.



## Road-Trip Romance

By Iain Stasukevich

The music video for Keane's "Silenced by the Night" tells the story of a man and a woman on a journey of discovery across the American Southwest. "They're free spirits willing to take chances," says cinematographer Alejandro Lalinde. "During their travels they fall in and out of love, not knowing where their road or their lives will take them."

For the improvisational six-day shoot, director Chris Sims and his small crew took the actors, Meghan Edwards and Julien Borno, on a road trip from Los Angeles to Austin, Texas, where Keane was scheduled to play the 2012 South by Southwest Music Festival, and then back again. "Music videos are usually shot in one 14-hour day, and you're doing a lot of fast work at an extreme pace," says Lalinde. "This was more like shooting six music videos. Whether it was 10 at night or 11 in the morning, we were rolling the camera."

In addition to Sims and Lalinde, the crew comprised 1st AC Robby Hart, a production coordinator and a producer. A chase van followed the lovers in their '80s-era Volvo while Lalinde and Sims traded operator duties in the back seat. To get the camera into such tight quarters, Panavision Hollywood's Guy McVicker streamlined the Panavised Red Epic-M to the stripped-down camera body, a 5" touch-screen LCD monitor, an anamorphic lens and a battery. The operator pulled his own focus with a lightweight follow-focus attachment, leaving Hart to concentrate on maintaining the camera, lenses and accessories. "It was unconventional for all of us, including Robby," says Lalinde. "It was like working with a photo assistant."

The camera's reduced size allowed the operator to shoot more easily from the chest or lap. That suited the documentary aesthetic Sims had in mind. "When I was putting the Epic together, I thought, 'We need to treat this like a 16mm camera: small, self-

contained and mobile,'" says Lalinde.

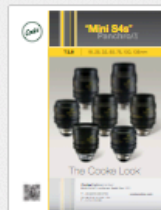
He and Sims sought out the older C-Series optics for their softening effect on the digital image and the irregular qualities of their anti-reflective coatings. They used 30mm, 50mm, 75mm and 100mm lenses in the C-Series line, as well as a 40mm E-Series lens "that was very close to the look of the C-Series," says Lalinde.

Depending on the lens, Lalinde could only come as close as 30" to his subjects before needing a diopter to maintain focus. The longer the lens, the farther out from the film plane its close focus is. When necessary, he used full or split Tiffen diopters. At Panavision, McVicker removed the diopters from their 138mm retaining rings to make them easier for the filmmakers to manipulate by hand in front of the lens.

The handheld glass elements allowed Lalinde to smear sunlight across the frame and bend the focus, giving the image an ethereal quality. "We did anything to distort the foreground," he says. "We shot into the sun and other sources to create flares. Depending on the source and the angle of light coming into the lens, you can create all sorts of artifacts. It's just something that happened while we were shooting, and the effect was different every time."

A mattebox was occasionally employed to facilitate Tiffen IRNDs, which Lalinde used to maintain a shallow-focus T-stop (between T2.3 and T2.8) at all times. He also utilized a Schneider Pola for some shots.

McVicker provided Lalinde with a spreadsheet describing the anamorphic-compatibility issues inherent in various digital cameras. "You will usually have cropping issues shooting 2:1 anamorphic with a digital format," the cinematographer explains. "The Red MX horizontally crops the image about 49 percent, and the Arri Alexa [with the 16x9 Alev-III sensor] horizontally crops it about 39 percent, so your field-of-view is not what it would be with a full-frame



Photos by Christian Heuer. Photos and frame grabs courtesy of the filmmakers.

Top: Lalinde says the shoot was "about finding what looked great and using it to our advantage."  
 Middle: Lalinde handheld diopters in front of the lens to bend focus and smear light across the frame.  
 Bottom: Lalinde (with camera), 1st AC Robby Hart (second from right) and Sims capture a shot of the couple at an abandoned gas station.



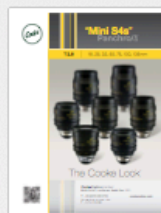
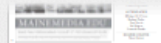
35mm-sized sensor, and you lose [horizontal] image resolution. When you capture in the 5K ANA mode with the Epic, you get about a 27-percent crop, so whereas normally a 30mm anamorphic lens would be the equivalent field-of-view of a spherical 15mm on 35mm film, it's more like a 19mm on an Epic. You have to be careful about picking the right digital camera when you're going to shoot anamorphic."

The footage for "Silenced" was captured in 5K ANA mode with a 7:1 compression-ratio setting for the Redcode Raw files. Frame rates varied from 24-96 fps. (25 fps was the intended frame rate for the video's U.K. broadcast.) The team carried four 128GB Redmag cards and shot as much footage nearly every day.

The pace didn't leave a lot of time for precision lighting. Other than some battery-operated F&V LED panel lights, and a 4K HMI that was used for Keane's performance in Austin, "everything was pretty much sunlight and existing street lighting, anything that could offer us a source or exposure," says Lalinde.

He cites Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life*, shot by Emmanuel Lubezki, ASC, AMC (AC Aug. '11), as a primary reference for the music video. "Lubezki's work communicated such deep human emotions, and that, to me, is cinema," observes Lalinde. Taking a cue from Lubezki's approach to *Tree of Life*, Lalinde says he used "bounce and natural light. [It was about] finding what looked great and using it to our advantage."

He kept the Epic's ISO setting at 800 for the duration of the shoot. "I usually don't go below ISO 640 on the Epic,





Above: The couple stands atop their Volvo on the open road. Right: Sims keeps an eye on the action as Lalinde frames up the production's Red Epic camera.

because the lower you go, the less highlight protection the camera offers. I'll go all the way to ISO 1,600, and I like the way the digital noise degrades the image, but in the end it's all about [protecting] the highlights."

ISO 800 was sensitive enough to capture subtle details in even the dimmest light, such as a dusk scene in which the lovers approach an emotional and literal crossroads that was lit with only the Volvo's headlights.

"The shoot was very free form," says Lalinde. "Chris showed me reference images of places along the road, forgotten Americana, the America that has started to decay but still evokes this sense of history and character. We planned as much as we could, but we were searching for the story as we went along."

From Los Angeles, the filmmakers headed east on Interstate 10, taking detours onto dirt roads or wandering into open fields whenever a location caught their eye. Mornings were typically used for travel, opening up the late afternoons and evenings to shooting while the sun was low on the horizon.

Keane's performance for the video was shot at night at a limestone quarry outside Austin. Lalinde describes the setup as "one light source, with the camera doing circles around the band." Local key grip Rich Bond improvised white and silver bounce surfaces with insulation panels purchased at Lowe's, and local gaffer Janet Jensen hooked the 4K HMI to a generator in the bed of a Ford F-150. The truck drove in circles around the band, which performed almost 30 takes of the song.

"The HMI was the only source, and it created these moving shadows and silhouettes," says Lalinde. "You can't really see the entire band, but it was interesting to see how the light wrapped around them." He and Sims took turns handholding the camera, covering the action on each band member with wide and close-up angles.

Lalinde was not able to be involved in the color correction, which Sims and colorist Brandon Chavez performed at New Hat in Santa Monica, but he is happy with the result and proud of what he and his collaborators accomplished with minimal resources. "In our case," he notes, "shooting anamorphic added a lot of production value." ●

