

Off the beaten track

There are few places on earth less inviting to Western film crews than the Brazilian jungle. So it is ironic that the team filming a commercial for the charitable organisation Brot Für Die Welt (Bread For The World), were drawing attention to an area which the indigenous natives wanted everybody to forget existed.

DP Henning Stürmer has worked with Director Gerrit Aschoff on another Brot commercial. He won the Studio Hamburg 1997 Young Talent award for his diploma piece, *Hilda Humphrey*. Since then, Stürmer has worked on documentaries, commercials and features, including *Berlin – Tango and Nicht Fisch Nicht Fleisch*.

The Brazilian commercial is the fourth commercial commissioned by Brot Für Die Welt. The organisation works on diverse projects with underprivileged people all over the world. Previous themes have included the working children in North Vietnam, famine victims in Sudan and the street children of Brazil's cities.

The fourth commercial highlights the plight of the Madija tribe in the jungle. They were so keen to protect their ancient territory from commerce that they sent tribe members to get educated and used them to draw international attention to their battle. Brot Für Die Welt was one of the organisations which went to their aid.

The humidity and unfriendliness of the conditions were crucial considerations for the team when deciding what equipment and film stock to favour. An ARRI Super 16 SR-II was considered more likely to withstand the worst that Brazil could throw at it.



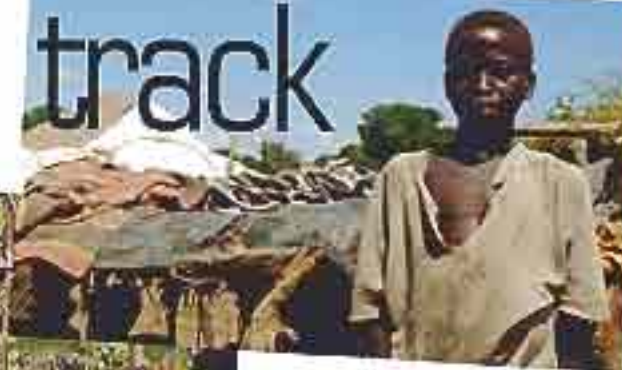
▲ DP Henning Stürmer left

than a more sophisticated model.

Stürmer explains the thinking behind his choice of film stock. 'Kodak Vision 250D (7246) was used, because we had to work in the middle of a deep jungle, where there was very little light but for beams of sunlight striking down through trees and branches,' he says. 'So we needed this high-speed stock, with its rich exposure latitude, to help us get the documentary style we sought. The stock needed plenty of flexibility for the conditions.'

For shooting on the fields or the rivers dividing the forest while the Indians were fishing and under direct tropical sun, Stürmer used the ENR 50D (72451) film. 'I didn't want to shoot the whole thing with 250D, because I would have had to use a lot of ND-filters in the open scenes. I wanted to avoid changing the optics as much as possible.' The two


▼ Previous themes have included the working children in North Vietnam.



stocks interact very well at the TK stage and both director and DP were very happy with the results.

The most challenging part of the job was not the week-long trip by plane and boat to get there, but convincing the various organisations that their intentions were noble. 'They wanted us to shoot a documentary,' Stürmer recalls. 'They thought we couldn't achieve enough with a 30-second commercial.'

Director of all four commercials, Gerrit Aschoff, has seen his fair share of difficult situations during filming. 'All the films were made in places which are a real culture shock to Western people like myself,' he comments. 'Sudan, for example. Nobody was allowed in or out without government approval and local guides at their side. In North Vietnam, the government doesn't want to see what you shoot, but you have to commit to using local production companies.'

Aschoff feels strongly that more members of the industry should support worthwhile causes. 'Too much emphasis is placed on making money. These projects give me real satisfaction. It's nice to feel that what I do is making a difference.' 



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