

"Quis custodiet custodes ipsos," wrote Juvenal. Who is guarding the guardians? A very good question when a policeman turns criminal.

Stander

The bent copper

How's this for a dramatic plot? Andre Stander, successful South African Police Captain, works overtime on his days off by robbing banks at gunpoint then investigates his own crimes! Twice married to the same woman, and twice divorced, he eventually gets caught and jailed for his off-duty criminal misdeeds after getting busted by his own partner. He continues robbing banks after breaking out of prison with two other bank robbers, Patrick Lee McCall and Allan Heyl. When he finds Johannesburg getting dangerously hot, Stander flees to the USA and is mortally wounded by a black American Police Officer while resisting arrest in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Sensational? Yes. But true in every detail. Cinema audiences can see these, and many other startling facts about his short and violent life, in **Stander**, a vibrant and spectacular feature, filmed in South Africa by Director of Photography Jess Hall.

"**Stander**, because it's true, needed a visually realistic approach," Jess said, "to help the audience connect with the story. To get it, I used a mixture of handheld camerawork, to put the audience inside the action, and simultaneous long lens coverage, shot on a second camera to give the impression of capturing the events unfolding. This also speeded the action. Using two cameras simultaneously, meant I couldn't be over fussy with the lighting; so I lit scenes rather than shots. This gave the actors more freedom and allowed us to cut seamlessly between the two cameras.

"The story begins in the 1970s and I tested several filters and lab processes before finding the right look for the period. I settled on an Antique Suede filter which worked beautifully on the skin tones of both black and white actors and reduced the magenta in the image overall. My camera package was two ARRIcams with Cooke S4 prime lenses. I



A re-enactment of the Tembisa Riots in 1976 on the set of *Stander*.



Camera Operator Harmon Cusack (left) and DP Jess Hall.

also used some longer Leica lenses, which closely matched the Cookes. The ARRIcam LT worked well in handheld mode and quickly became the A camera.

"We needed every minute of daylight to pack our 107 different locations into a tight shooting schedule. So I chose Kodak Vision 200T 5274 film, and rated it at 160ASA, for day exteriors, shooting around T8.

"I love the look of Eastman EXR100T film, but by using the faster stock I added 15-20 minutes filming to each day's shoot without having to change stocks. Sadly, South Africa has a very short 'magic hour' — my favourite natural lighting condition — but the Kodak Vision 200T 5274 film let me make the most of it; I simply pulled out ND filters as the light dropped.

"On **Stander** we also filmed many high contrast exteriors lit by the harsh South African sun. And as the shoot progressed we moved into Summer and its unfavourable sun-path. Unfortunately the schedule did not allow me to shoot many locations when they

Camera Operator
Harmon Cusack





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Thomas Jane as "Andre Stander" in *Stander*. The film stars Thomas Jane, Dexter Fletcher, David Patrick O'Hara and Deborah Kara Unger.

were at their best. We also had those many different skin tones to contend with. However the latitude of the Kodak Vision 200T 5274 meant I needed very little extra lighting on day exteriors. Instead I would just bounce sunlight from large unbleached muslins, which gave me the natural look I wanted.

"I shot most day interiors on Kodak Vision 500T 5279 film which cuts well with the 200T. When filming large bank interiors I used hefty daylight sources through windows, locating them as far away as possible. With so much handheld work, I wanted to shoot at T3.5, but had to shoot mostly at T2.8. Tough for the Focus-Pullers!

"In one bank scene Lee McCall (Dexter Fletcher) gets nervous and shoots out the glass ceiling, showering shards of glass over the customers and tellers below. I worked with Lester Cohen, the Creative Consultant, who came up with a 30ft x 40ft glass housing for 80 fluorescent fixtures. I found some flicker free fluorescent tubes to suit our frame rates and we hauled the huge lighting unit up into the 1930s bank ceiling using a series of winches. I had five 18ks on Condors shining through the three-storey windows, backlighting the glass as it shattered, and the fluorescents in the ceiling served as fill. We covered the scene with five cameras at various frame speeds; luckily we got it in one take. If we hadn't, it would have taken four hours to replace the ceiling!

"Most of the night exteriors take place in Johannesburg so I simulated the typically uncorrected light sources of urban nightscapes. I found a gel

package that matched both Sodium and Mercury vapour sources for 3200k light. I used these mostly on maxi brutes and Dinors, mounted on Condors and wired through dimmers. I used Kodak Vision 500T film 5279 for all night exteriors; I love its look on night scenes and it enables me to make the most of the available sources. I rated it at 400ASA and shot mostly at T2.8.

"Sometimes I would shoot at T2. I also pushed one stop and shot at T2 for some scenes, if for example I wanted to see the city lights in the background of a shot. The Vision 500T is so versatile; and it copes well with underexposure.

"For one night exterior scene we turned Durban into Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We found a section of the beachfront in Durban where the architecture was a close match. I created a slightly different look by using a wet down to reflect the neon lights of the bars and clubs and changed my sodium sources to a more golden tone."

Stander, directed by Bronwen Hughes, is an international co-production involving the UK, South Africa and Canada with distribution handled in the USA.

Jess Hall summed up the experience. "I enjoyed working with a completely South African crew, especially Camera Operator Harmon Cusack, Focus-Puller Carl Eksteen and Key Grip Guy Micheletti. I also had all the support I needed from ARRI Media and AFM Lighting; both have strong bases in South Africa but were also able to bring out anything extra that we needed from the UK within 2-3 days. ■

Harmon Cusack on camera in Durban Yacht Club.

