

Table-top cinematography VISION3's superior imaging

"Sizzling" expressions have become an essential concept in the world of imagery. As one of the first to recognize the significance, as well as excitement, of "sizzle shots," Takeyoshi Hosoi has established himself as a professional director specializing in table-top cinematography. Yasuhiro Yamauchi is a cinematographer who has filmed numerous commercials and images as Hosoi's right-hand man. In this interview, we asked the two professionals for their impressions after using the KODAK VISION3 films and their key to producing sizzling food expressions.



Q **What are your impressions of the KODAK VISION3 500T 7219 film for table-top work?**

A **Hosoi:** The pictures we took with the VISION3 500T looked clean and crisp even when we viewed them through the telecine. The film effectively offers all the advantages of 16mm film, so there's a sense of security in using it. The color detail it offers is especially amazing.

Yamauchi: I love new things, so when I heard that Kodak released VISION3 500T film, I immediately tried it out, and was impressed. Back when VISION2 was released, I was duly impressed with the improvement in granularity that provided stronger blacks, but I found this was even further improved in the VISION3. Since the frame size of 16mm is narrower than 35mm, it requires higher magnification in telecine. So, we can easily recognize the difference of film's characteristics in 16mm. I don't want to have to choose either darkness or brightness; I want to make the most of both qualities. This is something I am always pursuing. In this respect, VISION3 500T was perfect. The film also proved effective in reproducing the whites. No matter how sophisticated cameras become, motion picture cannot advance without the evolution of

film. Technically, it doesn't matter whether you use a 20-year-old camera or a modern camera. The type of film you use is the important thing.

Q **Why did you opt to use 16mm film, instead of going digital?**

A **Yamauchi:** 16mm film provides gentle imagery. Digital pictures are so vivid they can seem almost garish.

Hosoi: Many people are surprised when I say this, but even 16mm film can provide quality pictures, not just 35mm film. In fact, 16mm film can reproduce the slightest nuance the naked eye can capture. Food items filmed in high definition tend to look too bland, like a cooking show. Moreover, table-top cinematography is all about capturing instantaneous moments in time, and demands mobility and fluidity.

Q **The two of you have been working together for a long time; will you address the difficult challenge of table-top work?**

A **Hosoi:** The most difficult aspect of table-top work is that you don't get a second chance. We make thorough preparations before we begin

filming but we only have one chance to take the best shot. Our livelihoods depend on being able to capture that single moment. Mr. Yamauchi was originally a still photographer, and so was I. We operate on the same wavelength, so to speak, and can work together, as in a jazz session.

Yamauchi: Yes, and as in a jazz session, we frequently change our original plans once we are on-site.

Hosoi: That's true, but mostly because Mr. Yamauchi changes things. We've been working together for seven or eight years. Table-top cinematography is an established occupation in the United States but it didn't exist in Japan until recently. Around 2000, when I began to think about the future direction of my career, my thoughts led me to table-top work.

Q **How, specifically, do you produce sizzling expressions in table-top work?**

A **Hosoi:** We obtain visual information first with our eyes, then our brain. For example, when your favorite food is placed in front of you, your eyes naturally focus in on the food as though they were zoom lenses, and bring you closer to the food, right? I want to make the most of that sensation, so I rely on subjective

maximized by capability



experiences while doing a shoot. However, at the same time, I eliminate any preconceptions. As an example, imagine a scene where curry is poured onto a plate of rice. In the past, it was common practice to film images of the curry and rice while an assistant director reproduced the familiar action of ladling curry onto the rice. However, this method is far from being able to produce a sizzle expression. You need a magical or romantic element to make viewers develop a sudden craving for curry and rice.

Yamauchi: To reproduce what people see with their eyes as faithfully and as beautifully as possible, I mainly use a Zeiss prime lens.

Q In your work, you seem to rely heavily on high-speed filming, is that right?

A **Hosoi:** I tried using 16mm film at 300 to 500 fps, and I was able to reproduce the texture of the food beautifully, and I have since gotten into the habit of using high-speed 16mm. At 300 fps, even the gentle and graceful motion of liquids can be captured in detail.

Yamauchi: Yes, I frequently shoot food items at high speeds. In the case of a TV commercial for the Chinese restaurant Bamiyan, I shot with 16mm film at 500 fps. For lighting, I used two 24K lights for a 10cm square object. Then I set the focus by considering the depth of field with the lighting technician. The light is intense. The F-stop is more than 256 if it is converted in 30fps. Flare and halation which are invisible to the naked eye cause whiteouts in the image during telecine transfer, so I'm careful to eliminate them on-site. I need to be particularly careful of halation and flare when using a Photosonics camera because the spectroscopy prism is located right behind the lens. (Note: Photosonics is a high-speed camera manufactured in the United States. Normal camera speed is 24fps, but Photosonics cameras provide high-speed shooting at speeds of up to 500fps.)

Q Do you often work in collaboration with foreign companies?

A **Yamauchi:** Yes, so far, we have filmed commercials with companies in China, Korea, and Thailand. Each country has its own unique culture

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and its own method of filming, so we often encounter some difficulties. At times, on-site changes are suddenly made to the filming schedule and we have to urgently search for the equipment we need. Thanks to such experiences, however, we're sometimes able to acquire special filming equipment that's hard to find in Japan, or make other interesting discoveries.

Hosoi: Up to now, some types of table-top work couldn't be filmed in Japan or in other Asian countries, and we frequently had to travel to the United States or Europe to do the shoot. However, partly since I've established my business base in Tokyo, filmmakers from throughout Japan and Asia are now beginning to come to Tokyo to do their shooting. I think this is a wonderful development in the field of table-top cinematography.

To learn more, visit <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/sizuru/hosoi/>.

