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**DP David Wells Lenses the Rapper/Actor Ludacris with Zeiss Nano Primes**

When Austin-based cinematographer David Wells was handed the treatment for the C4 Energy sweepstakes featuring rapper and actor Ludacris, he knew this commercial would require out of the box thinking. Designed as a one-take, point-of-view shot, the spot would require a lighting setup tailored to the wide plane of view and a camera package nimble enough to operate as POV rig. Wells selected ZEISS Nano Primes with the Venice 2 Rialto to realize the project.

A prolific Texas commercial and music video cinematographer, Wells was an obvious choice to lens this unusual stunt for C4 Energy. The beverage company wanted to shoot a promo for a sweepstakes giveaway that among other prizes, included the iconic Integra Type S, a car featured in the *Fast & the Furious* franchise. None other than music icon and *Fast & the Furious* cast member Ludacris was attached to star in the spot. “It was one of those full-circle moments where you get to work with someone you’ve admired for years,” describes Wells.

The promotion was designed as a unique, one-take first-person point-of-view shot, moving from inside a convenience store out to a gas station parking lot. “I knew right away it would require a POV mount,” explains Wells. The commercial delivery specs required large format, so Wells decided to use the Venice 2 Rialto as the camera. Finding the lenses to pair with the Rialto rig was not as easy. “We looked at some other lenses, but they proved too heavy during tests and the actor had a hard time holding his head up. I thought, ‘I need a small lens that’s going to look great, shave weight, and have a stop of T-1.5.’ Then it dawned on me: *the ZEISS Nano Primes*.”

Wells had encountered the ZEISS Nano Primes for the first time at the 2024 South by Southwest Film Festival. “The Nano Primes are small, clean, and fast–they checked all the boxes.” He acquired a pair to test with experienced Austin operator, James Navarra. “Our actor/operator was able to move his head easily. We mounted the Venice 2 to an Easy Rig with a little plate that fits on the back, using the tension to help hold up the operator’s head. We added a monitor in front of his eyes with a focus motor on rails, lenses, and a matte box for filtration.” (It’s Navarra’s own hand that reaches out to fist bump in the commercial.)

Camera rig locked; the next challenge was how to light for the extremely wide field of view. With a focal length of 25mm, along with extensive blocking from the store into the parking lot, rigging lights out of sight was essential. “We didn't have the budget for a Condor to hang a big softbox with raking lights, so we ended up putting lights on the top of the store,” describes Wells. “We rigged all these ARRI S60 fixtures to the rooftop of the 7-Eleven. Then we hung hard fixtures to imitate existing streetlamps in the parking lot and replaced overhead lights under the gas pumps with cinema lights to ensure everything looked right.”

The Nanos proved their merit once more during the operator/actor’s movement from inside the bright gas station to the night parking lot. “We shot at T-4 inside, then did an iris pull outside all the way to T-1.5,” the cinematographer explains. “What really sets these lenses apart is how fast they are. I don’t think there’s anything like it below a T-2 anywhere else. The difference between a T-2 and a T-1.5 is huge, especially in large format.” The moment of transition is seamless. After days of prep and hours on location setting up, it only took five takes to capture the sequence.

“There are so many things I like about the Nano Primes,” reflects Wells. “The Nano Primes are like smaller versions of Supreme Primes. They’re a fantastic choice when you need a small, compact lens. They give us the opportunity to get closer in tight spaces and maintain a high-quality look.”

The sweepstakes deadline has passed, but the promotion can still be watched on C4 Energy’s Instagram and social media.

Check out the full interview with David Wells at**:** <https://lenspire.zeiss.com/cine/en/article/dp-david-wells-chooses-zeiss-nano-primes-for-pov-rig-on-sweepstakes-starring-ludacris/>