

Production Slate

Abandoning Society and Embracing Love

Chris McCandless (Emile Hirsch) thumbs a ride while trekking across the West in *Into the Wild*.



A Seeker Travels Too Far

by Jean Oppenheimer

Two days after wrapping Alain Resnais' *Private Fears in Public Places* in Paris, Eric Gautier, AFC found himself in San Francisco, prepping Sean Penn's *Into the Wild*. Stylistically, the two films could not be more different. "Resnais' film was shot entirely on stage — on nine stages, in fact — and involved very controlled lighting," says Gautier, speaking by phone from Normandy, France. "I always had three filters on the lens because Alain wanted it very diffused. Sean's movie was the exact opposite: we shot entirely on location, strove for a natural-light look and used hardly any filters."

Based on the nonfiction book by Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild* recounts the experiences of Chris McCandless (Emile Hirsch), a middle-class college graduate who gave away all his money, cut ties to his family and hitchhiked across the West, ending up in Alaska, where he planned to test his survival skills. Things

went well for a while, but in the end Alaska's harsh environment prevailed. McCandless recorded his adventures, the people he met, and his slow death in a diary that was found alongside his body. The diary and the hundreds of photographs he took on his two-year odyssey provided not only the backbone of the book, but also a great reference for the filmmakers.

"In a technical sense, we shot the film in a documentary style — we never rehearsed, there were no marks for the actors, and we usually shot only one take," says Gautier. "Sean had very precise ideas. Usually he designed the shot and then we discussed it, although he was always open to improvisation."

The production filmed in 33 towns/regions and rarely stayed in a location longer than three days. Four trips were made to Alaska to catch seasonal differences. "We spent most of our time hiking to hard-to-reach places," jokes Gautier, only half in jest. "The cameras had to fit into our backpacks because I wanted to be able to grab one and move

quickly." The main camera, an Aaton 35-III, came from Aaton in Grenoble, France. Keslow Camera in Culver City, California, provided an Arricam Lite, an Arri 435, and a range of Zeiss Ultra Primes and Optimo and Canon zooms.

Gautier shot most of the picture at the long end of a zoom. The production carried three, an Optimo 17-80mm, an Optimo 24-290mm, and a Canon 150-600mm, as well as 2x extenders for all three. "The quality of the long lenses in the bright sun is just amazing now, so beautiful," he says. "In France, filmmakers rarely use long lenses or slow motion, except for very specific shots. Having seen Sean's first three pictures, I knew he liked long lenses and changes of speed within scenes. It was so much fun for me to play with those things."

Into the Wild was shot in 3-perf Super 35mm, and Gautier used three Fuji Eterna film stocks: 250D 8563 for day exteriors; 400T 8583 for a few scenes featuring McCandless' parents; and 500T 8573 for all other material. "I wanted the scenes showing his parents

Into the Wild photos by Francois Duhamel, SMPSP and Chuck Zlotnik, courtesy of Paramount Vantage.