

JENNIFER WOLFE

# DIGITAL FILMMAKING AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Madonna and Steven Klein Launch *Secretprojectrevolution*



**M**adonna's long-anticipated *secretprojectrevolution*, ushered in with an Instagram post and multi-city launch event, arrived in September with a bang.

A collaboration of Madonna and fashion photographer Steven Klein, the 17-minute film, which opens with the Jean-Luc Godard quote "All you need for a movie is a gun and a girl," is a *Vogue* photo shoot come to life. Shot entirely in black and white, the gritty project introduces Art for Freedom, a global initiative that aims to expand freedom of expression.

"My goal is to show by the example of *secretprojectrevolution* my creative commitment to inspire change in the world through artistic expression," Madonna said about the project in a statement. "I hope my film and other submissions to Art for Freedom will be a call to action and give people a place to voice their own creative expression to help fight oppression,

intolerance and complacency."

The heavily teased film, bundled with bonus content including handwritten notes from Madonna and Klein, is available for free download at the Art for Freedom site, where in less than three weeks it was downloaded 1.2 million times. Slickly curated by multimedia company VICE and distributed by technology developer BitTorrent, Art for Freedom is "the first media store by the people, for the people."

BitTorrent has largely been synonymous with piracy across the media and entertainment landscape, but now the peer-to-peer file sharing company is touting the power of its platform to enable content creators to distribute intellectual property on their own terms to millions of Internet users. The new Art for Freedom site, which features artists as diverse as Linkin Park, the Pixies and Public Enemy, promises a world of content, including music and film exclusives, all

free for the taking. "Play what you want. Pay what you want. This site is powered by you. Happy downloading, friends."

Shot in New York and Buenos Aires with the RED EPIC digital cinema camera, *secretprojectrevolution* is elaborately lit and heavily stylized. A stark set, designed by Klein and lit by cinematographer David Devlin, who has worked with Klein for more than 11 years, provides an unembellished backdrop to the pop superstar as she delivers her manifesto.

"The entire project was very personal, very emotional for her," Devlin recounts. "She didn't want it to be heavily filtered, so it was important that things appeared to be natural and that the two sets—New York and Buenos Aires—blended seamlessly. The lighting absolutely had to support that."

For a sequence filmed inside a prison, the filmmaking team, which included camera



assistant Dominic Sheldon and Steadicam operator Stephen Consentino, labored to create a sense of space and motion outside the cramped jail cell. "We used a series of mirrors to create a lighting effect within the cell so it feels like there are either truck headlights or some other kind of lighting moving outside," Devlin relates. "You can see the light coming through the bars of the cell, which helps to give a sense that there's something larger going on outside of what you're actually seeing."

The production team employed narrow-spot PAR 64 lights in clusters that were reflected through a series of 4' x 4' and 1' x 1' mirrors to create a stark, high-contrast look. Lenses included an Angenieux Optimo 24-290mm zoom and a vintage medium-format Pentax 6 x 7 still photography lens in a custom housing provided by B2Pro. "It's a classic lens used back in the good old days when people just shot on film, a very well liked lens that now we're able to use on a digital camera," Devlin comments.

"Some people have happy accidents, but nothing with Steven is ever like that," Devlin concludes. "Everything is completely thought out, and he spends tons of time thinking about the smallest elements: the color of the paint, texture, light, space. Even the small practicals that were on the set we spent a lot of time thinking about—what those would be, how the bed should look, how to create a feeling of starkness—but also, because it was such a small set, how to create some sense of a larger space." **dv**

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