

Short Takes

Cinematographer Eric Koretz showcases Hive Lighting's Plasma fixtures with the 2013 Chevy Volt in "The Volt Plasma Challenge." Below: Koretz lines up a shot as actress Francesca Eaddy's makeup is applied.



Hive Plasmas Illuminate Chevy Volt

By Jennifer Wolfe

Directed by Mo Twine and shot by cinematographer Eric Koretz, the latest 30-second spot for the Chevy Volt, "The Volt Plasma Challenge," emphasizes the hybrid electric car's reputation for a light ecological footprint. Conceived as a showcase for Hive Lighting's Plasma fixtures, the ad was lit with instruments powered only by batteries and a single, lightweight, 60-amp generator.

Koretz, whose credits include the feature *Dragonslayer* and the Webby-nominated AMC series *The Trivial Pursuits of Arthur Banks*, was introduced to Hive's energy-efficient lighting products at last year's NAB Show. "I think it's important for cinematographers to be up on the latest cameras, lighting and accessories because they can change how we work," he comments. "I'm always looking at the latest equipment and working out how to integrate that into my shoots."

Koretz and the Hive production team were enthusiastic about "The Volt Plasma Challenge," which marked the first time Hive Plasmas were the sole fixtures used for an entire production. "I had used them before, but never on this scale," says Koretz. "We wanted to push the lights to the limit and show what they could do. At the same time, of course, we wanted to make a beautiful commercial for the Chevy Volt. Mo is an incredibly visual director, and he wanted to reframe how people perceive the car."

During the overnight shoot in downtown Los Angeles, Koretz and his team worked with two Red Epic cameras, an Epic-M from Radiant Images and an Epic-X from Digital Film Studios. "We also had a Red Scarlet on a drone," he adds. Footage was recorded in 5K



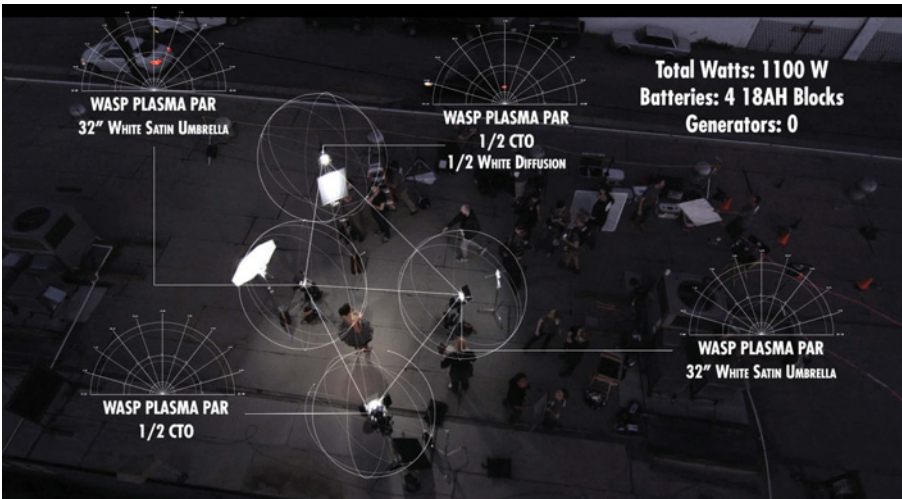
raw to Red r3d files. Both Epics were outfitted with Zeiss Ultra Prime and Superspeed lenses, which were also provided by Digital Film Studios. "I had an excellent camera crew, including camera assistants Adam Becker and John Jurko and Steadicam operator Xavier Henselmann, who were adept at working with the three cameras seamlessly," says Koretz.

"The Epic is a perfect complement to the Hive lights," he continues. "Like the lights, it is versatile and can be scaled up or stripped down in size and weight. Also, the support equipment — tripods, jibs and camera accessories — is smaller, and that enables you to move quickly. For example, we were able to monitor wirelessly from all three cameras using the Paralinx Arrow, which is the size of a USB stick and has less than 2 ms [millisecond] latency. We could be incredibly mobile and pull focus from the monitor away from the camera. ➤

Photos courtesy of Hive Lighting.



Top left: Eddy confers with director Mo Twine on a rooftop set. Top right: Gaffer Nicolas Amato sets a Hive Drone Plasma Spot. Middle: This lighting diagram shows where each Hive Plasma fixture was placed on the rooftop. Bottom: This frame grab shows a scene from the 30-second spot with two Hive Killer Plasma Maxis in the background.



"Even with all the company moves we made, the on-set and post processes for the Epic were fast and easy. [Digital-imaging technician] Jared Bargiel transcoded footage using his DIT cart with a Red Rocket

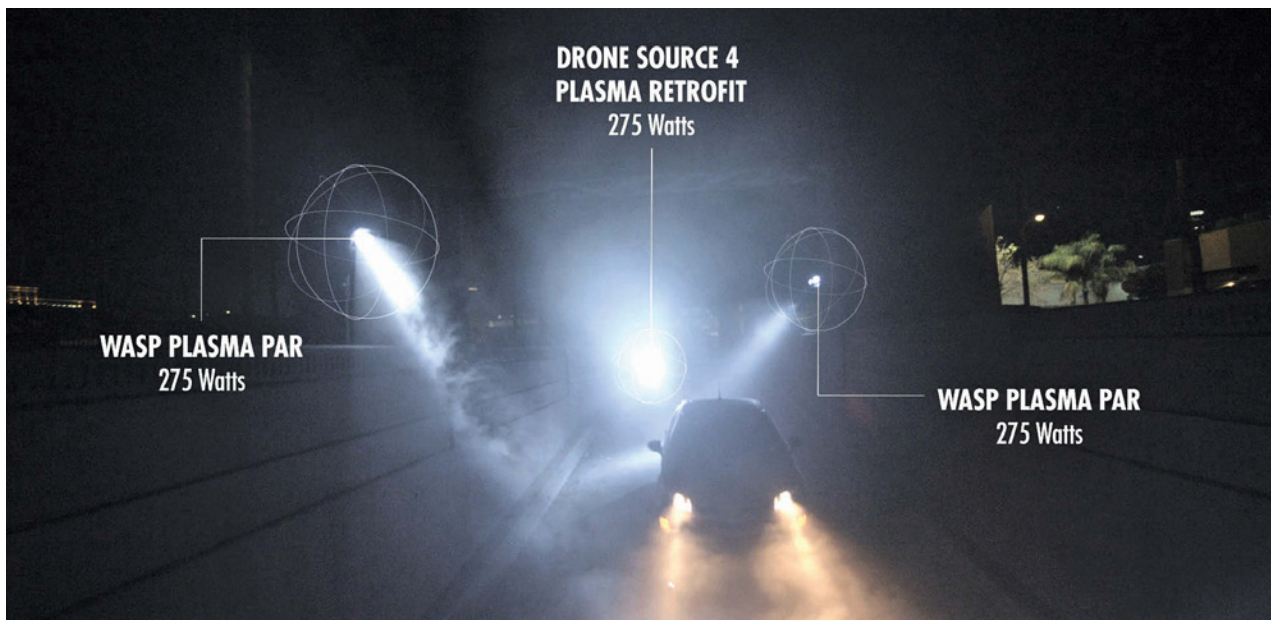
Card. He could transcode on the fly to ProRes, transfer footage and also dial in looks using [Blackmagic Design's] DaVinci Resolve to do a base color grade on the fly. Shooting raw enables you to take more

chances as long as you're monitoring the waveform and vectorscopes to know where your highlights, shadow area and color information lie."

One of the most challenging setups featured the Volt driving through a tunnel at night. "The Hive lights really showed their versatility and low-power-draw advantages there," Koretz recalls. "We had eight Wasp Plasma Pars, four Drone Source Four Retrofits and two Killer Plasma 4-Light Maxis. We put batteries in the Wasp Pars all the way down the tunnel, and then shot them upward to create columns of light that could be part of the story."

At the end of the tunnel, Koretz positioned the Killer 4-Lights to shine back into the tunnel, and beyond them, a Drone Source Four was placed with two more Pars to light the Volt as it emerged from the tunnel. All together, Koretz says, the fixtures "gave the tunnel a futuristic look. If we'd had to run cable, it would have taken a long time to light that tunnel, but with the [battery-powered] Hive units, we were able to do it in roughly 30 minutes." Smoke machines added to the ambience. Also, the filmmakers employed a Cinestar Octocopter remote-controlled aerial-camera platform from Drone Dudes to capture shots leading and following the Volt through the tunnel with the Red Scarlet.

"We had to be nimble and make adjustments quickly," says Koretz. "Mo is great at thinking on his feet, and we both had the confidence that the lights would give us the flexibility we needed. Avoiding



Top: This lighting diagram shows where Plasma fixtures were placed inside the 6th Street tunnel. Middle: A view of the Chevy Volt as it's driven through the tunnel lighted by battery-powered Wasp Plasma Pars, with a Red Scarlet on an Octocopter trailing behind. Bottom: The Red Epic, mounted on a Steadicam, stands ready for the next shot.

big generators allows you to use your intuition, respond quickly and change ideas on the fly, and I love working that way. Gaffer Nicolas Amato was excellent at this as well, coming up with creative ways to use the Hive lights in every shot."

Koretz was as impressed by the Hive lights' durability as he was by their versatility. "They're built to last a long time, and most importantly, there's a beautiful quality to the light with a high CRI. LEDs are great, but they're not single-source like the Plasmas are. You can beam a Plasma right at the subject and not see multiple shadows, and it won't have the green spike that a lot of LEDs have. They're also flicker free, so you can shoot at high speeds.

"I love where lighting technology is heading — everything is getting smaller and more powerful. The 4-Light Maxi is equivalent [in output] to a 2.5K HMI, but you can plug it into a wall. Because of these new tools, huge power draws aren't necessary on many jobs now. We can scale down and still get a beautiful look." ●