



## 'The Rope'

**Director: Philippe André**

Philippe André's short film 'The Rope' opens with a striking black and white close-up of one side of a woman's face, just as her eye blinks open. The camera pulls back and we see that her arms are tied to her sides with a thick length of rope. Finally, someone behind her stirs and it becomes apparent that she is tied back to back with a man, lying in the open air on a patch of post-industrial wasteland.

For the remainder of the piece, the woman is dragged behind her companion in wordless distress as the two are taunted by tramps and louts in a kind of post-catastrophe nightmare urban landscape. It's a tense - with a surprising and controversial ending.

"The film looks at the relationship between a man and a woman, but without seeing the man," says André. "It exposes the reaction a woman could have in certain extremes and the choices you make in a relationship."

Having made his reputation shooting innovative promos for

the likes of All Saints, Texas, Emilie Simon and Roger Sanchez, André has been largely occupied with commercials for the past few years, winning a Gold Lion last year for the Peugeot 'Toys' campaign. As a result of that, he has been courted by Hollywood, but he chose to make 'The Rope' his calling card.

"I've been offered films by Hollywood producers already because of my work in commercials," says André. "But I want to make a more challenging kind of movie. 'The Rope' shows what I can do in the indie and alternative direction. It shows I can play with actors and emotions in a more challenging way than the mainstream route."

Filmed in a derelict factory in east London, the clip was shot in black and white to create an epic tableau, but he adds that he really needed an arresting opening image to fire the project.

"It's always the same with me: I start with a gimmick and the narrative and emotion come after that," says André. "Here I began with the visual of the girl on the ground. I needed to have this hook. The film is visually very strong but also very challenging for the actors. I was sure they would give interesting performances." In particular, Natasha Wightman is excellent in a very demanding lead role.

'The Rope' has been selected for various film festivals, and has already had an impact on André's career: he has also returned to promos, to make a short film-style video for Placebo's Song To Say Goodbye, released in the UK in a few months (and reviewed next issue).

**James Rose**

