



FAR LEFT: Scenes from the advert. **ABOVE LEFT:** The real James Dean. **LEFT:** Des Erasmus was made up to look like the screen legend. **ABOVE:** A camera is mounted on the Spyder (with its back-to-front number) for the accident scene. **RIGHT:** Director Keith Rose (left) watches the shoot being set up.



a little younger and also much older.

“He had to be someone who could copy James Dean’s walk and, most importantly, had the same kind of hair. Des had the hair and has often been told he looks like Dean. The rest could be done with special effects such as prosthetics.”

Des, who sources cars for film companies, spent weeks working with an acting coach. He had to master all of Dean’s mannerisms – the way he walked, stood and smoked, for example. With his coach he watched Dean’s movies and documentaries on his life. Then he had to adapt the mannerisms to make a convincing older Dean.

Special effects company CFX – which helped transform Morgan Freeman into Madiba – worked on Des’ nose, lips, chin and ears to make him look like

Dean as a young, middle-aged and elderly man. Analysing the faces and creating prostheses took at least two weeks, Ashley Powell of CFX says. “For instance Dean’s face wasn’t as long as Des’, his lower lip was slightly fuller and his nose somewhat longer.”

New effects technology such as True/Skin came in handy for challenges such as filling out Des’ laugh lines. This soft silicone product offers a more natural look than foam latex. CFX also used it to make neck and jowl prosthetics for the older Dean.

Des spent 12 hours at a hairdresser having his hair thinned, coloured and styled for the older Dean.

Three suits helped to change his shape – from thickset around the waist and slightly stooped for the older Dean to leaner and fitter-looking as a young man, for instance – and also helped to create the illusion that he was shorter (Dean wasn’t much taller than Tom Cruise).

Wardrobe mistress Sylvie van Heerden specially imported ’50s denims from America and created replicas of Dean’s trademark red jacket and the coat he wore at a famous New York photoshoot. At the last minute she even tracked down the type of sunglasses he used to wear in France.

Another challenge was to find the right cars. Only two Spydres were available and the producers decided on a right-hand drive. To create the illusion Dean was driving on the right-hand side of the road the entire shoot was flipped. This meant any visible numbers and letters had to be back to front.

Digital magicians Black Ginger created computerised backgrounds such as in the scene where Dean walks down a street in New York.

Amazingly the entire ad was filmed in and around Cape Town. For example the scene in which a helicopter is used on a mission to Africa was

filmed on open ground next to a highway.

Original images of Dean were used in parts of the ad. The YouTube viewer was right about the last scene – thanks to “face replacement” technology it’s indeed Dean sitting in the Spyder, sighing. It took tough negotiation to get the rights to use this piece of Americana from the movie *Rebel Without a Cause*, Barry-McCormack reveals. They even had to get approval from the James Dean Foundation.

The mere concept of the ad upset some overseas commentators. But Barry-McCormack says the intention was always that the ad would be a sensitive tribute to Dean, “a remarkable character who meant so much to so many people even though his career spanned only three movies”. □



FROM FAR LEFT: More scenes from the advert: James Dean as a human rights ambassador in Africa; as a Vietnam War protester; on a motorbike; as an older man.

