



## NICOLE VOLAVKA

**Special prize winner** Barnardo's, Rubbish (Test)

Growing up in London with Czech parents, Nicole Volavka's film education came with a strong European slant. As a self-confessed cinema geek, it was only after completing a degree in psychology that she felt the director's chair calling. "I had an inkling I wanted to do it," recalls Volavka, "and when I finally did direct it was an epiphany, it felt brilliant and wonderful and right. It brings together drama, music, movement and my interest in people."

After starting out in the features world - on Michael Caton-Jones' Shooting Dogs, no less - Volavka completed a stint at the New York Film Academy, while also working at Saatchi & Saatchi. Rubbish, her PSA for Barnardo's was



filmed as part of her MA at the London Film School and picked up a special prize at the Porsche Awards. Shot for a budget of just £500, it perfectly demonstrates Volavka's talent for combining compelling visuals with an emotional poignancy.

As a storyteller, Volavka takes a large dose of her inspiration from magical realism, with the likes of del Toro's Pan's Labyrinth and director Michael de Thurah listed as muses - as well as Bat For Lashes singer Natasha Khan. "I'm inspired by the way [Khan] takes you into another world. That's the direction I'd like to go in, quite visual and stylised, as I think there are enough social realist directors out there already."

Having spent last summer in Croatia making a short film called Laundry, centred around a post-war mother-daughter relationship in the Balkans, Volavka is repped for commercials in Europe by Saward Management, but is now on the hunt for London representation: "In four years, I've made six short films, two documentaries and three commercials, all at film school or off my own back. It would be delightful to be recognised!" she hints. **IR**



## RICHARD VILENSKY

**Shortlisted** Sims 2, Play Dirty (Test)

Apart from a brief period in kindergarten, where he played an evil scientist, Richard Vilensky has wanted to direct ever since he was in short pants. He was always the kid that would take any stuff - anything - on video and playing it back to his friends. Things were pretty quiet where he grew up - in the suburbs of the world's most isolated city - Perth, Western Australia. "It was always nice, there was no crime and all the houses basically looked the same. I suppose that's why it was a breeding ground for a vivid imagination," he says. After studying film in his hometown, Vilensky moved to Sydney for a directing course at the Australian Film Television and Radio School, where he made two award-winning spots, including twice AFI-nominated Liebermans in the Sky and a Dirty spot, which saw him reach runner-up for Best Commercial. His thinking behind Play Dirty was that he wanted to do something never done before in terms of style. So, unlike most commercials, he wove the story and content around the product, as the game is kind of like a board game. The set was built from scratch in three days and was a miniature inspired by the architecture of Gaudi's Sagrada Família, inspired by Vilensky's fondness for the sun. "I wanted to do Runner and Bugs Bunny. "The idea of the toy was a cartoonish, cheesy idea but it worked. I wanted to put a fridge on somebody's head - I wanted a grand finale." Apart from dropping white goods on people, he also wanted to include wanting to make features, in particular, a reference to Englander's novel The Ministry of Special Cases.

Argentina torn asunder during the conflict, he tells a wonderfully obscure and oddball story about a man's search for the 'oddball' that chimes with his own. "I'm a fan of Allen and Paul Thomas Anderson."

In the meantime, Vilensky sees directing as a way to hone his skills and learn from talented producers and commercial experts. "As a commercials director," he says, "you have a lot of knowledge of filmmaking technology and ideas."

