

Twelve years in the French police force equipped Director Olivier Marchal with hands-on experience for his screenplay **36, quai des orfèvres** (**36 Goldsmiths' Wharf**), now his latest feature about a merciless clash between two senior police officers (Daniel Auteuil and Gérard Depardieu) as they compete for the prestigious post of Judicial Police Director in Paris. "We've borrowed the atmosphere and a certain degree of realism from French film and combined them with betrayal, vengeance and love," remarks Director of Photography Denis Rouden.

Marchal picked DP Denis Rouden after viewing his highly cinematographic work on Olivier Megaton's **Red Siren**. Rouden explains the look of **36, quai des orfèvres**, the fruit of their cooperation with Production Designer Frédéric Tellier. "It's chock-a-block with references to films important to our generation, such as **Taxi Driver**, **Apocalypse Now**, **The Deer Hunter** and **Barry Lyndon**, but our clearest influence has been Michael Mann's **Heat**, a cult film of the 1990s, from which we include clips. He has a simple yet effective way with images, sometimes involving just a tiny movement of the camera."

Contrary to customary French filmmaking practice, the pre-shoot period lasted several weeks. "I negotiated with the production office by cutting down on my calibration time," states Rouden who no longer wants to shoot films without a minimum three-week preparation time. "Olivier and I talked every day or went to the locations, even before some had been confirmed. Only when a DP and a director develop a

The rebirth of the French mystery

degree of mutual trust, can risks be taken. After all, it's by daring that one achieves creativity," says the devotee of long three-quarter and profile shots. "Olivier favours wide shots that convey soberness in a situation," he notes.

Refusing to be drawn towards an overly "smooth" stock and yet wanting to avoid intentionally degrading images, Rouden used several different stocks in the Panaflex Millennium® and Aaton Super 35mm cameras, equipped with Primo lenses for "their soft yet crisp image rendering." He chose Kodak Vision 320T 5277 for its "soft, yet slightly grainy structure," the "even softer" Kodak VISION2 Expression 500T 5229, Kodak VISION2 200T 5217 for experimental purposes and Kodak VISION2 5218 on night exteriors. "5218 is an exceptional film that corresponds almost exactly to what the eye sees. If you push it, you can go beyond human vision and, with such flexibility, everything is possible."

During scouting for a nightclub scene, Rouden noticed a room filled with silvery light created by thousands of diodes, controlled by a DMX console. "The cold, steel-blue look created a striking effect in our 1970s set, so I shot with a few additional bars of identical and moveable diodes for the 'forward view' and didn't add a single traditional film light," he says. In other sequences, Rouden added Chinese lanterns for "their soft, directional light and shadows that are neither too harsh nor too pronounced," as well as Kino Flos and helium balloons for exteriors.

Rouden chose 5277 for the opening dinner scene. "It's different from the rest of the film as the lights are fairly harsh and the faces are distinctly different and contrasting," he says. "When I arrive on set, I find a great deal of inspiration in the natural light. For me, a location is necessarily inhabited by its own light and, with the new range of Kodak films, you can capture all the nuances, even down to the tiniest bounces of light from a reflection on a wall!"

Nothing is left to chance, even the particular performance of the mass-produced copies obtained by overdeveloping the inter-positive and the inter-negative. "This additional generation gives the film an overall patina, which adds slight contrast and very slightly desaturates the colours. It's fairly unusual for a cinematographer to prefer the mass-produced copies to the copies taken from the negative, but that's what I'm doing with **36, quai des orfèvres**," he concludes. ■

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Below: Actors Daniel Auteuil (left) and Gérard Depardieu clash in **36, quai des orfèvres**

