

The lost generation

Director of Photography Diviš Marek's latest feature, **A bude hůř** is an adaptation of Jan Pele's cult Czech underground book of the 1970s. First published during his exile in France, the book was distributed illegally throughout communist Czechoslovakia by 'samizdat' publishers.

The book is set during the tough, oppressive rule known as 'normalisation'. Olin, the charismatic lead character played by Karel Zidek, returns to his friends after a period in a psychiatric clinic. He picks up the threads of his life and spends time drinking beer and planning his future, but a desire for freedom brings frequent clashes with the police. The situation becomes unbearable, so he and his two closest friends decide to cross the border illegally in search of a better life. In the end, Olin succeeds, but the bid costs his friends their lives.

"When I took on this project, I knew that it was essential to find a courageous DP; someone who believed in the subject and would search out the rough life of the lost generation of young people in communist Czechoslovakia," explains Director Petr Nikolaev. "I approached several DPs, but finding Diviš was a great relief to me."

"Petr and I remember the hard times of the 1970s and the long-haired young people (máničky) who tried to cope with the socialist standards around them" says Marek, whose starting point was the rough poetry in Pele's book. "Our knowledge of the surroundings and the people helped us to evoke the era and portray the characters authentically in a raw, straightforward way. We've told the story simply and naturally from their perspectives and we lit discreetly with a small package that included just two 2.5kW HMIs."

Marek shot with an ARRI SR Super 16mm camera in a hand-held documentary style, with Zeiss 9.5mm – 130mm lenses. Right from the start, it was planned to shoot in



Above: (L to R) Shooting from lift stage, from the left: Prokop Králíček (assistant DP); Diviš Marek (DP); Ibrahimič (still photographer).

Below: (L to R) Prokop Králíček (assistant DP) and Diviš Marek.

black-and-white reversal film. After testing a variety of makes and types of stock, Marek and Producer Kopecky settled on Kodak TRI-X 7266 black-and-white reversal film. "It gave the best rendition and offered us limitless possibilities in post-production," notes the DP.

Many of the locations for the 33 day shoot were in and around the industrial cities of Litvínov and Most in the north of the Czech Republic. A large scale scene of a mass open air wedding at dawn was heavily dependent on the weather, so Marek used grey polarising and red filters, while in the night scene of Olin's interrogation at the police station, he played with the light. In contrast, the cheerful shots of the freedom celebration, when the actors danced on the roof of a hill-top tower in the late afternoon sun, were shot from a helicopter. "The tower had to be accessed on foot via a long narrow path and it was difficult to climb the steep hill with all our equipment, so we set up a tent at the base for the night scene. All the crew helped out and we lit a big fire for everyone to warm themselves," says Marek.

"I knew that the choice of 16mm black-and-white reversal film seemed risky, but Diviš managed to maintain his composure in the difficult dusk and dawn shots and his enigmatic smile always shone through. I can see from the rushes that the character of the stock and its grain correspond exactly with the ambience of this period in history; it's a great achievement," exclaims Nikolaev. Marek achieved the optimum 1970s look with "slightly increased contrast and cruder rendering" following tests with Ludwig Draser at Andec Filmtechnik in Berlin.

"The crew members were mostly professionals, but we also had students from film schools. The most important thing we all had in common was huge enthusiasm and the exceptional team work and empathy amongst the crew and cast were extremely motivating. Personally, I hope I have succeeded in my objective of getting deep under the skin of the lost generation in **A bude hůř**," concludes Marek. ■



Main picture: Shooting in the deep and dark forest...

Left: On the set in Polerady, (L to R) Rostislav Svitek (builder/set); Martina Spurná (assistant director); Pavel Bureš & Filip Jirka, Petr Nikolaev (director); Hana Malaniková (script); Yvetta Jirková (clapper).