

# The Bunker Paradise illusion

Jean-Paul De Zaeytijd has notched up three dramas since becoming a feature Director of Photography just eighteen months ago. **Bunker Paradise**, his second film, was directed by Stefan Liberski, with whom he worked as DP on the popular Belgian satirical television series **Les Snuls**.

"I know Stefan well and he was familiar with my background in documentaries," remarks De Zaeytijd. "We collaborated on the visuals and enjoyed discovering those worlds we can't enter in daily life. Stefan's references for **Bunker Paradise**, Paul Thomas Anderson's **Magnolia** and Patrice Chéreau's **Intimité (Intimacy)** are quite different in visual terms, but the camera movements interested Stefan. Every cameraman knows it's easier to follow a moving actor than it is to shoot around him or create movement artificially. The story has to lead the movement and create a link and rationale with the actor."

**Bunker Paradise** tells the story of the confrontation between a group of very rich and idle young people and an unemployed actor forced to work nights as a taxi driver. The cynicism with which ringleader John Deveau, (played by Jean-

Paul Rouve) manipulates others makes a bridge between the two diametrically opposed worlds unlikely. "Knowing the boss in a story makes it possible to determine how to film and light," says De Zaeytijd. "**Bunker Paradise** is lit quite naturalistically, but subtleties differentiate the characters. Deveau, master of the game, is always in motion and should be the audience's vector. His mysterious fiancé (Audrey Marnay) gives the impression of not wanting to be part of this world and is isolated through the use of longer lenses."

"A young boy's fascination with Japan and his apparently irrelevant trip to the Land of the Rising Sun isn't truly explained because it's symbolic: a search for purity in a depraved world of excesses," he states. "It was a journey of initiation and discovery, as neither Stefan nor I knew anything about Japan. The scenes are profound, contemplative and primarily visual, with little or no dialogue, but the film would have lacked dimension without it. Similarly, we set shadow and light against each other. In Japan, the light was very bright and sometimes the neon made it blinding; in comparison, the winter light in Belgium was especially grey. The huge concrete house in Brussels where the young people party represents the animal side of humans: a stark contrast to the innocent boy in Japan," says De Zaeytijd

who lit windows in Belgium to prevent burn out, and mixed natural light with artificial light. "The walls in the party scenes were darkened and we often pulled draperies around the characters; since the material wasn't completely opaque, it was impossible to tell whether it was day or night. The light didn't reach the corners of the rooms, so the young people turned on lamps which then become part of the image."

De Zaeytijd used a discreet Aaton A-Minima with 7mm to 50mm Russian Elite lenses for the two week shoot in Japan and reduced electrical equipment to an HMI 575W, a Kino Flo 120, a battery pack and a reflector. "I used fine grained Kodak VISION2 200T 7217 for its pure image and had no problems with depth on daylight exteriors, but I had to work at full aperture to preserve the fine grain on interiors," he notes. Kodak VISION2 500T 7218 was the DP's night time choice and for the Belgian shoot he switched to an Aaton XTR Prod with Zeiss lenses. As Liberski wanted 2.35:1 aspect ratio with non-anamorphic lenses, to convey "a sense of place", the negative was scanned to avoid anamorphosis in the final version.

"**Bunker Paradise** will prove – as if any more proof were needed – that Belgian cinema definitely enjoys cocking a snook at conformity. Our cinema is still very much a matter of craft," De Zaeytijd concludes. "That may be what allows us to take risks and be so outrageous." ■

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**Below:** DP Jean Paul De Zaeytijd (at the camera)

