



**Above from top:** Alexander (Benjamin Sadler) confronted by Maria (Marie Bäumer).

**Middle:** DP Holly Fink (left) and lead actor John Light.

**Bottom:** A scene in Air Marshall (Bomber) Harris' bunker.

"I liked the fact that the script (written by Stefan Kolditz) wasn't one sided. It focused on both the German and British perspectives of that fateful night," says Director of Photography Holly Fink. "Unusually for a German TV production, Roland cast English actors for the English parts and recruited English extras from British Army bases in Germany. It's given the film an entirely authentic feel. Working with Roland has been the kind of working relationship which brings out the best in me. He knows exactly how he wants to tell the story and at the same time he is very open to ideas from others."

Fink handheld his ARRI SR 3 for most of the physically demanding 70 day shoot. "We wanted to ensure that the camera didn't play the lead role; we felt it was important to give the actors a lot of flexibility. We didn't do many rehearsals, shooting most of the scenes in an almost documentary style," he remarks. Long lenses, dolly moves and composed shots were largely restricted to the Royal

# The night

Director Roland Suso Richter's wartime drama, **Dresden**, is set at the height of the Allied bombing campaign against Nazi Germany. The two-part television movie and full-length feature are based on the love story of Anna, a German medical student (played by Felicitas Woll) and Robert Newman, an English pilot (John Light). The meticulously researched films, which incorporate newsreel footage, examine the Nazi regime and the motivation behind the devastating British attack on Dresden on 13th February 1945.

Air Force High Wycombe operational scenes filmed in a Cologne studio, to visually differentiate them and to make a statement about the level of military organisation on the British side.

He selected 35mm Kodak VISION2 200T 5217 for green screen and special effects shots and was well satisfied with its fine grain and good detail. He chose two 16mm stocks. "Kodak VISION2 500T 7218 was important to me because I had to shoot high contrast sequences on the fire set where we had really bright flames as well as some unlit areas. I needed a big contrast range and 7218 did a really good job. For day exteriors, I used Kodak VISION2 200T 7217, shooting without an 85 filter for correction. I wanted to keep the look of the film on the cool side, especially in the shadows," he notes.

Fink used a mixed lighting package for all interiors. "I wanted a big colour separation using tungsten lights inside and HMIs without colour correction coming from outside the set. I had to shoot over a five month period between February and June. Shooting this way helped me to maintain the atmosphere of winter light."

He recalls his concern when snow began falling two days before the Dresden bombing shoot. "The city's streets were clear of snow on 13th February 1945, but we couldn't change our shooting schedule because we were only able to block one of the few large bridges over the river Elbe in Dresden on a Sunday. In retrospect, though, I'm happy. The establishing shots of the snow-covered city when Robert enters for the first time look very peaceful and enhance the fact that the city hasn't been attacked; they contrast enormously with the dramatic colour and atmosphere of the later bombing sequences and the fire."

## Special effects

Production Designer Thomas Stammer located an original Lancaster cockpit in a London garden and transported it to Germany for the extensive cockpit scenes of the attack on Magdeburg and Dresden. The body exteriors of the bombers were created digitally at Scanline in Munich where Fink worked closely with Denis Behnke, a freelance Post Production Supervisor. "Denis knows so much about special effects and how to make shots work. For Roland and me it was very important that the CGI shots would match our hand held style. Scanline together with Denis fulfilled that need 100%," states Fink.

# Dresden fell

A huge street scene was created just outside Cologne and set alight with propane gas for the Lancaster bombers' attack on Dresden. Fink relied on the fire for lighting, adding only a few torches behind camera for some fill shooting on 7218 at f4. As Anna and Robert fled from the bombs close to the intense heat of the fires, they were tracked by three Camera Operators in protective overalls, each hand holding ARRI SR3s. "I told them to shake their cameras to convey the feeling of the bounce back of the heavy detonations. Roland had a sound tape made of bombs hitting the ground to add to the atmosphere. A huge speaker on set blasted the horrible bass noise." Fink asked for warning beeps one second before each 'bomb' hit in order to be in synch with shaking the cameras. "It was really effective and gave us a small understanding of how horrible it must be to be in a situation like this," states Fink.

"Gaffer Janosch Voss and I came up with a lighting concept for power failures in the air raid shelter scenes. We asked the art department to paint fluorescent signs on the walls so whenever the power failed, the signs illuminated the room. I shot on 7218 at f2.8 and used Kino Flo daylight tubes with 1/4 plus CTO and 1/2 plus green to enhance the light from the signs. When people in the shelter lit candles, we introduced light bulbs with 1/2 CTO and dimmers." Fink used one of only a few crane shots plus an epic reveal of the moment when Anna and Robert leave the air raid shelter after the bombing and see for themselves the full extent of the devastation.

## Demanding

In one of the last scenes in which Robert and Anna are trapped in a dark basement with only a few matches, Fink bounced two 400w Open Face HMLs with 1/4 CTO onto black duvetyne for "an almost no light feel". As the matches were struck, Janosch lit a single household light bulb with 1/2 CTO on a dimmer and, as the flame of each match extinguished, he died down the bulb's light. "It was a tricky scene. 7218 did great on keeping the deep black and handled the high colour contrast of the extreme cool fill light and the very warm flame just fine," remarks Fink.



"The shooting of **Dresden** was very demanding on the actors who had to crawl across stones on numerous occasions and sit in cramped dark air raid shelter sets for long periods," comments Fink "My marvellous Dolly Grip, Florian Prinz, wanted me to be as comfortable as possible trying to persuade me to use blankets or pads, but I wanted to let the actors feel that there was also no comfort

behind the camera. I hope you can tell."

**Dresden** was the Kodak Look Manager System's pilot project from its D-A-CH Cluster. "I was pleased to do the pilot and Adrian Crenage, 2nd Camera Operator, handled the System for me. Overall it was a good experience," states Fink. "It proved particularly helpful in pre-production to make a first selection of some of the extreme colours I used on the shoot. I had dailies the way I wanted them, even so I wished my colour timer Natalie Helgath from ARRI Munich to be on set to share her creative input. I think it helped me a great deal to maintain a highly consistent look throughout the long shoot."

Scanline digitally recreated a shot of the collapse of the Frauenkirche, which occurred two days after the bombing in 1945. On 30th October 2005, ten years after reconstruction work began, the old church was re-consecrated. The German television station ZDF was a major contributor to the Frauenkirche restoration fund and co-produced **Dresden** alongside Teamworx Production. Additional funding was provided by EOS Entertainment, FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, Filmstiftung NRW, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung MDM and Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg. ■



**Above from top:** The Augustus Bridge in Dresden.

**Middle:** Preparing for the fire shoot.

**Bottom:** Camera Crew.

**Inset left:** DP Holly Fink.