

Five Days

of intrigue



When Florian Hoffmeister (*Cracker, Hamburg Cell*) read the script of *Five Days*, it was "love at first sight." The director of photography's initial meeting with producer Paul Rutman and Otto Bathurst, director of episodes 1 to 3, was totally positive and he was "instantly hooked" onto the pair's vision for the five-part mini-series. "The script was amazingly well crafted, very subtle and toned down." Hoffmeister was impressed that, unlike a regular 90 minute crime drama, the show's format afforded the time to explore the characters' emotions.

Shooting through glass

Otto and Florian settled on a "rather light" route and decided to post-produce the film in HD to achieve maximum detail from the stocks. "Texture couldn't necessarily be obtained by blacks and darkness, but rather by reflections, flares and shooting through glass," explains the DP renowned for intense and haunting cinematography. "As a fine and brilliant picture was required, I shot daylight scenes in episodes 1 to 3 with KODAK VISION2 50D 7201 and KODAK VISION2 250D 7205. I also used KODAK VISION2 200T 7217 for the police station interiors and KODAK VISION2 500T 7218 for night shots."

"Otto encouraged me to experiment with the in-shot time and exposure changes I'd used on *Cracker*. He wanted me to push them even further and adjust the f-stop manually. This can be seen very nicely in episode 1 where one of the young children, whose mother mysteriously disappears, finds himself and his little sister alone on a dual carriageway lay-by. When he approaches some flowers his mother left behind in the car, the speed and exposure change and separate him from his environment. To further support this subjectiveness, we created very strong flares by shining a 4K onto the filters and moved a piece of reflecting metal in front of the camera."

"Each episode takes place during one day and, as darkness comes very slowly in summer, Otto and I devised sequences to give a blue hour look. We filtered in-camera with day-for-night filters or gel windows for interiors and, because many of the scenes were with children, we extended our plan to include night exteriors with day-for-night filtration. We shot one 60 minute episode involving child actors, animals and day-for-night work in 13 days and sometimes achieved seven minutes screen time in a day. Every decision had to be efficient and the fact we kept to schedule and delivered such a high quality programme speaks for itself."

As summer draws to an end in episodes 4 and 5, and hope diminishes for the missing family, the visuals become cooler. Director Simon Curtis opted to enhance the theme with rain. Hoffmeister shot episode 5 entirely on KODAK VISION2 100T 7212, KODAK VISION2 200T 7217 and KODAK VISION2 7218 500T, filtered with an 80EF to give a cooler, autumnal look. "I am always in favour of in-camera effects and filtration and I find their naturalness superior to post-production effects. I love shooting with day-for-night filtration as the result carries that poetry of strange summer nights."

Hoffmeister used Ultra Con filters (1/8 - 1) throughout the shoot. "They gave us the exact look we wanted by lifting the blacks and mid-tones and also changed appearance according to the level of backlight, creating interesting flares in a very organic way."

"I believe that drama lives in an audience's imagination but that imagination only comes to life if the visuals leave room for it. *Five Days* has been a very exciting experience and working with such a trusting and inspiring group of people felt exceptional. I truly hope the audience senses that too."

Five Days is a BBC and HBO co-production.

1 Actor Edward Woodward (right) in a tussle with the press. 2 Florian Hoffmeister (behind camera) on an external shoot. Photos BBC, Alex Gill