

**F**rostbiten (Frostbite) is Sweden's first ever vampire film. It follows the exploits of a doctor called Annika (played by Petra Nielsen) who moves to an isolated town in Lapland with her daughter after breaking-up with her husband. But inexplicable deaths and accidents start to occur in the small community and there are strange goings-on at the hospital where Annika works. A predator is on the loose in the endless polar nights – and dawn is a month away. In a series of complex sub-plots, flashbacks and ingenious twists, Annika learns the dark truth.

Most of the exteriors for **Frostbiten** were shot in darkness in temperatures of minus 30°C at Kalix – in the extreme north of Sweden – and so far from processing labs that British Director of Photography Chris Maris (**Journey Man**) often had to wait up to six days before seeing rushes. Interiors were shot at the Ystad Studios, in Sweden's far south.

Maris used a 1980s US-made Ultracam and Russian-made Kinor and Konvas 35mm cameras that their owner, Director Anders Banke (**There and Back Again**), had specially re-built for the production. "I first met Anders at film school in Moscow in 1993, where I spent a year specialising in black-and-white photography," he remarks. "Since then, I've worked with him and Solid Entertainment using the Russian cameras or the adapted 2 perf Cinemascope on music videos, commercials, shorts, documentaries and a pilot for **Fashion**, my first taste of the horror genre. After studying in Moscow, we treat roles much less compartmentally; sometimes Anders has ideas how scenes should be lit and other times I suggest the action."

The DP's portable lighting kit comprised 12kW HMIs for larger night exteriors, and several 2kW, 1kW, 650w and 150w ARRI fresnels and two 4ft Kino Flos to boost practical lights and candles on smaller night interiors. With little time for testing, Maris's Gaffer, Toby Farrar and the "excellent" sparks devised a dark, moody look that could be accomplished in the minimum set-up time.

"I particularly liked the way Kodak VISION2 200T 5217 reacted in a test in which we had just half an hour to light a scene in a bathroom showroom in Malmo. It was a gruesome FX scene in which an actor bites off a rabbit's head and, as he looks into a mirror, his face contorts into that of an evil demon. But instead of the workable image we expected, we were bowled over by the quality of the colours, contrast and sharpness."

"**Frostbiten** will break all Swedish cinema records for complicated visual and physical effects and stunts," states Maris. "If the feature is a success – and we believe it will be – it will encourage Swedish filmmakers to take risks that could lead to a stronger and more diverse film industry in Scandinavia."

**Frostbiten** is supported by MEDIA+, The Swedish Film Institute, Film i Skåne and Filmpool Nord. A teaser trailer created substantial interest amongst international distributors at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival. Paramount is distributing **Frostbiten** in Scandinavia in early 2006. ■



Above: (L to R) Chris Maris DP with second unit director Fredrik Boklund.

PHOTO: CHRISTIAN HALLVÄN

# A chilling tale

When the shoot began in early March, the sun was already strong and remained just above the pine forests from early morning until late at night, the thick snow compounding the unwanted light. "One day we tried to ND some third storey windows for moonlight, but even with three layers of .9ND or blacked out windows, it was still intrusive," recalls Maris. In the extreme temperatures, it took the crew twice as long to erect cranes or lay out tracks, dolly wheels froze and the camera had to be constantly heated.

After extensive tests, Maris settled on Kodak VISION2 200T 5217 and Kodak VISION2 500T 5218. "The stocks gave us a ridiculous amount of latitude and pulled out details, colours and textures, while the negligible grain was a bonus for Fido Film's CGI work and digital post-production. The film looks so good blown up and, in combination with 2 perf, gives an extremely expensive look for relatively little money," says Maris.



PHOTO: JESPER LINDGREN