



Philippe Le Sourd

reviews *A Good Year*

"Working with Ridley Scott (*Gladiator*) is both challenging and exciting," remarks French Director of Photography Philippe Le Sourd. "As with any film, we had our share of obstacles but we worked together to conquer them. It was truly an amazing experience."

Widely known in the advertising world, Le Sourd spent eight "unforgettable" years assisting DP Darius Khondji and collaborated with him on *Delicatessen*, *The City of Lost Children* and *Stealing Beauty*. Then Le Sourd's agent sent a demo film to Scott. "Ridley asked to meet me and the interview lasted five minutes," he recalls. "Ridley decided to hire me because I'm fast and don't use too much light!" laughs Le Sourd.

A Good Year is the story of an English financier who inherits his uncle's house in Provence where he spent happy times in his youth. He returns to the south of France to sell his inheritance, but unexpectedly meets and falls in love with a young French woman (Marion Cotillard). Russell Crowe plays the lead character in his first collaboration with Scott since *Gladiator*.

"I relied on my experience and Ridley's immensely quick mind, which allows him to discard the logic of the script in favour of actors' flashes of emotion, or what the light says at a given instant," says Le Sourd. "For reasons of energy, output and economy, his set-ups are so fast that one has to be highly responsive. Some days we put as many as 45 shots in the can!"

Prepared for the unexpected, Le Sourd gathered a broad range of films from 100 to 500 ASA. "I ran all sorts of tests with VISION2 100T 5212, VISION2 250D 5205, VISION2 200T 5217, VISION2 500T 5218 and VISION2 Expression 500T 5229. Ridley and I talked about

grain and image texture then discussed films we'd seen, but nothing was set in stone before the shoot."

The crew spent seven weeks shooting in the south of France and three weeks in London, "two clearly opposing settings," Le Sourd emphasises. "In London everything is desaturated. The predominant tone is grey and I did without 85 on exteriors to cool down the image a little further. Provence was just the opposite. It was hard to stay neutral; Ridley wanted the audience to feel strong sunlight in the exteriors and shadows in the interiors. Visible stop changes during a shot didn't bother him at all. In fact he liked that

sort of 'pick-up'. Ridley's approach was extremely free, to the extent that we went from 25 special effects shots to 200!"

Panavision agreed to equip the three ARRIcam Lite cameras with Primo lenses. "I wanted Primos because I like their texture, sharpness and contrast," Le Sourd states. "Working with multiple cameras is a boon for the actors who don't have to constantly repeat scenes and with short focal lengths, shots and reverse shots can often be completed simultaneously. With someone like Russell Crowe who provides a great deal in terms of detail and emotion, the result is very rich."

"The film benefitted from printing all the rushes; that's where working with Ridley is an unimaginable luxury. Shooting done with such feeling and inspiration captures the emotions."

A Good Year is bringing Le Sourd international recognition even if, as he modestly concludes, "one makes a career over the course of 30 or 40 years, but it still comes down to a sum of random chances." ■

Above: (L to R) DP Philippe Le Sourd with Director Ridley Scott