



Taboo subject demands uncomfortable colours in **Günstige Prognose**

The real life tragedy of a young Dresden girl who spent weeks under the control of a sex offender, brought filmmakers together to make a difference with a 30-minute short film loosely based on her ordeal.

When DP Maher Maleh got a phone call asking him to make a short film he wasn't delighted. "If I hear the words 'short film' I think chaos, long hours and bad equipment." Then Maleh talked to the Director and read the script of *Günstige Prognose* (Favourable Prognosis): "I said straight away I want to do it."

The script was a powerful indictment of how child abuse is swept under the carpet. Director Peter Ladkani wanted to explore the issue and change the law. He won the backing of Hamburg's Minister of Justice and major companies Kodak and BMW.

The story is of a teacher caught with a child in his car as he makes a sexual advance. He is positively evaluated by a psychologist and so gets probation. Later he abuses another child, the daughter of the psychologist. With such a powerful story and the chance to make a

difference, the entire crew and actors gave their services free for the whole eight-day shoot.

The initial worry for Maleh was that he would have to make do with reduced or second-rate equipment. But having presented his huge kit list to rental company Cinegate Hamburg he got everything he needed ... free. Maleh's next concern was the look of the film: "The director wanted the combination of great storytelling and an amazing look. But how could I make it look different without disturbing the story?" Maleh's answer? "It's an uncomfortable subject so I will make it an uncomfortable colour." He gelled the lights with yellows, greens and blues and altered them slightly for different parts of the story: Maleh favoured natural light in many of the locations and so he kept everything desaturated so that he could bring out the 'uncomfortable' colours on the DI.

His preference for natural light and the type of locations meant that Maleh had to use his free Kodak stock wisely. "I used the 200 ASA [KODAK VISION2 200T - 5217]. I wanted to get the 5274, the old 200 ASA Tungsten [KODAK VISION 200T - 5274] because I really know where the ends are and I feel very comfortable with it. But then I got the new stock and I must say it is amazing." For the dark and night scenes, he chose KODAK VISION2 500T. "Sometimes my light meter gave me E for error but I thought if I can see it Kodak can see it!"

Maleh's choice of A and B cameras were the ARRIcam Lite and the ARRIflex 535B. "There is one scene in a playground with a POV and the image floats away. I needed a [ARRIflex] 435es with an eprom control - where you disengage the shutter from the movement. Everything that is bright floats away because the film is transporting while it is exposing and you can control this - but it only works with the 435," he explains.

was it a dolly or a Steadicam?' So that was my special equipment - my shoulder!"

Although both the subject and the schedule were tough, everyone on the production gave 100%. That combined with Maleh's unlimited access to the best equipment and stock made it an overwhelming experience for him: "Everybody was fantastic and it was just great. I wish I could do a feature like this. Hopefully we can change something with this film and make people think! "

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Besides all his free kit there was one very special piece of equipment: "I'm not a big fan of Steadicam since I love to see everything myself through the viewfinder and be in control. Sometimes I want to do a different move and can do it right away with no communication delays or second takes so there is a lot of hand held with my own [ARRIflex] 235." One scene he is particularly proud of is in the court room. "I am walking behind the psychiatrist and the mother of the child comes up and slaps her face. I had to be behind them and then come around a little to the left to see the mother. Steadicam would have been too pretty, I wanted that little rough documentary look but when people saw it they said, 'It's pretty smooth,