

# Strahorn reflects on Scream of the Banshee



*Scream of the Banshee* is a dark thriller designed to transcend the genre's conventional norms. The film was produced in just 15 days. Cinematographer Andy Strahorn and director Steven C. Miller averaged over 35 set-ups a day. "It was a very ambitious project," says Strahorn. "I believed in Steven's vision. The question was whether we could shoot that fast without compromising the aesthetics."

Strahorn began his career taking tickets at a local theater in his Australian hometown. He advanced to projectionist, and began learning about lighting by watching films unspool over and over. Loosely mentored by Donald McAlpine, ASC, ACS, Strahorn shot short films and moved up through the ranks of the crew system. After *Undead*, a film he shot in Australia that garnered some attention, he moved to Los Angeles to further pursue his career.

Regarding *Scream of the Banshee*, Strahorn says that aggressive camera movement, mixed color temperatures, darkness, and an emphasis on secondary colors were aspects of the look. The film was photographed over 12 days in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with three days of production in Bulgaria, where the opening sequence was filmed by a different cinematographer in a wintry landscape.

The project was among the first to use Cineworks Digital Studios in New Orleans, Louisiana, for post-production services. Strahorn says that the facility played a key role in the success of the shoot. "I depended on colorist Bradley Greer because you can't really judge anything beyond framing when you're seeing dailies on standard def DVDs," says Strahorn. "My strategy was to achieve as much of the look as possible on the negative. I knew there wouldn't be a lot of time in the DI suite. Cineworks helped me accomplish that."

Strahorn chose a variety of film stocks depending on the situation. "We shot night interiors on KODAK VISION2 500T 5260," he says. "It has a little bit of bite, which I found worked very nicely. In some very dark situations, though, I would switch to KODAK VISION3 500T 5219. I almost always overexpose by two-thirds of a stop, which worked great for those very dark sequences."

Similarly, for daylight scenes, he alternated KODAK VISION2 250D 5205 and VISION3 250D 5207 negatives. "I found the 5207 to be particularly consistent in the neutrality and mid-tones, especially in the underexposed areas," he observes.

In "baking" the look into the negative, Strahorn depended on Cineworks as an ally. "I really made a strong connection with Brad," says Strahorn. "To me the relationship with the colorist is one of the most important on a shoot. I love the idea that you can wake up at 5 a.m., call the colorist and ask, 'How do I look?' Based on that information I can push a little more and follow my gut instinct a little further. You're not going to re-invent the wheel but you can re-invent your eye, and that's what makes every day seem new. The new film stocks and a good laboratory allow a cinematographer to really push his vision."

"If you're shooting digital, everything is raw," Strahorn adds. "In the worst case scenario, if you are unable to be there for the final color timing, you might have someone who doesn't know anything about the film making decisions regarding the look. Also, no one wants to be judged by an image that isn't finished yet on a monitor on set. With film, you control that."

"I think the most important thing about film is the texture, the way that it feels," he says. "There's something about the way that it's perceived, and, to me, that's what's exciting."