

The mystery of Marmorera

"Five years ago I dreamt of *Marmorera*," remarks award-winning Director and Co-Producer Markus Fischer about Switzerland's first home-grown mystery feature. "I was in no doubt that Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, BVK would be the right Director of Photography. We first worked together on the theatrical feature *Kaiser und eine Nacht* and have since

Marmorera is set by a lake, under which lies an Alpine village flooded in the 1950s for a dam project. After a strange and confused young woman (played by Eva Dewaele) is rescued from the lake, a number of mysterious and inexplicable deaths occur. One of several psychiatrists puzzling over the woman is Simon Cavegn (Anatole Taubman) who originally lived in Marmorera. As he treats her, he begins to unravel dark secrets.



"Every movie is like a newborn baby coming into the world."

After numerous tests, Schmidt-Reitwein chose KODAK VISION2 100T 5212 and KODAK VISION2 Expression 5229 for the ten week shoot. "They gave me the best results in terms of light effects, shadow detail and colour," he says. "I worked closely with Schwarz Film AG, one of the best laboratories in Europe, and phoned them regularly with precise advice before the exposed material arrived – for example I wanted the ghost mermaid's skin to appear as white and rose porcelain." For flared spotlight effects in candle-lit scenes, he grouped together islands of five to ten double-wick candles, behind which he placed 60 grad silver paper reflectors.

cameras set at T2.8 for the shots. The first camera, installed on a ground plate three feet from the pool and equipped with a 125mm lens, followed the main actress in a theatrical style; the second, positioned at 90° on a 15 foot tower for overhead shots, was fitted with 25mm and 50mm lenses; while the third captured underwater sequences with a 35mm lens. "Ernest Brunner, my Gaffer, installed a 20kW key light on a 36 foot spring board tower and we used colour spots with dimmers," explains Schmidt-Reitwein.

"Every movie is like a newborn baby coming into the world. I want to embrace *Marmorera*, after all it wasn't an easy confinement!" concludes Schmidt-Reitwein of the Snakefilm GmbH production due to be released in early 2007. ■



Above and above left: Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein BVK, looking through the camera.

Below right: Eva Dewaele, Gian Ruf, Barbara Christoffel and Marco Luca Castelli in a scene from the film.

collaborated on around fifteen features and numerous television productions. We have the same artist's imagination; I think in terms of pictures and colours of paintings and Jörg is well experienced with art. He has a very special eye for frames and single shots and I'm always impressed by the way he replicates my imagination with the camera."

"I understood why Markus was asking for me when I first saw the draft of *Marmorera*," says Schmidt-Reitwein. "Ghost movies need extraordinary light and shadow; they're a gamble between reality and suspended animation, which has been my particular passion since I worked on features with Werner Herzog." Schmidt-Reitwein credits his visual approach to *Marmorera* to Swiss artist Arnold Böcklin. "His symbolic paintings of water, islands, mermaids and fishermen inspired me on many of the outdoor and underwater sequences and I've tried to recreate the mood by integrating his peculiar combinations of green oxide, bottle green, black-violet and black-brown."

Fischer wanted an artistic, choreographed approach, a roving camera and freedom of movement for the actors, so 70% of the film was shot on Steadicam and 5% with remote cranes. "We hired Brian Goff, a really good Swiss-American Steadicam Cameraman," comments Schmidt-Reitwein who describes a dance-like mermaid sequence. "They appear to float in the water, then perform a perfect underwater circular tilt. Next they rotate on the surface of the water with their legs stretched upwards, but the main mermaid is missing. When she eventually emerges in the centre of the rotation, she is lifted up triumphantly like a star." Schmidt-Reitwein used 5229 and three

