

The vivid colours of Mater Natura

Above: DP Vldan Radovic on the set of *Mater Natura*.

Below: Actress Maria Pia Calzone in a scene from the film.

Mater Natura (*Mother Nature*), winner of the Venice Film Festival's Critics Week, is Director Massimo Andrei's debut feature and was produced by Umberto Massa's Kubla Khan company. The intimate tale, which combines a graceful touch of humour with serious drama, takes a bright look at a group of trans-sexual prostitutes and their day-to-day issues. Andrei's theatrically-influenced and vividly colourful film was lensed by Vldan Radovic, a talented young Director of Photography who impressed critics with *Saimir*, his last film.

InCamera talked to Radovic about his particular lighting style and the cinematographic choices he applied to *Mater Natura*.

Q *What technical choices did you make on this film?*

A "During pre-production, Massimo showed me a board covered with newspaper photos that looked like a giant palette. He said this was how his film should look, so I did my best to colour it with the same hues. I got the best results with Kodak Vision 500T 5279 because it has extremely rich saturated colours and adapts well to chemical changes. I prefer to complete most of my work on set and in the lab, instead of relying on digital imaging techniques in post. In my view, it is not yet possible to achieve perfect results with DI in Italy."

Q *Why did you only use one stock for the entire film?*

A "Once I found the right balance with push techniques, 5279 was simply perfect. To ensure consistency I had to be a little creative, for example I pushed night exteriors by one stop as our limited budget didn't provide enough light for the exposure required for a two stops push option and I had to fight the light on comic scenes to avoid too much contrast. I preserved the strong bright colours and maintained consistency by adapting push techniques in the lab according to the available light and reducing contrast where necessary. The budget didn't allow us to apply colour correction through DI transfer, so I had to lighten up the colours in camera and in the lab."

Q *Did you adopt different camera styles for comic and dramatic scenes?*

A "The camera style doesn't change between scenes because we didn't want to distract the audience from the emotional dialogue and the story. Camera moves are clean and precise throughout the film, but I chose to hand hold on two quarrel scenes and a murder scene to augment their intensity and differentiate them."

Q *Did you experience any particularly tough challenges during the shoot?*

A "There was a complex party scene in an extremely large salon location when I told my Key Grip, Alessio Di Fazio, almost as a joke, that I intended to place nine China balls high up to properly illuminate the room. The walls were very smooth and

hand-decorated, so it looked like a mission impossible... but not for Alessio. He found several small hooks hanging about 27 feet above the floor and climbed up. Thanks to some ropes and pulleys, he placed the lights exactly where I wanted them and in the end I could even fix the height of each China ball. It was simply great."

Q *Which lab did you use and what support were you given?*

A "We used Cinecittà Studios and, in order to achieve the look we envisioned, we undertook some tests with Grader Gianni Cerniglia. When we tried the one stop push process option, it wasn't enough but we realised we were on the right track. Then we pushed two stops, but quite honestly I was afraid of the grain. During the screening I had to ask Gianni if he had really pushed the process by two stops, because there was no grain at all - and I'm talking about the 'old' Vision 500T!" ■

