

In with the Old World explores dark recesses



In with the Old World follows a middle-aged man as he is forced to confront a dark secret from his childhood. Visually, the film reinforces the story's dark themes, mostly by design, but partly out of necessity.

"One of the biggest challenges we faced with this film, was not having very much lighting," says director of photography Ernie Kestler.

The film was produced in Super 16mm format. In one of the most powerful scenes, school bullies are tormenting one of the main characters as he runs down a darkened hallway. The footage is in slow motion, the walls and ceiling are dark, and the background is only dimly lit.

"We want the audience to see the kid's face and the torment he's feeling," Kestler says. "Therefore, we used a high-speed prime lens, and I put a Chinese lantern on a grip arm on top of the dolly to create just a faint glow on their faces. A dimmer would have made it too warm, so I put a net over the lantern. You see their faces but not much more."

That scene is one of several flashback sequences, which Kestler chose to record on Kodak VISION2 500T 7218 color negative film.

"We thought about shooting the whole film on Kodak Vision 500T 7279 color negative film, but then 7218 came out, and it was perfect," he says. "I shot some tests and was completely blown away with the results — excellent tonality and contrast, combined with fine grain even when it was pushed one

stop. This was really important because director David Birnbaum and I knew from the start that we were going to blow this up to 35mm for festivals."

All the flashbacks were shot on 7218, and pushed one stop. The scenes representing the present were shot on Eastman EXR 50D 7245 film for the day scenes and 7279 for the night scenes.

The Chinese lantern was a bit of a departure for Kestler, who almost always shoots with motivated sources. In another scene, a teacher and young student are sitting at a piano, where the motivated source is a gooseneck lamp lighting the sheet music. The yellowish light spills and reflects onto the student and teacher. Kestler used his favorite lens for Super 16 cameras, a Canon 7-63mm zoom, at its widest setting allowing the audience to see well into the darkened room. The wide-angle distortion visually reinforces the relationship between the teacher and pupil. He used a small fixture in a Chimera with a yellow gel off to the right of the camera. Kestler had the gooseneck on a dimmer to warm it even further.

Kestler shot *In with the Old World* without any filtration. "Some people have referred to me as the king of filters," he acknowledges with a smile,



owing to a much referred to article he wrote on the use of filters. "But, in this situation, my goal was to keep the image as clean as possible for the blow-up. It was just one of the parameters that I decided we had to work with."

Kestler used an ARRI 16SR-3 camera with a 1.85:1 ground glass, which was perfect for the 35mm blow-up.

The raw footage was processed at Medallion Film Labs in Toronto, and Technicolor in Montreal did the 35mm blow-up using a CTM Debie TAI optical printer. "We chose not

to do a digital intermediate due to the cost," explains Kestler. "Instead, we did a photographic blow-up on the CTM printer, which is absolutely fantastic." The printer projects the image through a fluid-filled prism, yielding a sharper image than a blow-up projected through air.

In with the Old World has been well accepted and is earning awards on the worldwide festival circuit. In addition to shooting dramas and documentaries, Kestler also coordinates workshops for the Canadian Society of Cinematographers. ■

Above: Actor Joseph Liebman in scenes from *In with the Old World* shot by Ernie Kestler.

Inset: Actor Rafal Sokolowski in a scene from the film.

