



The Informers

a dark look at 1980s Los Angeles

The Informers follows several jaded, disillusioned denizens of 1980s Los Angeles whose stories eventually converge and intertwine. Based on a collection of short stories by Bret Easton Ellis, the script features morally questionable characters that were brought to life by Winona Ryder, Mickey Rourke, Kim Basinger, Chris Isaak, Billy Bob Thornton and the late Brad Renfro.

Director Gregor Jordan asked cinematographer Petra Korner (*The Wackness*, 25/8) to create a slick, sexy look that also communicated a disturbing decadence. Korner used darkness to spark the audience's imagination, and imbued the images with a dash of texture that contrasted with the hyper-real gloss.

The logistical challenges of the shoot were significant. Despite taking place in Los Angeles and Hawaii, the majority of the film was shot in Uruguay. They did shoot in L.A. at the beginning of production, and ended with a few days in Argentina. Many L.A. views had to be composited into backgrounds and windows. Korner assembled a different crew in each of the three countries; only bringing her focus puller, gaffer and key grip from L.A.

The Informers was produced in Super 35mm format in 2.35 :1 widescreen aspect ratio on three-perf 35mm film. The ARRICAM Lite and Studio cameras and Cooke S4 lenses that Korner used were provided by Otto Nemenz in Los Angeles.

Korner says that collaborating with conceptual artist Daniel Auber was a highlight. "Daniel helped us come up with extremely creative ways of covering scenes," she says. "Transforming his ideas to the screen was a real pleasure. For a scene set at a party, I thought Daniel's drawings might be achieved with a hand-cranked camera. We used double and triple exposures to depict a wild laser show with drugged-out dancers."

"Hand cranking allows you to get unpredictable results," says Korner. "I think that much of the beauty of cinematography lies in finding the happy accident. I like having flares and real darkness, and not always the perfect rim light."

Korner says that this philosophy usually leads her to begin by lighting spaces. "I look at the space that these

characters inhabit in relation to where they are emotionally at that specific moment in the story," she says. "Then, I will add light to underscore a moment of dialog or a meaningful glance."

"Film is much better at holding highlights and reproducing true black. I haven't seen any video that looks remotely like film."

Korner made extensive use of colored gels on lamps, avoiding primary and "candy" colors that seemed wrong for their chosen approach to the era. Characters were smoking cigarettes in almost every interior scene, which motivated the use of haze in the atmosphere.

"In general, I light very contrasty," says Korner. "I try to be very directional. I don't use fill lights, per se. Instead, I use a little bounce if I need it. The haze helps enormously by giving things a bit less contrast and allowing the audience to see where they need to see. Also, I think the haze fits that faded glam era."

Korner used KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 film in most situations, and she chose KODAK VISION2 250D 5205 film for a few daylight scenes. "I don't shoot HD, and I feel very strongly about that," Korner explains. "It's a different medium. I don't think it's a textural medium. Video is electronic rather than organic. Film is much better at holding highlights

and reproducing true black. I haven't seen any video that looks remotely like film. Why take a medium and try to manipulate it to make it look like something else?"

All development, and initial printing was done at Deluxe Laboratories in Los Angeles, and video dailies were provided by iO Film, also in Los Angeles. Deluxe produced a pristine partial silver retention ACE print that provided a visual reference for digital intermediate timing at Company 3 in Santa Monica, California.

The Informers premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, and is slated for a May release in the United States.

