

# Blasting off with A Ticket to Space

**A**fter making his debut with the crime thriller **Mais qui a tué Pamela Rose? (But Who Killed Pamela Rose?)**,

Director Eric Lartigau has switched genre to comedy science fiction with **Un ticket pour l'espace (A Ticket to Space)**.

In their second collaboration, Lartigau presented Director of Photography Régis Blondeau with a complete change of style and a sizeable challenge: lighting an orbiting space station for two thirds of the film. "The trick was not to be too aware that it was a comedy," says Blondeau. "Eric wanted a realistic atmosphere and told us: 'The more credible the universe, the more absurd the characters' misadventures will become!'"

After viewing numerous American science fiction features, Blondeau applied all the clichés to **Un ticket pour l'espace**. "The film that appealed most was **Alien** (1979), but to avoid evoking anxiety, I was inspired by the atmosphere of Steven Soderbergh's **Solaris**. I also looked at the way the shots were framed in **2001, A Space Odyssey** and paid close attention in **Apollo 13** to the interior of the spaceship, the launch, the shaking of the cameras, the way the light moved...."

"To avoid a studio-like feel, I absolutely had to stay within the constraints of a realistic set. The trick was to integrate lights on the Bry-sur-Marne space station set so they formed part of the interior. My Gaffer, Patrick Contesse, and I used banks

of industrial fluorescent tubes from floor to ceiling along the tubular corridors. With almost 500 tubes, there was a budgetary issue, of course, but I didn't want to use the type of lighting in television adverts. I reproduced the greenish tint of car parks or hospitals in a functional manner and rendered it relative with fluorescents of different colour temperatures." Blondeau recreated a colour wheel with very blue 10,000° Kelvin fluorescents for the space station floor and tubes of 4500° Kelvin level with the characters' faces. "When a little key light was needed, we placed the industrial tubes into standard Kino Flo housings to preserve the dominant green and adapted the film during photochemical calibration."

Blondeau modified his approach in the space station's rooms, adding slightly electronic colours and mixing the resulting light with tungsten to warm the atmosphere. "Starting with an extremely white universe, I added spots of brilliance through appropriately coloured lights, which we turned on or off depending on the shots. When comedy turned to drama, I upped the contrast and also played with the red alarm lights."

For increased response in the highlights, Blondeau used Kodak VISION2 200T 5217. "I didn't want the fluorescent tubes to be continuously burned. Naturally, they're overexposed, but with 5217 there's still some detail left. We also shot against a black background for digital post-production, so I needed the purest black with the least possible grain." For the

film's more dramatic moments or those excluded from digital post-production, Blondeau used Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 and lit minimally. On "earthside" daylight exteriors and interiors, he chose Kodak VISION2 250D 5205. "It really came into its own on sets with glass screens and partitions, futuristic architecture, or sources of daylight that simulated the space centre."

Blondeau shot in Super 35mm with a Panavision and Primos. "The lenses combine accuracy, softness and roundness with a nice chromatic response and, given the film's fairly violent colour palette, there was no need to add further effects. The other advantage was a tiny 14.5mm–50mm zoom, which I used in all the crane shots."

"Comedy films are a very interesting experience for a cameraman, because they demand a great deal of rigour as to what should and shouldn't be seen. We can't over-light, but neither can we ignore the actors' expressions, so the lighting, contrasts and desires of each character has to be modulated. The lighting challenge is certainly greater in a thriller or a major dramatic film, but I know the new generation of French directors is willing to be more daring than its predecessors." ■



Above: (L to R) Director Eric Lartigau with DP Régis Blondeau.