



Scandi Noir UK

The second series of the detective series *Marcella*, written by *The Bridge*'s Hans Rosenfeldt, gets a new DOP and a new look

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In the second of our 'homegrown' production stories we look at the Scandi noir-inspired *Marcella*, another detective with a secret but a brilliant gift for detection. Kate Reid, one of our aspiring DOP stars (see page 28) took on the role of DOP for the first three episodes of the new series. "The brief for Series 1 was to get away from the look of *The Bridge* and similar Nordic dramas: they wanted it more colourful," she says. "Because Series 1 was so successful they didn't want to change a winning formula for Series 2." However, the director Charles Martin also made a return for Series 2 so there was more of a licence to experiment.

"Charles wanted to push the thriller aspect; it's a dark story so that allowed me to go a bit darker with the look. But there is still a strong sense of colour that kept in line with Series 1." Kate also had to keep in mind that Series 2 was shot in summer, autumn and early winter while the drama's time arc was only 18 days. "In a way the fact that we have such mixed weather in London actually helps to downplay any season shift. Also a lot of our exterior work was shot in daytime because of the late summer nights, but the moody dark feel was still needed. Wherever possible I tried to have a bright exterior that meant I could have shadows inside the room. Even if it was sunny outside you still had the darkness inside."

IN THE CUT REFERENCE

Kate luckily had recently re-seen the 2003 Jane Campion film *In The Cut*, which gave her the reference she needed, especially as there was a Q&A after the showing to learn more about the detail. "It's an interesting



film as it's a murder thriller based in a very hot New York summer," she explains. "It's got great colour and texture with great highlights outside and really dark shadows when you go inside. I watched it thinking that this could be the way we approached *Marcella* in the summer. As it's London there's only so far you can make that work but that had been the general idea. I would embellish the light from outside with 4K and 8K HMIs to give the suggestion of a sunny day outside. I obviously had to temper that if the exterior was overcast.

"There were certain spaces – like the morgue for example – where we had a small corridor for the light to come in, so it wasn't really affected by ambient light. We could then go to town with the moodiness and pushing the colour."



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ABOVE Anna Friel as the troubled but talented detective.

MOVING THE CAMERA

The playbook from Series 1 wasn't locked down too much so Kate could follow the narrative and adjust accordingly. "In a way that's the best thing about having the same director," she says. "He knew the show inside out and what the world of *Marcella* was. As Charles was keen to push the thriller aspect more than had been established in Series One, he was interested in slow-moving tracks and a kind of creeping camera so you could really play up that drama. My impression was that we did more of that in Series 2 than had been established in the first series; I think it was probably a bit more handheld in that series. Generally we didn't do much handheld unless there was a specific reason for it. ☑



CHARLES WAS INTERESTED IN SLOW-MOVING TRACKS AND A KIND OF CREEPING CAMERA ☑



WHEN I TESTED THE CAMERAS I ALSO TESTED MY FAVOURITE LENSES

Most of our work was done with track and dolly. We used a crane for some establishing shots but that's all. We had a Steadicam as well but obviously that's quite a different movement and was mostly used for B-camera work.

"The camera movement was a suggestion of what the director called 'the killer's POV,'" she continues. "It might be a scene where the killer isn't around but as an audience you get the sense of the camera movement not being motivated by a character in the scene."

VARICAM 35

Marcella is a Netflix series too so the use of a 4K capture device is mandatory for the A camera. Kate tested a few cameras: a couple of REDs, the Panasonic Varicam LT, the Panasonic Varicam 35 and the Sony F65. The F65 was the camera they used for Series 1. "All good cameras: and I felt that the F65 was beautiful but a bit bigger than we could use in the locations we needed it for as there were very few builds. Also the Varicam 35 has a lower data consumption which benefited the production, so I was happy to try it and it gave a very good result. I would

definitely consider it again if there was a 4K requirement for a show.

"I also used the dual ISO feature on the Varicam and to be honest when I first tested it I was expecting it to be a bit of a gimmick, thinking the 5000 ISO was going to be extremely grainy. But actually I was really impressed with how good it looked. So occasionally that did come into play and turned out to be a really good feature."

Lens-wise Kate shot with the Panavision PVintage lenses that Series 1 was also shot on. "When I tested the cameras I also tested a few of my favourite lenses. I really like the Canon K35s but because I was changing the cameras I didn't really want to change up everything. People were less nervous if they didn't have to change everything. I had to prove to the director that we could still get the deep, rich blacks that he so liked in Series 1 with the camera."

Andrew Daniel at Molinaro graded both Series 1 and then Series 2. He created a LUT with Kate which was also used in subsequent episodes that Kate didn't shoot.

DIFFUSION

Even though Kate used quite soft, vintage lenses she still used filtration; in fact, beauty diffusion in the shape of Glimmer glass which helped the leads look good throughout. "I also used soft LED lights when the environment called for it," she says. "I also used my bag of textiles, different fabrics that I'll put over LEDs just to help them feel more natural I suppose."



ABOVE Kate wanted to carry through the moody light palette from Series 1.

"*Marcella* has a lot of different spaces as the main character is always going into people's houses. So as much as possible I would work with available light depending how long we've got for the scene and how quickly we can move through the scene to be consistent. We did obviously have a large location package with big HMIs. So they might be outside on the windows and then we would treat faces with small LEDs or bounce the light around.

"The colour was the one thing that was specified should continue from Series 1. In that series there were a lot of night shoots so it had a colour palette heavily featuring sodium lighting. When you then come to daylight scenes shot in the summer it's harder to introduce that element of colour in a way that's still truthful to the space and the story. So wherever it was possible we would create a darkness within interior spaces and introduce light sources that would augment that, to give that suggestion of colour."

With multiple locations as part of the thread weaving through this drama, Kate has managed to do justice to the Series 1 but also stamp her own identity on the look. Series 2 brings a moody contrast to the story which is perhaps more 'Scandi' than before but ironically becomes more 'real' at the same time. ☒

