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With a fascination for microbes, and an eye for observation and detail, David Kerr started his career studying Microbiology at Kent University.

Continuing on for four years of Postgraduate Research in Electron Microscopy at the Botany School, Oxford University and taking micrographs for Oxford Scientific Films, Kerr then submitted photographs to win a place at the National Film & Television School. He graduated in 1988 with the BAFTA-nominated film *Water's Edge*.

Kerr's background and interest in science, combined with his own creativity, has given him what he believes is a solid technical knowledge and an appreciation for the unusual in framing and detail.

His work in commercials is in great demand by major advertising agencies, where he has helped define some of the world's most easily recognisable brands like BT, Mercedes and Nestlé. He has shot commercials for McDonalds and the John Smith's campaign, which were D&AD nominated. In addition to commercials, Kerr has also shot several films, including, most recently, the award-winning independent feature *Sinner*, filmed in Los Angeles and directed by Marc Benardout.

Photo main: DP David Kerr and scenes from his film *Sinner*, which has won several awards including the Best Cinematography Award at the Brooklyn Arts Council International Film and Video Festival 2007



FOCUSING ON THE ENERGY

Sinner is a story of one Catholic priest's attempt to redeem his vocation and regain his integrity through an inconvenient muse. Set against a world of church closures, bankrupt dioceses and scandalised clergy, it's a dark and visually intriguing film.

By focusing on the dark – not the visible – another picture emerges. Representing the priest's blindness, therefore not shooting any POVs for him, the darkness helps to envelop the characters and with that depicting their strength. With respect to the lighting, it was important for me to reflect the claustrophobic nature of the story and struggle between the relationships of the characters, with the cinematography. Emphasising darkness creates a world of shifting forms and false perspectives.

I shot on Fujifilm stock, 3-perf super 35 with two Panaflex Millennium cameras and Primo Lenses. I really like Fujifilm for its clean grain, good solid blacks and especially the skin tones. I have used it on many commercials, in different situations and have come to understand and trust what can be done with it and how far it can be taken.

There was a tight budget on *Sinner* and a 17-day shooting schedule. About 75% of the film was shot at night, so there was a lot to light, both inside sets and on locations around Los Angeles. I had worked with Marc the

director on many commercials before and we had shot a very successful short, anamorphic black and white called *A Little Worm*.

We have a great working relationship based on mutual trust and belief. He is always very well prepared, but open to ideas. We came up with a strategy for the filming, in terms of the style of shooting and colour palette. This was based on the dominant colours that feature in the Catholic religion – green, gold, white and purple as well as the red for the character Lil – a prostitute – to resemble lust.

I believe in achieving as much as possible in camera with the exposure, manipulation of the stock and its development. The post-production was done at LaserPacific in Hollywood using inDI, which is a great process that I had not used before. *Sinner* has since won the Best Cinematography Award at the Brooklyn Arts Council International Film and Video Festival 2007 along with a number of other prizes.

I always make notes as to how light in different situations and at different times affects me emotionally. Whatever the project, I aim to serve the script, position myself in the story and emotion of the characters, and to think of a visual plan for the way the director sees it.

The choice of stock, lenses, filters, lights, gels, dollies and cranes is always locked into the director's

visual style, but also having the possibility to be able to be flexible. Although I come prepared to a project, I do like to embrace and extrapolate from other people's conceptual input. I like to watch and interpret the story, then come up with ways to shoot it, make suggestions whether it should be one shot or five, moving or still, close or far away.

If everything is planned, I feel you lose the possibility of finding something fresh, something real that is happening on the set. It is so important to use your eyes, to think what you are looking at what interests you, then to decide where to put the camera to film it. So much is happening on a set and it is important to remain focused on what is going down on the film, and to use the place, the light, and the energy ... everything that is around. That is what I find so fantastic about filmmaking.

With my visa to work in America and two future film projects starting up there, along with doing commercials here in the UK, where I am based at the moment, I feel very lucky to be in this business. ■

■ *Sinner* was originated on 35mm Fujicolor Super F-500T 8572 and Super F-125T 8532

