



Christoph Schaub and Stéphane Kuthy enjoy a

Happy New Year

It's New Year's Eve and 150,000 revellers are gathering for Switzerland's largest New Year's Eve party: the grand firework display on Lake Zürich. But amidst the celebrations, five sets of people of different ages and backgrounds dream of changing their humdrum, lonely or unhappy lives. Will they continue on their well-trodden paths, or will the New Year give them courage to change direction? Director Christoph Schaub's new feature, *Happy New Year*, deftly intertwines five human stories and presents them in a truly engaging style.

Schaub and director of photography Stéphane Kuthy, SCS, had collaborated on the 35mm comedy *Jeune homme* and the documentary *Bird's Nest (Herzog & De Meuron in China)*. But *Happy New Year* presented the unusual challenge of 80-percent winter night shoots in numerous small locations.

"Christoph wanted a freer, spontaneous approach; not revolutionary, but more risky. He was confident we could make the film work for the audience," notes Kuthy. The DP approached Felix Berger at Kodak Lausanne and, after testing every available 16mm stock including KODAK VISION3 500T 7219, he settled for the new film. "It has the finest grain structure, more natural skin tones and it dug deeply into the shadows. We believe we were the first to use it for a European feature," he says.

Kuthy shot entirely handheld on an Aaton XTR. Capturing the city lights without lighting the city, he let the colourful Christmas decorations and warm department store window displays play on the characters' faces. He used greenish neon car lights and street lights for the two police officer characters and aimed for "something a bit more neutral on their faces. I shot two to three stops under and was not always completely sure how it was going to work out, but I'm really happy with the results," states Kuthy.

Choosing interior lights to suit each character's situation, he created an "unrefined" look in a lonely guy's two-room apartment

with Chinese lanterns and halogen lamps, while retaining the warmth of ambient amber lighting in a wealthy woman's 1950s villa.

Second and 3rd camera units were a necessity for the annual 20-minute firework display. "All the city lights are switched off, so we found positions and shot in a documentary style, capturing the fireworks and the actors' faces from different angles," recalls Kuthy. "Gaffer Eric Walter quickly understood my concept of appearing to let the film go to an extent, which at first must have seemed risky." Kuthy also credits 1st AC Astrid Miegel, who has worked with Rainer Klausmann, BVK, for her focussing skills and creative input.

"We did a 2K digital intermediate at Egli-Boost Lab, making very basic corrections just grading with Baselight. We added more contrast, deeper blacks and slightly reduced colours by pushing one stop and going for a 20% bleach bypass on the 35mm negative afterwards. It gave us a special character but maintained the roughness we wanted to achieve" comments Kuthy.

"Shooting a movie handheld at night with minimal lighting and a very small crew was at the same time both frightening and challenging, but I've learnt that limitation isn't necessarily bad," he muses. "Working quickly and with little means forced us to find creative solutions and to take risks; I think that's good for the story and the images."

"Stéphane is very curious and inventive, and each time we collaborate we develop a new style of cinematography," says Schaub. "I'm delighted with the visualisation of *Happy New Year* in terms of the relationship between the contrasting aspects of the pictures and the camera mobility. 7219 has enabled us to create beautifully rich colours and has given me courage to consider undertaking movies with a similar style of cinematography in the future. Thanks to the stock's high quality and lack of grain, it's easy to profit from the natural light in night scenes," he concludes.

Happy New Year was produced by T&C Film AG.