

WHERE DOES IT HURT?

ONE NIGHT IN EMERGENCY REVEALS THE DARKER SIDE OF A HOSPITAL VISIT FROM PLAYWRIGHT GREGORY BURKE



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A year after graduating from the NFTS with a handful of shorts and commercials under his belt, Benjamin Kracun has made his television breakthrough with a BBC Scotland drama, *One Night In Emergency*, starring Kevin McKidd and Michelle Ryan.

From the pen of award-winning playwright Gregory Burke (also making his television drama debut), *One Night In Emergency* is a dark, surreal tale of one man's journey to reach his wife in hospital, where all may not be as it originally appears.

"The director, Michael Offer, has been very generous in giving me this opportunity," states Kracun humbly, "and producer Dan Hine also took a chance in me. This was his baby." Aware of Offer's impressive back catalogue, which includes *The Passion* and *Moses Jones*, both shot with Fujifilm stock, Kracun came well prepared to their pre-production meetings.

"I put together a whole load of references," recalls Kracun. "We wanted to make the world recognisable, but give it nightmarish tones. I cited *Bringing Out The Dead* and *After Hours*, two Scorsese films. In *Bringing Out The Dead*, there's a basis in reality for Nicholas Cage's ambulance driver, but angels or ghosts surround him. Similarly in *After Hours*, one guy loses his money in New York and in trying to get home he meets all these different characters along the way."

Burke had cited Homer's *Odyssey* as an inspiration for *One Night In Emergency*, a strong mythological theme not lost on Kracun and Offer.

"There is a point in the script where reality is no more, which is great for the cinematography because it gives you free-range of how off-kilter you can make the

world," says Kracun. "Thankfully, it was already decided to shoot on film, Michael being a huge Fujifilm fan. In tests I was using the Reala 500D for two of the underground scenes because with the daylight stock the old sodium lighting fixtures were giving a strong yellow cast, which I would then augment with daylight light on the characters' faces.

"For the majority of the film, though, I used ETERNA 500T. In hospitals you have a lot of those fluorescent strip lights and we played with the cast those gave with the tungsten balanced stock."

With Offer an admirer of the 'Asian extreme' look, characterised by films such as *Old Boy*, careful location selection became an integral part of pre-production.

"When I first arrived in Glasgow, Michael took me to the bar scene location in Mitchell Lane, which opens the film," recalls Kracun. "The bar was a sort of city-boy haunt, in some sense ugly but perfect for the story, with these garish neon lights inside and a big car park in the background when you come out.

"I was using a Canon D10 and old Yashica lenses to take a lot of reference images on all the locations during prepping, even framing and putting the stop on so that I could see what was going on, and from these stills I could see there were a lot of the green and blue casts we were seeking. The great thing about the Fujifilm stock is that it really has good latitude with those mixed lights."

With locations in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, a Victorian megalith of labyrinthine proportions and the Western General, a dour seventies concrete box, a truly surreal parallel world for the hospital could be created. "The Royal Infirmary is a really

fascinating building," reveals Kracun. "All the underground scenes were shot there. They have this one corridor that is surreally long, going right under the hospital. It's pretty dark; there are some places that people probably haven't been for years. Anna Benbow was the focus puller; I didn't give her an easy time, most of the time we were wide open!"

Shooting all night for 15 nights in working hospitals gave the filmmakers an unusual insight into this world.

"We were shooting a scene once where the mortician is wheeling a body to the morgue," recalls Kracun, "and we actually had to stop filming because there was a real body to come down. Then one night there were six stabbings which, according to hospital staff, is just a normal Thursday night in Glasgow! It was extreme."

Under these taxing conditions, having a method to work from proved invaluable.

"The essential theme for *One Night In Emergency* is that it's one man's journey towards death, so I used the concept of him travelling towards the light to influence me," states Kracun.

"Wherever he was, to a lesser or greater degree there would be a light at the end of the tunnel. Having a concept that ties in specifically with the script is really important; it gives you a grounding and actually frees you up a bit." NATASHA BLOCK

 *One Night In Emergency*, originated on 16mm Fujicolor Reala 500D 8692 and ETERNA 500T 8673, is scheduled to transmit via BBC Scotland later this year



Photo main: Michelle Ryan and Kevin McKidd in *One Night In Emergency*; inset top left: DP Benjamin Kracun on set; below l-r: Focus Puller Anna Benbow, Director Michael Offer, Grip David Morrison, DP Benjamin Kracun, Gaffer Stever Arthur; scenes from the TV drama (courtesy BBC Scotland)