

# 'ROUND MIDNIGHT

Australian Cinematographer Ashley Barron (*Dreamland*) takes a prize-winning walk after dark – *interview by Meredith Emmanuel*



A scene from 'Midnight Walk' - DOP Ashley Barron

Ashley Barron's latest short film, *Midnight Walk*, follows the neon explosion of a fashion assassin's night out. The winner of Best Drama at Sydney's Winter Freshflix Film Festival 2016 is a passion project for director Mathilde Nocquet, and starring Charlotte Willars and Kate Peck, *Midnight Walk* is the first in a five episode web series. We sat down with Ashley to discuss her work and process on the project.

**AC** What was Nocquet's brief for *Midnight Walk*?

**AB** Neon! The idea would be to have a wacky tutorial of fashion hunting, modernising the film noir look of the 1980s. We wanted to distort the thriller movie codes into a funny way to kill. The main notion was to create an off-the-wall, black humour video making fun of women's often-unbridled passion for shoes.

**AC** What inspired you and Mathilde for this piece?

**AB** Nocquet is French, so our references were mostly from French artists. Photographer Guy Bourdain was one of our biggest

influences. We were drawn to how he transformed murder into something 'pop, colourful and funny.'

**AC** What was the pre-production process?

**AB** I had about a week to prepare. I received an e-mail about the project, got on the phone shortly thereafter and that night we met to discuss. The next day we were scouting and storyboarding. We had one night to shoot, and a limited budget.

**AC** What were the biggest challenges on *Midnight Walk*?

**AB** The quality of light we were going for is hard to get right and control in such a small space. We were also very ambitious with our schedule for this type of lighting style, so balancing this with the speed required for a one-night shoot had its moments.

Usually, I like to make the film in pre-production and not have any major problems to solve during principal photography. If I've done my planning correctly, there'll be time to put out any fires early on and just execute the plans on the day... or night, in this case. We

had planned on using a lot of neon light in the production design but we were unable to test any of it beforehand.

**AC** What do you like most about this piece?

**AB** Colour! I love working with colour and have been looking for a project like this for a long time. The fact that the film has such a strong and distinct sense of self and style is exciting as well. There's no question of what you're in for when you watch.

**AC** Did you have the music playing while you were shooting?

**AB** No, the music was created later. Nocquet ran the shoot like a regular film, as that's what it ultimately is. However, that is a way that I quite like to work. I think knowing what music your images will play to really informs the way you work. I always ask the director about the music they have in mind and try to, at the very least, have it in my ear during or before the shoot. It's a whole other experience as a Cinematographer.

Meredith is an ongoing contributor to Australian Cinematographer.