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\$4 March 2018 www.csc.ca

Cardinal

Dylan Macleod CSC

**Creates Unabashedly
Canadian Thrills**

Duraid Munajim The Journey



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Credit: Jasper Savage





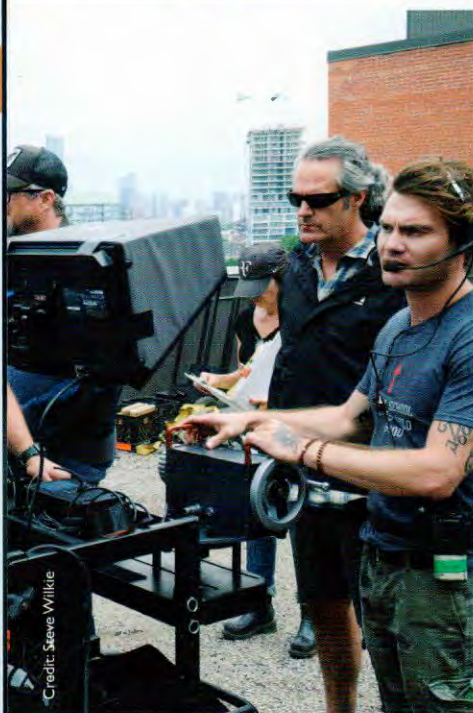
Cardinal

Dylan Macleod csc

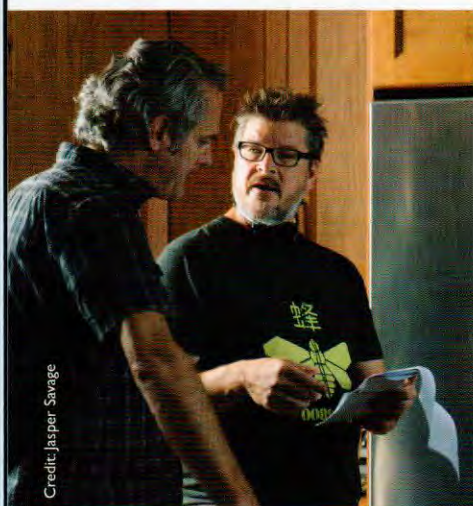
**Creates Unabashedly
Canadian Thrills**



Credit: Jasper Savage



Credit: Steve Wilkie



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Top: Dylan Macleod csc with director Daniel Grou. Middle: (L to R) Billy Campbell, Alan Thatcher, director Jeff Renfroe, Dylan Macleod csc and Yoann Malnati. Below: Macleod discusses a scene with Grou.

“I’m a fan of the RED camera. There’s a lot of unique functions with it. There’s a setting called HDRX that allows you to record two images at the same time, and the second image you essentially make darker using the shutter. And then those two images are blended in post. So in some situations I could walk into a room without bringing in much lighting and use the HDRX function to allow us to still have detail outside the window where it’s sunny out, and then use just the ambient light bouncing around inside the room to get an exposure for what’s happening inside the room.”

By Fanen Chiahem

The long-awaited television adaption of Giles Blunt’s award-winning 2000 novel *Forty Words for Sorrow* began airing in January 2017 (on CTV in English and on Super Écran in French) under the title *Cardinal*. The six-part crime drama series, produced by Sienna Films, follows police detective John Cardinal (Billy Campbell) and his partner Lise Delorme (Karine Vanasse) as they investigate the murder of a 13-year-old girl in the fictional town of Algonquin Bay (a stand-in for North Bay). In February of last year, CTV announced the series would be renewed for a second and third season, with Season Two based on the third novel in the John Cardinal series – *Black Fly Season* – and Season Three inspired by the fourth and fifth novels in the series – *By the Time You Read This* and *Crime Machine*. All three seasons were shot in and around North Bay and Sudbury, with Steve Cosens csc lensing Season One, while Dylan Macleod csc took on the shooting

of Seasons Two and Three. Daniel Grou directed the first and third seasons, and Jeff Renfroe directed Season Two.

The series is “unabashedly Canadian,” Macleod says, and it “has a fairly unique look in the TV landscape,” mainly because of its pacing. “There are very few edits compared to other shows,” he observes. “They weren’t afraid to let shots play out for a long time. Daniel Grou especially was very much into doing single long takes. So that really informed the tone and look of *Cardinal*.”

Although Macleod and Renfroe were new to the second season, Macleod says Renfroe and the show’s producers, wanted a certain amount of visual continuity from Season One, keeping in mind that the story continues during a different time of year. “In the first season, the winter was such a character that to a certain extent we had to throw out some of what they did because we wouldn’t have winter as our production design,” the DP says. “So we took the tone that Steve and Daniel had set on

Credit: Steve Wilkie



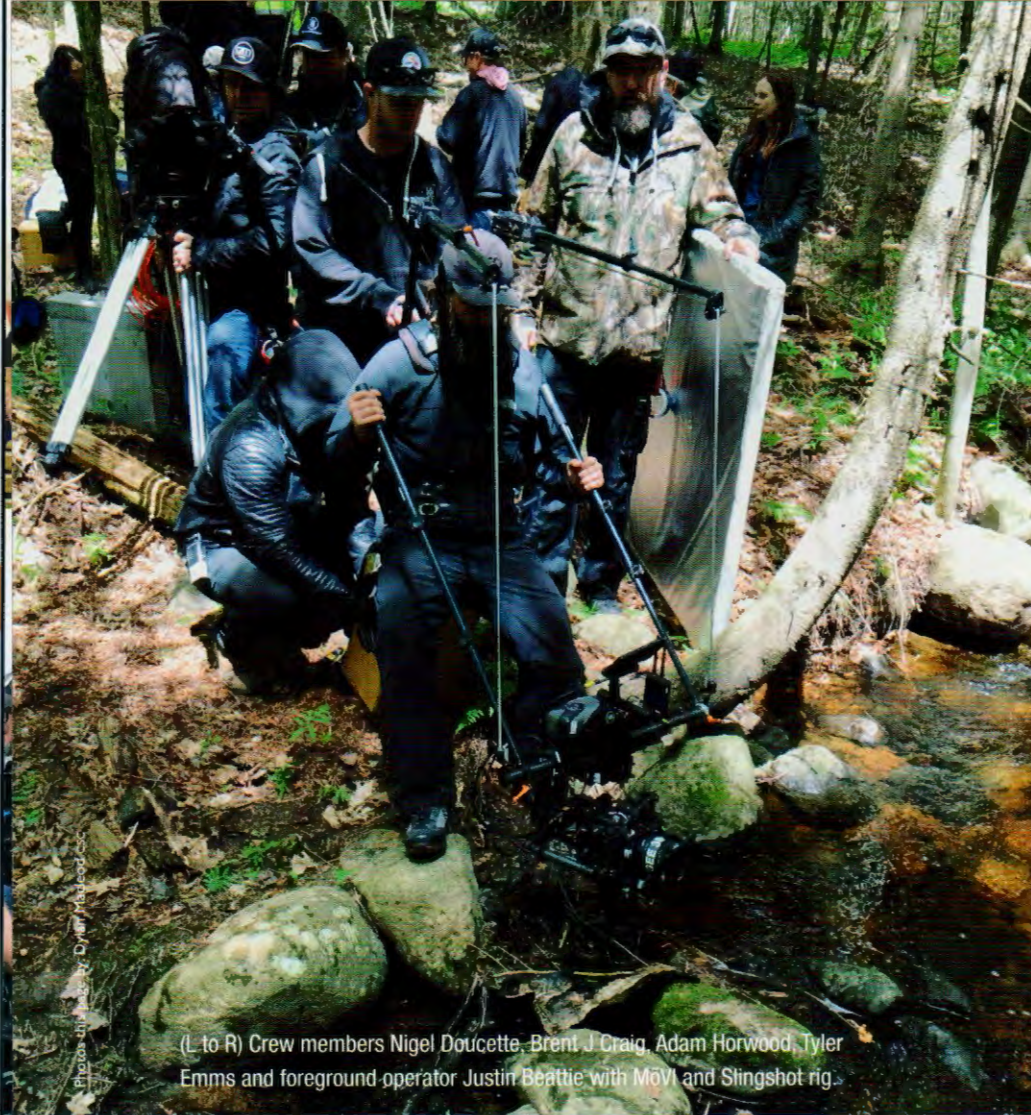
1. Grou, Macleod and crew members Emily Jusic, Mike Hope, Kriten Thomson, Steven French, Ashley Nay and Allesia Spalvieri watch a scene. 2. Karine Vanasse, Alex Paxton-Beesley and Billy Campbell. 3. Justin Beattie, Tyler Emms and actress Alex Paxton-Beesley. 4. Karine Vanasse as Detective Lise Delorme 5. A camera/Steadicam operator Steven French with Grou and Macleod. 6. Karine Vanasse and Billy Campbell. 7. Kirill Belousov, Adam Horwood and Steven French with actor Billy Campbell

Season One as a starting point and then just evolved the look for Season Two, and it evolved again when I started working with Daniel in Season Three.”

One of the things Macleod appreciated about the first season was the unique way Cosens

and Grou photographed winter. “They went beyond what you would expect from a winter look – winter was brown, which was really interesting. But what do we do now walking into the summer season?” he reflects. “*Black Fly Season* is all about summer, so do

we do the opposite and go blue? No, that didn’t make sense, so we decided fairly quickly that brown is the colour of *Cardinal* no matter what season it is, so it also worked into how we approached the summer look; we embraced the brown, and I did that mostly



(L to R) Crew members Nigel Doucette, Brent J Craig, Adam Horwood, Tyler Emms and foreground operator Justin Beattie with MoVI and Slingshot rig.

Photos by Justin Beattie, Dryden Macleod

“There were a lot of times we would play with framing to leave a lot of negative space and have things shallow focus with the background very soft, and then somebody would appear in the background and you’re like, ‘Which character is that?’ So we could build a little tension with shallow depth of field, as well as the way we would frame things.”

through camera filtration. I used a lot of antique suede filters, which kind of imbues everything with a golden brownish tone.”

Working with one director per season enabled the crew to approach each cycle “like a really long feature film,” Macleod recalls, adding that in the five weeks of prep for Season Two, they tech scouted all the locations. “It was nice to do everything up front and not have to do a lot of that weekend work that normally gets done on a series where you’re prepping the next episode while you’re shooting the one before that,” he says.

Most of the series was shot on location, with a couple of exceptions, such as the main police station. Macleod recalls that one of the most difficult locations to shoot in was an abandoned camp that is a major location in Season Two. “We were lucky enough to find a semi-abandoned camp. It was perfect for our needs, but it was very difficult to work in, partly because there was just a single-lane gravel road about a kilometre long that went into the place,” he relates. “It was a very rainy summer, so the road got really muddy and dirty, and on top of that, it’s the middle of the summer and we’re in bug land. It was crazy. The black



Jonathan Yapp



APOGEE lenses



Chris Chung, Brent Robinson and Tyler Emms.



Top: Actress Alex Paxton-Beesley and Justin Beattie.
 Middle: The crew shoot a scene on the water.
 Bottom: (L to R) Alan Goluboff, Dylan Macleod csc,
 Jeff Renfro, Dan Petronijevic, Mike Hope. On ground,
 actor Brock Morgan.

Credit: Steve Wilkie



The hardworking *Cardinal* crew enjoy mid-morning substantial.



Credit: Steve Wilkie

Grou directs Campbell and Vanasse.

shoot some day and then some night, and we'd be doing these mini moves all around this camp. I am really thankful for my hardworking crew who remained positive and creative throughout those difficult shooting conditions."

Macleod says the look of *Cardinal* is based in reality, so he would rely on the art department to provide a lot of built-in lighting and practical lighting especially when the crew had to be in and out of a location quickly. "For example, there was one location in Season Three where it was just a road, a middle-of-nowhere road at night, and we really wanted to avoid the moonlight cliché, so I asked the art

flies were for real. The production bought every crew member a full-body bug suit, which I think I lasted about an hour in because they're very difficult to work in – you've got these mesh nets in front of your face, and they're kind of hot. You just had to deal with the bugs, or if they were driving you crazy, then you just had to deal with this bug suit. So it was a difficult location because of the weather, because of the bugs and because we had to block shoot for the most part. At the same time, we were experiencing the longest days of the year and we had a lot of night shooting to do. We would have to split a lot of our days and

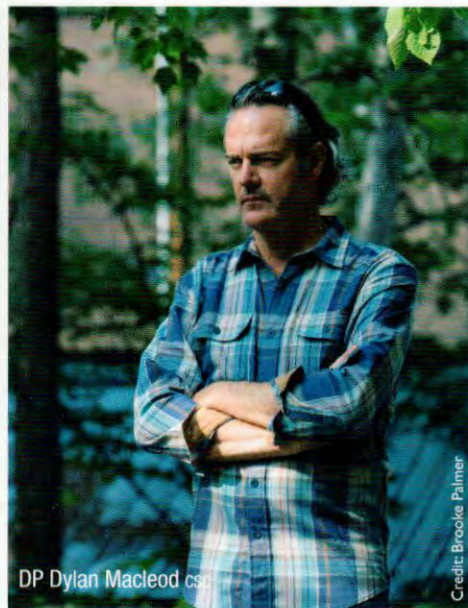


Credit: Steve Wilkie



Credit: Steve Wilkie

Billy Campbell films a scene.



Credit: Brooke Palmer

“[Renfro] and [Grou] both have the same sensibility when it comes to setting up and blocking scenes. They very much want to listen to what the actors have to say; they’re very conscious of the space they’re in; they want to see all of that before they really decide on what they want to do. But Jeff has an editing background, so once all that was determined, his shot design was more based on allowing some good flexibility in editing. Whereas with Daniel he was always trying to find the most interesting and simplest way to cover a scene, which very often meant one shot in a scene with little coverage.”

department if they could do a streetlight there, and Rory Cheyne, our production designer, who is amazing, just said, ‘Yep, what kind do you want?’” Macleod recalls. “So they put in a street light for us, and to the viewer it’s not going to look like anything much, but it fits with the look of the show, which is naturalistic, more motivated lighting, and we didn’t have to show up with a pre-call for electricians to build moonboxes and take hours to get in there. We leaned a little bit on the art department to get that light in advance for us and have it set up and ready to go.”

Macleod also relied heavily on windows as a source of light, which can be seen in John Cardinal’s house, another primary location on the show. “We didn’t want to create our own magical light sources like soft top lighting in the house,” he says. “It was just wherever the light comes from, we’d work with that. So windows became very important. And also that combined with the need to maintain that style of very long takes – oftentimes we’d be doing almost 360s in a room, so where else are you going to get your lighting from but the windows?”

Season One of *Cardinal* was shot on the RED WEAPON at 6K, which Macleod was happy to shoot with for the following two seasons. “I’m a fan of the RED camera,” he says. “There’s a lot of unique functions with it. There’s a setting called HDRX that allows you to record two images at the same time, and the second image you essentially make darker using the shutter. And then those two images are blended in post. So in some situations I could walk into a room without bringing in much lighting and use the HDRX function to allow us to still have detail outside the window where it’s sunny out, and then use just the ambient light bouncing around inside the room to get an exposure for what’s happening inside the room.

“Also, the RED has interchangeable optical lowpass filters, or OLPFs, so you can switch them out and optimize them for whatever your lighting conditions are,” he explains. “So I would use the skin tone highlight OLPF when we were outside in the daytime, which made sure our high-



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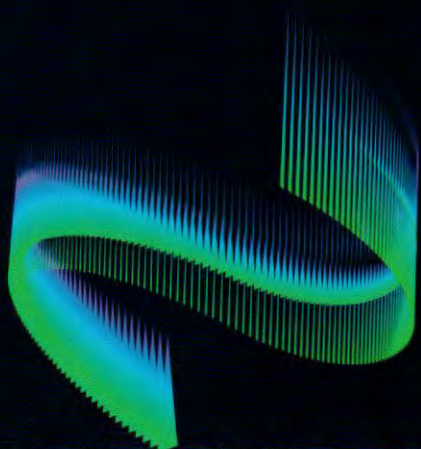


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lights were nicely protected and made the skin tones look really nice, and then I would change it out and use the low-light OLPF when we were doing night work because it actually allows you to shoot in really dark environments and still get a nice, clean image out of it. So there were a lot of advantages to the RED that helped us to work quickly and get a good image quality.”

Macleod is also a big fan of Cooke lenses, so he used a set of Cooke 5/i Primes “mainly for their speed, but also they have a beautiful focus falloff, they have gorgeous bokeh, they produce really nice flares, and all that was especially important for *Black Fly Season* because we really wanted to play with flaring and sunlight and warmth and all of that,” he says. “I also had a boutique lens maker, a guy named Richard Gale, who’s based out of the U.K., rush me a set of lenses called APOGEE lenses – essentially a Helios 44 lens, which is an old Russian lens from the 1950s, but [Gale] has made all these customizable elements to them – because we wanted to do something a little different for the camp scenes in Season Two so that it would stand out a little bit from everything else. So for our purposes, I put oval apertures in the back, which created an almost anamorphic look to the out-of-focus highlights in the background. And then there’s an interchangeable back element, an optical cell lined with amber, so any kind of flaring that would happen in the lens would also get a little more warmth. I think it really helped to make the camp scenes stand out without drawing too much attention to itself.

“We had a zoom lens we used to get some really long lens things, but interestingly enough, in Season Three with Daniel we found a way to use some very slow zooms just to put little exclamation points on some moments for Cardinal like when he’s having a revelation or a realization,” the DP adds.

The show’s slower pace actually helped play up the suspense in the storyline by allowing for some evocative camera moves, Macleod says. “You could do a slow dolly in that’s not going to get cut into; you could actually let it play out, and that kind of builds tension and allows you to slowly reveal things during the shot with a slow push in,” he says. “We also did some shots where we would start out of focus and then push in slowly, and you’re wondering what it is, and it gets your curiosity up and kind of builds a little audience involvement in a way. Those slow push

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He adds, “There were a lot of times we would play with framing to leave a lot of negative space and have things shallow focus with the background very soft, and then somebody would appear in the background and you’re like, ‘Which character is that?’ So we could build a little tension with shallow depth of field, as well as the way we would frame things.”

The production framed the second and third seasons for a 2:1 aspect ratio, as in Season One, Macleod says. “It’s interesting because that’s become more of a common format now in television. A lot of shows now are doing anamorphic and 2:35:1. You get a lot of black in the top and bottom of your screen, and then in 1:85:1 there’s almost no cropping top and bottom,” he maintains. “2:1 is almost in between 2:35:1 and 16:9, so it is a nice subtle wider screen ratio to frame for.”

Comparing his experiences with Renfroe and Grou, Macleod says that

although both directors have slightly different approaches, “they both have the same sensibility when it comes to setting up and blocking scenes. They very much want to listen to what the actors have to say; they’re very conscious of the space they’re in; they want to see all of that before they really decide on what they want to do. But Jeff has an editing background, so once all that was determined, his shot design was more based on allowing some good flexibility in editing. Whereas with Daniel he was always trying to find the most interesting and simplest way to cover a scene, which very often meant one shot in a scene with little coverage.

“I would say for me Season Two was more of a learning curve, and by Season Three, I was dialled into the rhythm of the show, and to come back to working with Daniel, who had done Season One, felt very natural,” Macleod says. “I think we had taken care of his baby well in Season Two, so it made for a very comfortable flow in Season Three.”



Billy Campbell

Credit: Steve Wilkie

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