

Mark Partridge discovers the *Odour of Chrysanthemums*

Director of Photography, Mark Partridge, discovered D.H. Lawrence's short story *Odour of Chrysanthemums* whilst studying modernism as part of an English course two years ago and couldn't get it out of his head. Set in a small Nottinghamshire mining community in 1913, it's a disturbing tale of how a once passionate relationship has been destroyed by economic and emotional demands. "Lawrence's story of a woman's disillusionment within a marital relationship is emotionally powerful, but also socially significant. Its theme has a strong contemporary resonance," remarks Partridge, who subsequently purchased the film rights and wrote the screenplay with fellow filmmaker and Producer, Andrea Wallace Grant.

Odour of Chrysanthemums focuses on Elizabeth as she anxiously awaits the return from the pit of her miner husband. As evening draws on, she conceals a growing resentment from her children, believing that he is yet again spending his earnings drinking in a pub in Brinsley, but eventually he's brought home – dead, after an accident at the mine. Lawrence's dark tale unveils a disturbing and surprising twist as Elizabeth experiences a turmoil of conflicting emotions.

In the original story Elizabeth makes the journey to Brinsley, but Partridge took an early decision to confine the action to the cottage and the result is electrifying. "We kept the camera within the set and designed low ceilings to make it feel as if the whole cottage is bearing down on Elizabeth in her desperate predicament and shot very low, using quite wide-angle lenses to intensify the claustrophobic atmosphere," explains Partridge, who also directed the 28 minute film. "I wanted to portray the harsh reality of the period and, as firelight and moonlight are central to the story, I let the coal fire effectively light the kitchen. A blue



PHOTO: ANDREA WALLACE GRANT

filter on the Varicon cooled off shadow areas, so the only warmth appears to be coming from the fire. Elizabeth's face is lit and everything else falls away into the background. For the moonlight scenes, I bounced a 10kW through a window off poly and used a combination of gels to give a slightly green and

2nd Unit Clapper-Loader Jani Janus (left), Director/DP/Screenwriter Mark Partridge (standing, centre), and Camera Operator Adam Gilliam (seated).

"I let the coal fire effectively light the kitchen."


unwelcoming look to the dawn. The Kodak Vision Expression 500T (5284) film, with its wide latitude and fine grain structure, is fantastic. It gives a sharp and gritty look and provides subtle shadow detail; the blacks have a silky quality."

Odour of Chrysanthemums was set in Lawrence's aunt's home in Nottinghamshire, but for financial reasons Partridge used a strikingly similar cottage in his own village of Dunsmore, Buckinghamshire. With Philip Barber (Production Designer), the team recreated the mine railway tracks, located just eight feet from the original cottage and used the relentless grinding noises of pit engines in the film's soundtrack. Partridge chose two Nottinghamshire children from the area where Lawrence lived as a boy and a dialect coach helped the main cast learn the distinctive dialect. "I was very fortunate to secure a talented cast on



A scene from the film

the strength of the adapted screenplay," he says. "Which included Geraldine James, Geraldine O'Rawe, Bruce Alexander, Gawn Grainger and Julian Glover, actors I have always admired. Pinewood Studios, Lee Lighting, Panavision, Todd AO, Lipsync, Agfa, Soho Images and Kodak also generously supported the making of the film. In fact Kodak is so pleased with the result that it's using the film to promote the stock's excellent qualities at seminars and exhibitions," adds Partridge. *Odour of Chrysanthemums* will take the festival route, but Partridge admits he would like to see it placed alongside a suitable feature in cinemas.

Andrea Wallace Grant, who has collaborated with Partridge since they met at film school, admits that her colleague sees the world in a unique way. "Mark has a curious, visual mind, which is quite dark and his films are slightly unsettling. Audiences will be thinking about *Odour of Chrysanthemums* long after they have left the cinema or turned off their televisions," she predicts. 

Data File

Odour of Chrysanthemums

Director/Director of Photography/Screenplay
Producer/Screenplay
First Assistant Director
Focus-Puller
Clapper-Loader
Camera Assistant
Grip
Editor

Mark Partridge
Andrea Wallace Grant
Alex Bignell
Miles Evans
Hopi Demattio
David Hilton
Dean Morris
Liz Webber

A Jack Russell Production

Mark Partridge

Partridge was a Formula One and Le Mans racing car engineer before he changed gear and studied cinematography at the National Film & Television School. After graduating, he worked in television drama, documentary and commercials and also studied English at Oxford University and The Open University.

TELEVISION FILMS

The Glass, The Vice, Mind Games and Life Support.