

Tensions simmer in the kitchen



Actor Jonathan Firth as the Chef composing his letter

VISION

Director Sybil Mair's second short *The Chef's Letter* is about how desire disrupts harmony. A successful, married chef (Jonathan Firth) lives his life as he runs his kitchen, but his familiar regime of order and control is put to the test when he unexpectedly falls in love with one of his staff. At the start of the film, he sits at his desk writing a love letter.

The day's work unfolds in the kitchen while the letter waits to be read. But the chef's sense of anticipation begins to distort his perceptions about goings-on amongst the staff. Slowly, his self-control begins to unravel.

The Chef's Letter was shot on a combination of KODAK VISION2 5205 250D and the slightly faster KODAK VISION2 5218 500T film stocks. Sybil wanted to use film "to help create visually the intense moods and emotions that constitute the very spine of the story." Cinematographer Charlotte Bruus Christensen explains the choice of two film stocks: "We wanted the office scene to be warm and cosy, with rich blacks / no grains - therefore we went for a slow tungsten stock."

Sybil and Charlotte wanted the kitchen scene to appear busy, noisy, cold and always moving - a harsh change when cutting from the office. And since they didn't have enough lights to light the entire kitchen, they had to make the fluorescents, which were already there, work within their lighting. By pulling the stock one stop, they could give the white and shiny kitchen a little more texture.

Charlotte continues: "To make all this work, we needed a faster stock. With the Kodak 5218 500T we had a nice low grain stock, which gave us enough latitude to work in low light and pull one stop." Having seen the film, they are very pleased with the result. The stocks supported the feel and look they were after. Together with camera filters and lighting, they achieved a very warm and homely feel in the office and a more rough and cold look for the kitchen.

Only finished earlier this year, the film will be entered for the Kodak Short Film Showcase 2008. It has already been officially selected for The World Film Festival in Montreal, the International Short Film Festival Kratkofil in Banjaluca and the Libertas Film Festival in Dubrovnik. www.thechefletter.com.