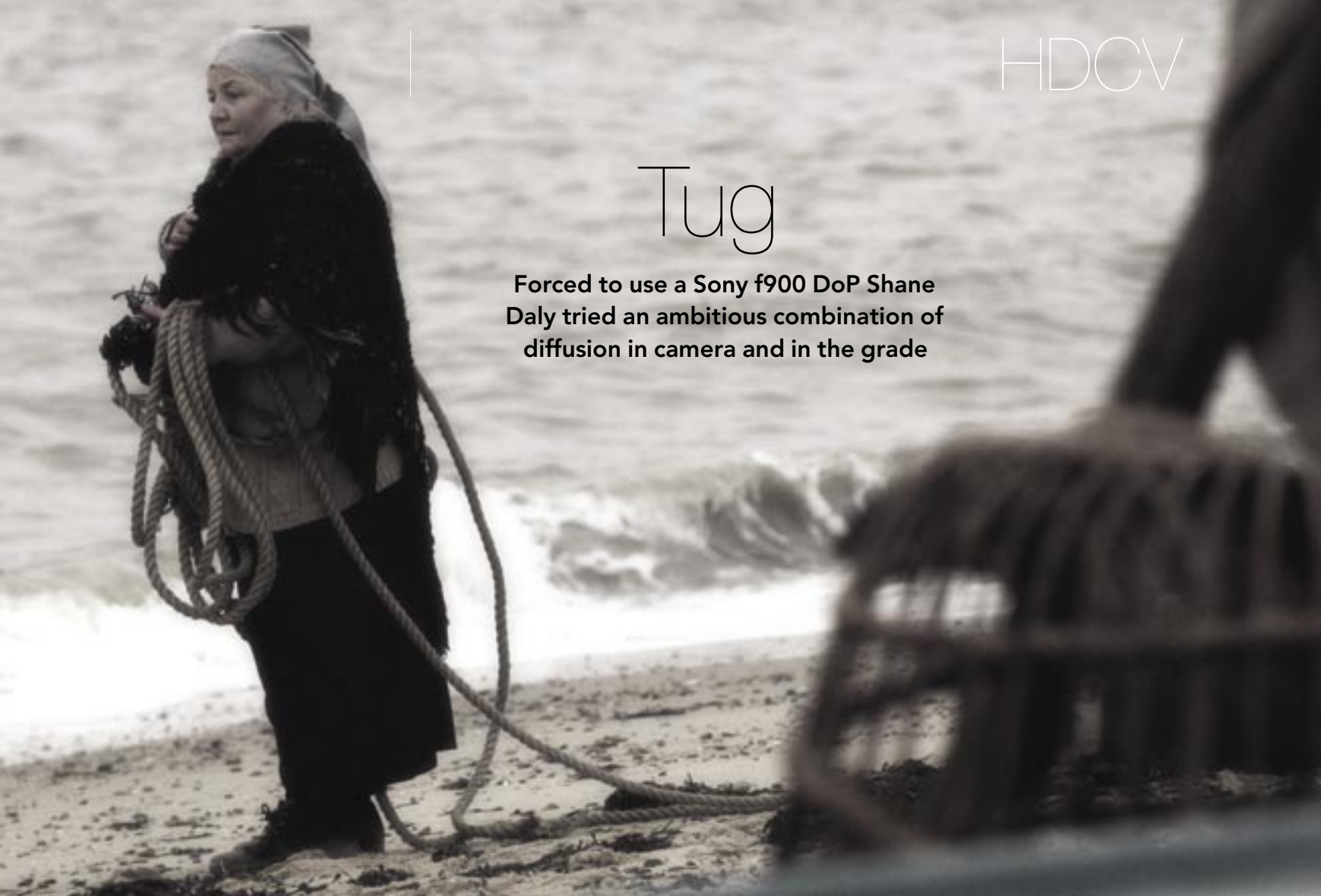


# Tug

**Forced to use a Sony f900 DoP Shane Daly tried an ambitious combination of diffusion in camera and in the grade**



Stills cameraman Neil Rouse used Nikon digital cameras to emulate the look DoP Shane Daly was after

Both images © Neil Rouse 2006

**T**ug' is a dark fairytale about murder, family, community and revenge which owes a narrative and stylistic debt to the Brother's Grimm and Tim Burton amongst others. It was shot with two Sony f900/3 cameras on location with much of the film situated on boats at sea, hesitating boat to boat shooting. DoP Shane Daly describes the steps he took to parallel the look with the story and the camera format he was asked to use: "I've known the director Dave Ward since film school and I've been his cameramen since then. *Tug* was meant to be his last short before he went for a feature, we'd done a couple before that were quite different. For this one he was going for much more of a varied feel. It came about through Screen South and the UK Film Council as part of their digital shorts scheme.

"Tug is like a dark fairy tale, like the Brothers Grimm and definitely a feel of Tim Burton about it. So that dictated how we were going to shoot it, the scheme required that we shoot on a digital format and the budget dictated that we had to go with the Sony f900. I pushed very hard to get something like a Genesis for a D-20 and it looked for a while that we were going to but it didn't happen.

It's (Sony f900) not my ideal camera I have to be honest, that's mainly because it is linear but also because its so hugely compressed - by the time it gets to the recorder on the camera it's already been sub-sampled down to 3:1:1 which is alright for something like telly maybe but for a short that is going to have a theatrical release I think that's dangerous. The artifacts

that it brings in aren't part of the look that we're trying to use and I've always tried to use the variables that we have, the lighting, the lenses and the cameras to enhance the story or try and tell the story so jagged edges or aliasing I wanted to avoid.

"So once the decision was made and we had to go with the 900 I tried to embrace it and as soon as I'd read the script and Dave gave me some free range to interpret it I felt that a fairytale look would suit it. My mind went towards quite a diffused look so we started to play around with some in camera diffusions, in front of the camera. We ended up settling on Double Fog filters, on the wide shots we used Double Fog 1 and the close ups Double Fog 2s. They smeared the highlights in a 'cotton woolly' way and to me it gave it quite a fairy tale feel.

## Emulating The Log Look

"Where I wanted to shoot on a log format, Genesis or D20, I tried to emulate that so I used a RMB 150 Paintbox camera controller to sit the black level very high so it was almost grey, so the combination of the diffusion glass and the grey black level gave it a very milky almost a flat look. I wanted to lock the look in terms of the diffusion in camera, I think there is a big difference between diffusing the light organically and then putting on a digital diffusion.

"The look was achieved via a two stage process of heavy in-camera diffusion with a very gentle gamma curve, which was finished in the DI with a further digital diffusion rolling off into

[www.shanedaly.co.uk](http://www.shanedaly.co.uk) - trailer of Tug available on the site

the highlights, a desaturation pass and a more contrasty layer placed on top bringing the blacks back from the greys acquired in camera. This emulated the log - linear method as closely as possible considering the limitations of the 900s and affords the film a distinct look which I hope suits the story and helps the mood.

“So we wanted to use a combination of the two, trying to shoot it flat to keep as much black detail as we could. When we took it in to the grade, after setting the highlights to roll-off, we then re-applied a deeper black level over the top so the black level hit a hard edge against the white diffusion. The white diffusion didn't just go all over the screen, it was restricted into the white areas. That worked really well, it was one of those beautiful things, you sit in the grade your fingers crossed that your plan is going to work and it does.

“The last thing that we did was to really draw the colour out

and I couldn't do that on the day as I didn't want to get into the menus but shoot it quite flat that way and just grade it with the black level with the RMB 150. So I set up the monitors to be very thin almost black and white so Dave had a good idea of where we were. When we went back to do our DI the final thing we did was to draw the colour out.

It wasn't far from a bleachy look but because we put the black level on top of all the other elements rather than underneath I would call it a 'tight' bleach with a diffusion.

“The other thing we did was to frame for 2:35 even though we exposed the full chip, sadly they cut in 16:9 and we had a little tussle and it was only about a day before the grade that we watched it again with a 2:35 crop and it all just came together and we went with it. I know you lose resolution on the chip but I think the audience immediately think they are watching a film, it's a cinematic ratio.”

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