

DP MIKE SOUTHON SHOOTS CHICAGO JOE AND THE SHOWGIRL AT PINEWOOD

BY JOHN CALHOUN

Most of *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* (left) was shot on Pinewood's D Stage; the studio setting allowed for DP Mike Southon to achieve a feeling of soft, low-level light in the film's numerous night sequences. Southon, who looks for an "emotional temperature" on each project, says he decided *Queen of Hearts* (right) should have the rich look of espresso coffee.

La plus grande partie de *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* (à gauche) a été tournée sur la scène D de Pinewood; l'arrangement du studio a permis à DP Mike Southon de créer une impression de lumière douce pour les nombreuses séquences de nuit. Southon, qui cherche à réaliser une "température émotionnelle" pour chaque projet, dit qu'il a décidé que *Queen of Hearts* (à droite) devait avoir la couleur riche de l'expresso.

Der grösste Teil der von *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* (links) wurde auf der Pinewood-D-Bühne aufgenommen; die Studioausstattung erlaubte dem Kameraman Mike Southon, ein Gefühl von weichem, halbdunklen Licht in den vielen Nachtszenen des Films zu erreichen. Southon, der nach einer "Gefühlstemperatur" in jedem Projekt sucht, sagte, er beschloss, dass *Queen of Hearts* (rechts) den reichen Anblick eines Espressos haben sollte.

The British cinematic new wave during the late 50s and 60s was famous for its "kitchen-sink" air of gritty realism. The current British film industry renaissance is marked by an opposite strain — fantasy and dream sequences are commonplace, and the blatantly studio-shot aura of many movies lends a stylized and fantastical quality to even more realistic settings. Several recent examples of this style — last year's *Paperhouse* and *Queen of Hearts*, and *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl*, were shot by director of photography Mike Southon.

According to the cinematographer, however, this stylization is not so much a conscious choice as one dictated by circumstances. *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl*, for instance, is set in wartime London, when there were nightly blackouts and dimouts. "I would estimate that 75% of the script takes place at night, during the blackout," says Southon. "It's a very difficult thing, shooting at night. Where does the light come from?"

Southon faced a similar problem on *Paperhouse*, which like *Chicago Joe* was directed by Bernard Rose and designed by Gemma Jackson. *Paperhouse* was highlighted by a sick girl's fever-dream hallucinations of an isolated house on a distorted landscape. "Because we wanted to control a number of elements in the picture very carefully, and because much of it takes place in a nighttime environment, we felt that we needed the control of the studio to create nights," explains Southon.

The *Paperhouse* set was built on Pinewood Studio's vast E Stage, and included a 360° reflective cyclorama. "That slightly luminescent sky gave a wonderful quality of seeing forever," says the cinematographer. "But it also meant that one didn't have to put in intense moonlight to see everything—one could deal with things in terms of silhouettes, in terms of shape.

"I've always been fascinated, in the countryside around Britain, by the way the eye and the brain see at very low levels of light," he continues. "It's almost half-seen — it's kind of miasmic and grainy — things shift. If you get a large tree in the distance, it seems to dance because of the half-light." It was precisely this visual quality Southon wanted

continued on page 41

