

Fallen Star
Stella Artois

Introduction

The 20s signalled a profound shift in the way of life, propelling the world into the modern age. The 'talkies', the 'Charleston', the newly founded 'youth', who rejected the reassurances of the 'simple life', instead favouring the stylish, lively and decadent lifestyle of newly industrialised cities - enchanted by the bright lights. Even the villages couldn't escape the change, as the outside world began to flood into the provinces and rural corners of Europe. Nothing was left untouched.

In Leuven something spectacular was also brewing - Stella. A new brand, with not only it's pulse firmly on the zeitgeist, but also a deep respect for tradition.

We want the viewer to experience this era in its all-consuming, innovative glory, but in a way that conjures reality as opposed to pure nostalgia. The use of familiarity - through distinct characterisation will evoke the viewer's empathy from the outset. This aesthetic will be the medium to translate the wonderful, timeless sentiment at its heart - the idea of a gift. It's uniqueness as an expression of dedication and personal intention throughout the ages, and the difference it makes - A difference made not because of its grandeur, on the contrary, because of its simplicity - Stella, a brand that gives beautifully.

For us, the best way to tell this story would be like a beautiful small feature, a black and white ode that nods towards the long standing tradition of cinema but in a new a innovative way. As mentioned, we don't want to re-create Hollywood Babylon, it's more using this as a way of celebrating the longevity of Stella as a product. Basically, if Bèla Tarr had ever split cells with Capra then this film would have hatched. Stylish, premium, whilst using the irresistible wrapping of story-telling to unveil this gem of history in a real, emotive and cinematic way. The characters, the location, the art direction all building a real sense of place, situated in the past yet shot with the film techniques and modern production values of today.

Style & Tone

From the opening skyline, to the worker's in the factory, there is an undeniable thread pulled through each scene. Something is in the air, something special - but it's not fairy dust. It's not contrived, or sugar coated or illustrated with a white polar bear on ice, this is not a Coco-Cola commercial, it's not obvious in any way, it's more implicit - like that real sense of anticipation, generosity and joy that we tangibly encounter in our own lives during the festive season. Although for a while, you don't even know it's Christmas, you are only aware of the common spirit of togetherness, something real, that builds and builds and climaxes into something warm and heartfelt - the gift.

The characters, the locations, the piano played at the party, the wrinkly factory workers, even the rusty bicycle leant against the wall will all feel like they have their own individual story. We want to create a cinematic experience that's layered with sublimely detailed, subtle nuances, so on each watching the viewer notices something new.

How this translates on screen will be integral to the 'gift-giving' concept planned in for after the filming has finished. This further film will show the deconstruction of the set, almost like some nordic fable about generosity where, in the ending, everyone is given a their own memento . We want the winners to feel they have taken home part of something special, a priceless gift like Sam's piano from 'Casablanca' or the Algonquin Table from 'Dorothy Parker and the vicious circle'. Of course

the most coveted thing is the Stella which in it's self works perfectly as a 'gift', but once we have the final choices we will weave them into the fabric of the story in a beautiful and personal way.

Look and Art Direction

The Road

A beautiful black and white shot of a van making it's way down a snowy road. There's a truck ahead, barely visible, illuminated only by the vans headlights and reflections from the snow. This part of the tale will create suspense and enhance the viewers curiosity. The use of black and white will again reinforce the tradition of film but instead of shooting on 8mm to make it look like it was filmed in the 20s we'll use a cinematic wide to capitalise on that beautifully aesthetic. Of course the use black and white is not a deal breaker for us, but as you'll see from the rest of the treatment, it would carry the idea perfectly.

You can't actually see what's on the back on the truck, it's an unidentifiable object, blanketed in the shadow, building the viewers intrigue along with the mysterious location of the road, and the countless questions that this gives rise to. Where are they going? Who's in the front truck? What's in the box?

We know we are somewhere in the countryside, but everything else is impossible to make out. We are in a new world but as of yet everything remains ambiguous. The only clues we have to date it are the model of the van/truck, and the workers uniforms.

The workers we'll discuss a little later but let's build a picture of the Van. The van is loud - a working vehicle with dents and scratches from the daily grind clearly visible in the paintwork, complete with those huge vintage headlights which look like old lamps or set lights. Beautiful

The truck is more like an iron wagon. The kind local lads jump would jump into in the wee hours on the way to work, swinging their sacks onto the back with a loud thump. Again a working truck, built to haul materials and heavy objects around. You can hear the rattling of the open back doors, unlocked banging against the sides they're supposed to be fixed to.

The Factory

Continuing from the above, the Factory will be industrial but still relatively small, probably only one floor. Not exactly an assembly line set-up but organised in a way that shows the men like the clogs of a watch - all concentrating on their individual tasks with pride and precision. Take the uniforms for example, these in particular hark back to the days when workwear was constructed for purpose but also important for status. Skilled workers were considered the western pioneers of this new economic expansion. The prosperity of which was reflected in their uniform.

Around the men, the scene is littered with brewing essentials. Grain spouts, barrels, sacks of barley - all shot beautifully to enhance the sense of 'process'. Possibly steam from the coal powered machinery - adding another really beautiful texture to the background.

The Party

Much like the entrenched image of the 1920s - the party is roaring. Not total unabashed frivolity, but fun all the same. It's Christmas eve and everyone is caught up in an evening of festive bliss. The men are smart and the women elegant, with a cacophony of different highly- styled trends. Mildred Davies' eyes, Clara Bow's hair, dresses with dropped waists and necks draped with pasted glitz. We could even start to go a little 'futuristic' in the sense that the clothes are very ahead of their time, collar lines from a young Chanel, early influences of Elsa Schiaparelli creeping into women's wardrobe will also help us colour this angel.

For the building, we want it to reflect the age. It doesn't have to be a complete time capsule, but it does need to have that 20s vibe. A great reference would be ' The Grand Budapest Hotel' with it's sense of occasion, decorated with the latest stylings, like Tiffany lamps, or Lalique, but peppered

with elements of good taste from previous era's. As with wardrobe, it would be great to include some 'next generation pieces'. Possibly a painting from a very young William De Kooning - or pieces of Art Deco which wouldn't really take hold as a movement until the 30s, or hints of surrealism? Remember the Surrealist dinner held by the Rothschilds at Château de Ferrières ?

Music

Music will be pivotal, something like the score from a film - completely cinematic, in the way that we are shooting we aren't trying to replicate music from the era, in fact it works better if it's not, as once again this avoids cliché and reflects the relevance of the film to the audience. We have a huge archive here with more than a 1000 bands and artists. Most of them from independent labels, some really interesting pieces that would really like to suggest and share. Something new, cinematic and fresh.

Characters and Performance

Our emotional attachment to the characters will be the main engine for this campaign. Not only will they be the vehicles of the narrative, but through their realness, they will invoke empathy and a genuine interest in the viewer. The initial interest in their fashion and general look (of an era) will soon be replaced by a sense of their humanity. This will build on the questions evoked in the opening on the darkened road along with the characterisations which will escalate the narrative to crescendo. And of course - lots of human energy - each of our characters has to feel completely three dimensional and real, characters that we care about, understand and warm to instantly.

Performance will also be essential, which is why we will use actors instead of models. Those who can capture and deliver emotion in a very believable way. We want every aspect of the film to ooze authenticity with the characters' journeys and experiences at its very core.

This means casting the net as wide as possible to find a brilliant variety of characters, but always keeping them feeling very natural and true to everyday life. We'll do a thorough casting session so that we can see the actors in 'normal' and 'action' mode, allowing us to weed out any over-acting that could ruin the tone.

Again - Subtle. Understated. Authentic - deeply layered and idiosyncratic to give an overall cinematic effect whilst avoiding cliché or complete nostalgia. The character portrayal will be integral to this, as it will be their characterisation and relationships that will define the narrative and emphasise the simplicity of the message at the heart of the film.

The Brewmaster and Assistant

Our Brew Master is around 65, and a little weathered. He is medium build but with a presence of a man twice his size, someone that you can believe could be 'A Master' with an interesting backstory. Instantly, you can see he is from another era in the way he wears this hair, his clothes but at the same time there is something terribly familiar about him, something the viewer will relate to. Simple, salt of the earth, but elegant at the same time. Maybe he looks like that smartly dressed man who goes to your local pub at 7pm on the dot every Friday to order same pint of beer, or the man in the cap you see walking into the same newsagents every morning before work to buy his paper. A man from the background of your life that always somehow manages to catch you attention.

The assistant is younger, probably early forties. Out of the men he stands out as 'more of a sensitive soul', possibly the underdog? One angle we'd like to imply is that he is the Brew Master's son. An interesting dynamic of unspoken dialogue and telling looks to show how he is trying to prove himself to his father, who he looks up to as a real craftsman.

In the reveal, when the star is unveiled. His creativity and innovation is recognised. The 'gift' has now been passed down from father to son, spurring on a new generation of Brew Masters.

The Workers

The workers all range between 45 - 55, they are skilled, and very conscientious about their work. For example their body language shows how comfortable they are in their surroundings, they have a sense of belonging. Just like a chef holding their knife, you can see right away that they are professionals.

They also possess a real sense of camaraderie, imaginably following the previous decade's conflict, the men value their work more than anything. They dress smartly as mentioned above, and wear their uniforms with pride. Essentially they're village men, probably more or less all married with a parish of children between them. We are looking for interesting people more than anything else, faces like those from those beautiful black and white photos you can find at yard sales or vintage markets. We want them to create a symmetry on the screen that is both aesthetically pleasing and alludes to the uniformity of industrialisation. This will connote the synchronicity of their lives together - as part of a workforce and as part of a community.

The Guests

The guests need to be a good mix of interesting and vital characters; some with swagger, some with a little less. The typical run of names you would expect at such a soiree. The Mayor, the Lawyer, the local Entrepreneur, perhaps they're identifiable, perhaps they're not. Handsome faces for certain but not from the realm of advertising. Older women, younger women, some elegant, others not. A sea of faces that the viewer can feel represent the vast spectrum of the town's inhabitants, but whilst glamorous and beautiful, we still want the guests to be rooted in reality and very relatable to the viewers.

Performance-wise, the party needs to feel real and beautiful. It should never look like a charade - more along the lines of Thomas Vitterberg's 'Festen'.

Location

A great location for the film would be Prague - a city beautiful to its very core. Majestic mountains, coquette villages, a place with the most hectic history of the richest cultures and yet at the same time completely universal. We want somewhere that could be anywhere in Europe but with the intricacies, beauty and flamboyance of somewhere filled with life. Budapest could also work for the same reasons, especially with its mix of architecture, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Jugendstil, if we want opulence we can certainly find it here.

Pack Shot

End with beautiful pack shot of the bottle with its new label next to a chalice of freshly poured Stella. Everything is in darkness except for the bottle and beer. Slowly, a shadow of light traces across and colours the shots. The rich, golden colour of the beer is instantly recognisable, refreshing and of course mouth watering. Not only does this one use of colour in the entire film make it more striking an image to stay in the viewer's mind, but it also reinforces the idea of the longevity of Stella through this combination of traditional imagery and modern technology - taking the viewer in one shot from past to present.

The story

Opening title: 1920 Leuven

We open to a beautiful full texture of the Christmas tree on the back of the truck - full screen. This only time we will feed the audience a clue before the final reveal of the tree at the party. Unrecognisable - the story begins...

We cut to a road. The lights have started to darken and we understand we are in the middle of winter. A Stella Artois delivery truck makes its way through the snowy road, driven by the Brew

Master and a couple of assistants who are on their last call of duty before the holiday season begins.

Just ahead of them is a much bigger truck, slightly more beaten and provincial. The men keep looking up. It's hard to make out because of the light, but appears that an enormous object is strapped in at the back. The anticipation builds, as we try to make out the scene through the view of headlights in the quiet. Then, there's rattling and shaking and the clinking of something that sounds like glass.

Suddenly, the front truck goes over a bump and a wooden box falls to the ground and into the headlights of our delivery van - the Stella Artois truck, quick to react, tries to avoid it - but can't.

Over it goes with a 'crunch'.

We see the expression on the The Brew Master face. He winces almost painfully. We know it's not good. He gets out of the van, allowing an almost 'Pinteresque Pause', we hear only the door slam and his footsteps on the road in the darkness until he emerges into the view of the headlight by the (and paces over to the) now flattened box, picking it up off the floor tentatively like a run-over animal, he shakes it gently – there's just the sound of broken shards.

We hear his sigh, swiftly followed by a further door slam as the others gather round, their faces telling, hoping it's not what they think it is. The Brew Master opens the box. It is.

Something dazzling and precious - totally shattered. The plot thickens.

We cut to the Artois Brewery, later that night. It's not a big factory, but industrial and softly lit with that 'after hours' feel. The subdued light not only alludes to the working hours, but the softness of festive candlelight. A group of men surround the Brew Master. They're dressed in workers clothing but retain a proud elegance, resonating an image from a time when men took pride in polishing their shoes and brushing off their overcoats.

His hands centre in the middle of the group, as he unfurls a recipe for a new beer. Obediently they nod, getting to work.

Through the night, we see the brewers making the most beautiful beer, checking it against the light, getting it exactly right and pouring it into glass bottles. Working uniformly and methodically, the starkness of the darkening hours contrasting the warm glow of the factory with the glistening beer at its heart.

We cut to a long wooden workbench, covered in utensils and 'work' paraphernalia. At its centre is the broken star in the same wooden case from the road next to a classic bottle of Stella.

Cut to beautiful skyline of 'Leuven'. A Gothic spiral, some Neo-Romanesque buildings scattered amongst the 19th century industrial warehouses give us the impression of somewhere distinctly Northern European. It's more that it could be the skyline than it actually is, and we will use these tools to guide the imagination there.

The evening light casts a particularly interesting shadow on the rich blend of architecture. It feels real, but hints at magic and anticipation - something is in the air.

We now cut to a beautiful, decadent interior. The town hall or possibly Leuven's finest hotel. In a wide shot we see that a great party has gathered, a cacophony of faces, with everyone dressed in their finest. A piano serenades the guests, but instead of allowing themselves to get into the swing of things, their attention keeps being compromised. Using a long lens we'll focus in on our guests. Everyone keeps looking up and for some reason the mood is a little forlorn.

In the corner stands the most majestic of Christmas trees, strung with silver and glistening with beautiful glass decorations. In fact, it is so large that the top can only be seen from the mezzanine above. But something is missing. We go to a close-up. There's no star.

Crunching over the snow we see the Artois delivery trucks arriving one by one...

We cut to a wide shot of everyone at the party - the people, popping open the tops of the beer – in the same shape as the star – pour the beer into their chalices. Everyone's having a great time. The tone becomes more celebratory and frivolous, yet there is still that sense that something is missing.

A close-up of the Brew Master as he smiles. We go to a shot of a bottle of Stella, it's new label positioned like the beautiful wrapping on a thoughtful gift.

We cut back to the Brew Master nudging his assistant - they look up at the tree. The Artois Workers are now hoisting something up. We still that the new shining star is exactly the same star as on the label. It looks - beautiful and dazzling.

Our exhausted assistant slumps into his seat with relief.

We cut to our end-frame, a black and white picture of that original bottle of Stella Artois and a title appears....

'Stella Artois was originally given as a gift to the people of Leuven.'

We cut to a new bottle of Stella Artois and the title:

STELLA ARTOIS. Give Beautifully.

The End.

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