

ARTISANS

SEA OF INTRIGUE

Morgan Saylor and Sophie Lowe play sisters who band together to cover up a crime in Bridget Savage Cole and Danielle Krudy's debut feature.



Camera Tells a Dark, Salty Tale of Sisterhood

LONGTIME DP COLLEAGUES CAPTURE AN INTRICATE MOOD OF SUSPENSE FOR THEIR DEBUT FEATURE, 'BLOW THE MAN DOWN' ■ By Jazz Tangcay

BRIDGET SAVAGE COLE and Danielle Krudy spent eight years working on the script for their feature film debut, Amazon's "Blow the Man Down," about a pair of sisters who go deep into the underbelly of their New England hometown to cover up a crime. But the filmmakers' relationship dates back further than that—to the days when they were shooting shorts and making music videos on Coney Island. They moved to Los Angeles at the same time and worked on sketch comedy videos. "We met behind the

camera," Krudy says. Cole adds, "It was so rare to meet another girl doing camera stuff."

Not only do they have a love for cinematography, but both also come from Irish-Catholic families and have sisters. And they share a love of seaside towns. "I'm from Beverly, Massachusetts, and Krudy's mother is from Maine," Cole says.

Those commonalities helped early in the writing process. "We were playing sea shanties to get inspired," Cole says, "and

we latched on to that, which helped us find the tone of the film." Krudy adds that New England-set movies such as "Mystic River," "Mystic Pizza" and "Dolores Claiborne" also helped put them in the mood. Visual references came from films that centered on characters covering up a crime, like the Coen brothers' "Blood Simple," Lynne Ramsay's "Morvern Callar" and Pedro Almodóvar's "Volver." The last film in particular came in useful as a reference for how groups of women talk about what gives them joy.

"Blow the Man Down" strikes a fine balance among mystery, thriller and humor as the sisters, Priscilla (played by Sophie Lowe) and Mary Beth (Morgan Saylor) must cover up a murder when Mary Beth kills a dangerous man after a drunken night out on the town. Not only does the film consider the lengths to which sisters will go for each other, but the town is also filled with women (June Squibb and Margo Martindale) who have

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their own dark secrets as questions of allegiance arise.

When it came to choosing actors, Krudy and Cole didn't have the luxury of having a casting director on board. “We read people in Silver Lake,” Krudy explains of auditioning thespians who came to their L.A. neighborhood, explaining that they took the time to talk to everyone who had read the script. The casting process lasted from August through December, when the production started shooting in Harpswell, Maine.

Saylor, one of the first actors cast, had a natural power and a sense of who she was, Cole says. Her air of tomboy energy was something that the co-writers responded to when they saw her walk into the room. And while Lowe was cast late, “she embodied Priscilla,” Cole says. “She’s so stoic and had this wit to her.” On the page, her character could have been a stick in the mud, but “the same part of her who is quick to write a thank-you note is the same person who would cover up a murder for you.”

When it came to capturing the grit and natural look of the film, Todd Banhazl (“Hustlers”) — who said he wanted the film to feel as if it were a foggy and salty experience — was the ideal director of photography. Cole jokes that Banhazl said he wanted to make things feel “like a movie found at the bottom of a pile of fish guts.”

Krudy notes that Banhazl's camera was a key player. “He found the right touch to help balance how the camera told the story,” Krudy says. From close-ups of an oyster-shucking knife and a pancake box to the almost 180-degree pan at the top of the film showing the men leaving on their boats while the women stay onshore — the shots captured the tone.

Banhazl also accented naturalness when filming the women. “He wanted to enjoy the wrinkles and the older faces,” Cole says. He would embrace them, and establish a familiarity for the viewer. That went a long way toward giving those characters a larger-than-life feel — a necessary note, Cole explains, because these women are the power that runs the town. 🍷