

Mandao Returns

Look Book - Real World

Day Time



Day Exteriors in the original film relied, obviously, on natural light. Like in the original, the majority of the sequel takes place inside. In fact, *Mandao Returns* has no single scene in Day Exterior that isn't an establishing shot.

Nonetheless, we want to give the feeling of December in Los Angeles...which shouldn't be difficult. The key is in the production design: cheesy xmas displays and xmas lights.

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Day interiors make up about 20% of the *Mandao Returns*. What worked great in the first film was the consistent use of motivated window light. Shaping the key light from the side gives the best look, but straight on is an option too if a gradation is added via flags.

Soft light was the goal for every shot and still should be.

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The window behind the characters creates the most cinematic look. The key light is bounced back onto the face from the side maintaining a darker shadow.



Window light from the side creates an excellent key light and is easier to control the contrast.

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If the window light is straight on, then we'll need to add gradation from the top to create darker walls in the background to help the characters stand out. The further they are from the walls, the better the result.

Ways to Improve Day Time



Shape and separation are key to the day time interiors. This above angle shows little shape in comparison to the other shots in the film. In this instance, we need more gradation on the back wall to create separation.



Exposure on some shots was right *except* for the key light. This above angle looks great, but the key light (coming from frame right) was *juuust* too weak. We should give more punch to our key lights from angles like this.

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Hard sun light was lacking in the prior film. Though the soft light was pleasant, we could use the occasional hard light coming in for realism and contrast.



Color was the same for every scene. This above shot was in the morning, but it didn't look like it. Morning light is typically warm, so we should bring in warmth from the light sources and color grade.

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Brightness of the day interior scenes seem dark when I view the film on VLC. Just to be sure, let's keep the interior scenes bright.

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Night Time Interiors



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Night interiors with no lights in the first film were motivated by streetlight rather than moonlight. We should do it again!

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Night Interiors make up the majority of *Mandao Returns* outside any of the astral projection scenes. As in the first film, practical driven lighting will establish the look of the film. The above two angles show first a lamp driven scene and an “overhead” light driven scene. They’re virtually the same color, but coming from different directions.

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This shot, one of my favorites from the first movie, implies the table lamp is lighting them. In reality, it's a bright light diffused shooting towards the ceiling. The resulting bounce back down established an ambiance and maintained the practical driven look.



This scene, one of the longest dialogue scenes in the first film, was lit with an overhead "ceiling light". In reality, it was a china ball skirted. The key take-away from a light like this is to control the spill onto the walls.



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Top down light in this scene can create heavy shadows on the face when it points down. The two shots show the difference. We'll have to make sure to use a bounce card to return some exposure on the face.

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The most obvious thing to do is have the practical light actually be the key light!



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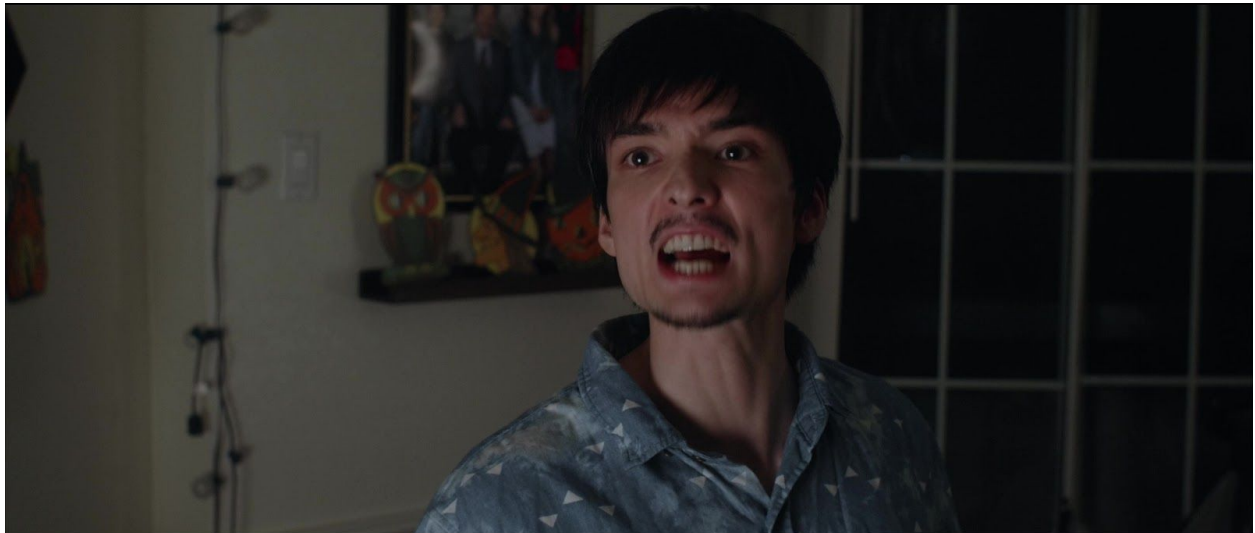


When a practical light can't physically serve as the key, we still should *imply* that a practical light is coming from somewhere. The above shots have the practical lamp in the show either behind the character or off to the side. However, we implied another lamp was coming from off camera or that the practical light simply reaches the face

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(though, in reality, it doesn't)



In parts of an interior where we've established that low level lamps illuminate a room, we will light from below! Not ghoulishly below, but low.

Ways to Improve Night Time Interiors



Key light position became an issue in one scene, the final confrontation between Jackson and Maeve. It works for the scene, but could be better by having the key light more directly overhead. Of course, there were honest logistical reasons for why we decided on this lighting set up, but it looks like we'll be able to avoid that issue with the locations on the film.

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Interesting angles of light can elevate the production value of the film. This above shot was when Jay was lying down to save the gang via astral travel. We try to incorporate unusual light positions to heighten tension, emotion, and horror.



Christmas lights are going to naturally occur in the frame because of the production design, but let's even through them in when it doesn't make sense! **The goal is to feel like Christmas.**

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Night Exterior



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Establishing shots not only tell us where we are, but what establishes the lighting geography. Like in the first film, we'll imply that porch light and street lamps are the sources of light for exterior scenes in the front lawn and backyard.

One establishing shot shows a lighting gag where illuminated colors come out from a window.



Porch light and Street light are the primary sources of light for exterior scenes. The above shot is primarily lit by the actual porch light and a second movie light from frame left.

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Here, we're implying that the porch light reaches this far. In reality, it's our own movie light.



Here, the porch light provides the majority of the background light while our movie light keys Jackson from frame left.

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Light spilling from the interior is also a great way to light the night exterior.

Ways to Improve Night Exteriors



Hard edge light with bounce key looks amazing. This above still is from *Another Cinema Snob Movie*, a feature I shot in late 2018. The edge light was an incredibly bright light way up high shoot over the roof towards the camera. We bounced in the key from the spilling light which created this beautiful and natural look. We can totally achieve this look on a small budget because our location is a single story home.



Overexpose the night exterior, even if it means higher ISO or wide open. This shot looks great, but could be brighter. We can always denoise in post!

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Car Interiors



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The only car interior shots are at night in Fer's car. We'll use the same purple light gag from before!