

Sound & PICTURE

Vol. 27 No. 2

Marvel's Daredevil

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Charlie Cox plays Matt Murdock/Daredevil

Marvel's Daredevil

Cinematographer Matthew Lloyd, CSC and sound mixer Joshua Anderson, CAS take up residence in Hell's Kitchen.

by Daron James

Netflix has gone Marvel with an original thirteen-episode order of *Daredevil*. But the streaming mavens have something even more amazing in store for comic book fans and viewers alike. If you haven't heard, *Daredevil* will be the first of four adventure series that will also include Marvel's Jessica Jones, Iron Fist, and Luke Cage, before all four characters will team up in a series as *The Defenders*. Which is pretty cool to say the least.

If you're unfamiliar with the superhero Daredevil, he was blinded in an accident as a young boy but his four remaining senses have become extraordinary, superhuman

if you will. By day he's Matt Murdock (Charlie Cox), a lawyer teamed with another lawyer, Foggy Nelson (Elden Henson), and legal assistant Karen Page (Deborah Woll), who take on cases at their new practice. By night, he becomes Daredevil, delivering righteousness to vigilantes in Hell's Kitchen, New York City.

Drew Goddard penned the first two episodes and serves as executive producer with showrunner Steven DeKnight. Those two – along with Jeph Loeb, Marvel's head of television, a handful of writers, producers and a large crew – have put together a series that's definitely worth watching. Asked to provide

the show's look were director Phil Abraham (who directed the first two episodes) and cinematographer Matthew Lloyd, CSC, a name you might recognize if you watched FX's *Fargo*.

Lloyd's early conversations with Loeb and Abraham had them agreeing upon and crafting a darker tone for the series. "*Daredevil* is very different from the *Avengers*, and we wanted to separate him from those characters. Doing it on the Netflix platform allowed us to be a little more edgy with our images. We didn't have to chase a film rating so we were able to create more of a film noir look." What helped the director

and cinematographer was the early support from Loeb and DeKnight. “We were right on that edge of being too dark the entire run, and Steven and Jeph stood by what we were doing from the start, which allowed us to stay the course,” Lloyd notes. The cinematographer referenced a lot of Martin Scorsese’s films from the ‘70s like *Taxi Driver* and William Friedkin’s *French Connection* for their harder New York street photography, and *Harry Brown*, an English movie with Michael Caine, to sample industrial light source ideas to help build the looks.

“We made these little battle cameras that ended up doing some pretty impressive stuff.”

To capture the series, Lloyd used multiple RED Epic Dragons at ASA 800 with ARRI Master Primes over seven months of production. “Netflix’s new platform is 4K, so at the time it really took us to two places, Sony or RED,” says Lloyd. “I had used them before on a movie called *Project Almanac* to a similar end. My A camera focus puller on *Daredevil*, Marc Hillygus, built these rigs so the operator would just be holding a tiny box with a lens on the front and then the cables would run into a backpack the dolly grip would carry. For all the complicated action and fight sequences we would be doing in *Daredevil*, I knew this was something no other camera could do for us. Once we had the cameras configured, it made total sense. Our operators did have to adjust the way they balanced a shot, but everybody appreciated the research and development that went into the smaller rig. We made these little battle cameras that ended up doing some pretty impressive stuff.”

The fight sequences in *Daredevil* are ballets of aggression. Both entertaining and not shy when it comes to violence, they’re some of the more captivating sequences in the series. Lloyd admits there was



On location with cinematographer Matthew Lloyd, CSC and crew



Who is that strange masked man?



Showrunner Steven DeKnight sporting a blue cap



The RED camera in action



Matthew Lloyd, CSC working in studio



Nothing like a little bounce board to provide additional light

a lot of night exterior work when they didn't find themselves on the sets built at Broadway Stages in New York. "It felt like every other scene was a monster fight sequence. It forced us to work on a large scale and keep our instruments and fixtures off the track, which I really think helped the look of the show," mentions Lloyd. "The more you fuss, the more you try to fill things. You don't let it be as broad or as dark as it could be, which is what gave the show a unique perspective."

Stunt coordinator Philip Silvera constructed the fight scenes. Working with Cox and stunt double Chris Brewster, Abraham and Lloyd were able to map entire fight sequences with precision. "Silvera and Brewster are two of the most talented guys I've ever come across in the field. We would shoot them in a way that never bogged us down," explains Lloyd. The main unit would capture the bigger strokes of the fight scenes in order to keep the actors on schedule, and then 2nd unit cinematographer James McMillan would go in, reestablish the lighting, and build out a more robust sequence for the editors.

Since Daredevil wants to keep his identity a secret, he wears a black mask the covers his face and eyes. But how could the actors see? You'd think visual effects would step in (which they did when needed), but costume designer Stephanie Maslansky had the mask woven with a two-way fabric in such a way that Cox and Brewster could see out, but the camera couldn't see in. "There were certain moments in the light you could tell, but generally, if we shot straight at him, it looked like he was truly blindfolded," notes Lloyd.

For lighting, the cinematographer looked to pre-rig as much as he could. "They handled most of the heavy lifting before we got to set," Lloyd says. "I tend to diagram everything out and where the instruments should go in order to keep our day short. Things can get very complicated at night, and I'm a firm believer in twelve hours on, twelve hours off. Sometimes in TV things can get really messy, so I went with

bigger rigging departments.” To help, Lloyd used rigging gaffer John Bagley and longtime rigging key grip Dave McCalister as a lifeline. The cinematographer would often have to leave the first unit shoot to go scout with his rigging crew for upcoming locations. At that time, 2nd unit cinematographer McMillan would step in so the group could set plans a day or two before. “It seemed like we were always in big alleys or a shipping yard, so having John and Dave there setting up every instrument in these large areas was key,” mentions Lloyd.

Exterior night scenes were built with tungsten instruments, balloons, and special lighting from Source-Maker Lighting in New York, which provided wrapped sodium vapor and mercury vapor fixtures to match existing exterior lights. “We played with a mixture of colors,” adds Lloyd. The crew also looked to

ARRI T 12 Fresnels. “The T 12 is a really clean and powerful source that can be spread evenly over a great distance when it’s fully flooded out. We would typically put those up on an 80’ or 120’ Condor,” notes Lloyd. “McAlister also had a very small, well-engineered crane called a Jekko. We would fly a balloon or a bounce for our hero light and just let everything else fall out if we needed to.”

For dailies, Lloyd had previously configured a LUT with Stefan Sonnenfeld at Company 3 for use with images from the RED EPIC. They created an aggressive curve that was put over the RED log as a preview on-set and then tweaked in the dailies color sessions. Andrew Geary and Kevin Krout at Deluxe NY shared the responsibilities for the dailies, which were done in such a way that they were tuned in for final colorist Tony D’Amore at Encore

Hollywood to handle. “I would grade stills in Photoshop on set at lunch or after wrap, and send them off to Kevin and Andrew for them to interpret. They would apply with incredible precision the look we wanted, and that was sent to Tony where he could toggle it on or off. For our final coloring, I would call in or do a virtual session with him to fine-tune any of the sequences, like if the first or second unit material varied,” Lloyd explains. “I’d never try to color on set anymore. I think it’s the plague of the modern camera-

“This project had a lot of different challenges and we wanted to be prepared for everything,”

man, getting stuck in the tent fussing with the color instead of really helping to run things on set. With this kind of precise daily workflow it made life easier. Tony was able to focus on finessing and digging out the details of the show rather than trying to build the entire look, like in a REC 709 workflow.”

Working with production sound mixer Joshua Anderson, CAS, the cinematographer admits they had a funny relationship. “[The crew on] a new show always starts off learning each other’s approaches, but Josh was a constant professional. He wouldn’t compromise the soundscape of the show and I got nothing but love for him.” Anderson and his crew did just that: they tried to never compromise. They even rolled sound when the director would play with slower camera speeds. “This project had a lot of different challenges and we wanted to be prepared for everything,” says Anderson. “In later episodes, there were some fight scenes where they slowed down the camera and I remember a previous project where the producer came up to me and said, ‘We might want to ramp this up to speed later on so I think you should roll.’ Remembering this, we tried to slate all we could in *Daredevil* in case producers did the same.



Two booms to cover two actors - Wilson Fisk (Vincent D'Onofrio) @ Wesley (Toby Leonard Moore)

This way, at least they had something that would be normally MOS. We also tried really hard to maintain a naturalistic sound so that the sonic perspective made sense with what all of the cameras saw. We really pushed to keep things on the boom (or booms) and not get too burned with wide and tights. “

Blocking and locations also had their own obstacles for sound to combat. “It was crazy what Matt was accomplishing with lighting. He lit a scene with just candles once. The way we would work is to let the cameras find their spots and then adjust to what they were doing.” Helping Anderson were booms Gregg Harris and Terence McCormack Maitland and 2nd unit sound mixer Julian Townsend. “Julian was a life saver. We brought him in as our third and he was able to step in and mix for me when my wife went into labor and all of our 2nd unit with the exception of maybe one day.”

In an early episode there’s a creative fight scene between Daredevil and some Russian bad guys who are holding a child hostage. Daredevil ends up fighting multiple men down a hallway, and as he eliminates each attacker, some of the action is played off screen and into adjoining rooms. Lloyd and his crew set up the camera on a dolly track and armed down from the ceiling so they could turn the RED 360 degrees in the hallway to capture the action. Sound attached



The crew inside the art gallery location



Daredevil just taking names and smashing faces



A little water should put that right out



Hey look it's our cover photo - sweet cop car



Cinematographer Matthew Lloyd, CSC setting up an interior shot

a mic to the front of the camera for a perspective for post, and then relied on wires to capture any dialogue on screen and used boom operators for all the off-screen dialogue.

Another scene had a mixture of singing and dialogue in a car traveling along an alley. To record the scene Lloyd and his team put a camera on a rig inside the car that turned almost 360 degrees, leaving no room for crew – there wasn't even a follow car. "Normally, I'd do a setup where I would have mics going into a Sound Devices 442 mixer and split its direct outs into a Sound Devices 788T and wireless transmitters. I would then have receivers on another 442 and 788T in the follow vehicle so if we got separated, I'd still have a continuous roll. But for this instance, there wasn't any room. They literally took all they could out of the car," laughs Anderson. The sound mixer ended up relying on the range of his Lectrosonics wireless system. He figured out the best placement for his cart and hid behind a big plastic tarp that the art department had put up at about the midway point of the car ride. "It ended working out nicely. The scene started with the singing, [and] once the car landed where it needed to be, a line of dialogue came from the driver for the actors to get out of the car, and then Daredevil shows up and mayhem ensues."

The office set where Matt,



Thats some awesome wind protection on that boom

Foggy, and Karen work even called for a third boom one shooting day. “We were doing a six- or seven-page scene and the three actors were just walking all around the set. I called the assistant director ahead of time to see if the director was going to split the action up or if he was going to follow them through the various rooms. What I found out was that he would be going from room to room, and for us to cover it, we were going to need a third boom because of the doorways and enclosed ceilings. Luckily it was later in the season and we had a sense for that set and knew from the start what we were up against. Production was very supportive the entire run and it was nice to have a third boom in there instead of relying on wireless or plant mics.”

For Daredevil’s costume, sound mic’d Cox using a Countryman B6 lav along with available SMQV and SMV transmitters. “Besides the fight sequences, he [Cox] plays a lot of stuff on rooftops. Even with our booms close, we couldn’t contend with the noise from the air conditioners and buildings,” Anderson says. “The B6 did great on him. It helped pick up all the heavy breathing Charlie was putting into the character too.” For overhead mics, sound relied mostly on the Schoeps CMT 5 U, the occasional Sennheiser MKH 416, and longer mics like the Sennheiser MKH 815 and MKH 816.



Claire Temple (Rosario Dawson) aiding Matt Murdock (Charlie Cox) back to health



Matt (Charlie Cox) with former client and now legal aid Karen Page (Deborah Ann Woll)



What episode will Daredevil get his red suit?

Sanken CUB-01s were put in play for plant mics, and when Anderson contacted post to open up the lines of communication, they wanted him to capture the sounds of New York, so he used the Sennheiser MKH 418-S for stereo/mono recordings. "I went with an M/S mic so post could have what they initially asked for: just a mic getting street ambient sounds, but they could also use the Side signal to get a stereo version if they wanted it. We also used the stereo mic on bigger stunts and explosions. Just to give post some options and to have some fun ourselves, too."

The mixer also looked to Shade VFX's on-set digital effects supervisor Karl Coyner. "Both the special and visual effects on this crew were excellent. This was my first Netflix show and I wasn't sure how they approached painting out booms. We really didn't have someone on set who would give us a definitive go-ahead so we used our best judgment.

I would ask Karl on the day what he was doing to help visualize exactly what was happening, and in the end, I think they said they only painted out one boom the whole series.” The VFX created in *Daredevil* were overseen by visual effects supervisor Bryan Godwin.

For his daily work, Anderson used MovieSlate to record all his notes, which turned out to quite helpful. “We had a scene where actors were on the roof and more people were down below. To cover the dialogue, Matt had the camera on a lift to simulate each side’s point of view. What we ended up doing was having one boom operator on the roof, another one on the ground, and wires to cover everything else. I would pull up different mics that were essentially covering two different sets, and I had to do a continuous roll as cameras were cutting and rolling independent of each other. To be able to cut and paste all the

various mic-ing elements for each take in MovieSlate made things a lot easier.”

Both Lloyd and Anderson reiterated how the shoot was truly a fun experience, with Lloyd saying he really enjoyed episode 104, directed by Ken Girotti, adding that “The studio never really backed down from what we were trying to do, and it’s rare in my book to experience that.” Anderson, gives props to his crew and everyone around him. “All my guys were great and the rest of the crew. Julian even managed to save my Sonosax mixer when rain found its way through a hole in my cover. You can’t ask for anything better than that.”