

Rising High raises the bar for audio and imaging with Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos



Fans of films about the shadier side of the high-powered business world are in for a treat with the new Netflix film *Rising High* (or *Betonrausch* in German, literally 'concrete rush'), produced by UFA Fiction.

The film tells the story of a young man prepared to do anything to get rich by gambling on the Berlin property market with the help of a shady business partner. But the pair's hedonistic lifestyle pushes things too far, threatening to destroy what they've built.

With such a colourful story, Dolby Vision® HDR imaging technology and Dolby Atmos three-dimensional audio technology were the logical choice to bring this richness to the screen.

Post-production preparations pay off

Niklaas Warda, an in-house producer at UFA Fiction's post-production partner Rotor Film, says exploring the creative opportunities provided by the technical features of Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos was important from the very beginning.

During the early stages of filming, director Cüneyt Kaya met with director of photography Sebastian Bäuml, the production team, the post-production team, and sound designer Gregor Junghans to discuss which audio and visual elements of the film he most wanted to highlight. The post-production team at Rotor Film was then able to look at early scenes to determine what worked and what needed attention, and then communicate that to Kaya while shooting was still under way to help improve what was being captured on set.

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Dolby Atmos was part of the creative process from the start

As a company, Rotor Film strongly believes Dolby Atmos should be used for all genres, including dramas and documentaries. As a classic heist movie in a German context, *Rising High* demonstrates how Dolby Atmos can be used to support the production team’s artistic intent and enhance the audience’s enjoyment. The creative use of Dolby Atmos’ capabilities meant it was integral to the storytelling, says Rotor Film re-recording mixer Gregor Bonse, who was responsible for the sound mix of the film.

During pre-production, sound designer Gregor Junghans and his team thought about the exciting ways they could employ Dolby Atmos to enhance the viewer’s experience and engagement. Bonse explains that the decision to work with this format provided the opportunity to tell the story “three-dimensionally” by “exploiting the entire space” of the listener’s environment. The sound designer came to the set himself to record surround sounds to use while mixing in Dolby Atmos.

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Junghans made notes about locations offering interesting soundscapes, attended the shoots and recorded sounds and precisely positioned them in the finished soundtrack.

“So we had 3D audio recorded in B-format straight from the locations. It lets you work in a very nuanced way. We ended up using the technology to incorporate atmospheric soundscapes such as forest, garden and construction site, which are portrayed in a very detailed manner”, Bonse explains.

They decided object-based Dolby Atmos sounds would be best deployed in the music and drug trip scenes of the film. “We tried to infuse these trips and parties with lots of details, using musical elements everywhere, which are really trippy and swirl around you, as well as certain effects when they are snorting

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Petra Lisson, in-house colourist, Rotor Film

cocaine. You can hear those effects flying behind you, using delays and stutters”, Bonse explains.

In this way, the title of the film - *Betonrausch* - was literally expressed by the soundtrack: “They are basically on a megalomaniac high - a rush - intoxicated by success”, Bonse says.

The team further enhanced the storytelling by deploying other effects “to catapult us into the next scene” - for example, thunder rumbling around & above the viewer or the noise of a child’s balloon moving around you to transition into the family home scene.

Bonse adds that, with these capabilities at your disposal, it’s important to exercise some restraint: “When you have such tools available, the question is always to what extent you actually use them. If I have things flying around and behind me all the time, I am just distracted, I can’t focus on the story”. When used appropriately, it all comes together, Bonse continues. For example,

the beginning of the film has few sound effects, conservatively mixed to the front, as the main objective is to introduce the viewer to the story. “And then, the more captivated you are, there are things happening which intensify your experience, but they immerse you. You’re not conscious of which speakers are being used”.

Related to this, Bonse suggests that mixing in Dolby Atmos will translate to a good 7.1 mix, to a good 5.1 mix, and to a good stereo mix. If problems arise in one of the sub formats, they will likely be caused by improper balancing in the initial Dolby Atmos mix. In his experience, few things needed to be adjusted when downmixing.

Dolby Vision allows creativity and simplifies production

Rising High was the first big Dolby Vision project for Rotor Film. The company’s previous HDR experience had mostly been with HDR10. One of the main differences in working with Dolby Vision is that you perform the HDR grading



and then derive the SDR from it; it worked straight away – “it was just a matter of rethinking it and doing it the other way around”, says Warda.

Another advantage is that, with Dolby Vision, you deliver one HDR master and the metadata for your HDR and SDR versions, instead of two separate masters as with HDR10. This new process was quite exciting for the team, as you can get much more detail starting in HDR rather than having to work within the constraints of SDR and make compromises from the start of the process.

Petra Lisson, in-house colourist at Rotor Film and responsible for the colour correction in *Rising High*, was excited about the prospect of working with Dolby Vision.

A benefit of HDR, according to Lisson, is the “extra headroom” it provides “to really let an image shine or glow. You can make the image look more three-dimensional in subtle ways, with more colour volume, makes things possible that weren’t possible before – bright blue skies, fires that really have colour and detail and so on”, she adds.

A lot of the colours in *Rising High* were meant to be “quite loud”, while other parts of the film needed an austere, authentic Berlin look. For example, the banking world was depicted as being cold and “a place where you wouldn’t make contact with people easily”, according to Lisson, while the more trippy scenes get “really colourful and really dark”.

Whilst the range of contrast offered by Dolby Vision is much greater than SDR, Lisson says that “does not mean that you always have to use the entire dynamic range or go to the maximum”. Rather than everything having to be “super bright with a lot of contrast”, Lisson adds, Dolby Vision “supports you in the creative process” – it gives you a wider colour palette and gives you more creative opportunities.

Rising High was the first HDR project that director Cüneyt Kaya and director of photography Sebastian Bäuml had worked on – and they were certainly impressed: “I don’t know if they had ever really seen HDR before. They sat here, looked at the monitor and said they’d like to take it home”, says Lisson.



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Niklaas Warda, in-house producer, Rotor Film

Post-production deliverables easier with Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos

Kaya’s enthusiasm for the final form was gratifying for the post-production team, who worked hard to ensure all deliverables were right.

Warda says working in Dolby Vision made everything come together more easily: “The Dolby Vision trim pass is used to produce an SDR master. Depending on what deliverable is required by the studio a Dolby Atmos mix can produce a 5.1 and stereo version, likewise, in Dolby Vision, the SDR comes via the metadata, this maintains the creative intent regardless of the device the consumer uses to listen to it or to view it”.

For Netflix, the team delivered the Netflix IMF package that includes the HDR file with the Dolby Vision metadata.

Warda says: “We QC all the files and masters that we deliver. With Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos, particularly with *Rising High*, our first Netflix production with these formats, Petra and Gregor [Bonse] checked the whole thing themselves.

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The art of good storytelling

Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos provide more space and subtlety to enable filmmakers to really explore the nuances of sound and vision. And they deliver a more lifelike experience that is more enjoyable and immersive for the audience. From a creative standpoint, having a great Dolby Vision image master that derives other versions and Dolby Atmos audio maintains the creative intent and makes life much easier in not having multiple versions of content.

With the two Dolby technologies at its fingertips, Rotor Film was able to make *Rising High* a feast for the senses without forgetting the core value of telling a good story.