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## Scene and heard: directors of photography spill the beans on TV's biggest shows

In the 'golden age' of television, directors of photography are charged with making shows look better than ever. We talked to five of the best

Interviews by **Eric Thurm**



This may hurt a tad': Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys in *The Americans*. Photograph: FX Network

*Warning: this post contains spoilers*

## Richard Rutkowski on the 'tooth scene' from *The Americans*



Yes, I'm a dentist. It's bring your own anaesthetic though.' Photograph: FX Network/Everett/Rex

The scene is built around the idea of sex – it's the most intimate and physical connection we've seen between the characters played by [Keri Russell](#) and [Matthew Rhys](#) for a while. It's tender. He doesn't want to hurt her, but it clearly is going to hurt.

Thomas Schlamme, the director, was clear he wanted very close shots on their eyes. And part of this is the idea that they're breaking themselves down into physical parts.

The shot I am most in love with comes after he gets the second half of the tooth out, and we're on Keri's face, and there's some unbelievable brilliance between where the camera was, where the focus held, what she did with her face – she practically wept on command. I was crouched on top of her with a handheld camera and a 100 macro lens. And we got that shot where you go from one of her eyes to the other. She's looking at Philip, but as an audience member you feel like she's looking at you. You feel like you are totally right there. For lack of a better word, that's the scene's climax.

There is no special effect in the sequence. There are some sounds that obviously wrench the ear in combination with pliers in someone's mouth. There's a fake bit of a tooth that comes out of a mouth. Keri Russell bit down on cork, and gave Matthew the cork as a place to put his pliers. But there's no special effect or trick that makes this work. What makes it work is the stellar performers, the situation is well set up, and you're close enough with the camera that you feel like you can hear her heart beating faster.