

Last fall, German DP Mathias Schoeningh (*THE HOUSE IS BURNING*) shot the independent feature film *HERE AND THERE* in New York City for writer/director Darko Lungolov. The movie follows a broke, cynical American named Robert (David Thornton), who travels to Belgrade to make a quick buck by marrying a Serbian woman for legal US immigration status. The film also stars Mirjana Karanovic, Cyndi Lauper and Branslav Trifunovic. Schoeningh and the crew were tasked with lighting limitations and shooting in real locations. Here, the lens-man writes about his experience on the transatlantic shoot and how he put to the test ARRI/Zeiss Master Primes and ARRI Digital Cinematography Accessories.

DP Mathias Schoeningh on filming with ARRI's Digital Cinematography Accessories

HERE AND THERE

I liked the script from Director Darko Lungolov and especially his ideas on the visual realization of the film. He was aiming for a rough documentary style, yet feature-like look. The actors were supposed to move freely without positioning marks and the camera was to constantly follow them. We shot almost exclusively handheld and in order to turn 360 degrees, we kept the location free of tripods and any production equipment. This was quite a challenge.

We shot DVCPROHD using an AJ-HDX9000 in conjunction with the Pro35 from P&S Technik, a set of ARRI/Zeiss Master Prime lenses and the ARRI Digital Cinematography Accessories. We had to shoot in mostly tight settings in typically small New York apartments, some car mount sequences and also handheld in the car. The Pro35 adapter enabled me, despite fixed focal length lenses, to create separation and depth within the tightest spaces. In addition, I like the rough look the rotating groundglass creates to offset the sharp, static video image. Before we started the production, we tested the effects of the various speeds of the rotating groundglass and found out that a slower rotation gave us a better look when shooting close-ups. By using the adapter I lost one stop, which I could easily compensate with the speed of the Master Primes. That was a big plus. The image quality of the Master Primes at full aperture is just amazing. Most of the time we shot wide open, which, of course, made our focus puller's (Jack Lam) job harder, especially since we worked without focus marks and a lot of improvisation from either the actors or cameras.

Jack was very happy with how the Digital Cinematography Accessories and Master Primes fit together. All lenses have the same physical size and you just swing the matte-box open and exchange the lens. No further alignments were necessary since the front diameter and focus ring always remained the same. The one thing that I consider really outstanding on the Master Primes was that they don't breathe at all. At first, I was afraid the MPs would be too sharp for the video, but in combination with the Pro35, we achieved a truly great look. In past video productions using the Pro35, I always insisted on older style lenses for that reason. This was obviously a wrong decision. The Digital Cinematography Accessories are super compact and very easy to use which speeds things up tremendously. Filters in all different sizes fit right into one and the same tray.

The tight shooting spaces in New York were a challenge in all aspects. As I said before, we very often shot 360 degrees and since we were not allowed to use wall spreaders in the old buildings, the only chance for lighting was to light from outside. We worked a lot with practicals, which would appear in the frame. The Master Primes were very accommodating in this regard, because they have no glare. During a short break we made some experiments shining various lights straight into the lens and interestingly enough, not much happened, even the contrast stayed the same. Anyhow, it drove me nuts setting the lights in these tiny rooms to accommodate 360-degree camera moves.

To see a trailer and learn more about the film, go to www.hereandtheremovie.com.

Mathias Schoeningh

The Digital Cinematography Accessories on the various sets of *HERE AND THERE*

