

**T**he *Celestine Prophecy* is a film based on the best-selling book about a man (known simply as the Narrator) on a search for an ancient Peruvian manuscript that contains nine powerful prophecies. Along his journey, he meets resistance from religious groups and even the Peruvian government, while envisioning such fantastic sights as energy transfers and auras.

To bring the book to screen, director Armand Mastroianni called upon Cinematographer Michael Givens to lend his skills in visually rendering the popular spiritual story. Givens has years of experience shooting effects, and while considering how to show these otherworldly experiences, the DP determined a digital intermediate (DI) would be the best option.

Since DIs are not cheap, Givens found a way to allocate the funds from other areas. The production managed to save roughly a quarter of the film budget by shooting on spherical lenses on Super 35mm with a 3-perf pull down.

Says Givens, who also shot *Rebel Private*, "A lot of strange things happen in the film. For instance, the main character looks at some plants and can see a glowing energy. I wanted to do

To imbue the film with a certain level of vitality, the filmmakers elected to keep the camera moving for most of the film. "We needed to show movement and have this feeling of energy," notes the DP. "When the Narrator sees these energy fields, we would move the camera in slowly, dollying past or craning up to punctuate what this man is going through."

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For the Cinematographer, nature often inspired the best lighting design for a number of scenes. "A lot of times on the film I would use natural light and try not to do anything else. We did a scene inside a Spanish building at Flagler College with actor Hector Elizondo (as Cardinal Sebastian). Hector was on the second floor of the rotunda. The light from the sunset was streaming through slats in the windows and there were really warm walls and paintings. It was already so gorgeous I couldn't screw it up, I just enhanced it by putting some griffons on the first floor and bouncing two 12Ks into them to give a little fill through the opening to the second floor."

# Pure Vision: Michael Givens Shoots *The Celestine Prophecy*



something clever and within the budget. I suggested that we shoot some plants before a bluescreen and effect the different layers in DI during post so you could see this odd change in their quality."

To illustrate the Narrator's journey as he becomes enlightened, Givens painted with a palette that steadily transforms as the character does. "The story is about a man who makes a change and is looking for answers. I wanted to guide the film visually and show these sorts of changes," he explains. "In the beginning, his life is dreary - all of that is shown through muted colors and grays. Then he goes to the jungle that is rich and beautiful, yet I held back a little until he has the power to see his inner beauty. I wanted the audience be on the same learning curve as the Narrator."

Givens relied on Kodak VISION2 5218 500T film to capture his specific looks. He says, "I tend to shoot on wide open lenses. It drives the Camera Assistants crazy, especially with night scenes and long lenses, but our budget wasn't huge and I didn't have an endless supply of lights. I use the tools I'm used to and I've never used anything else besides Kodak. I find it so versatile and I know it like the back of my hand." To read more about the project go to:

[www.celestinevision.com](http://www.celestinevision.com). ■

**Above:** (L to R) DP Michael Givens working with director Armand Mastroianni, actors Annabeth Gish (seated), and Matthew Settle (seated). DP Michael Givens and actor Matthew Settle in conversation while shooting a scene for *The Celestine Prophecy*.