

Exploring post paths for *C'est pas moi, je le jure!*

Traditional photochemical film processing played a starring role in the post-production of *C'est pas moi, je le jure!*, a new feature film directed by Philippe Falardeau and photographed by André Turpin.



To tell the tragic comic story of a 10-year-old boy whose family is disintegrating, the filmmakers envisioned a contrasty, saturated and somewhat gritty look that showed the world from the youth's unique point of view. The story is set in 1968.

Turpin originally planned a digital intermediate post-production path, but he was disappointed in tests that resulted in a lack of film grain. "What I like about traditional baths is that although it's a controlled and precise path, there are some unpredictable side effects," says Turpin. "To me, that is something gained. I want these surprises and the element of chance. Sometimes the side effects are undesirable, and we work to minimize them. But sometimes there are beautiful surprises, and you find a look that you had never imagined even with the total control you have in digital."

The filmmakers enlisted Conrad Perrault, who was

technical director of the National Film Board of Canada lab for 30 years. Perrault retired in 1994 but he occasionally assists filmmakers on special projects.

"Working with Conrad is like bringing on a master chemist," says Turpin. "He has so many tricks in his bag. He helped me with *Maelström*, a picture I shot in 1999. I feel privileged to tap his deep knowledge and experience."

"The problem with the digital route is that when you boost the contrast, the colors look a bit unnatural," says Perrault. "The image looks cleaner, but artificial. We wanted real grain structure."

The filmmakers did extensive testing and experimentation using eight different film stocks. They eventually arrived at a formula that involved using print film as an interpositive and EASTMAN COLOR INTERNEGATIVE II 2272 film, which is designed for use with EKTACHROME. From that

element (the 2272), the release prints are made. But by itself this path created too much contrast, partly because normal interpositive has an orange base while the print stock they used in its place is clear-based.

Further experimentation led Perrault to try pre-flashing the print film to reduce contrast, thus opening up details in tones ranging from medium gray to white. He also applied a degree of pull processing during the internegative stage.

"The resulting image is very contrasty, with inky blacks, but very vivid colors and quite a lot of grain," says Turpin.

Turpin chose KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 and 250D 5205 films. "I also compensated in lighting and filtration," he says. "We used low contrast filters to further reduce contrast. I tried to light with much more fill than I would normally, and lit more flat. In night situations, I had to really light characters in order to see

their faces, whereas I normally might leave them unlit. This also meant we had to work to find motivation for lighting, especially at night."

Turpin says he tended to over expose by at least a half a stop, and sometimes more. "In sunny day exteriors, I wanted the images to feel like you're walking out of a dark space into bright, flashing sunlight," he says.

When asked how he knew the film's look was strong enough without overdoing it, he replies, "I think you can accept very strong textures in landscape or architecture settings, for example. But with the human face and eyes, it can be dangerous. I can accept lighting on people that is less than flattering, but there is a cut-off point where it takes you away from the film. Philippe and I were careful about maintaining the emotional expression on the actors' faces."

C'est pas moi, je le jure! is currently on the festival circuit.

Eight different film stocks tested

Print film used as interpositive
(later pre-flashed to reduce contrast)

EASTMAN COLOR INTERNEGATIVE
11 2272 + EKTACHROME
(some pull processing applied)

Release Prints