

Tristan Whitman and director Charles Oliver had collaborated for more than a decade on commercials when they decided to make the leap to narrative filmmaking with *Crossing Paths*. Oliver wrote the script, which tells the stories of Ana (Minnie Driver) and the man who takes her son hostage and accidentally kills him (Jeremy Renner). They only meet once, when she sees him in prison prior to his execution for the crime.

Upon reading the script, Whitman immediately began combing the internet for source photos to explain to Oliver how he envisioned the film. Eventually the filmmakers devised a distinctive look for the past and present of both main characters, as well as a fifth visual signature for the single sequence in which they both appear.

Whitman made extensive use of the KODAK Look Manager System (KLMS) to try out various looks. He used the software to emulate various choices in contrast, color, and processing techniques, including bleach bypass. Production designer Luke Freeborn also took part in the pre-visualization.

During production, Whitman would print out or e-mail manipulated photos to the lab and other collaborators to show them what he had in mind. "Using KLMS saved us a lot of money," says Whitman. "It allowed us to do extensive testing without a lot of expense to determine exactly what we wanted, and to communicate that to the lab and the people at Deluxe Toronto who will be handling the digital intermediate."

The visual signature devised for each of the two main characters represents how that character is seen by the other main character. Minnie Driver's character is seen in the present in a faded, bleached-out Kodachrome look.

"You can tell that at one time she had vibrancy in her life, but the pain she's endured since the loss of her son has sucked the color and life out of her," says Whitman. "In her past look, we see warm earth tones. She is a working woman, but her life is inviting."

Renner as Saul is seen in the past in a harsher milieu. "His past is depicted with a bleach bypass look," says Whitman. "The present, in prison, is almost monochromatic, like a duotone photograph."

Whitman used older stocks – KODAK VISION 500T 5279 and KODAK VISION 250D 5246 films – and slightly underexposed to add to the grittiness of the images.

"We shot Ana's look clean, with no filtration," says Whitman. "Saul's past look was photographed with a cyan filter. We enhanced the looks with lighting. Using KLMS, we decided to skip the bleach on the negative rather than on the print, which adds more contrast and sucks more color out of the images."

The format was 3-perf Super 35, which results in a 2.41:1 widescreen aspect ratio. The A camera was a Panavision Millennium and the B camera was a Panavision Platinum. The lenses were Primo primes and a Primo zoom.

"Panavision and Kodak were extremely helpful to us on this project," says Whitman. "We could not have made this picture without their assistance."

Whitman, working with his gaffer Mike Walsh, found that a soft side light worked well for Driver's face. "We wanted her to look good, but not glamorous," he says. "For Jeremy, the light was more topy, creating shadows in his eyes. It's not a very flattering light, but his character is shadowy and he is going through rough times. We wanted to communicate that this person made some very bad decisions, but at the same time he didn't set out to kill anyone and under different circumstances he might have been a good person."

KLMS helped keep everyone on the same page, and it gave Whitman the confidence to take chances. "Sometimes we had the laptop on set, and we'd print photos I had taken with my digital camera to show how far we were going to go with a certain look or scene," he says. "We were able to show the gaffer, the producers, and everybody else. That got everyone on the set excited about what we were doing. Also, the dailies timer was able to get the images pretty close to the final look. That way people aren't surprised when they see the finished film."

His motto for the project was, "If I'm not pushing myself to the edge, I'm not doing it right. We told ourselves that we had one chance to get it right," he says. "Charles and I decided from the start that the entire cast and crew must know that we were of one mind. We would look at things and say 'Is it enough? Is it too much?' But we never let each other skimp, or pull back. We had a small budget, but we knew we could make it look bigger than what it cost." ■

Crossing Paths

An ambitious visual design for

