



Above: (L to R) Diane Keaton, pictured here with Josh Hopkins, stars in *Surrender, Dorothy*, shot by DP Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC.

**S**urrender, Dorothy features Diane Keaton as a grieving mother who is searching for answers after her 23-year-old daughter is killed in an automobile accident. Sara, her daughter, was sharing a summer home with friends in the Hamptons on Long Island, when the accident occurred. Natalie (Keaton) visits them to learn about her daughter's last days. She moves into Sara's room and gets to know her friends.

"It isn't just a story about parental grief," explains director

Charles McDougall. "It is more about the connections people make in life, often in unexpected ways. There is an initial sense of antagonism when Natalie meets her daughter's friends, but as time goes on, there is a strong emotional connection between them. It's an optimistic story."

**Surrender, Dorothy** is scheduled to air on CBS Television in May.

# Surrender, Dorothy

explores a mother's love for her daughter

McDougall had an ambitious 20-day shooting schedule entirely at practical locations in and around San Diego, California. Most of the scenes were staged in and outside a house in Point Loma, which served as a setting for the summer home in the Hamptons. He asked Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC to help create a visual language.

The cinematographer has compiled some 70 narrative film credits during his storied career. He earned the Oscar for **Close**

**Encounters of the Third Kind** as well as nominations for **The Deer Hunter** and **The River**. **The Mists of Avalon** and **Stalin** were his only previous telefilms. Both of which earned him Emmy nominations, including a win for the latter. **Surrender, Dorothy** was the first time Zsigmond has used a 16mm or Super 16mm format camera on any narrative film since he was a student in Budapest during the 1950s.

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"We had three days in pre-production, and five days of technical scouts," Zsigmond recalls. "We spoke about Charles' ideas and I looked at some of his films. He wanted a visceral look with the cameras almost always moving, though it's never obvious. He is a gutsy director who approached this film as though it was for the cinema."

There were no storyboards. McDougall generally prepared shot lists during the evenings, and brought them to the set the next day. He planned up to 50 shots a day. Zsigmond worked out how he was going to light while the director rehearsed the actors.

McDougall and Zsigmond decided to film almost all of **Surrender, Dorothy** mainly with two side-by-side Panavision Elaine cameras with 4:1 and 10:1 zoom lenses used for variable focus. One camera was on either a medium or long shot. The other one was used for close-ups that McDougall used as cut-aways. For instance, in one scene, a close-up of a character's hands reflects the character's emotions during a discussion.

Zsigmond used the full frame composing in 16:9 format.

The Super 16mm cameras were often tracking on dollies. One scene has five characters seated around a table talking. Zsigmond laid tracks around the table.

Both cameras slowly tracked around that circle following the flow of the conversation.

A walking and talking scene in bright sunlight on a beach was filmed with the camera on a Steadicam that puts the audience into the middle of the conversation.

Zsigmond used soft light motivated by visible sources, including doors, windows and lamps in the house. The walls in the house were painted dark colors to create

contrast with faces of the characters in the foreground.

Sometimes Zsigmond used a board to flag light off characters and objects. There is a shot where an apparently naked character is sleepwalking down a dark hallway. He enters the room where Natalie is sleeping. Zsigmond flagged the light off most of the character's body using dabs of light to reveal glimpses of his face, limbs and shoulders.

The cinematographer decided to record the entire movie on Kodak VISION2 500T 7218 film. The negative is rated for an exposure index (E.I.) of 500 in 3200 K light. By choosing to work with one emulsion, he enabled McDougall to keep shooting without stopping to reload when scenes moved from brightly lit areas into near darkness.

Occasionally, in the darkest scenes, Zsigmond rated the film at E.I. 1000 to gain an extra stop, while processing it normally at the lab. In bright, sunny exterior scenes, he had neutral density filters on lenses to cut the intensity of light coming through lenses. In one sun-lit scene, he had an ND 9 filter on the lens and was still pulling stop T-8.

"It works, because our pupils close down in bright daylight, and we see deeper into the background; so it is very natural looking," he explains.

Keaton is in almost every scene. There are virtually no close-ups of her face. She is almost always engaged with other characters. One notable exception is a scene where Natalie is brought to a yard filled with rusting old cars. She is led to the car her daughter was in during the fatal accident. She opens the door, and sees a medallion that her daughter wore hanging on the rearview mirror. When Natalie reaches to take the medallion, there is a brief, emotional close-up of her eyes in the mirror.

In some scenes, Zsigmond made painterly use of CTO orange gels on lights

to create a more romantic tone. He filmed a color chart, including use of the gels, before every scene as a reference for the dailies timer at FotoKem Labs in Burbank.

Zsigmond explains that he showed the dailies timer how warm or how cold he wanted the look.

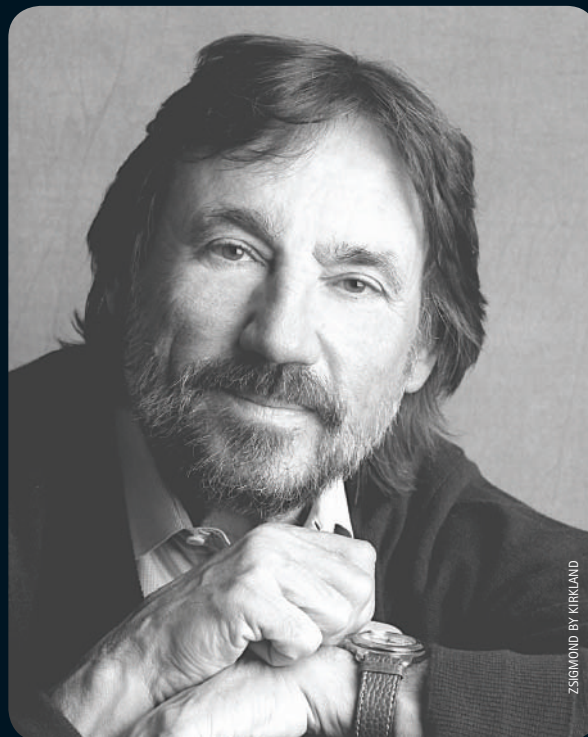
The cut negative was scanned at 2K resolution and timed by colorist Randy Starnes at Modern VideoFilm in Los Angeles, in an interactive, collaborative environment with Zsigmond. McDougall and editor Michael Berenbaum were present when Zsigmond and the colorist put the final touches on the look

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McDougall wasn't surprised. He was born, raised and educated in England, where he began his career before migrating to Los Angeles several years ago.

McDougall's impressive body of work in England includes **Hillsborough**. He



ZSIGMOND BY KIRKLAND

earned a BAFTA Award for directing that series in 1997.

"I've probably directed more Super 16mm than 35mm films, so I wasn't surprised that Vilmos could create compelling images in this format," he says. "I learned something new everyday we worked together from pre-production right through telecine." ■

**Below:** (L to R) Lauren German, Josh Hopkins, Diane Keaton, Tom Everett Scott and Chris Pine (in pool) in a scene from *Surrender, Dorothy*, shot by DP Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC.



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