

The Los Angeles Times called **Hustle & Flow** "the most hotly anticipated title of the Sundance Film Festival." The reporter noted that the audience was jammed with top studio executives. Paramount Pictures won a "bidding war" and paid \$9.5 million for the right to distribute the film. Amelia Vincent, ASC earned Sundance's American Excellence in Cinematography Award for her contributions to the film.

Writer/director Craig Brewer scripted the story about DJay, a small time hustler and pimp in the "hood" of Memphis, Tennessee. DJay is approaching 40 and desperately wants to become "somebody." He dreams and schemes about making it big as a rapper.

Hustle & Flow was produced in Memphis by Stephanie Allain's Homegrown Pictures and financed by John Singleton. The cast includes Terrence Dashon Howard as DJay, Taryn Manning as Nola, Anthony Anderson as Key, Taraji Henson as Shug, and Ludacris as successful rapper Skinny Black. Memphis rappers Al Kapone and Three Six Mafia composed original songs for the film and Scott Bomar composed the score.

Vincent says that her first meeting with Brewer began a 24-month odyssey in quest of a visual style for **Hustle & Flow**. During this time he was seeking funding for production. The film was originally slated to be produced in 35mm format with a substantial budget. After initial financing faltered, Singleton invested in the film.

The decision to produce **Hustle & Flow** in Super 16mm format was only partially motivated by costs. Vincent wanted to give Brewer the freedom to work with small, mobile cameras. She also felt the format was the right aesthetic for the film.

Her modest camera package included two ARRI SR-3s and an Aaton A-Minima, fitted with Zeiss prime lenses. Vincent limited her film palette to two Kodak VISION2 emulsions. She used Kodak VISION2 500T 7218 film for interiors and night scenes, and Kodak VISION2 100T 7212 film for daylight exteriors. She opted not to use diffusion filters.

Almost all of **Hustle & Flow** was filmed at practical locations with the main exception of the music studio, which was built on a very small sound stage in Memphis.

to say. We decided a handheld camera felt right for that scene. Sometimes I used a slightly longer lens than normal in a handheld situation to give a shot a little more energy."

The negative was processed at FotoKem in Burbank, California. Later, the edited film was scanned on the Imagica 2K scanner and converted to digital files. Vincent timed the film for shot-to-shot continuity in interactive digital intermediate sessions (DI) at FotoKem with colorist Walter Volpatto. Eventually, the timed digital files were recorded onto

Behind the Scenes With Amelia Vincent, ASC: Making Hustle & Flow



Above: (L to R) Actors Taraji Henson, Paula Jai Parker, Terrence Howard, and Taryn Manning in *Hustle & Flow*, shot by cinematographer Amy Vincent, ASC.

"You could photograph Memphis in a much more somber way but we chose to go for a very contrasty look and saturated colors," she explains. "All the elements were unbelievably beautiful, including locations, set dressings, wardrobe, the various skin tones, and how beautifully the sweat glistened on the faces of the characters in close-ups."

The camera movement was generally achieved with simple dolly moves and a substantial amount of handheld work.

No cranes or Steadicam. "We didn't necessarily make the obvious choices for shooting handheld," she explains. "There is a very sedate scene with two people talking in a confined space, but their world is about to be disrupted by something one of them is going

an intermediate film stock (Kodak Vision Color Immediate Film 2242).

"There are so many amazing tools at your disposal in the DI suite," says Vincent, "but with **Hustle and Flow** we kept it all very true to what was originally exposed on the negative. The music, script and performances are so honest that I didn't want to do anything out of context."

Vincent concludes that advances in film stocks and DI technologies have made the Super 16mm format a viable origination medium in all budget ranges, enabling filmmakers to remain in the photochemical world.

A line from a character in the film, expresses the spirit of the story: "Everybody gotta have a dream."

To read more about the making of **Hustle & Flow**, go to www.kodak.com/go/motion. ■

Below: (L to R) Director Craig Brewer and cinematographer Amy Vincent, ASC discussing a scene for *Hustle & Flow*.



Far Left: (L to R) Actors Terrence Howard, DJ Qualls, and Anthony Anderson in a scene set in a makeshift recording studio in *Hustle & Flow*.

