

Inspirational **Sisters of** Suppe

Sisters of War is based on the true story of army nurse Lorna Whyte and Sister Berenice Twohill, a Roman Catholic nun. The two women were among a small group of Australian nurses and nuns that the Japanese military made World War II prisoners on the remote island of New Britain, part of Papua New Guinea. The nurses were eventually sent to Japan as part of a POW swap. Although they were two very different women, Whyte and Twohill forged a friendship and survived an unimaginable experience.

Producer Andrew Wiseman tapped Brendan Maher to direct the telefilm and Ben Nott, ACS for photography. "Andrew explained that although he had a very modest budget, both he and Brendan had very high hopes for the end product," recalls Nott.

Nott chose KODAK VISION2 50D Color Negative Film 7201, and KODAK VISION3 250D Color Negative Film 7207 and 200T Color Negative Film 7213. His camera package included an ARRI SR 3 and Zeiss 16mm Ultra Primes.

"Given the tight budget, the producers had originally planned to shoot this project in HD," says Nott, "but to his credit, Andrew was very open to discussing the format. The fact that film was the right tool for this job was simply undeniable. We were shooting in the jungle with the potential to compose frames that would have large areas in the top and bottom of the exposure curve.

"Also, I knew I would not have the resources and time to carefully finesse the images to attenuate the highlights and fill shadows," adds Nott. "We would shoot full sun in clearings surrounded by dark jungle. ... To choose any other medium would have been a disaster."

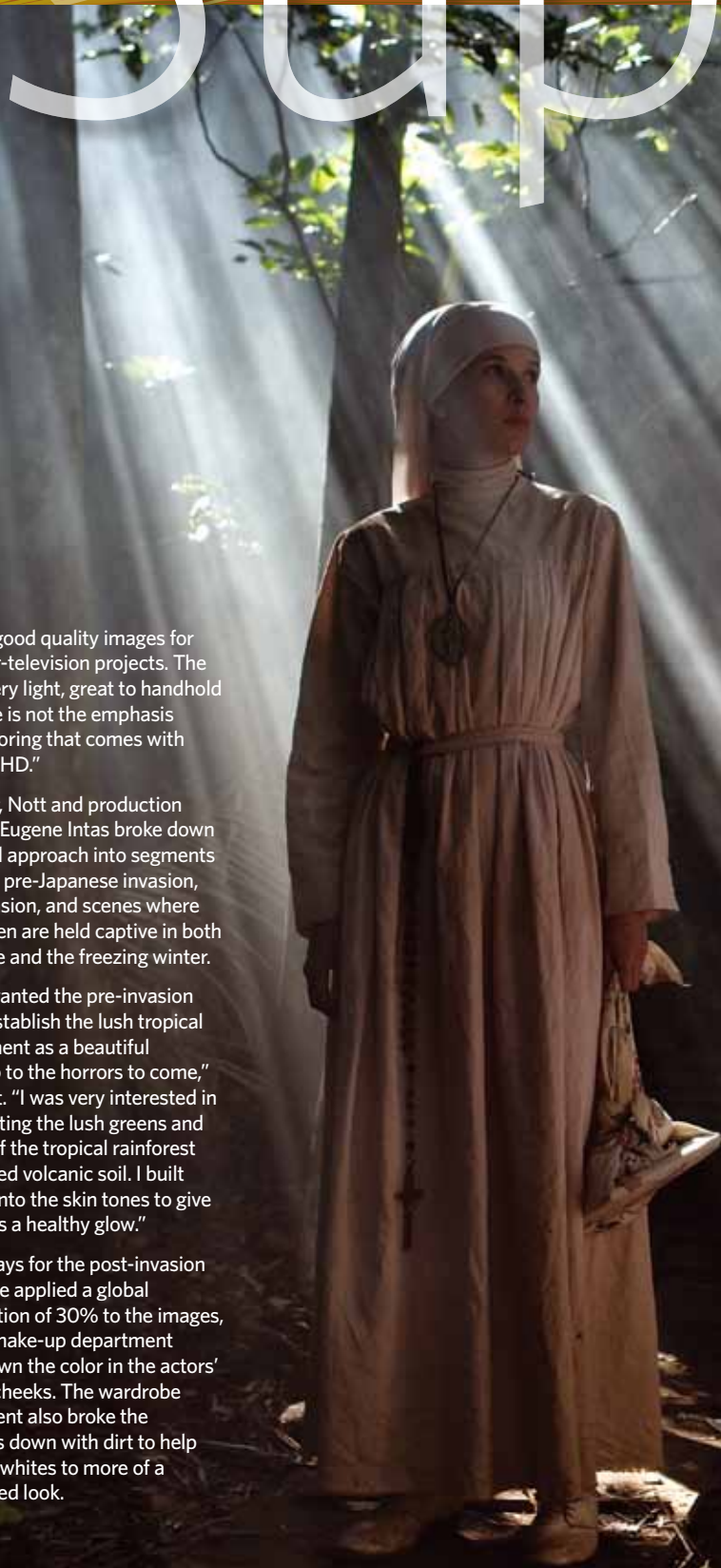
Nott was confident that the Super 16 format would be the right choice for the story. "I firmly believe that shooting 16mm is the fastest

route to good quality images for made-for-television projects. The gear is very light, great to handhold and there is not the emphasis on monitoring that comes with shooting HD."

Maher, Nott and production designer Eugene Intas broke down the visual approach into segments including pre-Japanese invasion, post-invasion, and scenes where the women are held captive in both the jungle and the freezing winter.

"We wanted the pre-invasion look to establish the lush tropical environment as a beautiful backdrop to the horrors to come," says Nott. "I was very interested in exaggerating the lush greens and browns of the tropical rainforest and the red volcanic soil. I built warmth into the skin tones to give the actors a healthy glow."

Nott says for the post-invasion visuals, he applied a global desaturation of 30% to the images, and the make-up department toned down the color in the actors' lips and cheeks. The wardrobe department also broke the costumes down with dirt to help push the whites to more of a tea-stained look.



War in r-16

"For sequences in the jungle, I had the colorist increase the desaturation to 50% and cool the image slightly," describes Nott. "We wanted the actors to blend into the environment as if their helpless souls were trapped beneath the dense canopy. The wardrobe designer changed the nuns' costumes from white to dirty brown so they blended with the deep-jungle shadows."

During the freezing Japan winter, the filmmakers wanted the actors to merge as if captured by the snow-covered landscape. "I stuck with the 50% de-sat and photographed day exterior on the tungsten stock without correction," says Nott. "Wardrobe and make-up completed the picture by muting all color and matching the hue of the background. To bring contrast integrity to the images, we had the Japanese guards dressed in black."

Sisters of War was shot over 25 days on Tamborine Mountain in South East Queensland.

"Brendan Maher is one Australia's finest filmmakers," adds Nott. "His philosophy is that all aspects of the art department must work in concert to produce a coherent canvas that serves the story. The wardrobe, make-up, sets, paint, dressing and lighting were all designed to work together to create the mood for this piece. Many filmmaking teams begin with this obvious philosophy, but when the 1st AD slaps a 25-day schedule on the table and the budget is less than \$4 million, then only the most committed stay the course. Brendan Maher is committed, and our relationship blossomed as we held firm to producing four-page days that look fantastic."

