

"Not every job you do screams 'Look at me, I went through a digital intermediate!' The whole idea is to help tell the story, and whether that's done in a subtle way or in an overt way depends on the nature of the material." So says LaserPacific Colorist David Cole, who handled digital timing on the indie feature *The Savages*, under the supervision of cinematographer W. Mott Hupfel III and writer-director Tamara Jenkins.



The Savages: extending cinematography into the DI suite

Film stocks
Colorist

KODAK VISION2 250D 5205, KODAK VISION2 500T 5218
David Cole

Digital Intermediate
Technology

LaserPacific
4K scanning

The Savages is an independent feature film in which an adult brother and sister (played by Philip Seymour Hoffman and Laura Linney) struggle to adapt to their emotionally distant father's advancing senility. Jenkins, best known for *Slums of Beverly Hills*, and Hupfel, whose cinematography credits include *The Notorious Bettie Page* and *The American Astronaut*, chose a handheld aesthetic to make the audience feel as if they are present in the room. The creative decision was made to have a handheld approach in real locations using minimal lighting, and follow with a digital intermediate post workflow to fine-tune skin tones, color temperatures and continuity, all in support of the visual storytelling.

"Tamara and I wanted the camerawork to feel totally natural and not draw attention to itself," says Hupfel. "We were both enamored with an excellent film from France called *The Beat That My Heart Skipped*. In that film the camerawork is highly stylized and

yet at the same time completely transparent."

The majority of the film was shot at practical locations in the New York City area. Hupfel lit the spaces with a goal of underscoring the drama while allowing the actors to move freely.

For daylight scenes, Hupfel used KODAK VISION2 250D 5205 film. He chose KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 for night exteriors. "With the 5218, you can literally make it look almost exactly like what you see with your eyes," he says.

In most interiors, he used extremely small, unobtrusive lighting instruments. Gaffer Ken Shibata and the crew ran the lights through a dimmer board so that adjustments between takes could be made remotely, without disturbing the actors.

Throughout the shoot, Hupfel knew he would be able to tweak the images in the DI suite, which saved valuable time on the set. The negative was processed

at Technicolor and scanned at LaserPacific on a Northlight scanner at 4K resolution. The images were then downsampled to 2K for digital timing.

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Hupfel and Cole adjusted plane interiors shot on stage by adding bloom, halation and wrap to the light. Scenes in Buffalo were made to feel chillier, and colors in the Arizona retirement community where the father lives were intensified to contrast with the colder East Coast environments.

Hupfel notes that Linney's fair skin picked up and reflected any colors in the sets or wardrobe. He used the DI tools to eliminate any unwanted hues. "We could pick up Laura in the back of the room, circle her face and bring it up a bit, and she could end up in the foreground with the changes following her face," he says. "Dave was very good at telling me what we could

and couldn't do. He was very good at listening to Tamara and keeping us both happy. Everyone at LaserPacific was terrific and very supportive."

"The finished film has a very traditional photochemical look," says Cole,

whose credits include *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, *King Kong* and *Southland Tales*. "Our job was to keep things real and grounded, to fine-tune continuity, and to support the emotions through the subtle color adjustments."

The digital intermediate took roughly two weeks. "We were able to pretty much nail it in that time because of the great collaboration among Mott, Tamara and myself," says Cole. "We all had opinions that we could quickly test out, and the best parts of all those ideas made it into the film. That communication was one of the driving forces behind the speed and success of the DI process."