



PHOTO: COURTESY OF PAUL RYAN

Painter and Ryan follow a different path for *Steal Me*

Above: Crew mounting camera while on location for *Steal Me* shot by DP Paul Ryan, ASC.

Above right: (L to R) Director Melissa Painter with Paul Ryan, ASC preparing to shoot a scene from the film.

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Admissions was produced in Los Angeles with many scenes filmed in one house on a short schedule and tight budget. The film was produced in Super 16mm format with Ryan frequently handholding an ARRI 16SR-3 camera. The cinematographer explains that Painter and he wanted maximum freedom for the camera to move and observe the performances as a subjective participant.

They timed the film for continuity and put final touches on the look, all in a digital intermediate (DI) suite at HD

resolution. The DI file was recorded onto 35mm color intermediate film that was used to generate release prints.

"That was the right decision for **Admissions**," Ryan says. "The film was very spontaneous. It wasn't practical to stop shooting to flag the light off a wall or to gel a window. I knew we could make those fixes in DI and also selectively manipulate colors."

Painter and Ryan decided to follow a different path during the production of **Steal Me**. The story focuses on Jake, a 15-year-old boy who travels to Montana searching for his wayward mother. A ranch family takes him in and provides friendship, food, shelter and a job. Things look promising for the teenager for a while, but then his life crumbles.

Steal Me was produced on an ambitious 24-day schedule at practical locations in Livingston, Montana, mainly on a ranch that has existed for five generations. It was the fourth film Ryan has shot in Montana and his third in Livingston.

"We never considered shooting **Steal Me** in anything but 35mm film," Painter says. "The environment and look are an important part of the story, and I have always gotten the most compelling visuals

while working with 35mm film in an optical realm."

In addition to Ryan's credits on an array of independent features, he was also a second unit cinematographer on such visually graphic films as **Horse Whisperer** and **A River Runs Through It**.

"Paul has a great eye and ability to catch the moment and make the most of natural light," she says. "I wanted the nuances you get when you film, in the same shot, warm interiors in tungsten light, combined with beautiful sky and cool blue light in daylight exteriors. I don't think you can capture those extreme tonal variations in a digital realm."

Ryan worked with a lightweight Moviecam SL and a set of prime lenses, framing images in 1:85 aspect ratio. He used compositions and camera angles that enabled the landscapes and sky to graphically reinforce the characters' situation.

"The sense of place resonates with the emotional arc of the story," Ryan says. "The texture of images becomes rougher and edgier when Jake's life begins to fall apart. I wanted a counterpoint to the natural beauty of Montana without it being obvious to the audience."

Ryan used four films depending upon where he was shooting, time of day and a scene's mood. His palette consisted of Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 film and Kodak Vision 500T 5279 and 200T 5274 films.

Additionally, he used Kodak Ektachrome 100D 5285 color reversal film for some cross-processed scenes. "We wanted some extreme visual departures to mirror Jake's moments of past anguish, and cross-processing reversal film gives you that look," Ryan says.

"We would often have afternoon thunderstorms in the middle of scenes," he adds. "When you're shooting expansive scenic imagery in wildly uncontrollable light you need a medium with the latitude to record a wide range of light, shadows and colors."

Steal Me is a Picture Entertainment Corporation production presented by Cineville Inc. ■