

How Schreiber created three looks for *The Nines*



Think of *The Nines* as a cinematic three-act play with different stories, characters and visual grammars. Act one focuses on a TV star who is under house arrest. Act two depicts a reality show or documentary being made behind the scenes during the production of a pilot for a TV drama. Act three unfolds in the woods where a successful video game designer and his family get lost after their car breaks down.

The Nines was shot by Nancy Schreiber, ASC and scripted by John August.

August described his ideas for creating distinct visual signatures for each story. Part one would have classical framing, often static, with characters moving within the frame. Part two would look like a reality show or documentary with all handheld camera movement. Part three called for cinematic production values appropriate for the pilot of a dramatic TV show.

"My first meeting with John was at his beautiful home in Los Angeles," Schreiber recalls. "He told me that it would be the main location. There were windows and floor-to-ceiling glass doors throughout the house, and many scenes were slated to be staged in the kitchen looking out into the backyard. We decided that digital HD wouldn't provide the latitude needed in

that situation. I suggested shooting the first part in Super 16mm format, because John wanted the audience to be able to see what's outside the windows and doors without blown-out images."

Schreiber notes that even with the latitude of film, they still needed a mix of hard and soft ND gels on glass doors and windows coupled with the use of large HMIs in order to achieve the correct color balance. She says that in this situation, it would have been more time-consuming and costly to shoot in HD format versus film.

During pre-production planning, they tested shooting each segment in a different format. Based on the decision to shoot in three different formats, they fine tuned the images using digital intermediate (DI) during post-production. LaserPacific

in Hollywood had recently introduced its proprietary inDI™ system, which utilizes a tape-based HD workflow as an affordable option for low-budget films. The inDI™ system incorporates data compression technology that is designed to render truer colors and cleaner signals than D-5 and HDCAM formats, which use sub-sampled chrominance channels designed for broadcast.

August wanted the reality show sequence (part two) shot in standard video 24P format for a somewhat less clean look than HD. The third part of the film was captured in three-perf 35mm format with the camera tracking on a dolly or a Steadicam. That sequence was mainly filmed at exterior scenes in a wooded area in Malibu with some shots in the house. Schreiber added a visual nuance by crushing the black tones, saturating images and leaning towards cool colors. She also put a "very light" Schneider Classic filter on the lens.

The film camera package provided by Fritz Heinzele at Otto Nemenz included an ARRI SR 3 for the Super 16 sequence, an ARRIcam Lite for the 35mm shots with Zeiss prime and zoom lenses. The film palette chosen by Schreiber included KODAK VISION2 250D 5205 film and 500T 5218 film. For the 16mm sequences she used KODAK VISION2 250D 7205 film, 500T 7218 film and 50D 7201 film. She shot the reality show sequence with a Panasonic AJ-SDX900 digital camera.

The Nines premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January and is slated for a theatrical release this year.

1 DP Nancy Schreiber, ASC prepares to shoot a scene for *The Nines*. Photo: John August
2 Actor Ryan Reynolds in a scene from the production
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