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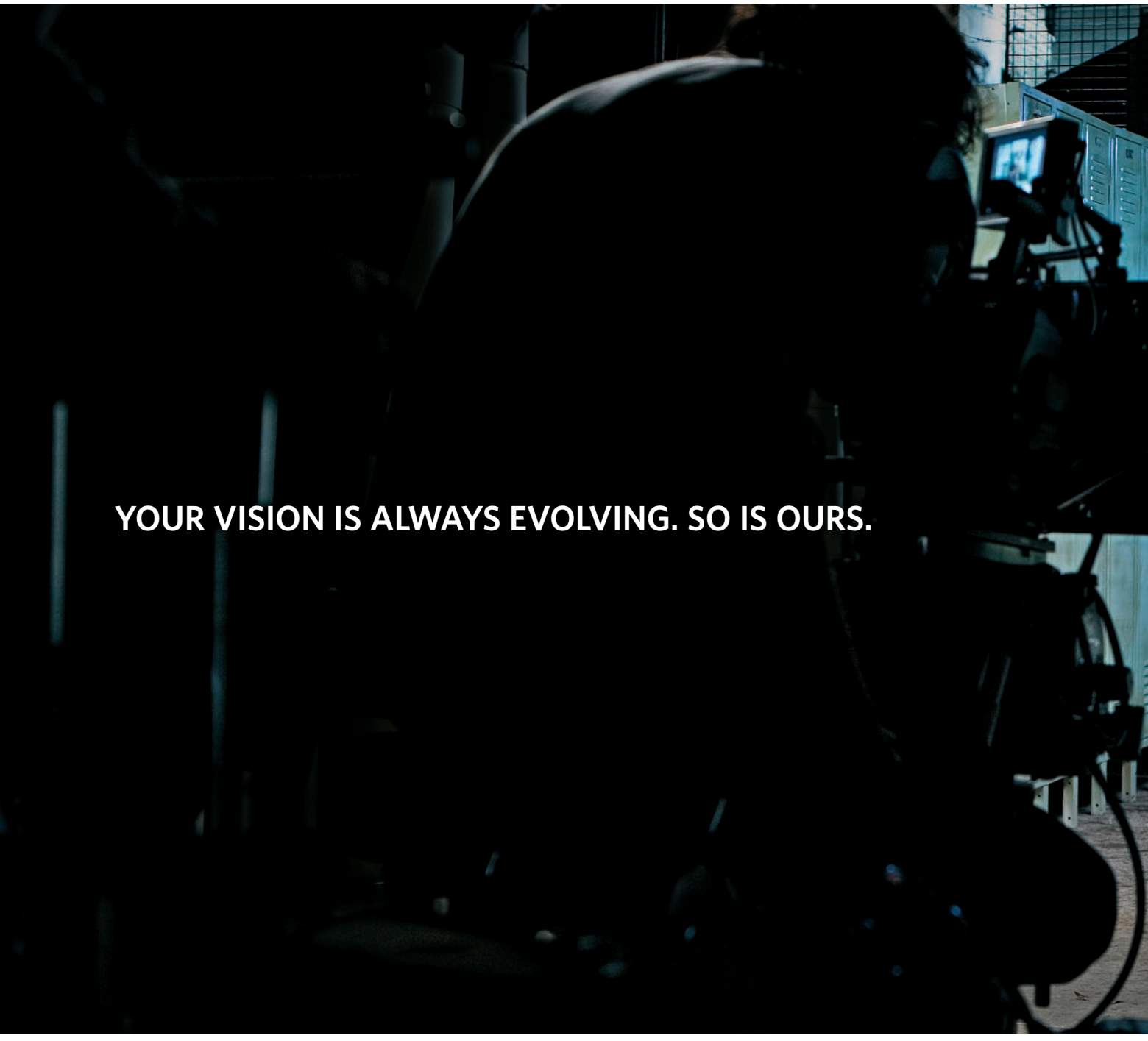

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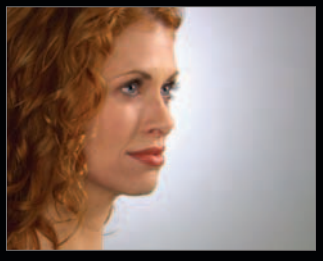

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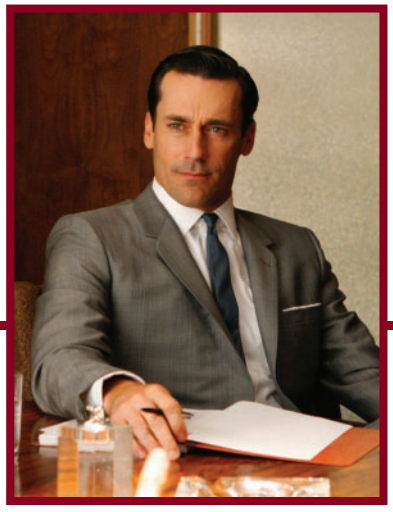

American Cinematographer
The International Journal of Film & Digital Production Techniques

On Our Cover:
Jon Hamm stars as Don Draper, creative director of the prestigious Sterling Cooper ad agency, in the acclaimed television series *Mad Men*. (Photo by Carin Baer, courtesy of AMC.)

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PHANTOM

Editor's Note

As this issue went to press, the Hollywood writers' strike had brought scripted television production to a halt, but some shows found ways to maintain their momentum. In January, AMC's *Mad Men,* the brainchild of *Sopranos* alumnus Matthew Weiner, took home Golden Globes for Best Television Drama and Best Performance in a TV Series. Star Jon Hamm earned the latter laurel for his enigmatic portrayal of New York advertising executive Don Draper, resident creative genius at the fictional Sterling Cooper agency. Set in the early 1960s, *Mad Men* boasts the same mix of dramatic complexity and dark humor that made *The Sopranos* team a fixture at awards galas. The show also makes the most of its retro settings thanks to the visual style of "high modernism" laid down by former *Sopranos* cinematographer Phil Abraham. New York-based scribe Rob Feld spoke with Abraham and gaffer Mike Ambrose about their approach to the show, which will return for a second season whenever the writers do ("Tantalizing Television," page 46).

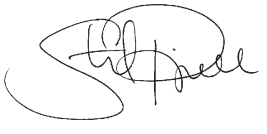
ASC member Lowell Peterson has also been riding high thanks to his work on perennial ratings topper *Desperate Housewives,* which drew a whopping 19.78 million viewers to ABC in its first airing of 2008. In a chat with Jean Oppenheimer (page 50), Peterson offered his apt description of the wildly popular primetime soap: "Douglas Sirk with a comic touch."

Mystery blends with romance and wry comedy on *Bones,* which has been pulling strong ratings for Fox. Cinematographer Gordon Lonsdale has brought a varied cinematic palette to the weekly series, which is sparked by the onscreen chemistry between its two leads: Emily Deschanel, who plays forensic anthropologist Temperance "Bones" Brennan, M.D., and David Boreanaz, as the FBI agent who adds romantic tension to Brennan's job. Lonsdale offered Iain Stasukevich a detailed overview of his strategies (page 54).

Since this issue has a special focus on teleproduction, we saved space to salute a legendary cinematographer who has left an indelible mark on the history of both television and the industry itself: George Spiro Dibie, ASC, this year's recipient of the Society's Career Achievement in Television Award. Over the course of his long and distinguished career, George earned five Emmy Awards; he also served for 20 years as president of the cinematographers' union (now known as the International Cinematographers Guild, Local 600). Along the way, he changed the face of television by bringing a more artful, nuanced approach to multi-camera comedy series. Jon Silberg penned a definitive profile of the man who calls everyone "Sexy" ("Making Sitcoms 'Sexy,'" page 58).

Of course, we haven't forgotten about the big screen, and this month's lead feature article proves that Emily Deschanel and her actress sister, Zooey, aren't the only talents in the Deschanel clan. Their dad, Caleb, also knows a thing or two about creating quality entertainment, and he's done it again with *The Spiderwick Chronicles.* The family-oriented adventure takes viewers into a fantastic world inspired by the series of popular children's books written by Holly Black and illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi. Deschanel, a five-time Oscar nominee and an ASC board member, has plenty to say in Jay Holben's article about the film ("Magical Mystery Tour," page 26).

You'll need to leave the little ones at home when you venture out to see *Cloverfield,* in which a huge, hideous and very cranky monster lays waste to Manhattan. Michael Bonvillain, ASC and director Matt Reeves cleverly reinvigorate the genre of King Kong and Godzilla by simulating the "you are there" POV of Handycam-toting twentysomethings, most of whom end up squished, skewered or snacked upon in stomach-turning fashion. Safely ensconced in Hollywood, assistant editor Jon D. Witmer surveyed the aftermath ("Some Kind of Monster," page 36).



Stephen Pizzello
Executive Editor

Photo by Douglas Kirkland.

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Short Takes

Crossing Over in Viola's *Ocean Without a Shore*

by Iain Stasukevich

Left: An overview of Bill Viola's installation *Ocean Without a Shore* in the Church of San Gallo, Venice. Right: Performer Blake Viola takes direction from Bill Viola on the set.

In a dark edit bay at LaserPacific in Hollywood, there's a copy of Dante's *Inferno* on the desk where video artist Bill Viola is assembling his latest project, an offshoot of *Ocean Without a Shore*, a three-channel installation created for the 2007 Venice Biennale. Viola notes that most of his work can be traced back to texts of a poetic or philosophical nature, and looking at his body of work, it's easy to see these influences at play.

From his earliest works, Viola has experimented with the concepts of memory, movement, time and mortality, and through numerous residencies, commissions and independent works, he has gained many collaborators. Since the late 1970s, he has worked with wife and partner Kira Perov, the studio's executive director. Of his productions, he says, "Initially, I chose to work with myself because it was the only way I could be honest and authentic about what I was trying to accomplish, but I slowly reached a point where I needed to be behind the camera, and I couldn't be behind it and in front of it at the same time."

By 1992, Viola realized he had exhausted the possibilities of slow-motion with video and sought help. He was introduced to cinematographer Harry Dawson and high-speed 35mm film. Their first project together was *Arc of Ascent*, which depicted a clothed man jumping off a 10-meter board into a swimming pool. The diver was photographed at 300 fps against a black background in such a way that he appeared to be floating in mid-air until the surface of the water rose from the bottom of the frame to meet him. "Bill just fell in love with the quality of the 35mm high-speed image," says Dawson.

Viola and Dawson's collaboration extended into the high-definition-video realm with 2002's *Going Forth by Day*, a five-screen projection installation inspired by the frescos of 14th-century Italian painter Giotto. That project introduced Viola to LaserPacific staff editor Brian Pete, who has been a regular collaborator ever since. "Collaborators are so essential," says Viola. "Brian and I have done extraordinary things together, things I couldn't have done completely on my own, and so have Harry and I. Harry brought an incredible new palette for me to work with."

Dawson recalls the moment Viola suggested the project *Ocean Without a Shore:* "Bill was talking about spending days just sitting in a chapel in Venice. Then he talked about all the ghosts there are in Venice, and he showed me some unfinished sculptures of Michelangelo's where the figure was sort of halfway out of the marble. He said he really liked the idea of unformed figures emerging from something. He wanted there to be something they passed through, maybe fabric or light or water, and then went back through.

"I remembered this old, black-and-white surveillance camera that Bill has had since the '70s," continues Dawson. "When you starve it for light, the image takes on a very ghostly effect. It's very grainy, streaky and evocative. I think if you were to

Photos by Thierry Bal, Kira Perov and Matt Sersion, courtesy of Bill Viola Studio.

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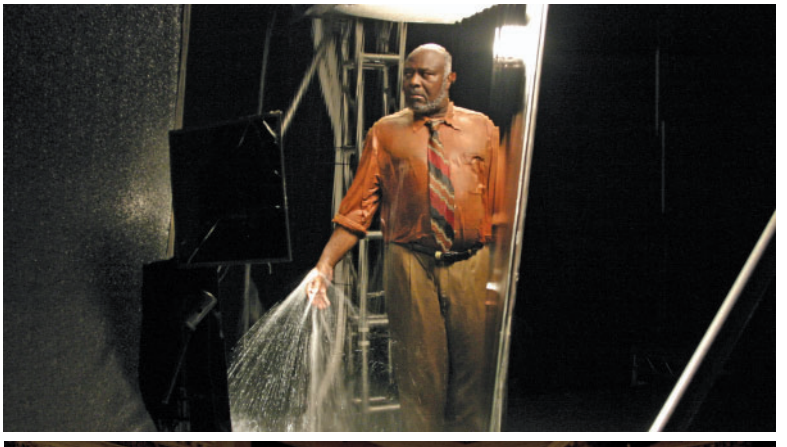
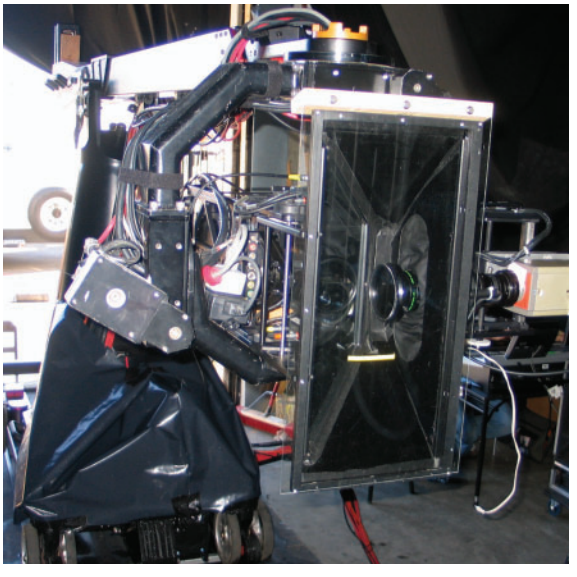


Top two photos: Performers Weba Garretson and Ellis Williams are drenched with water on the set to symbolize the spirit's transition between life and death. Third photo: Installation views of the actors as they appear on two of the church's altars. Bottom: The two-camera configuration for *Ocean Without a Shore,* containing the HD camera and the small yellow "Grainycam" on the right.



photograph ghosts, it would look just like that."

With the surveillance camera used to create the effect of a single ghostly figure emerging from darkness, a Sony HDW-F950 would capture the spirit's transition into flesh after it pierces the proverbial veil between life and death — the veil is represented by a transparent wall of cascading water.

To orient the two cameras so they could shoot the same image, Dawson sent Brian Garbellini, his longtime assistant and camera technician, to Pace HD in Burbank. Pace's engineers devised a solution that worked in a similar fashion to the company's 3-D camera systems, creating a custom rig that oriented the surveillance camera on top of the F-950 at a 45-degree angle. The "Grainycam," as it came to be called, is aimed at a beam-splitter with the HD camera shooting straight through the beam-splitter's glass mirror (where both images are aligned). The rig was mounted sideways, creating a 19x6 aspect ratio.

Viola wanted each image to look as similar as possible, so both cameras were outfitted with the same HD zoom lenses, and a motion-control rig was employed. As the ghostly figures approached, the motion-control rig dollied back and landed in a final frame that was adjusted for each actor's size and distance from the lens. Footage was recorded on separate decks, HDCam SR for the F-950, and DVCam for the surveillance camera. (In post, the DVCam footage was up-rezzed and cropped to match the 60i 1920x1080 resolution and 16x9 aspect ratio of the HDCam footage.) "Thanks to a great team led by [producer] Genevieve Anderson, the shooting of all 32 performers was completed in record time," notes Viola.

During the post phase, the filmmakers discovered that because the surveillance-camera image came from an analog source, it was subject to distortions; the picture would streak, stretch and condense in various places. Along with a small team of assistant editors, Pete combed through each sequence, realigning and stretching the disparate digital images into a more identical relationship with each other.

The complex transitions between the cameras were created in one of LaserPacific's linear bays, allowing Viola and Pete to work in real time. Using a Sony DME-7000 switcher between two HDCam SR decks, Pete used simple picture wipes to matte out the Grainycam footage, revealing the HD image underneath. "It was a bit like burning and dodg-

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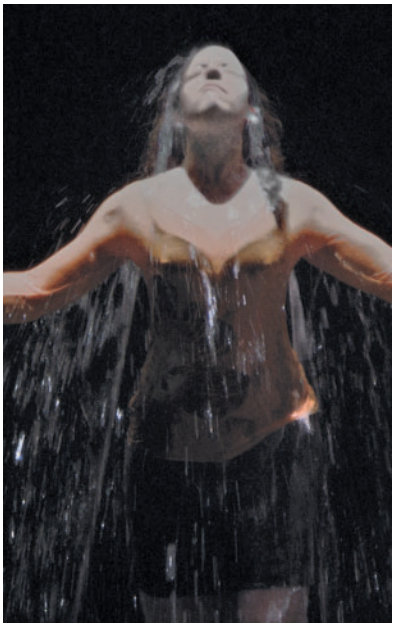

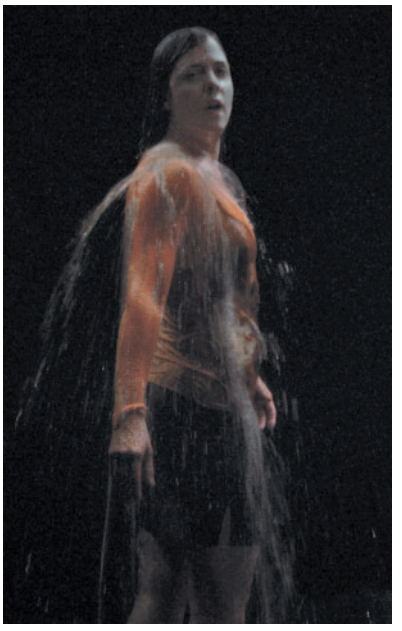

Right: Performer Melina Bielefelt in *Ocean Without a Shore*. Below: Gaffer Bobby Wotherspoon, camera assistant Brian Garbellini and director of photography Harry Dawson work with a configuration of three HD video cameras while shooting "The Path," a 36'-wide projection for *Going Forth by Day* (2002).

ing," he explains. "We didn't have very many tools to articulate detail in the outlines of the bodies … we're limited by the shape that's built into the switcher." Those shapes included standard switcher wipes such as diamonds, circles and heart shapes. "I actually got to bring out the heart-wipe on this one!" the editor says with a smile. Because each wipe was completely programmable, Pete could fade, expand, feather, rotate, stop or swing them off the edge of the picture. After a period of experimentation, the effect was fine-tuned to the point where a single transition — there are two per piece — could be completed in as little as two hours. "As they put their hands through the wall, the water just flies out of their bodies like it's coming from within them," Viola explains. "At that moment, they became incarnated."

Viola also directed additional pieces that involved multiple subjects in the same frame. These proved to be too complex to be finessed in the linear bay, so it was decided to assemble an as-yet-unnamed companion exhibition with those additional elements; those transitions will be rotoscoped in one of LaserPacific's Avid Nitris suites.

"Those of us who work with film and video are constantly being asked to do a dance between what's going on within ourselves and the world of technology, which is not of our making," muses Viola. "The dance we do is as much about being inspired by the outside — your experiences in the world or a new device that's come out — as it is about what's going on deep inside you. It's very much about body and soul, hardware and software. One is intangible and the other is concrete. I've been deeply inspired by new technologies, many of which have allowed me to move forward when I was a bit stuck. I've also had incredible experiences with the same old technology I've had for a number of years when I have a new vision or use for it."

Ocean Without a Shore was given its premiere in Venice in June 2007 at the 15th-century chapel in San Gallo that inspired the piece. Three vertical plasma screens were mounted on the chapel's three altars to display the work, and by the time the exhibition ended in November, more than 60,000 visitors had come to see it. "Because I work without any language or lines of dialogue in my pieces, I can show *Ocean* in villages in China or Africa, and people would know what it's about," says Viola. "The fundamentals of the human condition — ecstasy, tragedy, birth and death — are universally understood. All of us have entered life through one door and will, at a certain point down the road, find ourselves at the threshold of another." ■

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Production Slate

A Romanian Drama and an Egyptian Concert

A young Romanian woman, Otilia (Anamaria Marinca), gets more than she bargained for when she helps her college roommate obtain an illegal abortion in *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*.

A Dark Passage

by Jean Oppenheimer

Winner of three awards at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, including the coveted Palme d'Or, *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* is the latest in a recent surge of films that have been christened the Romanian New Wave. The renaissance began in 2005 with *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*, a grim but acerbically humorous critique of the Romanian health system that was notable not only for its tone, but also for a visual aesthetic that has become a hallmark of the movement: long, unbroken takes; an often-static camera occasionally offset by long tracking shots; the use of real locations; and the pointed use of deep focus.

4 Months … is set in Bucharest in the late 1980s, the final years of Nicolae Ceausescu's dictatorship. The story takes place over a 24-hour period during which Otilia (Anamaria Marinca), a college student, helps her roommate, Gabita (Laura Vasiliu), secure an illegal abortion. Like *Mr. Lazarescu*, *4 Months …* was shot by Oleg Mutu, a native of Moldavia. The cinematographer moved to Bucharest to attend film school after the 1989 Romanian Revolution, and *4 Months …* director Cristian Mungiu was a classmate.

"The late 1980s was a dark and depressing time in Romania, and we wanted to convey that," remarks Mutu, speaking to *AC* by phone. (Translation was provided by Cristiana Hurduc of Mobra Films.) "The dominant colors were gray, brown, dark blue and black. There were very few streetlamps, [so the streets and] buildings also had a dark appearance."

Mutu and the other department heads studied photos and documentaries of the period. The most helpful proved to be *Decreteii (Children of the Decree*), a documentary by Florin Lepan that communicated a strong sense of the communist era. To replicate that feel, and to suggest an earlier time period, the filmmakers decided to do a ⅔ bleach bypass on their negative. "We felt that was the best way to increase grain and desaturate colors but also retain rich blacks," says Mutu, who praises Elena Bodrug, his long-time timer at Kodak Cinelabs Romania, for her work.

The filmmakers initially planned to shoot Super 35mm and do a photochemical finish, but when Mutu tested the optical transfer to anamorphic 2.40:1, he wasn't satisfied with the result, so the production eventually budgeted for a digital intermediate [DI]. "The DI also enabled us to eliminate chromatic differences and add contrast," notes Mutu, who did the digital grade with colorist Maria Murgu at ABIS Studio in Bucharest. Release prints were made on Kodak Vision Premier 2393.

4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days photos by Adi Paduretu, courtesy of Mobra Films and IFC First Take.

Otilia and some of her fellow students get ready for the weekend. To film in the tight practical location, cinematographer Oleg Mutu sat on the fire escape outside and shot through the open window.

Mutu believed *4 Months …* was well suited to Super 35mm over anamorphic for three reasons. "First, the interior locations were very small, and we wanted to give the actors space to move around; second, we didn't have much artificial light, and spherical lenses would allow me to shoot at f2; and third, I planned to shoot handheld, and the camera configuration in Super 35 is easier and more compact." Mutu did his own operating, and he followed key grip Cristi Toader's advice and used the EasyRig camera-support system throughout the shoot.

Using an Arri 535B and Zeiss Ultra Primes supplied by Anonymous Foundation in Bucharest, Mutu shot the picture on a single film stock, Kodak Vision2 200T 5217, which he liked for its "fine grain, silky blacks and good detail."

One of the film's most striking stylistic features is that each scene comprises a single shot — there is no coverage. "Romanian directors want to show audiences real life and are trying to present facts in a different way," explains Mutu. "Very long shots are a more direct way of presenting reality. Cristian proposed that every scene should last the length of a 1,000-foot roll of film, and he tried to stage scenes so they would play out that way. I would watch rehearsals and figure out the best angles. The actor always leads the camera, and in this case, Otilia leads the action through the whole film."

Deep focus was maintained throughout the picture because the director "wanted to integrate the background and the actors — the background reality has a strong connection with the characters," adds Mutu.

Another rule was never to pan unless the camera is following an actor, and even in those cases, the camera doesn't always pan. Frequently, the actor simply walks out of frame, even if he or she is speaking. Similarly, if one of two seated actors rises from a chair, the lens doesn't adjust to the movement; it stays at the eye level of the seated character. "We wanted the camera to be a neutral observer," says the cinematographer. "Its presence should never be perceived."

One notable exception to this occurs in the hotel room where Otilia and Gabita try to negotiate with the abortionist, Bebe (Vlad Ivanov), before he does the procedure. Otilia and Bebe are seated in chairs, and Gabita sits on the bed; Mutu was filming from a seated position. Suddenly, an enraged Bebe stands and lunges at Otilia, and as he steps forward, Mutu also stands and steps forward. "The audience, the visual object and the camera are synchronized, and you are attracted by Bebe's movement," says Mutu. "It has a tremendous psychological effect." In order to get all three actors in the frame, the cinematographer used a 20mm lens.

In fact, most of *4 Months …* was shot on a 20mm, 24mm or 32mm lens. One exception is the scene in which Otilia visits a cramped apartment to attend a party for her boyfriend's mother. The dining room is so narrow that the six people at the table are sitting almost on top of each other. Otilia is seated at the head of the table, framed in the middle of a long shot. "The first day, we tried shooting with the 20mm lens but realized it wasn't right," recalls Mutu. "Otilia, who says almost nothing, is supposed to be the focus of the shot, but she was lost amid the other characters' movements and discussions. The next day, we switched to a 50mm lens, which helped draw attention to Otilia and her reactions to what's happening around her."

Anxious to get back to Gabita, Otilia leaves the birthday party and walks down a dark alley, stopping along the way to vomit. The camera is stationary behind her as she moves farther and farther away. Occasionally, her outline can be glimpsed in an unidentifiable, foggy-white brightness at the far end of the alley. "I wanted to

Above: Mutu (center) checks the light for a dinner-table scene keyed from overhead by Kino Flos wrapped in black foil. Seated next to him is director Cristian Mungiu. Below: The cinematographer (center) and director (in background) check the frame. Mutu donned an EasyRig to achieve many of the film's long tracking shots.

have a streetlamp in that scene, but there weren't any, so I created backlight by putting a Kino Flo in a tree and throwing a 5K onto a nearby roof," says Mutu. "The intention was just to feel her presence. At the end of the alley was an actual sewage pipe that was emitting steam; that's what created [the misty effect]."

Otilia returns to the hotel room to find that Gabita has dumped the fetus on the bathroom floor, leaving a mess. After wrapping up the body and placing it in her purse, Otilia leaves, searching for a place to dispose of it in secret. The camera follows her as she walks past rows of buildings.

Mutu notes that in the absence of streetlamps, Romanians frequently placed regular household bulbs above their front doors. He asked production designer Mihaela Poenaru to incorporate this detail into the set design, and the small bulbs serve as an ostensible light source on Otilia as she walks. This was augmented by a 150-watt China ball that was held close to Marinca. "An electrician carried the China ball on a stick while three others carried the cable and walked behind me," says Mutu. "The alley was so long that we ran out of cable, so a second electrician carrying another China ball met us in the middle of the alley and continued from there." Backlight was created by 6K HMIs gelled with ½ CTO and a few 5K tungsten units on nearby rooftops.

Otilia enters a building and climbs the stairs to find a garbage slide. She throws the fetus down the chute. There were no practical lights in the stairwell, so off-camera, Mutu hung a few 150-watt bulbs covered with black foil to cut down the light level. When Otilia reaches the garbage dump at the top of the stairs, she is backlit with a Kino Flo.

To film an early scene set in a university dorm room — a practical location on the third floor of a building — Mutu wore the EasyRig and filmed from a seated position on the fire escape outside the window. A couple of 6K HMIs were placed behind him, and fluorescent lights gelled with CTB were used inside.

On most interior scenes, Mutu lit from above with Kino Flos wrapped with black foil to control spill. In the hotel room, he used a Kino Flo on the wall as a sidelight and placed 6Ks outside the windows. The light from outside proved so strong he decided to layer ND on the windows. "I improvised a lot," he admits. "During production, one discovers many things."

The happiest accident occurred as the crew was finishing a day with a shot outside a tram station. There was a lovely sunset. "Cristian loved the atmosphere, so we quickly wet down the streets and had Anamaria walk through the area. We didn't use any additional lights, and the lens was clean. Halogen and sodium lights coming from the tram station cast a beautiful mix of green and blue on the wet streets. We managed to shoot two takes, and we used the first one in the film."

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Pop singer Chantal Chamandy serenades the Sphinx during live shooting of the concert special *Chantal: A Night at the Pyramids,* which will air on PBS throughout March.

Chantal Spotlights Egypt's Ancient Wonders

by Stephen Pizzello

Through the ages, Egypt's Sphinx and Giza Pyramids have seen their share of spectacle, and the ancient site never goes out of style. Last fall, the iconic monuments provided a spectacular backdrop for a unique free concert staged by pop singer Chantal Chamandy. The show, titled *Beladi* (*My Country*), was a high-profile homecoming for the Montreal-based chanteuse, who was born in Alexandria to a Greek-Egyptian father and Lebanese-Egyptian mother but moved to Canada at age 6.

Multiple hi-def cameras were deployed to capture the event for a forthcoming DVD and the PBS special *Chantal: A Night at the Pyramids*, which will air throughout March. *AC* was invited to attend the open-air extravaganza, which also featured the Cairo Symphony Orchestra, members of the Egyptian National Ballet, an Egyptian marching band, Tanoura dancers (known in the West as "whirling dervishes"), a Darbouka drum band and a dazzling light show designed by Matthieu Larivée of Montreal's Lüz Lighting Design.

Chantal spent a full year planning the logistically ambitious event, which drew nearly 5,000 attendees. The night before the show, just prior to a final rehearsal, she explained her motivation. "I could have done this show in many countries, but I picked Egypt because I wanted to come back to my roots," said the star, who performed 18 songs in five languages, including cuts from her recent CD, *Love Needs You*. "I conceived and choreographed the show with my good friend Geneviève Dorion-Coupal, who has worked with Cirque du Soleil. We could have hired a stage director, but we decided we wanted to do the show our way, without any compromises."

Another Cirque alumnus, Guy St-Amore, designed the show's stage, which featured a series of bridges to symbolize the "bridging" of different cultures both onstage and off. According to Chantal's husband, manager and executive producer, Greg Chamandy, the multicultural undertaking proved rewarding but also challenging. "There were some dynamics at the outset that involved finding a good compromise between the high-tech systems of North America and the more labor-intensive approaches used here," he said. "For example, all of the lighting scaffolds were erected manually instead of with hydraulic lifts." Larivée explains, "We were not allowed to use hydraulic lifts on the sacred land. We also had to hang lights one by one with ropes and pulleys. The local crew was more a group of hands than specialized technicians. So 14 guys from Europe and 3 from Canada handled all the technical aspects."

In mounting the show, the Chamandys enlisted experienced television director Gérard Pullicino. Well known for his work on music videos and French TV shows, Pullicino has helmed projects for David Bowie, Ray Charles, Joe Cocker, Celine Dion and Madonna, among other artists. For *Concert at the Pyramids,* he hired his longtime friend and collaborator, Jean-Philippe Bourdon, to serve as director of photography. The two met when Pullicino was an assistant director and Bourdon a camera operator; after advancing through the ranks and working on many music videos together, they were both hired to work on the popular French musical TV show *Taratata*. "Jean-Philippe and I know each other very well, so we don't have to speak a lot when we're working," said Pellucino. "We have a 'big complicity.' He knows how I work, and I know how he works." Bourdon added, "Gérard gives me complete freedom, but it's a freedom that controls itself in a way because we share the same way of looking at things, and we like each other a lot."

Pellucino admitted that when he first heard the Chamandys' plans for *Concert at the Pyramids,* "I thought they were crazy, but I was very excited by the show and its possibilities, and the chance to shoot at the pyramids was an exceptional opportunity. When we scouted the site two months before the show, though, the spot designated for the stage was not ideal; the perspective wasn't good and the landscape wasn't interesting."

Bourdon noted, "It wasn't the first time a show had been done in that general location, but the previous shows had all been done on the other side of the pyramids, where you couldn't really see the Sphinx. We were the first production allowed to shoot with the Sphinx in front of the pyramids. But when Gérard and I arrived, we didn't like the stage location that had been proposed by the local authorities — the Sphinx was not very separated from the landscape because

Chantal: A Night at the Pyramids photos by Olivier Samson Arcand, courtesy of OSA Images.

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Top: Separate lighting schemes were required to illuminate the show's stage and the pyramids looming behind it. Middle: Lighting designer Matthieu Larivée controlled the lighting from his perch on a scaffold at the back of the open-air venue. Bottom: The concert's lighting scaffolds were erected manually by a crew of laborers.

one of the pyramids was behind it. We eventually moved the stage to a different spot where the Sphinx stood out more clearly.

"To make the view of the background clear, Gérard requested there be no stage elements behind Chantal and the other performers," he added. "Initially, there was a big door on the stage directly behind Chantal, but we asked Guy and his team to move it to one side. Everything in the central axis of the stage, facing head-on, was simplified."

Bourdon was able to bring a few key crewmembers from France, but most of the crew comprised technicians from several countries. "The camera operators and follow-spot operators were French, but the production was mostly Canadian, the video truck was from Belgium, and the rest of the crew was Belgian, Dutch, Egyptian and German. Canadian culture is very different than Egypt's, but as Europeans, Gérard and I could bridge the cultural gap."

Bourdon's team included 12 camera operators shooting with Thomson LDK-8000 HD cameras provided by the Belgian company Alfacam. A crane

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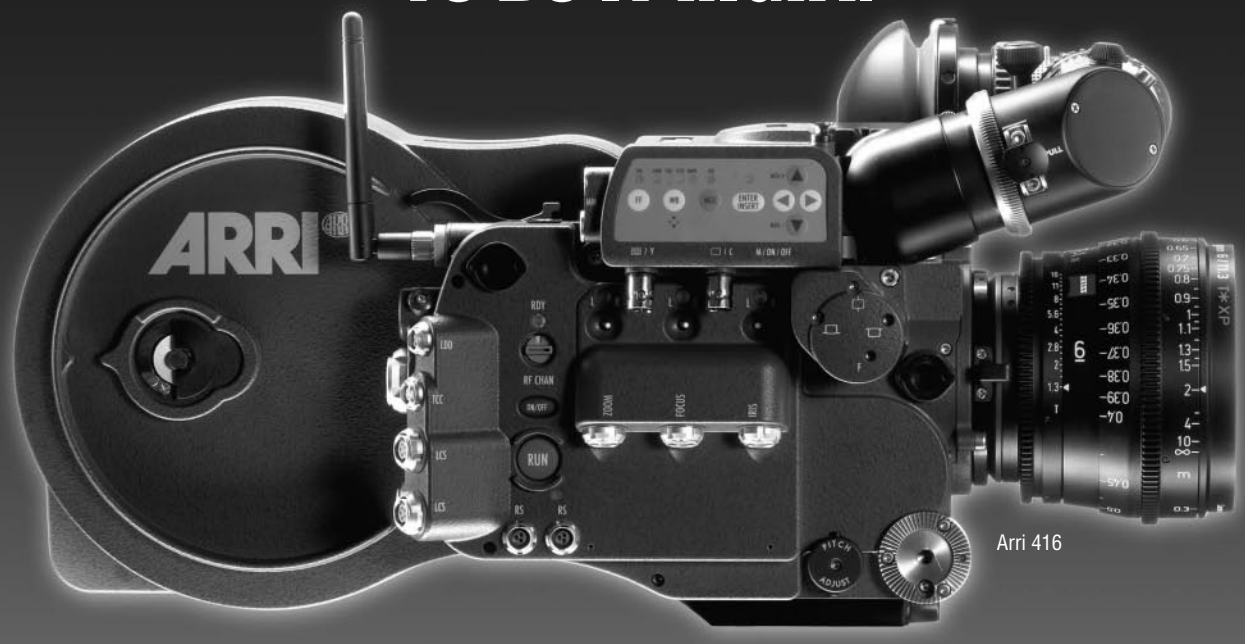

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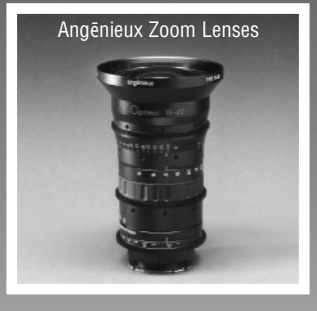

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Director of photography Jean-Philippe Bourdon covered the event with 12 Thomson LDK-8000 HD cameras provided by the Belgian company Alfacam. "I feel real joy that we were able to pull off such an ambitious show," he said.

arm was used to capture sweeping views of the scenic setting, and a robotic tracking camera deployed near the stage proved useful for capturing closer views of the dancers. "Gérard likes to use a variety of lenses, but that can be tricky," he noted. "Four of the cameras had Canon DigiSuper 100:1 [9.3-930mm] zooms, and when you get to the long end of the lens, the stop goes down considerably. The other cameras had very wide-angle lenses [Canon 4.7-52mm zooms], and when you're cutting from a very long to a very wide shot, you have to make sure the value of the background doesn't shift dramatically.

"A lot of changes were made between the final rehearsal and the show," he continued. "We had to find a good balance between the artists onstage and the pyramids behind them, but during the final rehearsal, we discovered our plan was not working. One of the big problems was that we were doing a show with no backlight whatsoever; we were lighting the stage and the pyramids separately, with nothing between those two points. Because we had no backlight, we had to have a background that was visually rich and fairly bright. Obviously, it was very difficult to change the stop on the pyramids themselves, so we had to calibrate all of our lighting to the pyramids. We decided to open up the irises on the cameras by a stop and a half. During the show, our stop ranged from a T2.85 to a T5.6."

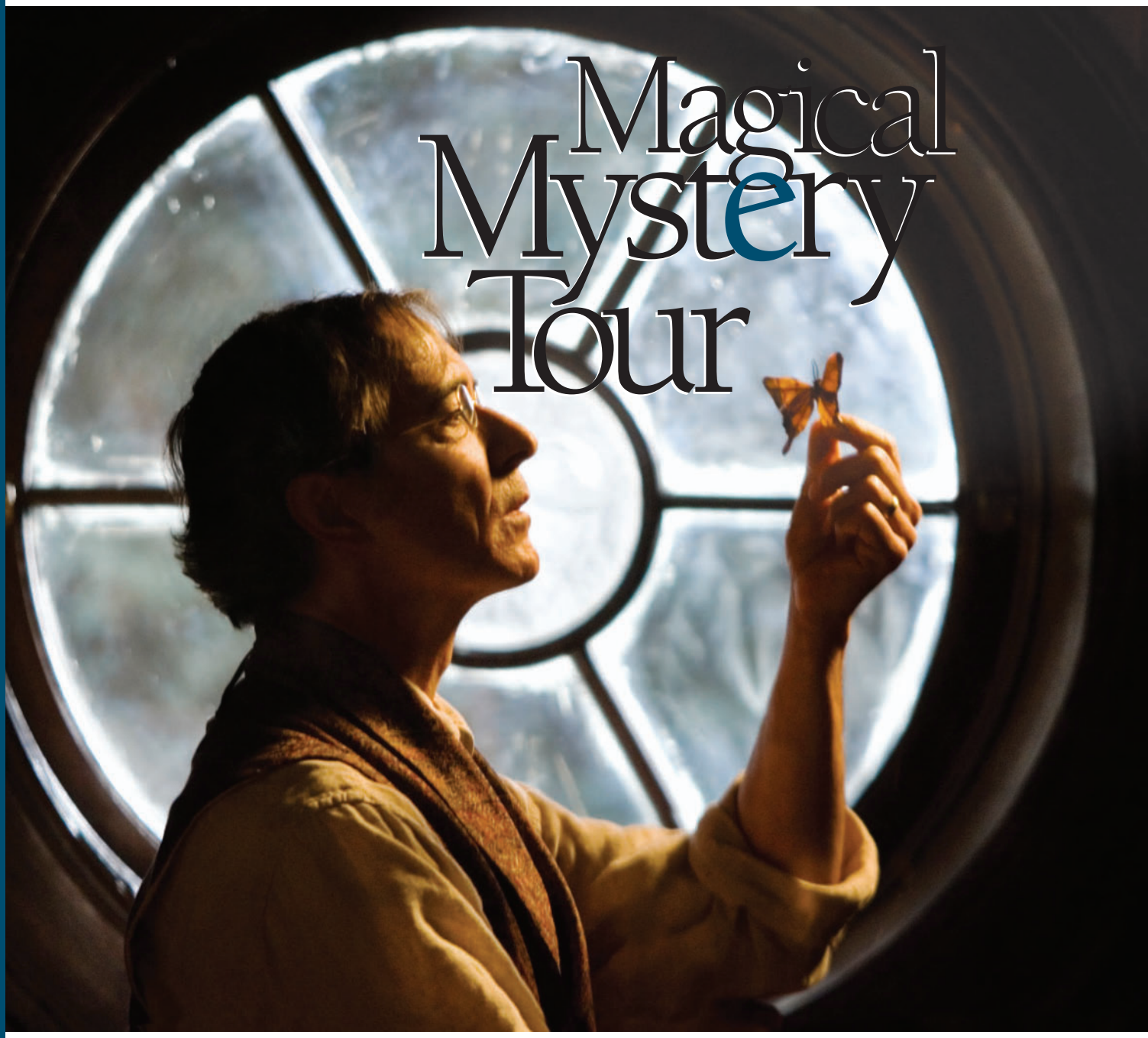
In designing the lighting for the stage and pyramids and supervising the placement of the stage and scaffolds, Larivée used a variety of software programs to plan his strategies. After using Google Earth to get the lay of the land, he worked with Google's SketchUp (an intelligent drawing system that simplifies 3-D design) to position models of the monuments using real-world coordinates. These rough sketches were then shared globally via Google's 3-D Warehouse. Larivée mapped his lighting plots with a software package called WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get). "We took the SketchUp renderings, put them in WYSIWYG and then started doing test renderings to determine the best distances from which to light everything," Larivée explained. "Our major concern was getting the background sharp — the last pyramid was a kilometer from the stage, so we needed a lot of power. Luckily, it's easier to get good depth of field in HD."

Lighting instruments aimed at the stage from the floor and the surrounding scaffolds included Vari-Lite 3000 Washes, VL3000 Spots, VL500s (with stippled lenses), Martin Mac 2000 Washes and Thomas 2 Lite Par 36s. Par 64s, Robert Julia Ivanhoe and Cyrano follow spots and Strand Lighting Nocturne 1000Ws were used as key lights. Color Kinetics Color Blasts (with clear lenses) and a pair of Pixel Line 1044s were used to illuminate scenery. The pyramids (known as Mykerenos, Kephren and Keops) were lit with a combination of BigLites (4.5K Xenon fixtures manufactured by Zap Technologies) and Griven Kolorado MK2s and MK3s, while the Sphinx was surrounded by a combination of BigLites and VL3500 Spots. As a final touch, an Airstar balloon containing a pair of 2K halogen fixtures was painted to resemble the moon and floated behind the stage. All of the stage lights were wired to dimmer boards. To control the background lighting, Larivée used three Grand MA lighting consoles; an Ethernet network allowed wireless control to the pyramids, and 16 universes of DMX were employed.

Powering this arsenal required 18 on-site generators, but positioning them involved a flurry of negotiations with Egyptian authorities. "We were not allowed to put the generator trucks in all the spots we'd initially planned," said Larivée. "The permissions took a week, and refilling the trucks also became an issue because they didn't want any fuel on-site. Incorporating the Sphinx into our plans further complicated things. Even the army was involved! We weren't even allowed to use walkie-talkies because of security considerations."

Atmospheric conditions also had to be addressed. "As the night goes on, there's a lot of humidity in the desert, which helps to create a nice fog," Larivée explained, adding that MDG machines were employed to add fog to the ambience. "If you want to see the lighting beams, you need to use some fog. But it's difficult to manage the fog so that you have enough onstage without diffusing or obscuring the background. If the wind picks up, the fog can turn into a wall."

Happily for all concerned, the show came off without a hitch. To prepare for the DVD release, Bourdon later supervised a "huge timing job" at Mikros Image in Paris. "I think the finished product turned out really well, but of course, I always see room for improvement!" he concluded with a laugh. "Looking back, it was a wonderful experience in a unique setting. Chantal was very nice and very human; she listened to all of our concerns and was very open with all of us. I feel real joy that we were able to pull off such an ambitious show." ■



Magical Mystery Tour

The Spiderwick Chronicles, shot by Caleb Deschanel, ASC, brings a spellbinding series of children's books to the big screen.

by Jay Holben

Unit photography by Takashi Seida and Andrew Cooper, SMPSP

Strange things start happening to Jared Grace (Freddie Highmore) and his family when they move to his great-uncle's secluded house in the middle of a forest. It begins with unexplained noises at all hours, then personal items start to disappear. The blame, as usual, falls on Jared, who is prone to such activities in his rebellious moments. This time, however, the boy is innocent, and as

Opposite: Arthur Spiderwick (David Strathairn) studies the magical realm in *The Spiderwick Chronicles*. This page, left: His findings are recorded in a book that's been guarded for decades by his miniscule assistant, Thimbletack, an entirely CG creation. Below: After unlocking the book's secrets, the Grace siblings — Mallory (Sarah Bolger), Jared and Simon (both played by Freddie Highmore) — must keep the tome from falling into the wrong hands.

he searches for the real culprit, he stumbles upon evidence of his great-uncle's life's work, the book *Arthur Spiderwick's Field Guide to the Fantastical World Around You*. Soon, Jared is exploring a world of powerful, dangerous magic that is full of creatures of all shapes and sizes.

Directed by Mark Waters and based on the best-selling books by Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi, *The Spiderwick Chronicles* was shot by Caleb Deschanel, ASC, who has mingled family films with adult fare throughout his career. "I like to do a children's movie now and again, and I really liked this story," says the cinematographer, whose recent credits include *Ask the Dust* (2006), *National Treasure* (2004) and *The Passion of the Christ* (2004; *AC* March '04). "In prep, the script was rewritten to be a bit more mature, with a little more weight in terms of story and consequences, but it's still a family film. I felt if we could bring the creatures to life in the right way, it would be a great film."

The evolution of *Spiderwick*'s script actually continued throughout production, and toward the end of the shoot, the company shut down for about three months so the ending could be rewritten. "It seems rewriting during production has become the norm, and honestly, we prepped one film and made another," says Deschanel. "Often, we'd have a previz worked out for a scene, and then Mark would come in with new pages and say that scene was no longer in the movie. So we had to do a lot by the seat of our pants as we went along."

As is typical of large-scale productions, there were other complicating factors as well. In the story, as the Grace family struggles

Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures.

Magical Mystery Tour

The first to become aware of some mysterious goings-on in his family's new home, Jared discovers a dumbwaiter (above) that leads to Spiderwick's secret study (right).

with the mysterious happenings around them, the children travel to see an aunt, Lucinda (Joan Plowright), a longtime resident of the Spiderwick home who has been moved to a sanatorium. The scene was originally written to include Jared, his twin brother, Simon (also played by Highmore), and their sister, Mallory (Sarah Bolger), but after part of the scene was shot in Montreal, it was rewritten to feature only Jared and Mallory, necessitating reshoots. Plowright, who lives in London, was unable to travel to Los Angeles for the reshoots because she had the flu, so the filmmakers had to shoot the new elements of the children's coverage in L.A., then travel to London and shoot Plowright's portion, using stand-ins for the kids. "It's certainly not easy to do things that way, but it keeps you on your toes," says Deschanel.

Several of Deschanel's recent pictures have involved extensive visual effects, and he notes that the most difficult aspect of such work is "framing for things that aren't there. You've got to set focus and focus racks for things that don't exist. We have special slates that we shoot to let the lab and editor know we're deliberately shooting something totally out of focus as a plate for a future CG element; otherwise, they'll think it was a mistake or useless footage. But it's hardest on the actors. I have to deal with odd compositions, but they have to act across from nothing or a little doll on a stick. That's a lot harder than my job!"

Jared eventually finds the mischievous culprit who is causing the Grace family's woes: Thimbletack, a gnome-like creature about 1' tall who lives in the walls of the Spiderwick home and guards Arthur's book with his life. "Thimbletack was entirely CG, and in order to shoot his scenes, we filmed one pass of the shot with a doll of his shape and size moving around on a stick, then filmed another pass clean," explains Deschanel. "That way, we could get the composition and camera movement down. We tried to do very little with motion-control and work more organically. It all takes a lot more time in the day, but the doubling was the worst."

The "doubling" refers to Highmore's dual roles, Jared and Simon. "Every scene that featured both of them had to be shot twice, once with Freddie as Simon and once with Freddie as Jared," says the cinematographer. "That was certainly one of the more challenging aspects of the film for me. We fell behind in our first few weeks because we had to double so many shots. To some degree, the script was revised as we went along to minimize the number of shots with both characters in frame, but we also found a rhythm that made those scenes go more smoothly as we went along."

The filmmakers used several techniques to help Highmore play scenes against himself, including incorporating audio playback from his performance of one character to get proper timing and performance for the other. When he was performing as Jared, for example, the crew would place a speaker in his eyeline where Simon was supposed to be standing, and then play back the audio of Simon's dialogue so Highmore could respond appropriately as Jared. Deschanel recalls, "When we were doing the digital intermediate at EFilm, I'd ask people

Left: The Grace family moves into their new digs, the former residence of Arthur Spiderwick and his daughter, Lucinda. Below: Mallory parries a goblin's attack outside the house, which was constructed in Montreal.

who dropped in if they could tell which twin was the older one, and they would spend a great deal of time debating it — no one realized it was the same actor playing both parts! Freddie deserves a lot of the credit; his performances were so good he really made it believable that they were two different boys.

"Because we weren't locked into doing motion-control, we were able to do some really fun things, like shooting doubling scenes handheld, which helps sell the gag," the cinematographer continues. "That was the great thing about working with ILM [Industrial Light & Magic] and Tippett [Studio] — they were very willing to take chances and do things in much rougher ways. We were able to do regular dolly shots and handheld, which was really liberating. In the old days, you'd have to have everything perfectly matched, but they were comfortable with doing it much more organically, and that was much more interesting for me."

The production ran two cameras most of the time partly because of the children's limited work hours. "The second camera was almost always tighter coverage of the same thing," notes Deschanel. "I tried hard to make sure we were using the second camera efficiently, but not in a way that would compromise the lighting for the main camera.

"This was the last movie I made with my longtime first assistant, Scott Rathner, who died suddenly last summer, and he had a great rapport with the kids," he notes. "They'd always look to him for a thumbs-up or a nod after a take, and Scott occasionally conspired with Freddie to ask for an extra take just to do something silly that would

Magical Mystery Tour

Top: To create the film's flashback sequences, cinematographer Caleb Deschanel, ASC worked closely with effects wizards at Imaginary Forces. Near right: The decades since Spiderwick's disappearance have left him unchanged and sheltered in this paradisiacal land without time. Far right: Hogsqueal gives heroism a bold new face. Bottom: Lucinda (Joan Plowright) still looks up to her father.

keep things light on the set."

The production's Panavision package comprised Panaflex Platinums, a Millennium XL and Primo lenses. "We wanted to do a [widescreen] aspect ratio but decided against going anamorphic," says Deschanel. "There were a lot of anamorphic shows shooting at the time, and we weren't able to get two sets of lenses, but we also knew there would be huge advantages to shooting spherical; the lenses are lighter, smaller and faster, and it's easier for the visual-effects guys because they have less adjusting to do. Also, the production has an easier time with the various final formats with a spherical source. I'd shoot everything anamorphic if I could, but sometimes, it just doesn't make the

Top frame grab courtesy of Imaginary Forces.

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Magical Mystery Tour

Above: The evil Mulgrath (Nick Nolte) adopts a human form as he tries to trick Simon into giving up Spiderwick's book. Right: Mulgrath lets it all hang out. Bottom: The villain's minions give chase to the Graces.

most sense, and this was one of those times."

Deschanel says he wanted the visuals of *Spiderwick* to suggest "a painter painting unreal things in a realistic style — something like a living comic book. It's a fantasy, but we wanted to give it a somewhat dark, realistic feel because of the nature of the story — it's a classic haunted-house story, really. We also believed setting these fantastic creatures in a somewhat realistic environment would give them more credibility. At the same time, we wanted the film to have a tongue-in-cheek feel, kind of like the character of Hogsqueal, who is strange and fantastic but funny at the same time."

Most of the story takes place in the Spiderwick home and the forest around it. In the house, Deschanel decided to go with warmer tones, gelling most tungsten lights inside with ¼ CTS and bringing ¼ CTB moonlight through the windows, with just enough atmosphere inside to suggest a magical quality. "We wanted the house to have a sense of time and mystery," he says. "Jared says the house 'smells like old people,' and I wanted it to look that way." For his principal lighting, Deschanel favors fixtures with Chimera softboxes, which he uses on tungsten and daylight fixtures alike. In combination with honeycomb grids, particularly of the 60-degree flavor, he favors the soft, controllable sources for keylight, backlight and ambience.

Jared is the first to discover that Arthur Spiderwick (David Straitharn) has a secret study, a warehouse of specimens from an unseen world that lies within our own. When he discovers the dusty room, it's nighttime, and the barest glimpse of moonlight comes in through a high window. Most of the light in the scene comes from Jared's flashlight as he wanders about, investigating his uncle's strange collection. "That room was beautifully propped and

designed," recalls Deschanel. "James Bissell, our production designer, did a spectacular job of designing the study and all its wonders. Everywhere we looked, there was really cool stuff — scientific equipment and remnants of bones and animals. Jim knows how to design things to work brilliantly with light, and it's wonderful to work with someone who has that kind of eye. The room represents the origins of the story, so it was vital that it had a strange, magical quality. Jim's work really gave it that.

"The entire interior of the house was built at Mel's Stages in Montreal, so we used a painted backdrop outside the study window to give it some sense of depth," he continues. "We put light in specific places, just little touches and kicks, but mostly left the lighting up to Jared's flashlight. I let the ambience fall several stops below the flashlight and gave Freddie specific spots to hit with it to kick light back on himself, but we wanted to let him fall into blackness to keep the sense of mystery and drama." Gaffer Jean Courteau adds, "We used a couple of small Kino Flo fixtures to extend the moonlight ambience coming through the windows, and we used SureFire flashlights, which are incredibly bright."

The façade of the Spiderwick house was built in Cap Saint Jacques, a 700-acre wooded park in Montreal. Delays in preproduction resulted in a mid-September start date, putting the production right up against Montreal's harsh winter. As it turned out, the filmmakers had to shoot exteriors in Cap Saint Jacques during one of the rainiest Octobers on record. "It was nuts," recalls Deschanel. "We were outside in the middle of the day under the canopy of this dense forest, and it was rainy and overcast. I had planned on using Kodak [Vision2 200T] 5217 for all the exteriors, but I just didn't have enough light. I had to turn to [Vision2 500T] 5218 for the forest stuff, and even though I was rating it at [ISO] 320, I was only getting something like a T2.2 at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. We had a scene outside the house where the kids try to burn Spiderwick's book, and the flames were overpowering the natural daylight in mid-afternoon! It was really crazy."

For day and night exteriors in Montreal, Courteau brought in LRX Lights, Canada's equivalent to a BeBee Night Light. The production used two LRXs to bring "daylight" through the dense forest canopy and work around the overcast skies. Closer in, Deschanel and Courteau used 18K HMIs bounced into blue-dyed muslin to create soft, cool, ambient daylight; Deschanel had impressed Courteau with this tech-

Magical Mystery Tour

Deciding Spiderwick's book will be his or no one's, Deschanel stalks the unsuspecting Hogsqueal.

nique on *Timeline* (2003). "When we made *Timeline*, I noticed that Caleb used dyed muslin to fill in shadows with a cool daylight ambience, and it worked wonderfully — we didn't have to color the lights because the coolness was built into the bounce," says the gaffer.

After wrapping *Timeline*, Courteau investigated dying several different materials to achieve the perfect blue hue for cool daylight fill. Working with The Rag Place and Rosco Laboratories, he experimented with several different dyes and various strengths of Silent Grid, eventually settling on a combination of Silent Light Grid and ½ CTB. "We had 12-by-12, 20-by-20 and 20-by-40 frames of it on *Spiderwick*, and we wound up using most of them in the park to get the light we needed," says the gaffer.

To film scenes in which the forest erupts with CG goblins, the production built a section of the woods onstage. To re-create natural daylight, the crew rigged up the ceiling of the stage with massive batten strips, each fitted with six 2K FEY globes. Rigging gaffer Gilles Fortier positioned several hundred batten strips, and each ran back to a dimmer board to give Deschanel the most flexibility. Below the batten strips, Courteau stretched a 120'x240' blue-dyed gridcloth to create soft daylight ambience.

Bissell's crew rigged the forest canopy on traveler tracks so they could dial in as many overhead branches as necessary. To create direct sunlight, Courteau brought in 30 20K tungsten Fresnels to blast through the branches. "If we'd tried to use one big light for the sun, it would never have made it through the branches," says Deschanel. "I wanted a chiaroscuro feel of light and shadow, which is exactly how it's

described in the script. I wanted pools of hard sunlight through the branches, and the only way to do that was through a battery of 20K fixtures that we could turn on or off as needed."

"We were pulling about 2 megawatts of power into that stage," notes Courteau. "We decided to run 600-volt power from two 1,500-amp generators because of the sheer amount of power we needed. If we'd run the standard 208 voltage, I can't imagine how much cable and how many generators we would have needed to power the whole stage. We brought in 600 volts and then used step-down transformers to convert that to usable voltage for the fixtures."

The production's footage was processed by Technicolor Montreal, and the filmmakers viewed projected HDCam dailies. "HD is a pain in the ass," says Deschanel. "You really can't tell anything about color, and although you can see focus, there are times when things look out of focus on HD but are fine on the print. You can't be absolutely sure of anything on HD.

"In the days when you had film printed, people at the lab would sit and watch your footage and call you about any problems — they always had your back," he continues. "Nowadays, you're lucky if someone is even in the room when the dailies are transferred. There's little communication, and that's something I miss." For several years, Deschanel has used his Nikon digital camera to shoot RAW images on set and then taken them into Photoshop at the end of the day to make sure he's getting what he wants. "A lot of cinematographers are doing something similar, and I've been doing it on every movie since *The Patriot* [*AC* June '01]. If nothing else, it gives you a solid reference later on for what you were thinking at the time."

Surveying his work on *Spiderwick*, Deschanel declares that despite the production's difficulties, he is pleased with the result. "We certainly had our challenges, but at the end of the day, I think we got the sense of magic we were going for." ■

TECHNICAL SPECS

2.40:1
Super 35mm

Panaflex Platinum, Millennium XL

Primo lenses

Kodak Vision2
200T 5217, 500T 5218

Digital Intermediate

Printed on Kodak Vision 2383

Some Kind of Monster

Michael Bonvillain, ASC simulates the look of a consumer-grade video camera to capture a monster's rampage through Manhattan in *Cloverfield*.

by Jon D. Witmer

Unit photography by Sam Emerson

On his latest project, the monster movie *Cloverfield*, director of photography Michael Bonvillain, ASC faced the unique challenge of crafting an entire feature that looks like it was captured by a single consumer video camera operated by one of the main characters. That meant eschewing traditional coverage in favor of long takes that are interrupted only when the character supposedly turns the camera off. On set, this led to long rehearsals and days when nothing was shot until hours after lunch; once the camera started rolling, though, shooting went on for upwards of 60 takes. "I felt like we were constantly teetering on the edge of disaster, but as long as we never actually fell in, I knew it was going to inform us in a good way," says Matt Reeves, the film's director.

Cloverfield reunited Bonvillain with Reeves and producer J.J. Abrams; the three first collaborated on the series *Felicity*, and Bonvillain went on to work with Abrams on *Alias* (*AC* Nov. '02) and *Lost* (*AC* Feb. '05). "J.J. and Matt are really respectful of the cinematographer, and they're just good people," says Bonvillain.

The main characters in *Cloverfield* comprise a band of friends trying to stay alive amid a monster's rampage through Manhattan. The story begins with a

party for Rob (Michael Stahl-David) that is videotaped by a friend, Hud (T.J. Miller). When the monster appears, Rob, his brother, Jason (Mike Vogel), and their friends Marlena (Lizzy Caplan) and Lily (Jessica Lucas) set out to rescue the stranded Beth (Odette Yustman) and make it out of the city alive. Hud videotapes their efforts along the way.

Abrams, who came up with the concept of *Cloverfield*'s camcorder POV, got the project greenlit at Paramount with only an outline. Soon, work began on a proper script, and Reeves spent weeks putting together a teaser trailer (shot by Ernest Holzman, ASC). Bonvillain joined the production for its last four weeks of prep, and much of that time was spent refining how to achieve the film's camcorder perspective. "When I read the script, I had a problem with why [Hud] kept filming," recalls Bonvillain. "How could we show Rob's face and his anguish and not make it look like Hud was just standing there with a camera? We couldn't *not* show it." Reeves explains, "[The solution] came down to just slightly tipping the camera so it didn't feel like [the scene] was being actively filmed. It's a tiny camera that sits on his hand, so he wouldn't really think about it. Somebody might come up close, and the camera would cut his face in a slightly odd way so it didn't look framed."

During prep, the filmmakers studied such features as *The Blair Witch Project* (*AC* Apr. '99) and *Children of Men* (*AC* Dec. '06), as well as YouTube video footage of the 2001 terrorist attacks and the current war in Iraq. While watching the latter two sources, Reeves and Bonvillain were struck by the powerful effect of limiting what the viewer sees. "We felt that would add a level of reality to our project," says Reeves. "When there's a lot you can't see, your imagination starts to fill in the horror of what's going on." Bonvillain adds, "We wanted to shoot it like Hud is really scared and sometimes forgets he even *has* the camera — he might shoot upside-down into a car grill, where you see the reflection of an explosion."

Opposite: Rob (Michael Stahl-David) and Beth (Odette Yustman) document their first-hand run-in with a monster in *Cloverfield*. To mimic the small camcorder, cinematographer Michael Bonvillain, ASC employed a Thomson Viper, a Sony F23 and a Panasonic HVX200 and HSC1U. The Panasonic cameras were often operated by the actors. This page: The monster leaves its mark on the Statue of Liberty, sending the head crashing down outside of Rob's apartment.

Which camera or cameras could create a believable "Handycam" feel yet also render an image suitable for theatrical distribution? "Ernie Holzman shot most of the trailer with a [Thomson Grass Valley] Viper, and we knew some of that footage would end up in the movie," says Bonvillain, who worked with digital imaging supervisor Nick Theodorakis to determine which cameras would complement the Viper's FilmStream (4:4:4 RGB) images.

Bonvillain and Theodorakis did side-by-side comparisons of the Viper with a Sony F23 CineAlta, a Sony HDW-F950 and a Panasonic AG-HVX200, taking all four cameras to an unlit street corner in downtown L.A. Ruling out the F950 in favor of the F23 and Viper, Theodorakis says the tests revealed that "the F23 has far greater sensitivity than the Viper at the low end. At the top, the two cameras are nearly the same, though the F23 has slightly more high-end latitude.

"We tested at +3 gain and +6 gain, and the noise structure on the F23 was amazing," he continues. "We worked with the shutter to eke a little more information out of [the F23]. You can really push the ASA

Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures.

Some Kind of Monster

Caught between the monster and the military, Marlena (Lizzy Caplan) ducks for cover. To maintain this streetlight ambience, Bonvillain and gaffer Rick West procured 400-watt sodium-vapor units from Luminys, complementing practical fixtures carried by the art department. Additionally, West's crew would occasionally gel 2K open-faced Blondes with Plus Green and ¼ CTO, though Bonvillain preferred to use real sodium-vapor fixtures whenever possible. "I wasn't satisfied with the gel pack," he explains. "It never looked quite right."

on that camera to a slightly higher speed than you can with the Viper." When they turned their attention to the HVX200, he continues, "There was an obvious latitude difference, about 4 stops. It didn't pick up as much on the low end and most assuredly did not pick up as much on the high end. But that was the look we were hoping for; we were shooting for a dirtier image that would sell the gag."

"The main idea was to make the camera feel like it was a little Coke can and not some giant camera on [an operator's] shoulder," says Bonvillain. Turning to Plus 8 Digital in Burbank for their camera package, the cinematographer and director ultimately decided to use "the HVX200 when there weren't visual effects and the Viper whenever there were," Bonvillain explains. "We also used the F23 for its sensitivity and faster 'ASA' when we went to New York."

Because of its small size, the HVX200 easily renders a "Handycam" feel, but trying to suggest a similar mobility with the Viper and the F23 was one of the operators' biggest challenges, according to Reeves. "Mike and I agreed the operator had to respond like an actor — it had to be like Method-actor operating. The action would have to happen and the camera would have to find it, and on top of that, the operator would have to find it the way Hud would find it." (Bonvillain's operators were Robert Altman Jr. and Chris Hayes.)

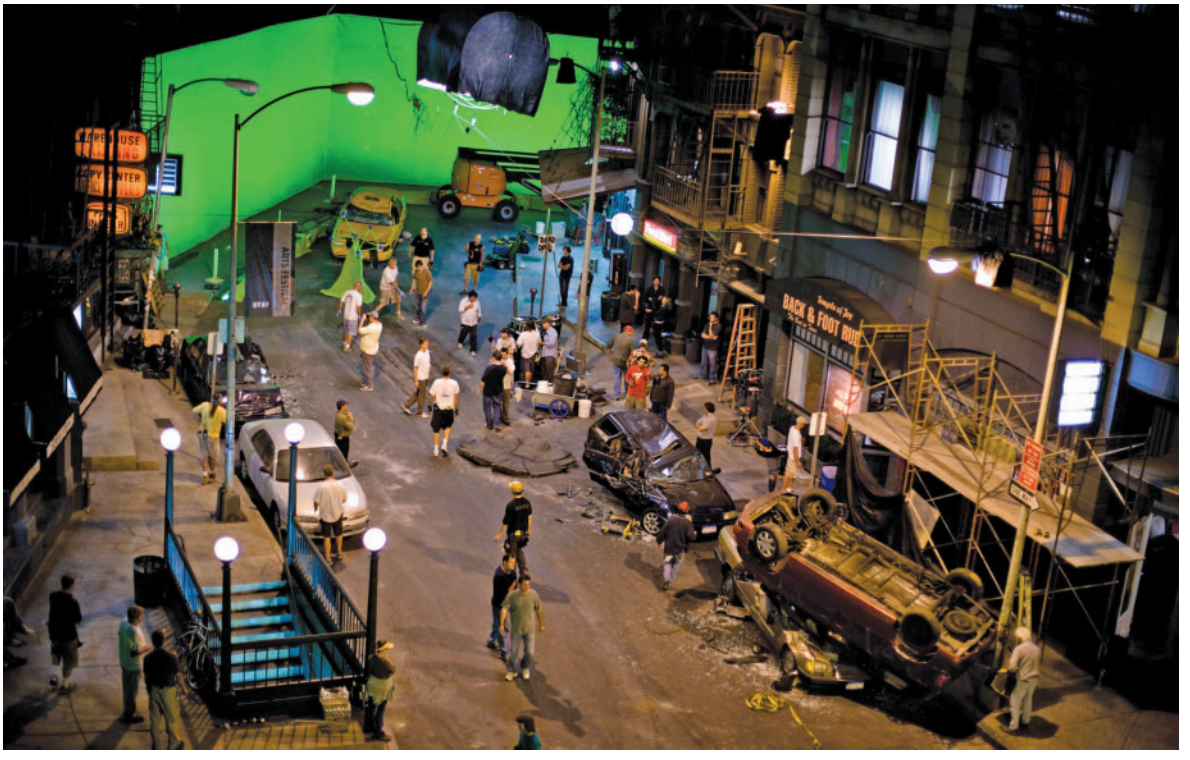
Such a style of operating doesn't come without its caveats, especially on an effects-heavy film such as *Cloverfield*. But visual-effects supervisors Kevin Blank and Michael Ellis of Double Negative and Eric Leven of Tippett Studio worked closely with the filmmakers to enable as freeform a style as possible. "It was a very close collaboration," notes Bonvillain. "We did a lot of previsualization, so we knew what our parameters were on certain shots. Sometimes, they'd ask us to shoot a little wider so they could do a correction if necessary, but otherwise, we could do pretty much anything we wanted with those tracking marks in place. [Blank, Ellis and Leven] were great to work with; I really can't praise them enough."

In fact, Reeves preferred an almost improvisational method that involved giving a small camcorder to Miller and running him and the other actors repeatedly through the scene, fine-tuning the blocking with each rehearsal. Often, when the HVX200 could be used for a shot, Miller would operate the actual takes. "The HVX is amazing," enthuses Bonvillain. "With the right amount of light, it looks really good, but it's a 4:2:2 camera, not 4:4:4, so the visual-effects team would do only simple things with it, like add dust falling through the foreground." For shots requiring complicated effects, the filmmakers used the Viper or the F23.

Naturally, jumping from camera to camera presented its share of challenges on the digital-imaging side. "We were constantly trying to match the HVX, which is a warm camera, to the Viper, which is a very green camera, especially in FilmStream mode," recalls Theodorakis. "It's funny, because on most shoots, you're aiming for the highest common denominator, but on this show, we were trying to very creatively match the lowest common denominator!"

To maintain some visual consistency, the filmmakers tried to use one camera per scene as often as possible — for example, shooting only with the Viper if the scene called for heavy visual-effects work. Still, some middle ground had to be established where the HVX could cohabitate with the Viper. To find that sweet spot, Theodorakis used a beta version of Iridas' SpeedGrade OnSet, a portable color-timing suite in which he could apply layers of adjustments until he arrived at the right look-up table (LUT). "I could save hundreds of looks on the system, and I could recall them all by the name of the scene or the name of the camera," he explains. "From there, I could output a DPX file with the color-timing information enclosed and send that to the post house."

The production's post house was Company 3, which provided DVD dailies and carried out the digital intermediate (DI). According to Bonvillain, Company 3 colorist/managing director Stefan Sonnenfeld "helped us set the look every step of the way. He knows the movie as well as anybody."

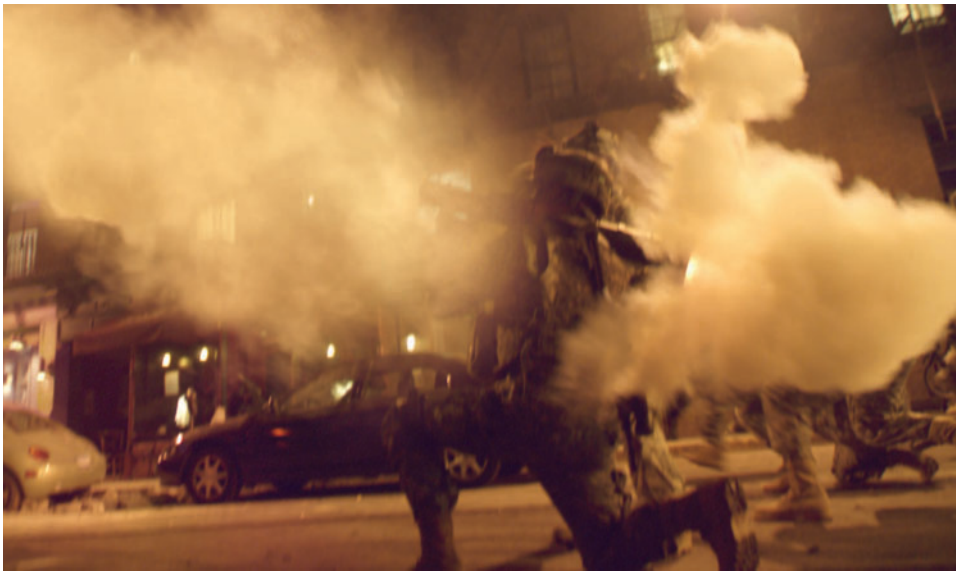


Left: The New York Street on Paramount's backlot was cordoned with greenscreens so the space could be extended by the visual-effects team. The screens were lit from the ground by 4-by-4 Kino Flos with green tubes. Bonvillain explains, "The effects artists wanted the reflected green to be ⅓ to ½ a stop below the camera exposure. I think we had just one bulb on in each Kino, and the green really popped." Below: A soldier takes aim at the monster.

Framing the movie — and adding another set of variables to the workflow — is a flashback of sorts, part of which was shot with a consumer-grade Panasonic AG-HSC1U. In the story, the camera Hud uses was originally a gift to Rob from Beth; when Hud takes the camera to start documenting Rob's party, he inadvertently tapes over footage Rob had shot of a day he spent with Beth. Snippets of this material appear throughout the film as the camera is jostled.

Specifically, the HSC1U was used for the film's opening sequence, set in Beth's apartment, and for shots on the subway as Beth and Rob head for Coney Island. (The film's closing image, taken from Coney Island's Wonder Wheel at sunset, was shot with the HVX200.) Recording in the Advanced Video Codec High Definition format, the HSC1U introduced not only another camera, but also another format. "Data workflows are intrinsically complicated," says Theodorakis, who was aided in managing the workflow by camera utility Oliver Mancebo, Los Angeles focus pullers Wally Sweeterman and Joe Buscaglia, and New York 1st and 2nd ACs Angelo Di Giacomo and Osa Elmfors, respectively. "Oliver proved invaluable," continues Theodorakis. "He knew what he was doing at the camera end, he could solve problems, and he could wrangle cable, which was especially important on this show. This shoot was 90-percent tethered; that's one of the disadvantages of the Viper."

The filmmakers wanted to achieve naturalism in lighting as well as camerawork. "The idea was to create an environment that was lit and then shoot [there] pretty much all day," says Reeves. For example, during Rob's party — which was shot in a practical apartment in Los Angeles — sodium-vapor units offer



Some Kind of Monster

Right: Narrowly escaping the monster's path, Bonvillain checks in with his crew. Below: Before the monster crashes Rob's party, Caplan shares a moment with director Matt Reeves.

some ambience through the windows while practicals illuminate the interior. "We were on the second or third story, and we were shooting day-for-night," recalls key grip Tony Marra. "We weren't able to tent the whole building, so we built little boxes around each window that we could put lights into to create a streetlight effect."

While the crew positioned sodium-vapor fixtures inside the tented windows, Bonvillain worked with the art department to bring an array of practical fixtures into the apartment. "There are probably more than a hundred practicals in that scene," says gaffer Rick West, who slipped in a Chinese lantern fitted with PH211 (75-watt) or PH212 (150-watt) bulbs when the practicals needed to be augmented. (As they did onstage at Downey Studios, rigging gaffer John Manocchia and his crew ran every fixture to a dimmer board, which was operated by Craig "Shaggy" Campbell.)

As the party — shot with the HVX200 — gets into swing, an event that feels like an earthquake sends the revelers up to the roof for a better look. Across town, an explosion plumes into the night sky, and everyone scatters. On street level, the degree of destruction becomes frighteningly apparent, and as skyscrapers crumble in the distance, a huge cloud of smoke, dust and debris rolls through the downtown neighborhood.

Seeking shelter, Rob and his friends duck inside a small bodega, a sequence that was shot with a Viper on the New York Street on Paramount's backlot. The street was lit with sodium-vapor units and an 8K balloon light, while the interior was lit with fluorescents and other convenience-store practicals. "We mixed color temperatures like crazy," says Bonvillain. "Inside the bodega, we used Cool Whites. We took the harnesses from Kino Flos and put those in, and everything in the entire place was on a dimmer."

"We clustered certain things together, like the light over the counter with the beer sign, and the milk cooler with the two beer coolers," adds West. "We had five or six different groups we could flash. Certain things were flashing inconsistently, and sometimes, the whole place would go dark."

With almost the entire film set at night, Bonvillain notes, "We shot pretty close to wide open most of the time, around T2.3." The production carried a set of Zeiss DigiPrimes, a 6-24mm T1.9 DigiZoom and two Canon HD-EC zooms (4.7-52mm T2.1 and 7.5-158mm T2.1), and all were used without filtration.

As the military begins a mandatory evacuation of the city, Rob, Jason, Marlena, Lily and Hud try to make their escape via the Brooklyn Bridge, along with thousands of other New Yorkers. When the monster lumbers by, the bridge's midsection takes a plunge into the East River, and the survivors make a beeline back to Manhattan.

The first portion of the bridge shoot was done on Downey Studios' Stage 1, where the production built part of the bridge's pedestrian walkway. Marra recalls, "We had a 360-degree greenscreen all the way around the bridge, going up to the ceiling, and we also had green on the floor in case [the camera] ever looked down." Key rigging grip Gary Kangrga and his crew set up a traveler truss with 180 degrees of black cloth that could be positioned behind the camera to keep light reflected off the greenscreen from hitting the actors.

To light the greenscreen, Bonvillain used 4' four-bank Kino Flos fitted with green tubes, and to emulate the lamps found on the real bridge, he used 30" Chinese lanterns built and rigged by West. "Each one has a top and a bottom with a screw-in base for a standard globe," explains the gaffer. "We put two 500-watt globes per unit and mounted one fixture on each stanchion [on the bridge]."

The bridge sequence was finished at the end of the 33-day shooting schedule, when the production

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Some Kind of Monster

Chinese lanterns emulate the lighting on the Brooklyn Bridge while a Xenon mimics a helicopter-mounted Night Sun. This portion of the sequence was shot on Downey Studios' Stage 1 prior to location shooting on the real bridge.

moved to New York for location work. On the actual Brooklyn Bridge, local gaffer Clay Liversidge and key grip George Patsos were tasked with helping Bonvillain match what had been shot onstage, lighting that also included "a Xenon that mimicked the Night Sun on a helicopter," notes the cinematographer. "It's a standard light for police work. Because we did [the stage portion] first, we had to match where the actual helicopter was to a certain extent.

"On the bridge," continues Bonvillain, "we had this weird procession: the operator, Chris Hayes, and focus puller, Angelo Di Giacomo, with all the batteries and a loop of cable; my nephew and camera PA, Nicholas Roose, who was wearing a backpack modified to hold the [SRW-1] recording deck; and then, in the back, me, Matt and Nick, holding a battery-powered, 12-inch hi-def monitor. We were running in this single-file line as fast as we could with all these people around us, and I was giving instructions to the helicopter pilot about where to fly and where to aim the light!"

The production was prohibited from bringing a generator onto the bridge, so Bonvillain and Liversidge used mercury-vapor lights powered by marine batteries. "We also had two 18K Pars on a Condor on FDR Drive," adds Bonvillain. "Those were aimed at the two stanchions because they were so dark — the Brooklyn Bridge is really poorly lit."

Back off the bridge, Rob gets a phone call from Beth, who is trapped in her apartment. Determined to save her, Rob and his friends head into the monster's path, opting at one point to walk through a subway tunnel in the hopes of avoiding the dangers above ground. Making it out of the subway rather the worse for wear, the group runs into a department store that's been commandeered by the military. Inside, soldiers lead them through what Bonvillain calls "*E.T.*-style plastic tunnels" to a makeshift medical station, where Marlena, who is injured, is taken away; finally, they reach the heart of the command center, where Rob argues with one of the brass about his need to get back outside and save Beth.

Shot with the HVX200, the sequence spans three locations — the exterior of Bloomingdale's in New York and the interiors of two department stores in Santa Anita, California — and comprises a series of shots blended together to look like one take. "One thing we figured out with the trailer was that we could do a slow pan, cut on the move, and use the first and second parts from different takes," says Bonvillain. "[Editor] Kevin Stitt had to do a little blending in post, but there was nothing gimmicky — we didn't need to glitch out the video."

In the triage area, Bonvillain and production designer Martin Whist originally opted to go with a fluorescent look. "When Matt first looked at it, he thought it was kind of boring, so we decided to pan around a couple of Xenons to liven it up. We kept adding more, and everywhere you looked, [the action] was backlit. With all the dust floating around the characters' heads, it's a nice effect.

"Matt and I collaborate really well," he adds. "I can give him notes on acting, and he can give me notes on lighting."

When the friends finally reach Beth's apartment — a 39th-story unit overlooking Columbus Circle — they discover her building has been badly damaged and is leaning at a precarious angle into an adjacent structure. "Martin Whist built the set for Beth's apartment down into this big well onstage at Downey," says Bonvillain. Marra adds, "Walking into it was like walking into a funhouse. There were floor-to-ceiling windows, and we had greenscreen all

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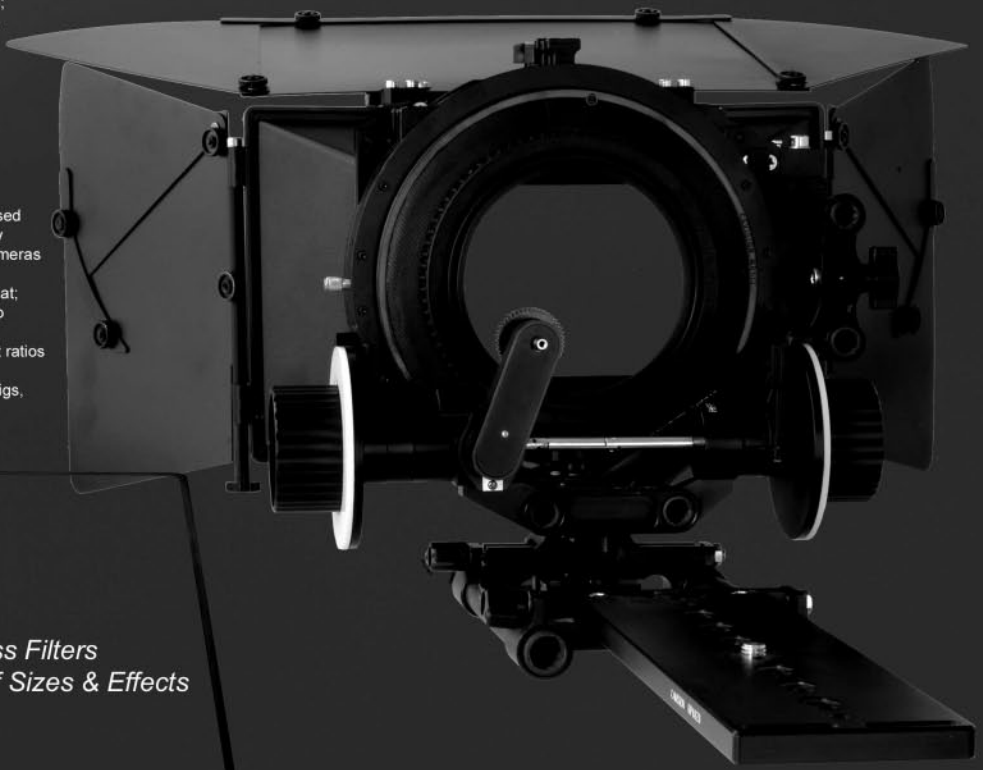

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Some Kind of Monster

Backlit by 4K Xenons, a soldier guides Rob and Beth to a waiting helicopter. "Pointing 18Ks, Pars and Xenons right at the lens became a motif for any scene with the army," explains Bonvillain. "We wanted it to feel like [the military was] using so much light that the camera couldn't even handle it."

around the set and in the pit below." To light the greenscreen, West and his crew set lights from above on the main floor of the stage, and from below at the bottom of the well, which West estimates was 12'-14' deep, 40' long and 30' wide. (Because the scene called for extensive visual effects, Bonvillain shot with the Viper.)

The power has been knocked out in Beth's building, so West's crew positioned small emergency lights in the hallway to light the action outside her door. "I used a 4-foot single Kino tube for a little fill, but basically everyone's really underexposed on the camera side," notes Bonvillain. The sun is coming up as the friends reach the building, and the crew used 20Ks with Chimeras to push the light of dawn through the apartment windows. "The 20Ks were on Condors that were armed out into a little area where we could push light inside," recalls Bonvillain. "That was the best Rick and I could do given the limitations of working in the well; I would have preferred bigger, softer sources farther away."

Making their escape with Beth, the group heads for a military rendezvous, where they pile into a helicopter that is soon knocked to the ground by the monster. Hud survives the crash and manages to help Rob and Beth out of the heli-

copter before he is snatched up by the monster, his camera rolling all the while. The camera falls to the ground, followed by Hud. "The Viper is sturdy, and for that shot, we put it in a Pelican Case, packed the case with foam and threw it on the ground," says Bonvillain.

On the fritz after its freefall, the camera's focus shifts uncontrollably as Hud drops back into frame. "Joe Buscaglia found a lens with a macro mode on it," says Bonvillain, referring to the Canon 7.5-158mm zoom. "At first, we were going to make the focus go to the distance and then to the foreground and back again, but that looked really boring. With the macro setting, when Joe pushed a knob near the lens port, we could go in and out of macro immediately. It's exactly what we wanted it to look like."

Once the visual effects joined the footage in the can — or on the hard drive, as it were — Sonnenfeld, Bonvillain and Reeves carried out the DI. Although Sonnenfeld added some noise to the Viper and F23 images to better align them with the HVX200 footage, he discovered that a consumer-grade camcorder was often best emulated by not matching other images to it too closely. "Sometimes, cutting to another camera for a different scene is really terrific for the piece," says Sonnenfeld. "We had to be careful not to stop on a shot and stylize it too much. Not trying to constantly make it match from camera to camera actually gives the images a more realistic feel."

Despite arriving unscathed, the filmmakers maintain that they remained at the brink of disaster throughout the shoot, even up to the last day of filming. "We were doing something none of us had ever quite done before," says Reeves. "Afterwards, we realized the crew must have been talking about us!" With a laugh, Bonvillain confirms, "Oh, they were. The grips were talking smack." ■

TECHNICAL SPECS

1.85:1
High-Definition Video

Thomson Grass Valley Viper;
Sony F23 CineAlta;
Panasonic AG-HVX200,
AG-HSC1U

Zeiss DigiPrimes and
DigiZooms;
Canon HD-EC lenses

Digital Intermediate

Printed on Kodak Vision 2383

Tantalizing Television

Cinematographers from three top series reveal their secrets.

by Rob Feld, Jean Oppenheimer and Iain Stasukevich

Mad Men

Set in the Madison Avenue advertising world in 1960, the AMC series *Mad Men* looks like nothing else on television. "Many TV projects rely greatly on close-ups for coverage, and that is not necessarily part of our language," notes cinematographer Phil Abraham. "*Mad Men* has a somewhat mannered, classic visual style that is influenced more by cinema than TV."

Mad Men made its debut last summer, and the series' second season is scheduled to go into production later this year, depending on the duration of the writers' strike.

Abraham recalls that when he began discussing the look of the show with creator/executive producer Matthew Weiner and pilot production designer Bob Shaw, "we talked about not simply referencing the period as seen in movies of that time. We wanted to be more genuine than that. Movies were an influence, but we didn't say, 'Let's make *The Apartment*.'" Other reference materials included photography, graphic design and architecture of the period. "We noticed that in all the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill designs of contemporary buildings, the ceiling — the overhead grid of lights — was a strong graphic element in all the office spaces. In one design we loved, the whole ceiling was like a lightbox. It was a time of high modernism, and we embraced the notion of presenting the world in that way. These were new work spaces — sleek, not stuffy."

Abraham segued into *Mad Men* after wrapping *The Sopranos*, for which he earned four Emmy

nominations. After shooting the pilot mostly on practical locations in New York (with two days onstage at Silvercup Studios) using a crew that included many *Sopranos* veterans, the production moved to Los Angeles, where Abraham worked with an entirely different crew at L.A. Center Studios. Frequent *Sopranos* director Alan Taylor helmed the pilot and first episode of *Mad Men*, and that continuity helped, according to the cinematographer. "Once we moved to L.A., there was a continuity of style that came from Alan and me, and that was important to Matt [Weiner]."

The lives of *Mad Men*'s characters are as conflicted as the era they inhabit — America was prosperous in 1960, and John F. Kennedy was poised to beat Richard M. Nixon at the dawn of great social upheaval. "1960 was on the precipice of change in terms of design and politics, and that was definitely something we were trying to capture," notes Abraham.

The protagonist of the show is the charming but enigmatic Don Draper (Jon Hamm), the star creative director at the fictional Sterling Cooper ad agency. Not even Draper's wife (January Jones) knows much about his history, and as he navigates the treacherous waters of office politics and extramarital affairs, his dark past begins to seep into all areas of his life. "Don is a character right out of literature, and I was always looking for opportunities to suggest his air of mystery," says Abraham. "I often shot from behind him or framed him so he was a bit obscured. However, I didn't have a playbook for shooting each character; you go by intuition and see what you discover in rehearsals."

Abraham is a big fan of practical lighting, and the fluorescent-light grid in the drop ceiling of the main Sterling Cooper office is the primary source in that set. "The art department went with a 2-by-2 four-tube fixture, which they determined was period-accurate," recalls Los Angeles gaffer Mike Ambrose. "But when our set-lighting crew came aboard, we discovered the fixtures were modern internally and had been designed to hold 2-foot T-8 tubes. Getting more than 800 2-foot color-corrected T-8 tubes became a major issue, and none of the regular suppliers had enough in stock. Movietone stopped production of whatever bulbs it was making, retooled the plant and started manufacturing the T-8s we needed. The last shipment arrived the morning of our first day of shooting!

"The bulbs had perfect color rendering, were consistent throughout the set, gave us plenty of stop and lasted the entire season. When we were working with Phil, we were rating at an ISO of 400, and we were able to meter a T4.5 at head height underneath a fluorescent fixture. We were reading a T3.2 between fixtures, so we usually shot scenes in the office at a T4 and let the hot spots burn an extra half-stop when the actors moved through the set."

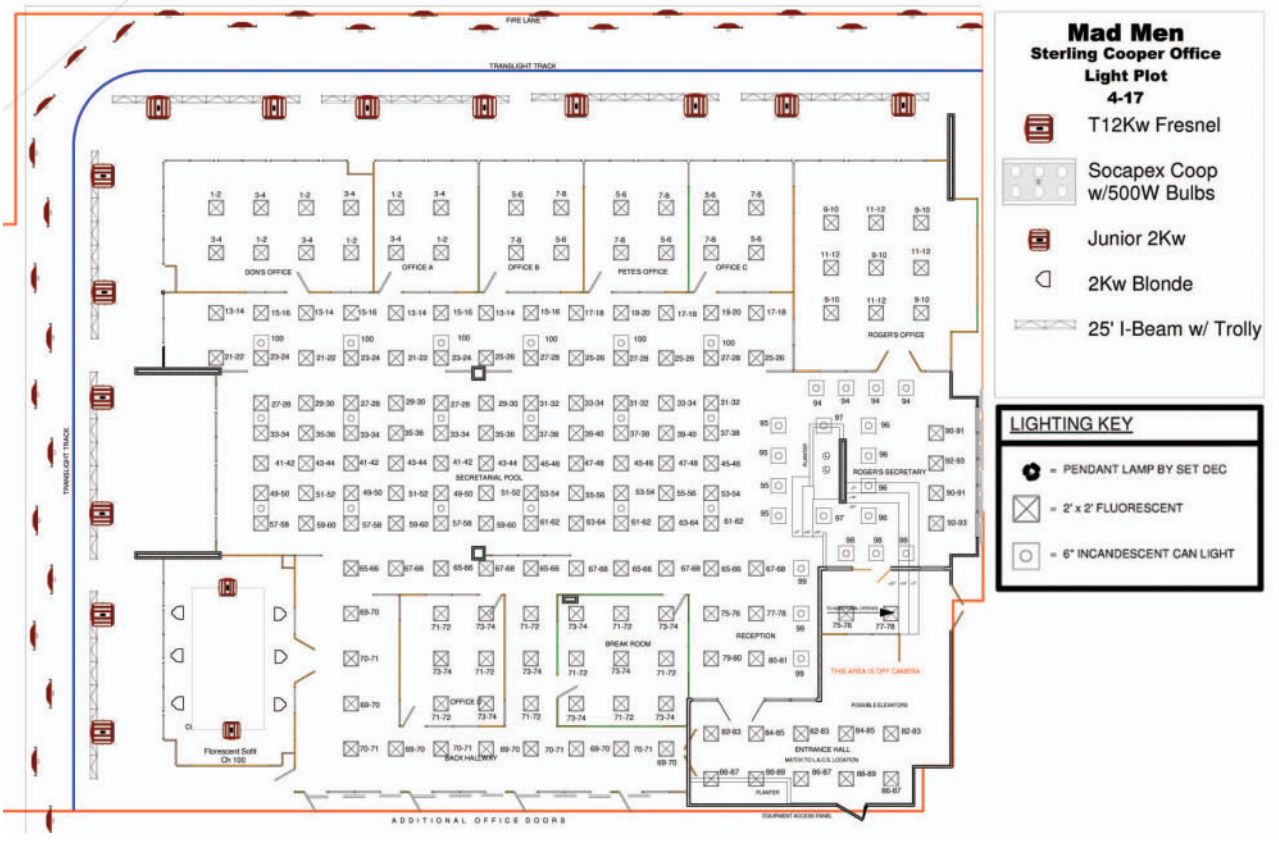
To keep the overhead light from being unflattering, Abraham had to devise a light-control system as the set was being constructed. Unable to implement all the wiring necessary to control each light, the crew settled for controlling rows of lights. Key grip Pat O'Mara created 2'x2' and 2'x1' Coreplast blackout panels and frames of 216 that were fitted with small but strong magnets. When a scene called for an actor to stand under a fluorescent, a blackout or a 216 was quickly popped over the fixture and diffused sidelight was brought in to sculpt the face. "If somebody was walking through the office in a wide shot, I just turned the overhead lights on," says Abraham. "But if Don was talking to someone at his desk and the office was the backdrop, I turned all the lights on and then selectively removed some; then, I brought the key around with Kino Flo Image 80s through 4-by-8 frames of 250 or 216, or sourced my key with a larger Fresnel through the window."

The perimeter offices of the Sterling Cooper set have windows looking out on a TransLite of the Manhattan skyline that's lit by 5K Skypans on 8' centers. Ambrose's crew rigged 25' trusses on chain motors and attached aluminum I-Beams to accommodate traveling trolleys that held Arri T-12s. "The flexibility of the I-Beam trolleys and the chain motors enabled us to move quickly and efficiently in focusing the window look," says Ambrose.

Opposite: Don Draper (Jon Hamm), creative director of the prestigious New York ad agency Sterling Cooper, dallies with a model (Megan Stier) in the episode "Lost Weekend." This page: Draper's secretary, Peggy (Elisabeth Moss), strolls past the firm's ad executives (Rich Sommer, Aaron Staton, Vincent Kartheiser and Michael Gladis).

Mad Men photos by Doug Hyun and Carin Baer, courtesy of AMC.

Tantalizing Television



Top: A lighting diagram details Abraham's general approach to the Sterling Cooper office set. Bottom: The company's staff watches the results of the 1960 presidential election between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy in "Nixon vs. Kennedy."

"We also had four 20Ks and a few more T-12s on stands that could be rolled around the office floor. For tungsten close-ups, we often used Barger-Baglite six- and three-light units with Chimeras, soft cloth, diaper baffles and 60- and 90-degree honeycomb grids for control.

"The walls of each office feature textured plastic 'glass' that has quite a specular quality," he adds, "and by placing small fixtures in strategic places, we were able to create some nice highlights in the background."

In characters' homes, Abraham used more traditional studio lighting but implemented practicals as much as possible. Draper's house was a practical set, and some scenes required four or five rooms to be lit at once. "I love the color spectrum of the household bulb," notes the cinematographer. "We used a lot of batten strips with 100-watt household bulbs. The bulbs are so close they're almost touching, so they create a single source that doesn't cast multiple shadows. Over time, we built housings for them with channels into which you can slide diffusion frames or egg crates. We call them 'Whiteys' because the guy who knocked these shells out of tin back in New York was named Whitey; I used them extensively on *The Sopranos* and felt they suited the homes in *Mad Men* as well."

Sterling Cooper's iconic ceiling influenced how the show's Panaflex Platinum cameras were positioned. "We always talked about having the camera down low to show the ceiling, and that cued a lot of different things," says Abraham. "It took on a life of its own — even when the ceiling wasn't involved, we were usually down low. There was something going on with the lower-than-eyeline camera that we were all tuned into.

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Tantalizing Television

Left: Don tries to figure out what's troubling his wife (January Jones) in the episode "Ladies Room." Right: Director of photography Phil Abraham.

Normally, you think of a low angle on someone as a kind of heroic vision, and there's an element of that, but when you shoot everything that way, you don't necessarily feel it."

Mad Men is a two-camera show, but Abraham strove to find unique ways to use the B unit — he wanted to avoid simply "spraying down" a scene with additional footage. "I'm not particularly fond of getting shots just because we can," he says. "I want shots from B that work as part of the coverage plan."

Abraham shot *Mad Men* on Kodak Vision2 500T 5218 and used Primo prime lenses ranging from 35mm to 75mm, as well as a 4:1 Primo zoom. "We shot well over a million feet of 5218 on *The Sopranos* every season, so I know it intimately," he says. "It holds the blacks really well and has great detail and excellent color rendition.

"I think the nuances of film stocks can get a little lost in post because there's so much creative latitude in what you can do on the back end," he continues. "I timed all the shows I shot because that's when you make sure your intentions on the set are carried through. It's important for the crew to be onboard with what I'm doing, but it's just as important for the colorist — in this case, Steve Porter at Encore in Hollywood — to be onboard as well."

While the first episode of *Mad Men* was being prepped in Los Angeles, Abraham was shooting another pilot in New York, so the *Mad Men* team had to use the series pilot as a guide. "I was constantly e-mailing and talking to [series production designer] Dan Bishop," recalls Abraham. "It turned out they had a poorly transferred DVD of the pilot, so their references for colors and other visual elements were off. Dan was trying to up the contrast in the sets because he was looking at something bad. The cinematographer's job isn't done when the camera is turned off. It's vital to make sure your work is maintained through to the master."

As a rule, Abraham avoided filtration on the lens, even on *Mad Men*'s frequent flashbacks. "By its very nature, a flashback is a stylistic conceit that calls attention to itself, and imbuing it with a special look is not something I like to do. Camera placement and point of view are of utmost importance in flashbacks."

The sets were designed to be dolly-friendly, even without laying track. "Steadicam and handheld work didn't feel appropriate to the visual grammar of that time, and that aesthetic didn't mesh with our classic approach," says Abraham.

Abraham shot the pilot and first four episodes of the series, setting a template that was later followed by cinematographers Frank DeMarco; Steve Mason, ASC, ACS; and Bill Roe, ASC. "On any series, there's a visual grammar that has to be maintained from show to show, and the cinematographer and production team usually provide that continuity while the directors come and go," observes Abraham. "On this show, the directors were happier coming than going! *Mad Men* brings out the best in directors because it's clearly not just another TV show."

— Rob Feld

Desperate Housewives

With its tree-lined streets, manicured lawns and habitually sunny skies, Wisteria Lane seems the very model of the upper-middle-class American suburb. But beneath this tony surface lurk mystery and infidelity, secrets and lies, gossip and scandal, nearly all of which is played with tongue-in-cheek humor. Even the show's title, *Desperate Housewives*, suggests a wry attitude.

"Douglas Sirk with a comic

touch" is how cinematographer Lowell Peterson, ASC describes the primetime soap opera, now in its fourth season on ABC. Peterson reveres Sirk, whose classical Hollywood melodramas were as much ironic social critiques as they were arch romances about misguided — or, better yet, forbidden — love. Although *Desperate Housewives* is played primarily for comedy, it, too, carries a healthy dose of social commentary.

In lighting the show's leading ladies, Peterson draws inspiration from Russell Metty, ASC, Sirk's longtime cameraman, whose luminous close-ups captured what Peterson calls "the inner life of women." A longtime fan of classic cinematography, with its emphasis on the human face, Peterson was a perfect fit for ABC's hit show. "In TV in general, the close-up is the money shot," he notes. His approach includes large, broad sources placed close to the actresses, wraparound lighting tailored to each face, plus contrast and highlights in other parts of the frame.

The drawback to big-source soft lighting is, of course, that "it tends to slobber all over the place," laughs Peterson, who sat down with *AC* while waiting for the Hollywood writers' strike to be resolved. "You can't control it with flags; you can't cut a big 8-by source; but you *can* grid it so it concentrates on what you want to light. And because it's soft, you can bring it around and it's still flattering on the face. Instead of front-lighting an actress with a big grid [that would] destroy the back wall, I'll bring it around so it's lighting the side wall you can't see. The grid keeps it off the wall you do see."

Barger-Baglites, which were already in use on the set when Peterson joined the show, prove quite useful. "I'd never seen them before and instantly fell in love with them," says the cinematographer. "They aren't very deep; they have either three bulbs or six bulbs; and we put big Chimeras on them, 3 feet across for the 3-Lite and 4 feet across for the 6-Lite. We put metal grids on the front of that to direct the light."

Peterson was pleased to "inherit" another asset that was already in place when he came aboard the show, gaffer Lon Thompson. "Lon is wonderful, very innovative, and as soon as he saw that I was into big, broad source-lighting, he found all these great tools. One was the Litepanels Mini, which makes an exceptionally nice eyelight; you can dial it up and down and it won't change color.

"Litepanels also manufactures 1-by-1-foot panels, and we use a large number of them for key light on interiors," he continues. "They're very thin, about an inch thick, and we use 2-by-2 frames so we can put four of them together. You can hang them, stick them on a Baby stand, or attach them to a wall with Velcro. They dim with no color shift. We carry both tungsten and daylight varieties."

A favorite unit for exteriors is the SoftSun 3.5K Soft Par, a soft daylight source that serves as fill, liner and even key light. The fixture is light enough to sit on a Junior stand. The crew has nicknamed it "Jiffy Pop" because it resembles a fully popped bag of the microwave popcorn.

Peterson says the show's generous lighting package, provided by Universal Electric, is larger than anything he worked with on previous shows. (His credits include *Six Feet Under, Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Profiler*.) "I still try to use less expensive stuff when possible," he notes. "For example, I use chicken coops on stage exteriors rather than space lights."

Desperate Housewives is

Top (from left): Bree (Marcia Cross), Gabrielle (Eva Longoria), Susan (Teri Hatcher) and Lynette (Felicity Huffman) keep an eye on their neighbors in *Desperate Housewives*. Below: Cinematographer Lowell Peterson, ASC, who alternates episodes with Eric Van Haren Noman, ASC, prepares to use a "Fly Swatter" on Wisteria Lane.

Desperate Housewives photos by Ron Tom and David Grossman, courtesy of ABC. Frame grabs courtesy of Modern VideoFilm.

Tantalizing Television

Top: Preparing to film the tornado sequence on Wisteria Lane. To capture most of the complex sequence, a VistaVision camera was locked off on its side. The finished shot boomed up the VistaVision frame from Lynette and Mrs. McClusky in the foreground to the funnel cloud in the sky. (The actors' portion of the shot can be seen on page 54.) Bottom: The CG funnel cloud was added to the top of the VistaVision frame. The sky and Universal Studios parking structure were replaced, and blowing debris and street lamplight were also added.

filmed at Universal Studios, where it occupies six soundstages and a street that was once used for the shows *Leave It to Beaver* and *The Munsters*. Production designer Thomas Walsh envisaged the street as a character in the show and designed it accordingly, building front rooms into what were formerly just façades of houses. These front rooms are permanent sets, allowing a character inside to look out and even interact with somebody walking down the street. Typically, the second floors of the houses are sets built onstage, but the home belonging to Katherine (Dana Delaney), a character who moved to Wisteria Lane this season, contains a whole floor of rooms at street level, and the entire interior of Bree's (Marcia Cross) house was built onstage.

The practical front rooms are lit by interior units and simulated sunlight pushed through the windows. Peterson says matching that material to what's shot onstage is his biggest challenge, and the Litepanels "really prove their worth" in such instances.

The rooms built onstage don't lend themselves to taking out walls, and in them Peterson uses various tricks for creating broad sources. One is the wall wedge: "We'll pick a wall that the camera doesn't see and put up an 8-by-8 bounce. Then, at a 30-degree angle to that, we put up an 8-by frame of light grid and pound a big light into the bounce. When it comes through the grid, it creates a large, luminous surface. Two 4-by-8-foot sheets of beadboard work perfectly with the 8-by."

The look of *Desperate Housewives* was established in the pilot and first few episodes by executive producer Larry Shaw and director of photography Walt Fraser. Peterson was brought on midway through the first season and alternates shooting episodes with Eric van Haren Noman, ASC. One innovation Peterson brought to the show was colored light; when he first came aboard, only white light was being used. Production initially discouraged the use of colored gels, but slowly, Peterson began adding them, and now that look is part of the show. "Again, I was thinking of Russell Metty," he acknowledges.

The use of colored light coincides nicely with an element of Walsh's production design: assigning specific colors to each of the female leads. "Tom worked up a color-palette sheet for each of them, and I use only the gel colors that are within each actress' palette," says Peterson.

The cinematographer is reluctant to discuss the colors assigned to each actress and the specific glamour lighting each face demands. However, he is happy to talk about "Something's Coming," the last episode to air before the writers' strike shut down production. In it, a tornado rips through Wisteria Lane, destroying houses and claiming a few lives. The program opens under uncharacteristically gray skies, which darken as the episode proceeds. "It was a huge undertaking, but we were determined to shoot it in the same nine days we have for every episode," recalls Peterson. "That meant shooting in full sun all day long, and the street needed to appear overcast."

In the background, his crew hung a 30'x40' silk from a 70' Champion crane; it was on chain motors so its orientation could be changed. Dull overhead light through the silk enhanced the suggestion of cloudy weather, and Peterson relied on telecine to achieve the cold, gradually darkening light he wanted. He used Power Windows to dull any stray sunlight that leaked into the deep background.

In the foreground, the crew

placed a couple of "Fly Swatters," 20'x20' silks suspended from 80' Condors, to keep harsh sunlight off the actors. The actors were softly lit from the ground with 18Ks through additional silks, bringing them into the same contrast range as the background.

The episode required one additional element: wind. "We had four 100-mph computer-controlled Turbo fans," reports Peterson. "Each required a 100-amp generator and a forklift to move it around. Just figuring out how to deploy all this equipment on our 40-foot-wide street required massive logistical planning."

Peterson worked closely with Dave Karriker of Modern VideoFilm, the visual-effects supervisor on the show. (The episode required so many effects shots that a storyboard artist was hired.) Peterson's visual-effects background includes two years of operating on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, one of the shows that pioneered the use of CGI on television. He has also shot second-unit greenscreen work on a number of Hollywood features. "I never thought I'd use those skills on *Desperate Housewives*," he admits with a laugh, "but over the years, I have."

In the episode, Lynette (Felicity Huffman) and Mrs. McClusky (Kathryn Joosten) are having an argument in the middle of Wisteria Lane when they turn and see a funnel cloud in the distance. Filmed with a 24mm lens, the shot takes in almost the entire street. The camera cranes up beyond the two women and sees the twister. "That shot was achieved very cheaply by doing a static VistaVision plate," explains Peterson. "Essentially, we laid a VistaVision camera on its side and photographed a still plate, and the visual-effects artists added a CG funnel to the top of the static frame. Normally, you'd do a tilt up, and they would have to put markers on

Tantalizing Television

Top: Actors Huffman and Kathryn Joosten are shot against greenscreen in 3-perf 35mm on another day. Bottom: The start of the final composited shot (before the boom up into the sky).

the frame and figure out how to change the perspective as they tilted up. But here, there was no perspective change. It was like a boom shot up the vertical frame — much quicker and easier to do."

By that point in the action, trees and bushes are blowing wildly. To achieve that effect, Peterson locked off the VistaVision camera, deployed a 30'x40' silk and the four wind machines, and shot each element one at a time — every house, every bush, every tree. "We just worked our way around the set and got everything in the shot both silked and blowing in the wind; the setup probably took four hours. Then the shots were tiled together in post.

"I think our final shot consisted of 21 elements, plus the funnel cloud and sky replacement. It was cool, but with the wind and noise of all those fans, it was also pretty uncomfortable to shoot." Additionally, objects falling around the characters, including a car that lands right beside Carlos [Ricardo Chavira], had to be shot separately and composited with greenscreen footage of the actors.

According to Peterson, greenscreen shots are a common occurrence. "For example, the producers might see a cut of an episode and decide they want Teri [Hatcher] to say a different line, but we can't go back to the location, so we shoot her against greenscreen. We routinely make plates on location with that very thing in mind."

One of the show's most unusual greenscreen exercises occurred when Cross was pregnant — with two episodes to go before her story arc was finished — and her doctors ordered her to remain in bed. "We went to Marcia's house and built two sets in her living room," recalls Peterson. "We shot there for two days, and we also greenscreened every additional shot of her for those two episodes while she lay in bed. Later, we composited her face on a body double and inserted her into every scene for those two episodes. I defy anybody to tell me where the greenscreen was!"

Desperate Housewives is shot on 35mm using Panaflex Platinum, Gold II and Millennium XL cameras and Primo lenses. It is framed for 4:3 and protected for 16:9 broadcast in high-definition. Peterson has used Kodak Vision2 HD Color Scan Film 5299 to film the show since the stock hit the market almost two years ago. "It's basically [Vision2 500T] 5218 that has been optimized for telecine use," he says. "It removes some of the color mask you don't need for telecine, so it gives you more latitude."

The series is color-corrected at Modern VideoFilm, where colorist Shaley Brooks uses a da Vinci 2K Plus. Peterson says Brooks is a full partner in achieving the look of the show. He adds, "I've also got the best camera, grip and electric crew there is. [A-camera/Steadicam operator] Rory Knepp is a Steadicam god who is also wonderful on the A camera."

— Jean Oppenheimer

Bones

Set in Washington, D.C., and loosely based on the experiences of forensic anthropologist Kathy Reichs, the Fox series *Bones* follows Temperance "Bones" Brennan, M.D. (Emily Deschanel), and her forensics team at the fictitious Jeffersonian Institute as they help FBI Agent Seeley Booth (David Boreanaz) solve mysteries. As with other procedural crime dramas, every episode of *Bones* presents a new mystery and further develops a season-long story arc, but it's the romantic tension between Bones and Booth that makes up a large part of the show's character.

Bones made its debut in 2005, and for its first season, the producers employed multiple cinematographers, notably Cort Fey; Michael D.

O'Shea, ASC; and Dennis Hall. For season two, producer Steve Beers and producer/director Tony Wharmby asked Gordon Lonsdale to be the sole director of photography for all 21 episodes. At the time, Lonsdale's episodic-TV experience included *Northern Exposure*, *Space: Above and Beyond* and *The Magnificent Seven*.

When he came aboard *Bones*, Lonsdale's first order of business was to establish a set of parameters for shooting and lighting the show that was specific but also flexible. "I like to think of the show as a romantic comedy with some thriller elements thrown in," he says. "Not every show is the same; depending on the tone of the scene at hand, sometimes shadows are black, and sometimes they aren't."

Lonsdale hired gaffer Erik Messerschmidt, who was recommended by A-camera operator Greg Collier, and together they drafted a lighting manifesto that details how the show should be lit and shot under almost any circumstance. This was deemed necessary because *Bones* has insert units and second units shooting full days every week, and Lonsdale tends to rotate his camera crews. Also, if Lonsdale has to step away to scout a location, someone else has to step up and shoot first unit. "We didn't want to have to worry about whether people were doing things the way Gordon wanted them to be done," says Messerschmidt. "We needed to make sure everyone was clear about what was okay and what wasn't. This wasn't just for Gordon, but for the good of the show in general — we have to get it done on time within the parameters the producers set."

Messerschmidt describes the show's look as "crisp, but also gritty. Gordon embraces the directors' visions and encourages them to make their episode their own. The look of the show is such that it can be adjusted to the way a director stages a scene or chooses to do coverage."

Booth (David Boreanaz) and Brennan (Emily Deschanel) compare notes in a scene from *Bones*.

One of the ways Lonsdale maintains such flexibility is by using Kodak's Vision2 5299 HD Color Scan film stock. Touted as a specialty stock for TV productions, 5299 allows the cinematographer to match the look of several different Kodak emulsions, all on the same roll of film. The first season of *Bones* was shot on 3-perf Vision 500T 5279, but Lonsdale preferred its Vision2 descendant, 5218. "Unfortunately, Fox doesn't allow the use of 5218 because Kodak charges more for it," he explains. "So I told my Kodak rep, Candace Chatman, that I needed a high-speed stock that wasn't 5279. She recommended 5299, which shoots 320 ASA to 2,000 ASA."

Before production would commit to a new film stock, Lonsdale had to conduct a battery of tests. He recalls, "Rating at 1,000 ASA, I shots tests where I overexposed and underexposed the film, 4 full stops in each direction. I transferred it straight without correction, and then I transferred it to see how it would respond to correcting it back to normal after being shot at such extremes. I did the same test, pushing it 1 stop to 2,000 ASA. *Bones* is the first show where I've put my meter at 2,000 ASA, and the footage looks great."

After grading the results, Lonsdale found 5299 similar enough to 5218. "The difficulty with 5299 is that you really have to set your parameters. If you were to do a film print directly from the negative, there would be no contrast in the film at all — it would be very flat."

Being able to take advantage of a variable-speed film stock makes all the difference on the set, which could be outdoors during the day or night, or indoors on one of the numerous *Bones* sets built within Stage 6 at Fox. A key set is the epicenter of the Jeffersonian, where polished-steel trusses, glowing floor panels and flashing computer readouts mesh with Gothic stone architecture. This set includes the forensics platform, the "bone room," autopsy rooms, a conference room and various offices.

When Lonsdale came aboard the show, he decided to keep a lot of the lighting put in place for the first season. Most alterations were relegated to the architectural lighting — much of which is visibly integrated into the set — for the express purpose of taking the overall light level down to accommodate shooting on 5299. (Look closely, and you might catch a glimpse of the grid of silver rock 'n' roll Par cans rigged to the truss over the forensics platform.)

Lonsdale prefers to shoot the action onstage between a T2 and a T5.6, rating the 5299 at 1,000 ASA. On the forensics platform, the action is lit primarily from overhead by the aforementioned Par cans and,

Bones photos courtesy of Fox Television.

Tantalizing Television

Bones **director of photography Gordon Lonsdale lines up a shot of Eric Millegan in one of the show's main sets.**

for fill, bounce off a large day blue stretched above the room's skylights; this allows for easy "walk-and-talks" and fast turnaround times on the set. The smaller sets make use of a combination of fluorescent lighting, window sources and frugal accents, with the exception of the bone room, which is almost entirely fluorescent-lit. Much of the secondary lighting comprises Kino Flos and Litepanels LED lights for kicklights in the eyes, with the occasional 1'-square Litepanel as a compact key source. "I usually key the principal actors with a 4-by-4 Kino Flo through 129 diffusion for a nice, broad, soft light," notes Lonsdale.

"If we were shooting on 5218, we'd be forced to light to a T2 or T2.8, and that would make the focus puller's job that much harder," observes Messerschmidt. "At 1,000 ASA, we can shoot at a T4 or a T 2.8/4 split. It speeds things up and also adds to the look of the show; we can shoot at a slightly deeper stop without having to bring in bigger lights."

On location, shooting with Zeiss Ultra Primes permits Lonsdale certain freedoms that few TV productions with tight budgets and short schedules enjoy. For an interior night scene in a restaurant in downtown Los Angeles, Lonsdale found he could get away with using little more than a small table lamp to light a master shot of Booth and his ex (Tamara Taylor). Shooting at 2,000 ASA with the lens at a T2, the crew augmented the actors' close-ups with Litepanels, while the environment outside the restaurant window required only a couple of Par cans to

achieve proper exposure.

Although 5299 is tungsten-balanced, Lonsdale and Messerschmidt have been impressed by its daylight performance. "There have been situations where we were outside during the day rating the film at 500 ASA, and with an 85 filter/Pola and ND.9, we were at 12 ASA, and by sunset, we'd pulled all the filtration and were shooting at 1,000 ASA," says Messerschmidt. "When you want to change your ASA, you just shoot a new chart and ask the timer to re-rate the film for you; you can go all the way to 1,000 ASA that way, except for the pushed rolls."

Because principal photography takes place in Los Angeles, a second-unit crew shoots background plates for driving scenes and some walk-and-talks in and around Washington. The first episode of this season, "The Widow's Son in the Windshield," called for a scene between Bones and Booth at the National Mall. The actors were shot against greenscreen, and plates of the Reflecting Pool and Lincoln Memorial were composited in later. Lonsdale says 5299 is satisfactory for visual-effects elements at any speed below 1,000 ASA "as long as you expose it right on the nose."

When 5299 was introduced, Kodak recommended the exclusive use of its HD Digital Processor for telecine transfer. However, when Lonsdale ran his emulsion tests through the Digital Processor, he didn't care for the results. Ultimately, he and Level 3 dailies colorist Rick Smith decided to transfer the film at 1080p 24 fps on a Spirit and grade with a da Vinci 2K. In that respect, 5299 "is no different than any other film stock," says Lonsdale.

Smith notes, "It's really important for the dailies colorist to stretch 5299 and get as much of the image out of it as he can because when it goes to the final color, a ton of contrast is added. If you don't transfer at exposure and clip out windows or highlights when necessary, 5299 will turn into a noisy, grainy stock in the final color."

"The nice thing about TV is that you can constantly experiment to see what works and what doesn't," says Messerschmidt. "We've had lots of practice with 5299, and Gordon really knows how to expose it to get the look — he gets it to pop."

Lonsdale says he welcomes any opportunity to operate outside his comfort zone. "We don't know what any film stock is capable of until we take it there; that's what makes our work exciting," he says. "Cinematography is about always learning, pushing and seeing what develops."

— Iain Stasukevich

■

Making Sitcoms "Sexy"

George Spiro Dibie, ASC, who brought style and nuance to multi-camera series, earns the Society's Career Achievement in Television Award.

by Jon Silberg

By the time George Spiro Dibie, ASC shot the first episodes of the classic 1970s sitcom *Barney Miller*, he was already a seasoned lighting professional. He had spent the previous decade gaffing for legendary ASC members James Wong Howe, Jack Marta and Harry Stradling Sr., among other cinematographers; he had also shot and directed a series of popular educational films through his Dibie-Dash Productions, filmed the ABC anthology *Armchair Mysteries*, and lit substantial stages for the multi-camera video children's show *The New Zoo Revue*.

So when Danny Arnold, the creator of *Barney Miller*, told Dibie he wanted the show's main set — New York's 12th Precinct police headquarters — to have a gritty, realistic feel rather than the bright, high-key look typical of sitcoms, Dibie had definite ideas about how to achieve that ambience, and he wasn't about to let video engineers stop him. "They had been shooting game shows in our studio, and they'd have 250 footcandles of light and expose at T5.6," he recalls. "I lit to 30 footcandles and opened up the lenses. Two video controllers wouldn't work with me. Someone told Danny, 'This guy you brought doesn't know anything about lighting for video. He doesn't know how to get a sharp, clean look.' Danny told him, 'The squad room is a 24-hour police station in New York. I don't want it clean. I like what I'm seeing on the monitor.'"

During the seven years he spent on *Barney Miller*, Dibie, who recently earned the 2007 ASC Career Achievement in Television Award, worked out many of the ideas that have since been implemented on multi-camera shows. He used smaller units, motivated

Opposite: Director of photography George Spiro Dibie, ASC recently became the second recipient of the ASC Career Achievement in Television Award. This page, left: Dibie takes five with an unusual cast member on one of his television projects. Right: The cinematographer films a hairspray commercial with Farrah Fawcett at the peak of her popularity.

Photo on opposite page by Owen Roizman, ASC. Photos courtesy of George Spiro Dibie.

light more, and tasked fewer instruments with performing more functions on set. "Less is more and more is less," he says. "I always talk about a 'kiss' of light."

Dibie won that battle with the video engineers, but he knew they weren't the last line of defense between his images and the audience's TV screens. To prevent technicians at TV stations from bringing up the video level in order to brighten shadowy areas of the frame, Dibie lit the practical globes, ever-present in wide shots, to nearly the highest level possible. "We would bring faces to between 40 and 60 IRE," he explains. "Then, I would let the globes in the station house go to 95 or 96 percent, so if somebody in Timbuktu wanted to bring up the shadows, they'd completely blow out the practicals. That way, I knew they'd leave the image the way it was supposed to be."

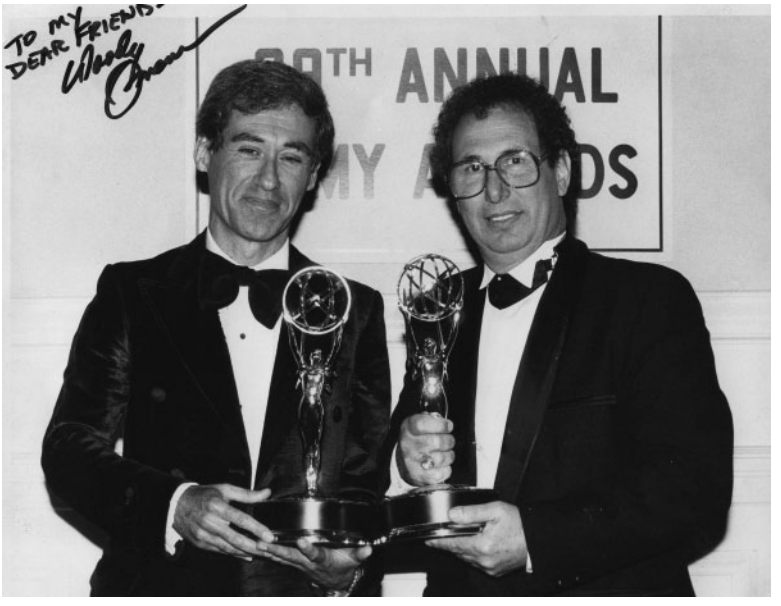
Dibie spent the next three decades as one of the most in-demand cinematographers in the sitcom world, shooting on both film and video. He spent 10 years under contract to Warner Bros. Television as a supervising director of photography; he always worked on the top series, sometimes two at a time. Over the course of his career, he won five Emmy Awards, for *Sister, Sister; Just the 10 of Us; Mr. Belvedere;* and *Growing Pains* (for which he won two). As president of International Cinematographers Guild, Local 600, a position he held for 20 years, he helped open up the roster to women and minorities and initiated an aggressive plan to educate aspiring camerapeople — an effort that was initially met with concern by some more traditional members. He recalls, "Some cinematographers didn't want to give away their secrets. I am not like that."

Dibie's success didn't come easily. He was born in Jerusalem — before the formation of Israel — to a Lebanese Catholic mother and a Greek Orthodox father. As a child, he built a tent in his backyard and charged friends admission to see comic panels scrolling in sequence on a device he built using paper rolls. As Christians, his family was neutral in the war between the Arab countries and the new state of Israel, but they eventually relocated to Amman, Jordan. There, while Dibie was working as a translator for the U.S. Information Agency at the U.S. embassy, an official helped him get papers to go to America, an opportunity he'd hoped for but did not expect.

Dibie arrived in San Francisco and soon headed for a warmer climate, moving south and enrolling in Los Angeles City College. He later studied directing at the Pasadena Playhouse, where a number of soon-to-be-famous actors, including Dustin Hoffman and Gene Hackman, were learning their craft. Although he hoped to direct for the stage, Dibie also took television courses. By the time he finished his studies, he had learned two things: "I learned how to work with people, and I learned that I could not survive as a theater director."

Trying to find his professional footing, he took a job at a supermarket. One day, he struck up a conversation with a customer who worked at 20th Century Fox; the customer got Dibie a job interview in the electrical department. He toiled at the lowest level of the department on the epic *Cleopatra* (1963) and steadily worked his way up. "I moved fast," he recalls. "Three years from best boy to gaffer — bang, bang, bang." ➢

Making Sitcoms "Sexy"



Right: Woody Omens, ASC and Dibie show off their Emmy Awards at the 1987 ceremony. Dibie won for Outstanding Lighting Direction (Electronic) for a Series for the hit comedy *Growing Pains*. Below: Dibie checks the light on a scene set in the New York subway.

As a gaffer, he worked on such films as *The Molly Maguires* (1970), shot by Howe, and *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (1970), shot by Stradling. On the latter picture, Dibie found Barbra Streisand to be every bit as talented and demanding as her reputation suggested. He built a special portable beauty light, dubbed the Stri-Light (a Scoop coated with paint and diffusion), that he positioned himself to enhance her close-ups. On one setup, he gave the custom light to his best boy because his own arm was throbbing from a recent inoculation. "Barbra asked me, 'Why aren't you holding the light?' When I told her about my arm, she said, 'Which arm got the shot?' 'My right,' I told her. 'Okay,' she said, 'you can hold it with your left.'"

In the early 1970s, Dibie joined forces with Roger Dash, a high-school teacher, to create educational films. The short pieces were self-financed and shot on weekends as cheaply as possible. Dibie-Dash Productions eventually sold more than 2,000 prints to schools throughout the country. "Two or three lights were all we had at first," recalls the cinematographer. He shot the 16mm projects on reversal stock, which forced him to take an exacting approach. "I was shooting ECO," he notes. "It's like Kodachrome — you can't tell the lab to print it up or print it down. You have to get the exposure perfect."

Despite Dibie's professional credits, he had a great deal of difficulty getting into the guild, which was then Local 659. He recalls one guild member's piece of advice: "Go shoot porno movies." When he returned with the offer of a job as cinematographer on *The New Zoo Revue*, guild officials resisted, arguing that he should be considered an electrician, not a cinematographer. But Warner Bros. wanted Dibie and

Left: Dibie checks the light on Mary Tyler Moore for the 1976 TV special *Mary's Incredible Dream*. Above: The cinematographer and his crew set up a shot on the series *Buffalo Bill*, a multi-camera show shot on 35mm.

he prevailed. "Within a month, I was a member of the union with a card as a director of photography," he says, the pride still evident in his voice.

There was, however, a caveat: at that time, the guild had a special "E," which stood for "electronic," on the card next to the director of photography classification, and cameramen who shot video were only in the union as video shooters — they were prohibited from working on film projects. Dibie felt this was unfair, and the situation reached a boiling point when producer/director George Schlatter, best known for his work on the *Laugh-In* variety show, decided to make the feature *Norman, Is That You?* on video. (He planned to use a very early tape-to-film process to make prints.) Dibie recalls, "The board at the guild told me I couldn't shoot it because it was a feature. I said, 'You said I can only shoot video, and this is video!'" The "E" classification was eventually crushed under the weight of the hypocrisy, but it didn't happen without a fight.

It's no secret that multi-camera TV work is seldom treated with the same respect given to single-camera work. Some see it as limiting; lighting and camera placement have to accommodate four cameras simultaneously, and although there is no chance to re-light for close-ups, the stars must look as attractive as possible in order to keep viewers coming back. Dibie has always viewed this as a challenge rather than a limitation, and when he and Isidore Mankofsky, ASC served on the Board of Governors at the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, they were instrumental in convincing the academy to offer an Emmy Award for filmed multi-camera shows. That honor was introduced just six years ago.

It was on *Barney Miller* that Dibie worked out his approach to lighting for multi-camera work. He knew what he *didn't* want: the look of most other videotaped sitcoms. To Dibie, those shows seemed over-lit; light came from everywhere, and none of it appeared to be motivated by practicals or windows. Also, there was rarely any change in the look from scene to scene or episode to episode. Early black-and-white multi-camera shows also tended to use more frontal light than Dibie liked. In fact, he doesn't cite any predecessors in multi-camera shooting as an inspiration for his work.

The cornerstone of his approach was what he calls the "Dibie square" theory of lighting. This refers to his desire to light the stage so that any areas where an actor plays a scene with another can have one light act as one performer's key and the other's backlight, and a second light that does the same thing coming from the other direction. "I always wanted to have back/crosslighting," he says. Fill came from very diffused lights pointing straight down from the grid and above the cameras facing the stage. But wherever possible, the key lights functioned as back/crosses. "When I worked with the production designer, I always made sure there were windows and practicals in rooms or hallways. If windows weren't feasible, I at least wanted practicals — something to motivate the light."

Dibie is quick to add that he is not a slave to the concept of precise lighting motivation. "I worry about source up to a point," he says. "I want to give you the *feel* of the source. We are in the movie business, and the most important thing is to tell stories and make you feel the story is real." ➢

Making Sitcoms "Sexy"

Right: Producer Danny Arnold takes five with Dibie on the set of *Barney Miller*, the cinematographer's big break. Below: Dibie enjoys a cigar while setting up a shot.

TV is a medium of close-ups, and to light those angles, Dibie made extensive use of Obies, the beauty light credited to cinematographer Lucien Ballard, ASC and named for his wife, actress Merle Oberon. "I have used Obies all my life," says Dibie. He would position them on the camera and heavily diffuse them to avoid casting any telltale shadows. Whether shooting film or video, he always ran cable for these lights — one for each camera — to a dimmer board, where he could bring them up or down as needed, scrupulously keeping track of the Obie's settings at each point in the script so he could duplicate the look. "Usually, we'd do the show the whole way through without the audience, then they would bring in the audience and we'd do it again. I would go through the script breakdown and mark it up so we could re-create with the audience what we'd done earlier. Otherwise, shots wouldn't cut together."

While Dibie was under contract to Warner Bros. and serving as a lighting consultant to all their shows, he sometimes came across cinematographers who overdid it with the Obies. One, he recalls, "had the Obie so bright that the colorist would bring down everything and people were wondering why the backgrounds were so dark. [The light] had no feeling. So I marked [the dimmer board] and said, 'You cannot go past this mark.'"

Dibie also liked to make extensive use of subtle diffusion in front of or behind the lens. "Hi-def-video manufacturers like to talk about how sharp their pictures are, but I don't know any cinematographer who worries about making the picture sharper," he notes. Cinematographers, he says, want to tell stories and usually want to make the performers look good, and extreme sharpness can be the enemy of both objectives.

He found that a lot of the available filters didn't suit his needs. For a show to cut together, he had to use the same material on all four cameras, and a filter that works well

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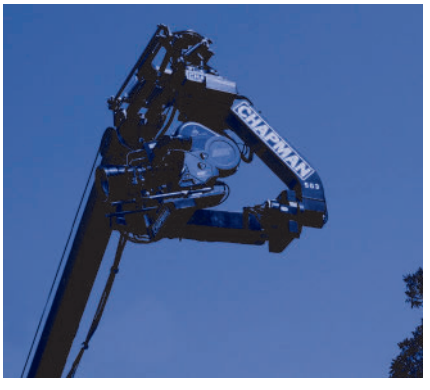

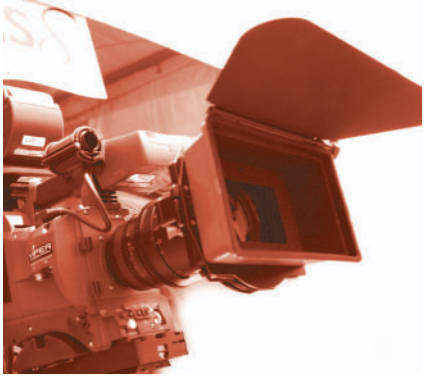

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Making Sitcoms "Sexy"

Dibie checks the light on lead actor Dabney Coleman on the set of *Buffalo Bill*.

for close-ups is often unacceptable for wide shots (and vice versa). Years ago, on a trip to Paris, he encountered a fabric that he found to be perfect for both film and video multi-camera work, and he has used it — D-B Net — ever since. "It is beautiful from 30 feet away and from 2 feet away," he attests.

Dibie's skill at shooting actresses helped secure his position as a leading cinematographer in the sitcom world. After working with Linda Lavin on *Barney Miller*, he came in as a consultant to retool the look of her show *Alice* at the start of its second season. "When Candace Bergen was going to do the pilot for *Murphy Brown*, Linda Lavin told her, 'Get the guy with curly hair who calls everybody Sexy,'" recalls Dibie. "I was already under contract to Warner Bros., so I was going to do the pilot, anyway. Then Gil Hubbs [ASC] took over, and that show kept him busy for years."

Dibie used color on his lights quite frequently. "People don't realize it, but I used color all the time. There's color in everything in real life. On the pilot for *Driving Miss Daisy*, I said, 'Atlanta is in the peach state,' and everything there is peach-colored. On *Barney Miller* and another New York-set show I did, *DiResta*, I used a lot of blue because New York was dirty and harsh. On *Growing Pains*, every light through a window, day or night, always had color. It gives a set a sense of liveliness."

Of Dibie's educational endeavors, ASC Vice-President Owen Roizman says, "George is always put-

ting seminars together and reaching out to students, and he's extremely enthusiastic about everything he does. Young people will call [the ASC] with questions about how to be a cinematographer and how to get work in the industry, and George always says, 'Have them call me.' He's an amazing guy."

Dibie learned of the ASC honor at a difficult time: Daniele, his wife of 49 years, had recently died quite suddenly. The man known as one of the most gregarious in the industry "couldn't even talk for a month," he recalls. "When I heard Michael Goi [ASC] nominate me for this award at an ASC meeting, I couldn't breathe. I wasn't expecting it."

But Dibie has known from the start that this business is anything but predictable. "I tell kids, 'Never give up. It's a horse race, and in a horse race, all the horses run. If you sit, you lose." He credits his late wife for tenacity, too, especially in the early days of his career, when opportunities seemed very remote. "While I was away on location, she was there for our three children — Suzanne, Marc and Laurice — and that was so important. I'm very lucky to have a great family, and so much of that is because of my wife. In the horse race, she ran with me; she never said, 'I'm tired. I want to sit.'" ■

The cinematographer and his wife, Daniele, celebrate his 2003 ICG Lifetime Achievement Award.

Post Focus

The angst-ridden brother in *Sibling*, shot by Aaron Medick, exacts a twisted revenge on the nun (Karen Young) who treated him poorly as a child.

Mega Playground Aids *Sibling*

by Jim Hemphill

When director Matt Farnsworth and cinematographer Aaron Medick decided to shoot the independent feature *Sibling* on high-definition video using the Thomson Grass Valley Viper camera, they began working with digital-imaging technician (DIT) Dave Satin at Mega Playground very early on to set the looks they had in mind — they had to convey multiple time periods on a modest budget and with a tight shooting schedule.

Sibling follows a brother and sister, Marcus (played as a child by Spencer List and as an adult by Walter Masterson) and Audrey (Dana DeVestern as a child and Diane Foster as an adult), who are separated after their parents' brutal murder and raised in very different circumstances; Audrey is adopted by a loving couple, whereas Marcus is raised in a horrific orphanage and becomes a violent psychopath determined to inflict pain on anyone who gets close to him, including his sister. "The story takes place over many years, from 1980 to the present," says Medick. "Achieving the looks we had in mind was a challenge because we didn't have a lot of money, and I only had two weeks of prep."

The filmmakers' key visual references were the features *Domino*, shot by Dan Mindel (*AC* Nov. '05); *Munich*, shot by Janusz Kaminski (*AC* Feb. '06); and *Zodiac*, shot by Harris Savides, ASC (*AC* April '07). Satin, whose recent credits include *Miami Vice* (*AC* Aug. '06), immediately recognized the script's visual potential.

"Being that it's a horror movie, it presented a wonderful opportunity to stylize the images," he says. He and Medick set to work devising a series of look-up tables (LUTs) that would achieve the desired looks.

In addition to referencing films during prep, Medick clipped stills out of *American Cinematographer* and brought them to Satin as reference guides, taking pages from coverage of *The Prestige* (Nov. '06), *Tsotsi* (March '06) and *All the King's Men* (Oct. '06). "Aaron was my dream client in that he was enormously well prepared," says Satin. "He had written descriptions as well as photos; he was very specific. With all of that visual research, it was easy for me to create what he wanted."

Satin and Medick came up with 15 LUTs that the cinematographer felt would work under *Sibling*'s lighting conditions. "There were multiple versions of what looked like a bleach-bypass process, multiple versions of a cross-processed effect, and then normal tungsten and daylight LUTs with different levels of black," says Medick. In addition to basic day and night looks, "there were some seriously aggressive day-for-night looks," adds Satin.

The filmmakers repeatedly referenced Mindel's work on *Domino*. "There was a lot of material that Aaron wanted to look bleach-bypassed and cross-processed," says Satin. Farnsworth adds, "Our really crushed blacks were also similar to *Domino*. It was high-contrast, and we had to pour a lot of light into the scene to shoot it, but it was gorgeous. Some of the pre-programmed looks were even named after *Domino*, like 'Domino 1' and 'Domino Night.'"

Using other movies as starting points for discussion enabled Medick and Satin to work quickly, creating their LUTs under the available lighting conditions at Plus 8/Panavision in New York, where the production rented its Viper package. "We did all the work in a checkout room," recalls Satin. "I do it with [Iridas'] SpeedGrade OnSet and a Cine-tal monitor, and it's an extremely interactive process. I ask the client, 'Do you like this or that? Do you want it darker or redder?' and so on. It only took about five hours during Aaron's checkout day, and he was good to go." Medick adds, "We did all the LUTs

Photos by Frank Ishman, courtesy of Full Fathom 5, LLC.

either in a tungsten atmosphere with a chart, or we went to the back door at Panavision, opened it, and shot the Manhattan skyline. We set our black levels as close to the stills from the magazines as we could and otherwise went into it blind."

On set, the footage was captured to 4:4:4 log space on HDCam SR tape, and the filmmakers saw the LUTs applied in real time on a Cinemage monitor from Cine-tal. "I was able to program 15 buttons that basically gave me different film stocks," says Medick. "I had the LUTs available right there on the monitor, and by pressing a button, I could see what my dailies were." He adds that the LUTs also served to counteract the green cast that characterizes footage shot in the Viper's FilmStream mode, a tint that might deter some filmmakers from using the camera.

Occasionally, Medick felt constrained by the project's low budget, which prevented the production from keeping a DIT on set. "It would have been nice to have someone come in once a week to do a new LUT," he says. "There were times toward the end of the shoot where we'd gone through all of the preset looks and could have used something new." In the end, however, the cinematographer felt the restrictions were as liberating as they were limiting. "We learned to embrace the LUTs and treat them like film. There were a few we threw out immediately, as well as some we saved for specific sequences or moments. Essentially, that limited me to five film stocks on a daily basis, but I felt I learned how to best use those five rather than relying on an engineer who could tweak anything at any time."

From Farnsworth's perspective, the LUTs provided plenty of options. "It was tough enough having 10 different concepts in front of us at any given time," he says. "If there had been more, it would have been even harder to decide [on one]. But I think we made the right decisions. And we're going to reapply the LUTs in post, so we can always change [the look] in the end."

While shooting, Medick would note which LUT had been chosen for each shot and then send the camera reports to Mega Playground's downtown facility in New York. "They did all the conversion work for us," says Farnsworth. "They dubbed our masters and made clones in 4:2:2 SR, and they applied the LUTs as they brought the footage in and did the downconvert. We wound up with 4:2:2 SR tapes that we digitized with a DVCPro HD codec for the offline." The footage was captured with an AJA Kona LHe capture card to a 7-drive Xserve RAID with 4.1 TB of storage for the offline, which Farnsworth then carried out using Final Cut Studio 2 on a Mac Pro G5.

Ultimately, the filmmakers found the workflow to be both economical and creatively fruitful. "Sometimes, you get slowed down when you shoot digital over 35mm because of all the extra equipment," says Medick. "But in this case, the process was sped up because I could really trust the monitor. I used no filters; I shot everything raw 4:4:4." ➢

Medick worked closely with digital-imaging technician Dave Satin at Mega Playground to establish an array of look-up tables for the feature. Shooting with a Thomson Viper, Medick and director Matt Farnsworth were able to view the LUTs in real time on set, though the footage was recorded raw to give the filmmakers flexibility through post.

Farnsworth (center) and Diane Foster — *Sibling*'s well-adjusted sister — find sanctuary with the crew.

"Shooting digitally and using LUTs has opened up a whole dimension to indie filmmakers," notes Farnsworth. "We covered decades in the characters' lives simply by altering colors, and the digital workflow allowed us to get some great effects in post."

"There's no black magic about this," insists Satin. "Using these tools doesn't have to be complicated, and as the technology improves, we can do more and more."

VES Announces White-Paper Program

The Visual Effects Society, which comprises more than 1,600 artists around the globe working in film, television, commercials, music videos, videogames and new media, has launched a white-paper program to encourage an industry-wide appreciation for the field of visual effects. As Jeff Okun, 2007's chair of the board for the VES, says, "We represent the technological leaders, and what we want is to encourage people throughout the entertainment industry and embrace other crafts so we can walk forward united with unified solutions and standards."

The program, Okun continues, "is about making the people [working in visual effects] more visible and helping others appreciate the technology that goes into creating an image." VES Executive Director Eric Roth adds, "There's a recognition that the entire visual-effects field and how it intersects with the delivery of entertainment across all platforms and all media need to be redefined. With these white papers, we want to take a look at [visual effects] from technological, business and creative vantage points."

The first of the white papers — titled "The State of VFX" and scheduled to be released this month — addresses the evolution of the visual-effects field and its impact on the industry as a whole. To do this, the paper focuses on

three issues: the continued erosion of distinct phases of production, the need for new positions and personnel throughout all stages of production, and the common misperception that visual effects are a quick, cheap and easy process.

Both Okun and Roth emphasize the particular importance of that last issue, noting that as production schedules continue to be shortened, post workflows take an especially hard hit. "Everyone wants everything in less time," says Roth. "We want to make sure that everyone moves forward from this point in the way that makes the most sense for the industry as a whole and the visual-effects world in particular." Adding to that, Okun notes, "We need to be able to point to some facts and say, 'This is what squeezing this down costs you or saves you.'" Accordingly, the VES hopes to find an audience for its papers among key decision-makers at the studio level as well as in guilds and other societies.

Similar to the vetting process that initially inspired the white-paper program, the specific focus of this first paper stemmed from discussions among ad hoc think tanks sponsored by the VES. "A couple of times a year," explains Roth, "we pose a number of questions to some leading individuals throughout the industry. It's an informal way of having a dialogue." From those discussions, a number of writers at the staff level of the VES compiled the white paper, which then went back out for review by the board and other society members. The result, says Okun, "both conceptually and scientifically, will be a product of the Visual Effects Society; there's no one writer that stands out.

"We've taken the first step with this white paper," he continues. "We're presenting the state of things and revealing areas that need further discussion." In turn, those discussions will point the way toward topics for future white papers, though Roth notes there is no set timeframe for the program. "We aren't holding ourselves to a schedule where two weeks after we finish the first [white-paper], we're on to the next, but we'll take a look at each potential topic as we get there.

"At the end of the day, the world is changing technologically, and these changes are offering up enormous creative opportunities," Roth continues. "Within the society, we have a ton of extraordinary information that should be mined and shared, and that's exactly what we're going to do."

For more information, visit www.visualeffectssociety.com. ■

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New Addition to the XDCam Family

Band Pro Film & Digital's recent "One World on HD" conference in Burbank, California, drew a crowd from across the globe, and one of the stars of the show was Sony's new PMW-EX1 XDCam EX camcorder.

Designed in response to the demand for a networked hi-def product at an affordable price, the EX1 boasts three ½" CMOS sensors and 1920x1080 and 1280x720 HD recording capability, all in a compact, handheld body. Despite carrying the XDCam brand, most of the key components — including the digital signal processor and memory recording mechanism — have been newly designed specifically for the EX1.

For its recording media, the camcorder uses the newly developed SxS Pro memory card, which employs the PCI Express Interface to achieve a data-transfer speed of 800 Mb/s. Combining the moderate bit rate of MPEG-2 Long GOP compression adopted by the EX1 to the SxS Pro card, the camera offers long-form recording with nonlinear capabilities such as instantaneous random access and high-speed, file-based operation. Equipped with two memory-card slots, the EX1 can record up to 140 minutes of HD footage.

The EX1's imaging devices are three newly designed, ½" Exmor CMOS sensors, each of which boasts an effective pixel count of 1920x1080, allowing images to be captured in 1080p, 720p and 1080i HD resolutions with a multiple frame recording capability that includes 59.94i, 50i, 29.97p, 25p and native 23.98p. Furthermore, the PMW-EX1 camcorder offers over- and under-cranking functionality, allowing image capture at frame rates selectable from 1 fps to 60 fps in 720p mode and from 1 fps to 30 fps in 1080p mode, in increments of 1 fps.

Recording to a flash memory card, the EX1 assigns each shot its own space, preventing any accidental overwriting of captured footage. The camcorder also generates thumbnails for each clip, allowing users to easily navigate a memory card's contents through the camera interface. An "Expand" function divides a selected clip into 12 evenly timed intervals, each with its own thumbnail identifier.

The EX1's Fujinon 14x zoom lens features a newly developed, unique focus ring that offers two types of manual focus and an auto-focus operation. When the focus ring is in the front position, the lens works as one would expect on a handheld camcorder, but when the ring is set to the back position, the lens has an absolute focus position, giving the camcorder's lens the functionality of a professional, interchangeable lens. Additionally, the lens features independent rings for zoom (5.8mm to 81.2mm, or 31.4mm to 439mm on a 35mm-format lens) and iris (F1.9 to F16).

Other highlights of the EX1 include selectable gamma curves, including four types of Cine Gamma identical to those on high-end CineAlta camcorders; a slow-shutter function; shutter controls adjustable by electronic shutter speed or by shutter angle; a 3.5" color LCD screen with a high resolution of 1920x480 pixels as well as a 16:9, color LCD viewfinder; a rotary hand grip; and two-channel, 16-bit, 48 kHz linear PCM uncompressed audio recording.

For more information, visit www.bandpro.com or www.sony.com/xdcamex.

Chrosziel Dresses Up the EX1

Coinciding with the release of Sony's PMW-EX1, Chrosziel recently introduced a series of accessories for the camera, including a mattebox, sunshade and follow focus.

Providing professional shading

and filtering solutions, Chrosziel's mattebox system features a true 16:9 housing that covers both 16:9 and 4:3 aspect ratios, a filter stage for two filter holders (one 4x4 rotating and one 4x4/4x5.650 fixed), a full-size French flag, and a 110:91mm ring. For a secure mount, the system also comes with a center bracket and 15mm lightweight support with adjustable mattebox rods.

Complementing the mattebox, Chrosziel offers its DV follow focus, which was designed specifically for DV and HDV cameras and has been outfitted with the appropriate gear ring to fit the EX1's Fujinon lens. Designed as a complete unit with a fixed handwheel, the DV follow focus is an excellent fit for the EX1's fixed-focus lens operation.

Similar to the mattebox system, Chrosziel's 4x4 sunshade covers both 16:9 and 4:3 shooting and features a filter stage for two filter holders (one rotating and one fixed) and a full-size French flag. Additionally, the sunshade boasts a 104:77mm screw-in step-down ring, offering a lightweight means of affixing wide-angle adapters.

For operators who prefer to keep the camera on their shoulder, Chrosziel is offering the DV Balancer, which clamps underneath the lightweight

support found with the mattebox system.

All items are available in the U.S. through 16x9, Inc. For more information, visit www.16x9inc.com or www.chrosziel.com.

K-Tek Clamps onto Camcorders

K-Tek, the maker of professional boom poles, microphone-support products and windscreens, has set its sights on accessorizing digital-video cameras and recently introduced the Universal Camera Clamp Adapter Kit (K-CA).

The K-CA offers a simple and cost-effective way to mount acces-

sories such as a shock mount or microphone suspension system to an array of DV cameras by converting the cameras' existing microphone clamps to a standard 3/8"-16 thread. When attached, the K-CA allows the user to position the microphone away from the camera and better isolate it from the camera's sounds and vibrations.

Designed to fit most DV camera microphone clamps, the K-CA comes complete with two rubber sleeves to accommodate clamps of different sizes. For more information, visit www.ktekboompoles.com or call (760) 727-0593.

P2 on the Move

On the heels of the solid-state AJ-HPM100 P2 mobile recorder/player, Panasonic has unveiled the AJ-HPM110, dubbed the P2 Mobile, which adds native 1080/24p recording, a 1080/24 PsF input/output and longer recording times to an already-long list of capabilities.

Weighing 14.4 pounds, touting a magnesium die-cast frame that folds

like a laptop for easy transport, and operating on either AC or DC power, the HPM110 is designed for use in the field, in mobile vehicles or in the studio.

In addition to recording in independent-frame DVCPro HD/50/25 and DV formats, the unit can also record master-quality, full-raster 1920x1080 AVC-Intra when used with the optional AJ-YBX200G codec board. The recorder/player also offers the flexibility of up/down/cross and aspect conversion.

With six P2 card slots, users can record continuous, extended clips in sequence or output an extended playlist from five mounted cards to the sixth slot. When used with Panasonic's 32GB P2 cards, the HPM110 records for four hours in 1080p/24 in AVC-Intra 100 and eight hours in 720p/24 in AVC-Intra 100 or DVCPro HD. Additionally, the unit offers recording in multiple frame rates, 24p pull-down removal and real-time playback of 720p variable frame rates for over- and under-cranking effects.

Equipped with an array of AV/IT connections — including HD-SDI input/output, IEEE 1394 and USB 2.0 — the HPM110 is designed to work with virtually any professional camera system, from tape-based digital cameras to high-end cinema cameras with 1080/24 PsF output (in full-raster 1920x1080 or 1280x720). The unit also offers eight 16-bit digital audio channels (including 5.1-channel surround sound with audio split/dubbing features), broadcast-level editing controls (includ-

ing audio faders and a jog/shuttle dial with 100x speed in forward/reverse), standard analog component/composite and audio input/outputs, an SD card slot and assignable user files.

No matter which camera is connected to the P2 Mobile, clip thumbnails are readily accessible and allow for easy management and viewing of the recorded content on the unit's built-in 9" LCD monitor. Further enhancing workflow, the HPM110 features an RS-422A remote (allowing the unit to be used as a play source in an edit session), an edit/copy function and a loop record function.

The suggested retail price for the HPM110 is $12,000. For more information, visit www.panasonic.com/broadcast.

Sachtler's Soom Transforms Camera Support

Offering multifunctional camera support to a range of DV and HDV camcorders, Sachtler has unveiled the Soom, an innovative support that provides four distinct configurations within one compact, easy-to-carry system.

The device can function as a tripod with a 75mm bowl adapter for mating to a Sachtler FSB or other fluid head. With its single-stage legs, the Soom features a vertical height range from 27" to 56", and users have a choice of removable rubber feet or hardened steel spikes. The integrated TriSpread mid-level spreader delivers stability over any terrain.

When additional height is called for, the Soom TriPod transforms into the HiPod via its integrated center column,

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the Soom Tube, which is capable of telescoping vertically to a variable lens height of over 8'. Sachtler has also incorporated a protective dampening feature that automatically deploys as the center column is collapsed, preventing the camera payload from crashing down.

If operators want to go lower, the TriSpread mid-level spreader sports its own 75mm bowl, so that when it is removed from the standard tripod, it becomes a single-stage baby tripod with a height range of 8" to nearly 19".

Lastly, the Soom boasts a monopod configuration with a height range of 34" to 62". The telescoping Soom Tube quickly detaches from the tripod and features a foldaway foot bracket, allowing the operator to firmly secure its base to the floor.

The Soom is easily reconfigured from one mode to the next without tools, and when the day's work is finished, it collapses to 37" for transportation in a single bag or case. The total weight of the Soom system is 11.4 pounds, and when used with an FSB 6 head, it can support up to 13.2 pounds. A custom-designed bag with carrying straps, wheels and backpack straps is also available.

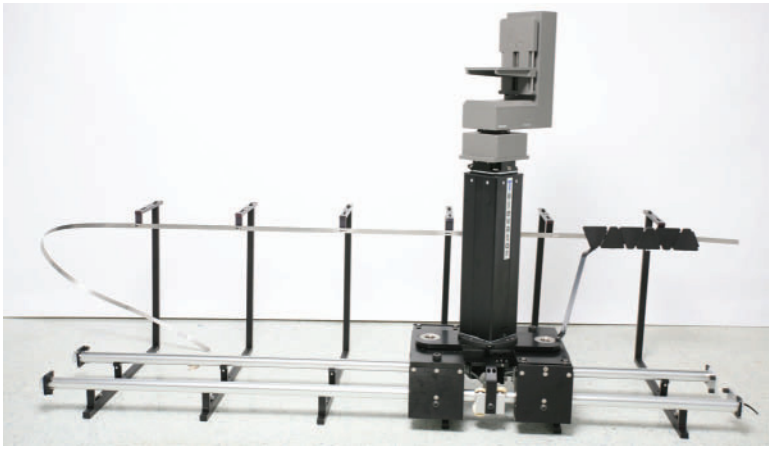
The Soom can be purchased as a complete system or as individual components. For more information, visit www.sachtler.us or call (845) 268-0100.

Telemetrics Rolls Out TeleGlide

Telemetrics recently introduced the TG-Tro-2 TeleGlide Camera Trolley System for use in studio and sports applications.

Able to be ceiling- or floor-mounted, the TeleGlide features an isolated motor to ensure quiet operation and a fully articulated dual trolley for optimal load stabilization and smoothness. The system can be easily configured to accommodate Telemetrics' Televator Elevating Pedestal for floor positioning applications, and it includes an integrated cable management system designed to help maintain trouble-free operation.

Recognizing that no two installations are the same, Telemetrics has designed its curved and straight track to be easily cut to customer specifications. The TeleGlide Trolley works with all Telemetrics pan/tilt heads and linear elevation units and can support up to a 250-pound payload capacity with a



maximum speed of two meters per second.

For more information, call (201) 848-9818 or visit www.telemetricsinc.com.

Reel 13 Salutes Shorts

New York's public-television station, Thirteen/WNET, recently launched an initiative that offers independent filmmakers fresh opportunities to connect with audiences. Called *Reel 13*, the program is built around a Saturday-night broadcast lineup that showcases a classic film followed by an independent short and feature. Additionally, *Reel 13* offers an online community where cinephiles can blog, critique, exchange ideas and even submit their own short projects for viewing. During the week, visitors to the site can vote on the shorts they watch, and the short with the most votes airs during Saturday night's broadcast.

"*Reel 13* is an exciting example of public television at its best, most original and most relevant," says Neal Shapiro, president of Thirteen. "Saturday nights will now be an interactive experience, where movie buffs can create and participate in what they watch."

In addition to the shorts programming, *Reel 13*'s weekly lineup of classics highlights great films from the early days of cinema to today, and its slate of indie features showcases works culled from festivals around the world.

For more information, including short-film submission guidelines, visit www.reel13.org. ■

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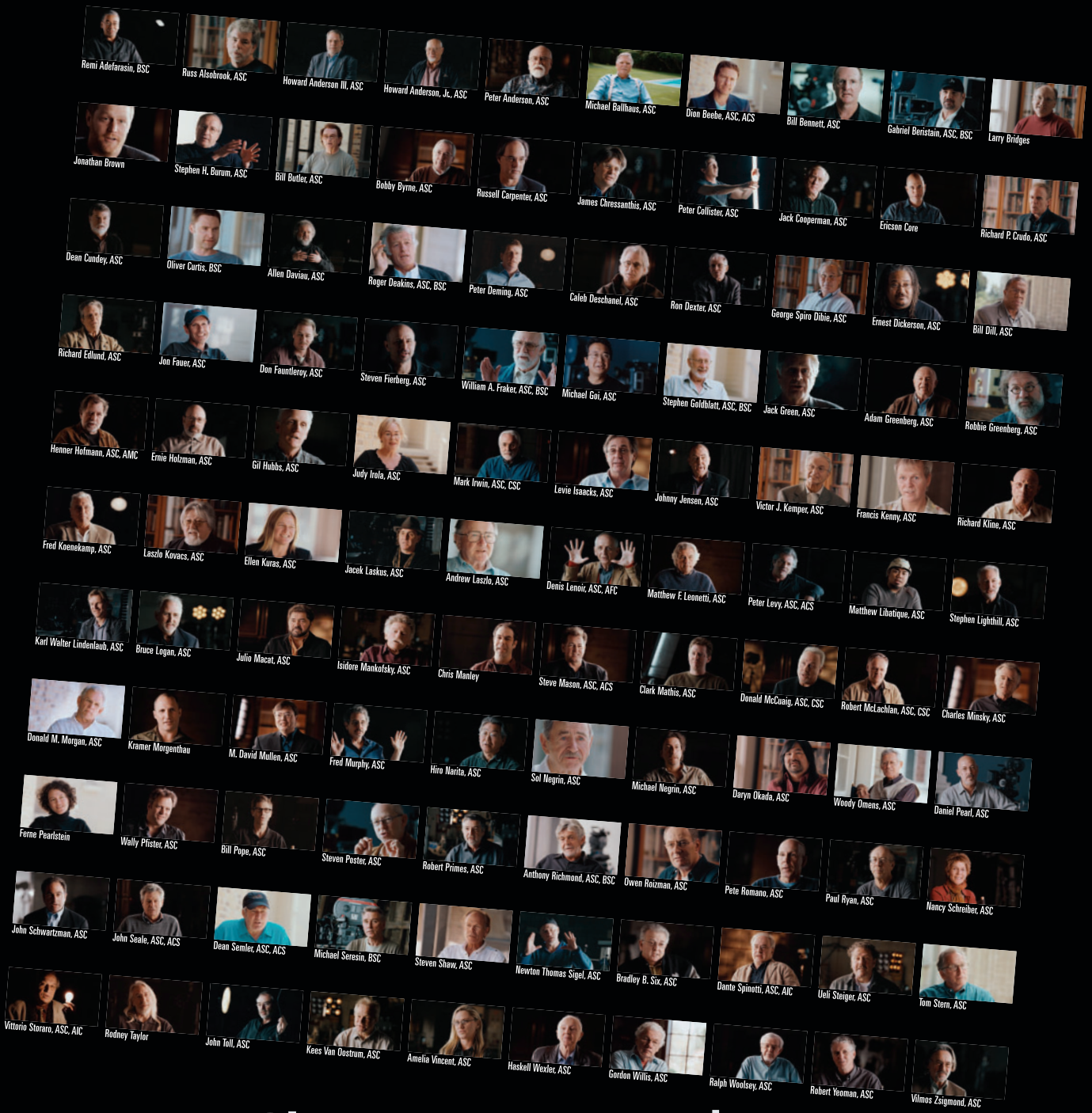

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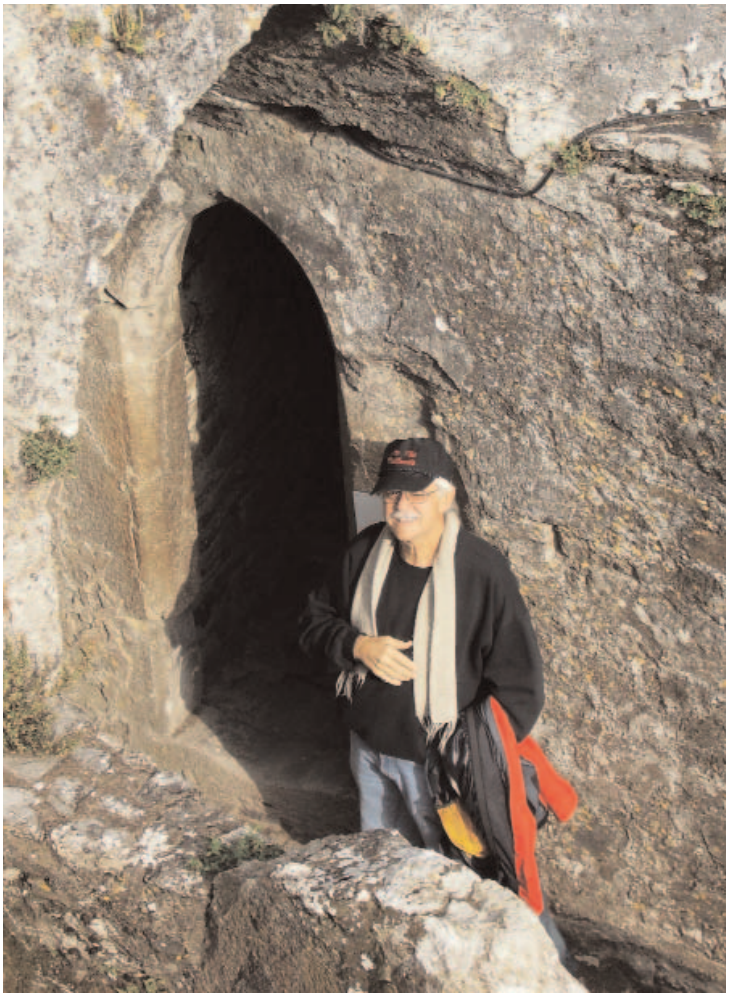
In Memoriam

John McPherson, ASC, 1941-2007



Emmy-winning cinematographer John A. McPherson, ASC, whose indelible images of Kojak, the Incredible Hulk, Fletch and Johnny Five defined generations of television viewers and moviegoers, died on Dec. 21. He was 65.

Born to Mac and Antoinette McPherson on Dec. 30, 1941, John grew up in Manhattan Beach, California. He attended military school as a child, and at the age of 7, he received his first camera. He was infatuated with capturing images from then on.

In high school, McPherson began experimenting with motion pictures, and in 1957, he took his first stab at being a director of photography with a short film, shot on 16mm, about track and field. As he went on to college — a journey that would take him through El Camino College, Los Angeles Harbor College, La Salle University and UCLA — he nurtured an appreciation for fine art in general and painting in particular, and was especially taken with the Impressionists. McPherson's early jobs in the film industry found him in the electric department, where he notched credits working for such ASC luminaries as Milton Krasner, Leon Shamroy and Sid Hickox. All the while, McPherson never strayed far from the camera, and it was Shamroy who helped him get into the camera union — then Local 659 — as a director of photography in 1974.

His first union job as cinematographer was for the Universal television series *Kojak*. "I first met John when he was the gaffer on *Moving Violation*, a movie of the week shot by Charles Correll, ASC," recalls Rick Gunter, ASC, who worked with McPherson for eight years. "A few months later, Universal pulled me in to be the 2nd AC on *Kojak*, and they said, 'We've got a new cameraman.' It was John McPherson."

McPherson went on to shoot the series *The Incredible Hulk*, and in 1980 he received an Emmy nomination for his work on the show. "He had a great eye and he was always willing to try something new," says Gunter, who advanced from 1st AC to operator on the show. "I remember going into a party scene, and he said, 'Well, everybody has candles, so let's just light the whole scene with those!'"

1980 also witnessed McPherson's induction into the ASC after he was recommended for membership by George Folsey, Milton Krasner and Harry Wolf. Seven years later, the Society rewarded his work on the series *Amazing Stories* with an ASC Award nomination. (The cinematographer's work for the series was also feted with an Emmy Award and an Emmy nomination in '86 and '87, respectively.)

McPherson began directing as well as shooting during his tenure on *The Incredible Hulk*, and in 1984, he joined the Directors Guild of America. He continued shooting into the early '90s, earning credits on such projects as *Jaws: The Revenge*, **batteries not included*, *Short Circuit 2* and *Fletch Lives*. Through the rest of the decade, he focused on directing for television, leaving his mark on *Swamp Thing*, *Sliders*, *Babylon 5* and *Nash Bridges,* to name only a few. Additionally, he tried on his producing cap while in the director's chair on the movies of the week *Dirty Work* and *Fade to Black*.

"John was an incredible person," says Gunter. "He was a gentleman, and he made everybody feel special."

McPherson is survived by his son, Brian; his daughter, Wendi; and seven grandchildren.

— Jon D. Witmer

■

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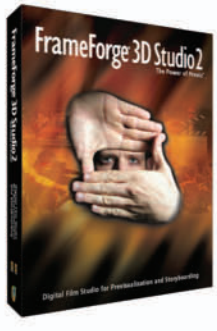

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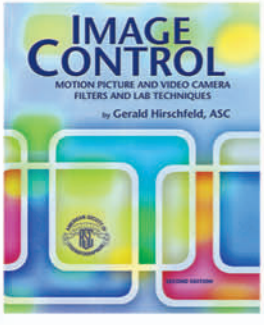

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MARCH 2008

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Clubhouse News

Zsigmond Takes Home Mattie

Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC was recently awarded a Mattie from Matthews Studio Equipment. Commemorating the cinematographer's outstanding service in the film industry, the award was presented to Zsigmond by Robert Kulesh, Matthews' vice president of sales and marketing. The presentation took place in Budapest, Hungary, during the 15th-anniversary celebration of Sparks Camera and Lighting Ltd., which Zsigmond helped found in 1992.

Primes and Dibie Pick Up SOC Honors

Robert Primes, ASC and **George Spiro Dibie, ASC** both carried away Golden Cammy statuettes at the 2008 Society of Camera Operators Lifetime Achievement Awards ceremony, which was held Feb. 16 at the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences' Goldenson Theater in North Hollywood. Primes was recognized with the SOC President's Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Industry, and Dibie was feted with the SOC

Distinguished Service Award.

The nominees for these awards are submitted by the entire membership of the SOC, and eligible active members then cast votes to determine the winners. Past honorees include ASC members **Steven Lighthill**, **Jack Green** and **Haskell Wexler**. As event producer David J. Frederick, SOC, notes, "The success of these awards stems from the integrity of the industry craftspeople who are recognized at this emotional and fitting tribute."

ASC Members Notch BAFTA Nominations

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts recently announced the nominees for this year's Orange British Academy Film Awards. In the cinematography category, the nominees are **Harris Savides, ASC** for *American Gangster* (*AC* Dec. '07); Seamus McGarvey, BSC for *Atonement* (*AC* Dec. '07); Oliver Wood, BSC for *The Bourne Ultimatum* (*AC* Sep. '07); **Roger Deakins, ASC**, BSC for *No Country for Old Men* (*AC* Oct. '07); and **Robert Elswit, ASC** for *There Will Be Blood* (*AC* Jan. '08).

UCLA Celebrates Art of Light

For the fourth year in a row, the UCLA Film & Television Archive joined with the ASC to celebrate the art of cinematography. Coinciding with the 22nd Annual ASC Awards, the "Art of Light" series featured appearances by ASC Lifetime Achievement Award recipient **Stephen H. Burum, ASC**; ASC International Award recipient Walter Lassaly, BSC; and ASC Presidents Award recipient **Richard Edlund, ASC**. Burum was on hand for a 70mm screening of *Casualties of War* on Jan. 19, and Lassaly introduced a screening of *A Taste of Honey* on Jan. 27. The series wrapped up on Feb. 6 with "An Evening with Richard Edlund," which was co-sponsored by the Visual Effects Society and featured a conversation with Edlund as well as a selection of clips highlighting his career. ■

Photos of Robert Primes and George Spiro Dibie by Douglas Kirkland.

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ASC CLOSE-UP

Wayne Kennan, ASC

When you were a child, what film made the strongest impression on you?
My parents took my brother and me to every Cinerama film that played at the Warner Hollywood and the Dome. *How the West Was Won* was just spectacular to see in its original format. I also loved all of the old Universal horror movies and all of the comedy-team movies with Abbott and Costello, Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers, etc. I must have seen *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* 25 times.

Which cinematographers, past or present, do you most admire?
One of my all-time favorite films in terms of cinematography is *How Green Was My Valley,* shot by Arthur Miller, ASC. I also admire the work of ASC members Ted McCord in *The Sound of Music,* Conrad Hall in *Day of the Locust* and Néstor Almendros in *Days of Heaven*.

What sparked your interest in photography?
When I was 12, I was banned from processing film in our bathroom — something about stains on the tile — and found a Kodak Brownie 8mm movie camera for $20 at a drugstore that was closing. I immediately started making films.

Where did you train and/or study?
The telecommunications and film department at San Diego State University. Desi Arnaz was a visiting professor for a semester, and I sat in on his classes when I could squeeze into the classroom. He was a truly inspiring teacher. While in school, I worked at the local PBS affiliate, KPBS. That was my first paying gig — $2 an hour and answers to all the questions I could ask.

Who were your early teachers or mentors?
Don Benke at KPBS, as well as ASC members George La Fountaine Sr., Meredith Nicholson, Lester Shorr and Dick Kelley.

What are some of your key artistic influences?
The world around me. I can't help noticing how my immediate environment looks. I'm constantly aware, almost annoyingly so, of where the sun is and what's filtering or blocking it. When I'm inside, or when I've entered a new space, I can't help noticing the light fixtures, where they are, how much daylight is present, and how the things or people in that setting look. I wish someone would develop a keychain with a footcandle and color meter.

How did you get your first break in the business?
Believe it or not, I knew somebody who knew somebody. I was carrying classified dailies to a lab in Hollywood for a San Diego defense contractor, and while the film was being processed and printed, I would try to get on the major lots to cold-call the camera departments. I called the Universal Camera Department from a payphone on Lankershim, and they gave me the bum's rush. I immediately called a friend who lived next door to a producer with offices on the Universal lot. He called me back at the payphone and told me to call the camera department in 10 minutes. I got the interview, and a couple of months later, I got my first union day on *Battlestar Galactica*.

What has been your most satisfying moment on a project?
My first episode of *Seinfeld*. It was one of those days when nothing was going as planned. It was pouring rain while we were rigging on the New York Street at Paramount. The power drops had not been put in as requested. I went over the entire night's work with the director, Tom Cherones, and had my crew rig for every setup so we wouldn't have to stop once we started shooting. It stopped raining for about two hours and we managed to shoot everything, with a great wet-down to boot.

Have you made any memorable blunders?
I've forgotten most of them. However, I'm having trouble shaking the feeling of a camera rolling down my back after I picked up a tripod without checking to see if the camera was secure. The floor was concrete. Enough said.

What's the best professional advice you've ever received?
Right after I was accepted into the union as an operator, I was offered a job at Warners as an assistant. I needed a letter from a producer to rerate me. The producer told me I'd be an idiot not to pursue operating because it might take me 10 or more years to get there again. He was right; it was a struggle. But I established myself as an operator and was working steadily within a year.

What recent books, films or artworks have inspired you?
Due to the recent addition of a classic-movie channel to my cable package — and the writers' strike, which has given me time to watch it — I've recently discovered the work of Edward Cronjager, ASC. His work in the '40s is just the greatest. It's that style of everything being perfect beyond reality; all the close-ups are gorgeous portraits and every inch of the screen is perfectly exposed.

Do you have any favorite genres, or genres you would like to try?
My favorite genre is comedy. I love working with comedians. Even really long days are a blast when they're filled with laughs. Unfortunately for the audience, the funniest stuff usually happens between takes.

If you weren't a cinematographer, what might you be doing instead?
I'd probably be "doing time." Just kidding. I've always admired and envied the photojournalists who get that great shot under completely uncontrolled and often dangerous circumstances. I'm not sure I could ever be remotely adept at it, but I do have my Walter Mitty moments about photojournalism.

Which ASC cinematographers recommended you for membership?
Lester Shorr, Meredith Nicholson and Dick Kelley, all terrific mentors and true gentlemen.

How has ASC membership impacted your life and career?
It's the greatest honor to have your work recognized by the greatest cinematographers in the world. The feeling is truly a mix of humility and pride. ■

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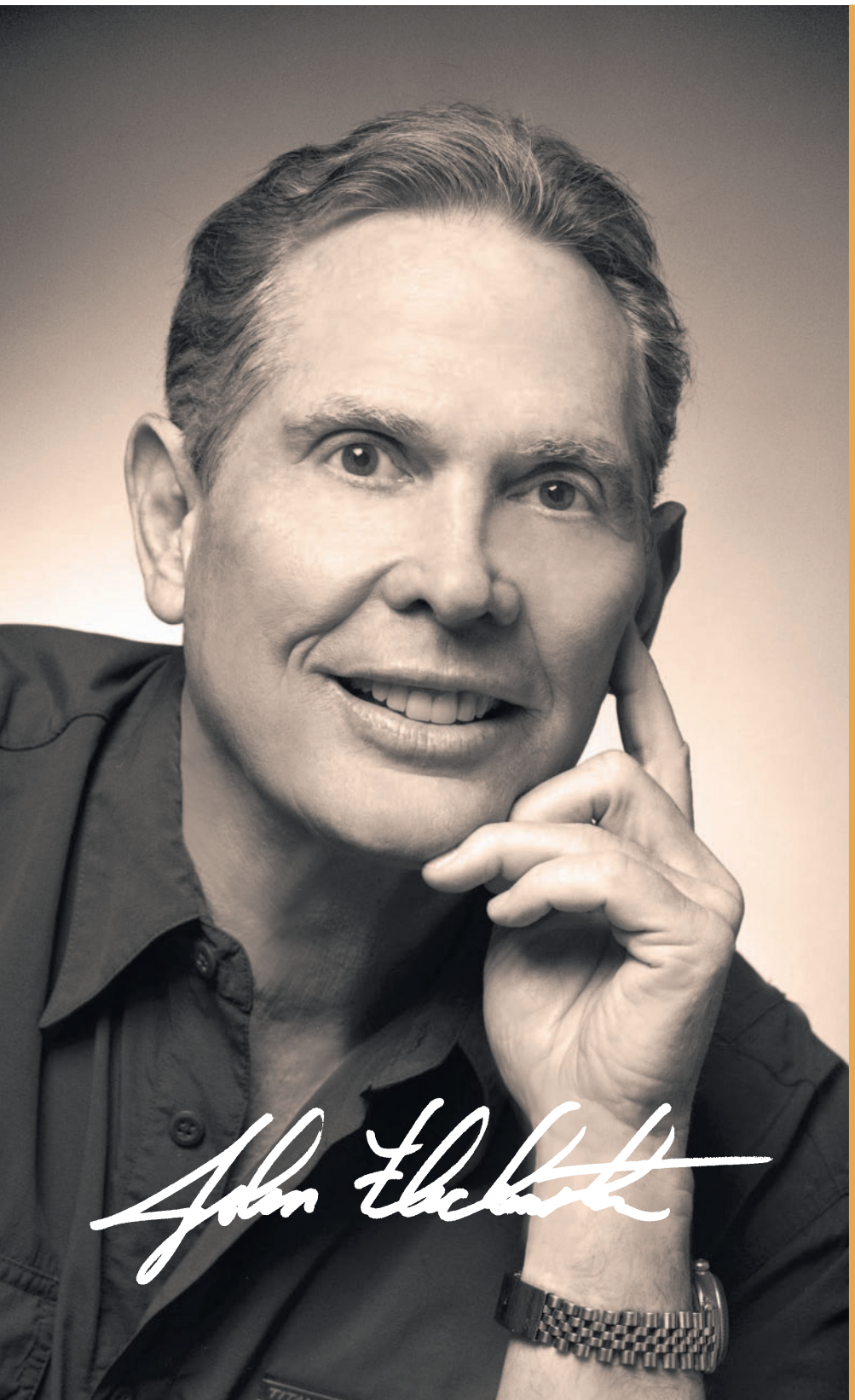

"*Women's Murder Club* is based on a James Patterson book about four women who interact and collaborate to solve homicides. We have a wonderful cast. I studied their faces, eyes, hair styles, and decided what colors and lighting work best for them. It is like shooting fashion photography in real environments with the models and cameras constantly moving. I use unconventional, unmotivated lighting to set moods. I can shoot five stops overexposed in the background and keep the actresses looking beautiful and natural in sometimes dark foregrounds. Film gives you that latitude. It's a natural look the way our eyes see reality. Chances are this series will be seen in different languages around the world because film is a global language. As broadcast technology transitions to HD, getting the right look is more important than ever."

John Fleckenstein has shot commercials and music videos, *A Different Kind of Christmas, Moonlight Becomes You* and other television movies, and such series as *Any Day Now, 10-8: Officers on Duty, Summerland and Windfall.* He earned a 2007 ASC Outstanding Achievement Award nomination for *Women's Murder Club.*

[All these productions were shot on Kodak motion picture film.]

For an extended interview with John Fleckenstein, visit www.kodak.com/go/onfilm.

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