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STUDENTFILMMAKERS

THE #1 EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FOR FILM AND VIDEO MAKERS

2014, Vol. 9, No. 4



DAVID JUNG DIRECTS MODERN FRIGHT FILM

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5 IMPORTANT ADVANTAGES TO SELF DISTRIBUTION PAGE 14

Editor's Letter



On the Cover is Bret Bertholf talking with Jon Firestone; photo taken by John Johnston Photography. Here, they are shooting a feature film that is a musical called, "Eat the Future". It is directed by Bret Bertholf and Pam Chavez. Firestone is the DP on the project, and the camera he is using is a Red Epic Dragon, with MōVI M10 on a Camera Turret jib. By the way, Jon Firestone has written and published numerous articles in StudentFilmmakers Magazine related to Red cameras, camera work, and workflow. He also teaches our Red Workshops in Manhattan, New York. We always look forward to seeing Jon when he's in New York City; and we always love catching up with him every year at NAB in Las Vegas, especially to find out about his new projects.

I hope the fresh autumn season and this exciting new edition of StudentFilmmakers Magazine will stimulate and inspire new ideas and directions for you in film and video making, storytelling, and production. This issue highlights how-to's, best practices, and insights into Cinematography, Film Business, and Documentary, as well as Directing, Acting, and Screenwriting. With Shocktober film festivals coming up, this issue may get you in the mood to perhaps watch a horror film, or make one.

Join me in welcoming new contributing writer, Yunus Shahul, who shares with us how he shot and lit key scenes for an independent horror film written and directed by Jeff Turboff. I'd like to give a shout out to Jeff who has written and published editing articles in the Post Production section of StudentFilmmakers Magazine, and who many times I've randomly run into either in the subway or sidewalks near Upper East Side, Manhattan. Congratulations on your new film, Jeff!

Jump to the articles in the Directing and FX/Makeup sections: "David Jung: Director of Horror Film, 'The Possession of Michael King'", "Dick Smith: An Appreciation of the Master of Makeup" and "Mike Marino Delivers Special Makeup Effects in New York".

Don't miss new contributing writers Robin Canfield and Bart Weiss' educational articles in this edition. Read "The Importance of Gatekeepers for Documentary Filmmakers" in the Documentary section and "The Joy of X" in the Post Production section. Our featured film school in this issue is School of Visual Arts MFA SocDoc. I'd like to thank Deborah Dickson for wonderful and inspiring interview.

There are many great articles in this issue. Take a look at "How to Test the Actual Latitude of Your New Camera" in the Cinematography section. Turn to the Film Business section of the magazine and read the articles, "Upsides to Self Distribution", "Is Self Distribution Your Only Option?" and "How to Properly Follow Up with a New Professional Connection".

We look forward to seeing you at Photo Plus Expo in New York, CCW Expo in New York, and GV Expo in Washington DC. Stop by our exhibit booths and pick up complimentary copies of StudentFilmmakers Magazine, and our new publication, HD Pro Guide Magazine.

All the Best,

Jody Michelle Solis

Editor-in-Chief

networking.studentfilmmakers.com/jodymichelle

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Publisher
Kim Edward Welch

Editor-in-Chief
Jody Michelle Solis

Designer
Tincuta Moscaliuc

Contributing Writers
Thomas Ackerman, ASC, Jack Anderson, Anthony Q. Artis, Arledge Armenaki, John Badham, Christopher Ball, CSC, Karl Bardosh, Jeremiah Baumbach, Bayou Bennett, Norman C. Berns, Paula Brancato, Al Caudullo, Chris Cavallari, Pete Chatmon, Michael Corbett, Sky Crompton, Jason Croot, David Daudelin, Jeff Deel, William Donaruma, Pamela Douglas, David E. Elkins, SOC, Scott Essman, Carl Filoreto, Jon Firestone, Fred Ginsburg, CAS, Ph.D., MBKS, Dean Goldberg, Jennifer Grisanti, Charles Haine, John Hart, Catherine Ann Jones, David Kaminski, Michael Karp, SOC, Carole Kirschner, Peter Kiwitt, John Klein, Klaudia Kovacs, Dave Lent, Wynona Luz, Monty Hayes McMillan, Erica McKenzie, Jonathan Moore, M. David Mullen, ASC, Ryan Pickett, Theresa Meeker Pickett, Gleb Osatinski, Patrick Reis, Peter John Ross, Dr. Linda Seger, Sherri Sheridan, Steven Silvers, Pamela Jaye Smith, Scott Spears, Peter Stein, ASC, Melissa Ulto, Mike Valentine, BSC, Manuel Valladares, Saro Varjabedian, William F. Vartorella, Ph.D., C.B.C., Tony White, David Worth, Dean Yamada, Kathie Fong Yoneda.

Advertising & Sponsorship Opportunities:
Kim E. Welch: 917.743.8381
Edmund Olszewski: 903.354.4932

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HOW TO TEST THE ACTUAL LATITUDE OF YOUR NEW CAMERA

The Over/Under Test

by Charles Haine

Contrast ratio and latitude are two of the least understood areas of image making, largely because there aren't official "standards," so marketing departments can make a wide variety of claims that might not always bear fruit. With every new digital camera I consider using, the first test I put it through is the over/under test, the same test I did when Kodak or Fuji would come out with a new film stock.

Have a subject sit in a chair, ideally in front of a background with a wide range of contrast: outdoors with a bright sunny area and a shady section, or indoors with a large chunk of darkness but also a bare bulb lamp would work well. You want to see the extremes of the image as much as possible. If possible, set up a white card, some black velvet, and if you have one, a color chart, in frame as well. Then, use a light meter to read the key light falling on your subject's face, and use that to set exposure on the camera. While there are some great tools for helping with exposure on a camera (false color is great, and onboard waveforms

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monitors almost as good: a histogram can be used in a pinch if needed), nothing holds up to the accuracy of light meter readings for giving the information you need to make a good exposure decision.

Have your subject hold up a fist, to mark "normal" exposure. Open the aperture on the lens by 1 stop and have your subject put up 1 finger in the air at the same time. Keep going until you get to 6-7 stops over (if your lens will go there), then go back to a set fist. Then, go for under-exposure, closing the aperture one stop at a time until you get deep into the under exposed, with the subject holding their fingers facing down. You might need to change the shutter speed one direction or another in order to compensate for the limits of how many stops you can change the lens. I often do the "over" test outside (where it's bright and sunny) and my "unders" inside, though if possible I want to get both overs and unders in the same lighting.

I follow this up with a key-fill ratio test, where I shoot a variety of key-fill ratio's (starting at 2:1, or 1 stop difference from key to fill, then 4:1, which is 2 stops difference, and taking it as far as I can go, sometimes up to 512:1) to see another view of how the latitude of the imager affects the images you get from it.

I then bring the shots in Da Vinci Resolve Lite for review. As the shot gets further and further from proper exposure, I watch how the shadows and highlights change, how the image rolls off into over or under exposure, and when I lose the ability to see key detail. Since I'm already in resolve, I try and "correct" the image and see how much it's possible to take something exposed incorrectly and get it to look "normal," which usually involves some loss of contrast and increase in grain. From that, I make a personal decision to what I consider the true latitude of a camera, sensor or film stock to be.

Contrast does change in a lens as you change apertures, so the best way to do this test would be with ND filters on the lens and scrims on the lights to keep the aperture the same, but I find doing this with the aperture to be a great quick way to get a feel for the personality of the imagery that will help me make exposure decisions in the field.


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