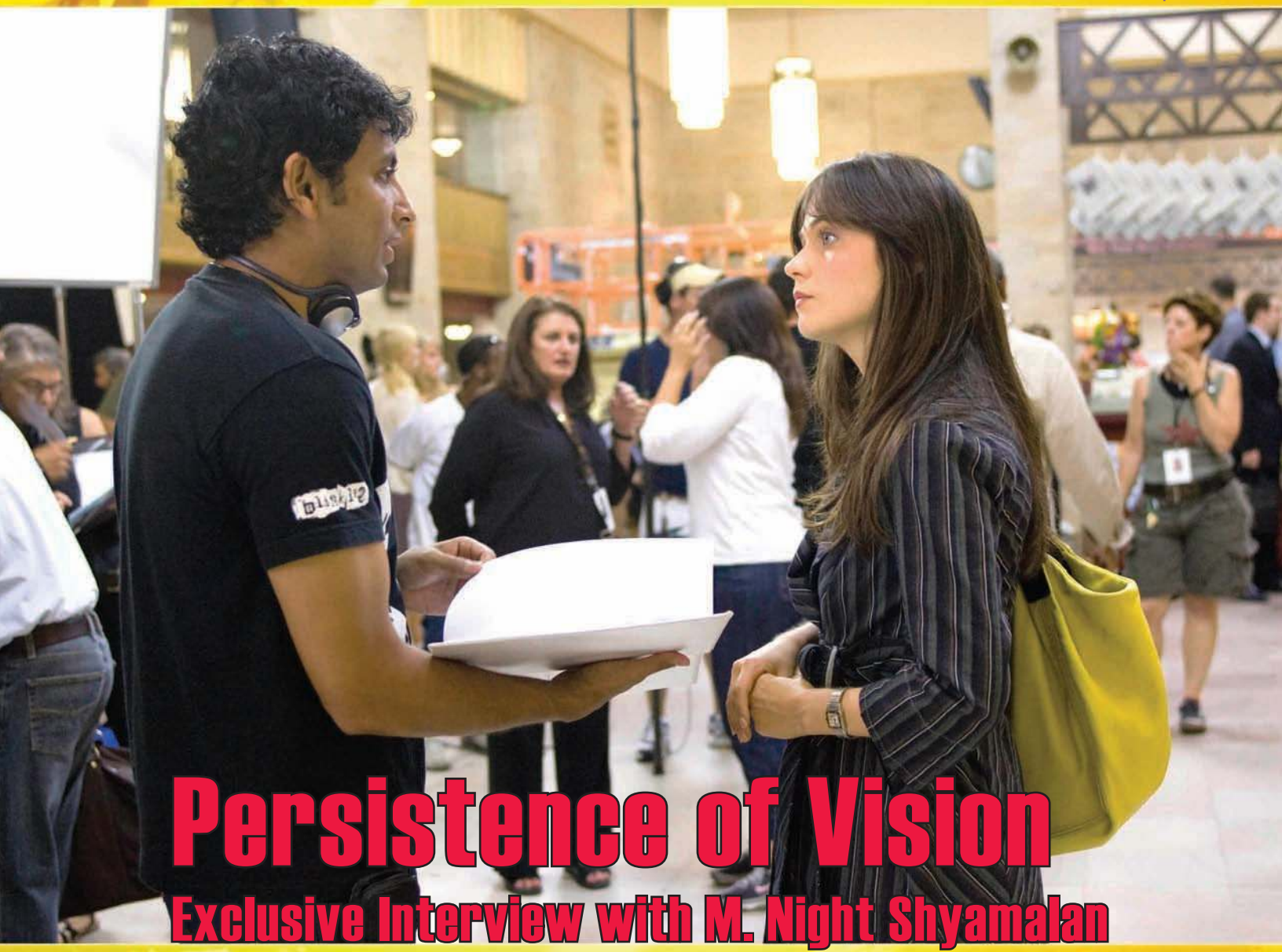
June 2008

studentfilmmakers

StudentFilmmakers.com The #1 Educational Resource for Film and Video Makers US$5.95



Persistence of Vision

Exclusive Interview with M. Night Shyamalan

Star Effects: Enliven Points of Light

Shooting with Film: Long Live Celluloid

16:9 on the Mind: HD Production

The Visual Language of *Before the Rains*

Selecting Angles with an HD Camcorder

5 Big Distribution Myths

The Art Institute of New York City

1.800.654.2433

www.ainyc.artinstitute.edu

VIDEO PRODUCTION • WEB & INTERACTIVE MEDIA • GRAPHIC DESIGN • INTERIOR DESIGN • FASHION DESIGN

Table of Contents June 2008

Cinematography

6 Star Effects: Enliven Points of Light by Ira Tiffen

8 Shooting with Film: Long Live Celluloid by Bryan Michael Stoller

HD Production

12 16:9 on the Mind by Daniel Gaucher

14 Using a Handheld Camcorder for Scene Selection
by George Avgerakis

Directing

18 Helping Your Actors Overcome Their Fears of the Audience
by John Badham

Close-Up

22 Persistence of Vision:
Exclusive Interview with M. Night Shyamalan
Award-Winning Director/Writer Discusses His New Film, "The Happening" by Leonard Guercio

40 The Visual Language of "Before the Rains"
by Mary Ann Skweres

Production

28 Creating On-the-Fly Solutions On Location by Myrl Schreibman

30 Common Mistakes Every Filmmaker Will Make
by Chris Cavallari

Tech Focus

34 Transitioning to a New Workflow with HD Cameras
by David Kaminski

Commentary

46 Revolution in the Seats by David K. Irving

Music & Sound

48 An Itemized Audio/Video Production List by Bryant Falk

Film Business

50 5 Big Distribution Myths by Stacey Parks

FX Makeup & Props

52 Special FX Makeup: The Importance of Pre-Production
by Todd Debreceni

Filmmakers Networking

56 This Month's Featured Networkers

On the Cover

M. Night Shyamalan and Zooey Deschanel on the set of *The Happening*

You might be reading this edition at your desk, or in between filming, or while researching filmmaking technologies and techniques. As you turn each page, you will be reading excellent articles written by real inspirational talents. They are serious, passionate, and hard-working filmmakers who make a difference in the industry, and contribute to filmmaking communities around the world by sharing their knowledge, insights, and experiences with *us*. They have a lot going on in their schedules – from back-to-back film shoots and productions and fitting in key industry, must-go-to events, to completing educational books on filmmaking and being recognized and granted tenure by universities.

You may be reading this edition while at HD Expo in Chicago. Go straight to Daniel Gaucher's article, "16:9 on the Mind," (p12); George Avgerakis' article, "Using a Handheld Camcorder for Scene Selection," (p14); and David Kaminski's "Transitioning to a New Workflow with HD Cameras" (p34).

Read SF's Cover Story, "Persistence of Vision: Exclusive Interview with M. Night Shyamalan," (p22) by Leonard Guercio. Check out, "Creating On-the-Fly Solutions On Location," (p28) by Myrl Schreibman. Jump to "5 Big Distribution Myths," (p50) by Stacey Parks.

Chris Cavallari returns with another entertaining and educational article, "Common Mistakes Every Filmmaker Will Make," (p30). David K. Irving, who is currently preparing for his move to Singapore to teach at Tisch Asia writes "Revolution in the Seats," (p46). Just recently completing a prosthetic makeup effects textbook for a 2009 release, Todd Debreceni offers tips in "Special FX Makeup: The Importance of Pre-Production" (p52).

As for more fantastic articles in this edition, you don't want to miss John Badham's directing article, "Helping Your Actors Overcome Their Fears of the Audience," (p18), or Ira Tiffen's "Star Effects: Enliven Points of Light" (p6). One of SF's most favorite feature interview writers, Mary Ann Skweres, returns with, "The Visual Language of *Before the Rains*" (p40). And, let's welcome new SF contributing writer Bryan Michael Stoller ("Shooting with Film: Long Live Celluloid," p8).

Enjoy this edition!

Truly,
Kim E. Welch
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

studentfilmmakers

The # 1 Educational Resource for Film and Video Makers

Publisher / Editor-in-Chief Kim Edward Welch
Senior Editor Jody Michelle Solis

BPA WORLDWIDE

Contributing Writers
Thomas Ackerman, ASC, Anthony Q. Artis, John Badham, Adam Biddle, Kevin Burke, Julia Camenisch, Chris Cavallari, Michael Corbett, Vanessa Daniels, Todd Debreceni, Jeff Deel, Christina DeHaven, Dana Dorrity, David E. Elkins, S.O.C., Scott Essman, Bryant Falk, Carl Filoreto, Jon Firestone, Brian Flees, Jacqueline B. Frost, Daniel Gaucher, Fred Ginsburg C.A.S. Ph.D. MBKS, Mark Steven Grove, Leonard Guercio, Phil Hall, Steve Holmes, David K. Irving, Larry Jaffee, David Kaminski, Michael Karp, S.O.C., Sam Kauffmann, Tamar Kummel, Adam Matalon, Roger Marsh, Matthew Marshall, Brian Melton, M. David Mullen, ASC, Stacey Parks, Mark Sawicki, Lew Schatzer, Myrl A. Schreibman, Bryan Michael Stoller, Ira Tiffen, Tushar Unadkat, Saro Varjabedian, William F. Vartorella, Ph.D., C.B.C., Kevin Zanit, Bill Zarchy

Media Art Director Lien-Chen Lin

studentfilmmakers.com

Publisher / Editor-in-Chief Kim Edward Welch
Media Art Director Lien-Chen Lin

Advertising & Sponsorship Opportunities:
Kim E. Welch 212.255.5458
Jody Solis 212.255.4330

Online/Print Classifieds, Global Marketplace:
http://www.studentfilmmakers.com/contact.shtml

Online Marketing Assistant Ruslana Stolbova 212.255.5454

Editorial Interns Chelsea Martin

StudentFilmmakers.com Online Store:
https://www.studentfilmmakers.com/store/
Toll Free: 1.888.222.0652

Contact StudentFilmmakers
http://www.studentfilmmakers.com/contact.shtml
888.222.0652 (US Toll Free)
212.255.5454 (US and International) 212.255.7204 (Fax)

Subscriptions:
U.S., $29.95/year; Canada, Mexico, and all other foreign countries, $69.50/year. Six-month, one-year, two-year, and three-year subscriptions available.
Go to https://www.studentfilmmakers.com/store

For subscription, mailing address change and distribution inquiries, go to http://www.studentfilmmakers.com/contact.shtml

StudentFilmmakers, established in 2006, is published monthly in New York by StudentFilmmakers.com. Opinions are solely those of the authors. Letters, article queries, photos, movie stills, film submissions, and unsolicited manuscripts welcome, but returned only with SASE. Submissions are subject to editing for style, content, and to exclusive rights provisions in this publication. Advertising: Rate card upon request.

Copyright 2008 StudentFilmmakers.com (All rights reserved.)
Printed in the USA. Postmaster: Send address change to StudentFilmmakers, 1133 Broadway, Suite # 1503, New York, NY 10010.

studentfilmmakers.com

Summer Shorts 2008

Entry Deadline: September 1, 2008 5pm EDT

Sponsored by

SONY FUJIFILM

Star Effects: Enliven Points of Light

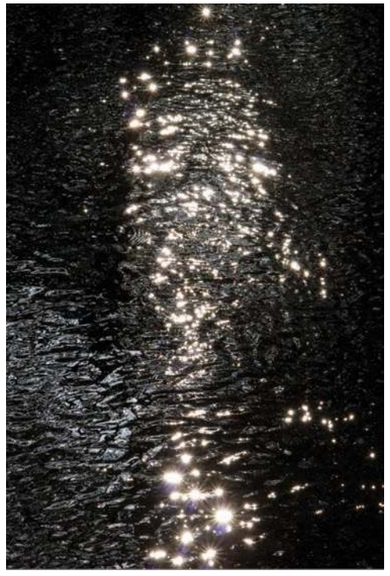
How Star Filters Work

by Ira Tiffen

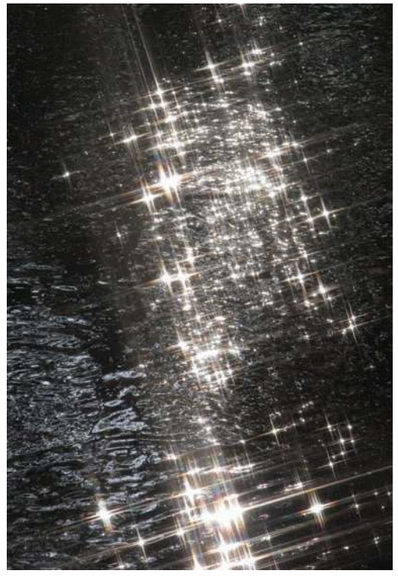
Light is the lifeblood of imagery. Without it, imagery dies. Knowing how to bend light to your will is an important part of visual storytelling. What can we do when light sources themselves are actually in the scene? Fortunately, this provides even more opportunities for creative control.

Let's look at one category of effect that is particularly suited for getting the most dramatic effects from points of light in the scene. We refer to it as the 'star' effect.

Star filters have been around a while. They can be viewed as gimmicky by some. And, if used improperly, that may be the case. However, being able to employ them judiciously can offer significant benefits to many situations.



Sparkles no filter



Sparkles with Star filter

Star filters are excellent for transforming points of light in the scene into bright 'star-like' bursts blossoming out from each point. This has many uses, but before we discuss those, it will help us to better understand how they work.

The traditional Star filter is a clear element, usually glass but not necessarily so, that has a series of fine lines 'etched' into one side. These lines act like tiny cylindrical lenses (envision a solid glass polished tube, cut in half lengthwise) that cause the point sources of light to spread out thin fingers of light perpendicular to the direction of the lines, from both sides. A filter with lines, which form a grid pattern across the filter's surface, usually spaced 1, 2, 3, or 4mm apart, and running in only one direction, will create a single line of light running through a point of light passing through. This is seen as two 'star lines' emanating from opposite sides of the source, and aligned in a straight line. This is a '2-point' Star filter; more commonly known as a 'Streak' filter, due to its appearance as a streak of light through the source.

If the filter has more sets of parallel line grids running in different directions, there will be an additional set of 'streaks' for each direction there is a grid running. Typically, there are patterns to produce 4, 6, 8 and more points, in a symmetrical pattern, in addition to the Streak filter. The most commonly used filter is the 4pt.

The spacing between lines in a grid, mentioned earlier as measured in millimeters, determines how many lines there are on the filter. The 1mm, being closely spaced, will have twice as many lines, for instance, as a 2mm filter, and will thus create a stronger star pattern. This also created the most flare. If you want overpowering stars, use a closer spacing; more finely crafted star points come from larger line spacing in the grid. The most popular spacing are the 2mm and 3mm.

Some filters have asymmetrical patterns; they also involve grids having different line spacing in the same filter. These are designed to give a less 'synthetic' feel to the effect, more like a gleam or a glint than a star.

I created a number of these years ago in response to the requests of those who were not using traditional Star filters because of their 'man-made' look.

The 'man-made' look of the standard patterns is very effective, though, when the need for glitter is apparent. These are used extensively in sports arenas where the lights overhead add excitement when 'starred.' Religious programs, as with a speaker in front of an audience in an auditorium, often use them to extend the light into the room, adding an important psychological effect. The star lines created by these filters also take on the color of the source. When there are variously colored sources, these filters have even more impact. Theatrical events and many others can benefit as well – wherever there are strong points of light.

Water's Edge No filter

Star effects don't have to come directly from point sources. They are effective with bright points of reflection. This application includes anything sparkly that could use a touch of glamour: jewelry, cars, and other shiny things that reflect bright points of light that would be enhanced by such gleaming touches.

It is clear that anywhere there are bright points of light against a relatively dark background, Star filters can have a wonderful effect. There are things to know about their use, though, before you start experimenting.

As with any other 'patterned' filter, it is possible, with sufficient depth-of-field, to partially focus on the line pattern. This will appear as a waffle-like grid, the pattern on the filter, appearing fuzzily in the image. To avoid this, it is best to use larger iris openings and longer focal lengths, both of which will reduce the ability of the camera to focus on something mounted right on the lens, as will focusing on a subject that is further away from the camera.

In our image examples, there are two scenes. The unfiltered 'Sparkles' image shows the sun's many reflective points from the water's rippled surface as we would see it. The addition of a 4pt 2mm Star filter creates a galaxy of stars from the same scene; ever so much more interesting. Note that most Star filters are mounted to allow you to rotate the filter to best align the star pattern with your scene.

In the 'Water's Edge' scenes, we see in the unfiltered image again what we would ourselves see. With the 4pt filter and a lens opening of 16 we can see the result of focusing on the filter's grid pattern. The lines of light are broken up into disjointed segments, very distracting and not at all desirable.

In the last image, using both the 4pt filter as before and a Vector Star filter, one of those asymmetrically patterned filters I mentioned earlier, a clean and commanding star is created by using a lens opening of 4.

Star effects are another powerful way to add excitement and glamour to any scene containing bright points of light. Especially if you know how they do what they do. Have fun experimenting!

Photos by Ira Tiffen.

Water's Edge with Star filter combo at f4

Water's Edge with Star filter at f16

Shooting with Film:
Long Live Celluloid

A Glance at Working with Film Formats, Cameras, Lenses, & Filters

by Bryan Michael Stoller

Film. The magic of celluloid! I first fell in love with film in the seventies when I discovered Super 8. I eventually worked my way up to 16mm, and finally graduated to 35mm.

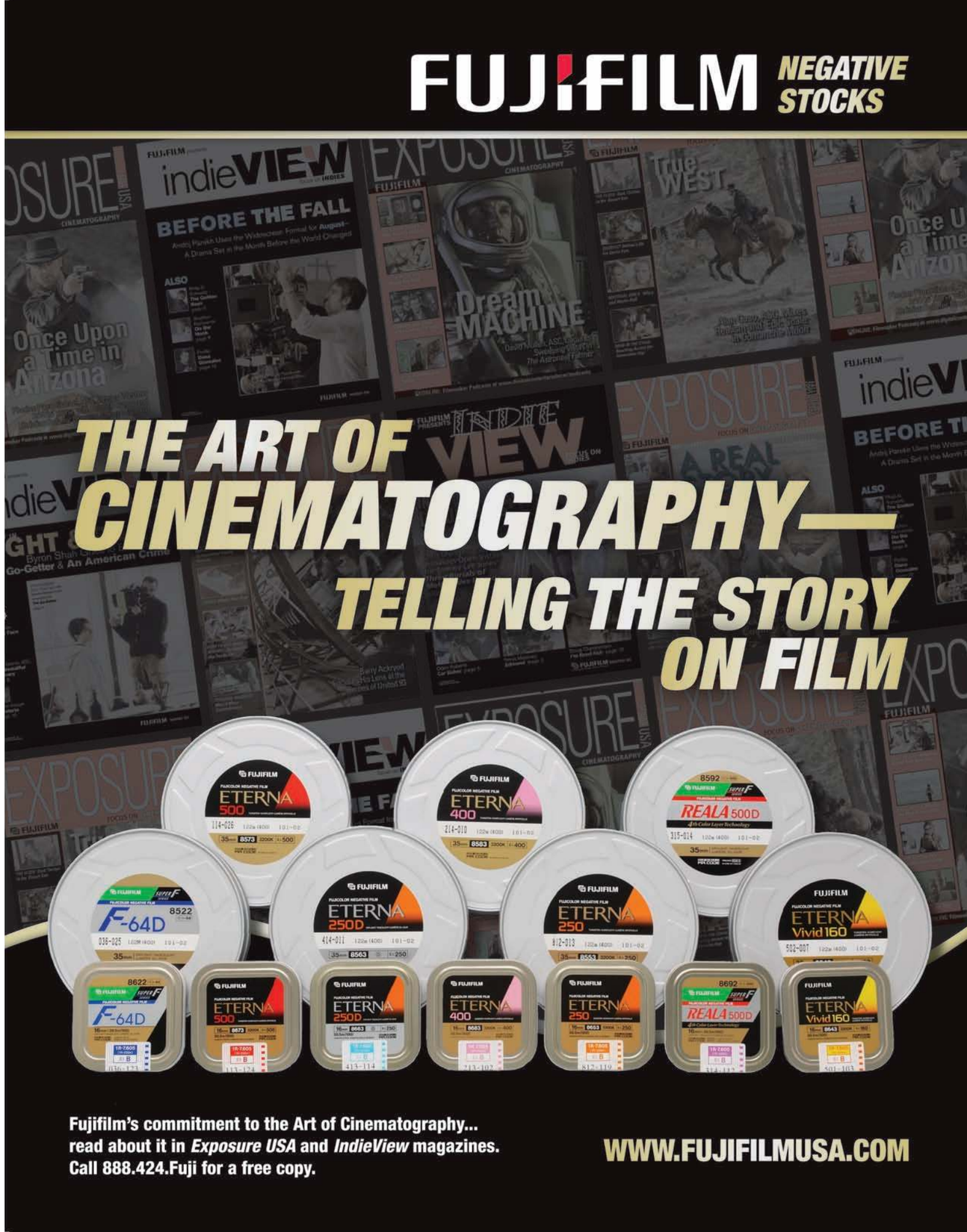
Shooting in film, you don't have to worry about the whole new HD and digital technology, at least not until you get into post-production, but that's another article for another time.

Motion picture film has a nostalgic feel to it. Creating the illusion of something that's happened in the past. The feeling of reflecting on a cherished memory. Film provides a softer more surreal image than the sharp, sometimes harsh and unflattering picture that video presents.

The film camera has been around since the late 1800's. A film camera also doesn't have the fancy circuitry found on a digital camcorder. It's a relatively basic but genius concept – the film is advanced through the camera, and a portion of that celluloid is exposed to light, one frame at a time.

Celluloid comes in various formats: Super 8, 16mm, 35mm and 70mm (IMAX). Each tends to lend itself to certain genres. Super 8 is great for home movies, documentaries and even gritty music videos. 16mm is often used for TV, low-budget features, student films and documentaries. 35mm is the norm for episodic TV shows and theatrical feature films. 70mm, also known as IMAX, is for epic event studio pictures and highly commercial documentaries and travelogues.

You usually want to shoot with negative film stock, not reversal. Negative stock is similar to your 35mm still photos that come with a negative and you can make as many prints as you want. Reversal film is like Polaroid film where the actual stock is developed into a positive image, and you have no backup negative. The other great



thing about shooting negative, is when you transfer it in telecine to tape, the telecine process can automatically convert your developed negative into a positive image without having to incur the cost of printing the negative in the lab.

A film camera can hold different size magazines, the average size being a 400 foot magazine and a 1000 foot magazine. A 400 foot 16mm camera magazine holds 10 minutes of raw footage. A 35mm 400 foot magazine for a 35mm camera holds half the time at 5 minutes. Many cameramen like to use 1000 foot magazines on their 35mm cameras because they can get 11 minutes of footage and don't have to change out the magazines as much during a shoot.

You can decide whether you want to shoot with a fixed telephoto lens, or use prime lenses on your movie. A telephoto lens will give you most of the shots you need, from close-up to wide establishing shots, but the image will have more of a flat appearance and not as much depth as if you used prime lenses. Prime lenses can be attached and removed. Lenses can be wide at 18mm (giving your subject a comically distorted look) to a normal lens, 50mm on a 35mm camera (appears exactly as it looks to the naked eye in terms of size), to a telephoto lens 100mm (brings the subject closer creating a larger object in frame). Lenses on a 16mm camera do the same thing as on a 35mm camera but their millimeters are cut in half. For example, a normal lens of 50mm on a 35mm camera (the subject four feet away, looks four feet away), would be a 25mm lens on a 16mm camera.

When shooting with a film camera, you may want to consider a video tap, which allows you to have video assistance. Video assist was created by Jerry Lewis. In 1956, Jerry attached a video camera to the film camera to record his scenes on video at the same time the film camera was rolling. Lewis directed and starred in many of his movies, but found it difficult to gauge his performance while doing double duty as director (and wouldn't see the results until the film came back from the lab). This is how video assist was born. Similar to a video camcorder, a video tap in the motion picture camera allows you see the image that is being captured to film. You can record it to tape (or hard drive), play it back to check the performance, and even check for continuity concerns, etc. You get a reflex image – which means, the video will record exactly the same framing and lens size that will be captured to film. Jerry Lewis revolutionized a new technique that virtually every filmmaker shooting with a film camera uses to this day.

The cameras image can be manipulated or corrected using filters. There are correction filters and special effect filters. A correction filter is used to correct the image for color balance. If you're using indoor film stock outside, you would use an 85 filter so you don't get an unwanted blue hue. If you're using outdoor film stock inside, you would use an 80 filter so you don't get a strange yellow/orange or red tint. Why use indoor film outside? You can buy one type of stock and make it work for both (using color correction filters), rather than trying to figure out what percentages of indoor and outdoor film stock you'll need. A polarizer filter helps to dial out pesky reflections when shooting through a car window. A neutral density filter (ND) is used to cut down the amount of light coming into the camera (like sunglasses for the camera). Then you have colored filters that can add hues to your footage. You can create a gold hue to your image, or turn a daylight scene into a night scene using a blue filter (as long as you don't show the daylight sky in the shot).

I've been in love with the film camera since I was a kid. I've been tempted by the digital camcorder, and felt guilty for even considering it. I've also found that distributors (worldwide) still prefer to know that you shot your movie on film. Some distributors are weary to even look at a movie that was not shot on film. Long live celluloid!

Bryan Michael Stoller (www.bryanmichaelstoller.com) is an international award-winning filmmaker who has produced, written and directed over eighty productions that include, short comedy films, half hour television, music videos, commercials and feature films. Bryan has directed George Carlin, Howie Mandel, Gilbert Gottfried, Barbra Streisand, Drew Barrymore, Jerry Lewis and Dan Aykroyd. Dolly Parton wrote and recorded four original songs for one of Bryan's films. Jerry Lewis wrote the foreword for Bryan's book, "Filmmaking for Dummies."

THERE'S AN AZDEN SHOTGUN MIC DESIGNED TO IMPROVE YOUR AUDIO QUALITY

SGM-1000

A phantom powered shotgun mic with new high-performance microphone element that features: phantom 12-48V or 1.5V "AA" battery • wide frequency response • highly directional pick-up pattern • high sensitivity/low noise • shockmount holder with new taller integrated shoe mount • XLR output • switchable low-cut filter • On/Off power switch • standard foam windscreen • length - 310mm (12.5"). Battery and cable not included. MSRP $360.

SGM-2X

Ideal for full-size cameras, it is 2 mics in one. Combined, they are a 15.75" low-noise, wide bandwidth, shotgun, with balanced low-impedance output. Includes same features of the SGM-1000 but no phantom power. The short barrel (8.125") is a general purpose omni mic. MSRP $310

SGM-1X

SGM-1X. At 298mm (11.75") with XLR output it's ideal for smaller DV cams with XLR audio inputs. Comes supplied with the same unique integrated shockmount with shoe-mount as the SGM-1000. Cable not included. MSRP $230

SGM-X

At 216mm (8.5") the mini **SGM-X** is a complete system, including windscreen, shoe-mount holder and mini cable. With mini output, the SGM-X is perfect for smaller DV cams with mini-jack mic inputs. MSRP $155

AZDEN

P.O. Box 10, Franklin Square, NY 11010
(516) 328-7500 • FAX: (516) 328-7506

For full specifications e-mail azdenus@azdencorp.com or visit our Web site: www.azdencorp.com