May 2008

studentfilmmakers

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



International Cast Makes "Reservations"

Aloura Charles Wrangles Ensemble in Award-Winning Film

Directing Your Actors at Post Production

Focal Length and Filter Strength

Collaborating with Your Editor

Scheduling Without the Fancy Software

Work the Festival Circuit Like a Pro

Traveling with Your Video Gear

BEST NAB 2008 CHOICE studentfilmmakers.com

studentfilmmakers.com

Summer Shorts 2008

Entry Deadline: September 1, 2008 5pm EDT

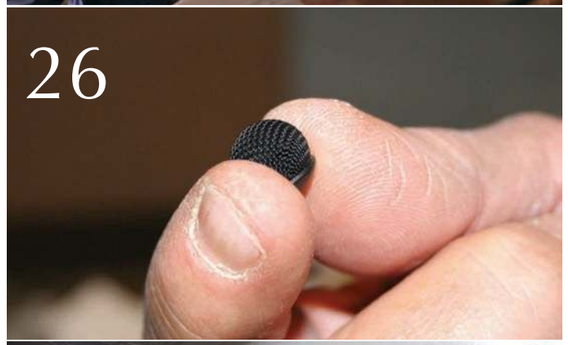
Sponsored by

SONY FUJIFILM

Table of Contents May 2008









Cinematography
6 Focal Length and Filter Strength by Ira Tiffen
8 Recent Stylistic Trends in the Industry by Saro Varjabedian

Close-Up
10 International Cast Makes “Reservations”
First-Time Feature Director Aloura Charles Successfully Wrangles Ensemble in Award-Winning Film
by Mary Ann Skweres

Directing
18 How the Last Shot is Only the Beginning by John Badham
20 Collaborating with Your Editor by Myrl Schreibman
22 The “B” Team by David K. Irving

Actor’s Perspective
24 7 Guidelines for Getting the Best Performances Possible
by Vanessa Daniels

Music & Sound
26 Lav It Up! Effectively Mic Up Your Talent by Bryant Falk

Production
28 On the Set, In the Studio Film Biz Lingo by Chris Cavallari
32 You Can Do Your Scheduling Without Fancy Software
by Michael Corbett

How-To
26 Traveling with Your Video Gear by Carl Filoreto

Production Design
38 What Does a Production Designer Do for Film Production?
by Tushar Unadkat

Film Business
40 Working the Festival Circuit Like a Pro by Phil Hall
42 Getting Financing for Your Independent Film
by Christina DeHaven

Events
44 3 Reasons Why Teachers Should Go to NAB
by David Kaminski,
46 *StudentFilmmakers* Magazine NAB 2008 Best Choice

Filmmakers Networking
56 This Month’s Featured Networkers

Props & FX Makeup
50 Lifecasting Primer by Todd Debreceni

On the Cover
Aloura Charles directs Winter Zoli and Alejandro Chaban on the set of *Reservations*.



I want to invite all of you to participate in this year's Annual Summer Shorts Film and Video 2008 competition and festival. We are planning a screening and awards ceremony in New York City. All filmmakers, videographers, and animators can enter and upload their films, videos, and animations through the contest's official website at: www.studentfilmmakers.com/summershorts08.

The film and video competition is free to enter. You don't have to be a student to participate. We welcome all submissions, multiple submissions, and from all categories of genre. Universities and professors are welcome to submit films which their students and schools directed and produced. Music videos, claymation, and stop motion animation are also welcomed. Go to www.studentfilmmakers.com/summershorts08, and upload your films and videos to participate in this year's contest and for a chance to win awards and prizes which can help you with your next productions.

We are proud to announce that the new website FilmFestivalPost.com (www.filmfestivalpost.com) has launched a new blogging tool for filmmakers, and festivals. The free blogging tool allows filmmakers and festivals to post their news and stories, with the benefit that our magazine is always watching out for new, cutting-edge directors and storytellers to feature in our monthly print editions. Whether you're a filmmaker or screenwriter, or if you're a festival producer, director, or programmer, you can now post your stories, announcements, and production journals in the 'blog section' of FilmFestivalPost.com.

The difference in having a blog on FilmFestivalPost.com versus a general blog on the Internet is you will be seen by and read by the people you want to be exposed to – whether that be other serious filmmakers and crew, or festivals and organizations who wish to offer grants, scholarships, awards, and recognition.

You also have the ability to find and network directly with this audience and community. It is free and easy to use, so sign up today at www.filmfestivalpost.com

StudentFilmmakers.com and StudentFilmmakers Magazine thanks all of you who stopped by its exhibit booth at NAB. We look forward to meeting you at HD Expo in Chicago, Illinois in June, the UFVA Conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado in August, and at New Media Expo in Las Vegas, Nevada in August.

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

Contributing Writers
Thomas Ackerman, ASC, Anthony Q. Artis, John Badham, Adam Biddle, Kevin Burke, Julia Camenisch, Chris Cavallari, Mark Cheng, Michael Corbett, Vanessa Daniels, Todd Debreceni, Jeff Deel, Christina DeHaven, Frank DiPaola, Dana Dorrity, Paolo Dy, 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, Michael Kent, Mark Kerins, Perry Kroll, Tamar Kummel, Adam Matalon, Roger Marsh, Matthew Marshall, Brian Melton, M. David Mullen, ASC, Stacey Parks, Mark Sawicki, Lew Schatzer, Myrl A. Schreibman, 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
Lonn Stengel 212.255.7190
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, Shaheen Ulon

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

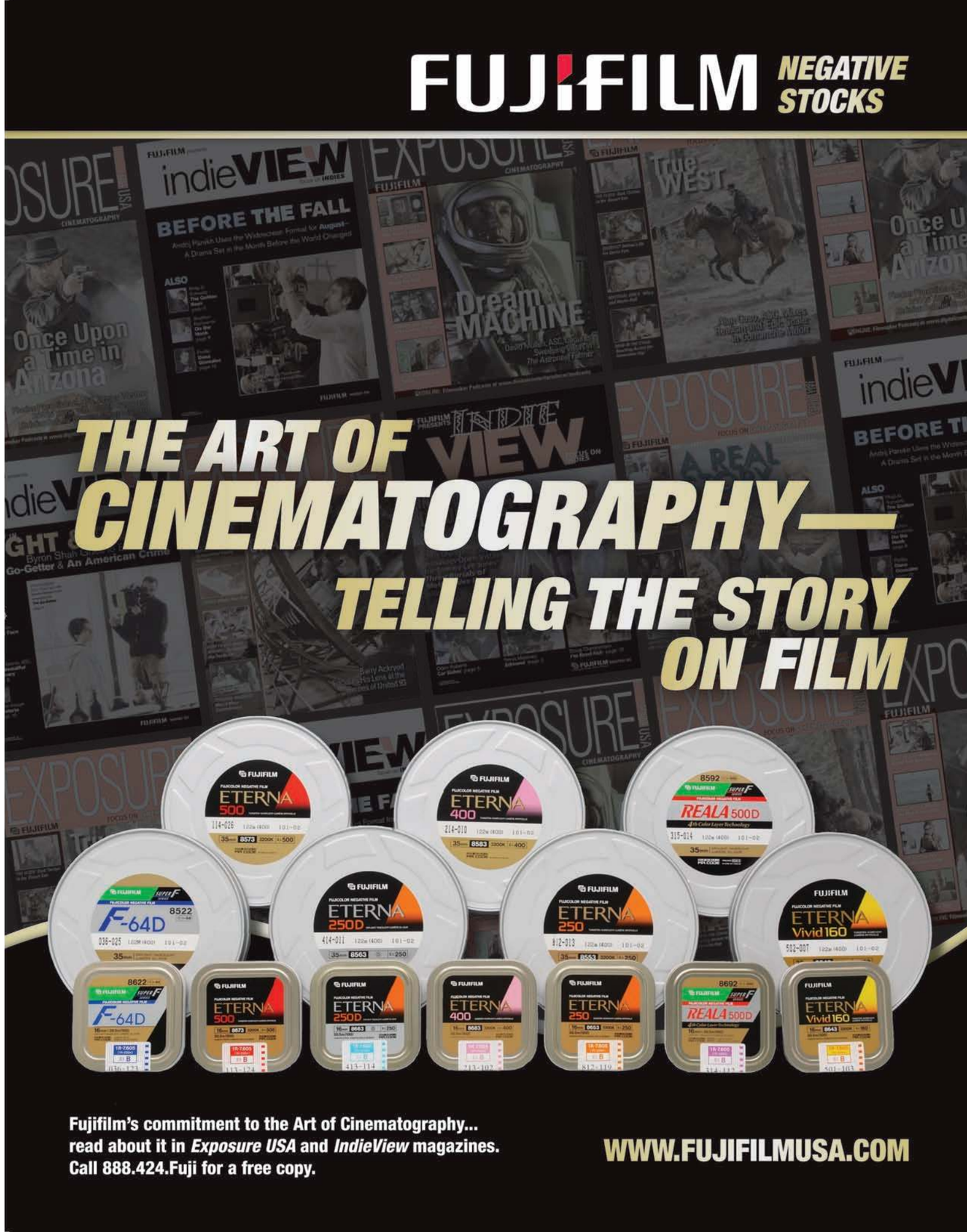
Contact StudentFilmmakers
http://www.studentfilmmakers.com/contact.shtml
888.222.0652 (US Toll Free)
212.255.5454 (US and International) 212.255.7204 (Fax)

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.





Black ProMist 3 Wide



Black ProMist 3 Zoom



Black ProMist 1 Zoom

Focal Length and Filter Strength

What is the Relationship?

by Ira Tiffen

We are all familiar with *rules of thumb*. They are concepts which fit a variety of situations but are not expected to be suitable for all circumstances. The purpose for having rules of thumb is to allow decisions to be made using a readily memorable guide to estimate results.

We are also familiar with *old wives' tales*. They are concepts that supposedly derive from prior wisdom that are to be applied to assist decision-making in similar circumstances today.

What happens when we mix the two? How about as in, "when you double the focal length, you should halve the strength of the diffusion filter you are using."

I have heard this often over the years. I am sure it has worked frequently enough that it is still being circulated. However, there are some things to know when applying *old wives' rules of thumb* to every situation. And, there is more to know than is covered by this 'rule.'

First off, it is hard to define 'halving the diffusion' since filters are not generally graded in multiples. Two grade 2's do not a grade 4 make, and so on. That's because most filter types are graded to allow control over a certain range of effect strength. A choice is made by the manufacturer for the weakest and the strongest grades, and the rest are dispersed in-between. Filter choices are then generally made by the cameraman, who evaluates each filter grade for each situation, running tests if necessary, to determine the proper filter to use. So there has not been a need to set grades by multiples.

The differences between the perceived strength of one type of diffusion and another do not allow for ready correlation. The same is true between different manufacturers. So the ability to estimate filter strength adjustments by a set 'rule' is hampered by the inability to determine how to apply it.

There is, though, an element of truth to this concept. That is, you may often find it helpful to reduce diffusion as you zoom in, to maintain visual similarity. Here's why. In the first image, "Black ProMist 3 Wide," we see the effect as desired, at a short focal length with a relatively strong grade 3 filter. In the next image, "Black ProMist 3 Zoom," the flare produced by the same filter seems considerably stronger than it does in the original. Note, though, that the relative proportion of the amount of flare to the size of the Batman symbol stays the same; it is just magnified. But in doing so, it takes up a larger portion of the overall image, and appears too strong.

In the final image, "Black ProMist 1 Zoom," I have reduced the filter grade from 3 to 1. Comparing this image with the original shows a greater visual correlation, and is better suited for this application than keeping the grade 3 on when zooming in.

Remember that each situation is somewhat different. A change in the distance, the actual focal lengths used, the relative brightness of the light and the darkness of the background, and especially, the particular look desired by the cameraman, will all contribute to making different decisions. However, it helps to remember that you *may* want to reduce the diffusion filter strength as you increase focal length, and vice versa. Just don't narrow the numbers to specifics and expect them to apply well to most, if not all situations.

Photos by the author.

Modern Cinematography

Recent Stylistic Trends in the Industry

by Saro Varjabedian

At the 80th Annual Academy Awards, presenter Alan Arkin said that "the nominees this year show the golden age of cinema is very much alive." Without trying to put words into his mouth, what Alan Arkin may have been referring to is that the artform that is cinema has continued to evolve. After all, cinema as an art is still very young in comparison to all the other traditional artforms. Therefore, it makes sense that this young art should continue to grow and develop. And the one aspect of cinema which may lend itself to develop more readily than any other aspect of film is its cinematography.



Mathieu Amalric plays French editor Jean-Dominique Bauby in Julian Schnabel's *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. Photo credit: Etienne George/Courtesy of Miramax Films.

Consider some of the trends seen in recent years. It is no surprise that the popularity of reality TV and the movement of documentaries garnering commercial success have impacted the cinematographic style of recent narrative films. That impact is reflected by the trend towards a more realistic look (e.g. less lighting) with a more "objective" camera. The "objective" camera stylistically acts as if the camera is there to record the unfolding of the story rather than to recreate it shot by shot. In 2006, *Children of Men* brilliantly epitomizes the use of the "objective" camera with its long takes and handheld camera work bringing the horror of the future a reality that makes all the events of the film all the more horrific.

Another movement in the industry which started in the 90's and has now entrenched itself into the business of film is the commercialization of independent films. After the major studios took notice of the commercial viability of independent films, they saw fit to jump on the bandwagon and developed their own independent production/distribution divisions to capture the independent market. The result of this movement is that studios are now seeking films that take artistic risks and break all the rules of conventional cinematographic practice set by traditional Hollywood filmmaking. Maybe the most striking example from 2007 of a movie breaking all the rules was Janusz Kaminski, ASC's work on *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. Can you imagine pitching that concept to a Hollywood studio executive twenty or even ten years ago? "We're going to shoot the first third of the film from the perspective of a paraplegic's one functional eye."

In Julian Schnabel's *THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY*, Marie-Josée Croze is Jean-Dominique Bauby's speech therapist, Henriette. Photo Credit: Etienne George/Courtesy of Miramax Films.



And what is the next stylistic trend in cinematography? Well, I couldn't say, but one thing is for sure. As long as cinematography continues to push the boundaries and evolve stylistically, the golden age of cinema will never come to an end.

Saro Varjabedian is a New York based director of photography and has worked on numerous independent films, music videos and corporate videos. He has recently finished production of the music video for the band KHZ and is currently in production for the spec of "Art House Film." Saro can be reached at www.sarodp.com.



International Cast Makes *Reservations*

by Mary Ann Skweres

Reservations, the award-winning feature from writer-director **Aloura Charles**, has been making the festival rounds, recently opening the Reel Women International Film Festival in Beverly Hills, California and closing the Women's Film Festival of Vancouver.

The script started as three shorts that possessed a common theme. When grouped together, and with the addition of a fourth story, they evolved into a larger narrative feature. Set in a New York hotel, the story unfolds over the course of one day as the lives of strangers become inextricably connected. Charles elaborates, "The interwoven relationships examine the condition of loneliness and our human need to connect. The non-linear structure is designed to give the audience a sense of drifting through these stories in the same way that our lead, Hellen (**Kerry Armstrong**), feels she's living her life out of order."



Aloura Charles laughs with actor Ulrich Thomsen "Adam" on the set of *Reservations*

The delicate mix of drama and comedy is achieved not only through Charles' assured directing, but also by the strong performances of an internationally recognized ensemble cast including Armstrong (Australia), **Loren Dean** (USA), **Ulrich Thomsen** (Denmark), **Ray Wise** (USA), **Pasha Lychnikoff** (Russia), **Alejandro Chaban** (Venezuela), **Jordi Caballero** (Spain) and **Vanessa Johansson** (USA).

Casting is one of the most important considerations for any independent filmmaker, affecting not only the quality of the film performances but also whether or not a film will receive commercial distribution. Hellen was the only the character for which Charles had any preconceived casting idea. "That part was actually written with Kerry in mind," she explains. "For the other parts, it was pretty much casting genius. John Jackson, and casting associate, Taylor Loeb, who suggested names to me that I never would have thought of. The role of the businessman who hires a teen call girl was not conceived as international, but the fact that Ulrich was Danish contributed a whole other element to it, another layer of people arriving in New York from different walks of life, cultures and nationalities." The award-winning Thomsen is well known in Europe and played opposite Connie Nielsen in Susanne Bier's critically acclaimed drama *Brothers*.



First-Time Feature Director Aloura Charles Successfully Wrangles Ensemble in Award-Winning Film

Aloura Charles discusses the scene with Loren Dean and Kerry Armstrong on the set of *Reservations*

There was a good period of creative rewriting prior to casting, and later in the editing, but, because of the good response by the actors who came in for meetings, there were not a lot of changes to the script once the actors signed on. One exception was that the Russian businessman was originally written as a Czech. When the opportunity arose to work with Pasha," says Charles, "We started looking for a Russian woman, because he didn't speak Czech. We were lucky enough to find **Winter** [**Ave Zoli**] who was able to do Czech and Russian for us. She's Czech and American."

Lychnikoff has appeared regularly on television series including *Deadwood* and films such as *Charlie Wilson's War* and the new Indiana Jones film.

Since the film is an ensemble piece, and many of the actors usually played leads, one major concern needed to be addressed. "They all wanted to know how