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The ABCs of Coverage

DP Rick Siegel

Lights

Jeff Beck Live

Gleb Osatinski's Directorial Debut

The DP as Camera Operator

Documentary Casting Must-Do's

Shooter Checklist for the Interview

Niven Howie on RE4 3D

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On the Cover:

Behind the scenes on a DSLR music video shoot for rock band Divine Pilot's song, "White Bird." Shot in Bourgogne, France by Ludovic Argenty, Louis De Sailly, and Laurent Danis.







Topics covered in this highly educational, inspiring issue include top trending topics which continue to circulate through The Film and Video Makers Network (networking.studentfilmmakers.com), Discussion Forums online (studentfilmmakers.com/bb), and Workshops held at the StudentFilmmakers.com Studio in Manhattan, New York City. These top trending topics: 3D, DSLR, cinematography, film composing, and films shot in New York.

On the 3D and editing front, William Donaruma shares helpful tips in his article, "3D Post." Scott Essman interviews Niven Howie, who reveals his methodology during the production of *RE4 3D* in the article, "Editing in Three Dimensions." Meleah Maynard writes about two students who create an award-winning project using C4D in the article, "CINEMA 4D in the Classroom ." (3D Department)

On the Cover this month is a music video production shot entirely on DSLR by Laurent Danis who will be flying from France to New York this season to film new projects on location in New York City. In this issue, we also speak with Gleb Osatinski on his directorial debut shot entirely on DSLR. Osatinski filmed in various locations in New York including Montauk, Ft. Tilden, Midtown Manhattan, Downtown Manhattan, and Williamsburg.

After filming *Chipwrecked* (Alvin 3) for Fox, Mr. Thomas Ackerman, ASC, returns to *StudentFilmmakers* Magazine with his very insightful and inspiring article, "The DP as Camera Operator: Good Idea?" (Cinematography Department)

Up-and-coming film composer and musician Fabian Almazan shares his experience learning from Harry-Gregson Williams (*Cowboys & Aliens, The Chronicles of Narnia, Shrek, Antz*) in the article, "Creatively Experiment." (Music & Sound Department)

We invite you to our new 2011-2012 New York City Continuing Education Workshops and Professional Training seminars for all levels of working filmmakers, crewmembers, and storytellers. Our film education-packed intensives bring together professors, students, and professional members of the motion picture industry. Please visit and bookmark, www.studentfilmmakers.com/workshops, as we look forward to meeting, networking, and seeing you at upcoming events held at the StudentFilmmakers.com Studio in Manhattan, New York City.

Enjoy this edition!

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

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

Contributing Writers
Thomas Ackerman, ASC, Jack Anderson, Laurent Andrieux, Anthony Q. Artis, John Badham, Christopher Ball, CSC, Karl Bardosh, Adam Biddle, Evan Bollig, Heidi Braudenburg, Terence Brody, Kevin Burke, Julia Camenisch, John Carrico, Steve Carlson, Chris Cavallari, Pete Chatmon, Vicky Collins, Michael Corbett, Vanessa Daniels, Carsten Dau, Todd Debreceni, Jeff Deel, Christina DeHaven, William Donaruma, Dana Dorrity, Pamela Douglas, Scott Eggleston, David E. Elkins, SOC, Dr. Gordon Erlebacher, Scott Essman, Bryant Falk, Carl Filoreto, Jon Firestone, Brian Flees, Jacqueline B. Frost, Hali Gardella, Daniel Gaucher, Fred Ginsburg, C.A.S., Ph.D., MBKS, Dean Goldberg, Todd Grossman, Leonard Guercio, John Hart, David K. Irving, Larry Jaffee, Ian Johnson, Catherine Ann Jones, David Kaminski, Michael Karp, SOC, Sam Kauffmann, Peter Kiwitt, Christopher Keane, Tamar Kummel, Richard La Motte, John Manchester, Dave Lent, Adam Matalon, Matthew Marshall, Thomas McKenney, Jonathan Moore, M. David Mullen, ASC, Stacey Parks, Mark Sawicki, Myrl A. Schreibman, Dr. Linda Seger, Sherri Sheridan, Mary Ann Skweres, Pamela Jaye Smith, Tim Smith, Scott Spears, Ira Tiffen, Jeff Turboff, Melissa Ulto, Mike Valentine, BSC, Saro Varjabedian, William F. Vartorella, Ph.D., C.B.C., Tony White, David Worth, Dean Yamada, Kevin Zanit

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Good Idea?

The DP as Camera Operator

by Thomas Ackerman, ASC

When on-set crew photos are published, the coolest shots invariably center on the camera. No wonder. Wrapped around an Arri or Panaflex, wielding a super-sized lens, the operator appears as the quintessential filmmaker. This is the seat of power. If an image eludes the viewfinder it's never going to hit the screen.

Meanwhile, the director of photography might be found in a remote corner of the set mumbling into his walkie-talkie or taking a light reading. Indeed, the general perception – not only by the general public but by industry veterans who ought to know better – is that a DP's function consists of "reading the light," followed by the arcane ability to fashion a "look" for the film.

As any cinematographer knows, operating the camera is the jewel in the crown. That is where everything is resolved. Literally. It has nothing to do with ego, everything to do with putting the puzzle together. It also involves trust and a shared vision. I do not think of the operator as an automaton, slavishly manipulating the wheels or fluid head. They make a unique contribution, aesthetically and technically. No shot can be accomplished without their management. Whether bonding with the actors or solving a bump in the dolly track, the operator's skill is indispensable in a DP's game plan.

It is no wonder that a majority of student cinematographers elect to operate their own camera. "Hands on" is the mantra at most top tier film schools. In itself, the allure of working with sophisticated equipment is almost irresistible. Added to that is the rush of the inner circle where decisions are made, where directors and actors can be influenced, often with the camera operator's thumbs up or down that decides if the company will move to the next shot.

Unfortunately, working in the hyphenated mode is often a mistake. It is a blend of contrasting skill sets and joining them yields uneven results. The obligations of a director of photography are as diverse as they are relentless. This is not to suggest that camera operation is "cinematography lite." In fact it is a demanding portfolio ranging from the nuances of framing to hard core technicalities such as chasing boom shadows and defining actor eyelines. Some of the operator's vital contributions aren't even photographic, like creating a positive atmosphere around the camera where the cast and crew can do their best work.

That said, working as operator drastically erodes the time necessary to be a director of photography. Multi-tasking has its limits. With the DP's eye glued to a viewfinder, how is the rest of the job supposed to be accomplished? You can have your gaffer and key grip keep an eye on things, which is why it's essential to hire the best people. When high tech is supported by clothespins and black wrap, set lighting can shift unexpectedly and the keys are your first line of defense. However, they cannot be held responsible for the photography.

Even when the day's work is proceeding flawlessly, with every shot an amazing tour de force, the DP has an obligation to lead the charge. With the camera operator in the trenches, *the Director of Photography should be thinking of a way to make it better.* Whether tweaking a barn door, coordinating a light change on the dimmer, or grabbing a quick sidebar with the Production Designer, the only individual destined for the DI suite after the movie wraps is the one whose name is on the slate. That is where the buck stops.

Most of my colleagues welcome the camera operator's partnership and have affirmed this time and again. What is less well known is that on most mainstream feature films there is equally strong support from the producers. They know that this is the way a camera crew operates at peak efficiency. After a fierce debate between Local 600 and the studios a few years ago, the IATSE lost the mandatory operator position. In spite of this unfortunate shift in work rules, very few production managers today need to have their arms twisted when it comes to hiring an operator. In fact, they would have to be convinced *not* to have one.

Not all directors of photography are in agreement on the subject. One accomplished cinematographer, with many wonderful films to his credit, has been quoted that operating is essentially a dance with the actors. In his view, "only two can tango." Which suggests that a camera operator, at best, is an unwelcome guest in the process.