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Australian Cinematographers Society

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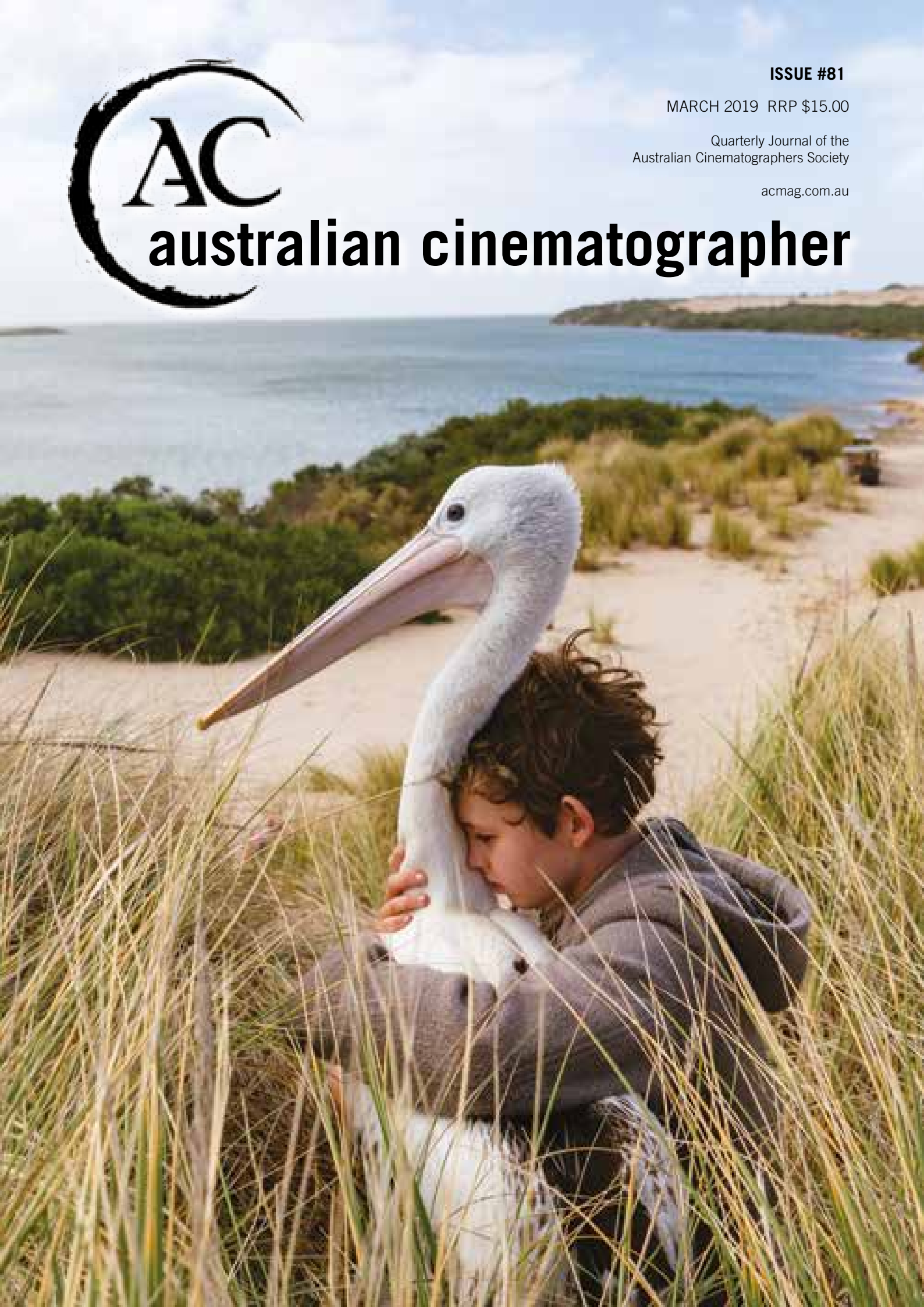

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CONTACT/SUBSCRIPTIONS

Editorial Level 2 / 26 Ridge Street, North Sydney NSW 2060
Media Kits acmag.com.au
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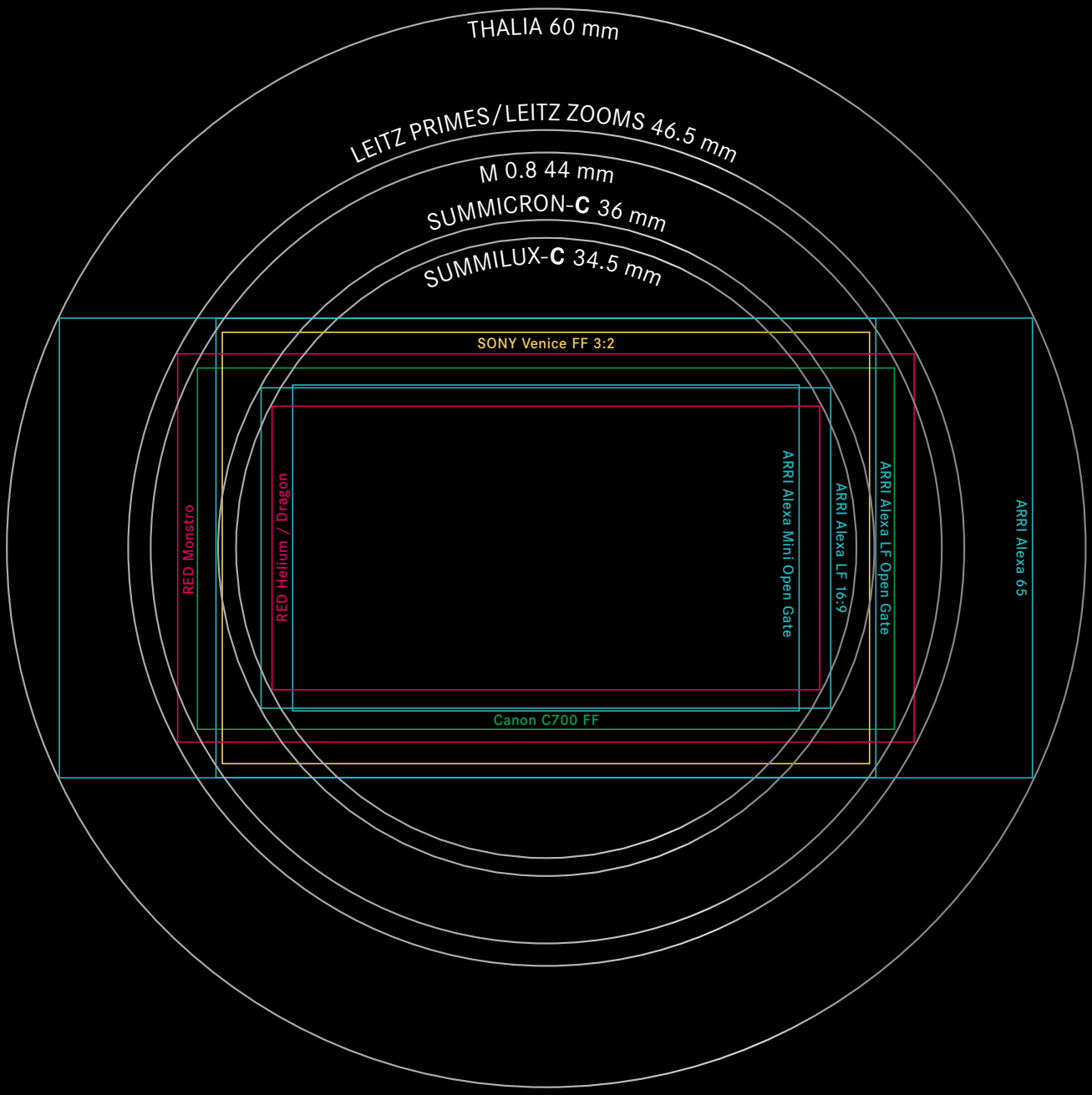

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FEATURES...

DEPARTMENTS...

AC australian cinematographer

Quarterly Journal of the
Australian Cinematographers Society

FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings readers,

I was going to start by writing about how appalled I was at the decision not to televise the Best Cinematography category, among others, at the recent Academy Awards. Thankfully, however, the Academy reversed their decision thanks in no small part to the outrage that it caused. Perhaps the silver lining is that the whole fiasco shone a light on cinematography, cinematographers and how valued the craft actually is even if it's sometimes under-appreciated.

I will add, however, that I would like to see in our own backyard the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) broadcast the three cinematography categories (features, television and documentary) in the main AACTA Awards broadcast, and not be relegated to the technical 'luncheon'. There, I said it.

Now onto Issue 81 of your magazine! If you haven't already, go see *Storm Boy*. Then read our story on how the awesome Bruce Young ACS shot it. Have you been watching *True Detective*? Then surely you'll want to read about Germain McMicking ACS' work on the third season. And, we hear from our good friend Grieg Fraser ACS ASC about shooting *Vice*.

On the subject of Grieg Fraser, *Lion* is still winning the cinematographer great plaudits with his recent nomination for the IMAGO International Award for Best Cinematography for Feature Film. By the time you're reading this, he may have already won! The awards are on 16 March. Good luck Grieg! One of his fellow nominees in another category is Brazilian cinematographer Adolpho Veloso ABC, for his work on the documentary *On Yoga: The Architecture of Peace*. We look at that film in our ongoing Spotlight on Brazil section, and if you want to see it... *On Yoga* is on Netflix, right now.

There are three more great features in this issue; Calum Stewart shares his experiences shooting the new Australian feature film *Akoni*, Nick Remy Matthews ACS chats to us about his work on the film *Hotel Mumbai*, and we hear from Wade Muller HKSC on HBO Asia's new television series *Grisse*. Alongside our regular departments ACS Brief, New Gear, Film Reviews and Australian Shorts, once again the team here at the magazine have delivered a huge issue for you to digest. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Until next time, peace.

James Cunningham
National Editor,
Australian Cinematographer Magazine.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings ACS members, colleagues and friends.

I would like to remind you of an organisation that I speak of with great warmth. One that is here to support those in our industry that have fallen on difficulat times. The Motion Picture Industry Benevolent Society was founded in 1931, and for the ensuing 88 years has continually provided financial and emotional support to employed and retired members of our industry in their time of need.

Hundreds of people have been assisted and cared for, enabling them to enjoy a more comfortable life. Currently the MPIBS have twenty-four beneficiaries who receive assistance. I encourage readers who are aware of a colleague in need of such support, to contact MPIBS Chairman of Investigation and Relief, Tom Jeffrey.

I also encourage those who are currently experiencing the 'good times' to think about colleagues 'doing it tough', and consider supporting this wonderful organisation to continue their work by making a donation to: The Motion Picture Industry Benevolent Society, Attention Bruce Leonard, Secretary/Treasurer, 9 Collins Street, Lapstone, NSW 2773.

No doubt like all of you, I was delighted to learn that the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences in the United States has at last seen reason by including all of their Awards categories in the televised Oscars presentation. A lot must be said in support of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) for their support of cinematographers globally in pursuing this decision, along with IMAGO, other Societies and many individuals. It was a passionate and at times polarising debate, but surely, we can debate these issues without personal attacks, particularly to those who may only be the messenger.

I congratulate the Academy and its Board of Governors for listening to the industry and reversing their original decision. Perhaps the next step is the conversation regarding the cinematographer gaining rightful recognition overall which includes authorship rights, moral rights and control of the final grade.

Our own Fujinon/Fujifilm ACS National Awards for Cinematography will take place in Melbourne at the Plaza Ballroom on Saturday, 18 May, with a number of other special soon to be announced events, as part of the celebrations. All our Awards category nominees, as Gold-Award winners at their Branch Awards will be acknowledged, and all members are encouraged to attend and support our Australian cinematographers and their outstanding work. A sincere thank you to all our ACS Sponsors for their support, not only at these National Awards but all year round. I look forward to seeing you in Melbourne.

Until next time,

Ron Johanson OAM ACS
National President,
Australian Cinematographers Society

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LOST AND FOUND

A knitted dinosaur must completely unravel itself to save the love of its life – ***by Claire May***

A scene from the film 'Lost & Found' - DOP Gerald Thompson

Andrew Goldsmith and Bradley Slabe's beautiful animated short film *Lost & Found* took home Best Short Animation at last year's AACTA Awards and was shortlisted for this year's Academy Awards. The film shares an adorable yet tragic love story between a knitted dinosaur and fox.

Cinematographer Gerald Thompson was approached due to his specialised experience as a stop-motion cinematographer. The project was unusual in that it used hand-knitted puppets, rather the usual clay or silicon.

The look of the short film was worked out between Thompson and co-director Andrew Goldsmith. ***"He wanted a bit of colour contrast in a dramatic night setting, but not too dark,"*** says Thompson. ***"It was then a case of working with the sets and puppets to establish a style that worked. In that sense, there were no references. Just a bit of instinct and some trial and error."***

"There was no real alternative at the time," says the cinematographer when asked about his choice of camera. ***"Canon DSLRs like 5D and 7D have been the mainstay for stop-motion due to a reliable and consistent implementation of tethered LiveView."*** Thompson explains that the EOS mount is also the most adaptable for mounting vintage manual lenses. ***"Auto aperture lenses can lead to flicker,"*** he says, ***"I mainly used Leica R lenses."***

Shooting days for stop-motion are not anything like live-action shoots. Things happen at their own pace. Setting up lighting and camera for one scene can take from a couple of hours to a whole day. The crew is minimal and everyone has to multi-task.

"Lighting is complicated," Thompson says, ***"The animator needs access to the puppet, and the lighting needs to be incredibly stable and locked down so nothing can get bumped."***

On some scenes where there was camera movement, it could take two full days for a set up. Then motion control programming was rehearsed in detail with animator Sam Lewis. ***"Once things were ready, Lewis could take a couple of days to complete the shot. I would normally clear out and leave him in peace for that part of the process."***

The cinematographer would keep an eye on progress in the studio, since he was working in the same space as the compositing and editing setup. ***"Seeing the story progress was also important because it gave me cues on how to approach new scenes and maintain continuity,"*** Thompson explains. ***"Once everything was locked off, I went through the grade with Goldsmith. My method is to get the look I want in camera as much as possible, referencing back to previously shot scenes."***

Thompson's favourite scenes are when the animation brings their characters to life in unexpected ways, as well as ***"when realism and dramatics intersect, neither at the expense of the other."*** Thompson tends to worry more about the shots that weren't so successful, but he won't say too much about those. ***"I think in some ways nobody really knew exactly what we would achieve,"*** says Thompson. ***"Only that Slabe's original characters would come to life and affect audiences emotionally."***

Thompson's new project is a comedy starring a skeleton. Born in the days of Ray Harryhausen films like *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963, cinematography by Wilkie Cooper BSC), the skeleton is now struggling to find a place competing with modern CGI. ***"Perhaps ironic since I often feel the same way,"*** he concludes. ***"A technician in the archaic world of stop-motion."***

Gerald Thompson is an award-winning stop-motion cinematographer and motion-control expert.

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CAMERIMAGE

Sissy Reyes, recipient of the 2018 Drew Llewelyn ACS Camerimage Scholarship, reports back from Poland – ***by Sissy Reyes***

Farshid Akhlaghi collecting a Special Mention in the Documentary Shorts Competition for 'Pain Is Mine' - PHOTO Sissy Reyes

The International Film Festival of the Art of Cinematography, Camerimage, is the greatest and most recognised festival dedicated to the art of cinematography and cinematographers.

I was very fortunate to be able to attend the last festival as the 2018 recipient of the Drew Llewelyn ACS Camerimage Scholarship. This was the first time I had ever attended, and so arrived with no other expectation than this was a 'once in a lifetime' experience.

The main festival venue is Opera Nova where all films in competition are presented alongside workshops and seminars. Competition films included *First Man* (cinematography by Linus Sandgren FSF), *The Favourite* (cinematography by Robbie Ryan BSC ISC), *Capernaum* (cinematography by Christopher Aoun), *The Fortress* (cinematography by Ji-yong Kim who picked up a Golden Frog for his work), *Roma* (cinematography by Alfonso Cuarón), *Phantom Thread* (cinematography by an uncredited Paul Thomas Anderson), *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* (cinematography by Bruno Delbonnel AFC ASC), *When the Bull Cried* (cinematography by Karen Vazquez Guadarrama) and *Cold War* (cinematography by Łukasz Zal PSC) to name a few.

Outside the screening rooms ARRI, Panavision, Red, Panasonic, Sony, Cook Lenses, DoPchoice, Rosco and Leitz, amongst others, presented a scrumptious suite of tools, gear and toys to tempt. From students, professionals, film and gear buffs, connoisseurs to mere aficionados, it becomes very clear very soon that the festival will offer no respite for the wicked.

The Opening Ceremony surprised attendees when director Roman Polanski *(The Pianist)* walked onto the stage to deliver the Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of Witold Sobociñsk PSC and his legendary legacy as cameraman, artist and mentor of Polish cinema.

It is very difficult for me to account for all the activities, films, workshops and seminars presented and attended without even getting into the legendary party schedule. I will only attempt this time to present my top ten highlights of the festival in no specific order:

1. The Imago Diversity & Inclusion Panel discussion on the lives of cinematographers. The panel included Elen Lotman ESC, Rachel Morrison ASC, Claire Pijman NSC, Jendra Jarnagin and Sophia Olson FSF. It was a terrific and honest conversation on the challenges of 'joining the circus' of a filmmaker's life.

The main discussion was around the consequences of living in financial distress, future work uncertainty and making tough personal decisions for our careers - moving countries, having/not having children, losing friends - and how all these effect our mental, emotional and physical health. There was a deeper conversation regarding the way the industry works and the need to change systemic mechanisms and structures within it to empower ourselves as artists, technicians and parents/carers.

2. Claire Pijman's poetic documentary on Robby Müller NSC BVK, *Living the Light* (2018). Pijman's film is an ephemeral and evocative look at the artistry and work of a legendary cinematographer. It is a unique look into his life through his own video camera documenting the happiness, beauty, melancholy, loneliness and success.

3. Having a 'Fan girl' moment while chatting to Rachel Morrison ACS. Power to the people!

4. Seeing *Roma* on the big screen and listening to Alfonso 'El Maestro' Cuarón talk about his film. *Roma* is simply a masterpiece of cinema, reminiscent of Tarkovsky, Truffaut and Fellini but purely Cuarón. The execution of cinematic language, symbolism and the film plane with its foreground and background storylines and intricate sound are a triumph of the cinematic experience. *Roma* to me was a visual and auditory echo of the great Mexican poet/ philosopher Octavio Paz's *Labyrinth of Solitude* and a triumph for diversity representation in Mexican and world cinema.

5. Meeting Bruno Delbonnel AFC ASC who, generously, shared with me beautiful words of wisdom. The festival could have ended there and I would have been a happy camper but thankfully there was more.

6. 'The Language of Cinema is Images' hosted by Australian ex-pat cinematographer Christopher Doyle alongside Ed Lachman ASC and James Laxton. In all his eccentricity and borderline excess, the Shaman of cinema Chris Doyle - aka Dú Kéféng - brought us back to the essence of what it means to be an artist of frame, colour and light.

With an almost philosophical approach, the panel talked about what cinematography was for them. In short, cinematography is about darkness and mystery. It is about collaboration and generosity, transcending the camera and the ego to be present and find emotion. Cinematography is about commitment and objectivity while being open and critical.

7. The massive pancakes at Mannequin. I over-ordered.

8. Nerding-out with *Cold War* cinematographer Łukasz Zal over legendary Mexican cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa and his iconic black and white films which galvanised Mexican identity to the world… whilst being my Nan and my favourite Sunday mornings films.

9. Hanging out with the London gang and making new friends.

10. And finally, loving the parties, all of them equally. Though that last party with the chocolate fountain where we hijacked the piano and the whole place sang David Bowie and The Beatles was pretty memorable.

Top Frogs for the main competition were: Golden Frog went to Ji-yong Kim for his work on *The Fortress,* the Silver Frog went to Łukasz Zal for *Cold War,* and the Bronze Frog to Alfonso Cuarón for *Roma*. As part of this list I have to include Farshid Akhlaghi from Australia via Iran, who won the Special Mention in the Documentary Shorts Competition for *Pain Is Mine* which he shot and directed. Bravo!

Before finishing, I have to address one of the biggest pieces of news this year regarding the festival itself. During the festival week there was an overall sense of concern amongst regular attendees regarding scheduling and venue capacity for the festival. The number of people attending each year has increased, yet the capacity to accommodate audiences and retain the sense of intimacy has fallen short according to regular attendees of the festival.

These themes were eventually addressed in a resounding manner by the Festival's long standing director Marek Żydowicz at the closing ceremony when, along with the entire festival staff standing on stage, Żydowicz told the audience about the tremendous funding gap between last year and this year's Festival. In a passionate and defiant delivery Żydowicz criticised the local government for its 'petty politics' and announced that the location for Camerimage 2019 is moving from Bydgoszcz and it is yet to be confirmed.

He urged the attendees to suggest new locations for the now 'homeless' festival. Needless to say the news astonished attendees as the thought of this year's festival possibly being the last Camerimage held in Poland hit home.

Finally, learning about the passing of Witold Sobociñsk, the legendary Polish cinematographer who had just received the the Lifetime Achievement Award less than a week before, was quite surreal news. I still have memories of Sobociñsk at the festival surrounded by students and peers talking about films and life. He attended the whole week, then went home for a day before his passing. This news framed my now remembered experience of the festival through a contemplative lens of what is important in life.

I returned from Europe inspired and clear to reconnect with that creative focus that ignites itself through a framework of possibility. Seeing so many creators from all over the world from diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds tackle storytelling from their very own inimitable eyes, painted a rich and vast picture of what is possible in beauty, emotion, story, artistry, technology and awareness.

This openness not just reflected itself in the richness of the multicultural storytelling experience, but in a yearning to enable a more generous way of working, a thirst to improve the current structures and opportunities for all who form part of the film and media industries. I left the festival inspired, awed and empowered.

I want to thank again the ACS Queensland Branch and National Executive for this 'once in a lifetime opportunity' as well as Scott Llewelyn and the Llewelyn Family for their generous contribution in making the Drew Llewelyn Camerimage Scholarship possible.

Sissy Reyes is a producer, cinematographer and visual artist who is passionate about cultural and gender diversity.

TROPFEST

A documentary about an anonymous Melbourne street-artist is awarded winner of Tropfest in 2019 – ***by Amy Owen and Genvin In***

David Franjic picking up Best Cinematography at the 2019 Tropfest Craft Awards - PHOTO Enzo Amato

Despite raging storms wreaking havoc on-site a night before the sixteen finalists' short film debut, Tropfest Australia rose like a phoenix to deliver a stand-out event, crowning *Be You T. Fool,* from director Brendan Pinches and cinematographer Dave Cleeve, winner of Tropfest 2019.

The short film was unanimously selected by a panel of industry leaders including AFI Award-winning Australian film legend Eric Bana (*The Hulk*), leading Australian actress Marta Dusseldorp (*A Place to Call Home*), AACTA-nominated Indigenous actor Aaron Pedersen (*Mystery Road*), screen starlet Jessica McNamee (*Packed to the Rafters*), award-winning filmmaker David Michôd (*Animal Kingdom*), and Australian producer Michele Bennett (*Chopper*).

Pinches' film is a fascinating short documentary on Be You T. Fool, an iconic but anonymous Melbourne street-artist inspiring commuters on the bustling Chandler Bridge with her distinct pasted portraits.

"The winning films for Tropfest 2019 were incredibly inspiring. Above all, the films explored crucial life lessons. It was a tough decision, and the variety of films made determining a winner very difficult," said the jury. ***"Congratulations to all of the finalists for their amazing efforts!"***

The award for Best Cinematography – which comes with a one-year membership to the ACS – was selected by an esteemed panel consisting of Oscar-winner Russell Boyd ACS ASC, Ellery Ryan ACS and Ashley Barron ACS. The prize was awarded to David Franjic for his work on the film *Allie*.

Also a documentary, *Allie* follows a car enthusiast, his recovery from illness and the bond with his partner's daughter with a disability who he takes to car shows. Director Cassie De Colling – who met the film's the subject by chance at the Northern Gal Car Show in Preston – has worked extensively over the past five years documenting the cultural practices of the Ngan'gityemerri people of the Daly River; she's also filming a biopic of the renowned Aboriginal artist Regina Pilawuk Wilson, on behalf of the Australian Embassy in Washington DC.

The winners of the 2019 Tropfest Craft Awards recognise excellence in their vital fields. As well as Franjic's win for *Allie*; Pip Hart (*Crush*) for editing; Claire Worsman (*Suck It*) and her crew for production design; Michael Noonan (*Notes to Salma*) for sound; Benjamin Goldman (*Safe Space*) for original score; Jayce White (*The Validation of Violet Worth*) for VFX; Leela Varghese (also for *Crush*) for screenplay; and Edward Copestick (*The Last Fight*) for documentary screenplay.

For the first time in 27 years, Tropfest live streamed a ground-breaking, interactive show called Tropfest All Access. Audiences around Australia and the world were able to watch all sixteen finalist films from Tropfest 2019 at home, exclusively on Facebook Watch. The show featured the winner's announcement, exclusive footage from throughout the night including the juror's deliberations, and interviews with A-list stars.

Tropfest, Australia's biggest and most prestigious short film festival and one of its most iconic cultural events, will return again in 2020.

Amy Owen and Genvin In both work for Cardinal Spin and are good friends of Australian Cinematographer Magazine.

THEY CALL ME VERNER

Northern Territory-based cinematographer Chris Tangey collaborates with legendary filmmaker Werner Herzog – ***by Chris Tangey***

On location with Werner Herzog - PHOTO Chris Tangey

There would be few ACS members who aren't used to working with big names. In fact some of those names include our own members!

A few months back, I had just finished shooting drone footage on a television commercial for Tourism Australia - under our own legend Russell Boyd ACS ASC - when the phone rang. ***"Werner Herzog wants you to do aerials for his new feature documentary."*** To be honest, I didn't really hear much of the rest of the conversation from the BBC Producer. Some names are 'big' for reasons that go beyond their filmmaking skills.

Herzog? The man who was shot during a BBC interview in Hollywood and wanted to carry on? ***"It was an insignificant bullet,"*** he calmly stated in his iconic German stilt. Herzog, the man who spent four years in the Amazon hauling a three-hundred tonne boat between two rivers to give his film *Fitzcaraldo* (1982) authenticity? Not to mention the extraordinary making-of *Fitzcaraldo* documentary *Burden of Dreams* (1983) that captured it warts and all. Herzog. The man who ate a shoe for a bet. The man who hypnotised his entire cast on the feature *Heart of Glass* (1976)... and so it goes.

As the film is yet to be broadcast, and with the ever-present Non-Disclosure Agreements we have to contend with, I cannot really talk about the project… yet. Suffice to say the film is tied to Herzog's old stomping grounds of Alice Springs and Coober Pedy from some decades earlier.

What is this now 76-year-old like to work with? He is perfectly normal, and yet perfectly not.

He carries with him a Germanic politeness and stand-offish acquaintance, yet when he met our elderly, and quite crazy, Greek mine worker in Coober Pedy, there was an explosion of soul-mating that I have never experienced before. An afternoon of filming turned into a joyous time of ouzo and banter instead. Did he come here for the opal mining? ***"No, I just like to make bombs. Have another drink you old German bastard!"***, he replied.

Surprisingly to me, Werner Herzog - I always called him 'Verner' - became a big fan of the Victoria Bitter stubbie - he always called it 'Wee Bee' - as we travelled huge distances in the outback. His daily dose was usually consumed during the end-of-day story. They were never self-important tales, and never for their own sake. From the time Mick Jagger invited him to the recording session for the 'Tattoo You' album, causing him to nod off in boredom. To the story of the snake-bitten Peruvian Indian, realising he was out of the anti-venom, promptly calculated his only survival chance was to start his chainsaw and cut his own foot off. And he was right.

Apart from anything else you get the sense Herzog is still on an inexorable journey, still trying to find the answer to life, the universe and everything. I am convinced though, he also knows his journey is ultimately futile. But at least he still smiles, ***"I don't smile for photos, I look like a crazy man."***

It's ok 'Verner', not only have you earned your smile, our industry salutes you for it.

Chris Tangey is an award-winning cinematographer, camera and drone operator based in the Northern Territory.

THE OCEAN

In the era of yes/no votes, plebiscites and debates, comes a same-sex love story in celebration of love over fear, free from shame – ***by Palina Barry***

A scene from Wallis Bird's 'The Ocean' music video - DOP Ashley Barron ACS

Finch company director Sinéad McDevitt tapped recently accredited cinematographer Ashley Barron ACS to lens a pure, beautiful, devotional love song by Irish singer-songwriter Wallis Bird for her recent single *The Ocean.*

The filmmakers prepared extensively with lengthy discussions about McDevitt's initial storyboards and choreography. Precision had to be taken with key moments in the song/choreography that needed to be punctuated alongside visual effects.

Barron shot the rehearsals on her Canon EOS 5D MkII, reviewing with the team on the spot to build on the choreography. McDevitt then ingested these shots into Adobe Premier to create a temp cut to the music, which was further built upon over hours of discussions with Barron.

"We watched a lot of dance films and music videos that incorporated dance," recalls Barron.

"We felt like they were mostly too observational; where the camera was fixed on a wide shot simply documenting the dance, and they often had no rhyme or reason to the coverage. We wanted, instead, for the audience to be immersed in the relationship, in the emotion of the story, and in the connection between the dancers. Each shot needed to tell a story."

The filmmakers considered the lyrics of the song as their script. This formed the basis for all visual decisions, from storyboarding, choreography and cinematography to the colour palette, wardrobe and art direction. The words ***"you are the ocean and the moon that controls it,"*** particularly informed the camera movement and lighting.

> ***"We wanted for the audience to be immersed in the relationship, in the emotion of the story, and in the connection between the dancers."***

"We talked about how to reflect this metaphorical, physical and emotional gravitational pull in the camera work," recalls Barron. ***"We also wanted the movement to feel like water, which is why we landed on Steadicam (operated by Jake Iesu) as the most appropriate tool for the job."***

Panavision Sydney, a team that Barron sites as pivotal in her career development, supported the project with a Red Epic Dragon and a set of Ultra Speed PVintage prime lenses.

Director and cinematographer reviewed sculptures of various muses, including Terpsichore, Calliope and Sappho, as well as Salvador Dali's painting 'The Madonna of Port Lligat'. The duo also analysed how queer love stories were lit in film; namely *Carol* (2015, cinematography by Ed Lachman ASC) and *Call Me by Your Name* (2017, cinematography by Sayombhu Mukdeeprom).

The filmmakers could not look past the softness in their research. Drawn particularly to the porcelain and flowing nature of the sculptures, the quality of light and colour in Lachman's photography and the blues in Mukdeeprom's brush strokes, they landed on their lighting style.

"In reality, the moon is a point source that creates very hard light with harsh shadows," notes Barron. ***"When it comes to softness, I particularly love a quality of 'barely there' light. So we opted for a source that was very big, very soft and very low-key."***

A 20'x12' silk was hung under three 6K Space-Lights from the studio's grid, with the silk angled as much as possible to avoid it becoming a top-light. Four

A scene from Wallis Bird's 'The Ocean' music video - DOP Ashley Barron ACS

coop soft lights were hung along the diffusion frame to extend the wrap.

In the lyrics of the song Bird notes that looking at her lover was like looking out on an ocean of planetary stars. Interpreting this concept visually brought in visual effects stars, or orbs, added during post-production to ignite the connection between the lovers/dancers.

This called for interactive lighting on the set. The aforementioned fixtures, along with additional 5K and 2K Fresnels from the ground, were wired to a DMX board where Gaffer Gourav Knight activated dim-ups at precise timing for the 'ignition' of the orbs in the extreme wide shots.

Not having the luxury of height in the studio to fully achieve the softness that Barron wanted, the cinematographer knew that the grade would be one of her main tools in achieving the look. Enter colourist Caleb De Leon.

"Sinéad and Barron both came in to the room with a really strong idea of the look they wanted to create," says De Long. ***"We worked really hard to create these beautiful porcelain skin tones in contrast with a cyan – almost aqua – tone across the highlights and shadows for a magical, gentle, moonlight look."*** The team chose to colour grade the video before visual effects were added so that they could set the colours and tones that effects would then match to help ground them in the world.

"We talked about how to reflect this metaphorical, physical and emotional gravitational pull in the camera work."

"One challenge was keeping the soft, slightly lifted black levels consistent across the board. Because so much of the frame is black, this project was particularly unforgiving of any minor changes in levels from shot to shot," explains the colourist. De Leon considers the project a perfect experience as almost all of the conversations in the room being purely creative and about how to enhance the emotional arc of the story.

"It really is a testament to how well it was shot and how in-sync Sinéad and Barron were." McDevitt adds, ***"Too often throughout history, the ignorant have attempted to soil homosexuality with shame. An obsession and preoccupation with the sexual aspect of queer relationships has created disgust and fear where there should be none."***

The Ocean calls on the viewer to focus instead on the transcendent beauty of a pure, loving human connection that is to be celebrated. ***"Bird and I made this for our younger selves who struggled with our sexuality growing up and as a gift for our LGBTQ+ family and allies everywhere,"*** says McDevitt. ***"Especially in the 72 countries where homosexuality is still illegal."***

Ashley Barron ACS is a multi-award winning cinematographer.

LIFE ON EARTH

Cinematographer Simon Green shoots the micro-budget feature *Life on Earth* – ***by Simon Green***

Emma Burnside and Keiran King in 'Life on Earth' - DOP Simon Green

Keiran King and Emma Burnside approached me a couple of years back to be the cinematographer on a teaser for a feature project they were developing. It was to be a micro-budget genre film; a post apocalyptic thriller with horror elements in it.

Unusually King and Burnside were the producers, writers and actors. There hadn't been a director assigned to the film yet, which came to be called *Life on Earth: Severance*. I hadn't worked with King before, but I had been in discussions with him about a year earlier about another film that hadn't got off the ground yet due to securing finances.

In the meantime, I had shot a short film called *All You Can Be* (2017) which, coincidently, Burnside had acted in as the lead. They must have been happy with the experience and results as they got in contact again for *Life on Earth*.

I was excited by the extensive visual language we could employ, to tell this kind of genre piece. At the time, Canon had just released the C700. I've always been impressed with the durability of Canon cameras and the cinematic quality of their images.

I approached Paul Stewart, Senior Manager at Canon Professional Business. Whilst he was interested in the project and wanted support it, he only had one of these cameras in the country at the time and needed to take it around to show people. Canon ended up supporting us with a C300mk2 as our A-Camera and a C500 as our B-Camera.

We shot in C-Log2 so both cameras would match. Canon also supplied two zooms; a Canon CN-E 15.5-47mm T2.8 and a Canon CN-E 30-105mm T2.8. I was extremely happy with the cinematic look of this glass.

We were EF mounted because I wanted to use some of my Lensbabys on particular shots. I think of these Lensbabys as a poor mans shift-tilt. I've found them to be useful in either extreme violence or beauty. For our purposes it was the earlier.

Another extremely fortunate asset to the production was being able to secure sponsorship from Atomos. They supplied two Shogun Infernos whereby we were able to record in 4K ProRes. The stability of this codec helped for the grade and also by using their monitor for being able to see sharps.

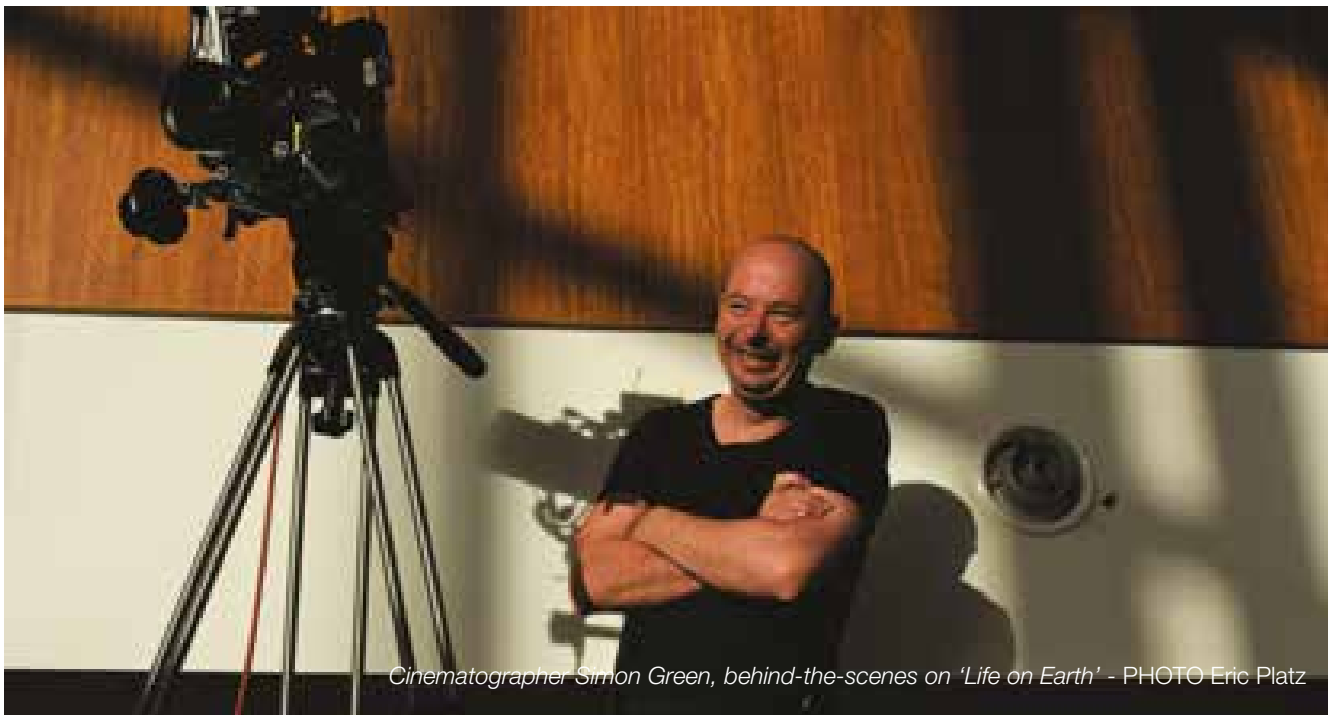
King and Burnside quite liked the visual approach I made for the teaser, which was classic beauty back-lighting along with framing the actors as people challenged and dwarfed by nature.

The director, who came in quite late, ended up being Angelo Salamanca who was a gentleman and fine collaborator. It was a demanding schedule and our crew was limited with no professional grips or gaffers. Salamanca spent his time focused on the performances and the emotional arch of the story, really giving me trust and freedom to approach the film visually how I saw fit.

I didn't take that responsibility lightly, however I came up with an approach that I thought made the film feel bigger than it was, which was essentially a two-hander. What I could do was approach every scene differently, stylistically.

My logic was as long as I was conscientious to a scene's thematic, I could adopt any style as long as it was true to what it was about. For example, a scene which outrightly portrayed conflict might be shot hand-held, where a scene that involved conventional confrontation might involve a more conventional wide-track in, and then film standard mid-shot coverage.

Given the micro-budget of the film, I was extremely fortunate to have Vanessa Orzlowski as first assistant camera. Orzlowski had just completed studying at university and my understanding was that she had spent her time assisting on as many



Cinematographer Simon Green, behind-the-scenes on 'Life on Earth' - PHOTO Eric Platz

short films as she could. This film was an extraordinary challenge for any assistant. Without her positivity, focus and technical support I would have been lost.

I had worked with Orzlowski a couple of times before, once on a short film and another time on a television commercial. I was crossing my fingers hoping she would be available and interested in this film.

Another collaborator was Ben Luck, who had assisted me on many other short films and commercials previously. I was able to ask him to come on to this film to step up to operate B-Camera.

Often, I also had Josh Macaulay come in to operate B-Camera when Luck was unavailable. I was extremely fortunate to have them collaborate on this film.

There were four main locations: a studio whose usage was sponsored by Horizon Films in St Kilda, an apartment in Port Melbourne, a private school that doubled as a research lab and a 'clever' property in Wantirna South in Melbourne.

I say clever because it was the remote bush location for the film and whilst it was only a couple of acres it was quite close the Melbourne CBD and had many different kinds of bush 'looks', in what was such a small space. This was where we spent most of our time.

We were blessed with great weather throughout the shoot, especially for our location filming. We would start these days before first light, so we could classically use back lighting when the sun came up and then move inside to a tent or caravan, as the light became more over-head and less pleasing.

We got some glorious scenes on location. This was not only because of the light but also because of the connection between the actors – who are a romantic couple in real life – and also their willingness as performers to go to some dark places.

An incredible asset to this film was our editor Hayley Miro. She has been Jill Bilcock's assistant on many feature films and really understood that post is the third draft of the script. The second being the shoot and the first being the script itself.

Miro actively engaged with the producers in shaping what she thought the story was and, as a result, we had a few pick-up days to fill out these additional scenes that were realised during post-production.

The colour grading was with my regular collaborator Thanassi Panagiotaras. He is an independent colourist whose suite is set up at the commercial production company Guilty's headquarters in Melbourne. Having done so many filmic projects with Panagiotaras there is an immediate confidence and short hand that makes working with him a pleasure.

The director and producers are extremely happy with the results of the film. Making each scene stylistically different by using a distinctive camera technique seemed like a risky idea at the time, but in hindsight to me it feels like the only way to have gone.

We are used to so many visual styles in the multitudinous of ways in which we receive visual content these days. It's the meaning or story of each moment that drives us to keep looking at it. Knowing that encourages me to have fun with the variety of photographic visual languages we can employ to tell our stories.

King and Burnside have a number of feature films in development, as does another director whom I have been working with. In the meantime, I enjoy the different challenges that commercials bring. Another day onset means another opportunity to learn. We're so darn lucky to do what we do.

Simon Green is cinematographer well-known for his versatility and talent in adding extra visual impact to a film project.

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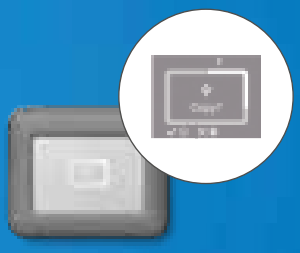

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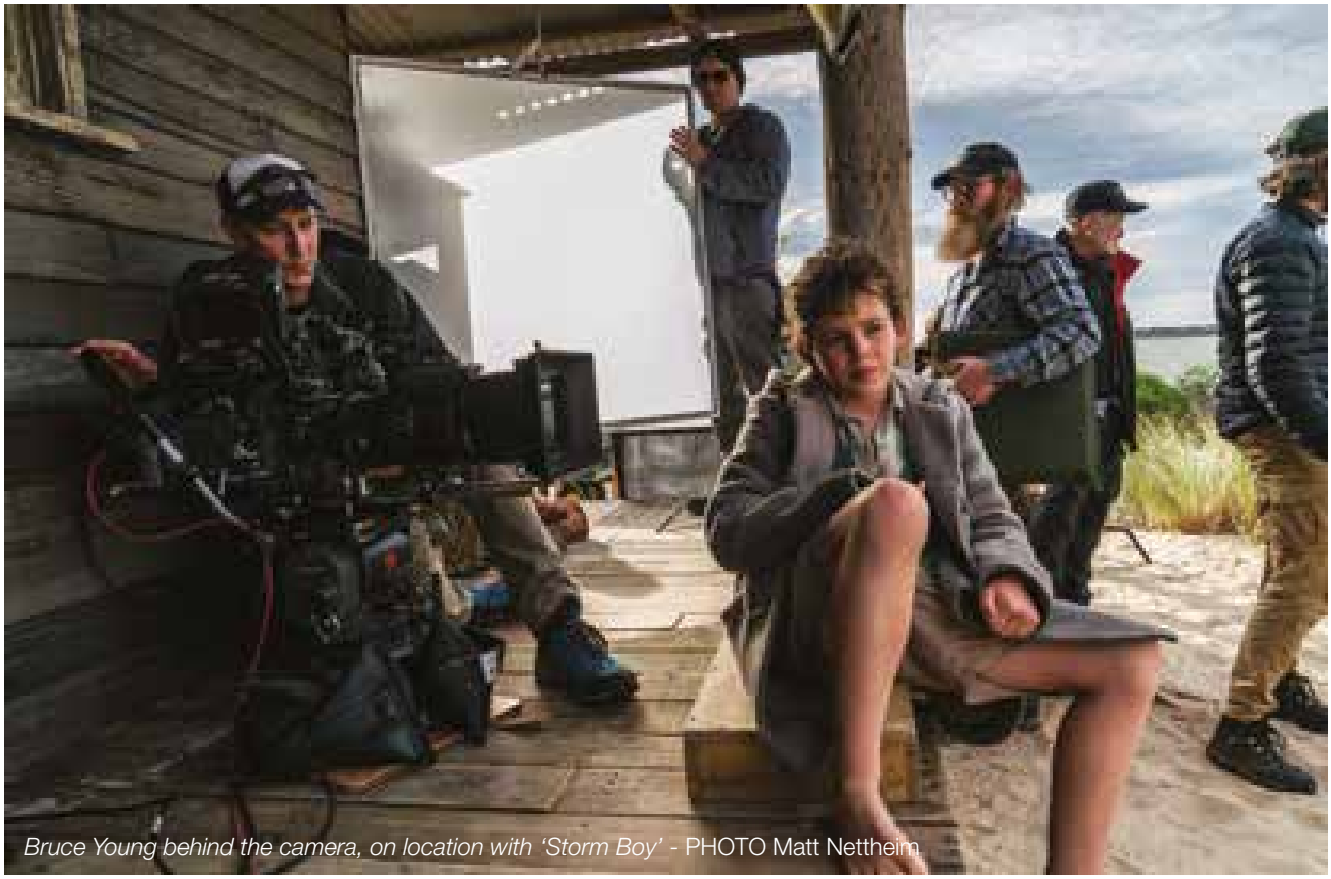
STORM BOY

A beautiful and contemporary re-telling
of Colin Thiele's classic Australian tale,
Storm Boy sees award-winning cinematographer
Bruce Young ACS behind the camera.

- by James Cunningham

Finn Little in 'Storm Boy' - DOP Bruce Young ACS, PHOTO Matt Nettheim



Bruce Young behind the camera, on location with 'Storm Boy' - PHOTO Matt Nettheim

Colin Thiele's novella *Storm Boy*, which tells the story of a young boy and his extraordinary friendship with an orphaned pelican on South Australia's remote Coorong National Park, has enchanted and moved Australians for over half a century.

Producers Matthew Street and Michael Boughen had both seen the iconic 1976 film adaptation - directed by Henri Safran and shot by cinematographer Geoff Burton ACS - and strongly recalled an emotional connection they had with it. ***"I was probably the age of Storm Boy at the time, maybe a little younger,"*** says Street, ***"and the film was dealing with life issues that were relatable to me as a kid, but to adults as well."*** The producers recognised that the themes of Thiele's 1963 book are just as relevant, and in some ways more so, today.

In 2019, however, *Storm Boy* would not be a remake of the 1976 film. As such, Boughen and Street decided to remain true to Thiele's original setting of the book; the late 1950s.

Director Shawn Seet (*The Code*) and acclaimed cinematographer Bruce Young ACS (*The Secret River*) had been working together for years before their collaboration on *Storm Boy*. ***"This film, I feel, is part of a great creative journey and friendship,"*** explains Young. ***"If you look at Seet's work he has great range as a director."*** Although Young had not previously worked with producers Boughen and Street, the pair very much wanted Seet to have his choice of cinematographer and fully backed the decision to bring Young on board.

The team wanted to shoot the film in South Australia, which would require support from the South Australian Government through the South Australian Film Corporation, as well as from Screen Australia. ***"Both organisations were incredibly supportive, both financially and in our early days of working through the difficulties of financing the film,"*** says Boughen.

In November 2016, Michael Boughen contacted South Australia-based location manager Mark Evans to begin conversations about *Storm Boy*, and discuss the need to conduct extensive site surveys once the film was financed. From March 2017, once the film was in pre-production, Evans travelled up and down the Coorong and as far north as Goolwa and as far south as Robe and Beachport, exploring every facet of the Coorong National Park and adjacent areas, to enable hero locations to be selected.

Before setting out, Evans spoke with Seet by phone and by Skype to understand what the director was seeing in his mind and to understand how he wanted to highlight the region. ***"It took a long time to get the geography to work for the film, but we found the main location at Godfreys Landing then tweaked the story to fit that location,"*** explains Evans.

When choosing cameras for *Storm Boy*, ***"There was some discussion about shooting on a 4K camera and that really related to the possibility, I think, of a presale to an internet platform,"*** says the film's cinematographer. ***"I was always keen on using the ARRI Alexa Mini, as were Seet and the producers. So that's what we went with."***

"The ARRIs have a wonderful, naturalistic feel," says Young. ***"Perfect for what I was intending to do on the film. We shot raw files and cropped the image to 2.35:1 so that***

Jai Courtney plays Hideaway Tom in 'Storm Boy' - PHOTO Matt Nettheim

we could use spherical lenses. I had a full set of Master Primes and Optimo Zooms for both cameras."

To showcase these incredible locations, as well as the characters, Seet and Young decided to partly shoot with an 18mm lens… a very short lens. ***"Young and I wanted a shooting style that would showcase the landscape but also allow us to get close enough to the characters to forge a real emotional connection with them,"*** explains the director. ***"What the 18mm lens enabled us to do was to capture extreme close ups on Storm Boy*** (Fin Little) ***or the pelicans, but still see the whole landscape so the characters were always figures within the landscape."***

Seet and Young also used drones to shoot some scenes, particularly as it gave a crucial 'bird's eye' point-of-view. ***"We were shooting in the actual Coorong, we weren't fudging it on some other beach,"*** says Seet. ***"We could get up high with the drones and look all the way down Ninety Mile Beach, the actual beach the story is set on, and see everything in relationship. It was accurate and fantastic."***

Young did take some inspiration from the cinematography of the original film. ***"Burton's work really captures the feel of the environment, and I loved that about the original film,"*** he says. ***"I also thought his photography inside the shack which Hideaway Tom*** (Peter Cummins) ***and Storm Boy*** (Greg Rowe) ***lived was good, lots of contrast. I really wanted the landscape to be something the audience could feel. Thematically it's a big part of the movie."***

"Working with production designer Melinda Doring and her team in pre-production was fantastic," says Young. ***"Doring is meticulous and her design of the shack is a testament to her talent."*** Working collaboratively she understood the naturalistic look Young was working to achieve. ***"We could shoot every part of the shack as it was so authentic. It was a real joy."***

"The bulk of the action involving pelicans is live."

The director talked at length with Young about visual references. One was *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007, cinematography by Roger Deakins CBE BSC ASC) and another was *The Revenant* (2015, cinematography by Emmanuel Lubezki AMC ASC). Seet had still images from both these films in his production office. ***"Although those films were very different from ours, the look of them are great references,"*** says Young. ***"Both create a strong sense of place and feature interesting colour palettes."***

Although the team didn't work from storyboards, a series was created for the storm sequence as this helped inform the wider crew about the various visual elements that would be needed. ***"Seet and myself have worked so much together that we are able to communicate in a very shorthand manner,"*** says Young. ***"As one might expect, we have similar taste so are able to decide quickly on how to approach scenes in regards to coverage."***

"Once we decided on our location," says Evans, ***"it dawned on me that we had to get every single thing across to the***

The 'Storm Boy' cast and crew on location off the Coorong National Park coastline - PHOTO Matt Nettheim

peninsula, which is only accessible by boat. The Coorong is also tidal, so getting the sets and infrastructure across, and then a crew of at least eighty people over there every day, would take a lot of organising." Also, because the filmmakers wanted to shoot in the coldest, wettest part of the year in keeping with the script and desired aesthetics, difficult conditions arose for the crew.

"There were complications for the construction and scenic teams having to work in difficult weather conditions," Doring explains. ***"It was hard, but very worthwhile. The location that we chose was so unique, with so much natural beauty, incredibly cinematic qualities. A lot of other locations we could have chosen would not have given us those important aspects."***

"Having the hut location built on the dunes of the Coorong National Park gives the film an incredible authenticity," says Young. But this did mean that the cinematographer and his gaffer, Andrew Robertson, had to make careful choices and plan effectively what they could have on location. They used a relatively small generator set on the back of a 4WD that could travel by barge and be driven onto the dunes. ***"We would hide it as close as we could to the set, but there was still a long cable run over the sand which Robertson would have to factor in to the equation when working out how much power we could draw."***

Day interiors in the hut required the most amount of lighting. ***"We had decided on two M18s, a 4k and a 575 as well as an 800 Jorer,"*** says Young. ***"In addition to these we had a couple of Skypanels and a few smaller LED lamps."*** The team also adapted a kerosene lamp to have a LED globe which was regularly used, even during day scenes.

Young worked very hard to get his day interiors feeling natural. ***"The challenge was to keep the levels inside high enough so we can see the exterior,"*** explains Young, who needed to create large soft sources so it felt like ambient light reaching into the shack. ***"It was critical to me to get this right. Inside the shack there is very little fill-light. There is a lot of contrast. It was a lot of work given the physical environment we had, however I feel pretty happy with what we achieved out there."***

"Every morning we'd get on a boat, and we'd get there just on dawn and it was like going through an airlock," recalls the director. ***"We would travel into that world. At the end of the day, we'd ride back, with the birds flying over and the most spectacular sunsets I've seen. It didn't care about us filming there, which is one of the things I wanted to get across, that nature doesn't care about humans. The storm will come when it comes, the wind will come up when it comes, and you have to live with that. It was tricky, but it was full of character."***

Storm Boy (Finn Little), Hideaway Tom (Jai Courtney) and Fingerbone Bill (Trevor Jamieson) in 'Storm Boy' - DOP Bruce Young ACS, PHOTO Matt Nettheim

Pelicans play a big part in *Storm Boy*. For the filmmakers, there were two aspects of the pelicans in the film that were of paramount importance; to create the majority of the pelican performances in camera with real birds, and to establish a tangible connection between these real pelicans and Finn Little, the actor playing young Storm Boy. To achieve this vision, the producers knew they would need to start some months before pre-production and before production financing; taking the risk to bring on animal trainers to find, raise and train the pelicans.

"The bulk of the action involving pelicans is live," says Young. ***"There were five birds altogether. They had been trained from when they hatched. It was amazing what the bird handlers were able to get them to do."*** Of course, there are a few pelicans in the film created by the CGI team, however very few considering how detailed and specific the action sequences involving them are. ***"It is another element that helps make the film feel authentic and visceral."***

There were challenges, however, in shooting scenes that featured specific bird action. ***"Generally what I did,"*** explains Young, ***"was put the long Optimo Zoom on both cameras so we could get a variety of shots without interrupting the action. This approach worked particularly well in the scene where Storm Boy plays hide-and-seek with one of the pelicans."***

Cast and crew were surprised every day by the birds and their improvisations. Specific actions had been built into the script, but the filmmakers developed what they called the 'flexible thinking' principle; that they would be open to what the birds did. This philosophy would carry through other aspects of the production.

"We had to adapt the script to their performances. Their performances, however, were amazing," says Boughen. ***"We were only imagining what we might get on the page, but these are personalities, these are characters and they brought so much more to it. People will I'm sure assume we used CGI pelicans, and we did in a very few limited specific moments, but basically everything you see was real and it was spectacular."***

Seet continues, ***"We filmed a scene in which Fingerbone Bill*** (Trevor Jamieson) ***talks to young Storm Boy, and the pelicans were not really interested in the discussion. Every time we went to shoot the scene, the pelicans would wander off. Someone said 'forget about the dialogue, just go into the dance'. As soon as Fingerbone Bill started dancing, it was like the pelicans had read the script. They turned, wandered over and stood in a row. Watching him. It was magic."***

"The camera team I worked with were absolutely fantastic," says Young. B-Camera's first assistant Jules Wurm, who lives in South Australia, and Young had worked together years before when Young was a second-unit cinematographer on *Farscape* (2002). Pim Kulk, who was the A-Camera's focus puller, had done lots of work with the cinematographer prior to *Storm Boy*. ***"Both of them did great work; lots of coverage is hand-held and we never put marks down which makes it challenging for them."***

"Andrew 'AJ' Johnson operated the second camera and Steadicam," says Young. ***"He is a remarkable Steadicam operator. His rhythm and timing are highly intuitive."***

A scene from the film 'Storm Boy' - DOP Bruce Young ACS

"My key crew members were supported by an outstanding camera team that did an excellent job at keeping the equipment in good order in difficult conditions," explains Young. ***"I believe that a crew need to be responsive to what the director is trying to do, even when it challenges."***

Young's favourite scene in the film is when Storm Boy arrives with the baby pelicans. He races in and out of the shack as he organises food and a nest for them. ***"It is a great example of when the director wants to cover a scene and as a cinematographer I have to fill the shack with ambient light,"*** explains Young. ***"The boy runs outside in the same shot so I had to change the stop while I operated and be able to have the lights outside so the camera doesn't see them when he runs out. It's a great scene dramatically, and a perfect example of the conceptual approach to the cinematography."***

Marty Pepper was the colourist on *Storm Boy*. ***"He did a great job,"*** says Young. ***"We had a grading suite setup in the theatre in Adelaide. An incredible luxury for me."***

The changing environmental elements meant that on a number of scenes the lighting conditions were different between some shots. No more than the storm sequence that was shot over a number of days and in different locations. ***"We had a good amount of time in the grade which is so important because it gives you the time to review and really get the consistency of the look spot on,"*** Young explains.

The film had its challenges, but something very special was created by a connected team, from South Australia and interstate, who shared a passion for and connection to the story. Producer Michael Boughen, South Australian by birth, lived his first 23 years in the state, but hadn't been to the Coorong until securing the adaptation rights to *Storm Boy.*

"I was stunned by the beauty of the place."

"I was stunned by the beauty of the place, the grandeur and the majesty of it," producer Michael Boughen says. ***"I'm very proud of the performances, I'm very proud of the film. We had a wonderful crew who were very engaged with it from day one. There wasn't a single person that didn't believe in what we were doing."***

"There's an underlying fiction which is a good fiction. There are certain rules that you have to go with in the Coorong, but also a freedom. You go along with what nature throws at you, don't go against it. It's some beautiful country. There's something about South Australia, every time we visit, we have a feeling of being looked after."

The producers were proud of the way the film was developed, produced, and the messages it will convey to Australian and international audiences, which remain true to the spirit of Thiele's story. ***"If Colin Thiele was alive today,"*** says Matthew Street, ***"I hope he would give the film his blessing."***

Bruce Young ACS is a Gold Tripod-winning cinematographer, known for his work on quality Australian dramas and films.

VICE

Greig Fraser ACS ASC brings his eye to the darkly satirical, political biopic ***Vice***, the story of the remarkably powerful and uncharismatic former Vice President of the United States, Dick Cheney.

- interview by Darcy Yuille

Christian Bale plays Dick Cheney in 'Vice' - DOP Greig Fraser ACS ASC, PHOTO Matt Kennedy

Sam Rockwell plays George W. Bush in 'Vice' - DOP Greig Fraser ACS ASC, PHOTO Matt Kennedy

AC **Tell us how this project came about. Was there a particular element that hooked you?**

GF The subject really fascinates me. I love politics. I love sort of dry, theoretical subjects, and this is funny because of its subject Dick Cheney, as a character, is interesting and complex because history has constantly reviled this guy.

I don't know if you remember being in Australia when we went to war in Iraq, but the media was crying, *"it's because of the oil!"* All the information pointed to weapons of mass destruction and nuclear yellowcake coming from Africa. There were all these bits of information that we, as Australians, were being sold. We were included in that whole process of going to war in Iraq, which turned out to be totally false.

When I read the script it was great to be able to see where that false information was coming from, and to be able to disseminate how it happened. What we're learning now, and what I learned from reading the script, it was like watching a fantastic little documentary, you go "oh yeah, connect the dots" this happened, then that happened. I loved it.

AC **Did you have a handle on the character of Dick Cheney before reading the script?**

GF We, Australians, knew nothing about Dick Cheney before 11 September 2001, or important topics of discussion like the Patriot Act. The guy didn't turn up from nowhere, he was already a seasoned politician that had his finger firmly on the pulse of how to get things done in Washington.

Cheney made some serious changes to the constitution of the United States, and ultimately sent the world into war. He was able to achieve that because of his skills as a politician. He's incredibly talented in that respect. Whether or not those things were good or evil is a matter of opinion, but regardless you cannot discount the talent this man has as a politician.

AC **Had you worked previously with the film's writer/director, Adam McKay?**

GF I hadn't met McKay before. I love a good comedy and *Anchorman* (2004) is one of the greatest, silliest comedies. I was a massive fan of *The Big Short* (2015) given that I loved the book. So I was a big fan of McKay. We had a great initial conversation. I gave him my thoughts about how the film should look and feel. We agreed on many things and started a very lovely relationship as a director and cinematographer.

AC ***Vice* was shot on a mixture of Super 8, 16mm and 35mm film. Was this part of the initial vision?**

GF I generally don't think about the format until well down the path of discussion, because to me the format is a sideline conversation; like the ratio or is it blue or is it green, or is it slightly warmer. It's a discussion to be held later.

One of the things about *Vice* is it spans a lot of time, it covers about forty or fifty years. The good thing about film is it instantly registers with a viewer and can take you to a certain time, visually. I wouldn't say it's nostalgia because it's not the right word, but it takes you to a place of memory.

I had strong thoughts about it, and McKay is a huge film lover. He pushed me towards film and I pushed him towards film. We were each other's partners in crime for that whole idea. The 35mm was the mainstay for the through line of the story, but the other stocks allowed us to jump around into different timelines and textures.

AC **Have film stocks improved or changed?**

GF Stocks are still the same, but what has changed since I last shot with film on *Foxcatcher* (2014) is they have reduced the range. My favourite stock was the 5230 and they've killed it, so there's only 5219. The 5230

Director Adam McKay, Christian Bale and cinematographer Greig Fraser ACS ASC (elbows on desk) on the set of 'Vice' - PHOTO Matt Kennedy

was a low-contrast, desaturated stock. It was fantastic and I remember I was one of the first ones to use it on *Killing Them Softly* (2012). I think we were one of the last ones to use it on *Foxcatcher* too. Just beautiful and creamy. We shot with 5219 for Vice, which I rated around 320-350.

AC **Did shooting on film have an effect on the production design?**

GF I do recall the days of *"What's this colour going to look like on film?"* There were a couple of colours that we tested. Some whites of the walls at the White House because we wanted white walls; but did we want them to be bright white or off white? We discussed the range and then did a test and looked at it together. The same thing happens on digital but it's more immediate.

AC **There's a lot of prosthetics in the film, was this a similar concern?**

GF The film is a double-edged sword with the prosthetics. With *Vice*, we got really close. We did some full face close-ups where Christian Bale's face is forty-feet high on the screen. We found that the prosthetics reacted to light on film in a different way to how it looked to the eye, so there were times when the prosthetic pieces were visible, even though they weren't visible to the eye. With digital, you'd be alert to it the second that you shoot. So the double-edged sword is that film has a granularity and a lack of inherent sharpness which helps prosthetics. The other side is you don't know the true result to the next day.

On set I would shoot a digital photograph on my Canon 5D and zoom right into the pixels. With the makeup, we would pick the hell out of any seams or nets or appliances, anything we saw as being a problem. We'd deal with it on the day. When we got to post-production there were very few things we needed to fix.

AC **This was a first time collaboration with production designer Patrice Vermette. How did you develop that relationship?**

GF Vermette is French Canadian, and what I discovered is that the French Canadians are actually very much like Australians. There's a very big similarity there; a certain brutal doggedness. Australians can sometimes be not the most tactful bunch of people in the world, and I say that in a very positive way. In this case, there was a true meeting of the minds and a meeting of the spirit as well. As an Australian I'm very dogged in protecting what it is I need to protect on a movie and Vermette was the same.

This was a film that isn't fantastical, it isn't extreme. It is very much based on reality. The White House is the White House and the West Wing is the West Wing, so the discussion with the production designer mainly comes down to a lot of technical refinements. Do we need ceiling pieces, or what ceiling pieces need to float, or what wall pieces need to float. There's a huge technical element that needs to be discussed. They need to know what your shot plans and storyboard ideas are so they can build accordingly.

Vermette's attention to detail is incredible. The White House, for example, is a fairly well-shot location, so rather than build it from scratch we got one from another show. Vermette put it up, and he wasn't really happy with the quality that it was going to give us. I remember they stripped it back and did a lot of work on getting it to the level of quality where it should be. That was a struggle, because everything costs money, and money that probably hadn't been budgeted, he probably had to pull from other areas, so it was a bit of a coup that he was able to do that. Having a production designer that is as dogged, and as passionate and as dedicated as you is a real bonus, because you serve that story of the director a lot better.

Director Adam McKay between takes on 'Vice' - PHOTO Matt Kennedy

AC **It's been a few years since digital has become the norm. Were there any adjustments from the cast or crew side to working in analogue?**

GF The actors had to understand when we ran out of film. But none of the actors stood there and said *"Damn you, how come you missed my best take!"* because you ran out of film. Actors are actors, they know what their getting into and ten years ago there was no debate. If you have a long scene you put the longest piece of film on the camera and you do your best to give them the longest run possible.

It definitely means there are less options in the edit, but the hardest thing is there are less qualified people who know how to load now, and we were shooting in Los Angeles! That's the reality now. I wouldn't say we had a hard time finding people to load, but… we had a hard time finding people to load. If you're in some kind of provincial centre, like a state of the US or in Australia where there is no professional lab, there just aren't the qualified crew because no one shoots film anymore.

The film gear itself hasn't really improved, and the grips and gaffers had all been through the transition from film to digital, so it was relatively easy from their side. Although we did use an Oculus head, a brand new head at the time so we had to look at our configuration for that.

AC **You are known for your embrace of LED lighting, both for environmental and practical reasons. How did this translate to the shoot for *Vice*?**

GF I would never want to be the holier-than-thou dude that says to all cinematographers *"You must save energy,"* however I personally do feel quite responsible for wasting energy.

The thing is, LEDs, up to a couple of years ago, were okay. They were just okay. I remember I used them for the first time on *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), they were from Creamsource and they were great. But they weren't bi-colour, they were just one colour. Then, the bi-colours came out and they were punchy and so good. Then the colour ones came out. Unfortunately, through every step, there are times when the quality is not good. I know cinematographers that don't love LEDs. I go *"oh, you should try these LEDs"* and they say *"Nah, I got burnt a few years ago"* because LEDs have a weird spectral range. They are tricky, they are an unusual spectrum.

AC **Did you have a colour meter on set?**

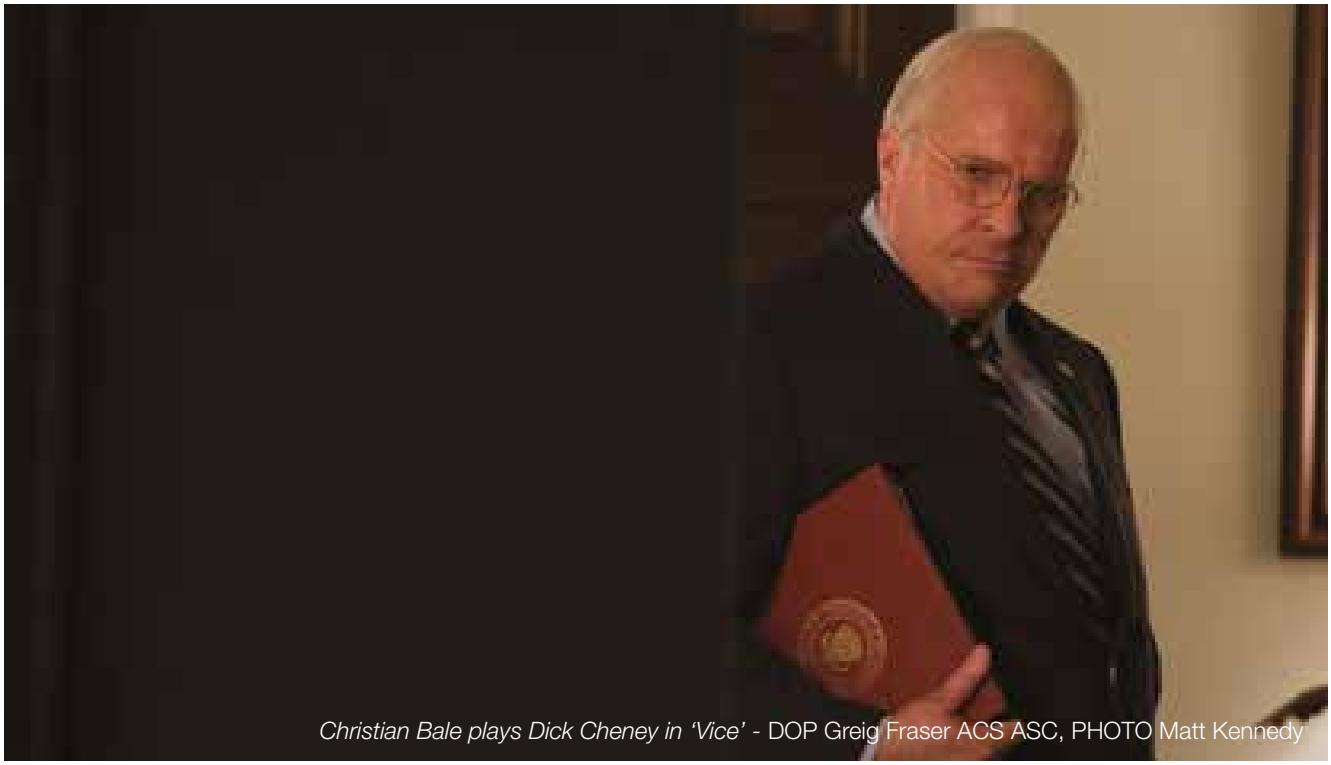
GF With digital, a calibrated monitor is often the best medium to see colour. LED and colour is not fool-proof. With film you rely a little more on testing, and the eye. Flexibility is the thing. We did a lot of the lighting on *Vice* with Digital Sputniks and with Light Gear. They were a great combination. We did some stock and lighting tests before we committed to those, and they were great, they were so natural. We'd put lights out during the day, and ordinarily you go *"the lights wrong, the colour's wrong"*. If you put an HMI out, automatically the intensity is wrong or the colour is wrong. With the LEDs you just tweak the colour and change the intensity with the flick of a switch so they become a very useful tool to create good quality light.

AC **So no gels?**

GF The last time I saw a roll of gel was the last time I pulled out an HMI. Diffusion, sure, but no gels.

AC **The behind-the-scenes footage and promotional stills are surprisingly devoid of large lighting fixtures but a lot of negative fill. Was this a conscious choice?**

GF There were about eighty to ninety sets over a period of fifty days. We were often moving fast between sets



Christian Bale plays Dick Cheney in 'Vice' - DOP Greig Fraser ACS ASC, PHOTO Matt Kennedy

and locations. It's also how I learned to shoot in Australia as a young cinematographer.

When you are a young filmmaker in Australia, you get the tiniest amount of lighting equipment, but you get lots of solids so you can often shape the light through negative fill. I watched a lot of cinematographers in Australia, particularly people like Graeme Wood (*The Dish*), who is a fantastic Melbourne-based cinematographer. I watched him work a lot; he would use a lot of negative fill. It's a very efficient way to create shape but still use the integrity of the natural light. The second you put up an electronic light, you're fighting it. You're already fighting something that's there, it looks wrong. The colour is wrong, the intensity is wrong, the softness is wrong. It takes more effort to make light look natural than it does to make natural light look shaped. To me that's the preferred methodology of lighting.

You can see in the scene where George W. Bush (Sam Rockwell) asks Dick Cheney (Christian Bale) to be his Vice President. The lighting is very minimal, a large black negative fill wrapped around the side of the scene, and no lights at all.

AC **Was there an ethos in the progression of the film? With the lighting or the operating?**

GF The film has an underlying thread, which is the story between Dick Cheney and his wife Lynne (Amy Adams). I wanted to be a little bit more conservative in the way we shot their story because next to their story at every point along the way there were flash-backs and flash-forwards. There were little musical numbers, a little this or that, so I wanted to make sure there was an underlying solidity to the cinematography. Then when we did cut to a dance number, or a Bolex camera shot in Vietnam, that the audience felt that they were going to come back into a warm house. The idea was it's quite nice being outside and different, but if you know you have somewhere safe to come back to, it makes it good to be out there in the rain or snow.

I wanted to make sure the audience weren't left wondering where they were emotionally or narratively and I wanted them to know they had a soft warm place to come back to.

AC **How did your appreciation for the film change as it went through the edit?**

GF After you finish shooting a film, you lose control. In the sense that it becomes the editor's film. Our fantastic editor Hank Corwin ACE (*Moneyball, The Big Short*) loved to take little offcuts; times where the camera is floating and shouldn't have been, or when the camera is sitting on a grip's knee and they're rolling. He loves to use those things and I love it as well. I definitely did see some shots in the film where I went *"Whoa, not sure I would have put that in there,"* but the thing is, this is where you have to trust the skill of an editor like Corwin and the taste of a director like McKay. Together they use the best of the material in the best way they can and I think they've cut a great film out of a very complex story.

AC **The thing that occurs to me though our conversation is you have a great understanding of story. Sometimes cinematographers can get caught up in getting through the day or achieving a look. How do you stay focussed on a story?**

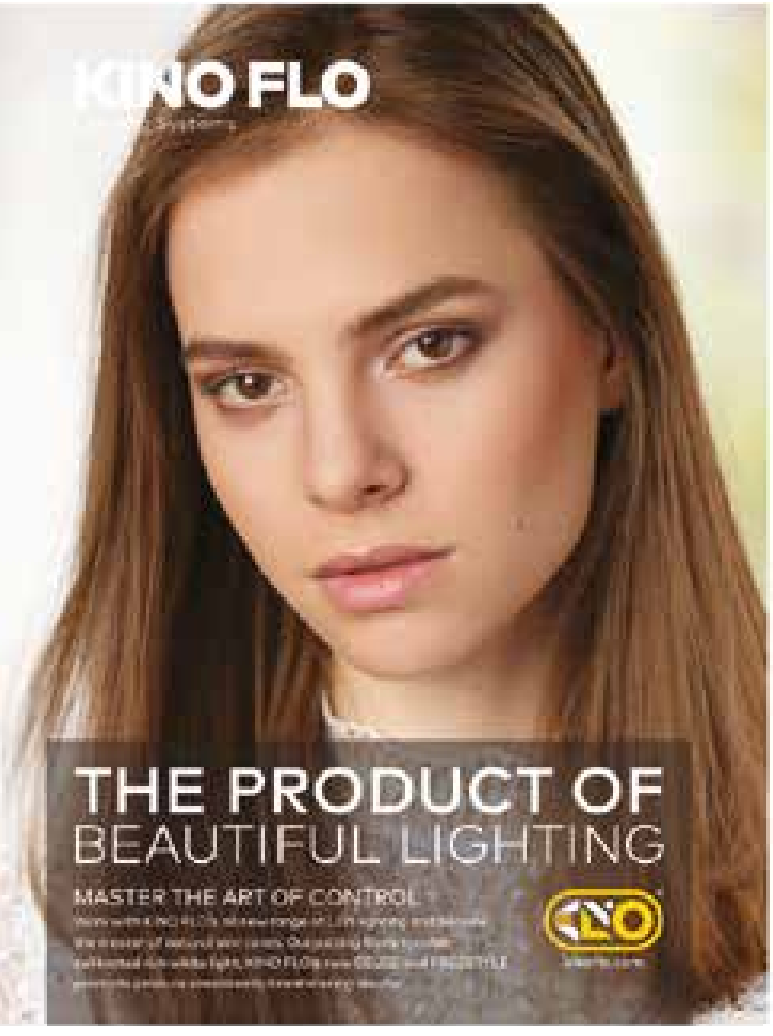
GF I've had the chance to work with amazing people like Glendyn Ivin (*Last Ride*), Jane Campion (*Bright Star*) and Scott Hicks (*The Boys are Back*). Every day on set with a director like that is a learning experience that I don't think you could ever get from film school or watching movies. I just try and stay open to that idea, knowing I have a natural tendency towards story over visuals. A picture paints a thousand words, so rather than an actor saying a thousand words, if I can tell it in an image, I'll offer that up. If you have an amazing script, director and actor and amazing things to shoot, sometimes the best shot is the least fancy. It's about coming up with

Dick Cheney (Christian Bale) and George W. Bush (Sam Rockwell) in 'Vice' - DOP Greig Fraser ACS ASC, PHOTO Matt Keenedy

ideas with the director to create that. I like to pride myself on the fact I'm story first.

AC **What surprised you about shooting *Vice*?**

GF For the first time ever, because of the way we were able to light the Oval Office with all the light panels and the Occulus heads, to me it was the most like being outside I've ever experienced. In the studio we were able to get entire ceiling panels of Light Gear's LEDs and when you stand inside those offices, Rumsfeld's and the Oval, just walking through there, it's like you're in a real office. When you're shooting until midnight on a stage it's a bit of a strange feeling to walk outside and see it's really dark. It's the most realistic studio lighting I've ever done. The greatest compliment I can get from any non-film person, is *"I didn't notice the cinematography in that film"* I would kiss the ground they walk on. Because the ultimate goal is, if my work is not seen but felt, then I have succeeded.



AC **Can we expect you back anytime to shoot in Australia.**

GF *Lion* (2016) was the last Australian film I did. I love doing work there.

AC **So what's next?**

GF I'm in Los Angeles for a few weeks, currently prepping a film with Denis Villeneuve (*Arrival, Bladerunner 2049*) and shooting in Budapest. He's in LA, I'm in LA, and we're just kind of doing a bit of prep here. I travel to Budapest in a couple of weeks. It's *Dune*, the Frank Herbert sci-fi remake. It's really cool and I've got a great Aussie connection; I rang my friend Kent Sang in Budapest, and he's like, *"Hey man, I've got this Aussie assistant who was working at ARRI in Budapest, and now he's working with me."* He was this young guy from Melbourne who used to work at Lemac and he went travelling, and now he's my assistant on *Dune* in Budapest.

Darcy Yuille is experienced in all facets of film production, from loading to directing and everything in between. He runs a production company, Rooftop Film Co. in Melbourne

***Vice* was released in cinemas last year.**

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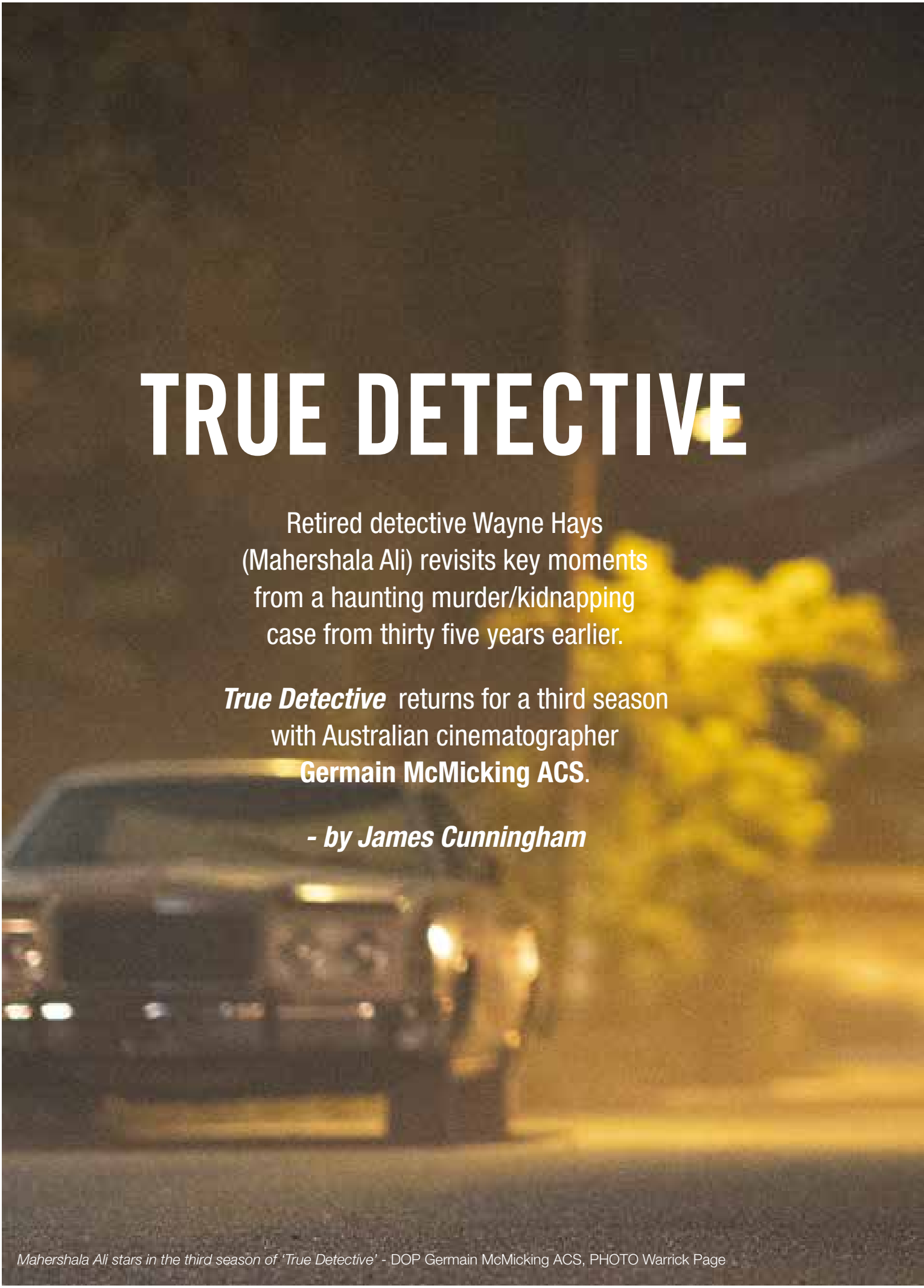


TRUE DETECTIVE

Retired detective Wayne Hays (Mahershala Ali) revisits key moments from a haunting murder/kidnapping case from thirty five years earlier.

True Detective returns for a third season with Australian cinematographer **Germain McMicking ACS**.

- by James Cunningham

Mahershala Ali stars in the third season of 'True Detective' - DOP Germain McMicking ACS, PHOTO Warrick Page

A scene from 'True Detective' - DOP Germain McMicking ACS

The third season of anthology crime drama *True Detective,* created by Nic Pizzolatto, was confirmed by HBO on August 31, 2017, and premiered on January 13, this year.

Season three plays out in three separate time periods, telling the story of the 1980 disappearance of a young Arkansas boy and his sister, and a mystery that deepens over decades. Academy Award-winner Mahershala Ali (*Moonlight*) stars as state police detective Wayne Hays, who recalls the days and weeks immediately following the crime, as well as developments in 1990, when he and his former partner, Roland West (Stephen Dorff), were subpoenaed after a major break in the case. What starts as a routine investigation becomes a long journey to dissect and make sense of the crime.

Australian cinematographer Germain McMicking ACS first had some inkling about shooting the series back in October of 2017. His agent at WME, Grant Illes, had it on his radar for some time and had begun a campaign actively pursuing producer Scott Stephens on Germain's behalf.

"I was a massive fan of the first season," says McMicking. ***"Although season two didn't really resonate with me, I expected that writer and creator Nic Pizzolatto would surely have written something great. I was happy to take a look."***

The scripts landed shortly afterward and McMicking wasn't disappointed. ***"I loved the world Pizzolatto had created,"*** he explains. ***"This beautiful and deeply layered story of a man desperately trying to find context and truth, in a life challenged by early onset dementia."***

"Sure the show was a kind of classic pursuit for answers to an unsolved crime, but there was so much more to it being a richly woven family drama, and a deeply philosophical rumination on the abstract nature of time and memory."

McMicking's interest also piqued learning about the season's incredible cast. ***"The opportunity to work with someone of the calibre of Mahersala Ali doesn't come around every day,"*** says McMicking. ***"Working with our other stunning cast members Carmen Ejogo, Stephen Dorff, and Scoot McNairy was also highly appealing."***

Director Jeremy Saulnier (*Blue Ruin, The Green Room, Hold the Dark*) was attached to the project, who McMicking admired as an incredible talent. He knew the show was out to a number of people at the time, and so the cinematographer didn't hold out a huge amount of hope initially.

McMicking expressed a passionate enthusiasm for the job. He was asked to participate in a number of Skype meetings with Stephens and one with Pizzolatto. ***"We all seemed to communicate well, and discussed the themes and hopes for the season,"*** he remembers.

Both Stephens and Pizzolatto really admired McMicking's work on Ariel Kleiman's *Partisan* (2015) and, the cinematographer believes, his work on *Top of The Lake: China Girl* (2017) gained the approval of HBO.

"Also," McMicking adds, ***"my geographical origin may have helped. Stephens acknowledged that they'd had great success working with 'southerners' before, in Adam Arkapaw ACS ASC*** (on season one of *True Detective*) ***and Nigel Bluck*** (on season two). ***He saw a common 'can do' attitude and subsequently… I was offered the job."***

"I loved the cinematography of both seasons one and two and so there was definitely some personal pressure to

Mahershala Ali stars in the third season of 'True Detective' - DOP Germain McMicking ACS, PHOTO Warrick Page

'keep the bar high'," he says. For the producers, HBO and audiences alike, there were also some huge expectations for this season to right the ship after season two's widely perceived failings.

"I guess there was a lot to live up to, and we held a definite respect for what was done before," McMicking says. ***"For us, this was an entirely new show and we took it on as our own."***

Of course there are similarities on a script level which informed McMicking's work. Two detectives investigating a crime, invariably leads to similarities in terms of choices on cinematic design. Repetitive aerial shots of the police vehicle traversing the landscape, and long dialogue scenes within moving vehicles, are all familiar territory.

"I think we intended to do something different, and we weren't bound by any bible or set of rules," McMicking says. ***"Our job was to respond to the material, the performances, and this environment of north-west Arkansas."***

"I think there was a great new story telling opportunity offered on season three," McMicking says. ***"The entire season is essentially told through the point of view of a seventy-year-old former detective. He essentially shuttles us through time. It gave us some nice story telling opportunities to transition from one time to the other, and do it in quite a conscious way, driven by character."***

McMicking knew early on that the show was to be shot digitally, and his preference with shooting digital super 35mm is the ARRI Alexa. ***"Obviously the Alexa is an industry workhorse,"*** he says. ***"Its reliability is proven and I love the aesthetics of its sensor."***

HBO and production were happy with the Alexa, shooting ProRes 3.2K, and they also had a preference to shoot this series spherically. ***"I was in agreement here as I knew I wanted the ability to be quite subjective with our lensing of the Hayes character (Ali), and get physically closer to him on slightly wider lenses at times. So spherical it was."***

"Whenever possible I try to work with Panavision on my shows," McMicking says. ***"I love their service and their inventory of glass."*** Given McMicking and his team were shooting entirely in north-west Arkansas, where there isn't any local support or film industry, it was especially comforting knowing they had back up. ***"Bob Feortsch and lens guru Dan Sasaki helped Donnie Steinberg and myself carefully put together a select package of lenses and Alexa SXTs and Minis."***

"With set up director Jeremy Saulnier, I went through a lengthy process of discussion and testing in pre-production to determine the right look for the show," the cinematographer explains. ***"I knew one significant place to start is with the glass."***

Initially, they had a mind to mark each time period with different sets and eras of lenses. However the more they tested, the more they kept coming back to an opinion that the added texture and feel of vintage glass would work across all the show's time periods.

"Because of the cross-boarded approach," explains McMicking, ***"I realised on a practical level that running different sets of lenses for different time periods would have been an expensive and logistical headache. We were constantly moving back and forth from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s."*** Saulnier and McMicking felt there were also

Carmen Ejogo and Mahershala Ali star in 'True Detective' - DOP Germain McMicking ACS, PHOTO Warrick Page

many other signifiers, in front of the camera, to mark jumps in time; production design, wardrobe and makeup, all make these times so distinct.

Ultimately, McMicking settled with multiple sets of Panavision Ultra Speed. ***"We had a mix of both 1970s 'yellow' speeds along with 1980s 'green' speeds,"*** he says. ***"They're very textural, filmic lenses, versatile and fast, have beautiful round bokeh, and some interesting edge fall off especially when shooting OpenGate or 3.2K."***

"I also felt that qualities of the Ultra Speeds worked harmoniously with the ageing makeup applied by Mike Marino and his team, which I thought was truly amazing," McMicking says. ***"That make up was so damn good you could hit if with hard light if you wanted to, it was flawless."***

Other lenses employed were a number of 'portrait' anamorphic and spherical lenses for flash backs in episode eight, Panavision Primo 11:1 and 3:1 zooms, Super Baltars, and PV/Century shift and tilts. ***"We did alter the colour palette for the different time periods in terms of lighting design, and with our lensing there were some conscious shifts."***

"The 1980s colour palette was somewhat an Ektachrome look playing off the desaturated tones of an Arkansas winter," says McMicking. ***"We wanted a slight yellow tone to our mids with cooler highlights. I remember a go to lens for that period was the 40mm Ultra speed, which is comprised of warmer Baltar glass, as opposed to the rest of the Ultra speed Zeiss based lenses, which are much cooler. I loved this lens for the period as it had a natural yellow cast due to it's distinctive coatings. When shooting wide open it would fall apart in the most beautiful way."***

McMicking describes how he pushed his lenses to their limits for the show's 1980s scenes. ***"As we progressed through time we gave them a little more stop to increase contrast and feeling of resolution,"*** he says.

"We tried to steer toward wider lenses in this period, or sit back from our heroes and have them feel a little more observed." McMicking was conscious that in many ways everything was a memory of Hays' from the present; as time progressed McMicking tried to be become more subjective with point-of-view, and for his camera to subtly close in on Hays as the story progressed. Ever so slowly hinting on getting deeper inside his mind, and communicating a world where the truth is closing in on him.

"Ryan Smith was the production designer on the show, and was a real talent, and a great human being," says McMicking. ***"He's young guy from Portland, who's been racking up some great credits over recent years."*** Smith came to *True Detective* through director Jeremy Saulnier, who had worked with him previously on *Green Room* and *Hold the Dark.*

"Smith was like the oracle on this show," says McMicking. ***"As directors changed he was a constant. He was definitely a significant voice in holding the whole thing together."***

The production designer had been on board for a couple of months before McMicking started pre-production, so was well advanced in terms of reference material and design. He had developed a book of photographic references; things specific to Arkansas and the 1980s, as well as ideas and feelings specific to the third season. ***"It was a great resource***

Detectives West (Stephen Dorff) and Hays (Mahershala Ali) talk to a suspect in 'True Detective' - DOP Germain McMicking ACS, photo wARRICK PAGE

especially for 1980s scenes, where I could get a real feeling for the colour and light of the time," says McMicking.

"I love this period of pre-production, where everything is possible," he says. ***"Through the process of sharing references and talking through the script you start to form a specific language and style for that particular show. That the references for me and for Smith were more of a discussion or step off point as to how to create the world, and not something that we specifically referred to once the bull was out of the gate."***

In terms of photographic references, they talked about the photography of Larry Clark, Nan Goldin, William Eggleston, Stephen Shore, Joel Sternfeld and the personal and open American landscapes they portrayed. ***"Mike Brodie's book 'A Period of Juvenile Prosperity' was also a great reference for its beautiful colour and tone,"*** says McMicking.

"Photographer Saul Leiter we referenced quite a bit for his abstract expressionism. We had hopes to play in this world. We both loved Leiter's use of reflections in his work, and felt that that was something we could utilise, as we felt that reflection could reveal something about the elliptical nature of time."

'*My America*', by political photographer Christopher Morris, became a personal inspiration to the cinematographer for scenes set in the 1990s and 2000s. "***I love the quality of his photographs,"*** says McMicking. ***"The cool austere feeling of them, and the way he could isolate characters within a landscape."***

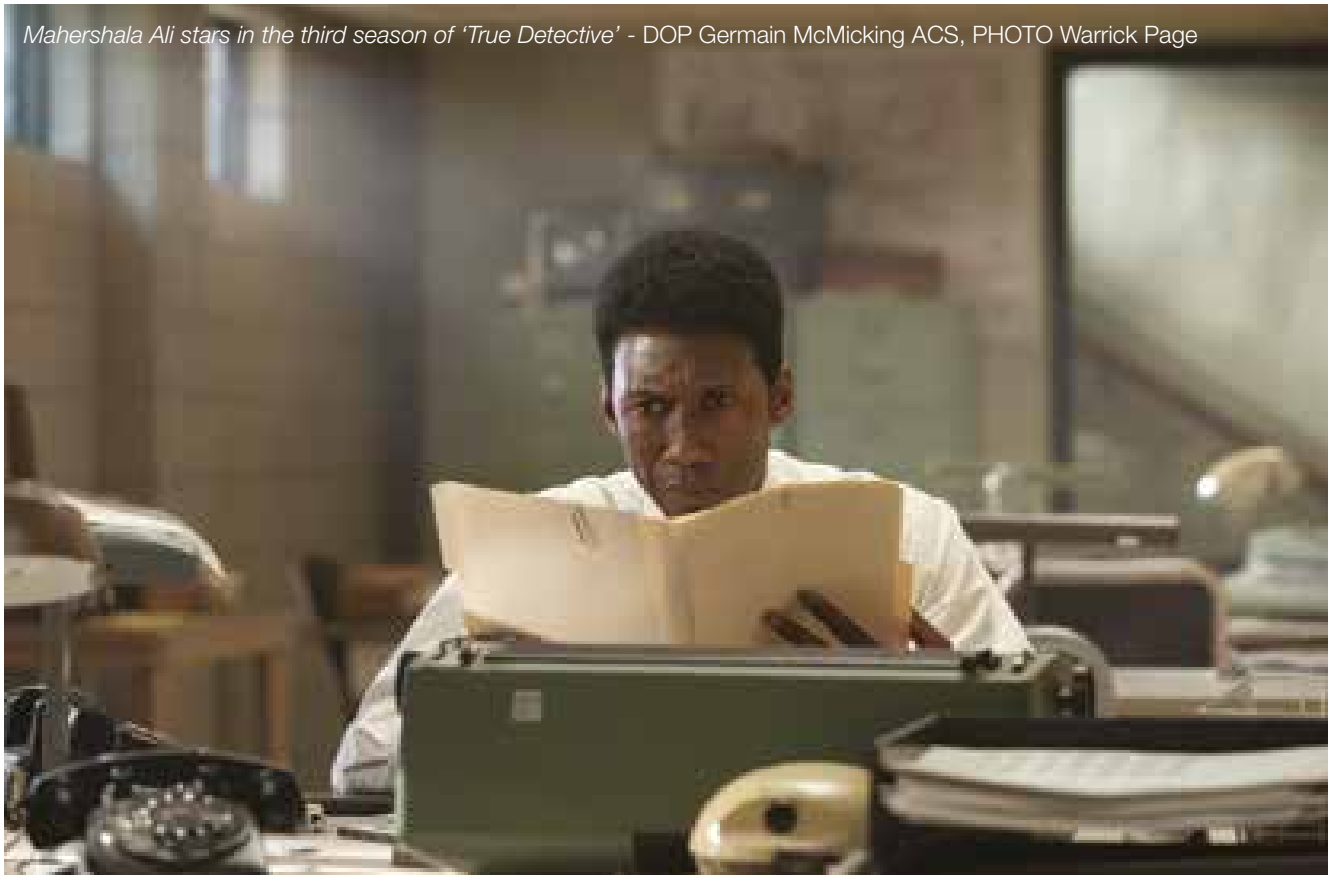
In terms of film references, the team looked at varied sources including *Rivers Edge* (1986, cinematography by Frederick Elmes ASC), *At Close Range* (1986, cinematography by Juan Ruiz Anchía ASC) and even Peter Weir's *Picnic At Hanging Rock* (1975, cinematography by Russell Boyd ACS ASC) for the metaphysical portrayal of landscape. ***"It's something we wanted to bring out of the Devil's Den location where Will Purcell's body is found,"*** says McMicking.

"Smith was also instrumental in finding so many of the period locations, along with the legendary Batou Chandler (Location Manager), ***in an around Fayetteville where the majority of production took place,"*** says McMicking. ***"Although it's quite a prosperous area these days, with the local Walton family's (founders of Walmart) influence everywhere there were was still a richness of period locations there. It was amazing what they found there, and in the satellite towns nearby."***

The majority of the 1980s footage was shot during the tail end of a very cold winter, and the 1990s scenes were mostly shot in spring. ***"When you watch the show the seasonal changes are pretty distinct,"*** says McMicking. ***"By the time we shot the 2000s time periods our leads were deepest into wearing their prosthetic, seventy-year-old makeup.***

"I really feel that these seasonal shifts were another character in the show, and really contributed to its look and feel. I think ultimately the look of the show came about pretty organically, and as always in response to the script and performance, locations and seasonal shifts."

McMicking's camera department was headed up by first assistant camera Donnie Steinberg, who was scheduled to leave half way through production to work on Jaume Collet-Serra's *Jungle Cruise*, starring Dwayne Johnson. Stevie Cueva seamlessly took over and kept things running for the



Mahershala Ali stars in the third season of 'True Detective' - DOP Germain McMicking ACS, PHOTO Warrick Page

cinematographer. ***"I have to credit all the other assistant cameras who killed it: Manny, JoeZo, LT, Jordan, Hadyn, Josh and a few others,"*** says McMicking.

Mandy Walker ACS ASC was very helpful on giving McMicking advice on crew. ***"She suggested I speak with her usual camera operator, the fabulous Australian camera/steadicam operator Jason Ellson,"*** says McMicking. ***"He was available to come on board for most of the season, and made an invaluable contribution. Once Ellson left, Mark Meyers came on board to complete."***

C-Camera was also a revolving door, with McMicking working with Mike Burgess, Jac Fitzgerald, Chloe Weaver and Ellie Ann Fenton filling that role. ***"It was so busy out there in the US that it was hard finding crew for the entire period,"*** he explains. ***"But I really can't praise the entire camera team more. They were incredibly professional, and worked quietly and tirelessly to see the season through."***

Depending on the episode's director and the scenario, McMicking generally used two or three cameras on most scenes. ***"Occasionally we'd end up with four,"*** he says. ***"But I tend to prefer a more limited number of perspectives, so I can light the scene properly."***

"I've shot a few commercials out that way over the years, but really this was my first time working there with a large union crew and on something of such scale," says McMicking. ***"It was a little daunting at first, with the sheer size of the circus each day. But it didn't take long to fall in love with some of the advantages it offered."***

McMicking explains that the skill set was comparable with the fantastic crews we have in Australia, but that the sheer numbers were significantly higher than what he's experienced back home. ***"I don't think this really changed how I approached things,"*** he says. ***"I felt that where it helped was that if offered greater flexibility in so many ways."***

"With a show of this size, invariably much of the pre-production becomes pretty abstract by the time you're deep in it," says McMicking. ***"Script and schedules change, locations fall away, directors and first assistant directors get replaced, so sometimes unfortunately you're turning up on set a little blind. Flexibility is key, and you can be less apologetic for some of the unplanned or last minute decisions that come up."***

One thing that took McMicking a while to get used to was the different delineation of work between grip and electrics. ***"In the United States, the gripping department are in control of all the materials to soften, bounce, cut and colour light,"*** he says. ***"I don't think I ever stopped asking for things from the wrong team. They were all very kind about it, and I think in the end we ended up with some hybrid of their usual practice."***

The gripping team was headed up by Jimmy Shelton, and electrics by gaffer Joshua Davis. ***"Those guys and their teams were simply amazing. They did an incredible job of keeping a consistent look across all the episodes with skill, humour and charm,"*** McMicking says.

McMicking worked with two of season three's directors, Saulnier and Dan Sackheim. ***"I set up the series as cinematographer, shooting episodes one and two with Saulnier, episode three with Sackheim and the final three episodes again with Sackheim,"*** he explains.

Initially McMicking's hope was that he would shoot the entire season, but he knew show creator Nic Pizzolatto was getting his first opportunity to direct with episodes four and five. There was always a question surrounding these episodes. ***"What came to pass was that Pizzolatto, being a first time director, understandably wanted someone he was familiar with to help him through this experience,"*** McMicking says.

"He asked New Zealand cinematographer Nigel Bluck, who shot season two of the show, to come on board for his episodes. Bluck is a great cinematographer, meaning I was comfortable in the knowledge that he'd maintain the look and feel we'd established in the earlier episodes. I felt they both did a great job together."

Saulnier was initially set to direct the majority of the season's episodes, but unfortunately - due to some scheduling conflicts with HBO - Saulnier exited after finishing up episode two and was subsequently replaced by Sackheim. ***"In many ways, only taking on six of the episodes ended up being a blessing, as with the instability caused by Jeremy's departure early on, I had to do a fair bit of doubling in pre production to do what I could to help Sackheim get up to speed,"*** McMicking says.

"I dearly loved working with Saulnier. He's one of the nicest people you'll meet with an amazing energy and he's so very talented," McMicking says. ***"I feel like he brought a very measured and a classic cinematic sensibility to the work, and will no doubt continue to go far. It was a real shame he had to leave when he did, but that's show business I guess."***

"And then there was Sackheim," McMicking continues. ***"He had a completely different energy in so many ways. I also adored working with him. He is an immensely experienced television director and creator who I learnt so much from. He tended to come at a scene with a very economical, initial framework. He'd know what bare essentials he'd need to make a scene work, and then this would allow him time to explore performances and devise some really interesting story telling techniques. I personally think his work in episode seven is a stand out of the series."***

Season three of *True Detective* was shot over about one hundred days, and was cross-boarded to account for the seasonal shifts, the multi layered time lines, and the detailed and time consuming makeup requirements for the last period of the story.

"It was a very complicated shoot on so many levels," McMicking says. ***"Keeping track of where you were emotionally within the story at any given time was a real feat. I think the cast would have had the most difficult time with this, needing to delve back and forth into a different head space and emotional state. Also, what was a real killer was that Pizzolatto held onto episode eight for the longest time… it was hard to anticipate where we were ultimately headed."***

As the show moved into post-production, the tyranny of distance and life prevented McMicking from being involved. At the time, the cinematographer's best friend passed away and colour-grading wasn't high on his priority list.

Although McMicking was disappointed he couldn't help craft the final frames, he wasn't overly worried for a couple of reasons. ***"Firstly, I felt like the majority of the work was done on set,"*** he explains.

"We developed a particular look-up table for the show and steadily tweaked it throughout filming. I was blessed to work with a couple of amazing digital intermediate technicians, Jason Bauer and Mike DeGrazzio. I felt like we were already in a pretty good place with our rushes."

"Secondly, I knew that Deluxe had Pankaj Bajpai on board to grade and he's one of the best television colourists out there," McMicking says. ***"I thought he did a great job shaping in subtly delineating the different times, and helping to shape the drama and emotion of the scenes."***

McMicking dearly loves the sequence that Saulnier designed for episode one, where Hays is following tracks and straw dolls through an eerie winter landscape of Devil's Den culminating with the discovery of Purcell's dead body. ***"I feel like the tension building in that sequence is pretty masterful, and the final shot of Wayne calling in for back up on the top of the mountain at dusk was really beautiful to me."***

"The first meeting of Hayes and his future Amelia (Carmen Ejogo) in a classroom in episode one was also a pretty great moment," says McMicking. ***"I think their performances here were wonderfully played and full of sexual tension."***

McMicking continues talking about his favourite scenes in the season. ***"A couple of scenes directed by Sackheim, set in the VWF bar that always stick with me,"*** he says. ***"One with Hays and West as West convinces Hays to come back to the force, and another with Hays and his wife as they reconcile their differences. Everything seemed to come together so well in these scenes; performance, lensing and lighting."***

At this time, McMicking has just watched episode seven again, directed by Sackheim. ***"It's really so good,"*** he says. ***"The entire episode is really great, it hums along, and the story telling is superb."***

"I'm honestly really proud of all our work on this show," says McMicking. ***"Having a little distance from it has been good, and I've been able to sit down and watch a new episode each week with the anticipation and excitement of a new viewer. When I can detach myself like that from something I've worked on, and become completely immersed in the characters and story, I know it can't be half bad."***

"I've got no idea what's next," says McMicking. Since *True Detective* the cinematographer has been back shooting commercials. ***"There have been some really wonderful offers out there since the release of the show and I'm reading a lot of scripts. But I guess I'm biding my time until I find the right one; just trying not to rush things."***

Germain McMicking ACS has been working extensively within the commercial industry for the past decade as well as shooting documentary, and narrative film and television works

HOTEL MUMBAI

Starring Dev Patel and Armie Hammer,
Hotel Mumbai is the true story of the
2008 Taj Hotel terrorist attack.

Shot by cinematographer **Nick Remy Matthews ACS,**
people make unthinkable sacrifices to
protect themselves and their families.

- by Vanessa Abbott

Armie Hammer plays David in 'Hotel Mumbai' - DOP Nick Remy Matthews ACS, PHOTO Kerry Monteen

Gaffer Ramesh Sandrani (India) on the set of 'Hotel Mumbai' - PHOTO Kerry Monteen

Cinematographer Nick Remy Matthews ACS (*2:37*) has been working with director Anthony Maras for more than fifteen years. ***"We've made many short films together,"*** explains the cinematographer. ***"His short films are always grand and ambitious."***

The pair's success helped them transition into feature films when two of Maras' films, *Spike Up* in 2007 and *The Palace* in 2011, picked up Best Short Film at the AFI and AACTA awards those years. Both of these award-winning short films were shot for Maras by Matthews.

The Palace was a war story shot in Cyprus. ***"That was the last short film we made together,"*** says Matthews. It was this film that not only 'set the tone' for *Hotel Mumbai* but, Matthews believes, gave the financiers faith to invest.

That short film was produced by Julie Ryan who also produced *Hotel Mumbai*. ***"Ryan has always been a huge supporter of me,"*** says Matthews. ***"Long ago I worked for her as a clapper loader on a Rolf de Heer film she produced*** (Alexandra's Project, 2003). ***It's pretty amazing to look back now and see how we've all stuck together for such a long time."***

Matthews was living on a French island off the Atlantic Coast when Ryan called him about shooting *Hotel Mumbai.* He'd been out of cinematography for five years and was now writing and directing. ***"I hadn't really imagined I'd ever be shooting again,"*** he says. ***"Having recently directed a film in Australia*** (*One Eyed Girl,* 2015), ***I was knee deep in the whole 'agent circus' in America and the United Kingdom and developing my next project."*** Matthews originally declined the offer to shoot the film, telling Maras that he didn't think he would remember how to be a cinematographer.

"At the time, the idea of shooting again seemed very foreign to me," he explains. ***"I was very worried I would let them***

Dev Patel plays Arjun in 'Hotel Mumbai' - DOP Nick Remy Matthews ACS, PHOTO Mark Rogers

Cinematographer Nick Remy Matthews ACS (navy shirt) discussing a shot with director Anthony Maras (script in hand) whilst Aust ralian gaffer Richard Rees Jones looks on - PHOTO Kerry Monteen

down if I took it on.*"** However the director and producer were both insistent. ***"They could see the value in keeping us together, as collaborators, even though some of the American producers were looking at my resume and asking if I was the best person for the job, given I had transitioned into directing.*"** Matthews is very glad they fought for him. ***"It showed real faith and loyalty from them," he says. ***"Qualities not always in abundance in the film industry; especially at this budget level where the stakes are fairly high."***

Matthews camera of choice is an Alexa. Mostly because, as he explains, it feels like a 'real camera'. The cinematographer conducted extensive testing of lenses before pre-production on *Hotel Mumbai*. ***"I was fixated on the idea that the film had to be shot anamorphic,"*** he says. ***"Even though I knew it was going to be principally a hand-held shoot on a crazy schedule."***

"No one else fancied anamorphic much because everyone has had that annoying experience when the lens changes are slow and when a few too many shots are soft or the edges of the image are all mushy."

To try to help his argument, Matthews produced a showreel consisting of camera assistants running around the Panavision offices in Sydney. ***"It was spherical versus anamorphic,"*** he says. For Matthews, there was no question that the action in *Hotel Mumbai,* much of which takes place in confined spaces, could feel more artful and claustrophobic on anamorphic. ***"It allowed the focus to be more selective, even on wider lenses. I really fancied that."*** Thankfully, Maras and Ryan agreed.

The film was shot with Panavision G-Series lenses. ***"Interestingly,"*** Matthews explains, ***"these lenses are not so popular with cinematographers because they're generally considered not quirky enough, perhaps not anamorphic enough. I actually found them to be the best of both worlds; anamorphic but also not too heavy and fairly clean at the edges which meant all the hand held work wouldn't give people seasickness, particularly in regards the action sequences."*** Now, following screenings of the film, Matthews sometimes turns to his director, smugly saying ***"Any regrets about anamorphic?"***

The cinematographer's collaboration with the production design team during pre-production wasn't always smooth. ***"The team fancied lots of white and cream in the design, and I didn't,"*** Matthews explains. ***"For cinematographers, you're more often than not trying to avoid white walls! Especially when you're trying to create a moody thriller look."***

In the end, Matthews thinks it all worked out beautifully. ***"We found common ground and looked after each other. The elegance of the environment works against the subject. In some ways it's probably scarier having that juxtaposition; all that carnage in paradise."***

What that meant for Matthews was that he had to work out how to light lots of Steadicam shots in a very brief amount of time, in some big creamy spaces. ***"It was challenging but with a fair amount of remote iris pulling, but I'd like to think I got there in the end,"*** says Matthews. ***"I have a lot of respect for Steven Jones-Evans*** (Production Designer) ***and his team and what they achieved. I think together we created a seamless blend between the sets in India and those in Australia."***

The design team shared their work with Matthews early on, and from this he was able to design and refine practical lighting systems. ***"The more Steadicam intensive work I do, the more I am becoming aware of the need for very close collaboration with the design team, particularly on practicals,"*** he says. ***"Sometimes they're all you have in a scene! I find myself increasingly telling line producers that I'll happily sacrifice some of my lighting budget to have another few days with the practical electrician early in pre-production, and to have more money to spend on the infrastructure to control the practicals on set. Needless to say I spend a lot of time scanning catalogues of lighting fixtures in pre-production."***

Hotel Mumbai was a tough, physical shoot for all cast and crew; lots of handheld and Steadicam as well as the challenges of shooting across India and Australia. Long term

Dev Patel in a scene from 'Hotel Mumbai' - DOP Nick Remy Matthews ACS, PHOTO Kerry Monteen

collaborator, focus puller Jules Worm worked with Matthews in both countries.

"Worm handled our B-Camera, which I predominantly operated hand-held," he explains. ***"Her presence is so calming to me and the set as a whole; not just because she's incredible at her job, but also because she always keeps a level head…'when everyone else is losing theirs' as Kipling put it".***

Matthews adds that it was a particularly tricky shoot for the focus pullers because it was anamorphic, mostly shot almost wide open, often in close focus situations and in close quarters. ***"Gavin Head, our A-Camera focus puller in Australia would sit cross-legged on the floor and go into a zen state with his remote and pull off the most remarkable work,"*** he says. ***"Similarly, our Indian focus puller 'Bobby'*** (S. Babu Rao) ***was somehow looking after me with very tricky anamorphic work. It's so important to find these collaborators in our game; those fearless people who go into battle with you and stay so focused throughout even when they're knee deep in sludge."***

"I was also very happy to be able to continue my very long relationship with chief lighting technician Richard Rees-Jones, who is such a talented and dedicated collaborator," adds Matthews. ***"He's always thinking about story and the big picture."***

Rees-Jones travelled to India with the crew even though he wasn't able to actually light the Indian leg of the film. He would liaise with the film's Indian gaffer, Ramesh Sadrani, about the specifics of how they lit interiors in Australia. That enabled Matthews to achieve a seamless transition between the two countries and, ***"thankfully in Sadrani, Rees-Jones and I found a kindred spirit in lighting who understood the feel we'd established in Australia."***

Jason Isaacs plays Vasili in 'Hotel Mumbai' - DOP Nick Remy Matthews ACS, PHOTO Mark Rogers

Cinematographer Nick Remy Matthews ACS films Armie Hammer for a scene in 'Hotel Mumbai' - PHOTO Kerry Monteen

"Finally," Matthews says talking about his crew, ***"I was very lucky to have fearless Steadicam/A-Camera operator Luke Nixon with me."*** Matthews hadn't worked with Nixon before. ***"Our line producer Barbara Gibbs demonstrated a knack for putting the right people together when she suggested Nixon."***

"I hope we can all do many more films together, and I can't wait for everyone to see the finished product. It's been quite a wait for everyone," says Matthews.

When questioned about the shooting schedule on *Hotel Mumbai,* ***"Madness!"*** proclaims the cinematographer. ***"But isn't it always?"*** The crew had around forty-five days to cover two countries. ***"That doesn't sound too bad under normal circumstances but this film has a massive cast, lots of stunts, relentless special effects, and quite a bit of visual effects. All elements that can sap time."***

The crew shot most of the interiors of the Indian hotel in South Australia; corridors and the opulent hotel suite that was being turned around to play as multiple rooms. ***"Interestingly we ended up shooting on the lot at the South Australian Film Corporation, but not using their new sound stages,"*** he explains. Designer Jones-Evans adapted the corridors of the administration building for hotel corridors rather than trying to build lengthy sets from scratch.

An abandoned mental health facility on the lot was also utilised. For economic reasons it was simply cheaper to in-build at the existing location rather than start things from scratch in the studio. ***"In the end it worked beautifully,"*** says Matthews.

"The fun really started when we moved to India, in the sense that much of it was location work," says Matthews. ***"Dharavi is one of the largest slums in the world. We had street scenes and an enormous, run-down, pre-existing four-***

Tilda Cobham-Hervey plays Sally in 'Hotel Mumbai' - DOP Nick Remy Matthews ACS, PHOTO Mark Rogers

story high set that was adapted by the design team into the hotel's glitzy lobby." These were all challenging environments for Matthews; as for him interiors were mostly about practical lighting design and for exteriors, trying to add light to the eclectic world and colour palette of India, without it looking lit.

"Needless to say RGB LED lights like Skypanels and Digital Sputniks were my friend," says Matthews. ***"Being able to dial in any colour temperature in these situations is priceless. Sadrani built a fabulous, huge hanging softbox in the lobby of the hotel; it was full of Skypanels so we were able to quickly adjust colour temperature and intensity for all the different states of play in the script."***

"During the shoot I had a running joke that I was always striving for what I called 'anti-cinematography'," says Matthews. ***"That is, whenever it looked too 'movie-ish' I'd change something; turn lights off, go hand-held or go to a longer lens - and sometimes do all three - until the shot felt more organic and less like a movie."***

Maras, as director, often had the same impulse. ***"We both hate images that are too glitzy or feel too neatly presented. We wanted the filmmaking to feel like it was just happening on the spot, in response to the action."*** It was this mentality that took them through to the grade as well.

As a cinematographer, Matthews always makes sure he has colour-timing in his contract. ***"It's important to me to be there when it all gets baked in,"*** he says. ***"Even though we all strive to get it right on the day, inevitably there are compromises that you have to make. Knowing you'll have the chance later to polish a little bit, is always a relief."*** Matthews worked with Marty Pepper from Kojo, another long-term collaborator, and the pair had a fabulous time working on Baselight in a suite Pepper had set up in a full-size theatre at the South Australian Film Corporation.

In the grade, they never went 'stylised'. They never wanted to evoke the feeling of an 'action movie'. It was more about being true to story and spaces; to the city of Mumbai, the opulence of the hotel, or the sombre feel of the staff areas in the basement. ***"Pepper really embraced this and delivered a truly beautiful organic end product,"*** says Matthews.

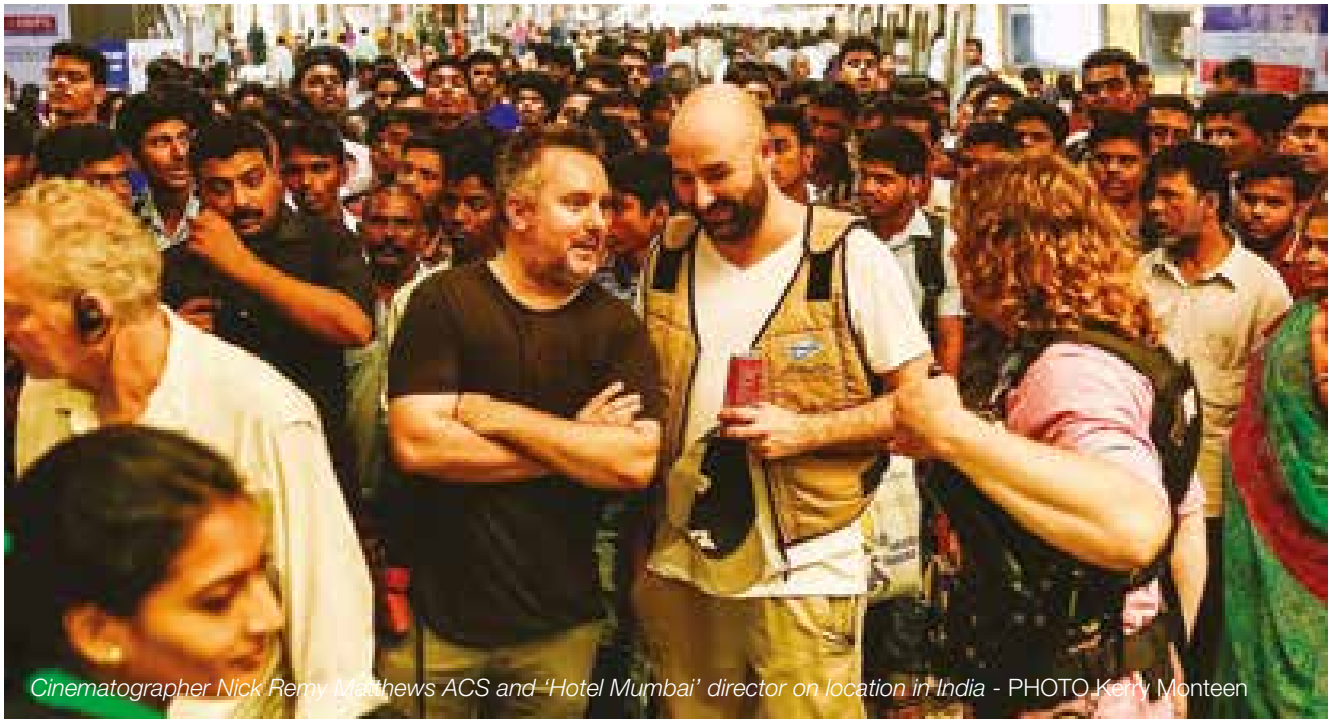
"I really enjoyed the night exteriors in India," says Matthews. ***"I went pretty bold and drenched the streets in heavy sodium vapour from cherry pickers. I watched a lot of news archive from the attack and that was the feel of the rough video news footage. I suppose I took the feel and really ran with it and turned it into a lighting style. It's a slightly expressionistic moment for me in a film that I otherwise was trying to keep pretty low key. I think it works. But I would say that wouldn't I?"***

"I see my role as a cinematographer as being a conduit for the story, as led by the director, then trying to keep a low profile with the camera. I don't ever set out with a particular concept of what I'm trying to achieve, personally. Saying that… I did just watch rushes from a film I just shot and I was reminded of some of our lighting from Hotel Mumbai! I kind of tsk-tsked myself, so perhaps we do have signatures."

"Personally," Matthews says, ***"I think the film is a powerful and complex experience that looks into the shadows of humanity. I'm really proud of what my director, our cast and the crew have achieved. But I will leave it to the critics or someone on IMDb to make their judgements."***

Since shooting *Hotel Mumbai*, Matthews has shot three very different features; a 1940s costume drama in New York City written by *Downton Abbey* creator Julian Fellowes, a thriller in upstate New York set in the 1960s starring the brilliant Australian actress Odessa Young, and he has just wrapped on an action film that was shooting in Hungary, the UK and Paris starring *Outlander's* Sam Heughan and another Australian, Ruby Rose. ***"I'm quite happy to just take a breather for a moment. But likely, I'll do that for a few weeks and then I'll be itching to do it all over again."***

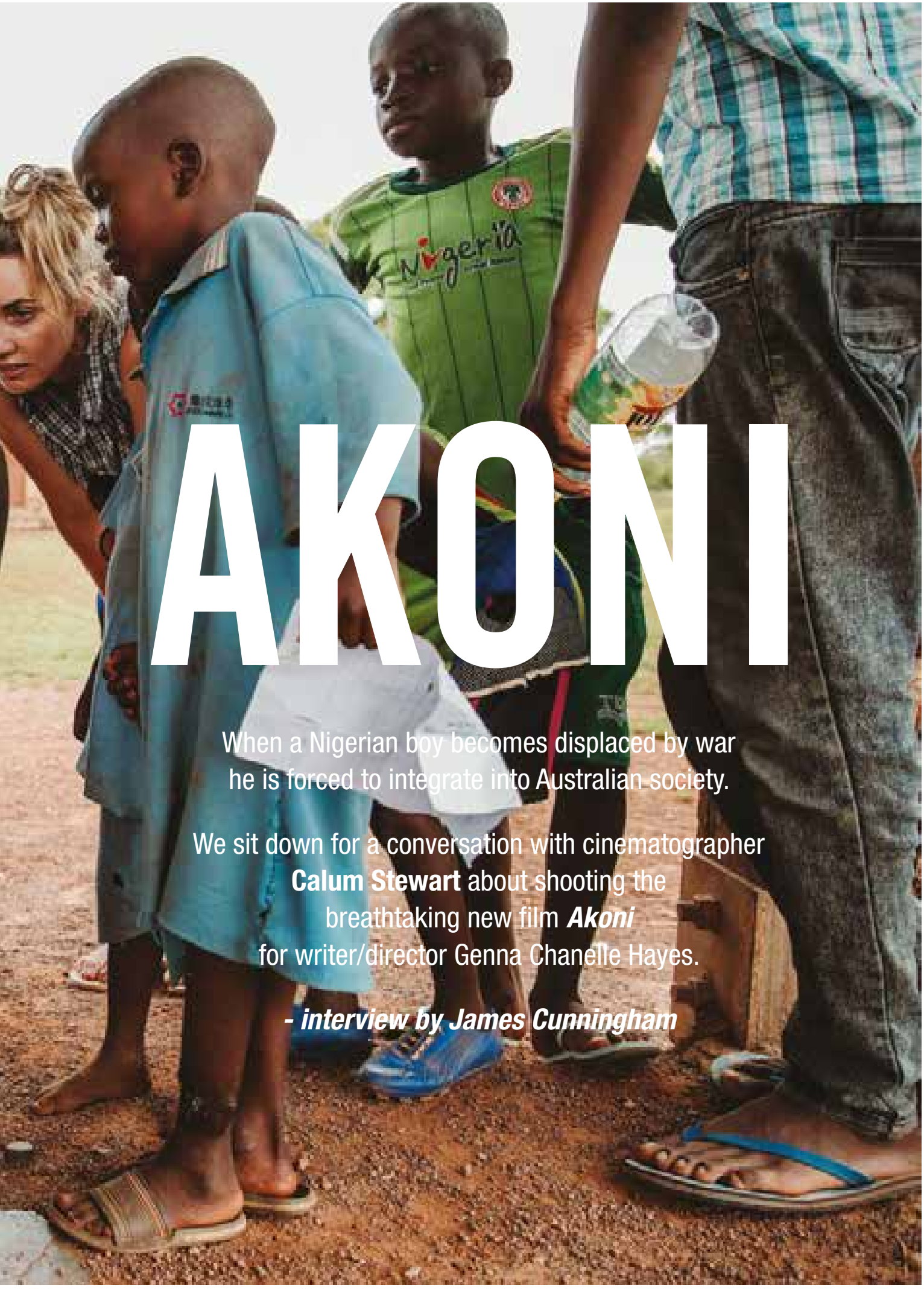
Nick Remy Matthews ACS is a British-born, Australian-raised cinematographer, writer and director.



Cinematographer Nick Remy Matthews ACS and 'Hotel Mumbai' director on location in India - PHOTO Kerry Monteen

Actor Anupam Kher in 'Hotel Mumbai' - PHOTO Kerry Monteen

Cinematographer Calum Stewart on location in Ghana - PHOTO Barnaby Downes



AKONI

When a Nigerian boy becomes displaced by war
he is forced to integrate into Australian society.

We sit down for a conversation with cinematographer
Calum Stewart about shooting the
breathtaking new film ***Akoni***
for writer/director Genna Chanelle Hayes.

- interview by James Cunningham

Cinematographer Calum Stewart filming 'Akoni' on location in Ghana - PHOTO Barnaby Downes

AC **Can you describe *Akoni* in your own words?**

CS *Akoni* probably sits across a number of genres, but at its heart it's a love story. The lead character is a young Nigerian man called Akoni (Kit Esuroso), who is forced to flee his homeland. Displaced and living in Australia, he struggles to make ends meet and finds himself living on the street. He inadvertently meets a local girl who is dealing with her own very different tragedy. The two form a reluctant and unlikely bond, finding solace and healing in each other as events unfold around them.

AC **How did you initially get involved with this project?**

CS The director, Genna Chanelle Hayes, initially got in touch after viewing some of my previous work and asked if I would be willing to assist with mocking up visuals in order to put together a short teaser. Through our collaboration on that, as well as some preceding commercial projects, we formed a great bond and creative understanding. I was subsequently asked if I would be interested in stepping in as cinematographer for the feature. I knew it would be a massive undertaking, having never shot a narrative feature before, but I was very keen to do so.

AC **What were your initial thoughts when you read the script?**

CS I really liked the rawness and originality of the script and was excited about the possible directions we could take the film, visually. We had discussed the limitations of a smaller budget at length and I felt strongly that, while it was an ambitious script, it had a narrative that could flourish with the resources that were available to us. Furthermore, as with all the director's previous work, the script dealt with difficult themes, had a lot of heart and felt fresh and original. All of which are a fantastic starting point for visual storytelling.

AC **How did you choose your equipment?**

CS Camera and lens was one area I hoped to be able to give ourselves a head start. We felt the narrative naturally lent itself to hand-held and being able to move the camera organically with the characters was key; allowing the audience to be in their world and to journey with them wherever possible. We also needed something that wouldn't leave us stranded in tough conditions, and was light enough to move quickly with a small crew. The schedule was going to be tight, particularly so in Africa where resources were going to be somewhat limited.

A scene from the film 'Akoni' - DOP Calum Stewart

Genna Chanelle Hayes listening to cinematographer Calum Stewart discuss the next shot - PHOTO Barnaby Downes

Coming from a documentary background the ARRI Amira was immediately top of my wish list. It's a camera that is beautifully balanced shooting off-the-shoulder for long periods of time, and also has a very forgiving sensor. I knew I would be able to push the image pretty hard and be confident we were not sacrificing detail in key areas.

We shot everything at ARRI's internally 'up-ressed' 4K UHD (internal processing that turns an image from the 3.2k sensor into a '4K UHD' image, meaning it is technically not true 4K UHD) with a 2.35:1 ratio using ARRI log C and a ProRes 442HQ codec. Ideally I would have liked to have shot with a larger codec to retain the additional detail for post-production, but budget largely dictated the amount of data we could handle at 4K UHD. Shooting 2K at 4444HQ was discussed, and this would have been my preference had 4K not been a requirement.

We sourced a set of Canon Cinema prime lenses to pair with the Amira, giving us a T1.5 if we needed it. I opted for two sets of filtration to push our two distinct looks and to take the edge off of the C-NEs. These being Hollywood Black Magic for our Africa block and Glimmerglass in Australia at lesser strengths where I needed a more subtle effect, particularly with blooming of the highlights.

There was a bit of a delay before we could undertake the Africa photography, so for access reasons we ended up shooting this with the Alexa Mini. The Mini, custom rigged, felt nicely balanced and I found it to be a more than suitable replacement for the Amira.

AC **What was your collaboration like with the production design team?**

CS During pre-production, I worked closely with the talented Carlo Crescini and his production design team. We worked to develop the lead characters spaces individually, and create two very distinct looks that would print incredibly well. It was also key to maintain the rawness and authenticity of the locations, to stay true to our characters worlds, which was a balancing act at times and meant locations were very carefully selected to allow this, and to ensure they could also be adapted to meet our lighting and camera requirements.

AC **What 'look' were you working toward? Did you have any visual references?**

CS Genna's work always has strong ties to the natural world and as this script being no different, we were instinctively drawn to the work of Terrence Malick. There were two disparate worlds we wanted to create in this picture, which we also needed to link visually so that the juxtaposition between the two wasn't overly distracting for an audience. A visceral connection to nature and landscape gave us the opportunity to do this, as well as the use of colour, recurring themes and compositionally linking the characters.

AC **How did you approach shooting in different parts of the word, different continents?**

CS I'm always excited at the prospect of shooting in obscure or unusual places. I feel blessed that we work in an industry that takes us to all these weird and wonderful locations and allows us to experience walks of life we would normally only ever get to observe from the outside. That said shooting in a foreign country is not without its challenges and this project was no exception. After much research and deliberation by the production team, it was decided that the regions of Nigeria where we initially wanted to film would not be safe for a foreign crew; that a very similar look could be achieved in and around Tamale in the Northern regions of Ghana where security and crew safety could be managed more effectively.

For me, any time spent on the ground prior to shooting in a foreign environment is worth its weight in gold. Other than time to prepare, adjusting to climate - it was consistently above forty degrees in Ghana - and diet change is important. When you're working with a small crew, someone getting sick can wreak havoc on the schedule. Also, having time to gel with local crew prior to the first day together can make a world of difference.

With these types of locations it seems that no matter how much research you do you never fully know what you are dealing with until you are on the ground and can experience it first hand.

Cinematographer Calum Stewart setting up for a scene with local school children in Tamale, Ghana - PHOTO Barnaby Downes

AC **Can you tell us about your crew?**

CS I can't speak highly enough of my crew on this project. We asked a lot of them in frequently difficult conditions, my focus pullers had a particularly tough time. Where possible I lit to a T2 or T2.8 but often I would be shooting wide open, off-the-shoulder in low-light conditions with little in the way of camera rehearsals. Thankfully, both Paul Hoad (First Assistant Camera, Australia) and Ed Massey (First Assistant Camera, Ghana) had the skills and experience to adapt quickly on the fly and find those sharps regardless of what I threw at them.

I want the camera department to feel like a collaborative one and for that you need guys and girls who aren't afraid to speak up - within reason! - when they see something that I might have overlooked. We're all working towards the same goal and if someone has a great idea then I want to hear it. Being 'in the trenches' together can really help bring you closer together, though I'm sure the opposite is also true.

AC **Do you have a favourite shot or sequence in *Akoni*? Why?**

CS It seems that like most cinematographers I talk to, I tend to obsess over images I'm displeased with rather than the ones I like. I do feel, however, a particular affinity to some of the sequences we captured in Africa.

One that stands out is a key scene early in the film where Akoni, concerned for the safety of his family, is traveling back to his village on a bus. This is a dangerous time and route for him to be traveling so the journey is a tense one. We shot the scene with twenty locals from the surrounding area acting as extras, all speaking in a variety of dialects with little or no acting experience. We also had chickens and goats to wrangle and a bus that threatened to break down at any second, as its predecessors had done on their way to location that morning which had put us massively behind on time.

We managed to block and push through the coverage without too many issues but we came out the other side feeling exhausted, a little jaded and not entirely sure we had captured the scene exactly as we had intended. However, any reservations I had disappeared when I saw it in the cut, there is a beautiful rawness and authenticity to it that, for me, encapsulates everything we set out to achieve with this film.

AC **Looking back on what you set out to achieve with the film, with hindsight, what might you have done differently?**

CS As this was my first narrative feature, the learning curve was a steep one. It was tough going at times and there are many lessons I learned along the way, but I feel I am a much more rounded and efficient filmmaker for the experience.

The most important lesson I think I learned is that there is no such thing as too much pre-production time. I'm sure some people may disagree but our pre-production saved us on many occasions and got us through what was at times, a pretty grueling schedule.

Further to that, you can never underestimate the importance of keeping your crew happy and firing on all cylinders because when you are under the pump and everything is falling apart at the seams, you need people who are willing to go that extra mile for you to get things back on track.

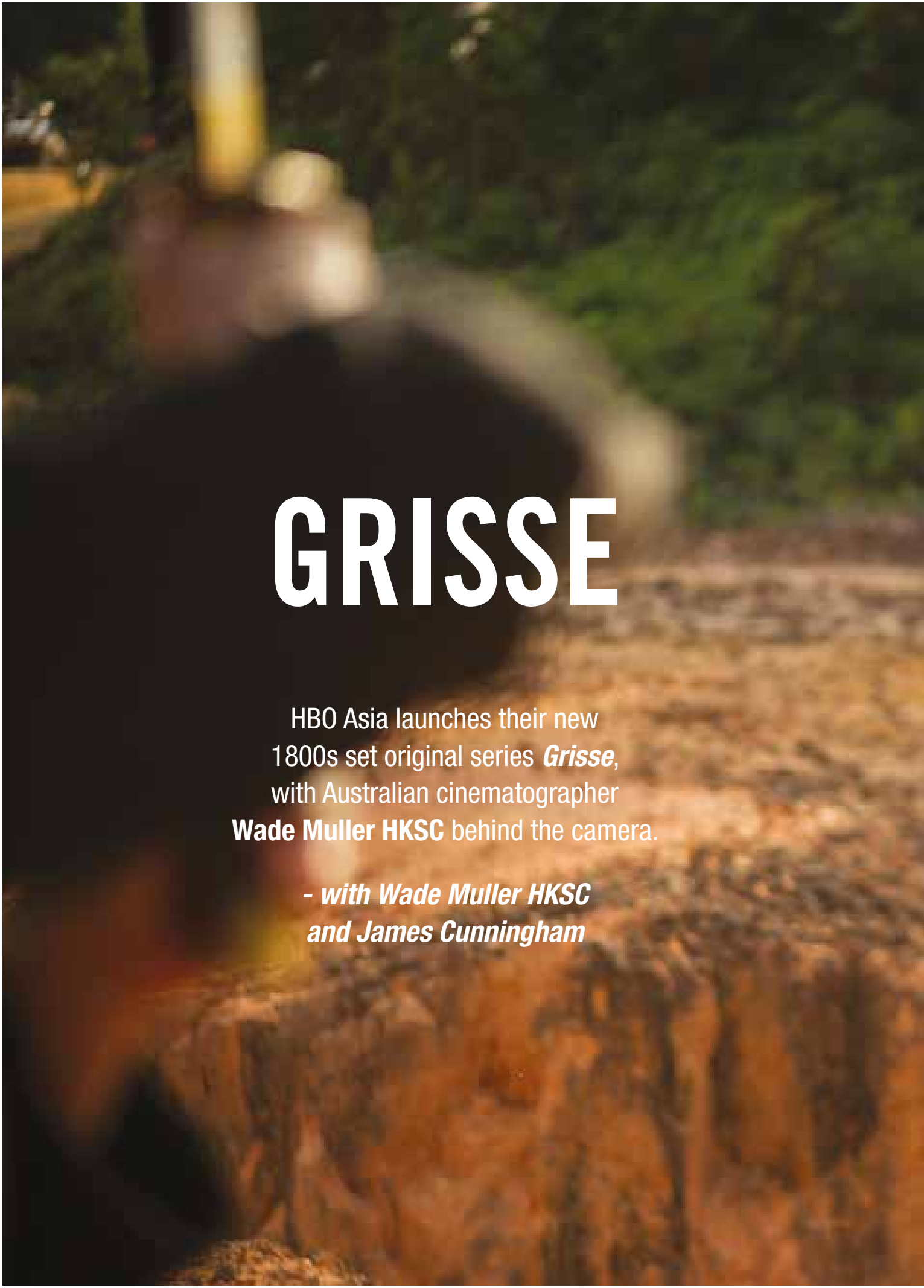
This was a challenging shoot at times and availability meant I didn't have the consistency across the camera department that I would have liked. But every single member of crew I worked with on this were outstanding and I couldn't have done it without them.

AC **What are you working on next?**

CS I'm just about to go into the grade on a long-form documentary project I have been working on since 2013. I'm excited to finally see that come to fruition. Other than that there is the usual spattering of commercial and short form projects, and I have a couple of feature documentaries kicking off in the next few months, one of which will be shooting in India and Australia, the other in Kenya. I also hope to have the opportunity to delve deeper into the narrative world and continue on this exhaustive and rewarding journey of learning and honing my craft.

Based in Sydney, Calum Stewart is a skilled cinematographer and camera operator with a wealth of industry experience.

Cinematographer Calum Stewart shooting inside one of the village huts in Northern Ghana - PHOTO Barnaby Downes



GRISSE

HBO Asia launches their new
1800s set original series ***Grisse***,
with Australian cinematographer
Wade Muller HKSC behind the camera.

- with Wade Muller HKSC
and James Cunningham

A scene from the new series 'Grisse' - DOP Wade Muller HKSC, IMAGE Courtesy HBO Asia

A scene from the new series 'Grisse' - DOP Wade Muller HKSC, IMAGE Courtesy HBO Asia

HBO Asia's brand new original period drama *Grisse*, is an eight hour-long episode series set in the mid-1800s colonial period of the Dutch East Indies. The English language series chronicles the story of a group of unlikely individuals who lead a rebellion against a brutal governor. Suddenly they find themselves in control of a garrison town called Grisse. The story revolves around a number of unique characters, each from diverse backgrounds and creeds who unite for the chance to break the chains of tyranny and write their own destiny. ***"You've heard of spaghetti westerns,"*** says show creator Mike Wilaun, ***"this is a Nasi Goreng western."***

In Issue 80 of Australian Cinematographer Magazine, we covered director Mike Wiluan's *Buffalo Boys* shot by Australian cinematographer John Radel ACS. Wiluan, who acts as writer and showrunner on *Grisse*, says that both *Buffalo Boys* and *Grisse* inhabit the same universe, as both were set in the same era, but are very different projects. Wilaun has again chosen to collaborate with key Australian talent, tapping director Tony Tilse (*Underbelly*) to helm six episodes and cinematographer Wade Muller HKSC (*Escape and Evasion*) to shoot all eight.

Muller explains the only thing *Buffalo Boys* and *Grisse* have in common are the sets and costumes. ***"The scripts and cast are completely different for each project,"*** says the cinematographer. ***"I had always been interested in doing a period drama, and once I started reading the scripts and seeing artwork from the production design team… I was hooked."***

HBO Asia's vice president of production, Kimberly James, had known Muller for many years when she contacted him to see if he was interested in working on the series with the Sydney-based director. ***"I was intrigued right away for two reasons: firstly, I think a period drama is quite an attractive genre for most cinematographers, and secondly it was the chance to work with Tilse,"*** explains Muller. ***"I almost worked with him on another project a few years earlier but unfortunately there was a date conflict, so it was nice for this project to come up. Luckily for me Tilse enjoys shooting a similar style to me by using wider lenses for close ups and use of backlighting. We felt the 'close and wide' gives the viewer a visceral connection to the characters."***

For the series, Wiluan spent six months studying literature on Gresik, an historical multi-ethnic city in what was formally Java (now Indonesia). ***"There was a Dutch base camp there,"*** Wilaun says. ***"When I read this, characters immediately started popping out in my mind."*** Given the time period and setting, production of *Grisse* is an Asian one, with actors from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Japan, coming in to populate the series' with colourful inhabitants.

Both Tilse and Muller are huge fans of ARRI's Alexa cameras. On this project they chose to shoot with two Alexa Minis. ***"I feel the Alexa series offer the best digital highlight roll-off and can handle mixed lighting conditions better than any other digital camera on the market,"*** says Muller. ***"Most of the time we shot with two cameras, but stayed away from cross-shooting except for the few occasions where it didn't compromise our lighting."***

Muller's collaboration with the production design team on *Grisse* was fairly unusual as by the time the cinematographer came on board, production designer Pawas Sawatchaiyamet had already established a base from his earlier work on *Buffalo Boys*. ***"A lot of the studio backlot was ready to go and the colour palate was already in place,"*** he explains. ***"They'd built a bunch of new sets as well as a cave complex in the studio. A few other large sets had been constructed outside of the studio, in the countryside."***

Muller shot all eight episodes of *Grisse*, under three different

A scene from the new series 'Grisse' - DOP Wade Muller HKSC, IMAGE Courtesy HBO Asia

directors, in under fifty days. ***"The schedule was tight and very ambitious,"*** he says. ***"On a lot of productions you can spend quite a bit of time waiting around. This was definitely not the case on this production. I would estimate seventy percent of the series was filmed on the backlot with the remaining either shot in the studios or on location."*** Episodes were shot in order of location and cast availability. ***"Usually I would work with the same director for several days in a row, but sometimes I would be working with all three directors in a day!"***

When speaking about his crew in the camera department, the cinematographer has the highest of praise. ***"Jakarta-based focus pullers Maliki Zulkarnain and Adhitya Rachman did an amazing work,"*** Muller says. ***"These guys were unbelievable at nailing every shot."*** The crew had another Australian, Peter Stott, as B-Camera and Steadicam operator. ***"Stott is an incredible operator. We were very lucky to have him on the team."***

"I am really into hand-held and there was not too much in this series except for some action scenes, so I would get

Behind-the-scenes shooting the new series 'Grisse' -IMAGE Courtesy HBO Asia

Wade Muller HKSC behind the camera shooting 'Grisse' - IMAGE Courtesy HBO Asia

pretty excited on these days," Muller says. ***"There was also a western-style gun drawing duel between two of our cast. This was definitely a bit of homage to Sergio Leone, which is definitely a highlight of the series for me."***

"Gaffer Yudi Anton knew right away the look we were wanting to achieve," explains Muller. ***"We used a lot of candles and oil lanterns, both indoor and outdoor, usually supplemented by an array of Flickermaster units connected to various lamps between 25w to 2,000w. Most of these were fixed, but occasionally they would be swung on a boom if a character was walking through a building holding a lantern."***

One of the main exterior lighting challenges was to keep the light constant throughout the day, and to not be overbearingly bright. ***"We decided to run a huge array of silks the entire length of the backlot streets,"*** says Muller. The size of the combined silks was about 15m x 150m and the material was equal to a one stop silk.

"Our gaffer did a fantastic job rigging the overheard silk which worked on a wire system to make fast adjustment possible and to also easily remove as we got towards the end of the day to allow for more light," Muller explains. ***"These overhead silks were then augmented by the production design team hanging large pieces of cloth between the buildings."***

There are minimal digital effects in *Grisse* other than some set extensions and adding a volcano and mountain ranges in the background of some wider shots. ***"Apart from that, there was only some computer-generated blood splatter and wire removal,"*** says Muller. ***"The explosions were all done for real by the special effects team."***

Muller always gets involved as much as possible in the grading process. ***"Because this was a television series as opposed to grading a feature, I approached the grade a little different as it's hard to be available to sit for over a month of grading,"*** says Muller. The grade was done at Gravitate Post in Singapore by colorist Azman Mohamed. ***"I flew into Singapore initially to grade the first episode, then setup a system using the frame.io platform. This meant I could have correspondence with the colourist from anywhere in the world, and just make another trip towards the end of the grade to go through a bit of tweaking."***

For the look and feel of the series the pair looked at selected references, including *Tulip Fever* (2017, cinematography by Eigil Bryld DFF). ***"In the end we went with the desaturated, earthy look with some greens and reds slightly enhanced. We also introduced a bit of green in the blacks throughout the series."***

Looking back on what Muller set out to achieve on *Grisse*, ***"It would have been great to have more time in pre-production, but by the time I signed on I had just taken on a feature in Australia,"*** reflects the cinematographer. ***"I only had a week on the backlot with Tilse and my gaffer initially to see what equipment was needed, and also to shoot some make up and Costume tests."*** Muller then flew to the Gold Coast to shoot Escape and Evasion for director Storm Ashwood. ***"The day after we wrapped on the Gold Coast, I hit the ground running in Indonesia for the final couple of weeks pre-production on* Grisse."**

Muller is currently shooting *The Cave*, directed by Tom Waller. ***"It depicts the fascinating true story of the Thai cave rescue. The film sets out to tell the stories of the unsung heroes behind the seventeen-day operation to save the Wild Boars boys' soccer team, who were trapped in the flooded Tham Luang cave, more than two miles inside the Earth,"*** says Muller. ***" Some of the film's lead cast is actually played by the real heroes."***

Wade Muller HKSC is an award-winning cinematographer based in Bangkok, Thailand, and Hong Kong, China.

James Cunningham is the Editor of Australian Cinematographer Magazine.

Wade Muller HKSC behind the camera shooting 'Grisse' - IMAGE Courtesy HBO Asia

NEW GEAR

Our New Gear section looks at ARRI's OCU-1 for wireless FIZ control – ***by Tom Waugh***

The ARRI OCi-1 for wireless FIZ control - PHOTO Sean Dooley

Wireless FIZ (Focus, Iris, Zoom) control is in use on the majority of sets now.

With the proliferation of gimbals, smaller cameras and latency free wireless HD video systems, this is the standard way of working. By going all wireless, it doesn't matter whether the cinematographer or director want handheld, tripod, crane, car mount, gimbal... it doesn't require a rebuild of the FIZ system, or running of cables.

Another benefit can be shooting in small rooms, or sensitive scenes, with one less person around the camera.

A unique problem of wireless FIZ is if the first assistant camera was busy while the operator was lining up a shot. The operator would have to disengage the FIZ motor from the lens gear to get manual control, requiring a motor recalibration afterwards. This is where ARRI's OCU-1 comes in.

Based around the design of the Master Grips, the OCU-1 was released in Australia in December of last year and works with their cforce range of motors and accessories.

It's a compact and solid build with smooth wheel, touch OLED screen, three user buttons, two LBUS in/out ports and swappable mounting points, made to survive use in rental houses and on long form productions.

"Another benefit can be shooting in small rooms, or sensitive scenes, with one less person around the camera."

In terms of use, I really enjoy how quick the override and release function is. Click one button to select focus, iris or zoom and then one click of another button to take control.

You can also assign a button to camera user; such as cycle NDs on Alexa Mini/ AMIRA or run/stop on Red DSMC2.

Then it's only one click on the OCU-1 to release the channel back to the first assistant camera with the WCU-4. While the channel is controlled by the OCU-1, the WCU-4 can still alter other FIZ channels.

Another interesting use for the OCU-1 is single operators with Alexa Mini or Amira and Canon EF lenses. It can be plugged into the EXT port and used as a smooth focus and iris control, without the need for external motors.

Other systems may have additional thumbwheels or grips but none bring the same easy approach to solve the problem of how to override the remote FIZ control on set.

The OCU-1 is available through ARRI Australia.

Tom Waugh works for Ignite Digi and is Chairman of the ACS Technical Committee.

FILM REVIEWS

Discussing the five Oscar-nominated films for Best Cinematography in 2019 – ***by Dash Wilson***

'A Star Is Born' - DOP Matthew Libatique ASC

A STAR IS BORN - Based on the 1937 film of the same name, *A Star is Born* tells the story of Jackson 'Jack' Maine (Bradley Cooper), a famous country music star privately battling a drug and alcohol addiction. One night Jackson meets Ally (Lady Gaga) who is working at a drag bar in California when both their lives are changed forever.

Lead actor Bradley Cooper (*The Hangover, American Sniper*) makes his directorial debut with *A Star is Born* which he also co-wrote and produced. Teamed with cinematographer Matthew Libatique ASC (*Black Swan, Requiem for a Dream*), Cooper has created a seductive and exquisitely shot film that is as deeply moving as it is enjoyable. As a genuine fan of Libatique's work, particularly his collaborations with Darren Aronofsky, this latest pairing was a particular stroke of genius.

Libatique uses a highly effective mix of hand-held cameras and close-ups that bring a sense of realism that is often missing from mainstream Hollywood films. With the aid of colourist Stefan Sonnenfeld. *A Star is Born* literally shines from the screen. The first hour in particular stuns with its concert scenes and bubbling sense of intimacy.

But, whilst everyone seems to have an opinion of this film, it is definitely not without its faults. Its second half is particularly cliché, but still works. Lady Gaga is impressive as Ally, however, this may be in part due to the fact the story has many similarities with her own life so how much acting is really going on is questionable. The soundtrack of course is brilliant, but it will be really interesting to see what Gaga does next as an actress, particularly in a less musically based film.

There is no doubt that as an overall film, *A Star is Born* is successful. Cooper's obvious passion for the project shines through and elevates what is essentially an excellent remake that is let down by an average script. Did I love this film... no. Did I enjoy this film... very much.

'Roma' - DOP Alfonso Cuarón

ROMA - Set in 1970 in the Colonia Roma neighbourhood of Mexico City, *Roma* is the semi-autobiographical film taken from writer, director Alfonso Cuarón's upbringing.

Roma, a completely black and white film, tells the story of Cleodegaria 'Cleo' Gutierrez (Yalitiza Aprariciо), a live-in maid for a white, middle class family. One afternoon, accompanied by fellow maid and best friend Adela (Marina de Tavira), Cleo, who has just found out she is pregnant, goes to the movies with her boyfriend only to have him abandon her without explanation.

Shot on a minimalistic budget in today's terms, Roma is another defining career moment for acclaimed director Cuarón (*Children of Men, Gravity*). The foreign-language film, whilst definingly simple, is deeply emotional and filled with excellent performances. Aprariciо is mesmerizing in her film debut; the performance is so realistic that you often forget you are watching a film. Likewise, the supporting cast are all excellent in mainly understated roles.

"If I were Cuarón, I might be making a lot more room in my Oscar's cabinet."

Instead of using his usual cinematographer, Emmanuel Lubezki AMC ASC, *Roma* was shot by the director himself. The result is a deeply personal film that also manages to entertain. The landscapes and scenery around Mexico City are exquisite and create realism to that film that is all but missing in the current film landscape. The lighting too is naturalistic and moody but it creates such depth that the viewer can't help but be impressed.

Whilst many people won't watch this film just because it is foreign, it will no doubt be a film that is studied long into the future. Even a critical eye such as mine, finds it hard to fault. If I were Cuarón, I might be making a lot more room in my Oscars' cabinet.

'The Favourite' - DOP Robbie Ryan BSC ISC

THE FAVOURITE - Yorgos Lanthimos is a deeply polarizing director. From *The Lobster*, to *The Killing of a Sacred Deer,* Lanthimos' filmography is as short as it is unforgettable.

His latest, the period piece *The Favourite* is set in 1708. Britain is at war with France and Queen Anne (Olivia Coleman), in frail health, sits on the throne. The Queen shows little interest in governing, instead preferring increasingly bizarre activities such as playing with her seventeen rabbits, eating cake and racing ducks.

Due to Anne's increasingly erratic and self-destructive behaviour, her adviser and secret lover Sarah Churchill (Rachel Weisz) essentially rules the country through her influence over the Queen. When Abigail Hill, Churchill's impoverished cousin (Emma Stone) arrives, the dynamic between the Queen and her lover is challenged with irreverent and hilarious results.

Deeply original and unashamedly brash, *The Favourite* is a wicked delight. Lanthimos has created another world that is difficult to describe but also one you don't want to leave. Brilliantly written by Australian Tony McNamara (*Love My Way, The Rage in Placid Lake*) and Deborah Davis, *The Favourite* is the first film that the director hasn't co-written himself and it's all the better for it.

Paired with cinematographer Robbie Ryan BSC ISC (*Philomena, American Honey*), the film was shot entirely using natural light. Using a 10mm lens down to a fish-eye 6mm lens, the filmmakers have bought a garishness to the period film that is in sync to the craziness unfolding on screen.

The Favourite is a daring piece of film. The performances are uniformly excellent. Weisz and Coleman in particular are far better served because their characters are easier to dislike. The ending however, disappointing and the dramatic shifts in tone won't sit well with some. This is by far one of the most original films of the year, it's just not particularly the best.

'Cold War' - DOP Łukasz Żal PSC

COLD WAR - One of the true surprises from this year's Academy Award nominations for the year's best cinematography was not only that two of these films were foreign, but also shot entirely in black and white.

Written and directed by Polish filmmaker Pawel Pawlikowski (*Ida, Summer of Love) Cold War* is the tale of a musical director who discovers a beautiful young singer. Loosely inspired by Pawlikowski's parents and set during the Cold War, Wiktor (Thomas Kot) and Zula (Joanna Kulia) fall deeply, obsessively and destructively in love. In the ruins of a post-war Poland, they are forced to play into the communist propaganda machine that surrounds them while they dream of escaping to the creative freedom of the West.

With a miniscule production budget of five-million pounds and a current box office take of almost twenty-million, there is no doubt that *Cold War* has become a resounding success. Premiering at the Cannes Film Festival in 2018, *Cold War* is a stunningly shot film that deserves to be seen. Working with his cinematographer from Ida, Łukasz Żal PSC, Pawlikowski has created a brilliantly gloomy and stark visual aesthetic that brings to life an otherwise lean narrative. Shot digitally using a 1.37:1 aspect ratio, the last minute decision to shoot in black and white has been a masterstroke. All you can do is marvel at how Zal and Pawlikowski have used the film's visual style to truly invoke the feeling of the period and the location.

Performance-wise, the two leads are also uniformly excellent. Even with its brief running time, the film is thoroughly enjoyable from start to finish and at times, highly emotional. If I was to be critical it would be that I found some of the characters actions a little over-dramatic and some of the plot lines a little cliché. Ultimately though, while it may not be *Schindler's List*, if you do like your cinema a little different and appreciate a sumptuous visual treat, then you can't go past *Cold War*.

'Never Look Away' - DOP Caleb Deschanel ASC

NEVER LOOK AWAY - At nearly three hours in length and shot entirely in German, one would be forgiven for never having heard of the final nominated film in this category, *Never Look Away.*

Loosely based on Gerhard Richter, one of the twentieth century's most admired visual artists, the plot follows art student Kurt Barnert, played here by Tom Schilling, in post-war East Germany. Barnert falls in love with fellow student Ellie Seebank (Paula Beer) but her father deftly opposes their relationship. Ellie's father begins to complicate matters further when his role in the Nazi eugenics program becomes known.

Having sat through many films in my time, this one was a particularly tough watch. Gerhard Richter himself has said that *Never Look Away* is a grossly distorted adaptation of his biography. Solid performances and a transfixing score help elevate things but for me, *Never Look Away* just wasn't worth investing three hours.

Kudos though must go to cinematographer Caleb Deschanel ASC (*The Patriot, The Passion of the Christ*) whose work here is career best. Shot much like a painting, the film glows with luminous lighting throughout and it is hard not to be impressed by what's on screen. Interestingly, despite not speaking a word of German himself, Deschanel was drawn to this particular project because - in his own words - when you don't speak a language, ***"you end up really looking carefully at people and visual world around them."***

Never Look Away may be an arthouse flop, but with six Oscar nominations and no wins, it may also be Deschanel's first well-deserved gold.

Dash Wilson is a lover of cinema and film reviewer based in Brisbane.

AUSTRALIAN SHORTS

In this Issue, we look at a selection of Australian short films in competition at this year's Melbourne Queer Film Festival (MQFF) – ***by James Cunningham***

A scene from 'Cherry Season' - DOP Emma Paine

CHERRY SEASON - The first project from independent film production company Wintergarden Pictures and the second short film from director Joshua Longhurst, *Cherry Season* explores themes of sexuality and identity in rural Australia.

Between stacking the shelves with cherries and scrolling through women on her feed, there doesn't appear to be much going on for Shantelle (Yassica Switakowski). She discovers her wayward teenage half-sister (Kate Fruend) posting raunchy pics online and Shantelle, with the help of callow workmate Connors (an outstanding Travis Jeffery), must hunt her down to stop Tamara crossing a dangerous line.

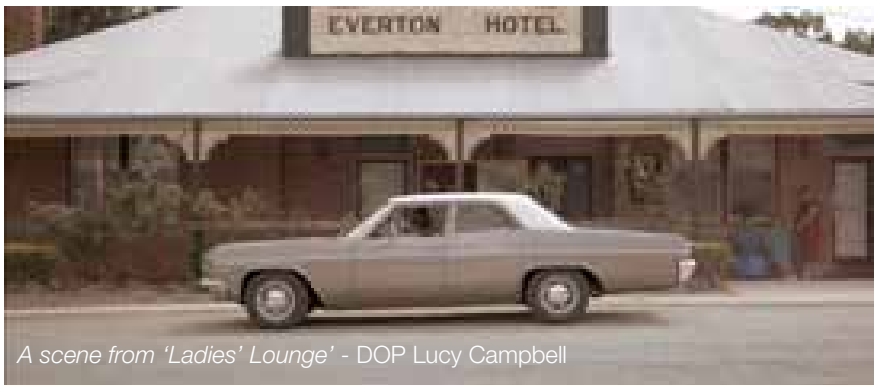
Shooting in a simple and uncomplicated 4:3 format, cinematographer Emma Paine employs a liberal use of hand-held in this film, adding to an almost uncomfortable 'what is going to happen' tension. Beginning with the caustic neon of an IGA; as time passes, the light diminishes. The sunset beautifully signals the arrival of the dark, and with it mystery and drama. *Cherry Season* is easily one of the best short films at any festival this year.

A scene from 'Great Again' - DOP Gabriel Francis

GREAT AGAIN - Jordan, a queer non-binary person, visits their conservative, Evangelical Christian family in rural Australia in the aftermath of the US election to discover that their own mother is a Trump supporter. Director Kirrilee Bailey is no stranger to MQFF, having been awarded Best Emerging Filmmaker at last year's festival with the short film *Allergies* (2018).

Cinematographer Gabriel Francis does a wonderful job at making *Great Again* look and feel as if it could have been a feature. The cold, grey exterior is punctuated with the red 'Make America Great Again' cap, literately acting like a red rag to a proverbial bull. Warmth is also cleverly brought in to an evangelical prayer ceremony, while Jordan is left to watch through a window, left out in the cold. Francis also hits a stroke of genius with one silhouetted shot of the two protagonists from behind, one with a gun, under what seems to look like a barn.

The themes embedded in *Great Again* resonate far beyond just the six minutes of this film, and one would love to see Bailey and Francis collaborating and expanding this idea further.



A scene from 'Ladies' Lounge' - DOP Lucy Campbell

LADIES' LOUNGE - A 1960s housewife, in an act of devotion, risks everything when she chains herself to the foot rail of a regional Australian pub to protest discriminatory drinking laws.

Until the mid-1970s, women were not permitted alcohol service in the main bar of Queensland pubs and were segregated to an area called a 'Ladies' Lounge' in which they were denied service unless accompanied by a man. After further extensive researching the filmmakers - film school students, director Monique Bettello and cinematographer Lucy Campbell - decided to write a screenplay.

"It's steeped in a rich nostalgic Australiana, with a beautiful colour palate."

The film itself is gorgeous, with elements of *A Place to Call Home* and even *Days of Heaven*. It's steeped in a rich nostalgic Australiana, with a beautiful colour palate. Aided by exquisite costumes, hair and an authentic 1965/66 Chevrolet, Ladies' Lounge could be one of the most beautiful shorts at the festival.

A scene from 'Sammy the Salmon' - DOP Hossein Khodabandehloo

SAMMY THE SALMON - Starring Liam Maguire and the voice of Mark Mitchell, *Sammy the Salmon* is a tale of a young man coming to terms with his sexuality. In a comic twist, he enlists the help of a talking fish in order to come out to his girlfriend. Directed by Jake Shannon and with cinematography by Hossein Khodabandehloo (both executive producers on the film), *Sammy the Salmon* is a fresh and humorous take on the age-old coming out story.

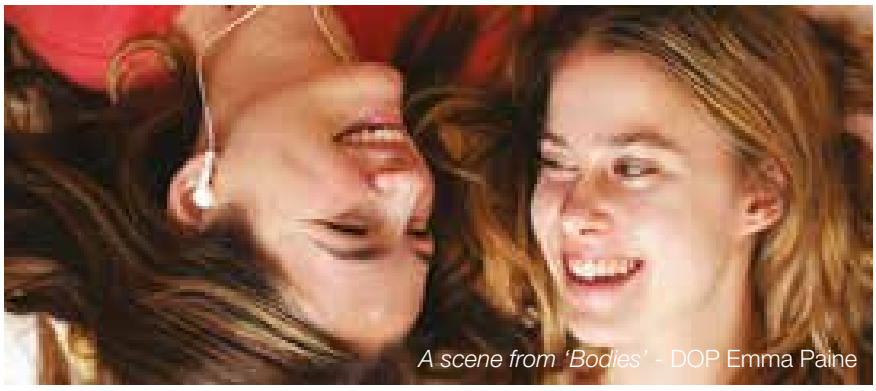
Based in Melbourne, Khodabandehloo is a cinematographer primarily working in the advertising industry. In *Sammy the Salmon,* he seamlessly creates an environment for comedy, juxtaposing a beautifully bleak opening location, moving to the short's second act before a stunning city backdrop and finally ending the film with warmth at its delicious conclusion. It is clear that Khodabandehloo has oceans of skill and talent in which to fish from.

A scene from 'Joy Boy' - DOP Tania Lambert

JOY BOY - Unexpectedly, *Joy Boy* delivers probably one fo the best performances of the entire festival when young Jonny (George Holahan-Cantwell) kicks off the film and introduces us to the film's main character. Based on a true story, Jonny is played later in life by Jonny Hawkins. He's a young man caught between his conservative family, and evangelical church and his emerging sexuality.

Cinematographer Tania Lambert has done a truly wonderful job in bringing together all the elements of what is a very ambitious short film, layering the images with both realism and beauty. Lambert is an award-winning cinematographer with a keen eye for composition and lighting as well as a desire to tell stories which move people in every way. With her work on the film *Joy Boy* she has very much proved herself as 'one to watch'.

Kudos, too, to the talented Paul Capsis who was brilliant in the film.



A scene from 'Bodies' - DOP Emma Paine

BODIES - *Bodies* is a fifteen-minute drama exploring the toxic friendship between two teenage girls, both seeking to master control of the world around them, their relationships, and their own bodies through increasingly destructive means. The pair's relationship is brought to breaking point as they compete for the attention of a high-school gym teacher.

Bodies was funded by Create NSW's Generator: Emerging Filmmaker's Fund in 2017, and was executive produced by Polly Staniford and Cecilia Ritchie at Aquarius Films (*Lion, Berlin Syndrome*).

Shot flawlessly by cinematographer Emma Paine, we are taken into a world where exquisite production design by Diva Abrahamian is amplified perfectly by the camera. It is sometimes argued that good cinematography is not noticing the cinematography, and that is why, based on *Bodies*, Pain should be one cinematographer in high-demand.

The film stars Mitzi Rhulmann (*Boys In The Trees*) and Bridie McKim (ABC's *The Heights*).

James Cunningham is the Editor of Australian Cinematographer Magazine

SPOTLIGHT ON BRAZIL

Nominated for the IMAGO International Award for Best Cinematography for Documentary Film, we examine *On Yoga* by Brazilian cinematographer Adolpho Veloso ABC - ***by James Cunningham***

A scene from 'On Yoga; the Architecture of Peace' - DOP Adolpho Veloso ABC

To start with, this is not a documentary just about Yoga. It's about photography, the world we live in, and about finding an inner-peace. Sitting down to watch *On Yoga: The Architecture of Peace*, I knew I was in for something special as the film was recently nominated for Best Cinematography for Documentary Film at the IMAGO International Awards (I'll update this article on the website when the winners have been announced on 16 March). it was also nominated at Camerimage last year.

Veloso's cinematography is nothing short of outstanding. The film is based on Michael O'Neill's book of the same name. It tells the story of the ten years the author spent photographing yoga's great masters and has been created as a deep extension of the original book. By posing very human questions from our current perspective and mixing them with elements of movement and experiential sound, a new view of the 'art of yoga' emerges.

O'Neill looks for some of his best pictures and shows them to the camera. On his twenty-five year career, the photographer's lenses captured Orson Welles, Paul Newman and Martin Scorsese, among other film legends. But celebrities and glamour weren't enough to make him happy. A drastic event changed his life and O'Neill turned to yoga. About ten years ago, O'Neill traveled to India. He wanted a connection with his subject and he found it on framing yogis. ***"I became an anthropologist,"*** he explains.

Veloso's crisp cinematography showcases landscapes, while softly gliding over phenomenal poses. Both cinematographer and director, fellow Brazilian Heitor Dhalia, cleverly capture the tranquillity of these Gurus' being.

These teachers are wonderfully framed, their unique faces carrying immense character, their deep wrinkles appearing like gnarled trees. Accompanying their eloquent explanations is such warmth and kindness, that their inner-peace seems so clear. ***"Nobody knows who they are"***, one Guru explains, ***"They confuse themselves with a photo of themselves"***. The physical appearance of Yoga, like of people, is only one aspect of it. Peace is not a still pose, but a continual search.

Dhalia started to practice yoga, and it is clear how this impacted his filmmaking, particularly if we compared it to *Drained* (2006), perhaps his best-known film. Long takes invade the screen. The feature is what writer and filmmaker Paul Schrader (*Cat People, First Reformed*) calls a transcendental cinema, or slow cinema, ***"a strain of art film defined by flat acting and visuals, heightened sound effects, little music or dialogue, minimal camera movement, delayed editing and generous use of the long take".***

And that should serve as somewhat of a warning before sitting down to watch *On Yoga:it* is slow. I usually don't like calling films 'slow', but this is an exception and it's not in a negative sense. You really get the sense that the film is a mediation on Yoga, more so than a documentary about it.

On one side, the film is a visual story of yoga to understand how it looks and how it has been practiced by different schools or the intensity of various postures (asanas). On the other side, it's a narration of the personal path of people and the philosophy attached to their thoughts. The commentary and the ensuing conversation about inner-peace is indeed as fascinating as the film looks beautiful.

James Cunningham is the Editor of Australian Cinematographer Magazine.

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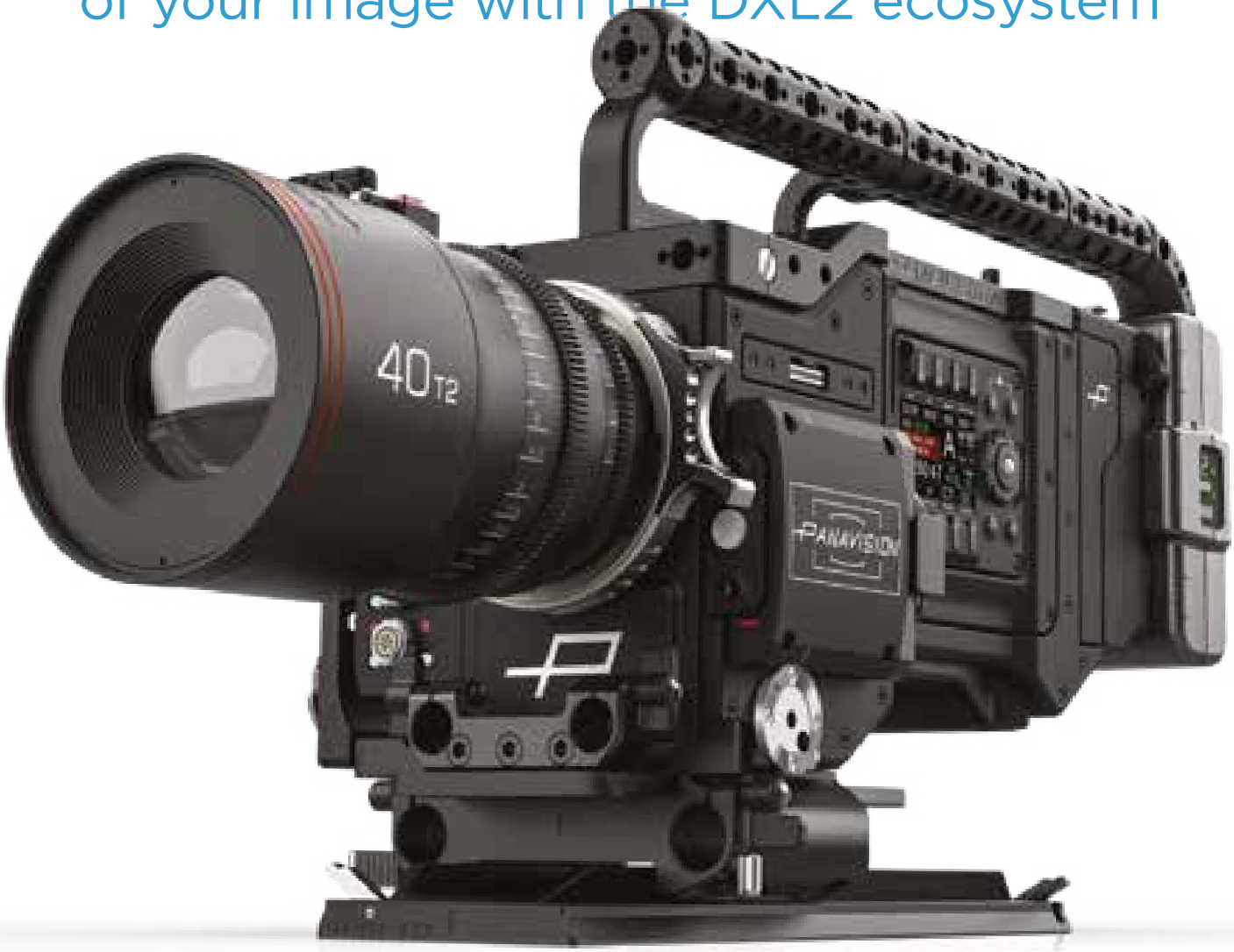

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