



ISSUE #82

JUNE 2019 RRP \$15.00

Quarterly Journal of the
Australian Cinematographers Society

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ISSN 1440-978X

Print Post Approved PP255003/03506

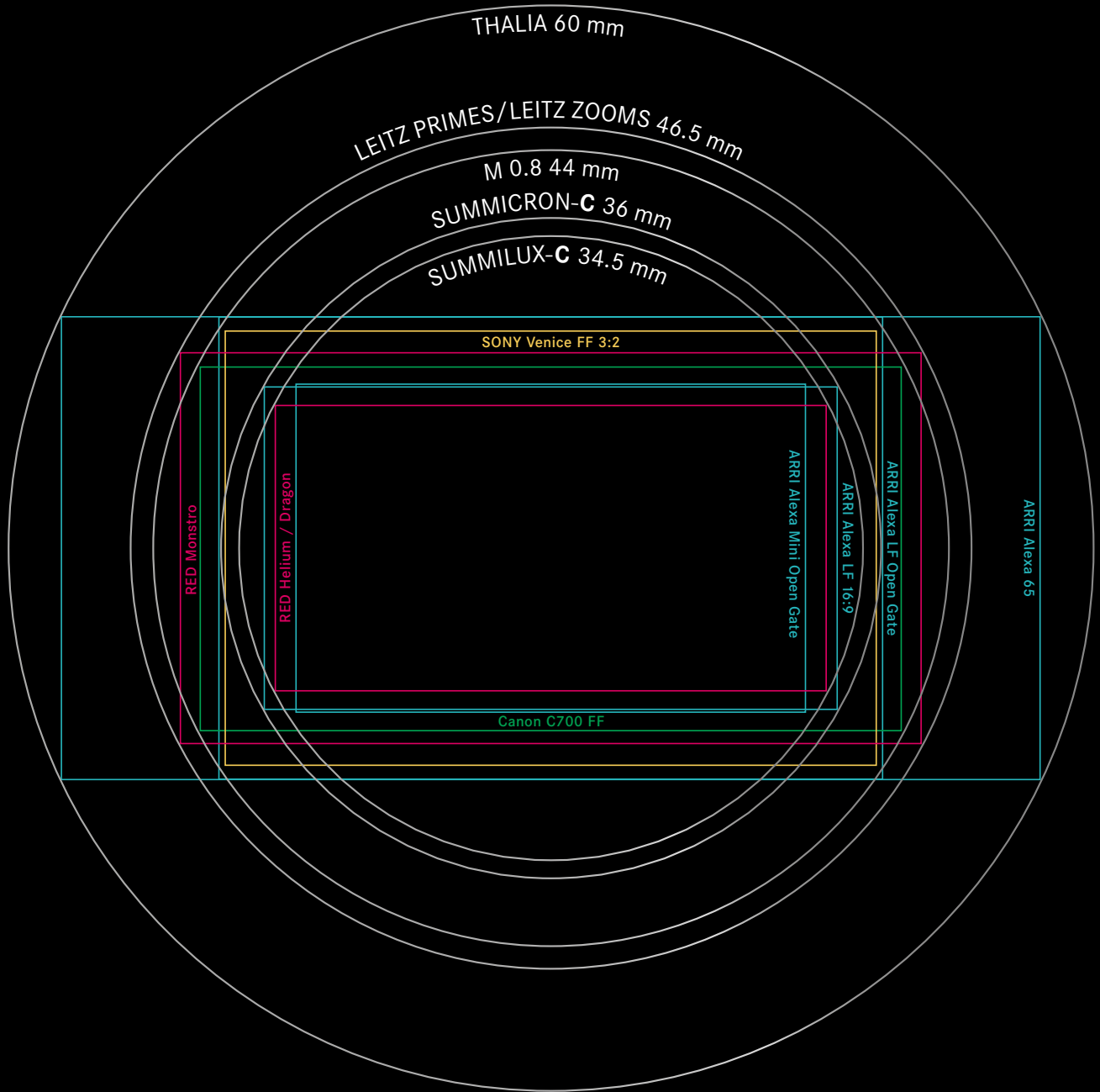


BY DEFINITION of the Australian Cinematographers Society's Articles of Association, "A Cinematographer is a person with technical expertise who manipulates light to transfer visual information by the use of a camera into aesthetic moving images on motion picture film or electronic recording systems".



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We've got you covered.



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20 LAMBS OF GOD

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Brazil's new president, Jair Bolsonaro, is cracking down on rampant crime, but many fear the 'Trump of the Tropics' is turning his country into a dangerous police state. Reporter Sally Sara, along with cameramen **Greg Nelson** and **Matt Davis**, travel to Rio de Janeiro for the ABC's **Foreign Correspondent**.
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Breaking Bad's RJ Mitte stars in a charming Australian romantic comedy about a loner with cerebral palsy roped into helping a friend overcome her shyness. Premiering at the Sydney Film Festival this month, award-winning cinematographer **Mark Bliss ACK** is behind the camera on **Standing Up for Sunny**.
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With new characters, shocking twists and unexpected turns, season three of the Logie and AACTA winning ABC and Netflix paranormal drama series **Glitch** will keep viewers on the edge of their seats for one final epic chapter. Cinematographer **Aaron McLisky** chats to us about his time behind the camera.
By James Cunningham.

54 REFLECTIONS IN THE DUST

Written and directed by **Luke Sullivan** and shot by cinematographer **Ryan Barry-Cotter**, the unique **Reflections in the Dust** is the chronicle of a relationship between a paranoid schizophrenic clown and his blind daughter. We speak with both the director and cinematographer of this highly-original, independent Australian feature film. *By James Cunningham.*

60 BLUE MOON

New Zealand feature film **Blue Moon** is a twisty, real-time thriller from writer/director **Stefen Harris** nimbly staged and shot entirely on iPhone by cinematographer **Ryan O'Rourke** within and around a Motueka petrol station in the wee small hours of the morning. *By Ryan O'Rourke.*

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FROM THE EDITOR



Hello and welcome to Issue 82,

I'll kick off by saying a huge thank you to everyone involved in putting on the recent ACS National Awards for Cinematography in Melbourne, and a big congratulations to all the category award winners. Especially Milli Award recipient and 'Australian Cinematographer of the Year', Bob Nguyen. If you want to learn about his work on the film *Song Lang*, which also earned him a Gold Tripod in the Cinema Features category, head back to Issue 80 of AC Mag to read all about it.

But as it's Issue 82 you're reading now, let me tell you what the magazine's team has got in store for you. ACS Brief is jam-packed as cinematographer Mark Broadbent heads off to Europe for an IMAGO Masterclass, Mark Hobz hits the streets of Dubai with a number of cameras and Lamborghinis, and we hear from Scott Kimber and his adventures joining the film community in Canada. Also Ryan Alexander Lloyd and Sam Chatterjee both chat to us about their latest short films, *Three Stories Inside a Rental Van* and *Outdoorsing*.

For our features section, we're joined by the legendary Oscar-nominated Don McAlpine ACS ASC for a chat about the upcoming Foxtel series *Lambs of God* (our cover this issue). Then for a fascinating look inside some of Australia's best news and current affairs production, AACTA and Walkley Award-nominated team of Greg Nelson and Matt Davis open up about filming a recent episode of the ABC's *Foreign Correspondent* in Brazil.

Cinematographer Aaron McLisky joins the *Glitch* family for the much-loved show's third and final season, while Mark Bliss ACK shoots the new Aussie rom-com *Standing up for Sunny* which is premiering at the Sydney Film Festival this month. We also look at low-budget, independent features *Reflections in the Dust* with cinematographer Ryan Barry-Cotter, and *Blue Moon* which was shot entirely on iPhone by cinematographer Ryan O'Rourke.

Finally our friend Michael Steel wraps up the magazine by contributing to our Australian Shorts section, talking about the experience of shooting two short films back-to-back earlier this year.

As always, it's been a pleasure bringing to you another issue of Australian Cinematographer Magazine.

Until next time... peace.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The signature is stylized with long, sweeping lines.

James Cunningham
Editor,
Australian Cinematographer Magazine

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings ACS members, colleagues and friends,

The ACS National Executive is a group responsible for the day-to-day running of the Society and the adherence to governance. It comprises the Branch Presidents and other Branch delegates, a National President, two Vice Presidents, a Treasurer, an Assistant Treasurer and an Assistant Secretary... wait, I have left one out; a National Secretary.

We have had for over a decade a National Secretary who has guided and led us through many administrative twists and turns. Unfortunately, he has decided not to continue in the role. I refer, of course, to David Wakeley ACS. He has always been there to answer those difficult questions and to be that cautious and wise ear that I could always turn to when necessary. Personally I will miss him enormously, but having said that I look forward to the next phase, working alongside Calvin Gardiner ACS as our new National Secretary.

I also want to acknowledge the work done by David Lewis ACS as a past National Vice President as well as our ACS Headquarters Manager, and numerous other duties that he was always willing to take on for the good of the Society. He will be missed and I'm delighted to advise you that Ted Rayment ACS will be taking on the role of our National Headquarters Manager which will be added to his role of Archive Manager.

We are fortunate to have so many dedicated people who always contribute at the highest level, and another that needs to be acknowledged is NSW Branch Treasurer and Membership Manager, Marianne Wakeley, who has decided to pull back and spend more time doing things for herself. My sincere thanks goes to her for her enormous contribution over many years.

I welcome as National Vice President; Erika Addis, along with Velinda Wardell ACS as Assistant National Secretary, to compliment the returning Executive office bearers; myself, Ernie Clark ACS and Mylene Ludgate.

I am looking forward to a busy and successful twelve months and will continue to foster and promote the ideals of our great Society.

Until next time,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Johanson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ron Johanson OAM ACS
National President,
Australian Cinematographers Society



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THREE STORIES INSIDE A RENTAL VAN

Cinematographer Ryan Alexander Lloyd re-teams with director Lewis Attey for their latest short film *Three Stories Inside A Rental Van* – by **Vanessa Abbott**



'Three Stories Inside a Rental Van' - DOP Ryan Alexander Lloyd

A young labourer backs into a parked car. Two international students watch a group of kids make a small bomb. And a man attempts to dump a load of rubbish on the side of the road. *Three Stories Inside a Rental Van* presents three vignettes, each set inside the same rental van, and each exploring the morality of the different characters who hire it. Each story is filmed in a single shot, without edit points and the camera never leaves the interior of the van.

For the filmmakers, the aim of the film was **“to live within a moment of someone’s life where their actions or lack of action would be observed and invoke a repose within the viewer as the scene wouldn’t cut away but play out in three long, real-time shoots,”** says cinematographer Ryan Alexander Lloyd.

Lloyd has known writer and director Lewis Attey for close to a decade. **“I was lucky to have shot his student films some years ago,”** says Lloyd. **“I seem to be one of the first people he calls when a clanging idea pops into his head.”** And although they hadn’t worked with each other before, the film’s producer Katie Laurie is also friends with Lloyd.

The film takes place in a moving vehicle. **“The best place to start is the work of Emmanuel Lubezki AMC ASC in Children of Men (2006),”** says Lloyd. **“From there, we took into consideration the fact that our budget was 0.1% of that film and we got to work problem solving.”** Time-of-day was used to assist with lighting restrictions – Lloyd’s camera moves 360-degrees in some scenes – along with

the film’s look being natural, with minimal artificial lighting used. LiteGear’s bicolour LEDs, the size of A4 paper, were taped into small gaps within the van for soft fill light on the actors.

Given the physical space was small, the crew knew they wanted to use a lightweight gimbal on a remote slider. That quickly led Lloyd to the ARRI Alexa Mini. **“It was new for the director and myself,”** he says. In terms of lenses, all the cinematographer’s dramatic projects up until now had been 16mm or 35mm. **“Lenses were more a process of elimination. I knew I wanted a ‘Zeiss look’, it was then finding the right size and speed for the scene. We ended up with Master Primes 21mm between T2 and T5.6 for or the first storyline, 35mm at T2.8 for the second, and T1.4 and T4 on the third.”**

Lloyd remembers a four-day shoot. **“The hardest set up being the third storyline on location in western Victoria,”** he says. **“A number of camera and technical rehearsals leading up to rolling up later in the day was how we prepared.”** The shoot week was one of the hottest of summer, pushing forty-degrees in temperature some days. Lloyd’s camera consisted of second assistant camera Bonita Carzino and focus puller Bryn Whitie. **“Given the technicalities of the shoot they were absolute legends.”**

Nicholas Hower was the film’s colourist and someone whom Lloyd had worked with before. **“It was very straight forward, just a little bit of shaping here**

and there,” he says. **“Some of the visual effect’s texture elements were captured by Carzino, such as the explosion, and overlaid with mine and Lewis’ sign off in the mastering stages. I feel like I just gave away a plot point.”**

“After seeing the film again just recently i think the second storyline is my best work,” proclaims the cinematographer. **“All I see in the other stories is my errors in camera operating. It’s hard to get over those. The second movement, however, is so focused and story driven and really pushes the viewer into the mindset of asking ‘what is next?’ It’s so restrictive you have to sit up and be present.”**

“Would I have done things differently?” he asks himself, **“I think any creative person knows the answer to this one; could have, should have. Time and money always help but given it was self-funded by the director and many people offered their time and skills I think it’s a testament to all the creatives involved. Personally, I wish the FreeFly MVI Pro 2 would have been available.”**

Lloyd is currently in pre-production on a beautiful Indigenous script with Aaron Pedersen attached as a complex father-figure reconnecting with his son. He’s also in post-production on an emotionally-charged documentary following the ongoing mining pollution in the Northern Territory.

Vanessa Abbott is a writer based in Melbourne.

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IMAGO MASTERCLASS

Mark Broadbent reports back from a European Federation of Cinematographers' (IMAGO) cinematography masterclass in Vienna, Austria – **by Mark Broadbent**



Greig Fraser ACS ASC (on right) interviewed at the IMAGO Masterclass in Austria - PHOTO Mark Broadbent

I spent January in Iceland shooting a personal photography project. Just before I left Australia I spotted a note in the National E-News about an IMAGO Cinematography Masterclass taking place in Vienna around the time I was due to head back home. With a quick chat with Ron Johanson OAM ASC, a bit of flight wrangling and Airbnb booking I found my detour booked.

The event took place in a little theatre in the centre of Vienna and was set up as three days of half-day guest speaker/interview sessions as well as couple of social events. There were over 120 participants from 24 different countries.

First cab off the rank was Barry Ackroyd BSC (*The Hurt Locker*). Ackroyd began by focusing on his personal inspiration, the work of Chris Menges BSC ASC who worked primarily with Ken Loach. Films referenced included *Kes* (1969), *The Killing Fields* (1984) and *The Mission* (1986).

He went on to detail his own twenty-five-year-long collaboration with Loach and how the documentary style established in this time went on to influence his more recent feature work collaborating with directors such as Kathryn Bigelow (*Detroit*), Sean Penn (*The Last Face*) and Paul Greengrass (*Captain Phillips*).

One point Barry noted on several occasions was to “**discover your own voice in cinematography**”, emphasising that everyone is different and what works for one cinematographer may not work the same for you.

While not focusing too much on the technical side of shooting Ackroyd made particular note of various cinematography choices that influence the style of each film. Some of the memorable ones for me include the choice to go for 16mm and zooms on *The Hurt Locker*. This was to keep a strong documentary feel as well as allowing the three and four operators stay light and nimble in their movements. Alternatively, *Captain Phillips* employed a mixture of 16mm and 35mm. 16mm was used when shooting the pirates side of the story, while 35mm was saved for footage of the Western cargo ship and its characters. Aiming to give a different feel to both worlds; one is rough and dynamic, while the other is clean and controlled.

Another shoot that Ackroyd noted was his work on Greengrass' *United 93* (2006). The majority of the film set on a plane, and Greengrass wanted to create long, 40-50 minute takes in a time where standard 35mm mags ran

about four minutes. This was achieved by running two cameras simultaneously but with an offset start. When one ran out the Assistant Camera would grab one of the newly loaded mags that were spread under the airline seats along the length of the plane. One operator was working on a wider lens while another was shooting on a 24-290 hand-held with the assistance of a monopod holding up the lens!

The second day began with a session with Dan Laustsen ASC DFF (*The Shape of Water*) which was moderated by Laustsen's teacher from film school, Andreas Fischer-Hansen DFF. Laustsen began by discussing his path from a 22-year-old self-trained fashion photographer through to his current projects. With that was also the transition of working with a firm set of photographic 'rules' to a place where his shooting is a lot more dynamic with a greater level of freedom afforded to him.

Laustsen screened sections of *Crimson Peak* (2015), *John Wick: Chapter 2* (2016) and *The Shape of Water* (2017), going into detail on his approach to shooting a number of the scenes. One story that I found interesting was the bus travel scenes in *The Shape of Water*. These were shot before principle photography and were originally meant



Jan Weincke DFF, Astrid Heubrandtner AAC and Ron Johanson OAM ACS in Vienna, Austria - PHOTO Mark Broadbent

as camera, lighting and makeup tests. Once the editing began these scenes became important in character development. Laustsen's note on this was to always do 100%, because even though you think you're just shooting a few tests and a shot for a montage it may grow further down the line.

Day three began with a session by Maryse Alberti (*The Wrestler*). This started with some background of her early career which included two years as a rock and roll photographer while shooting stills on adult movies. ***“That was my film school, because at the sets I met a lot of students for NYU and Columbia University”***, she explained.

While Alberti did go into some detail on shooting projects like *The Wrestler*, *Creed* and *Chappaquiddick* she tended to lean more towards thoughts of advice, inspiration and looking at the overall cinematic feel of a project.

An audience member asked about being a woman working on 'male films' such as *Creed*. The reply, which I thought was fantastic, noted that gender didn't matter. She was a 60-year-old shooting a Rocky film for a talented, enthusiastic 27-year-old director and was having the professional time of her life.

The final session of the masterclass

was with Australia's own Greig Fraser ACS ASC. Fraser began the session discussing inspiration and 'anti-inspiration'. Whether when starting a film you should immerse yourself in similar films, artwork and photographs, or alternatively strip things back and keep your mind clear of these outside influences. Fraser will often not watch any movies while in the planning stages of a new film so he isn't accidentally or subconsciously influenced.

Some of the films covered by Fraser included *Let Me In* (2010), *Killing Them Softly* (2012), *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), *Foxcatcher* (2014), *Lion* (2016) and *Mary Magdalene* (2018). All these films had quite different aesthetic styles and Fraser went on to outline the stylistic and technical choices made on each. This included the use of large format digital, night vision units, ultra-high speed film cameras, LED lighting and custom lens options.

While *Rogue One* (2016) was covered briefly there was a very interesting little story from it, being given the task of lighting Darth Vader and the high-gloss helmet. Spending a lot of time coming up with a plan and arranging the construction of a 70ft x 100ft silk that was to be stitched in a particularly way where the seams would not be visible in the reflections. After all this work on

the day before the shoot the silk arrives and has been stitched the wrong way resulting in a very last minute re-think on shooting the scene. No matter what the budget and pre-production time, some things just don't go to plan.

Some final advice from Fraser was on the topic of technology. His thoughts were to ***“Embrace technology but don't let it rule you”***.

The two main points I took away from the sessions were that every cinematographer is different. We all have different approaches to our pre-production, lighting, crewing, equipment choices and working with directors. There is no wrong or right way, just what works for you. The second was a note that every speaker brought up; that was the importance of protecting and taking control of your images throughout the process. This is particularly important after the shoot where grading decisions are often done without discussion with the cinematographer.

The masterclass trip was well worth the effort. What I particularly enjoyed other than the sessions themselves was the discussion I had with a wide mix of ages and backgrounds of the participants from various parts of the world.

Mark Broadbent is a freelance cinematographer based in Brisbane.

OH CANADA

A life changing decision to pack up my life and give another country's film industry a go – **by Scott Kimber**



A scene from 'Unspeakable' - DOP Scott Kimber

Going to Canada had been something I was thinking about for a few years. Having heard the success of Brisbane camera department – Luke Barlow and Polly Piece – I was stuck between a rock and a rockier hard place. My film career in Australia wasn't taking off as I was hoping, so rather than have a whinge, I did something about it.

Being part of the Commonwealth of Nations means that us Aussies have it good when it comes to Work Visas. Of course, I'm talking about Canada. The easiest Visa to get is a Working Holiday Visa or IEC as it is now called today. I decided to apply, lots of forms and background checks and a traffic check if you live in Queensland. I received the Visa and once you obtain it you have twelve months to activate the two-year open work permit.

Every time I would plan on buying my plane ticket a job would come up and, of course, I was also on-board to shoot a feature where the start date kept getting pushed back. It was getting down to the wire; I had one month left to activate my Visa. The feature got pushed back again so I went for it. I booked my ticket with the plan of a holiday on the west coast of the United States. Then fly up to Vancouver, Canada, get the visa and

fly home and shoot the feature. When I emailed the production to inform them of my travel plans, I got the email no cinematographer wants to get... the producers have decided to look for someone with more experience. After many phone calls and emails, my job was given to someone else. Maybe this was a sign; a big sign to get going. So, I changed my return flights and told my then girlfriend that I was staying in Canada for five months. Lots of tissues.

After a road trip though the West Coast of America, I'm finally at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Once you've arrived, finding a place to live is like any rental game. I was extremely lucky that an old Brisbane friend let me crash on the futon while I looked for a place.

It was Dirk Foulger who suggested I join the local lighting union to get income while I look for camera gigs. In Vancouver's film industry, or 'North Hollywood' as it's called here, you're allowed to work in more than one department; a lot of crew do it and no one cares. But to work on any feature film or television series with a budget you have to be a union member. There is no way around it. There are different requirements for joining individual departments within each union.

Every union requires you to do a film orientation course; a two-day course about working in film and television, plus an exam at the end. Even if you've been in the business for decades, you still have to do it to work in Canada. Some of the great questions I encountered were, "***If I have an idea about a shot, should I go to the director and tell them about it?***" and "***What does it mean if my radio beeps twice?***". One thing I did learn was 'Unit Base' is called a 'Circus'.

After sitting a written lighting test I became a Permittee Member of the lighting union, which means I could only work after all the full members were working and I wasn't allowed to find my own work. After sixty days I could apply for full membership. The way this union, the IATSE Local 891, works is they have what's called 'The Hall'. When a department from that union needs crew they call the 'The Hall' and they do the ring around with its members to find someone. Whereas with the camera union, the IATSE Local 669, the production office or camera department looks up who's available and makes the call.

After joining, I just had to sit back and wait for the phone to ring. It only took two days before I was called out on an

urgent call to do rigging electrics on a tiny feature film called *Star Trek Beyond* (2016). It was on the other side of town, but I found a way to get out there without a car. Even though Vancouver has great public transport compared to Brisbane, you still need a car for film jobs. Early on I lost a few jobs for not having a car.

From day one on set, my biggest hurdle was learning a new lingo; as a spade ain't a spade. A 'baby', it turns out, is a 1K Fresnel. This did produce a lot of funny radio chats, "**What do you call it in Oz?**" Another big difference is the grips and electrics do all the cutting, bouncing and diffusion of light.

I landed a couple of corporate camera jobs, even went back to focus pulling for a day on an indie feature with Cheech Marin of *Cheech & Chong* fame. After a few months of constant lighting work, I was working my way up the permittee ladder and was getting known around town. It got so busy at one point that 'The Hall' would contact me with ten different job offers, leaving me to ask for the one closest to my house. I was getting close to my sixty days, but it was time for me to head home.

My girlfriend took me back when I returned, but she didn't like the news of me heading back so this time she came with me. Unfortunately, because we lived apart for more than three months our relationship ended according to the Canadian government. She could not get a Visa off mine, so was to become a housewife without being a wife. I did fix that by getting us engaged.

Back in Vancouver, I got back into lighting where I left off. Finding a lot of jobs; working on about thirty different features and television shows. I even had one stint where I worked on a different show every day for two weeks. It wasn't long before I was asked to join a lighting crew as a full-time member. From this, I was lucky to meet gaffer Mark Berlet - whose credits include *The X-Files* - and after a few chats I dropped the whole, "**I'm a cinematographer, actually**". News to me was that Berlet is a renowned Second Unit DOP on just about every television show he has been gaffer on, the list is quite long. After comparing show-reels and talking up my film career thus far, I was asked

the question, "**Are you going the join the camera union?**" He told me that if I got my membership, he'd get me out as camera operator on his next show.

One of the requirements to join the camera union, the IATSE Local 669, is that you are a permanent resident of Canada. I thought to myself, does applying for permanent residency count? Luckily for me, it only recently did. I was one the first to apply without having my permanent residency. Originally I was going to join as a cinematographer, but was advised to join as camera operator. If you joined as a cinematographer you cannot work as camera operator on a union show. As a camera operator, however, I could work as a Second Unit / Splinter DOP or as a cinematographer if I was invited to by the production. As well, when I moved up to cinematographer within the union I could still get operator work.

There are different processes for applying for each category, but for camera operator there are many requirements. Sixty days of credited work as an operator on studio television shows or features. Three letters of reference from cinematographers, directors or producers. Special thank you to Ron Johanson OAM ACS for your support. A video example of your latest work, plus the hefty joining fee. This is put to the membership committee and, after a phone call interview emphasising I will be

becoming a Permanent Resident of Canada, later that month I got the phone call I was hoping for... I was in.

I'm all ready for my first day as an operator, lots of handshakes and congrats from grips and electrics. Instead of being C-Camera on a second unit, I am bumped up to B-Camera on the main unit. Talk about being thrown in the deep end, the pressure is on. I put on my operators hat and it was just like riding a bike. After that, I became the resident C-Camera operator for that show plus, during a splinter unit day, I was able to get an upgrade to cinematographer with the show's creator as director. It was only the opening four shots of the entire whole show. No big deal.

After four long months of paperwork my wife and I were granted Permanent Residency of Canada in January of 2018. I will still always call myself an Australian and will endeavour to never lose my accent. I look forward, too, to the many trips home to shoot features and television shows in my own backyard; so don't rule me out for any jobs going. But for now, Canada is where I'm at and I look forward to the many adventures that will take hold. One day I may even get used to the rain. One day.

Scott Kimber is a cinematographer active in growing his craft and pushing the boundaries of his work.



The slate on season six of 'The 100' - PHOTO Scott Kimber

OUTDOORING

Los Angeles-based Australian cinematographer Samudranil Chatterjee shoots short film *Outdooring* for director Maxwell Addae – **by Slade Phillips**



Cinematographer Sam Chatterjee explaining a shot to Steadicam operator Will Lyte - PHOTO Ino Yang Popper

Writer/director Maxwell Addae, pitched the story for his short film *Outdooring* to cinematographer Sam Chatterjee in late 2017. **“This was our first project together,”** says Chatterjee. Both attended the American Film Institute (AFI) in Los Angeles, where the cinematographer is now based. **“We had chatted a lot about the type of films we like and the type of films Addae wants to make.”** Addae has said that for him coming out as gay was a time filled with fear and uncertainty. He wanted to tell a story that could portray those same feelings via a narrative.

The film sees a young Kobby (played by Keith Machekanyanga) arrive at his sister’s baby naming ceremony with a plan to steal money collected from family and friends, in order to run away and keep a personal secret hidden.

During pre-production, Addae had spoken about the idea of the environment engulfing Kobby. **“Initially this story was set in a house in a forest with tall trees that towered over our lead and made him feel small,”** says Chatterjee. **“When the location changed in the script, we tried to retain a similar concept using the width of the frame instead of height, to do something similar.”**

Chatterjee also wanted to be able to get as close as possible to Kobby for certain moments and carry a similar feeling. The team behind *Outdooring* decided on anamorphic lenses. **“We went in to The Camera Division and looked at some options for anamorphic lenses,”** explains the cinematographer. Both Maxwell and Chatterjee loved the distortion and softness that the Lomo Anamorphic Round Front Lens set provided. **“Going with these lenses also meant that we had a set of diopters always nearby.”** The crew did tests both for lenses and lighting; they were thankful to have their lead actors present for this as it set their choices in stone.

The team looked a lot at the films of Bradford Young ASC, especially on films such as *Pariah* (2011), *Mother of George* (2013) and *Selma* (2014). The work of cinematographer Ava Berkofsky on the film *Free in Deed* (2015) and the television series *Insecure* (2017-2018) were also important to Chatterjee in looking at how to light darker skin tones correctly and with good colour contrast.

“Both of these cinematographers light in a way where it never feels ‘lit’ or sourcey,” says Chatterjee. **“I found myself drawn to that a lot for**

this project as well as lighting skin tones faithfully and with range. I also looked into a lot of still photography work from Raghubir Singh, Alex Webb, Gordon Parks and William Eggleston for colour, shadow work and framing faces.”

From the script phase, Chatterjee wanted the look to evolve throughout the story just as the character’s arcs, motives and emotional journey changes. **“From a camera movement point of view, we really wanted to give the actors as much room as possible for performance and natural blocking,”** he says. They looked at films such as *Fishtank* (2009, cinematography by Robbie Ryan BSC) *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (2013, cinematography by Sofian El Fani), *Mommy* (2014, cinematography by André Turpin) and *American Honey* (2016, cinematography also by Robbie Ryan BSC) for their camera movement. **“We felt that similar style was integral to the performances in this film.”**

The cinematographer has high praise for his crew in the camera department. **“My gaffer and key grip are guys I went to AFI with,”** he says. **“Both Anton Fresco (Gaffer) and Yoni Shrira (Key Grip) are phenomenal**

Camera operator Brian Nguyen, first assistant camera Austin Kite with lead actor Keith Machekanyanga - PHOTO Ino Yang Popper



cinematographers themselves and were totally on board to lighting it the way we planned, which was to push the exposure and see reflections.

Chatterjee also worked very closely with the film's key make-up artist Maggie Murrieta, who was also there for the lighting tests and who he would constantly request on set for adding sheen to help pick up certain angled reflections as such, on the skin tones. ***"Quite often Murrieta would be part of the light shaping discussions along with Fresco and Shrira and definitely saved us more than once,"*** he says.

Outdooring was entirely shot on location. ***"We had a giant hall as well as a carpark that were the biggest challenges to light, especially on a budget,"*** says Chatterjee. ***"A big aspect of this film was to make sure Kobby could move around as freely as possible and have the camera follow him through this journey. It really opened us up to natural blocking and performances that I feel we would have been missing had we not utilised as much of the space as possible, especially for the more action driven scenes."***

For lighting night scenes Chatterjee and

his gaffer would use a phone torch at various angles to see where best they could catch reflections and accordingly move light sources to that angle. ***"We were mostly exposing 2-2.5 half stops under at almost all times, often adding neutral density in the camera,"*** he says. ***"The reflections made it feel like it was lit and helped us embrace the darkness a bit more."***

"I adore our final sequence in the film," says Chatterjee. ***"It was by far the hardest shooting day; at night, filled with action, a tonne of camera movements, a baby, a baby in a car, a giant carpark we had to light, it was summer and the sun set around 8pm, and with a location and permit that only allowed us to film until 1am."***

"Brian Nguyen, my operator, would find moments exactly to the taste of the scene and as chaotic as the scene feels in the final edit, it was done very precisely and with an eerie sense of quietness," Chatterjee explains.

For that night sequence, the crew spent around three hours setting up; lighting the space as the director blocked around four pages of action driven scene, rehearsed with stand-ins, broke for lunch and shot the whole scene in

around five hours. ***"It's some of the most happiest I've ever been shooting something,"*** he says.

Chatterjee was fairly involved in post-production on *Outdooring*. ***"Before filming, and after shooting lighting tests, I sat down with colourist Greg Strait at MTI Film,"*** he explains. ***"We looked at the test footage and built our own look-up tables (LUTs). I had sent him over the same sort of lighting and tonal references we had put together so that we were on the same page, and we built a daytime and a nighttime LUT we could use."***

"I felt it was good to have something that would carry over into post and throughout the long days and nights of the edit where often we as cinematographers can find ourselves slowly being shifted out of the look we might have originally been going for."

Outdooring recently received Official Selection at SXSW, and recently a Staff Pick on Vimeo.

Samudranil Chatterjee studied at Griffith Film School in Brisbane and the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. He has received numerous awards for his work.

Slade Phillips is a writer based in Brisbane.

WHERE IS MY LAMBORGHINI

Australian cinematographer Mark Hobz battles the heat and sand of the Middle East for a new reality show concept – **by Mark Hobz**



A scene from 'Where is my Lamborghini', filmed in Dubai - DOP Mark Hobz

Where is my Lamborghini?, or 'WIML' as we came to call it, is a new concept that merges mobile gaming into a casting for an action/adventure reality television series in Dubai to win your very own Lamborghini.

The television concept worked by having top gamers each week selected to a casting where eight were chosen to move forward onto the show. In the final episode, one lucky person would walk away with a Lamborghini Huracan. Second place being an Audi R8, not bad huh? The entire project was a pilot, being a new hybrid of mobile gaming and television. There were no proven results that it worked, so for a pilot you could say this was quite ambitious.

Having lived in Finland for nine years after my original move from Australia in 2009, I came into the Scandinavian film world where I networked with gaming producer Perttu Saarela and award-winning director Pete Veijalainen. With several projects together and a growing friendship, we were introduced in 2017 to *WIML*. We began pre-production on the mobile gaming concept and how it would integrate winning gamers into reality television stars and, eventually, Lamborghini owners.

Reality television being a very stale format in most regions of the world, we thought that the fit needed a facelift. With a name like Lamborghini and a film location like Dubai, Veijalainen and I thought that we needed to go a step higher from your typical Electronic News Gathering (ENG) setups. I wanted to run with the Sony FS7s for budgetary reasons, however Veijalainen didn't like the 'Sony look' and thought we needed to remember this was, as he put it, "**Dubai plus Lamborghini.**" Our selection consisted of ARRI Amiras and Minis because of the post-production ease of in-camera ProRes, as well as the in-built neutral-density filters for the field.

Even with such an ambitious vision there is a budget, and we were lucky enough that the concept was so new and unique that rental houses were willing to help with our budget needs. Icon Art Production in Dubai, who have supplied some of Bollywood's craziest demands, were willing to fit our needs and supplies to the best that they could. In the end our kits on the photography days were ARRIs and REDs of all assortments. When it came to glass, Zak Zorro at Icon Art supported the director's vision and gave us kits of Aurulas, Optimos, Master Primes and

Ultra Primes to cover all of our cameras. Little did we know, however, that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had all the technology to offer but not the person-power.

After one year of concept and development it was time to begin pre-production for the television show which began in mid-2018 in our home base of Helsinki, Finland. I was at the time filming a feature in Iran which made pre-production quite difficult being remote, but it well prepared me for the desert conditions I was about to face in Dubai some months later.

"...on the majority of days I required between eight and sixteen cameras on set..."

Big locations, massive challenges for the contestants along with producers and a director wanting the challenges to be non-scripted; all offered little chance for re-takes and simply having one chance to get all the shots during these challenges. To execute this, on the majority of days I required between eight and sixteen cameras on set, most being the ARRI Alexa Mini. With



Director Pete Veijalainen and cinematographer Mark Hobz on location with a buried Lamborghini - PHOTO Supplied

the shortage of camera operators in Dubai, I was forced to hire four other experienced cinematographers - Alessandro Martella from Italy, Hani Talat from Egypt, Amir G'nia from Iran and Tom Lebaric -from Croatia - to ensure that the different camera stations I had mapped out were all being framed and exposed correctly and someone was micro-managing the small teams scattered across the challenge locations.

I'm heavy on planning. I usually prepare pre-visualisations in Unreal Engine and mud-maps for setups. This is one production where all of these tools really came into play. With various cameras being very remote and only relying sometimes on the trust of who is on camera when the video signal and radio drops out, it was so important to have all the prepared documents ready for my camera team. Every day entailed a sit down with the whole camera crew and going over plans with my four other cinematographers. With the bigger days and assortments of gear I tried to maintain all exteriors at T4-T5.6 and interiors at T2.8-T4.

One of our trickiest challenges was in Dubai Mall, and with the strict film

regulations here, we were not allowed at all to use anything larger than a DSLR due to security and public liability issues. The director was still stuck on an aversion to the 'Sony look' and we ran with the new GH5s with 10bit 4K internal recording, and Leica glass. We were very surprised with the results during post-production, the colourist did an amazing job with colour matching. Post-production was done at Mile Studios under Leo Joseph, the colorist was Lulian Papaghiuc.

If you have ever been to Dubai between August and October you would know its hot. Temperatures were reaching above 58°C. Some days it was so hot that you needed to ensure your camera handles were taped up or wrapped in rubber as any metal housings or grips just get too hot to handle. With the heat and the sandy conditions, most gear needed to be cleaned down properly after each day. You would be surprised where desert sand ends up; lens mounts, filter trays, magic arms, even memory cards that have been inside a sealed bag the entire day.

Some of our challenges required tracking vehicles and underwater shots. With special thanks to Irene Proimos

at Dubai Film, they supplied us with Gates housings, Alexa Minis and Master Primes for the underwater shots and an Ultimate Arm with a Spacecam Maximus 7 head mounted on a Ford Raptor tracking vehicle. Fun to operate, not just because of the crew but because it had bloody air-conditioning!

After four episodes being filmed, two episodes edited and gamers already being cast and winning episodes... the CEO of our development company pulled the pin on the pilot and to hold any further development this year. Now the concept has been proven to work and the investors are happy, the 'real season' is expected to start principal photography in November this year.

Following the learning curve of the pilot season, I'd say what we could have done better is just the creation of the challenges and in making them less location heavy. It would have made the setups smaller and also team management far easier. Despite these issues, the results were a reality show which looks nothing like any reality show that has ever been shot before, and of which we can be proud.

Mark Hobz is an Australian cinematographer, steadicam operator and filmmaker.

ICE DIVER

Brisbane-based cinematographer Josh Zaini travels to the Arctic Circle to film world-record breaking ice dive by New Zealand's Ant Williams – **by Josh Zaini**



Josh Zaini filming freediver Ant Williams near the Arctic Circle in Norway - PHOTO Supplied

My business partner Matt Bamkin started speaking with New Zealand Freediver Ant Williams around two years ago. Williams had told Bamkin that he was going to attempt to break the world record for the deepest free dive under ice, which peaked our interest and they stayed in touch.

Fast forward two years and it's on. There we are standing in a frozen fjord in the northern tip of Norway, watching the dive crew cut into the ice with a chainsaw pulling out metre thick chunks of ice.

Staying in a Russian border-town called Kirkenes, we shared a large house with the entire dive crew; dive experts, safety divers, medics, doctors and Williams' tech team coming from all over the world to help Williams achieve his goal. The dive site with a portable sauna and heated medic tent was a twenty minute Ski-Doo ride from our accommodation.

Our vision for the film was just to tell this incredible story in a way that we haven't seen before. The location was stunning, the team were amazing and the story was one of a kind. We had a rare opportunity to capture this great feat of human endurance and bravery in a unique way. We went into the project completely free to make whatever we wanted, meaning the opportunity was too good to pass up.

An interesting aspect of the creative process were our discussions surrounding what would happen if Williams didn't make it. This was a particularly dangerous attempt,

and although every precaution was taken if something happened to Williams at depth then there was a real chance he wouldn't be seen again. He was down there by himself, in pitch-black darkness, with no safety net. Williams assured us that we were well aware of the risks involved and instructed us to finish the film regardless of the outcome.

Planning a shoot in an area as remote and brutally cold can be a challenge. There were no backups in terms of our gear breaking down. The closest city was Oslo, and it wasn't around the corner. We researched what cameras and lenses we wanted to shoot with. They needed to be rugged and reliable but also be capable of shooting the images we were after.

We ended up going with our ARRI Alexa Mini and Zeiss CP3 combination, which I have to say went off without a hitch after being put to the test. That camera can handle anything! It looks amazing and it's super robust. The only dramas we had with gear was on a particularly cold day our Teradek Links temporarily froze. A bit of heat from the fireplace that night sorted it out and they were fine the next day.

We went back and forth on underwater filming for a long time. Williams was diving so deep, eighty metres under the ice, and coming back up so fast it was proving to be difficult to cover the dive with Scuba. We looked into different submersible vehicles, but due to the remote location it was proving to be a very costly exercise.

We ended up going with a guy called Jonathan Sunnex, who is the world champion free diver in his own right and happens to be a great cinematographer. He was already attached to the project as a safety diver for Williams. It was the perfect solution as he would capture the dive as far as he could before Williams fell into complete darkness, about fifteen metres due to the thickness of the ice, and then shoot a bunch of pickups after the dive.

For the rest of the dive we had cameras with LED lights mounted to Williams' body and we cut a separate hole in the ice and mounted a camera on a platform with two LED lights attached to a pulley system at around eighty metres to capture the moment he touched the bottom.

We ended up doing pretty massive days, just because the place was so beautiful and there was so much to capture. Outside of the dive itself were some amazing landscapes and just beauty everywhere, which of course required filming sunrise to sunset.

Bamkin and myself are both right across the post-production process. We are still in offline at the time of writing this, but we are really happy with how it's turned out. The Alexa Mini absolutely shone in the environment and the underwater vision looks amazing. We can't wait for everyone to see it.

The film *Ice Diver* will be released in July.

Josh Zaini is a director and cinematographer from Brisbane who works for Light + Shade Media.

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Sister Iphigenia (Essie Davis), Sister Margarita (Ann Dowd) and Sister Carla (Jessica Barden) in 'Lambs of God' -
DOP Don McAlpine ACS ASC, PHOTO Mark Rogers

LAMBS OF GOD

Academy Award-nominated cinematographer
Don McAlpine ACS ASC (*Moulin Rouge!*)
speaks to the magazine about
returning to television for the much-anticipated
new Foxtel series *Lambs of God*.

- by *James Cunningham*



Actress Ann Dowd listening to director Jeffrey Walker, on location filming 'Lambs of God' - PHOTO Mark Rogers

Lambs of God, the new Australian television drama series coming to Foxtel's Showcase, was adapted from Marele Day's novel of the same name about three eccentric nuns living on a secluded and remote island. Forgotten by time and the Catholic Church they are forced to defend their way of life when a priest, Father Ignatius, unwittingly finds them. An epic gothic drama ensues about love, faith and redemption.

When Day's books was released, The New York Times called it an **"unworldly, otherworldly story, by turns affecting and humorous and always absorbing,"** while, closer to home Melbourne's The Sunday Age said it was **"a novel of wit, suspense and surprises, a disconcerting and potent combination of element."**

The director behind *Lambs of God*, Jeffrey Walker, had previously worked with cinematographer Don McAlpine ACS ASC on the film *Ali's Wedding* in 2017. McAlpine is a legend in cinematography circles, having been behind such beloved and revered films as *My Brilliant Career* (1979), *Breaker Morant* (1980), *Predator* (1987), *Patriot Games* (1992), *Mrs Doubtfire* (1993), *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009) and *The Dressmaker* (2015) among many others.

Walker had a long list of credits directing for television when he sought out McAlpine to shoot *Ali's Wedding*. **"For some reason, Walker seemed particularly keen for me to shoot this feature film,"** says McAlpine. **"His persistence was infectious and I believed the script was both important and**

entertaining." Produced by Matchbox Pictures, *Ali's Wedding* was about as low budget one could get on a professionally structured production, McAlpine explains. **"My experience both with Walker and on the production was particularly rewarding in that whatever I contributed was both appreciated and understood."** Walker went on to express his wish to work with McAlpine again, and *Lambs of God* was that opportunity.

Prior to working with Walker, McAlpine had been doing his research on the Panasonic VariCam 35. **"The particular specification of a usable 5000 ISO intrigued this old cinematographer who had spent a lifetime excessively illuminating sets and subjects while at the same time trying to achieve a particular look... mostly naturalistic,"** says McAlpine. A series of comparative tests were carried out with the assistance of Panavision. **"I believed I had found a camera that could help me shoot more effectively."** McAlpine carried this experience into the selection of equipment for *Lambs of God*. **"As I have told the people at Panasonic I will continue to use their camera until I find something better."**

Filmed at spectacular locations in the Blue Mountains, the New South Wales south coast as well as across Tasmania, *Lambs of God* appears rich, moody, visually impressive and an immersive viewing experience. **"I have often confessed that half the praise that I receive should go to the production design,"** says McAlpine. **"This series is a classical example of that."**



A scene from the new Foxtel series 'Lambs of God' - DOP Don McAlpine ACS ASC, PHOTO Mark Rogers

“Like any successful production I have been part of, once one has the script and a cast it is the ‘trinity’ of director, cinematographer and production designer who actually make the movie,” says McAlpine. ***“I do understand the pressures and limitations on the production side and I do understand the massive contribution a gifted editor contributes. Music, grading and distribution are critical. However we three must produce the diamond before it is cut.”***

Production designer Chris Kennedy (*The Proposition, The Water Diviner, Lion*), was particularly involved in every facet of *Lambs of God*. ***“Kennedy’s ability on this production was to ensure that every dollar of budget was on the screen. His designs always considered what the camera would frame,”*** explains McAlpine. ***“His empathy for the story is visible in many frames throughout the series. He produced very fine sets for the nunnery interiors.”***

The work was divided between studio filming, at Fox Studios in Sydney, at locations around Sydney and also on Mount Wilson in Tasmania. ***“The bulk of the exterior work was shot mid-winter on Mount Wilson,”*** says McAlpine. ***“Visually fantastic, but physically freezing.”***

“Initially on reading the script I see a complete piece,” says McAlpine. ***“Inevitably, what I see is amended by the director, production designer, performance of the cast and a host of minor factors from budget to weather. This series depicts two worlds and, I believe, we used the contrast***

between the two to enhance the believability of both.”

The cinematographer last had a television assignment back in 1970. ***“Out of arrogance I vowed I would never go back to television,”*** he says. ***“In truth, my working pattern on this was little different from a normal film production.”*** This seems to be a trend and consensus among television crews the world over; television is becoming more and more ‘like film’.

Lambs of God runs over four one-hour episodes, however was filmed as one continuous piece with the same director and crew for the whole production. ***“I believe there was an efficiency, an economy in time as well as a unity of vision throughout this production.”***

Simon Harding was A-Camera operator on *Lambs of God*. ***“His energy and ability was fantastic,”*** says McAlpine. ***“He was the power and the force with the director at the coalface.”*** Brett Matthews was first assistant focus puller with ‘the gift’, continues McAlpine. ***“It is a rare gift that I have experienced maybe half a dozen times in my career where a focus puller intuitively knows what’s in focus.”*** Ben Dugard, gaffer and Toby Copping, key grip, provided the cinematographer with excellent support.

“Video assist, some claim, make everything easy,” says the cinematographer. ***“In truth, it only verifies all my mistakes!”***

During pre-production McAlpine sensed a concern that as a ‘non-operating cinematographer’ he might be struggling to





Father Ignatius (Sam Reid) and the nuns in a candlelit scene from 'Lambs of God' - DOP Don McAlpine ACS ASC, PHOTO Mark Rogers

contribute. He believes that with a production of this size and scope a cinematographer needs to be anticipating the lighting and camera placement, as well as - maybe more importantly, isolated from the forefront of production - assessing everyone's work, including his or her own. **"I was perpetually offering advice to the director, set dresser, gaffer and endlessly finding fault with my own work,"** says McAlpine.

"I have never been cinematographer on the more conventional television series, where crews alternate and maybe a series producer performs the task of visual continuity," says McAlpine. **"On this production the director, with a little help from his friends, maintained this vital continuity. I tried to walk a fine line between sustaining believability and visually enhancing the story. Each assignment evolves its own language. Once you find it, use it."**

Perhaps evoking a little from the process of filming *Barry Lyndon* (1975, cinematography by John Alcott BSC), the night interiors on *Lambs of God* were all fully lit by candlelight. **"I, like most mature cinematographers, have struggled for years to hide the shadow of the candlestick on the wall. No more!"**, says McAlpine. **"The advantages were many. You could relight a scene in seconds."**

McAlpine used four cameras to cover a tight four-shot and none of the lighting was compromised on any of the cameras. But it was these advantages that were insignificant compared to the inherent beauty and reality of the shots. **"I think that the performances took my work to a different level,"** says McAlpine. **"I produced some of the most satisfying work I have done in my career using practical candles on all these night interiors."**

The Panasonic 5000 ISO enabled McAlpine to do this without any visible loss of quality and gave the cinematographer a colour gamut that allowed him to put the candlelit flesh tones exactly where he wanted them. Another use of this 5000 ISO was anytime McAlpine was shooting normal 800 ISO and ran out of depth. **"I just used the extra 2.6 stops,"** he says. **"After four productions with this camera nobody has complained or even spotted the difference."**

Post-production for *Lambs of God* was done in Sydney with Cutting Edge providing the facilities and Dwaine Hyde as McAlpine's **"colourist, timer or grader"** the cinematographer explains. **"I don't think we have found the right word for this process yet. But very quickly Hyde understood how this piece should look,"** says McAlpine. **"His magic added another dimension."**

"For more than half my lifetime I was limited to simply be a critic of what a colour timer interpreted to be my film. Cinematographers never really 'participated' in that process," says McAlpine. **"It is amazing the results this step in post-production can achieve now. Today, cinematographers can and should be far more involved in this important step."**

Since the end of the last century McAlpine has been using a digital camera as a lighting and grading tool. **"For me, the transition to digital cinema, creatively, was very straightforward,"** he explains. **"Digital grading has changed my work considerably. I light and expose for the grade. I expose for the greatest latitude available for the result I want in post-production."**

McAlpine recently shot another project in New Delhi, India, and that production allowed him 4K RAW. **"The latitude appeared infinite. It wasn't; however the results were utterly fantastic."** After considerable arm-twisting, the producers allowed McAlpine to shoot *Lambs of God* in 4K, but not RAW. **"It gives you so many pretty pixels to play with. I believe those who oppose 4K RAW come from the same place as climate change deniers!"**

"After completing any production there is - if you're lucky - endless praise for what the production achieved," says McAlpine. **"This is basically a commercial imperative and, from my perspective, is always accepted with the value it deserves."**

"Having worked through the post-production and having a crew screening of two episodes in a cinema I think there was a synergy from all our contributors. Sarah Lambert's script, Jason Stevens as producer, Chris Kennedy as production designer as well as all the countless people who helped us along the way. It has not been often, in my career, that the accumulated effort far exceeds our individual inputs. This television series is a very fine piece of work."

One of McAlpine's final observations is that without Jeffrey Walker seeking out his help the cinematographer would have missed what he describes as a 'magnificent opportunity'. **"Walker has asked me to work on another production in the second half of this year,"** McAlpine says. **"From all I have said I hope the reader truly understands the belief I have in this director's ability in all areas of his craft."**

"It may be of interest to some of our younger cinematographers why an 85-year-old would still be taking work from them," he says. **"The experience of what I have done before is a minor factor. I truly believe that with age I have developed a far more personal approach to the work. My judgement is not cluttered with career or financial concerns. I am solely doing the job to please the director and myself."**

"Honestly, I still enjoy the challenge," McAlpine concludes. **"I will stop working when people stop sending me scripts."**

DonMcAlpine is a Milli Award-winning cinematographer who was inducted into the ACS Hall of Fame in 1997.

James Cunningham is the Editor of Australian Cinematographer Magazine.



Cinematographer Don McAlpine ACS ASC on the set of 'Lambs of God' - PHOTO Mark Rogers



FOREIGN CORRESPONDANT

Brazil's new president, Jair Bolsonaro, is cracking down on rampant crime, but many fear the 'Trump of the Tropics' is turning his country into a dangerous police state.

Reporter Sally Sara, along with cameramen **Greg Nelson** and **Matt Davis**, travel to Rio de Janeiro for the ABC's *Foreign Correspondent*.

- by *Fabio Ignacio Junior*



The Foreign Correspondent camera on Rio's famous Ipanema Beach - PHOTO Matt Davis



Holding a makeshift reflector next to reporter Sally Sara, on assignment for 'Foreign Correspondent' - PHOTO Matt Davis

Greg Nelson and Matt Davis are two of our country's most seasoned news and documentary cinematographers.

Nelson joined the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) as a camera operator and cinematographer twenty years ago, after nine years working in commercial television. ***"Most of my career has been in news and current affairs working across a variety of short and long form programs,"*** he says. Nelson's camerawork can be seen in documentaries including *The Killing Season*, *The House*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *Four Corners*, *Australian Story* and *Unravel*.

Davis joined the *Foreign Correspondent* team in 2015. ***"I was initially hired as a Producer,"*** says Davis. ***"My first two assignments were more traditional projects with the main camera operating an electronic news gathering style, with hints of my Canon C300 for stylistic purposes."***

#BlackLivesMatter (2016) put Nelson and Davis together for the first time as they made the wholesale move to working on Canon C300s. That program received two Walkley Award nominations, for Camera and International Journalism, as well as an AACTA nomination for Best Television Documentary.

Davis always had a close connection to Brazil through many of his friends. When Brazilian politician, and human rights activist Marielle Franco was assassinated over a year ago he began discussing the story with the ABC. Then along

came new Brazilian president, Jair Bolosnaro. ***"Yet another right-wing populist swept to power on the back of anti-establishment protest votes,"*** explains Davis. ***"We had seen a lot of this going on in the United States, but now Brazil had voted the so-called 'Trump of the Tropics' into power, and that was a story we wanted to tell."*** This became *Foreign Correspondent* episode 'The Battle for Rio'.

The brief was to report on the far right shift in Brazilian politics that saw a populist and, some would say, extremist politician elected President. What societal shifts were occurring and what political forces were at play to bring such a result? As always the report needs to relate back to an Australian audience. The pair's time filming in Brazil coincided with Carnival celebrations, which afforded them no shortage of filming opportunities and allowed them to bring together a lot of different characters into their story.

"The situation in Brazil is one that we'd been watching for some time," says Nelson. ***"The crackdown on crime in the lead up to the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, and the battles between police and crime gangs in the favelas particularly, were always stories that interested us. The political situation has parallels in many countries around the world right now."***

Filming an episode of *Foreign Correspondent* generally takes around ten days, plus travel. It's usually always as a core team



of three - producer, camera and reporter - supplemented with a good local 'fixer'. ***"Between all the filming commitments there's no down time for anyone,"*** says Nelson. ***"That's why it's always a pleasure to work with a visual reporter like Sally Sara, as well as a complementary shooter and producer like Davis. Both have a great eye. A two person crew affords us the opportunity for more coverage and the ability to split the team if circumstances or time demand it."***

Matt landed in Brazil a few days ahead of the other team members to set things up and do reconnaissance on locations. ***"Unfortunately, the final scene was shot on our last night so it was definitely a bit of a race to the end,"*** says Davis. As a team, Nelson and Davis are very confident of each other's skillset. On several occasions they did in fact split and capture different scenes. ***"This was particularly useful as Brazilians never seem to sleep,"*** he says.

Safety and security is always a concern filming in environments like favelas. Unique, poverty-stricken and unregulated slums and shantytowns located within or on the outskirts of the country's large cities, favelas are by far the most dangerous places for Westerners to visit in Brazil. If you've seen Fernando Meirelles' excellent and award-winning 2002 film *City of God* (cinematography by César Charlone), you know what the favelas mean. But favelas too can be vibrant, diverse, colourful and inviting; full of the friendly, kind-hearted and beautiful people that the country is made up of.

In Brazil, visiting and filming in the favelas is something that's considered from the very start of the production process. Davis met with a few different producers and journalists based in Rio who had experience working in these at times hostile environments. ***"Having good local contacts and fixers is absolutely essential for access,"*** says Nelson. ***"You can't just stroll on in with a camera so being able to make the***

initial approach and talk to the right people for access is crucial."

"It also introduces you to people and aspects of the story that might otherwise have stayed hidden," continues Nelson. ***"Obviously there are players on both sides of the story in Brazil who want to control the visuals but if you're friendly, observant and persistent, you'll get what you need."***

In advance the team developed a relationship with the story's characters and through them access was provided, although the crew was blocked several times from entering due to police raids targeting gangs. ***"It was quite a challenge to get the material we needed, but once we were inside the community we felt safe and welcome,"*** says Davis. ***"I did get robbed on the beach... go figure."***

Long form current affairs and documentary programs at the ABC have been shifting to super 35mm cameras for some time now. The television production unit had been using the Panasonic Varicam, until they were disbanded two years ago. *The Keating Interviews* (2013) was one of the first in-house news productions to use the Canon C300. When Nelson was asked to shoot *The Killing Season* (2015) along with Louie Eroglu ACS they both agreed that the C300 was the best option available at the time to fulfil the program brief.

"The success and style of that series led to a great deal of interest from program teams at the ABC looking to emulate our look for their own shows," says Nelson. Foreign Correspondent became one of the first ABC News programs to shift away from 2/3inch electronic news gathering cameras to Super 35mm. ***"Several programs had already been filmed with full-frame DSLRs but the Black Lives Matter episode, which was also the first time Davis, Sara and I worked together, was one of the first to use the C300."***





A drone shot, high above Ipanema Beach in Rio de Janeiro - PHOTO Matt Davis



Rio's famous Carnival parade in a scene from Foreign Correspondent's 'The Battle for Rio' - DOP Greg Nelson

That camera, which was inherited from the *The Killing Season* after it wrapped, was the only one we had in-house for a long time. Between Eroglu, Davis and Nelson it was rarely off the road between program assignments. It was not uncommon for it to arrive back in the office from a two week shoot in the morning and be out on a different overseas assignment that afternoon.

The Super 35mm cameras are far more commonplace today with a wide variety now used for news gathering, daily current affairs and long form programs like *Australian Story*. **"It can still be challenging to obtain a matching pair of cameras at the ABC for a job like this,"** says Nelson. For this story Nelson used a Sony FS7 Mark II with Fujinon MK Cine Zooms, and Davis a C300 Mark II with a Canon 18-80 Cine Zoom.

Most of *The Battle for Rio* was filmed using these cameras. Nelson also used his DJI Osmo Mini, which became very handy in less friendly environments, and both of them travelled with DJI Mavic Pros and the FiLMiC Pro app installed on their iPhones.

"Because of the speed we have to operate and the size of the team, lighting kits are tailored for each job," explains Nelson. **"On this program we had to stay small and light moving through crowds and favelas so we used a mix of Dracast and Aputure lights both for their size and output. They're affordable, quality lights."**

Where possible Davis prefers to run with available light and film with talent on the move. **"To be honest,"** adds Davis



Police watch over the favelas of Rio in Foreign Correspondent's 'The Battle for Rio' - DOP Matt Davis



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The favelas of Rio in Foreign Correspondent's 'The Battle for Rio' - DOP Matt Davis

“I don’t promote myself as a lighting cameraman in the traditional sense. Nelson is a very experienced operator so he was in charge of lighting our major interviews.”

While some current affairs programs still operate with dedicated sound recordists, *Foreign Correspondent* does not. ***“It’s a case of budgetary constrictions, not a disregard for the quality audio capture that good documentaries need,”*** says Nelson. ***“It means we have to work harder to get sound coverage from our characters and interviews, however it’s no replacement for a specialist and certainly compromises have to be made when catching sound.”***

“Carnival is such a feast, visually, it’s hard not for anyone not to be awestruck by the pageantry and spectacle of it all,” says Nelson. ***“Not just the main Sambadrome event but also the street parties or ‘blocos’ and the samba school rehearsals.”***

“Those final scenes at Carnival are absolutely stunning,” says Davis, ***“but I actually really love one transition in the story where we go from a favela rooftop barbecue to the Mangueira Samba School rehearsal. It is just so raw; all that energy, music, dance, skill and smiles, taking over a carpark as they prepared for the main event. At that point of the shoot I began to feel great. The build up to Carnival was a great series of events to anchor around and it certainly provided a cinematic climax to the story.”***

“Brazil, and Rio in particular, are such beautiful places but also full of extreme contrasts. Life in the favelas is hard but the people we met are making the most of the opportunities they get,” says Nelson.

As attached producer on this project Davis sees the project through to its completion in post-production, working closely with editor Leah Donovan and reporter Sally Sara. ***“There were so many layers to this project, I admit it was an extremely tough post,”*** says Davis. ***“We had to assume that people only know Brazil for football, samba and beaches. The political reality was always going to present a problem in scripting, but we got there!”***

The ABC has some of the best colourists around. In-house programs like *Foreign Correspondent*, *Australian Story* and *Four Corners*, among others, are truly a collaborative process. ***“Everyone takes ownership and brings something to the end result that makes it stand out,”*** says Nelson. From initial planning, through to the field shoot, editing and grading the program is always evolving with input from the team. Nelson and Davis are always taking and gathering stills and portraits as they go. The look of these can often help guide the edit and colouring process.

“The project received a colour grade and sound mix; a luxury that Foreign Correspondent is still allowed. I think our colourists, Simon Brazzalotto and Conor Bowes, do a remarkable job week in and week out,” says Davis.

“We have great editors at the ABC who can really unlock the potential of a program,” says Nelson. The look and style of a story is generally discussed and planned at the start of the editorial process, but that can evolve along the way as themes, locations and characters develop in the story. ***“Even though we move on to film other projects while post-production takes place, we’re always discussing and keeping***



A scene from Foreign Correspondent's 'The Battle for Rio' featuring Rio's Carnival parade - DOP Greg Nelson

across changes that may be necessary. Another aspect of the program that we're responsible for as field operators is the digital companion pieces that are rolled out online to accompany the program."

The assassination of Marielle Franco became such a strong theme throughout *The Battle for Rio* it provides a personal focus for the crime, political situation and upheaval in Brazil right now. **"The scale of the violence and societal clashes can be hard to gauge when you're just talking numbers, but to hear the impact from her friends and colleagues and to see the influence that she had posthumously on Carnival really brought the story together,"** says Nelson.

The whole team were successful in taking a complex issue and delivering a watchable, informative piece of international current affairs. **"It was not the easiest shoot, but in the end I think we captured a remarkable story,"** says Davis.

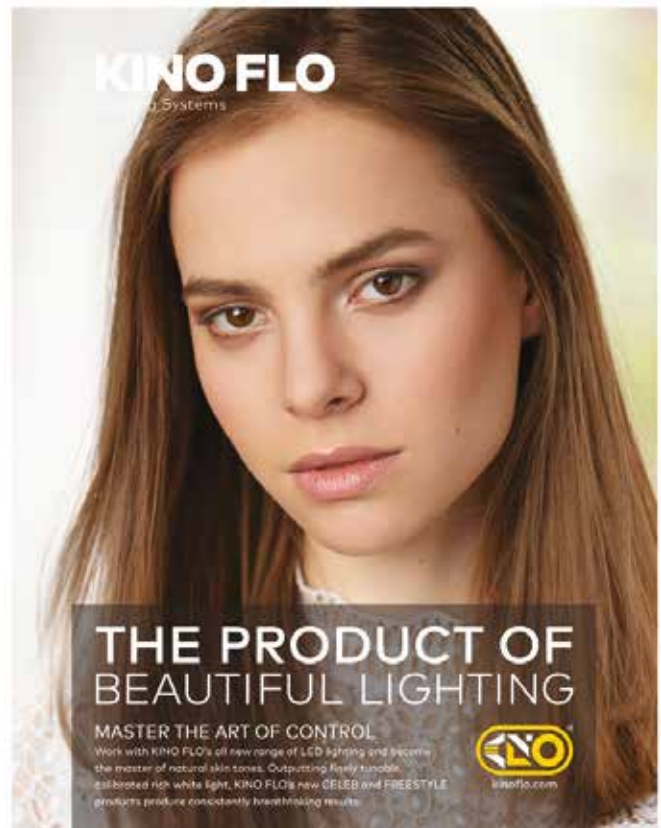
"Hate and fear killed Marielle Franco," says Nelson. **"No matter who pulled the trigger, she represented something that threatened ideology and power and that always encourages extremists to attack. Her killers actions though have only emboldened her supporters and friends to continue her legacy and bring about justice and change. Those effects are now starting to be felt in Brazil, one year on from her assassination."**

"Arrests have been made and there are some very interesting and concerning connections to Bolsonaro's family," concludes Davis. **"Dare I say: watch that space."**

Greg Nelson is a senior cameraman, editor and producer with the ABC.

Matt Davis is a producer and camera operator with the ABC.

Fabio Ignacio Junior is a Brazilian living in Australia, and a good friend of Australian Cinematographer Magazine.





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STANDING UP FOR SUNNY

Breaking Bad's RJ Mitte stars in a charming Australian romantic comedy about a loner with cerebral palsy roped into helping a friend overcome her shyness.

Premiering at the Sydney Film Festival this month, award-winning cinematographer **Mark Bliss ACK** is behind the camera on *Standing Up for Sunny*.

- by *Mark Bliss ACK*



Barry Humphries in 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK

My involvement with *Standing Up for Sunny* came through my early work with the film's producer, Jamie Hilton. I have lensed several music videos and short films for Hilton and he has been trying to get me on some of his other feature film projects before. It was usually my schedule that prevented us from working together earlier. This time the stars aligned and I am very happy for it.

Hilton send me the script; I read it in two hours and called him right away. Immediately a meeting was set up on Skype with the director, Steven Vidler. We hit it off, bounced some references around as well as quoting several films.

Even though *Standing Up for Sunny* has a very tight budget the decision on how and what to shoot on was left completely to me. Knowing the schedule was only going to be twenty days to shoot a feature I knew I needed a camera that would give me the flexibility to move fast and light fast.

The majority of the film was to be shot hand held so the size of the camera did matter a great deal too. I have shot on the ARRI Alexa extensively over the last ten years, and lately on the Alexa Mini, so I am well aware of how far you can push it. The added advantage for me was the fact that we shot RAW, giving us extra room to move.

We tested several different lens kits, one of them were Kowa Anamorphic, but in the end we settled upon the Cooke S4. The anamorphic, though visually stunning, would have been too difficult to work with and I think we made the right choice with the Cooke lenses. I was very fortunate not to be pressured into making a decision on financial grounds and for that I am very grateful to our producers.

Production designer Sherree Phillips and her team were working miracles with the budget. We compiled a scrap book of visual references. We would go through each location and



Travis (RJ Mitte) walks the streets of Newtown in 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK



Sunny (Phillippa Northeast) in a scene from 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK

discuss colours and styles. As the budget didn't allow us to repaint or redecorate locations completely we would take our queue from the locations, trying to colour balance our props and wardrobe according to the location's colour scheme.

The pre-production process on a film of this size means there's no room for error. All of our departments worked closely. As we were making a 'contemporary story' our look was dictated by the story. Inner-city student feel, if that makes sense.

The look of the film was discussed and referenced with Vidler and Phillips on several occasions. Phillips created a 'style book' with hundreds of photos of everything and anything that was related to *Standing Up for Sunny*. Interiors, exteriors, bedrooms, kitchens, vehicles, signage, lighting fixtures, props... the lot. The film is a romantic comedy, so the idea was to keep the look clean and not get overly stylised as that

could detract from the story. Our approach was to keep the lighting and styling of the film truthful to the situations and locations where we filmed.

I have been based in Europe for the past ten years. So much of my regular crew I used back in the day had moved on or were no longer in the industry. The only person with whom I had working history was key grip Kris Wallis. Both Wallis and Colin McAlpine were real troopers. My focus puller was Michael Pickells, with whom I had worked on commercials before.

The surprise of the package was my gaffer Stefan Fidirikos. I met him about a week into the pre-production and we hit it off right away. Fidirikos immediately understood what was needed and how to get it. We also had several camera trainees with us which was of great help, especially when we needed to shoot with two cameras for crowd scenes.

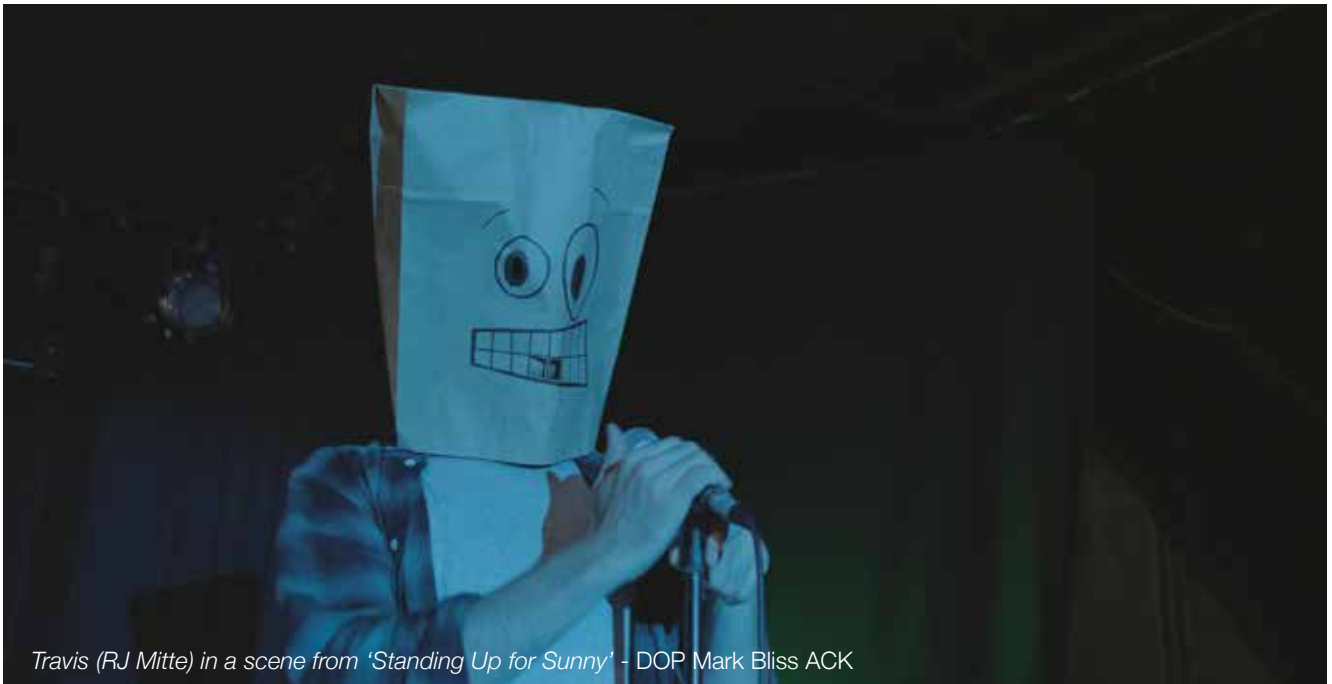


Gordo (Italia Hunt) busking in a scene from 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK





Sunny (Phillippa Northeast) and Travis (RJ Mitte) in a scene from 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK, PHOTO Supplied



Travis (RJ Mitte) in a scene from 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK

When we used two cameras I would operate A-Camera and Michael Pickells would operate B-Camera. Focus duties were divided between second assistant camera Louis Lau along with one of our camera trainees, Enna-Jay Curcuruto or Jordan Benjamin, who did amazingly well considering their inexperience.

I also need to mention Sam Winzar who was our data wrangler. Sam kept on top of things and would give me feedback during the day on the data. Everyone on the team had their work cut out as we had a slimmed down crew. Fidirikos only had one best boy to work with and at the beginning. I was concerned as the schedule was very tight and didn't allow for too much play. My concerns were disposed of very quickly with Fidirikos, and later Hamish Hardy, breaking world records in lighting set ups.

It would be hard to point out a single shot as my favourite

in the film. We didn't have any intricate crane or Steadicam shots. We had no grand locations with moody lighting. However there is one sequence that really sticks in my mind. Sunny (Philippa Northeast) and Travis (RJ Mitte) are rehearsing her stand-up routine and Sunny talks about her childhood, peeling away the hard shell and exposing herself in full light. It was their acting, rather than just my cinematography, which made this scene stand out for me.

In shooting moments of comedy the aim was to give our actors as much space to perform so most of our lighting came from outside and from practical sources within our sets. I wanted to maximise the time for actors by thinking ahead and having lighting fixtures in a way that could be changed within minutes as we would change for different angle or coverage of any given scene.

We would watch the rehearsal, I would suggest coverage of



A scene from 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK



Sunny and her sister in a scene from 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK

the scene, the director would point out his driving point for the scene and we would simply set about doing it. As most of the film was hand-held we were able to change angles fast. I would do slight changes on consequent takes so we'd have more angles. Building upon years of experience you know exactly how to go about covering a scene and maximising your shooting time.

One of my aims is to shoot as much of the look on the day and do as little as possible during the colour grading process, and my own schedule took me back to Europe following the *Standing Up for Sunny* shoot. When it came to grading the options for me were quite limited. Unless a project would take me to Australia it was all about communicating with the post house. We were fortunate enough to have Jamie Hediger, from Spectrum Films, as the film's colourist. We exchanged numerous emails and pictures that I would grade in Photoshop. He would send back single frames from

every scene. I would review, make notes and send it back. Fortunately the director would come in and sit in with Hediger on the grade.

From my perspective we managed to achieve what we set out to do, *Standing Up for Sunny* is a comedy and it will be now up to the audience to judge whether we succeeded or not in that respect. There were times when I had to keep myself from laughing on the set. Would I do anything differently? I wouldn't change anything. We worked very, very hard on this film and we tried our outmost best, every day. The crew and cast put their hearts into it and I am very proud to have been part of it.

.....

Mark Bliss ACK studied cinematography under Terry Byrne ACS at North Sydney College. He is an accredited member of the Association of Czech Cinematographers (ACK).



Sunny fixes Travis' car in a scene from 'Standing Up for Sunny' - DOP Mark Bliss ACK

GLITCH

With new characters, shocking twists and unexpected turns, season three of the Logie and AACTA winning ABC and Netflix paranormal drama series *Glitch* will keep viewers on the edge of their seats for one final epic chapter.

Cinematographer **Aaron McLisky** chats to us about his time behind the camera.

- *by James Cunningham*





Cinematographer Aaron McLisky filming 'Glitch' - PHOTO Ben King

It was early in 2018 when cinematographer Aaron McLisky was working with Executive Producer Julie Eckersley, from Matchbox Pictures, on season three of *The Family Law*. Matchbox was seeking a director of photography for the third season of *Glitch* and Eckersley suggested to director Emma Freeman that she take a look at McLisky's work.

"I was asked to do a Skype interview with Freeman," says McLisky. "We discussed her approach to the show and shared ideas for the season three. It was more like an informal chat than an interview. I remember we immediately had good chemistry and agreed on many things about the show."

McLisky was a fan of *Glitch* well before getting the job, so felt privileged to maintain a look that was loved by its fans and creative team. Freeman and McLisky discussed the show's look and how important it was to maintain a continuity, but discussed how it evolved from season to season.

"We noted the work Simon Chapman ACS had done with season one, setting the tone and palate for the world of Yoorana (the fictional town the series is set in)," McLisky explains. "We also discussed the tension and claustrophobia that Earl Dresner ACS achieved with tighter lensing and coverage style in the second season."



Sean Keenan in a scene from 'Glitch' - DOP Aaron McLisky,



Behind-the-scenes during a night time cemetery shoot for 'Glitch' - PHOTO Ben King

Returning for season three is the extraordinary *Glitch* ensemble cast including Patrick Brammall, Emma Booth, Rodger Corser and Sean Keenan among others. This season also welcomes new cast members including Jessica Faulkner, Harry Tseng and Jackson Gallagher.

Within the third season the characters leave Yoorana and head to the city, presenting a new world to design a look for. With the collaboration of writer and showrunner Louise Fox, Freeman and McLisky shared references and built a style guide for the new season. ***“I would describe the evolved approach as embracing dirty colour and heavier contrast,***

deepening the shadows while maintaining heat in the highlights,” says McLisky. ***“I was excited to play with colour in the season and push the darkness to an unsettling place.”***

“I was excited to play with colour in the season and push the darkness to an unsettling place.”



A scene from 'Glitch' - DOP Aaron McLisky





Behind-the-scenes on 'Glitch' - PHOTO Ben King



Cinematographer Aaron McLisky gets wet, on location with 'Glitch' PHOTO Ben King

“During pre-production I had my heart set on using the ARRI Alexa, however due to Netflix’s 4K requirements my hand was forced,” says McLisky, who tested the new Sony Venice versus the Red Dragon. ***“I did a side-by-side comparison, working with colourist Marcus Smith at Blue Post to define the pros and cons of both camera systems.”***

“Knowing that I was going to mix various skin tones with urban practicals, I was pleased to see how the Sony Venice dealt with colour separation,” says McLisky. ***“In comparison to the Red, it seemed to hold those tricky hues that sometimes breakup with digital sensors.”*** As the show is largely set at night, having the ability to switch the sensor to a native 2500 ISO feature, McLisky could reduce his lamp size and build larger coverage plans.

“In terms of lensing, I wanted versatility of speed and minimal contrast,” he says. ***“I settled with the ARRI Master Primes as I felt they held sharpness and have a lovely rolloff.”***

The shoot was in Melbourne, and McLisky wasn't familiar with local crews. He spent a lot of time during pre-production interviewing and trying to build a team that had the right balance of experience and personality. ***“I was incredibly proud of my camera department who soldiered on through some of the most technically and logistically challenging times,”*** he says. ***“With this project the combination of an ambitious schedule and heavy night shooting really brought us together.”***

The crew shot mainly locations or repurposed locations to

achieve 'glitch' moments. When characters experience a 'glitch' they shift in time or place to learn clues about who they are and how they died.

“In order to achieve this we would shoot scenes that would transform in time or place,” says McLisky. ***“This made scheduling tricky as we would repurpose characters and props that slide between worlds. This was only made more challenging with our consistently high page count that included stunts and action sequences.”*** With a shooting schedule like a jigsaw puzzle, first assistant director Todd Embling made sense of it all.

“I can’t speak highly enough of my B-Camera and Steadicam operator Heath Kerr, who through thick and thin maintained a sense of humour and focus that kept us going,” says McLisky. ***“My first assistant camera, Chris Braga, was a solid asset throughout the shoot. The whole camera department deserve endless thanks for having to adapt to the relentless pace of this shoot.”***

The cinematographer also makes special mention of his gripping and lighting teams. ***“My key grip Dan Mitton was a dream to work with, constantly offering alternative solutions such as ‘The Juzell’ where his best boy wore a Steadicam vest with a stabilised head to get running shots through dense bush. My Gaffer Steve Price who always kept the craft alive whilst running his team like a drill sergeant, only to stop in moments of pressure to break the tension with a song.”***

Although most of the crew's time was utilised on location,



The crew of 'Glitch' on location - PHOTO Ben King

some of the *Glitch* sequences required built sets. Production designer Paddy Reardon often spent his weekends hand-building sets and props. The most complicated was a Chinese mining camp from the eighteen hundreds that spanned nearly thirty meters.

“In terms of lensing, I wanted versatility of speed and minimal contrast.”

“I think the Chinese mining camp was one of my favourite sets to shoot as the art department had done such an incredible job creating a sprawling period scene that felt like it deserved its own series,” says McLisky. *“There was also a complicated fire sequence at the cemetery that was a personal favourite.”*

McLisky knew it was impossible to create a fire big enough that would satisfy the drama; he needed to create a source of light that emulated it. So, taking inspiration from the fire rig in *Skyfall* (2012, cinematography by Roger Deakins CBE BSC ASC), they built lighting into the trees that surrounded the cemetery, creating a large enough source to imitate the characteristics of fire.

“We had about ten 2k Blondies and ten Par Cans with 1/4 CTO, plus four 5k Pars on a chase that spanned about fifty meters into the bush,” he explains. *“We used controlled*

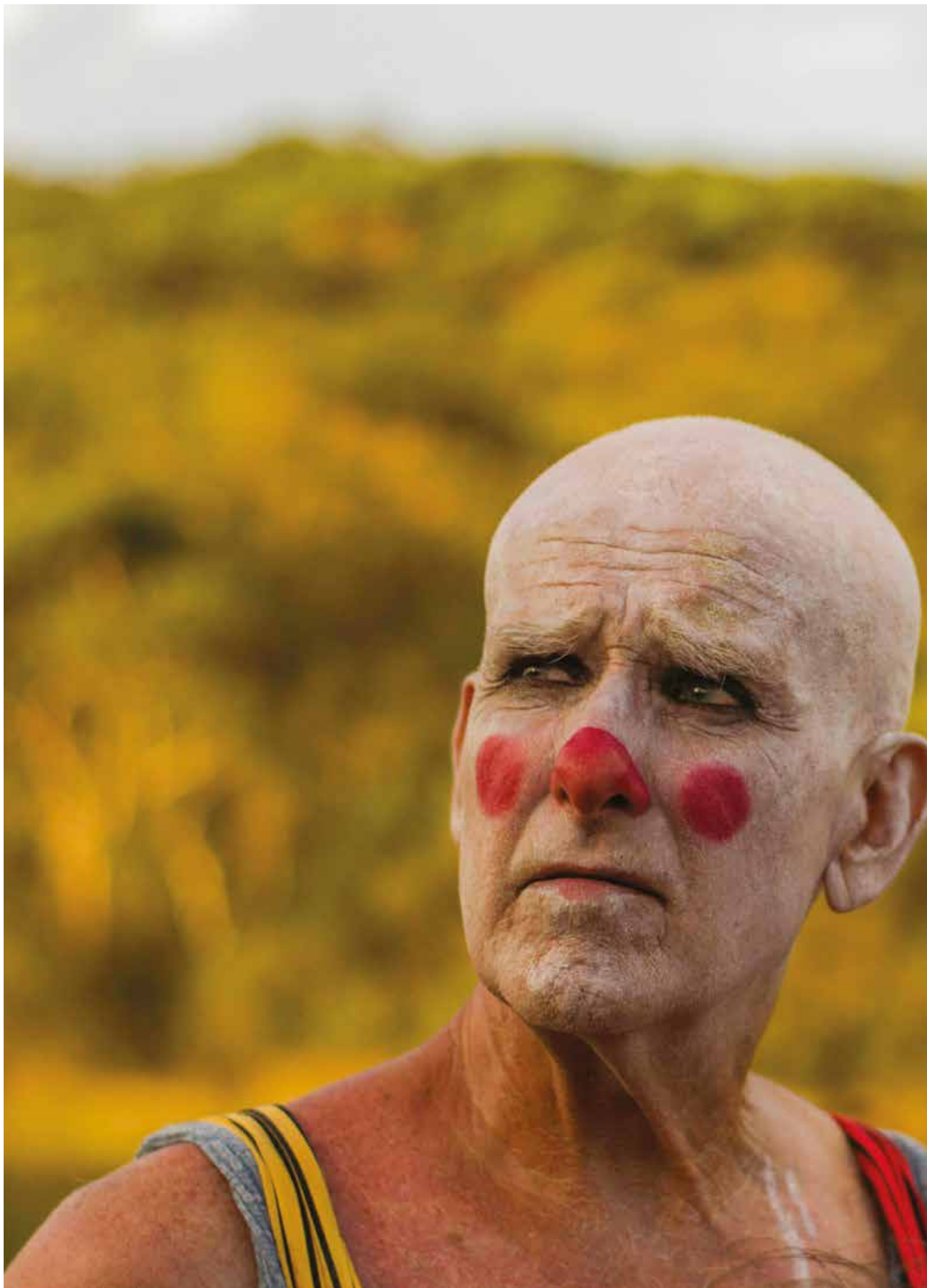
gas fires closer to the actors to give real fire light for close ups. Then we had a 4K and two M18 on three scissor lifts providing hard and soft moonlight. I have not seen the final sequence with all the elements but from early visual effects passes it looks pretty impressive with the budget we had.”

McLisky was involved in the grading process from the beginning, having done a lot of groundwork in pre-production with Marcus Smith from Blue Post. *“Smith and I used the look up table (LUT) we built for dailies as a jump off point,”* says McLisky. *“We ended up using a Frankenstein combination of film print emulation and ARRI colour curves to find a look that we felt suited the show. The Sony Venice was a great camera from a production perspective but it needed a bit of love in the grade.”*

“With the experience of the team and Emma Freeman at the helm, we managed to make things happen that still blow me away,” says McLisky. *“I am proud to say we achieved something special with the third season. If there was anything I would have done differently it would be to request for more time in pre-production, drink less coffee and sleep more. Other than that I am so humbled to be a part of such a significant Australian drama.”*

McLisky is now in pre-production for season two of *Mr Inbetween*, directed by Nash Edgerton, shooting in Sydney.

Aaron McLisky is a cinematographer whose recent credits include horror feature *The School*, season three of critically acclaimed SBS series *The Family Law* and short film *Nursery Rhymes* that won best cinematography at Flickerfest 2019.



REFLECTIONS IN THE DUST

Written and directed by **Luke Sullivan** and shot by cinematographer **Ryan Barry-Cotter**, the unique *Reflections in the Dust* is the chronicle of a relationship between a paranoid schizophrenic clown and his blind daughter.

We speak with both the director and cinematographer of this highly-original, independent Australian feature film.

- *by James Cunningham*



Freckles (Sarah Houbolt) and the Clown (Robin Royce Queree) in 'Reflections in the Dust' - DOP Ryan Barry Cotter

An unspoken event has caused civilisation to crumble. Survivors cluster in the wilderness. Among them is a blind girl (Sarah Houbolt), who struggles to survive, with her father (Robin Royce Queree), a paranoid schizophrenic clown.

As she dreams of what may exist beyond the wasteland, her father is increasingly consumed by fear, paranoia and hysteria. *Reflections in the Dust* is a powerful allegory for the epidemic of violence against women in Australia.

"I wanted audiences to experience the entrapment, claustrophobia, confusion and fear of those suffering domestic violence," says Director Luke Sullivan. ***"In many tragic circumstances the question 'Why didn't she leave?' is asked. The answer to that is very complex but is often based around entrapment and confusion."***

A mixture of factual interviews in vibrant colour, juxtaposed against the fictitious story in stark black and white, was intended to leave audiences unable to distinguish between reality and fiction. ***"I wanted to convey the feeling of disorientation often experienced by women suffering at the hands of an abuser,"*** continues Sullivan. ***"Claustrophobia conveyed by the camera's extreme, unwavering and literally in your face hand-held close ups."***

Sullivan had seen some of the work of cinematographer Ryan Barry-Cotter prior to starting pre-production and sent an unsolicited yet welcome email asking if he might consider shooting the film. ***"Sullivan thought my style and approach to visuals would be suited to the film,"*** Barry-Cotter explains. ***"Occasionally, you get lucky."***

"In my search for a cinematographer I googled and watched heaps of show reels," says Sullivan. ***"Ryan's avant-garde style caught my eye."*** The clip that sold the director on

Barry-Cotter's talent was actually a wedding video he'd shot. ***"It was so cinematic and beautiful it felt like the love was engulfing you. That's exactly what I wanted, not a wedding video, but someone who could transform the ordinary into an intoxicating, cinematic world."***

Once Barry-Cotter was secured as cinematographer, one of the first visual references that director Sullivan presented with was the stills photography of Sam Hiscox. ***"A raw, documentary style of portraiture,"*** he says. "The other major influence was the work of director Andrea Arnold OBE (Red Road, Fish Tank, American Honey), particularly her short film *Wasp* (2003, cinematography Robbie Ryan BSC). ***The camera had to be 'a witness'.***" says the cinematographer.

In their very first meeting Sullivan and Barry-Cotter walked around the location at Manly Dam, a heritage-listed former dam near Manly Vale, New South Wales. The pair talked about a range of cinematic influences, ***"not so much in terms of 'look' but in terms of mood and shooting philosophy,"*** says the cinematographer.

They both love Terrence Malick and the approach he used for *Tree of Life* (2011, cinematography by Emmanuel Lubezki AMC ASC). The film had a minimum budget and only had eight days to shoot. ***"We knew they would have to be fast and flexible,"*** says Barry-Cotter. ***"To create an environment on location that our actors could use and have the camera just follow them."***

Barry-Cotter had been working mostly in the beauty and fashion world, as well as exterior broadcast television up to this point in his career, and Sullivan would often encourage his cinematographer to be 'more wild' with his camera. ***"I had to fight my instincts on that,"*** he says.



Director Luke Sullivan speaks with actor Robin Royce Queree between takes on 'Reflections in the Dust' - PHOTO Angus Hoy

“I don’t think I understood how clever Sullivan was early in the shoot. I thought all these close-ups and abstract shots would never add up,” Barry-Cotter says. ***“The film is really a culmination of intense scenes. I had no idea how they would come together when I shot them, but I fell into a rhythm between the director and the actors.”***

As *Reflections in the Dust* was entirely daytime exteriors on a tight schedule, Barry-Cotter’s goal with his choice of camera was to get the most dynamic range and post-production flexibility available on their budget. ***“Obviously budget was a huge factor!”*** he says.

“Another key factor to consider was how the camera rendered motion, as the film was to be shot entirely handheld and Sullivan wanted some really wild moves,” he explains. ***“I wanted something that was comfortable and easy to operate too.”***

The team did camera tests on location with the lead actor Robin Royce Queree in makeup. ***“I tested the Sony F5 and the Blackmagic URSA Mini 4.6K,”*** he says. ***“I found the Blackmagic to be much closer to the look we wanted. I shot RAW 3:1 and rated it at 400 on location because I didn’t want to underexpose the sensor.”***

Lens wise, Barry-Cotter maintained the use of three lenses; 24mm, 35mm and 50mm Samyang Cine Primes. ***“Probably the best, cheap lenses ever made,”*** he says. ***“Generally, I tried to shoot at T2-3 but the extra stop came in handy when the days went long.”***

In one scene Barry-Cotter was convinced the footage would be unusable as the sky was almost dark and the actors were lit only by fire. ***“As far as my photography is concerned I was really proud of the fire scene,”*** he says. ***“It was a crazy***

moment to shoot. The sun was gone and I didn’t even know if the sensor could handle the light. It turned out amazingly well on the screen. Huge respect to what Blackmagic are doing.”

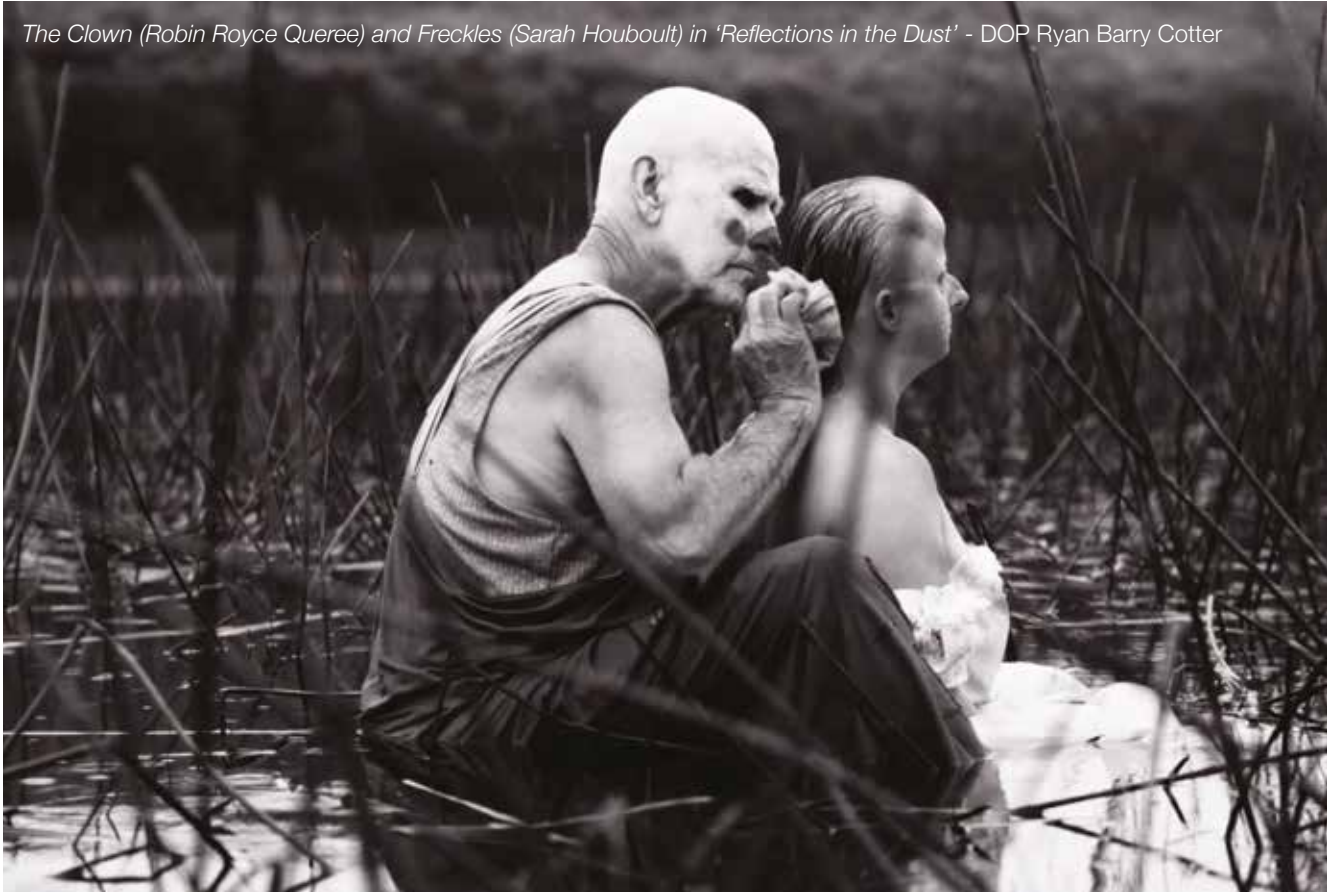
Both director Sullivan and first assistant director Giovanni De Santolo were very accommodating to Barry-Cotter in terms of a shooting schedule. The small crew would shoot all their wider sequences by the water at opportune times of the day, spending the middle of the day shooting close-ups or scenes deeper in the bush where light could be broken up.

“The schedule was very tight and the location was pretty unforgiving,” Barry-Cotter says. ***“The only shelter was a fifteen minute hike away so we had tarps and pelican cases at the ready for the equipment. I brought to location large vacuum bags, cutting them out to house the camera and viewfinder.”***

“The shooting days were really gruelling too,” says Sullivan. ***“Twelve and fourteen hour days, forty degree heat and Barry-Cotter with the camera on his shoulder. I knew our cinematographer was going to need strength, but he brought with him some super human stuff. I can’t thank him enough.”***

“In a small production like ours you really become a family,” Barry-Cotter says. ***“It’s really hard physically and mentally to perform, so we relied on each other to keep pushing on. I wish I had a photo of my boots from the shoot.”***

Barry-Cotter had by his side as first assistant camera, Alex Nyssan, who he says was young and keen. After the first morning of the shoot the cinematographer decided against continuing to use the wireless follow focus. ***“Our lead***



actress, Sarah Houbolt, was around five-feet tall so I had to hold the camera in some awkward positions,” he explains. **“I wound up pulling focus on the lens myself for the majority of the shoot.”**

Nysson had another job that clashed with the second half of the *Reflections in the Dust* shoot, meaning that first assistant camera duties fell to Ryan Lee. **“Lee was initially on the crew as our data wrangler, but he stepped up,”** Barry-Cotter explains. **“He was running cards, pulling focus, keeping the split up, putting up scrims, keeping everyone safe and loving it.”** Lee is shooting some himself now and Barry-Cotter hopes to work with him again in the future.

“The camera had to be a witness.”

One afternoon when cast and crew were shooting in the upper reaches of Manly Dam, Barry-Cotter was getting his close shots when he started to sink in the mud, camera on shoulder. **“I was on the other side of the creek,”** explains director Luke Sullivan. As he calmly began asking for help. The only people near him were the actors Sarah Houbolt and Aldo Fedato. **“Lucky he had the strength to hold the camera above his head just long enough for me to get over and grab it, otherwise that could have been a costly bloody disaster.”**

Post-production was completed at Roar Digital in Melbourne with Charlie Ellis as colourist. Ellis and I did a lot of tedious experimentation. **“Not only was I looking to get this grainy,**

gritty image but I also wanted to have a feeling that the audience was looking into a world they shouldn't be, a private world,” says Sullivan.

As cinematographer, Barry-Cotter had no involvement in the post-production process on the film. **“It was pretty well always my plan to have the story in black and white,”** says the director. **“We shot in colour so we had a choice. It was a really hard final call to make because the colour footage was visually beautiful, but I knew the story had to be grainy and gritty to get that authenticity.”**

The main thing Barry-Cotter learnt from his experience shooting *Reflections in the Dust* was how important actors are. His perspective changed from being the cinematographer who simply makes images aesthetic or visually pleasing, to the person who is in charge of capturing the work of the actors.

“All in all though I'm proud of what we accomplished,” Barry-Cotter explains. **“The mood and the look of the film were successful in my eyes.”**

“I really would not change one thing,” says the director. **“The result is more amazing than we could have imagined. The festivals and incredible reviews are testimony to that.”**

Ryan Barry-Cotter is a freelance cinematographer, director and underwater camera operator.

Luke Sullivan is a director known for *You're Not Thinking Straight* (2016) and *Reflections in the Dust* (2019).

James Cunningham is the Editor of Australian Cinematographer Magazine.

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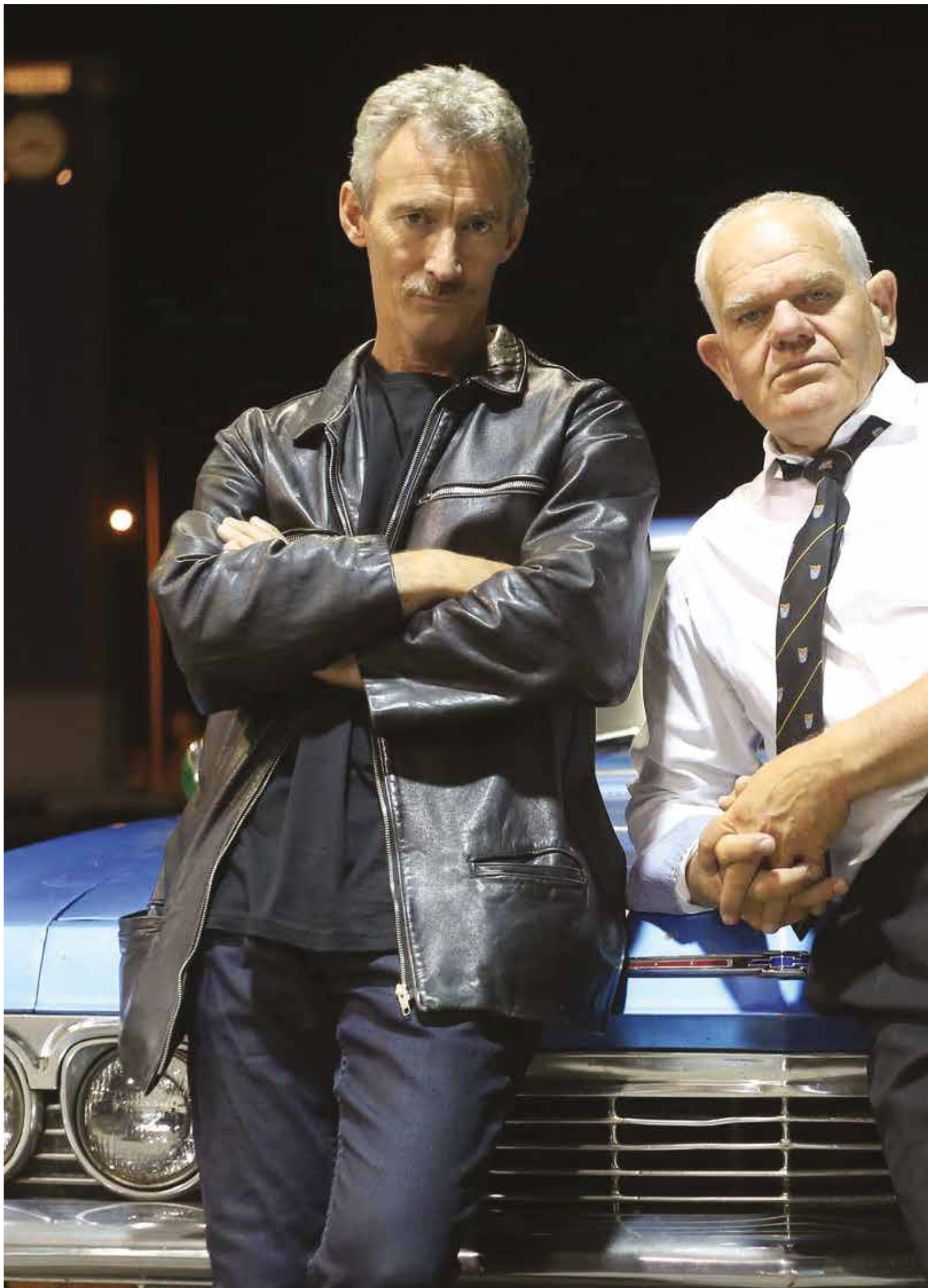


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BLUE MOON

New Zealand feature film *Blue Moon* is a twisty, real-time thriller from writer/director **Stefen Harris** nimbly staged and shot entirely on iPhone by cinematographer **Ryan O'Rourke** within and around a Motueka petrol station in the wee small hours of the morning.

- by *Ryan O'Rourke*



Cinematographer Ryan O'Rourke and director Stefen Harris on location with 'Blue Moon' - PHOTO Supplied

I've known writer and director Stefen Harris for a few years. We were both police officers in Christchurch and were introduced to each other by another cop who knew we were both interested in film. I've shot several things for him in the past and worked with the two lead actors on test shoots for another film. We've been able to develop a level of mutual trust, which is critical. That turned out to be particularly important on this project due to our shooting schedule.

Harris had shot a couple of feature films prior to *Blue Moon*, so I was really lucky to get the opportunity to work with him and grateful that he felt able to trust me.

Our limited budget was one of the main drivers for choosing to shoot the film on iPhone; however the more we looked into it, the more it began to be a stylistic choice as much as a budget-driven decision.

The film is shot effectively in one location; a service station in Motueka, which is a town with a population of about 8000 at the top of the South Island of New Zealand. There are two main characters – Horace played by Mark Hadlow and Darren played by Jed Brophy – and a lot of dialogue between them. Harris had some ideas about how he wanted the film to look, which involved a lot of camera movement.

I knew it was possible to get nice pictures with an iPhone, but assumed that conditions had to be perfect. This is true to a point. Our testing showed that it was potentially achievable to shoot a film in the middle of the night at a service station, on a phone. The most concerning aspect was that some of the scenes were night exteriors and we knew we wouldn't be able to light everywhere outside. We were worried about how the tiny sensor would perform.

“ Our testing showed that it was potentially achievable to shoot a film in the middle of the night at a service station, on a phone. ”

Being able to shoot anamorphic helped our decision. We used Moondog lenses that clipped onto the front of the phones. These lenses changed the whole look and feel of our film. A number of people have commented that they didn't realise *Blue Moon* was even shot on a phone. Although it's fair to say none of those people are cinematographers. However I feel if you have a solid story and great performances, the audience is going to be drawn in regardless.

We had a test shoot about three months prior to the main event. This helped to answer a lot of our questions about the iPhone, confirm that it was going to be technically feasible and allowed us to test various settings in the FiLMiC Pro app.

We were really worried about shooting in 4K and so decided to shoot in HD. We were worried the phones would overheat during the shoot, worried about data storage and transfer, worried about battery life and generally worried that the phones wouldn't handle the job. After testing, we became confident that the iPhone would be up to the task and in the



Cast and crew behind-the-scenes on 'Blue Moon' - PHOTO Supplied

end we didn't have a single technical issue with the phones for the entire shoot.

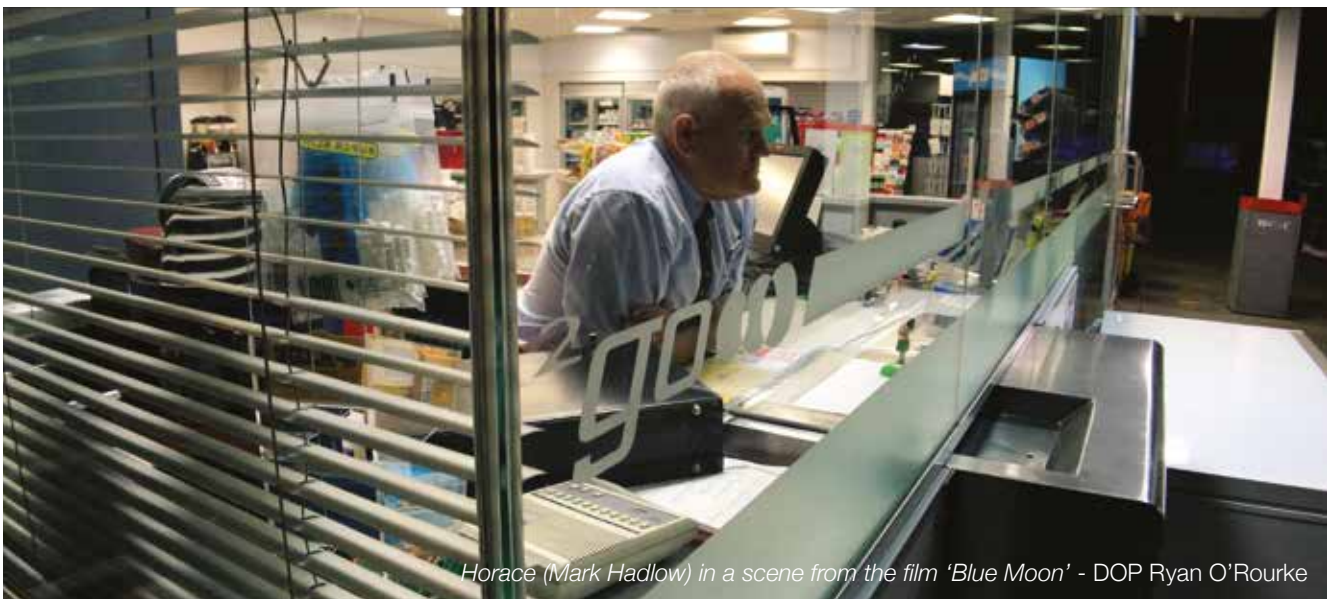
We looked at the film *Tangerine* (2015, cinematography by Radium Cheung) prior to the shoot. Directed by Sean Baker, that film had been filmed using the iPhone 5+ and made a splash when it premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2015. For us, we were mostly interested in what could be achieved with the technology. *Tangerine* showed that it was possible to shoot a feature film on a phone, but that it was also possible to get some beautiful pictures and have the whole thing look quite 'filmic', if that's a word.

Harris made it clear what our schedule meant; no room for delays. It was nerve wracking, particularly ahead of the test

shoot. By then I had spent a lot of time thinking and testing various aspects, and the tests helped put those different aspects together. It helped to solidify our thinking around how we would approach the shoot.

We liked the idea of a service station as a pool of light in the middle of a small town, surrounded by darkness. The whole story playing out within the confines of the service station without anyone else being aware of what was unfolding. The seedy underbelly of humanity that comes to life when the rest of us are sleeping.

The film features Horace and Darren, our two main characters, engaging in some pretty intense dialogue. Harris was keen to keep the camera moving as much as possible. Particularly



Horace (Mark Hadlow) in a scene from the film 'Blue Moon' - DOP Ryan O'Rourke



during the action sequences he wanted minimally rehearsed camera movement. The gimbal was great for that, but focus was a real challenge on the small screen, and with only one operator.

One bonus was that the actors really enjoyed working with the smaller camera. Partly because of the way we were shooting, which meant there were no setup delays; but also because they felt the small size of the camera didn't interfere with their performances to the same degree as large-format cameras and equipment. It was the only shoot I've been on where the sound department had more gear than me!

Blue Moon was shot using three iPhone 7+s, which had varying amounts of storage. With the iPhone too, there's no ability to change batteries and that was a bit terrifying heading into the shoot. We worked with the two phones with the biggest storage capacity and had another operator shooting some beauty shots with the third phone. Shooting one phone until the battery was low, swapping it out for the second.

We had crew downloading the footage to a laptop, checking it and backing it up to three hard drives. The phone was then charged and wiped. One phone would get us through two to three hours of shooting. The phones were always downloaded and charged by the time we needed to swap so it worked out really well.

Playback was effectively non-existent. The FiLMiC Pro app did allow for Harris to monitor using an iPad and Bluetooth, but most of the time he didn't use it. That put a lot of pressure on me to be confident about what we were capturing. There was no 'video village'. Most of the reviews were by watching the shot on the phone. For some of the action sequences or continuity issues we would review shots on the laptop.

The FiLMiC Pro app provided a really good level of control over the camera and I felt comfortable with what we were capturing most of the time. Using the app meant we were able to keep the workflow really tight.

Our shooting schedule was unreal. We had six nights to shoot



Darren (Jed Brophy) in a scene from the film 'Blue Moon' - DOP Ryan O'Rourke

the film. That mostly came down to the availability of cast and crew as well as the budget, but also the access we had to the service station. It closed at midnight each night and opened again at 5.00am. We had the place to ourselves for five hours each night. My math isn't great, but I'm pretty sure that means we shot a feature in just thirty hours.

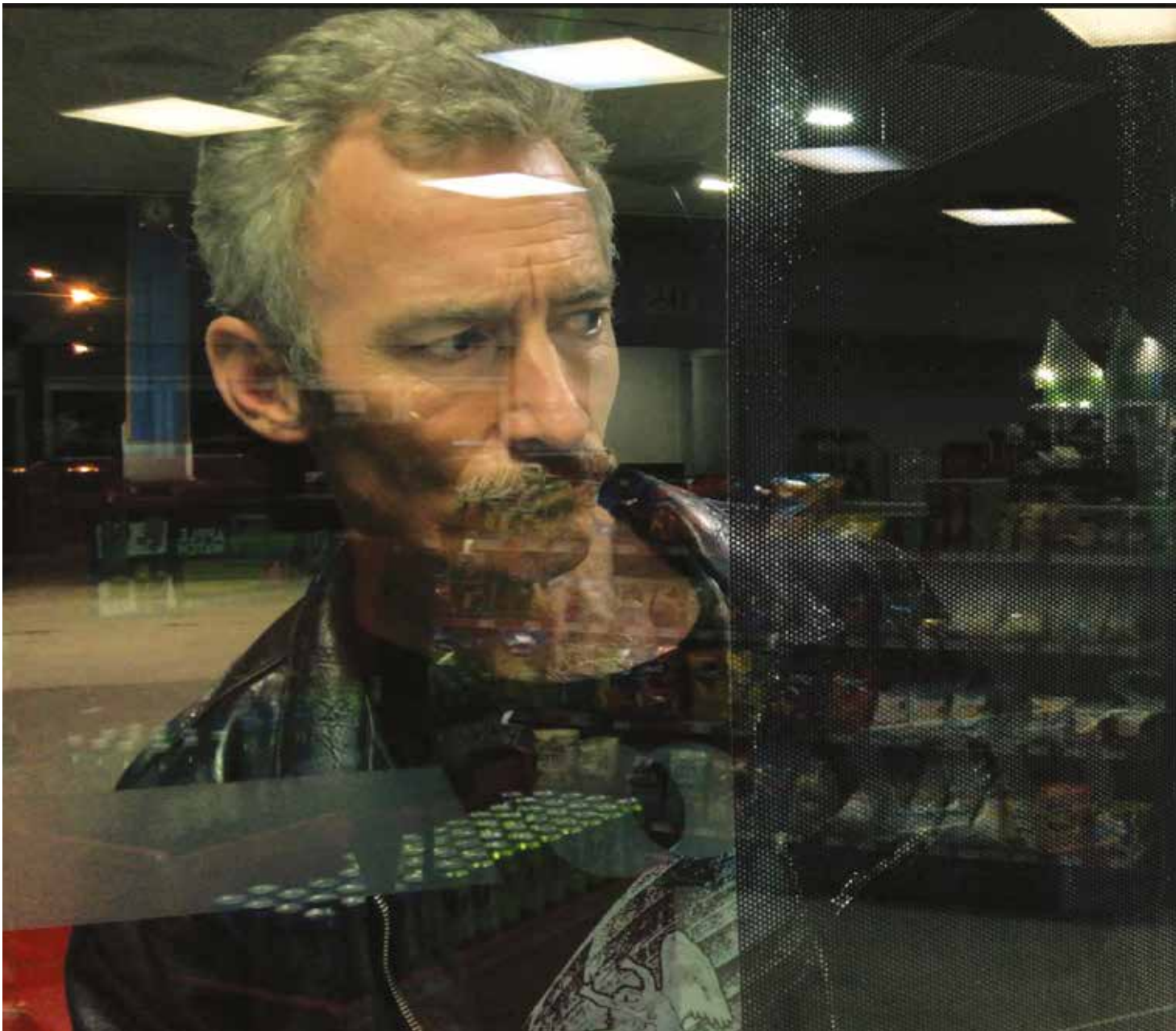
The actors were amazing. The two leads are very experienced film actors and nailed their performances time after time. They were an absolute pleasure to work with and really made the difference in terms of completing the shoot.

We would start with a dinner and briefing from Harris at 9.30pm every night at a local café. Then we were usually on location and ready to go by about 11.00pm and would be gently suggesting the late shift staff member might want to go home early. Or, we would just start shooting while the service station was still open. The short timeframe and the pressure that provided really suited the look that we were after.

We didn't put any additional light into the service station. The harshness and the authenticity of the service station lighting was exactly what we were after, and lighting as we went was never going to work. The main challenge inside the service station was reflective surfaces. We knew we'd be dealing with windows and fridge doors however we didn't expect that all the cabinetry and display cases would also be as reflective as they were. We spent a lot of time working out where the boom operator could go, especially with so much camera movement. The rest of the crew spent a lot of time lying on the service station floor during shots.

We did have the odd person rocking up in the middle of the night thinking the service station was open and wanting to buy a pie. There were a few hold-ups like that.

There's a number of sequences in the film that I really like, but one that stands out is where one of the characters, Darren, is walking across the forecourt looking for a serious amount of his cash that's gone missing. The camera is moving backwards as Darren stalks towards a car over the far side



of the forecourt. The green light from the BP service station canopy is illuminating his face and he just looks evil.

There's plenty of other bits that I love, probably mostly around the action sequences where we got to have a bit of fun with the camera. Some of the dialogue heavy scenes involved really intense performances from the actors and it was really satisfying capturing those performances.

The film was shot in March, and quickly accepted for the New Zealand International Film Festival which was screening at the start of August. This meant the post-production phase of *Blue Moon* was also pretty hectic. We shot with a natural look baked into the footage, which meant there was less opportunity to manipulate the look in post.

It's obviously about trying to capture the director's vision first and foremost. But within that framework there's plenty of scope to apply myself. What I really enjoy about filmmaking is trying to make every shot as beautiful as it can be. But the

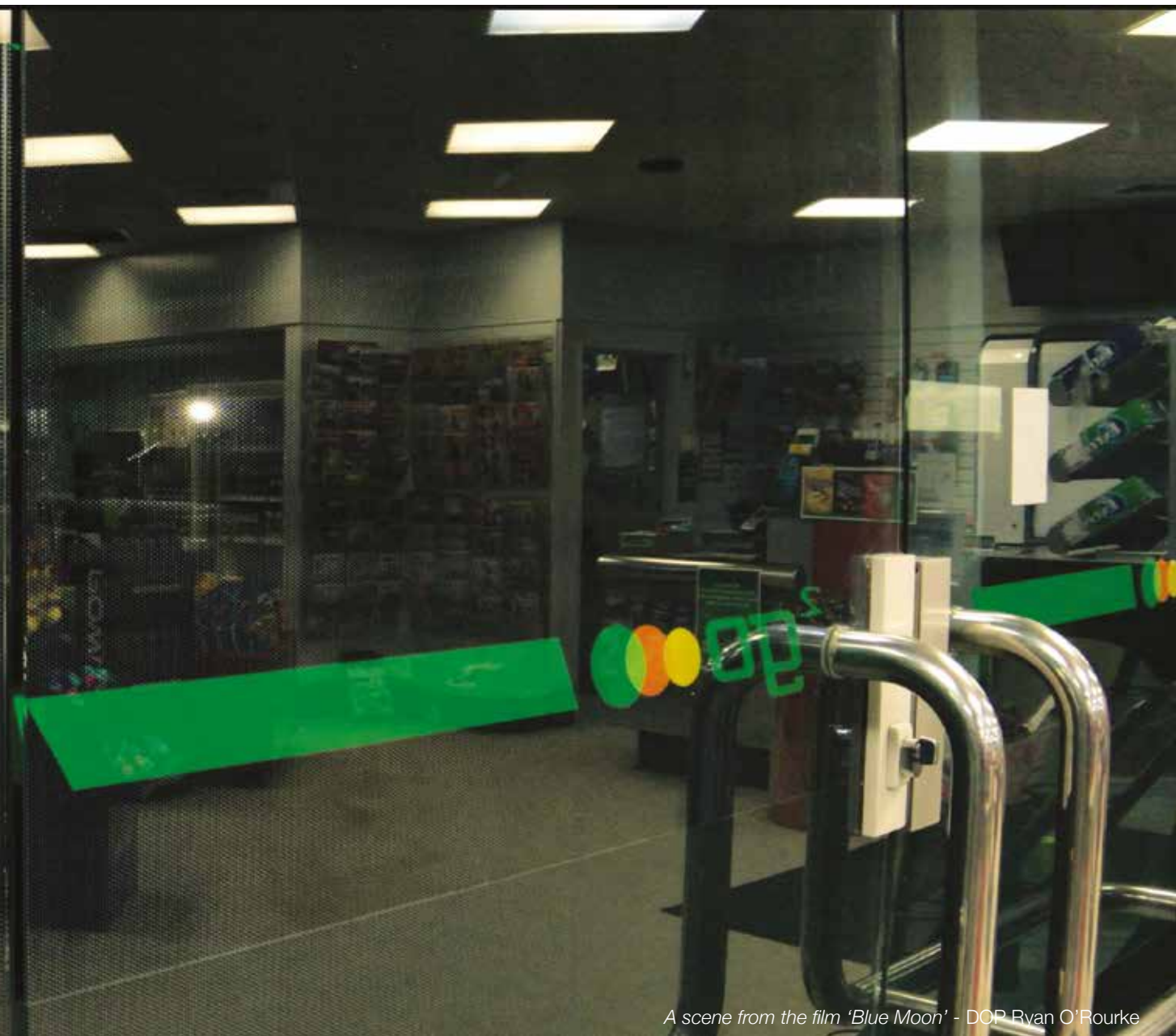
challenge is doing that within all the constraints that you are faced with, which is usually time. But also equipment and environment.

I'm really proud of what we achieved. I'm even prouder when I think about the incredibly short timeframe, the small size of the crew and the non-traditional equipment we used. I think what it shows yet again is that story is king, a camera is a camera and making movies is hard work!

If we were just starting to plan the shoot, with the knowledge I have now, I'd do my best to lobby for more time. I'd be happy to use an iPhone as a camera again, but I'd really want to get a bigger monitor in there somehow and probably a focus puller. Which isn't technically feasible and then we're sort of defeating the purpose of shooting on a phone anyway.

My next project is a serial killer film based on a true story. But that's about all I can say at the moment.

.....
Ryan O'Rourke is a cinematographer based in New Zealand.



A scene from the film 'Blue Moon' - DOP Ryan O'Rourke

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AUSTRALIAN SHORTS

Cinematographer Michael Steel (*Beast*) shares his experiences shooting the two short films *Atlas* and *The Complex* – **by Michael Steel**



A scene from the short film 'Atlas' - DOP Michael Steel

I recently had the privilege to shoot two short films back-to-back for two different writer/directors. The films were *Atlas* by Gene Albert and *The Complex* by Dane McCusker. I had previously been cinematographer for McCusker on three short films since 2010, but doing *Atlas* was my first collaboration with Albert who I had met during our days studying at AFTRS.

With Albert's future-tense action film script *Atlas* I was immediately drawn by the fact it had barely any dialogue. Instead it relied heavily on visuals and performance to tell the story. It also offered me the opportunity of working with a new director in capturing a realistic dystopian world with elements of science fiction.

With *The Complex*, I was drawn to how tight Dane's script was and how much it conveyed in only twelve pages. The topical story captured the essence of the many personal complexities of apartment dwellers today so I knew it would be a compelling film if we didn't over complicate it.

Due to budget constraints neither *Atlas*

or *The Complex* had a professional production designer, which was a shame. Albert took on the important role himself on *Atlas* and though he did a great job it did mean he had to wear multiple hats.

“ Short films are generally a test of your ability to achieve great results despite the lack of resources. ”

The whole film was shot on a large property in Bilpin, New South Wales, that Albert wrote specifically to suit. Thankfully much of what we needed already existed and what was altered was done by Albert and his partner in the weeks leading up to the shoot.

Throughout *The Complex* we follow our lead actress, Jessica Murphy, gradually moving into a new apartment by herself. As the film progresses we see the apartment fill up and become homely. As the apartment, McCusker's actual residence, was full of furniture we decided to shoot the film back-to-front

which helped ease the design workload.

I would love to say that on short films you always get the camera gear you really want but as every cinematographer knows that is rarely the case. Even with the great contacts I have built up over the years at various rental houses it wasn't financially feasible on the budgets we had. As *Atlas* was self-funded by Albert we were always going to be using his Canon C200 with a set of Canon CN-E Primes hired at mates rates from Nic Owens, a fellow cinematographer and good friend.

The C200 held up really well and was an excellent size for all the DJI Ronin 2 gimbal shooting we did. Another great plus of the C200 was that we could shoot Canon RAW internally on CFast2 cards. The robustness of RAW really helped when dealing with the constantly changing exterior lighting conditions.

Miraculously, I did get the camera package I wanted on *The Complex*, an ARRI Alexa Mini and a set of Ultra Primes lenses from Cameraquip. The small size of the camera and lenses helped in the confines of the



A scene from the short film 'Atlas' - DOP Michael Steel

apartment where the shoot took place. Also, the large dynamic range helped when balancing the bright east facing apartment windows with our actors.

After the first two days on *Atlas* we regrettably lost our gaffer Brooks Robinson as he had other work to go onto. From then on it fell onto other crew members to help and support me when needed. For *The Complex* it was the first time on a film I did not have any lighting or grip personnel to help. Initially, I was concerned after seeing how tight the location was and in coming up with a solid shooting plan. With McCusker and first assistant director Jaime Lewis I realised that it could be done.

The *Atlas* script is the start of Albert's much larger science fiction, action feature film idea. The first eight pages of the twelve-page script we were essentially setting up characters, locations and conflict, not actually shooting any action sequences. There is an arc to the film from the opening where the camera moves are much more subtle than in later scenes. For the majority of the film the camera lived on the gimbal. We also got in a second

body and ramped up the use of hand-held towards the end.

The Complex is a story about two people of differing yet valid opinions. We wanted our camera to simply observe, not to play favourites. Though we mostly follow our lead actress we wanted the audience to stay objective, so when seen together we did a lot of reverse shots and reactions. Hitchcock was one of our key references. To keep the small one bedroom apartment with white walls from appearing bland I mostly shaped the existing light, keeping walls dim with our actors in the best available light.

Albert was a director great to work with as he is very trusting, visually orientated and who works organically with what he sees in the moment. He also understands editing which was great for breaking down scenes. I pushed for more pre-production time to plan and schedule as I know how much it adds to a film. I'm thankful and relieved Albert pushed the film back and allowed that to happen.

Much of what worked well with

McCusker on *The Complex* came from a solid understanding of our previous collaborations together. The fact was he trusted me to execute a plan without many key crew members and conversely I could trust that he knew what he was asking for and did so with respect.

I choose to shoot short films to fulfil a creative passion which is generally not the reason your technical crew come on board. These 'love' jobs however are just not possible without their time and support and so to everyone who gave us that I thank you.

Of special note on *Atlas* was my camera assistant Sam Vines who did an outstanding job. He truly gave more of himself to the film than I can thank him for. I'd also like to mention Charles Taparell for donating a second Canon C200 and also fellow cinematographer Tahsin Rahman for coming on to operate B-camera during the final chase scenes in the film.

For reasons of availability on *The Complex* I had to change camera assistants during the shoot with both



A scene from the short film 'Atlas' - DOP Michael Steel

Benjamin Powell and Gokulchand Mandalapu coming in and doing a great job during their time. Neither the director nor I had met either one before but they came in and performed brilliantly under pressure.

My favourite sequence in *Atlas* is set in a shed on the property we used as our unit base. It was very late at night and after an extremely long day. We had no gaffer and there were multiple light sources that I had to synchronise to turn on and off by crew members plugging them in and out of sockets. It was memorable not just because it came out so well but that it was achieved despite all the hardships we had to get through to make it happen.

On *The Complex* my two favourite shots bookend the film. Though we storyboarded the opening scene to have four shots, and had the time to get them, we realised when filming that our opening wide-shot felt right for the entire scene. The final shot of the film was actually the first shot we did, as we shot the film back-to-front. As it was time specific and didn't fit in our weekend schedule, we organised it for the evening prior to our first shoot day. A cherry picker was brought in and I went up in the bucket to get the shot we wanted at the right time of day which really set a great tone for the rest of our shoot.

What I took away from these two films was that despite all the constraints you may encounter. If you have a dedicated and passionate crew all helping each other to achieve the best results, you can get over almost any hurdle. I am so thankful to have collaborated alongside so many great people who all went above and beyond their own roles to make the films the best they could be.

“ If you have a dedicated and passionate crew all helping each other to achieve the best results, you can get over almost any hurdle. ”

In terms of post-production, the look of *Atlas* started with my own temporary grades that I applied to .tiff files using the Lightroom program. Shots to be graded were selected from the most challenging scenes that I then sent on to Albert for feedback.

As the post-production process for *Atlas* is still ongoing I cannot tell you who the actual grader will be, though it is set to be done at Vandal in Sydney who I am yet to collaborate with. The only CGI in either film will be just one shot in *Atlas* where Albert will add CG drones into the final shot of the film.

The Complex was a very simple film to grade and it was complete after just a couple of short days on a DaVinci Resolve operated by Conlan McKenzie; a great, young grader who has helped me out so many times that I can't thank him enough. The process was that we did an initial pass and noted a couple of shots for special attention. After a second pass we sent a link to Albert for feedback and from that made a few tweaks and it was done.

The only thing I would change on *Atlas* would have been to have more pre-production time in order to get the pages down a bit more so that our shooting days weren't so long and demanding on our threadbare crew. For *The Complex* I would have liked someone on lighting as it would have sped up the process and been less physically demanding on me.

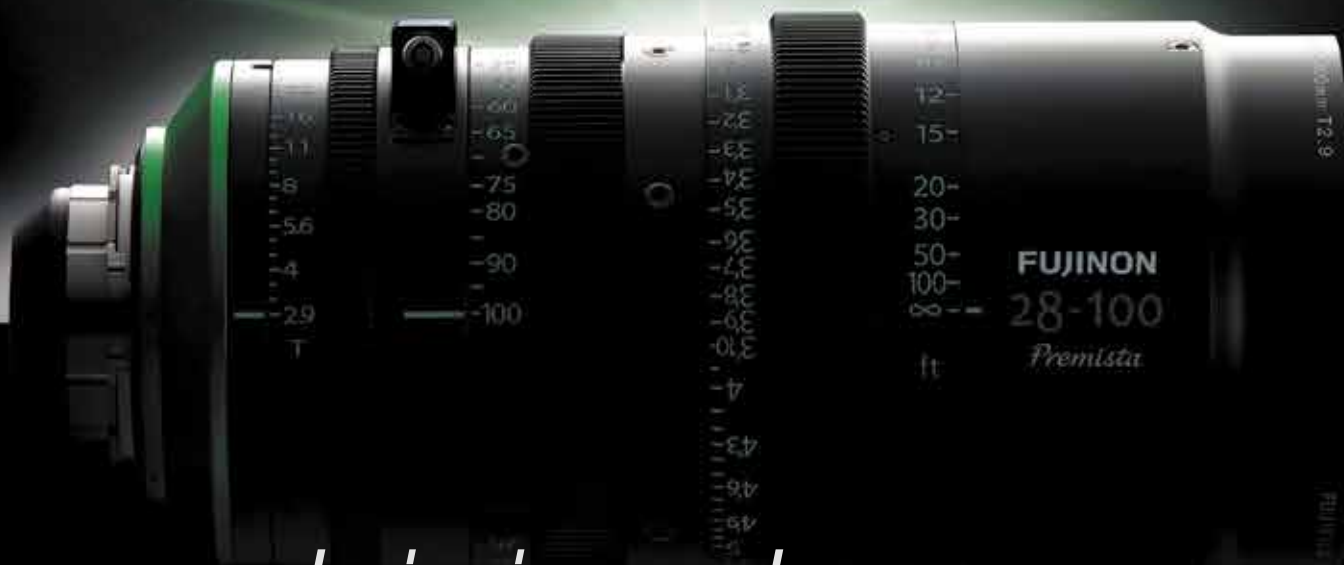
Overall though I am very proud of these two films and excited for people to see them on the big screen in the near future.

I am currently filming a television show with director Keaton Stewart and Ambience entertainment.

Michael Steel is a freelance cinematographer based 'wherever he needs to be'.

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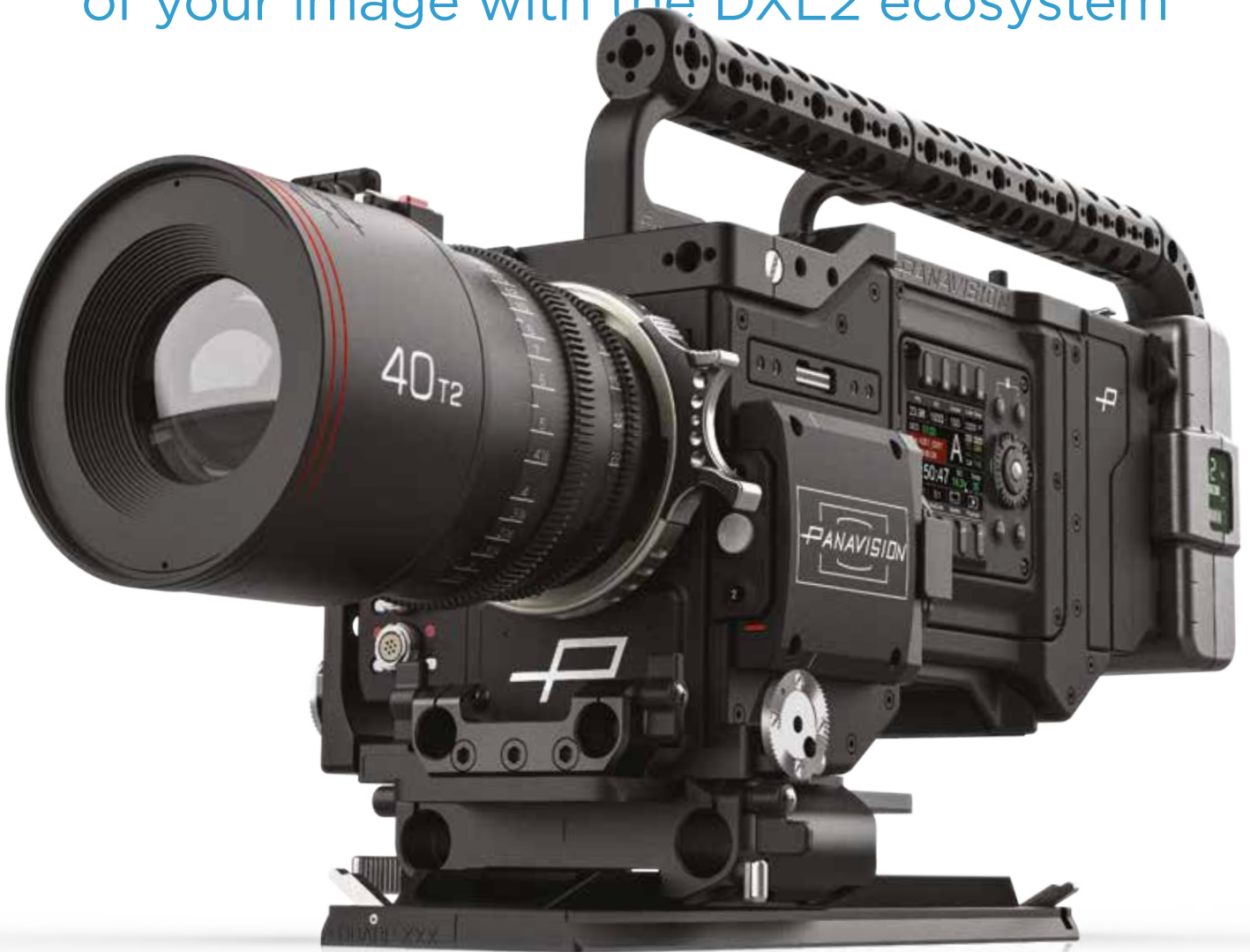
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