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FROM THE EDITOR



2023 has taken off in leaps and bounds and the holiday season is far behind us.

In the lead up to our 100th edition of the magazine later in the year i'm reflecting on what it means to be a Cinematographer in Australia and what this publication has meant over the years.

I guarantee that social media would have been but a twinkle in the eye of a yet-to-be-born Mark Zuckerberg when Issue #1 came out in the early 1960's. Back then, the magazine had a clear and pointed mission - to be an exchange of ideas and to pass along the benefit of past experiences, and to promote an atmosphere of comradery. I believe these are still the ideas at the core of the publication, but they bring with them a more nuanced cultural landscape and a greater responsibility to consider whose ideas are being shared, and who is being represented on a platform that seeks to represent us all.

With that in mind, if you have a project you're proud of, no matter how big or small, i'd love to hear about it - and if you're one of our unsung heroes of the camera department, our tried-and-true assistants, and you've got something to share please reach out. Every new perspective has something to offer, and no Cinematographer is an island.

I hope you put this issue down with a new idea to explore. Happy reading.

Sarah Jo Fraser
Editor
Australian Cinematographer Magazine

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hi everyone,

It is not what you look at that matters. It's what you see.

(Henry David Thoreau)

What cinematographers do, like other artists, is see. We look upon that which is around us and we see it deeply, with all the detail and meaning it contains - be it confronting, perhaps painful or beautiful and uplifting. And we work to translate what we see into images that have meaning embedded in them, aiming to engage and move the audience.

We are fortunate to work in a field that combines artistry with exceptional technology and to work with gifted colleagues. The calibre of the work of Australian cinematographers is world class and something to be proud of. But never forget that everyone starts out small and our journeys are made possible by those who help us along the way. Gratitude is vital and an important part of our practice.

The ACS proudly continues to support emerging cinematographers on their journey with the upcoming John Leake OAM ACS Emerging Cinematographer Award. The award provides the recipient with funds to support their education and access to the latest equipment provided by Panavision Australia. Perhaps more importantly though, the award provides the encouragement and support to young cinematographers to believe in and have faith in themselves. Having faith is also an important part of our practice.

I hope everyone's year has begun well and wish you all a good one ahead.

Erika Addis
National President, Australian Cinematographers Society



PHOTO David Dare Parker

BLUEBACK

Andrew Commis ACS teams up with long-time collaborator Robert Connelly to bring **Blueback** to life.

By Andrew Commis ACS





ABOVE: Mia Wasikowska in 'Blueback'.

Blueback is based on an iconic children's novella by Tim Winton that explores the dynamic between a mother and child and through their journey, our relationship to nature and particularly the ocean. Rob Connolly (director) and I first worked together on the series *The Slap* in 2011 and we've had an ongoing collaboration ever since. On one hand *Blueback* was a natural progression for us and on the other hand a fantastic evolution.

Rob and I were after an approach that was elemental, we wanted you to feel the texture of the story and landscape - both above and below the surface of the water. We wanted to create a sense of wonder without being glossy or superficial. There's a very human tone to this film and how the camera explores the world. We didn't just want postcards of beautiful images—the images needed to resonate and have a quiet power.

Rob and I were excited by the idea of filming and exploring scenes rather than just 'covering' scenes. Rob is also the writer, which means a scene could evolve based on what a performance brings, what the location brings, what the weather brings ... there's an energy and response to how we tend to film a scene which is a key part of our collaboration together. Over the years we've developed a lot of shorthand and as a result, there's deep trust and that creates confidence.

Blueback is a film with multiple timelines and Rob was very keen to articulate them. The initial story line with Mia Wasikowska as Abby for example has a more structured visual language that reflects the direction her adult life has taken. The camera moves but with more a sense of weight, a position of knowledge, and with a fluidity - she isn't in repose, she has purpose. I had used Panavision Primo Artistes lenses previously (initially on a commercial with Serena Williams) and testing them again confirmed the beautiful combination they have of contemporary large format resolution and human warmth.

The past with Abby as a girl needed a strong point of difference and that's where the Panavision H series really came into their own. They're vintage glass that was made

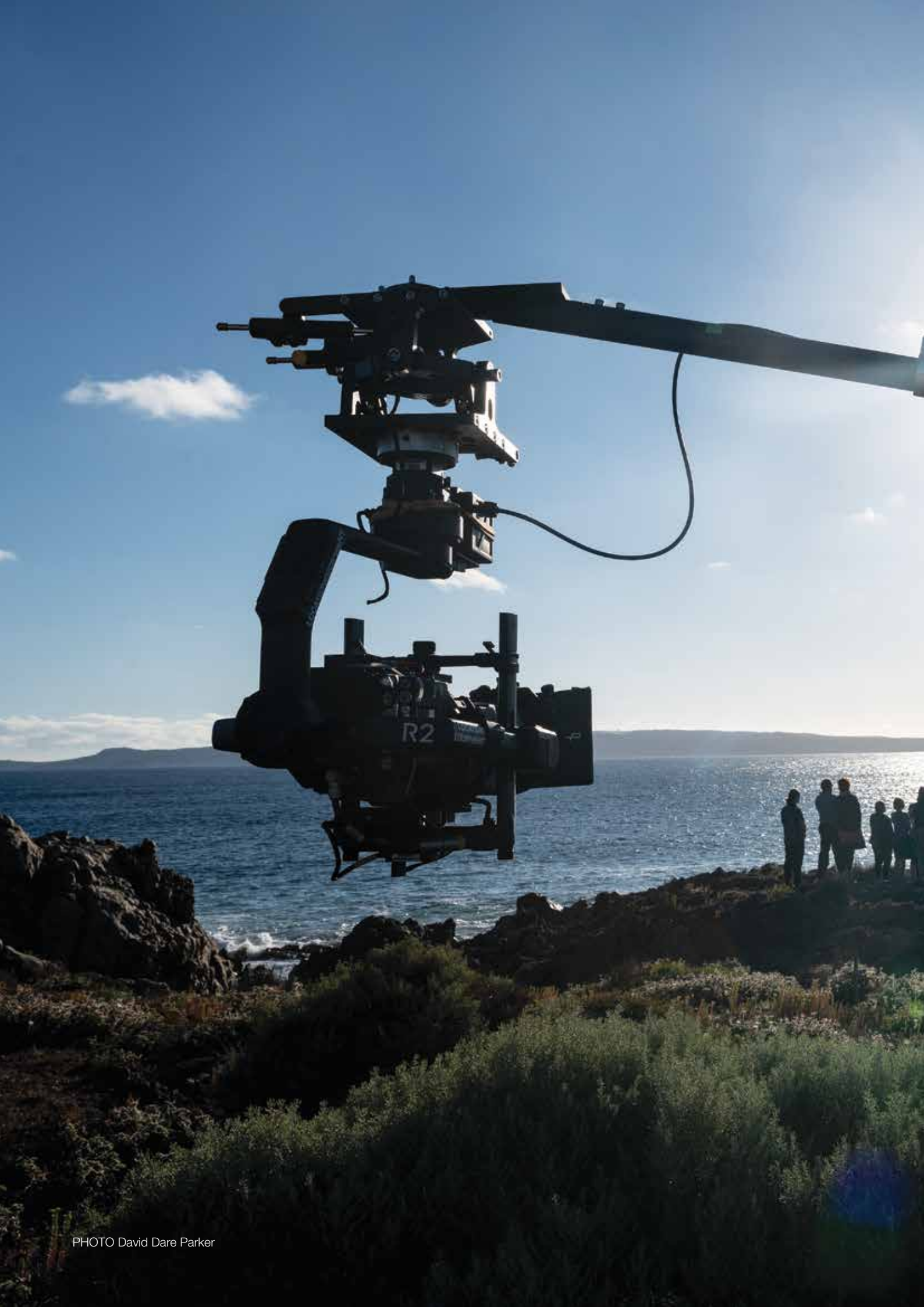
without knowledge of a digital future but with enough coverage for a modern-day large format sensor. While not specifically a matching set, I found I could really utilise their individual characteristics. The past was visually treated with less formality with the camera often handheld or on my easy rig. It allowed us flexibility with our younger actors but more importantly enhanced the immediacy of their perspective and help accentuate those tonal shifts between timelines. The film is very much a woman looking back at her past, initially to when she was 8 years old and then predominately as her 15-year-old self, and through these timelines we allow the audience to emotionally see how it galvanises her future self.

We knew we wanted to shoot large format to help create images that drew you in as a viewer with depth and scale. We were looking for visceral ways to feel this sense of wonder and discovery. After shooting some comparison tests which we projected in 4K with colourist Olivier Fontenay, I found the Panavision DXL2 with its Light Iron colour science was doing things visually that were quite unique. On a technical level we found the sensor particularly amazing at isolating the colour channels and particularly blue, which was critical for the amount we were about to be dealing with - whether that be sky, water surface or underwater elements themselves. I shot to a single Light Iron developed LUT which is something Panavision have developed in conjunction with Light Iron so it's not just an 8k Red Monstro sensor within a Panavision built camera but an integral feature of the camera. Effectively I was shooting to a "one light" LUT, which I tend to do on nearly all my films, and largely creating the look of the film in camera.

Through these multiple timelines we were trying to make the film as a whole feel like a life lived. To complement the design and lens choices we also used Live Grain to further enhance the texture, essentially grading the image with texture. Live Grain is a completely analogue library of sampled film stocks with a codec that allows for real time processing. Effectively

RIGHT: Radha Mitchell in 'Blueback'.









Eric Bana in 'Blueback'.

its marrying digital and film in a way that I hadn't experienced before. Blueback also has a large degree of VFX compositing, particular in the underwater sequences and Live Grain became an essential tool here to help connect these layers in a seamless and authentic way.

Water was always going to be the production's biggest challenge and not just the underwater sequences, I'll get to those in a minute! A huge proportion of the film is above water, and on boats, so a large amount of energy went into planning the unpredictable. Having multiple plans on a practical and logistical level of how-to co-ordinate boats became an obsession, especially regarding light and geography. We never wanted to use green screen in that regard. We wanted the audience to feel the visceral experience of the cast immersed in their environment onscreen.

Even if you're shooting a single dinghy floating on the water, there will be a flotilla of boats behind it! The more boats on screen, the more boats behind camera to service the process.

Key Grip Greg Stirling came up with several brilliant solutions in pre. As we were extremely remote, we needed to customise a local fishing vessel to be the camera tracking boat, or the "mothership". Never as roomy as you think, we also had to consider the trade-off of physical scale for boat speed. While we weren't in open ocean, we were still dealing with Southern Ocean swell. Greg custom made a light weight 6m scaffold tube crane that we then used with a Ronin, and it proved to be an incredible package that worked a treat, even on 100mm plus lens sizes. Generally, I would be handheld when I was on the same boat with cast, regardless of timeline. It's something I know they worked out years ago on Jaws! It's just a much easier way to absorb the rocking motion of being in swell.

The other gift of an idea that Greg came up with were 'float bricks.' A commercially available product that is essentially

BELOW: Ariel Donoghue in 'Blueback'.. **RIGHT::** DP Andrew Commis ACS and Director Rob Connolly. PHOTO David Dare Parker







Mia Wasikowska in 'Blueback'.

air-filled interlocking plastic boxes. They can be customised to whatever dimensions we needed, and it allowed for multiple boats to be joined by a floating deck. All boats have people limits so it allowed a freer movement of people but as importantly created opportunities for placing equipment. Not sure how we could have facilitated the boat work without them in hindsight.

Following on from our work together on the feature film *High Ground*, I also must make mention of our 1st AD Mark Boskell. Mark and I tend to deal with location extremes, and he was intrinsic to making this film as good as it could be from beginning to end. A trusted and highly valued collaborator who always thinks of the film as whole.

Our titular character *Blueback* is a Blue Groper fish and Rob was adamant that it needed to be tactile, instinctively feeling that a CGI fish was never going to feel right or have the same onscreen effect. So, *Blueback* was made as a true to scale puppet by the truly amazing artisans at Creature Tech in Melbourne, then mechanically operated by four puppeteers!

There are puppets and then there are puppets ... whether someone had worked with puppets before or not, and I was in the latter, this was an entirely new learning experience for everyone. It effectively became a 1.5-metre-long fish that could swim, and act! The suspension of disbelief was immediate on set, and you felt privileged to witness such artistry. In many ways puppeteering is effectively acting, it requires such an interpretive understanding from the puppeteers to bring the inanimate to life. In a similar way the communication from myself as DOP to the puppeteers is much the same as how it might be with an actor.

These sequences were shot separately and scheduled after our location work at a large indoor pool in Melbourne, where key Grip Dan Mitton built a full-scale jetty for the puppeteers to operate from. This allowed our cast to physically swim and interact with *Blueback*, a unique challenge that was mind blowing to be involved with. Underwater plates were

specifically shot in Western Australian by underwater cinematographer Rick Rifci and then composited as backgrounds and foregrounds.

As well as the plate work, Rick operated underwater for the pool shoot in Melbourne, and then with fellow underwater camera operator George Evatt, shot the underwater components on location with us in Western Australia. Both Rick and George have absolute "can do" attitudes and combined with phenomenal skill and endurance, a profound love and respect for the ocean. The film is a real testament to that love and it's a joy to witness their work.

The key cast all learnt to free dive so whether in the pool or the ocean, they are doing their own swimming and diving which was amazing and exhilarating. We had an underwater housing purpose built by specialist Dave Kelly in Newcastle that configured an 8k Red Monstro with a combination of Primo Artiste and H series lenses, using glass ports as much as possible. The housing also allowing for focus and video output, we often used it as a surface housing, but it was capable of descending to about 4 metres.

The film was primarily shot on the pristine south coast of Bremer Bay in Western Australia, about a 6-hour drive from Perth for a 7-week shoot (plus a week for the Melbourne pool shoot). It was amid WA's "iron curtain" covid era but once on location we were fortunately a million miles away from stringent covid protocols and it made for a tight knit cast and crew who lived and worked together on location. Something I personally love when the project calls for it. I had a brilliant crew led by Key Grip Greg Stirling and Gaffer Dan Spriggs, and then was incredibly fortunate to have Gavin Head as 1st AC for the present timeline and Kitty May Allwood for the past timelines. A fortuitous and beautiful scenario. Paolo Feliciano was 2nd AC and a godsend as our Ronin tech! Jim Frater ACS joined us with AC Meredith Lindsay for a couple of weeks in a robust Steadicam / b camera op / splinter unit dop role and made a great contribution.



Behind the scenes in 'Blueback' - PHOTO SUPPLIED



We looked at several films in pre-production. Obviously, something like *The Big Blue* has an immense scale with its water elements but also has great human (and animal) pathos. So too the original Australian film *Storm Boy*. The perspectives and texture of Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone*, the big screen dynamics of *Arrival* and the sense of discovery in Terrence Malick's *The New World* were all points of departure for us. However, the pure beauty and ruggedness of the South Coast of Western Australia itself was probably the main point of visual inspiration.

Lighting for the most part was influenced by environment and fed off the energy of the landscape to heighten the narrative without trying to draw attention to it. Essentially, I was trying to create a dramatic naturalism that combined a sense of spontaneity. Personally, I really explored my interpretation of 'natural' and tended to favour being bolder than being safe. You still need find ways to manufacture that too, and at times it was using literally nothing and at other times it was emptying the truck to maintain the visual tone. Dan Spriggs and his team were up for the challenge. The south coast weather is particular unpredictable and unstable! We often found ourselves dealing with every possible weather scenario, and particularly when working around the very exposed and dramatically positioned family home!

Production Designer Clayton Jauncey and his team built the family house that features in the film from scratch in a prime location that enabled maximum vantage of the coastline. The house wasn't built as a traditional set, but the interior and exteriors were featured equally. Not without its challenges I spent a lot of time with Clay figuring out the interior window placement and internal shape so that it enabled Rob to treat the house as a real thing, essentially a real location that enabled exterior / interior flow. Even though Clay had made some allowances for lighting from above I chose to light it as I would a location. I was predominately lighting via windows and then pracs for night.

The flexibility and versatility required on this film was quite

extreme and without sounding like a cliché it was through the commitment of every single person on the crew and cast that we were able to pull it off. We were punching way above our weight. Yet this was also a 20-year journey for Rob, he's had the rights to the book for that long just waiting for the right time in his career when he could make this film with the right scale. Rob brings such passion and energy to his film making, it was an honour to be involved on that level and an important and beautiful story to help tell. With that also comes responsibility, you only really get one chance at it.

Every film develops you as a cinematographer, bringing you to find new skills and new approaches. For example, I hadn't done anywhere near as much underwater work before in a production, nor attempted as much VFX compositing underwater—that was a great learning experience, along with the amount of shooting on water and boats.

I've made very elemental films before, in the sense that we are immersing ourselves and the cast into a very dominating environment, which will really control us as much as we might think how we can control it! Yet it's a completely different environment than those other films, for me as a cinematographer to start observing the environment and the light to work out how to best harness that on-screen. Having that preparation and experience which then creates the confidence to make the calls that might have a huge impact practically on the day and often the on the overall film.

That's what excites me as a cinematographer, the privilege of being able to use a camera to tell a story. Each film with its own unique set of challenges that might transcend an audience to somewhere they didn't think they could go ... emotionally, physically, or ideally both!

Andrew Commis ACS has an extensive career which includes feature films, shorts, television drama and documentaries.

Since *Blueback*, Andrew has shot Robert Connolly's next film *Force of Nature* starring Eric Bana, and set up the new season of the Paramount Showtime series *Halo*, in Budapest





THE STRANGER

Cinematographer **Sam Chiplin**
embraces the natural grain in **The Stranger**.

By Sam Chiplin



Steve Mouzakis prepares for a take in *The Stranger* - CHARLES SCHACHE / @ SEE-SAW FILMS

AC Tell me about *The Stranger* and how you got involved?

SC Thomas and I met at MIFF after the premiere of his first film *Acute Misfortune* in 2018. Admittedly I didn't see the film that evening but we connected immediately. After seeing the film when it was released, I reached out to him and waxed lyrical about how much I liked it. That opened a dialogue about what we were both working on in future and that's when I first heard about *The Stranger*, which at the time was titled, 'The Unknown Man.' He was still writing the script when we spoke, but he sent me an early draft and I was blown away. It was a complex piece of writing, but at the same time, it had a crystallised story that I couldn't stop thinking about. I knew it was special. He, Joel Edgerton, and Thomas' assistant Charlie Schache had done an enormous amount of research, and despite how dark the material was, it had a deep amount of respect for the people who were involved in the story itself.

AC How long was the pre-production process and how did you utilise that time?

SC We always planned a long pre-production, but like many films, we were affected by covid. We did an initial scout of Adelaide, Port Adelaide, and the Badlands north of the city, to understand the landscape tonally, and were due to fly down again for a longer period of scouting / pre-production. At 11pm the day before we were due to fly the lockdown came into effect, and the film suddenly went into a period of uncertainty, though we continued pre via zoom. Thomas and I made the decision to start shot-listing every day for up to eight hours a day. It was an intense process, but it ended up

being a blessing in disguise. It let us get inside the material at a level that I don't think we could have achieved through a conventional pre-production process. We created shareable cards for every scene in the film, with detailed shot-lists, reference images and film clips, location photographs and outlines of our intentions, and Thomas continued to tighten the script and the film continues to strengthen. We presented Screen Australia with a 400-page book of those cards in our final financing application.

AC What camera and lens package did you use, and what format did you shoot in? Why?

SC We shot on the Alexa Mini with Panavision C and E Series Anamorphic lenses and carried a couple of Panavision Ultra Speeds to get us out of trouble with night work. We carried a 48-500 zoom. Panavision have been long collaborators of mine, particularly Nic Godoy in Sydney. They were incredibly generous during the testing period. Letting us test almost every lens they had—we were looking for a very specific feel. Knowing we were going to shoot very dark; we wanted the film to feel textural, visceral, immediate like you were being dragged by it physically. To do that, we wanted to put the sensor under a huge amount of stress and shoot it on the very edge to bring out the natural grain and softness that comes with under exposure.

AC What was your working relationship with Thomas M. Wright like? Have you worked with him before?

SC Thomas' preparation was meticulous to a degree I'd never seen before. He was committed, and I could see that the film was living inside him. I felt a deep responsibility

to help him realise his vision. We'd never worked with each other before but after our first meeting I knew we were on the same page philosophically, and cinematically. It was only his second film, and he's a very porous character. He'd learnt so much in such a short time and he knew exactly what he wanted, but that's not to say he wasn't collaborative. Any idea to strengthen the film was welcomed with open arms and he empowered every single collaborator.

AC How did you develop the visual language of *The Stranger*?

SC The visual language of the film developed in two stages. The first stage was listening to the material itself, sitting down with Thomas, Leah Popple (Designer) and Mariot Kerr (Costume Designer) and discussing at length how we wanted the film to feel, sharing a lot of photographic references, watching films together, understanding why we were making the film, and developing a look that captured the tone of the story material. During this stage we developed the colour palette and textures of the world we were about to create.

The second stage was extensive testing of camera equipment. To find the look that we had in our minds, we gathered every set of lenses we could get our hands on from Panavision and began shooting tests in similar environments to our actual locations with Joel Edgerton and the other cast. In some cases, we shot on real locations. The process was dense but very illuminating. We not only identified what kind of lenses we wanted to use, but also started to mix and match lenses from different sets. Thomas and I reacted very similarly to the emotional qualities of certain lenses, often it would be hard to describe why the lens felt right, but we almost always agreed. This process also allowed us to talk about light levels—how far to push things—what 'darkness' in cinema really means? We looked at the work of cinematographers who made substantial use of darkness, particularly Conrad Hall ASC and Gordon Willis ASC, and how they used shadow and darkness to direct the eye. The reason for that was the density of the material itself. We felt that we needed to keep the film focussed and clear, as, with its sixty-five speaking parts, seventy-five locations and multiple timelines etc. it could easily become unfocussed or overwhelming.

AC What was your approach to coverage on the day?

SC Thomas and I would meet every morning before travelling to set and discuss the day's work ahead. This allowed us a moment of quiet focus. Usually, we would read the scenes together, talk about the emotional intention behind each scene, then how we had planned to cover it, as well as any ideas that the filming process had brought up. These discussions were far from scripture. If another idea presented itself on the day, we would drop the original plan in a heartbeat and follow our instincts. Thomas is incredibly

RIGHT: Camera tests shot in Sydney in the months leading up to Pre-Production. Joel Edgerton experimenting with his character Mark Frame while Sam Chiplin tests the limits of different lenses in different conditions.

- CHARLES SCHACHE / @ SEE-SAW FILMS





Detective Rylett pours over evidence in The Stranger. - CHARLES SCHACHE / @ SEE-SAW FILMS

fluid as a director, regardless of how much preparation he had done, he was incredibly good at changing his plan on the day and operating at a very instinctual level. I think his background as a theatre director/actor made him incredibly comfortable with improvisation. I guess once those curtains go up at the theatre - the pressure is on!

In terms of coverage on set, we would block the scenes with the actors and design the coverage based on our previous conversations. It was a very quiet, intense process, with actors who had, in some cases, been preparing for over a year. Which meant that they sometimes had a different intention for the scene, and in that case, we would listen closely to what they wanted - and adapt the coverage to suit the changes.

AC How did lighting inform these decisions?

SC Lighting was incredibly important to the look of *The Stranger*. The lighting in *The Stranger* was very specific and controlled. Thomas and I had a philosophical approach to lighting: 'If in doubt, turn off a light,' and mostly, that's what we did. We knew that we would be shooting at an eye watering pace - almost 250 part-scenes in seven weeks— and we needed a system that allowed us to shoot quickly, with a lot of responsiveness. Thomas, Leah, and I worked very closely at length in pre-production to find locations that worked almost out of the box for both design and lighting. The process took time and required a lot of patience, but it yielded very strong results. The film would not have been possible without that approach.

Often, we would arrive to a location that was completely dressed, and all myself and Gaffer Andy Robertson would

have to do was twist out a few fluoros and add some negative fill. I was very lucky to have a collaborator in Andy, he's an artist and understood exactly what we were creating. That also goes for grip John Smith. They're both strong story tellers and were huge assets to the film.

AC What was post-production process like? Were there any challenges in the grade?

SC The grade was exciting and terrifying in equal measure. We pushed the sensor very, very hard and handed over a very thin negative. We baked the look of the film in during the shoot so the first few days of the grade I was nervous that any mistakes we'd made would be punished. Luckily, these moments were few and far between and colourist Olivier Fontenay bought a very caring and experienced eye to the material.

AC What did you learn from this shoot, or were there any new experiences?

SC Every time I've shot a film or show, I feel like I take a little piece of each project away with me for better or worse. This film was an incredibly positive experience. It taught me to trust myself and listen closely to my instincts— something that I'll be taking to every new project in the future.

Sam Chiplin is a Sydney-based Cinematographer known for his work on projects such as *Safe Harbour*, *The Cry*, *Dirt Music*, and *Penguin Bloom*.

RIGHT: Sam operates with a reduced crew on the last day of the shoot.
- CHARLES SCHACHE / @ SEE-SAW FILMS



TESTING THE COOKE S8/iFF RANGE AT CAMERIMAGE

By Mark Broadbent ACS



TOP: Still image using the 32mm Cooke S8/i at T2.8.
PHOTO courtesy of Mark Broadbent ACS

MID & BOTTOM: Behind the scenes of the Cooke Test Room at Camerimage. PHOTOS courtesy of Carey Duffy from Cooke.

In November 2022 I had decided to tick off an event that had been on my bucket list for many years, and that was to attend the Camerimage festival in Toruń, Poland.

While there I attended the usual screenings, Q&A's and many a late night at the various parties and bars.

One event that I was lucky to score a spot at was the Cooke Test Room.

The event was run by Carey Duffy, Cooke's Director of Product Experiences and was an opportunity to test a variety of Cooke

lenses. This was a one-on-one experience with DOP's given 1 hr windows. It involved a small pre-lit set with a couple of models and a selection of cameras to choose from including an ARRI Alexa Mini LF, Sony Venice and RED Raptor. I chose an ARRI Mini LF as I was familiar with it. Also on hand was a full selection of Cooke lenses including all their current spherical and anamorphic prime options as well as the new range of Varotal/iFF zooms which you could pick and choose from to play with.

As there are currently no stock available in Australia, I chose to play with new S8/iFF range of lenses. This is an all-new range of full frame primes that currently consists of seven lenses from 25mm up to 135mm. All the lenses in the set are T1.4 with size and weight a touch longer and heavier than the widely used S4 range. There are an additional nine focal lengths in development with the widest being 18mm and longest at 350mm.

My first impressions from this short experience are that the range definitely holds on to the "Cooke-Look." Nice and sharp with good level of contrast, and a hint of warmth to them.

They seemed to have just the right amount of contrast to hold in highlights and shadows without feeling like they pushed the image unnaturally one way or the other.

I found the flare soft and subdued across the full range. The flares were quite neutral or leaning towards the cooler side. There was a stronger hint of green in the flare points. Overall, I found them quite pleasing and not overpowering.

On the focus front the bokeh very pleasing. With the popularity of vintage lenses lately they inherently have a lot of strange things going on in the out of focus areas due to iris patterns however the 9-blade design on the S8's gives a very smooth, symmetrical bokeh. With that the overall fall off was also very smooth and even. There is some breathing, more so on the longer lenses but nothing I found distracting.

The time and location didn't lend itself to being able to do any real distortion tests but from the quick play they all seem very straight.

After doing the tests the footage had a quick grade by Polish post company Black Photon where I could look at the various lenses on the monitor side by side and compare with one of the Varotal/iFF zooms that I had also played with. A couple of days later I was then invited back to look at the tests projected which was an opportunity to how things held up on a bigger screen.

Overall, I found them quite beautiful lenses. Not too clinical but also not going into the "vintage" world. They are the type of lens that you could comfortably use on a wide variety of projects without a second thought. If you really did need something that was more strongly in the vintage realm, then Cooke has the Panchro range filling that spot.

This experience, and the Camerimage Festival as a whole, was one I'd highly recommend for both up and coming, as well as experience DOP's. I'm looking forward to getting back over there in future years.

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A person is riding a brown horse with a white blaze on its face. The horse is standing in a field of tall grass and green shrubs. In the background, there are dense green trees under a bright sky. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting.

THE OLD WAY

Cinematographer **Sion Michel ACS** embraces
the natural surroundings and changing seasons of
Montana in this Nicolas Cage Western.

By Jenna Fanelli



Ryan Kiera Armstrong in 'The Old Way'.

Director Brett Donowho's *The Old Way* marks what many have deemed Academy Award winner Nicolas Cage's classic Western debut. Cage embodies Colton Briggs, a father and widower whose past life as a merciless assassin comes back to haunt him when an outlaw and his gang violently target Briggs and his family. This leads Briggs to join forces with his twelve-year-old daughter, Brooke played by Ryan Kiera Armstrong, in a suspenseful, intense showdown to defend their family, as the two navigate the complexities of themselves and their relationship.

The film's visuals are realized by director of photography Sion Michel ACS, who utilizes imagery to bring to life the sprawling 1878 Montana Territory setting with well-executed landscape compositions, while capturing the surrealist lighting of Montana's vast skies.

Montana wasn't the sole immediate choice for the film's destination, though. Michel says places like New Mexico and Texas were also in the running. It was ultimately decided that

Montana — a place where few films in this style have been shot in recent years — was the standout, as the environment so purely lent itself to the film's subtext.

Still, Michel's photography manages to hone in on the action and intimate dynamics between characters, especially the central father-daughter relationship, for which Donowho drew from personal experience, having spent a portion of his life growing up on a cattle ranch in Texas and as the father of three daughters.

Michel says he first met Donowho fifteen years ago when the two teamed up on an independent feature called *The Box* starring Gabrielle Union and Giancarlo Esposito. The pair tried to reconnect to work on a sci-fi film in Shanghai entitled *Santiago*, but pre-production screeched to a halt in 2019, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In April of 2021, Michel says Donowho approached him with the script for *The Old Way*. **"He sent it over, I read it, and**

BELOW: Clint Howard and Shiloh Fernandez in 'The Old Way'.

RIGHT: Gaffer JP Gabriel, Key Grip Stu Brumbaugh, DP Sion Michel ACS and Director Brett Donowho







Cowboys roll into town in 'The Old Way'.

realized it was a classic Western-genre script. I had to do it,” Michel says. The two met in Montana just a few days later to begin their next endeavour.

Michel says the script reminded him of fifties film *The Gunfighter* starring Gregory Peck, bringing him back to films by Western directors Raoul Walsh and Budd Boetticher. Those famed Western directors were under studio contract when films were low budget and produced in tight timeframes with stars like Randolph Scott or John Wayne.

“Knowing The Old Way would have a tight schedule and we would be in Montana, I decided to build the camera package with this in mind. In Los Angeles, with the help of Keslow, Alternative Rentals, 2020 Camera and CineVisuals I tested lens packages that could be appropriate for the story and the conditions we would encounter on this fast-paced location shoot,” says Michel.

He tested Anamorphic and Large Format lenses but realized

“I tested lens packages that could be appropriate for the story and the conditions we would encounter on this fast-paced location shoot,”

the film’s pace would be so fast it would require the cameras and lenses to be lightweight and mobile. Michel had to forego his desire to shoot Anamorphic, acknowledging the lenses would be limiting and cumbersome for the minimal crew and production time.

Michel tested Cooke Anamorphics, Leica primes and ARRI Signature Primes, ultimately choosing ARRI Signature Primes: 18mm, 21mm, 25mm, 35mm, 40mm and 75mm. He also included a Fujinon Premista 80-250mm with a doubler to be used for splinter unit work for action, horses, and travel.



He used three ARRI LF Camera production packages, two ARRI Mini LF production camera packages and an ARRI LF production camera package.

Using an ARRI LF as A camera, while the ARRI Mini LF worked as the B camera, Michel also stripped them down for lightweight handheld work, while all batteries and transmitters were in a backpack. A DJI Ronin Gimbal Stabilizer for crane, dolly and handheld action work carried a third ARRI Mini LF.

“Shooting ARRI Raw, I knew the LF format would allow me to frame in 2.35:1 widescreen and give us the option of reframing in post (a la Fincher) to tighten eye lines and match reverse shots. This makes the film feel more refined and considered,” Michel says. ***“Fortunately, 2020 Camera has a facility in Bozeman Montana and the company supported the project by supplying the camera, lenses and support packages for us.”***

Michel views his priority as director of photography as serving

“Brett gave me his complete trust to serve his vision for the picture. He allowed me to use the camera, lighting, and contrast to express the heart of each scene.”

two masters: the story and the director, adding he aims not to allow the camera to function as a character. He says director Brett Donowho came prepared and passionate about visual storytelling, allowing the camera to frame up the story and maximize the emotion and heartfelt story of *The Old Way*.

According to Michel, Donowho never misses nuances in a performance, nor does the camera, making for a solid collaboration on the film. ***“Brett gave me his complete trust***



Dusk shooting on location in 'The Old Ways'.

to serve his vision for the picture. He allowed me to use the camera, lighting, and contrast to express the heart of each scene. We could bounce ideas of coverage, angles, contrast off each other with no power play or ego. The best idea in the room wins,” Michel explains.

Donowho describes Michel’s approach to cinematography as very, “zen,” and with “an artistic frame of reference.” He says the two worked to capture the nature of Montana in a manner that made it seem like a painting, while capturing authentic moments amongst the characters at the forefront. Being a technician, Donowho says, comes so naturally to Sion it allows him to focus more on the intricacies of the story and the vision.

Once he grasped the film’s Western Noir nature, Michel says he used Tungsten units for the principal photography ninety percent of the time. He opted for these units as opposed to modern digital LED lamps, as he felt they best fit the story.

Additionally, Michel used HMI Fresnel 18K lamps, for the night

“Quasar and LED tubes just did not feel like this movie. Very convenient to use and low power, but after seeing the location and the sets, I decided to go with Tungsten,”

scenes and 2900k Kino Flo Wall-O-Lite. He also used modern ARRI Sky Panels, which he says are now a favourite — for both top and fill light in the saloon scenes.

“Quasar and LED tubes just did not feel like this movie. Very convenient to use and low power, but after seeing the location and the sets, I decided to go with Tungsten,” he says. “My gaffer was in shock. He had all the fancy modern lamps, but I rejected them all. In the end, he too thought



we had made the correct choice.”

Other lighting instruments included:

One 6K HMI Par, a 20k Tungsten Mole Beam and a 10k Mole Fresnel. Two each of the following: 1.8k HMI M18s, 575 HMI Fresnels, s60c Skypanels, 5k Mole Fresnels, Studio 2k Fresnels, Vista Beams 80 Tungstens and two Jem Ball Chinese Lanterns.

Four each of the following: Mole 9 Light Maxi Brutes, Studio 1k Babies, Studio 650s, 300w Fresnels, 200ws and four 4x4 Kinos Tungsten's plus six 2k Blondie Open Faces and six Par Can Medium Lenses.

For a feature film, Michel says this lighting package was relatively small, but tailored to each scene to contain the budget.

Due to the film's specificity of time and space to strengthen the story's context and raise its stakes, it was important

production pay careful attention to the natural surroundings. Location scouting and pre-production time was valuable, Michel says, as his team was able to track the sun and to schedule the scenes to be shot at the optimal time of day to take advantage of natural light and sun.

“In Montana you may have four seasons in a day — and we did at times. However, we were blessed with some incredible days of sunshine, which definitely blessed the film,” Michel says. ***“Wind is another element that plays havoc with filming there. It can be fierce, and this was the case for The Old Way. Fortunately, when the wind was dangerous, we actively set up wind blocks and used the wind as an element in the frame, which only heightened the imagery and drama of the script.”***

Essentially a 'grip' movie, Michel used 20 x 20 frames with solids to decrease light on exterior scenes and 20 x 20 or 12 x 12 overheads to cut sunlight for continuity. Michel's key grip brought up special 'rags' from Los Angeles for him to use.



Nicolas Cage in 'The Old Way'.

“I like to say that in Australia, my training, and roots, we learned to light from the shadows up. In America, I have found that many times we would light from the lights down.

These included: unbleached muslin in different sizes; silent bounces which could be used in windy situations without hampering audio recording too greatly; large gold bounces from 6x6 to 12x12 and 4x4 gold/soft gold shiny boards for

kickers and rim light and 4x4 mirrors to bounce into cloth for fill or be used as a hard light kick.

“We pretty much harnessed the sun through these passive means to create a mood / contrast within the scene,” Michel says. “I like to say that in Australia, my training, and roots, we learned to light from the shadows up. In America, I have found that many times we would light from the lights down.

Sion Michel ACS is an American Cinematographer based in Los Angeles.

Sion completed a Masters of Cinematography at AFTRS and has operated for Cinematographers such as Laszlo Baranyai ACS HSC, Steve Windon ACS ASC, and Dion Beebe ACS ASC.

Ryan Kiera Armstrong and Nicolas Cage in 'The Old Way'.



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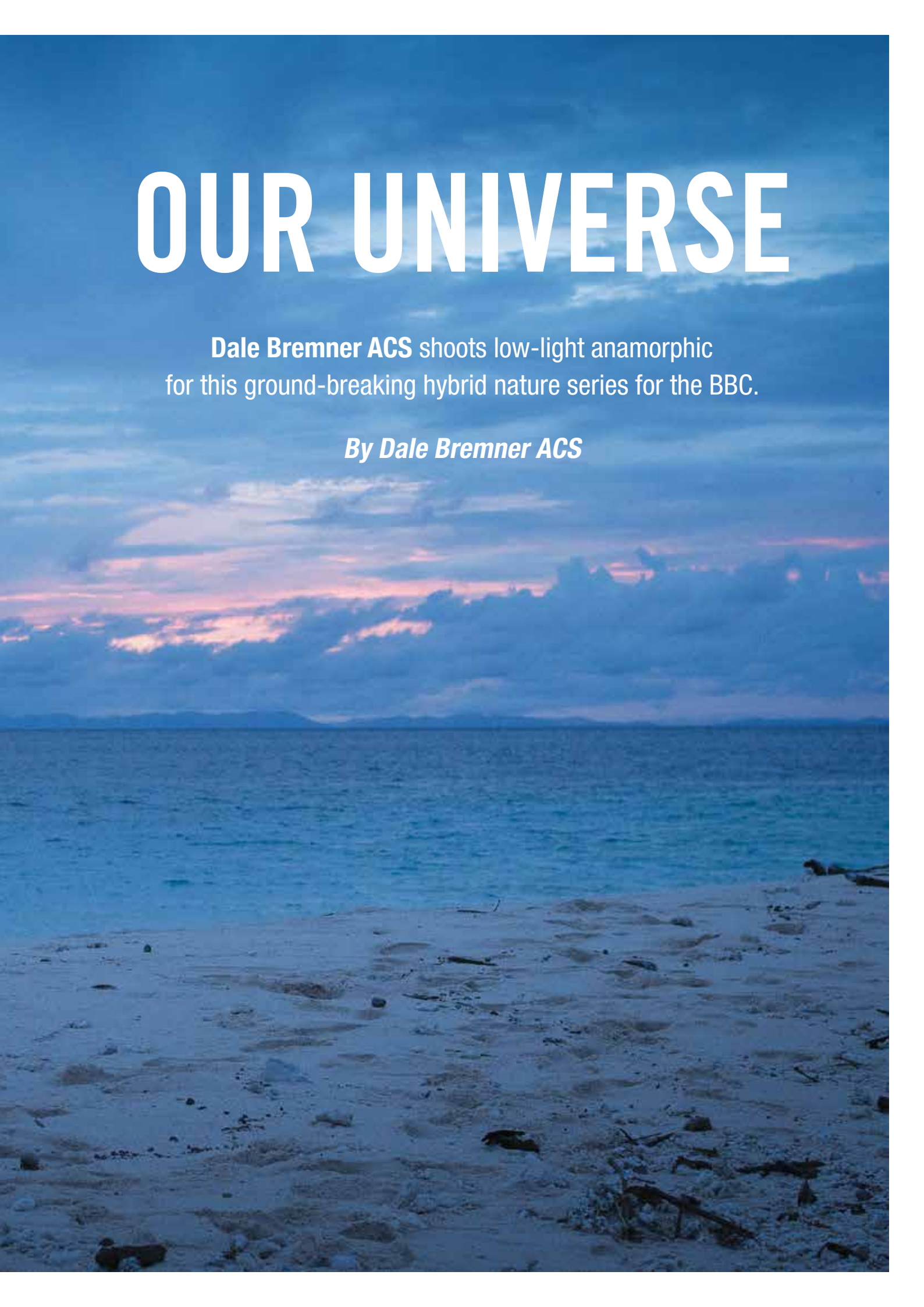
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OUR UNIVERSE

Dale Bremner ACS shoots low-light anamorphic for this ground-breaking hybrid nature series for the BBC.

By Dale Bremner ACS





Behind the scenes on 'Our Universe'.

When the BBC first approached me to shoot an episode of *Our Universe*, they caught me off guard by the desire to shoot the ground-breaking hybrid nature series with a 2x anamorphic squeeze. The episode entitled '*Elemental*' follows the life cycle of the great sea turtle and its connection to raw elements of the universe.

The shoot was broken down into two blocks - based on the activity of the turtles laying and hatching eggs and shot on the Northern rim of the Great Barrier Reef - a restricted and preserved sanctuary out from Lockhart River, roughly 50 hours

yacht cruise north of Cairns.

Working off the scientific research vessel ARGO, out of Cairns, our crew had to be small and nimble with specific permits required for a strictly limited number of people involved. These are endangered reefs and sandbanks and very sensitive to the struggling marine ecosystem.

We had scheduled seven days to capture the delicate hatching process on the island. However, nature had other plans. Three days in, our shoot was cut short as we were



hit by a tropical cyclone, pinning us against the reef for 48 hours. Blessed with incredibly dramatic skies, and cursed with unpredictably violent weather, we were forced to abandon the shoot and island-hop back down the coastline to Cairns. Thankfully, we had hit the ground running and shot enough coverage in the two days to scrape through. The second block, the laying process, was shot over two and a half weeks cyclone-free.

Joining me on the endeavour was Sydney-based 1st AC Chris Braga. I had previously worked with Chris on remote regions

of Uluru for the Australian National Gallery and knew he would once again be perfect in a harsher environment. I cannot recommend Chris enough for any natural history and nature work; he's definitely in his element, when in the elements. We joined the crew of the ARGO, along with local Indigenous custodians, a parks and wildlife representative, and marine biologist and renowned underwater cinematographer Richard Fitzpatrick ACS, who has had extensive experience shooting the reef.

Narrated by Morgan Freeman, and remotely directed by



Excerpt from 'Our Universe'.

London-based Stephen Cooter, the BBC hybrid series is a Netflix original and the first of its kind. We needed to meet Netflix's delivery requirements, which is a minimum of true 4k delivery, and on their requested 2x anamorphic squeeze.

Given both the environmental and physical constraints, I knew multiple setups of both camera and lens combinations would be required to successfully achieve this, and my package of choice was the Panavision G series lenses combined with a DXL2 and a Sony Venice..

From a technical standpoint, all anamorphics present a multitude of challenges when working in controlled environments. This was amplified when working in endangered, fragile, and exposed conditions. The series is also heavily reliant on a multitude of VFX components from

award-winning post house Lux Aeterna, so consideration to these post elements was essential from both a technical and narrative standpoint.

Some key technical hurdles that present themselves when shooting with anamorphic lenses are, vertical and horizontal resolution loss, horizon barrel distortion, smaller aperture range, inconsistent weight and front element dimensions, undesirable lens breathing, and a lack of minimal focus lengths.

To add a further dose of challenge, the turtles' activities were predominantly nocturnal and on the fringe of low light, being pre-sunrise and sunsets. Add extreme humidity, fine sand, a passing tropical cyclone, and an endangered bird sanctuary surrounding us, and the variables were multiplied. Let's not



forget the nocturnal commute with equipment in shallow shark infested waters.

Considering all these factors, I needed a base set of anamorphics that held up in low light, with minimal distortion, a uniform casing, a realistic minimal focus range and a balanced visual consistency. Personally, I find when shooting the ocean's horizon line, any skew feels amplified, so any deep distortion needs to be minimised as well. It's almost as if we are subconsciously conditioned to seeing the ocean within a perfect horizontal plane, and anything else feels completely off.

Panavision's G series anamorphics ticked these boxes perfectly. I combined them with the Sony Venice for its resolution, high ISO capabilities, and internal NDs for most of the on-land sequences.

When the G series were pushed beyond their limits in terms of low light and minimum focus, I supplemented them with Panavision Primo spherical lenses to match the G series aesthetically. A Panavision super macro 90mm was also used to capture hero shots of our baby turtles emerging for their first time, as diopters can both distort and amplify resolution loss.

Sky VFX plates were captured at all times of blue hour and sunrise, at multiple exposure and aperture levels. This was to ensure Lux was given enough latitude in the shots with connecting plates of the sky and ocean, and our narrative VO that links the two. With consideration to the full VFX universe sequences, transitions of different speeds and focal lengths were also shot. This was to ensure the narrative pacing between our VFX world, and the reef was consistent. Both colour and distortion charts were shot and offered up in pre-



Excerpt from 'Our Universe'.

production to aid in future integration of the VFX shots.

The turtles were extremely sensitive to any artificial light and noise, and as such, much of our egg-laying sequences were shot purely in moonlight, at extreme proximities requiring a delicate touch and minimal footprint. To ensure we had enough detail in moonlight, with minimal disturbance, we combined a Sony A7 III with Cooke S4 primes when possible. A heavily diffused Ice light and silver bounce was also gently introduced during some of these delicate scenes.

For the aerial sequences, I requested the expertise of Guy Alexander, Ewan Donnachie and Jason Price from Heliguy. They joined us on the last leg of the second block for some truly sensational aerals. I had previously discussed with Ewan the best build and combination to match the on-land

sequences. Due to their size and weight, we combined P+S Technik Kowa anamorphics from CameraHire with a RED Komodo on a Matrice 600, and they performed perfectly. I had a backup set of vintage Zeiss super speeds for the lower light flights, but the Komodo held up to my satisfaction even when pushed, and the super speeds were not deployed.

Many characteristics of the vintage anamorphics were reduced when foreground was not introduced, and only the distortion of the ocean's horizon was a concerning factor. The Kowa's were also never shot wide open, ensuring some optical consistency was retained while minimising the edge fringing, something which is so synonymous with the vintage Russian glass.

Finding the in-water action in low light was not an easy task, and flight time was limited with our main payload, so we



launched an Inspire 2 to scout the action beforehand. This way, when the Komodo launched, it could hunt the action immediately and maximise flight time.

The underwater sequences were predominantly captured by Richard, on a RED Helium, in custom Gates and Nauticam housings. We combined these with our Cooke S4 primes, in a rectilinear dome for some breathtaking sequences. Diving and swimming the reef amongst thousands of great sea turtles remains a truly unique experience and one I will forever be grateful to experience.

Most of the core camera decisions were driven from a technical standpoint, with the creative taking a back seat. Combining such a large combination of camera bodies and lenses was a little daunting from an aesthetic perspective, but

seeing the result and outstanding post work done by the BBC and LUX Aeterna, quickly reassured me that the right choices were made, to bring this incredible and fragile story to the screen. Having Morgan Freeman's voice to tie it all together, was simply the cherry on top.

A special thank you to Heliguy, Jessica Springthorpe and Stephen Cooter from BBC One, the late Stuart Scowcroft of Intomedia (Rest in Peace), ARGO's dive master Belinda Flanders, Richard Fitzpatrick ACS, and Nic Godoy and Troy Galvin from Panavision Australia.

Dale Bremner ACS is an Australian-born international Cinematographer whose work includes film, commercial and documentary through to music, fashion and experimental films.

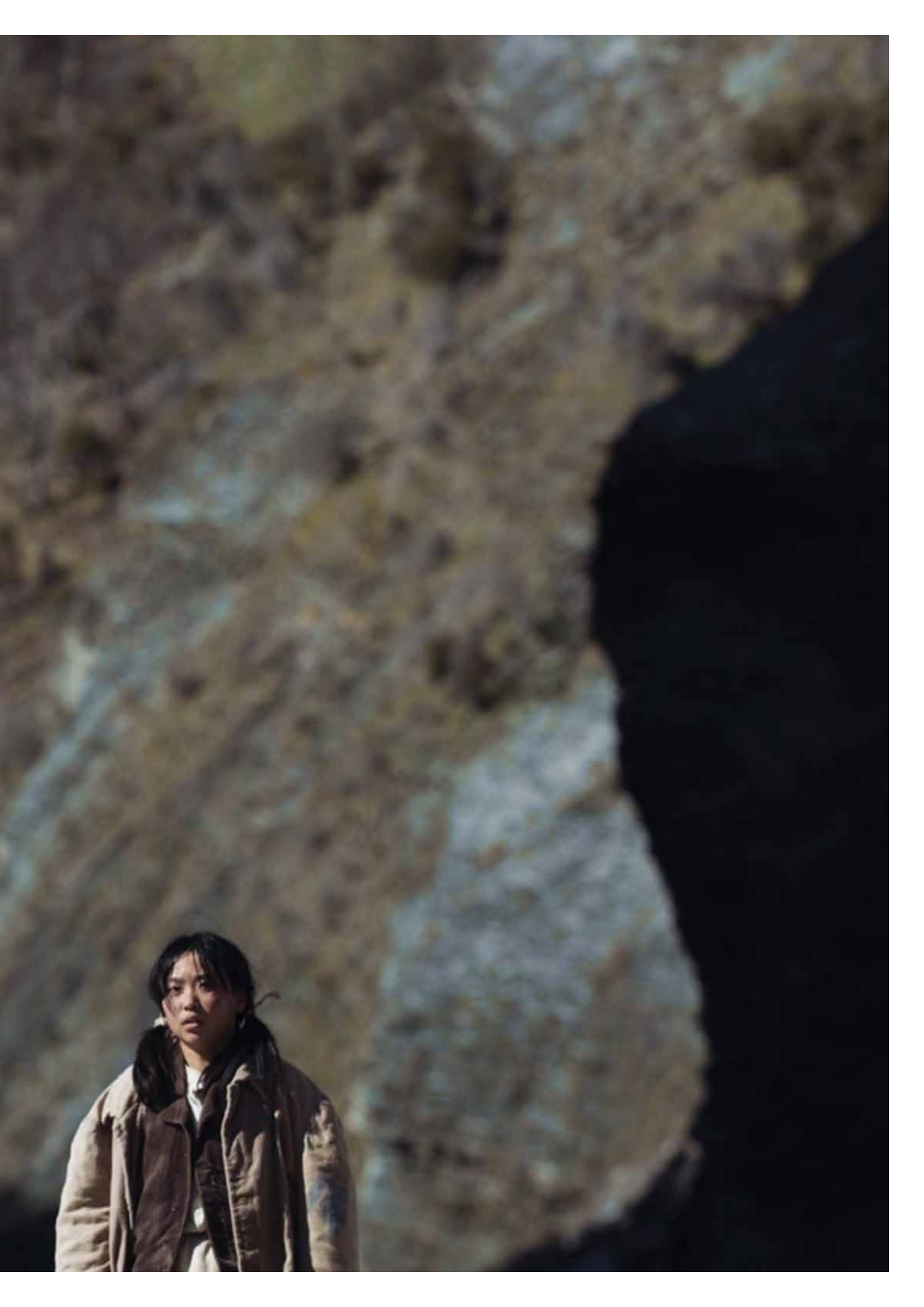
The 6-part series *Our Universe* is currently available on Netflix globally.



BLOOD AND GOLD & WAY SOUTH

Ryan Alexander Lloyd compares and contrasts his approach on two recent shorts.

By Ryan Lloyd Alexander





Excerpt from 'Blood and Gold'.

AC Can you describe both *Blood and Gold* as well as *Way South* in your own words, why are they similar and why are they different, and how both jobs came to you?

RAL *Blood and Gold*, is a stark period drama set on the gold frontier of the 1860-70's. Our female lead is on the run, on horseback in the remote Skipper's cannon, known from Mission Impossible Fallout as a stand-in for Kashmir, with little dialogue we had to visually convey the peril of our central character's situation, the landscape really did the heavy lifting for us.

Way South, on the other hand is very dream-like and has a modern spirit with hints of *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, infused with Kiwi road movies. Based on a poem by Courtney Sina Meredith, 'No Motorbikes, No Golf,' the poetry sits as the thread that weaves the story together, as different couples and friends explore the surrounding landscape around Lake Wanaka. Originally pitched as a branded content venture with Lake Wanaka, *Way South* Director's cut is an expanded idea.

I am trying to wrap my head around the similarity between these two unique projects, *Blood and Gold* and *Way South*, beyond the shared landscapes of Central Otago, Aotearoa, New Zealand.

The more I think about it, I think it may be a story of possibility and life-changing interactions. Our lead, in *Blood and Gold* is confronted with a brutal crime being perpetrated against a pre-teen girl and intervenes at her risk, changing the course of both their lives and *Way South* has this playfulness of Queer culture and the growing friendships that help the community unify and bond.

The differences are very clear, one being *Blood and Gold* is very much a brutal and violent story and *Way South* is a celebration of love, connection, and misadventure.

How I got involved in *Blood and Gold* was based on the creative relationship I have with the film's Director Yamin Tun. We have collaborated on a number of projects over the past decade and done the festival circuit together and have somewhat of a shorthand not to say they don't throw a curveball my way now and again.

Way South was somewhat lucky for me to land as the attached DOP stepped away for another job and I had a good relationship with the film production company having just worked with them on a commercial.

AC What was to be the 'look' of each project? Were you working from any references?

RAL For the look of *Blood and Gold* the director and I referenced several old photographers from the late 1800s early 1900s along with the gothic painting of Aotearoa. An artist that kept coming up was Bill Hammond, in hindsight I think we both really liked his paintings, and they really didn't sit in the same world as the film but getting lost in inspiration isn't a bad thing along the way, it feeds you on some level. Oh yes, there were a few frames from 70s Herzog films we kept coming back to. I think we landed on bold and heavy and there is no doubt we captured just that.

With *Way South*, the influences were very much landscape photography of Central Otago mixed with fashion photography. The director, Benn Jae has worked in the fashion and photography world for some time and knows what they like, bold colour images and textures, scale, and intimacy, it's a fun starting point.

AC How did camera and lens choice, as well as locations, affect how you approached filming? What equipment did you choose and why?

RAL Both projects simply wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for the support of Brett Mills and the Queenstown Camera Company. The package for *Blood and*



Jodie Hilcock and Joyena Sun in 'Blood and Gold'.



Excerpt from 'Way South'.

“...we knew we needed the long end of the zoom to pull our lead actor, riding her horse, off the epic background. And, for the wider end of the primes to be used, as close as humanly possible,”

Gold was a, then-new, RED Monstro 8k full frame. Keep in mind this film was shot in September 2018 and wasn't released until late 2021. It was a chance to see what all the fuss was about, in the full framed world. I'm still not 100% sold on the full frame scale as I don't think all projects need it, and now, five years on it's become so common... I miss Super 35, I digress. Paired with the Monstro, was a set of five Leica THALIA T2's and a 15mm Zeiss CP2 T2.9 to fill out the wide end, along with an Angénieux Zoom with 1/8th Black Pro-Mist filter.

With *Blood and Gold*, we knew we needed the long end of

the zoom to pull our lead actor, riding her horse, off the epic background. And, for the wider end of the primes to be used, as close as humanly possible, to the actors in the intensely violent and confronting moments—so you felt as much in their heads as possible. Due to the location and limited budget of a short film, lighting and gripping were somewhat of an impossibility, so it was mostly tripod and hand-held in the fight scene. The lighting was basic daylight control Neg and Diff frame, it wasn't perfect, but we made it work.

Way South again was supported by Brett Mills and the team, the classic tried, and true ARRI Alexa Mini was the camera of choice paired with the Cooke Anamorphic/i S35, and an Angénieux Zoom with a 2x expanded on the rare and a Laowa12mm for the wired wide-angle frames.

Given the landscape, shooting in the Anamorphic look was a no-brainer for the Director and I. I've always enjoyed shooting the Cooke's with their warm tones and loving rendering of brown skin tones, they really suited the actors look. Our B-Cam was the very compact Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 6K, with a PL Mount so we could mount a Cooke lens on it, and I could steal frames and textures between location

BELOW: Excerpt from 'Way South'.

RIGHT: Cinematographer Ryan Alexander Lloyd finds the shot on *Way South*







Behind the scenes on 'The Way South'.

“Often, we would start shooting in full sun to then find ourselves in sideways rain an hour later, it was like that for four or five days and the film’s story plays out almost in real-time, “

moves. Even on the location scout, I was grabbing texture and B-roll, I can’t recommend this kind of set up enough if you know the shooting day is going to have a lot of re-locations and setups. Largely handheld with the long lens zoom set-ups being on Tripod and really, light wise doing our best to pick the spots based on the time of day. Gripping was super helpful in fulfilling my spare-of-the-moment frame ideas like rigging the Blackmagic camera with the 12mm in some wild places and hanging off cars and boats, I loved their can-do attitude.

AC Where you shooting mostly location work? What was travel/planning like? Did everything go as planned?

RAL Well for *Blood and Gold* the simple answer is No, it was somewhat of a nightmare, with a spring cold snap hitting Queenstown and Skippers a day or so before we started shooting. The roads were ice, locations got snowed in and then transport became a mission. We all got into the canyon and started to shoot with weather conditions changing. Often, we would start shooting in full sun to then

find ourselves in sideways rain an hour later, it was like that for four or five days and the film’s story plays out almost in real-time, so I am happy it plays out ok on screen, only the odd shot was like oh it’s raining in the background now.

Way South was the complete opposite, with blue sky days right up until the afternoon of the last shoot day, very lucky and with daylight control on the exteriors we captured some really fun frames. We did use a few ARRI M18’s around a small cabin scene as the sun was setting, and we had to pass it off as morning inside on the lovers.

AC How involved were you in the post-production and the colour-grading process in each film?

RAL With *Blood and Gold* I saw a few edits and informed a pick-up shoot, and then into the finishing grade I was present and was able to work with Clare Burlinson whose work speaks for itself, please do yourself a favour and check out *The Orator* (2011) and *Stray* (2018) crafting gifted cinematographer’s images. Clare really helped pull the images into line after the wild weather conditions we were up against on set, and I will forever be in her debt.

Way South was something I didn’t feel I needed to be heavily involved in as the director and I had already had conversations about the look before we even shot, plus we solidified the look whilst shooting. We knew that with our grader, Matic Prusnik, we were in good hands, there was one small round of feedback. I was very happy with the overall look.



Behind the scenes on 'The Way South'.

AC *Way South* is quite beautiful. Do you have a favourite shot or sequence from this film? Why?

RAL There are a few moments I really like in *Way South*, to start with Courtney Sina Meredith's poem.

'No Motorbikes, No Golf'.

**It isn't like an Island nipple nup
no breezing trees and caramel sand
no coconut truths spilling over woven fans
no plans of making love to the land.**

This excerpt from which *Way South* is inspired just pulls you into a reflection, memoir or even dream. The poem's original intent has been reworked by the director to include these colourful, brown, and queer actors inhabiting the rugged landscape. If you are someone who knows the South Island there aren't many brown faces, but corporate player's holiday homes and ski fields with predominantly white faces, the whole thing is somewhat rebellious to the local look and morals. I must commend Wanaka Tourism for venturing away from the stock standard image of their region and pushing boundaries. So, what I am saying is I can't pick a moment in the film, the work altogether is it for me.

AC Considering what you had set out to achieve by making these films, do you think you succeeded? Looking back now, what might you have done differently?

RAL Tough question, I would say for *Blood and Gold*, in

hindsight I would do things differently but that is possibly the five-year gap talking, I think I am 75-80% happy with my work and yeah there would be more room for improvement if I was to revisit the world, the project is now in script development to become a longer form project so there is a chance to redeem myself there.

Way South, yes, I think I succeeded, well there is one shot I am not 100% on— I am guessing it will only haunt me, but on the chance any of the readers see the project please drop me a line if anything sticks out to you, always open to improving.

AC What's next for you?

RAL I am just wrapping some 2nd Unit work on an interesting feature film, *One Winter*, exploring race relations, creative dreams, and family in the 1980s. *One Winter* has a great cast including Minnie Driver, Julian Dennison, and Rhys Darby, it's due out later this year, and has a riot scene I think a few readers will enjoy. Up next is a TV show and a few commercials, also hopefully back in Australia this year as I've been somewhat stuck in Aotearoa since all the madness with the border closures and pandemic, looking forward to the new year.

Ryan Alexander Lloyd is of Ngai Tahu, Maori descent born and raised in Aotearoa, New Zealand. A visual storyteller who has worked on over 50 short films, award-winning feature films and celebrated TV dramas along with numerous music videos for the likes of Courtney Barnett, Six60 and King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard working between Australia and New Zealand.

RESTOS DO VENTO

Mark Bliss ACK digs into defining the past and shooting in chronological order.

By Mark Bliss ACK







PHOTO SUPPLIED

In Restos Do Vento, the memory of a pagan tradition in a Portugal village leaves painful memories for a group of young teenagers. When they meet again twenty-five years later, the past resurfaces and tragedy sets in.

While the world was in the midst of Covid 19, I was shooting 2nd unit on the US TV series *The Wheel of Time*, and everything came to a grinding halt. There was no work to speak of and in Prague, normally teeming with film makers from all over the world, the streets were eerily empty.

When the director, Tiago Guedes called me with the offer to shoot his next project I didn't think twice. Tiago's previous feature film *A HERDADE* premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2019 and had a very successful theatrical release in Europe.

I have shot several other projects with Tiago, but this was to

be our first feature film collaboration.

The script was very dark and offered no happy ending, dealing with the ambiguity of human nature and I was drawn to the subject matter right away.

There's two distinct parts to the film. One section of the film is set in 1995 and the other, making up about 80% of the film, is set in the present.

“The script was very dark and offered no happy ending, dealing with the ambiguity of human nature and I was drawn to the subject matter right away.”

We decided to use different lenses and different screen ratios



PHOTO SUPPLIED



PHOTO SUPPLIED

for these two parts. After extensive testing we arrived at Carl Zeiss Mk II lenses for the scenes set in 1995 to be shot in 16:9 ration and Master Primes for the rest of the film to be framed for wide screen 2.39:1 We wanted to differentiate the two periods hence also the two different screen ratios. I loved the subtlety of the Zeiss Mk II set, even though we ended up shooting the entire opening scene on one lens only. We tried different lenses but always ended up back with the 40mm. Tiago wanted a very first-person experience, so the camera moves with our main protagonist sometimes following him sometimes becoming his POV all within the same shot. We shot the opening sequence at T2 to keep the DOF to minimum to give the sequence an edge, where not all things in frame were sharp. For the scene we invented a pagan tradition which combined elements from Portuguese and Czech folk traditions.

After our initial location scouting in the remote region of Serra da Malcata in Portugal, I realised that all our interior locations are extremely small and mostly painted white. The size of the

“Tiago wanted a very first-person experience, so the camera moves with our main protagonist sometimes following him sometimes becoming his POV all within the same shot.”

interiors was very influential in selecting our equipment, be it camera, lenses, light, and grip gear. We opted for ARRI Alexa Mini and set of Master Primes.

I worked very closely with our Art Director Isabel Branco to make the most out of our limiting locations which wasn't always possible, and we had to be extremely inventive. We have devised a colour palette for both parts of the film and together with the costume designer Isabel Carmona did many fittings and camera tests.



PHOTO SUPPLIED



After several discussions with the director, we arrived on our visual approach. Decision was made to treat the two parts of the script very differently. We referenced films, photos, and lot of other visuals to arrive at the visual style.

The 1995 scenes were shot completely handheld, in long uninterrupted takes, placing extra pressure on cast and crew. The opening sequence which, in reality, takes place over a period of 15-20mins took us five days to shoot and we had all types of weather. From full sunlight to totally overcast.

The present-time part of the film was quite the opposite, the camera never left the tripod, slider or dolly and gave the actors a lot of space to perform. We didn't storyboard any of the scenes instead we worked off the extensive photo library I had amassed during our location scout.

Since the emotional arch that the entire cast goes through during the film is rather intense a decision was made to shoot the entire film sequentially the way it was written. To say this

“Since the emotional arch that the entire cast goes through during the film is rather intense a decision was made to shoot the entire film sequentially the way it was written.”

made a havoc with the schedule would be an understatement, but the producer Paulo Branco who has some 300+ producer credits to his name, has agreed to shoot the film that way and made provisions to enable to production to shoot chronologically. That meant returning to the same location several times over the course of the film.

We had a small but dedicated crew. The role of the gaffer was combined with the role of a key grip and four assistants that would according to the need be either lighting or grip crew.





PHOTO SUPPLIED

The system even though completely new to me worked well enough.

The camera crew was equally small and consisted of focus puller Marcel Encarnação and second AC Gustavo Vasconcelos. We also had a camera trainee who also doubled as a data wrangler. My first AC made sure that the small camera crew worked like a well-oiled Swiss clock. His dedication and experience helped us to achieve amazing results under very trying conditions.

We didn't use any filters apart from some Pola and occasionally some light Hollywood Black Magic at the beginning of the film.

The film was shot in a remote part of Portugal near the border with Spain. The town of Meimao which served as the main location for the film was largely deserted as most of its younger inhabitants moved to the cities and abroad in search of a better life.

“The lighting package was very small, and we relied heavily on practicals which were powered by the Aperture bulbs which we could control remotely.”

We used a minimalistic approach to cinematography, both in terms of lighting and camera movement. A lot of the scenes have been shot in a single camera set up without any coverage at all.

The lighting package was very small, and we relied heavily on practicals which were powered by the Aperture bulbs which we could control remotely. We also made a good use of the Astera fixtures.

Most of the day exteriors were filmed with no additional



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PHOTO SUPPLIED

“The process we embraced with Tiago was to give as much room for our actors. The director spent a week with the actors on location rehearsing, so they were well prepared.”

lighting rather using negative fill to get some contrast into the image. I have also employed a Segway for some tracking shots where possible.

For night scenes I had a SkyPanel 360 mounted on a 40m cherry picker as we were lighting a football field for the final scene. My lighting would be motivated by practical sources or windows. Tiago also really pushed me to go darker especially towards the end of the film, as the characters go into their own emotional darkness. We used LightMats extensively due

to their small profile and would make a good use of the Astera fixtures both tubes and bulbs.

The process we embraced with Tiago was to give as much room for our actors. The director spent a week with the actors on location rehearsing, so they were well prepared. During the filming itself we would watch rehearsal and would decide on how to shoot the scene. I would suggest a way of filming the scene and if it was possible, we would try to cover the scene in one uninterrupted shot. We would sometimes cover a 360-camera move, which would make it difficult for the rest of the crew and for our equipment.

In lot of the locations, we had to work with the available light and augment it to our desired look. One such locations was the small church where a particularly emotional scene takes place. We had our lights ready outside to put them through the windows, but the sun came out and with the help of little haze inside we were able to create beautiful shafts of light thus creating huge depth within the small church.



PHOTO SUPPLIED



We were fortunate to shoot the film in chronological order, as the characters arch was so demanding that shooting all scenes for given location wasn't an option. We had a schedule of 48 days but came in two days early, which is a testament to our hard work.

During the post I would get the offline edits and would grade remotely and would send references of frame grabs I'd graded in Photoshop. Once the cut was locked in, I flew back to Lisbon and graded the film over a period of three days with our talented colourist Rita Lamas. Our approach was not to distract from the story and keep things simple.

We knew we were working on something special, but we would never envision having the film premiere at the 75th Cannes Film Festival.

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Mark Bliss ACK has worked extensively around the world on feature films, documentaries, music videos, and commercials. After twenty years of living in Australia, Mark has relocated to Europe and is now based in Prague.



EXPLORING THE DEPTHS

Cinematographer Cesar Salmeron goes deep with moving shadows and mirrored water on his latest music video ‘High’.

By Phoebe Hartley



Cesar Salmeron operates the camera underwater

Some of the best projects start with a single idea.

Cinematographer Cesar Salmeron wanted to expand his underwater experience, having had a recent taste of it on a previous project which featured an underwater dream sequence.

Salmeron was keen to experiment further. This kernel, paired with the notion of a moving light source, became the bones of his new music video *High* for Australian artist Tika Maree. ***“So, the concept was driven by what I wanted to shoot,”*** Salmeron says.

For this hard-working commercials DP, the joy of creation is found in having opportunities to play. Given free rein on the production of *High*, Salmeron assembled a crack team of willing film practitioners with whom he regularly collaborates on bread-and-butter gigs. Letting their imagination lead the way, the resulting clip is an eye-catching alchemy of experimentation with technology and imagery.

Salmeron wanted to take the familiar

elements of sunlight, moonlight, and water, and turn them on their heads. So, the clip combines three juxtaposing sequences for cinematic effect: a forest in the day, the same forest at night, and the underwater inspiration that started it all.

First up, the backlit, daytime forest scene captures natural morning light and dreamy afternoon shadows. Then a striking night-time sequence shot at the same location uses a light-bearing drone and projector to make light dance around the singer. Salmeron found the forest location while mountain biking with his son in Victoria’s stunning You Yangs Regional Park, where much of the recent American Series *La Brea* was filmed. He and his trusted drone buddies from HARPY chose the spot for its epic straight-trunked trees that worked perfectly with the light. ***“The challenge is you need thin trees and not too much canopy, otherwise the light mounted to the drone doesn’t get through,”*** Salmeron explains. He was excited to have the chance to do things

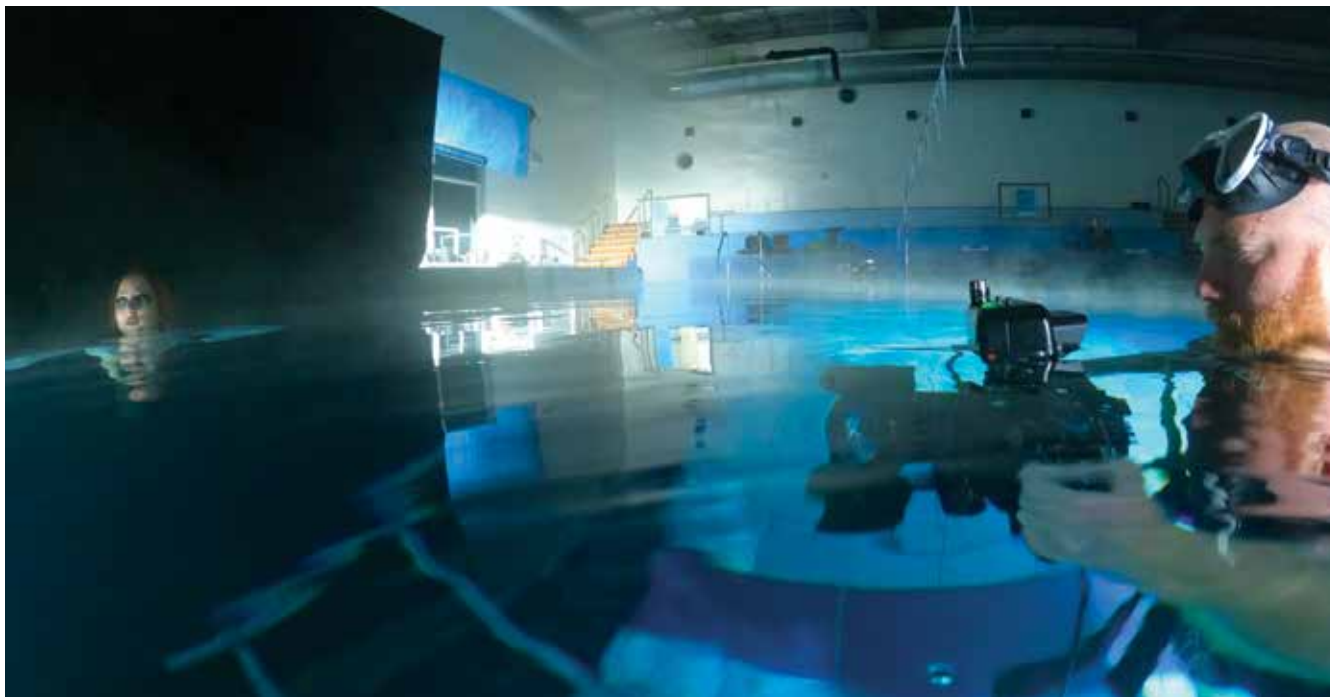
with light he doesn’t normally get to do.

“I just wanted to work with moving shadows. I work with soft light all the time—everyone wants a bounce or a book light. But you don’t get to play with lights on drones very often!”

To create an ever-moving texture of fast-moving moonlight, Salmeron and the HARPY crew mounted a 2K LED lamp to a heavy-lift drone and let it rip. To create flow on the ground, Salmeron opted for Steadicam wielded by Rayner Cook, who was keen to collaborate. A RED Gemini was selected for its low-light capabilities, paired with Cooke Anamorphic lenses to create depth peppered with a stylised bokeh look. Gaffer Albert Garcia—back in the field and better than ever after a life-threatening illness—did an amazing job lighting the forest using a laser projector plus a remote-controlled set of Astera tubes. And Salmeron’s long-time DOP bestie, Shyam Ediriweera was in charge of smoke effects, to enhance the lit backdrop. With the scene set, Salmeron says charismatic artist Tika Maree was,



Stills from the music video for 'High'.



ABOVE & BELOW: *Behind the scenes on 'High'.*

“the perfect talent.” The mosquito-infested location didn’t distract her from performing, nor did it draw a single complaint. ***“She’s a powerhouse, she was ‘on’ from the moment we rolled, so we were able to get great footage.”***

Then there was the underwater sequence. Expertly operated by Sam O’Reilly, the mirrored water creates an engaging frame. While underwater shooting comes with unique challenges, the on-set logistics were made seamless, Salmeron says, thanks to O’Reilly’s combination of

talent and great gear. ***“Sam doesn’t leave anything to chance—he comes prepared with more gear than a Navy SEAL.”*** O’Reilly’s top-notch scuba-skills and, “lifesaving” underwater speakers allowed for seamless lip-synch, lifting production to another level.

Finding a swimming pool location on a music video budget proved to be difficult. After hunting around at high-end hotels, it was again during dad-duty that Salmeron finally found something suitable: his local pool, where he takes his son to swimming lessons. And there

were plenty of other obstacles. The pool was relatively shallow, and warm, which can cause overheating issues with camera gear—having a second on stand-by was essential. The talent was tasked with singing underwater without creating bubbles, with the lengths of takes restricted by the artist having to hold her breath and keep her eyes open. And from experience, Salmeron knew not to rely on too much backlighting, as it gives the water a milky look.

But Salmeron excels at rising to meet





ABOVE & BELOW: Behind the scenes on 'High'.

challenges like these. He says he loves painting with coloured lights underwater. ***"We wanted to experiment with different lighting effects to create the right look."*** He limited camera movement to enhance the zero-gravity effect of the water, and found ways to light from below the surface, to separate the talent from the background in the absence of a backlight. To create caustics, he used a single spotted hard source light. And he enjoyed working with multiple-coloured lights that didn't interfere with each other in the dense environment. Close friend and DOP

Aaron Foley was on hand to help black out the swimming pool, and to capture incredible underwater stills. The talented gaffer for the underwater component was Jem Towsey, with whom Salmeron has worked on numerous commercial shoots. Finally, colourist CJ Dobson at Mood Lab provided the online and grade. A long-time collaborator, Dobson is described by Salmeron as ***"a magician"*** whose keen eye brings out the best in his frames.

To a commercial DOP who's usually bound by the whims of clients, the

freedom of shooting music videos is ***"like running naked into a field"***. Salmeron relishes being able to experiment and extend his skills. ***"The more we play, the more we arm ourselves with new capabilities. Then we can bring these with us into the next commercial job—it makes us better filmmakers."***

Cesar Salmeron is a multi-award-winning cinematographer working locally out of Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane.

Phoebe Hartley is a Melbourne-born writer and audio producer with a background in filmmaking.



DREW LEWELLYN ACS CAMERIMAGE SCHOLARSHIP

By Liam Edward Brennan



CKK Jordanki Building lit up for Energa Camerimage 2022 in Toruń, Poland.

There are few things greater in our careers as Cinematographers than the chances we get to travel and see the world. Camerimage Poland has been on my radar, but just out of reach for years. Thanks to the Drew Lewellyn ACS Scholarship, in November 2022, I was able to finally attend this incredible, International Film Festival. It changed my life.

Introducing Toruń, Poland

A UNESCO world heritage listed town that is medieval and perfectly preserved,

is the best place to host a film festival that focuses on Cinematography. The BEST. On my first day in Toruń I sat in the open windowsill of a beautiful apartment overlooking cobblestone streets, and drank polish vodka straight from the freezer. My European dream was complete.

As I sipped my chilled delight and looked down onto the street, I thought about the people who laid the bricks of this town in the 13th/14th/15th centuries. Did they recognise the significance of their work as each brick landed, or did they simply want to get the job done so they could go home to their families?

With that in my mind, I wondered, did the 1st AC on the Candy Club scene in *Elvis* realise the significance of their incredible focus pulling as Mandy Walker ASC ACS operated handheld? I

hope they did.

Camerimage Festival director Marek Zydowicz presented the Festival Director's Award for the impact of *Elvis*' images. These were awarded to Aussies Baz Luhrmann and Mandy Walker ASC ACS for their collaboration on *Elvis*. Each member of their crew represents a keystone of a future classic movie, proudly shot on Australian soil.

These thoughts made me realise; I need to be more present on shoots. What can seem like a simple brick, can be the part of such a greater, historically significant piece... or maybe the vodka was just starting to kick in.

I close the window and head to the Official Opening of Camerimage 2022. Here we go. The week kicks off and it is HECTIC. Films start showing at 10am, the schedule is jam-packed with



Liam Brennan, Mark Broadbent ACVS, Erika Addis and Ben Cotgrove at Camerimage 2021

Viewings, Q&A's, and Panel Discussions with global film industry leaders until 10pm each night... and then the afterparties start!

Each night of the week a camera or lens company hosts wonderful parties. I was thrilled to attend quite a few with official invites to Fujinon, Canon, Cooke, ARRI, Hawk and Sony. The afterparties go until 2 am, then you hit the clubs for the AFTER-afterparty, and then, suddenly, it's sunrise! "How is it sunrise AGAIN? Didn't this happen yesterday too?"

I Facetime with my two-year-old son and wife in Sydney and go to bed. At 8am, I open one eye, grab my phone, and reserve all my shows for the next day. I sleep until 10am, when the first movie of the day kicks off the whole Groundhog Day sequence again.

I walk into a cinema alone, sit down in a free seat next to someone, and immediately have something in common. The conversations come easily. I walk into an afterparty alone and start chatting to the cinematographer beside me. Once again, conversations

come easily.

The films, the parties, dancefloors, sunrises... The overall excitement all joins together to create an environment that is perfect for meeting and cementing great relationships with filmmakers from all over the world. It would be incredibly hard to go through this week without making any new friends or contacts. It's just the nature of this beast.

Film Highlights of Camerimage

I had a goal at the start to watch three to four films, Q&A's, or Panel Discussions per day. Some days this was easy, some days a dark cinema and a long film amidst the worst hangovers of my life was the ultimate eye closing experience. Armed with caffeine and lemonade, I did it - what an achievement!

Although all films at Camerimage have their own greatness and beauty, my movie highlights, Elvis, Blonde and Bardo, False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths were incredibly beautiful

and inspiring. I left each screening energised, but also with a sense of longing, sometimes hopelessness, wondering how I will ever create images as beautiful, and of this scale.

Some other highlights were the Cooke workshop, such a great chance for us ACS members and other visitors to Camerimage to compare the new Cooke Varotal Zooms against S8's and Full frame Panchros. There was a controlled, studio setup, with actors, gaffer and 1AC which was followed by a Colour Grading session with Polish Based Black Photon.

A standout for me was with Bill Mechanic, an American Producer and writer, and once the CEO of FOX studios, famously fired for only making \$37 million on Fight Club (only to become insanely profitable years later). He's a driving force in the industry and the first to pull Superhero movies back to cinemas. He spoke about the future of Movies and Filmmaking and shared insight and wisdom into the challenges that our industry may face in the short- and long-term futures.



Liam Brennan tests out the Leitz 25-75mm Zoom Lens.

My absolute film highlight was a Spanish documentary Tolyatti Adrift. The film follows a group of teenagers through Tolyatti, known as Russia's Detroit, where their future seems almost Dystopian. They find joy in rescuing old LADA-brand wrecked sedans and parts from the shutdown factory and build the LADA's into working drift cars. It was visually stunning and exciting, with the raw emotion of a teenager's struggle as they try to find a future in a town with the highest youth unemployment rate in the country.

What Did Camerimage Change For Me

It may take years, even decades for me to reflect, and see how this piece of my career puzzle has helped me. Quite often we do not recognise the bricks we lay that build the streets of our lives, until we look back and view it from afar.

In the short term, my world and my contact base expanded exponentially over the course of one festival. I now have friendships with filmmakers from all over the world, friendships that I

know will last a lifetime. I can't wait to witness these new colleagues' careers flourish. Camerimage gave me witness to cinematic greatness in all areas of the world.

“The Legacy of Drew Lewellyn ACS to each year send an Australian Cinematographer on this adventure to Camerimage, is a great, powerful, and inspiring one.”

I was grateful to catch up with Australian Colleagues Mark Broadbent ACS, National ACS President Erika Addis, London based Ben Cotgrove, and Paul Jackson of Panavision while in Torun which further cemented the bonds that we share, and talk about the future of Australian Cinematography on the world stage.

One thing I already know... this

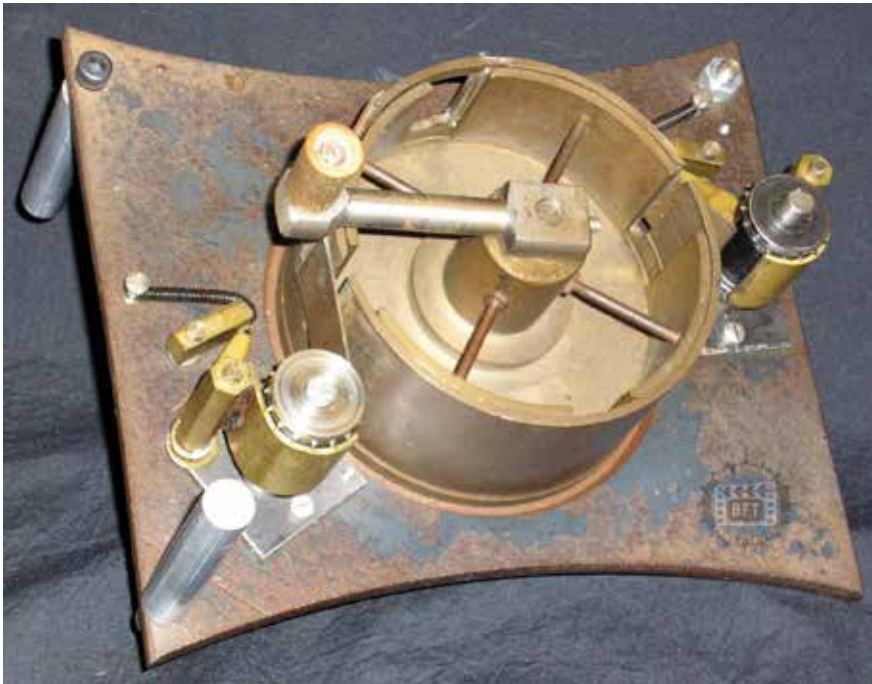
scholarship has changed my future in one major way. Legacy. The Legacy of Drew Lewellyn ACS to each year send an Australian Cinematographer on this adventure to Camerimage, is a great, powerful, and inspiring one. When my time as a living Cinematographer inevitably comes to pass, I endeavour to leave the same mark. I know that the future generations of Australian Cinematographers will be just as humbled, inspired, and grateful.

I don't think there can be any greater legacy than that.

Liam Edward Brennan is the recipient of the 2021 Drew Lewellyn ACS Camerimage Scholarship. He is based in Sydney, Australia.

RON JONES AND THE REVOLUTIONARY IMAX 'ROLLING LOOP' SYSTEM PROTOTYPE

By Daryl Binning ACS



Ron Jones 'Rolling Loop' system prototype.

Brisbane cinema projectionist, engineer and inventor Ron Jones designed a revolutionary critical component which allowed a group of Canadians to finally develop what became known as the IMAX system. They tried for several years to come up with a large format multi-screen presentation for the 1970 Osaka World Fair by using 70mm film, without success. By virtue of the weight of the film being run at a very fast speed, on a conventional film transport movement through the projector's film gate, that required image steadiness and picture quality on the massive screen while trying to avoid the mechanical strain on the film which damaged the sprocket holes, the problems could not be overcome.

Before progressing, a bit of international trivia is in order. 70mm film has been in use since the end of the eighteenth century. In 1929 Fox Film Corporation introduced the Grandeur 70mm wide screen system but this was abandoned the following year due to the depression. After being involved in the three-strip Cinerama format launched in 1952.

Mike Todd developed a new single 65/70mm film wide-screen process named Todd-AO. It immediately gained popularity when *Oklahoma* premiered in 1955. Another unique technical feature of Todd's first two productions was they ran at the faster frame rate of 30fps. The writer can vouch for the 25% difference made to the bio box routine where the heavy 6000' spools had to be loaded and changed over at shorter intervals. Also, when they were turned on, the higher speed caused the 70mm projectors to scream like wounded banshees. Thankfully his following films reverted to 24fps. Todd-AO camera negatives were shot on 65mm film, as were most other "70mm" formats, but all projection prints were made 5mm wider. This accommodated the extra space for the six magnetic sound tracks. Also, these systems all used spherical lenses. Later, Panavision introduced its own compatible 65/70 mm system, and then Ultra Panavision which used the anamorphic lens process. This provided the widest screen ratio used for regular public performances to that time, 2.76 :1.

Meanwhile, back in a Brisbane suburban bio-box while his 35mm shows were running through the projectors, Ron Jones was tinkering with his latest invention. It defied any previous film projection concept and enabled any size film to be run through a projector at increased speeds without it being damaged by the severe forces involved. More importantly, it provided a rock steady image on the giant screens. Instead of each image being pulled down quickly by an intermittent sprocket for each exposure, Ron's invention allowed the film to travel at a very fast constant speed on an air cushion around a large constantly spinning drum, eventually 95.25cms diameter. During its travel it was formed into waves, or "loops" with each frame being held momentarily stationary by fifteen registration pins, while a vacuum held it against the lens for the moment of projection. It became known as the "Rolling Loop" system. By running the 70mm film horizontally, the available image size for projection of each frame was ten times that of conventional 35mm cine film. This provided a previously unattainable extremely stable and high-definition screen image.

The patent rights were purchased by the Canadians who, as evident in some of the promotional blurbs, tried to encourage the perception it was all their own invention. Without Ron's experimentation and efforts, the IMAX system as we eventually knew it, at least up till the time digital projection came into its own, would never have existed. Ron's original prototype is now held in a Brisbane Museum.

Daryl Binning ACS is an accredited Cinematographer from Western Australia and was inducted into the ACS Hall of Fame in 2004.

MEMORY XPRESS: CLOSE-QUARTERS VIRTUAL PRODUCTION

By Wade Muller HKSC ACS



Behind the scenes of Memory Xpress and the LED Volume set.

Memory Xpress Directed by Wi Ding Ho, Was a Virtual Production film shot at Nant Studios in Los Angeles, At the time of shooting most LED Volumes were used for purposes of Sci-Fi films, Sim Travel and placing actors in any location, whether it be in the Antarctic, a Desert or onboard a ship out at sea, this film was a human story set within a living room of a house, an interior house environment comes with a host of issues like making the corners of the walls look correct, making sure the set floor is seamless with the LED Volume, creating the right direction and realistic shafts of light coming from the virtual

exteriors outside the window onto the virtual walls on the interior.

Australian Cinematographer Wade Muller HKSC ACS had worked on two previous feature films with *Wi Ding Ho*, *The Bittersweet* and *A Beautiful Accident*, In the weeks leading up to *Memory Xpress* Muller was away working on another Virtual Production that also incorporated VP shooting in a macro environment, which is another new use of VP.

I think everyone can agree that it's really powerful to see shots realized in real time on set, it's not a low-res pre-visualization, it's not something you are looking at in a post suite months later,

“I think everyone can agree that it's really powerful to see shots realized in real time on set, it's not a low-res pre-visualization, it's not something you are looking at in a post suite months later,”

its right there in front of you right here right now, the actors love it as they can take in the full environment as opposed to blue screen scenario, one of our actors said, “It was so real he almost walked into the LED wall thinking it was a doorway to outside”. From the DP and Director side it has many benefits over blue screen, it takes all the guesswork out of what you are lighting for, you

are shooting for pixel for pixel on the day and are looking at basically the final image that usually does not need anything done other than the grade, in general, the Pre-Production is longer and the Post-Production is shorter with Virtual Production, the location scouts are also done within Unreal Engine.

The pre for this one was quite tough for me as I was on a very remote Island in Malaysia. I could occasionally get just enough signal on a higher part of the island for a very scratchy call, so I only had a week of pre once I returned to the mainland. This was a process of making sure the depth of field from the closest point to furthest looked convincing and checking through the digital assets. Once we arrived in Los Angeles the real testing began for me, with Virtual Production you really need to have everything ready prior to your shoot day. You definitely don't want to be sorting your background elements, or looking for new digital assets, on the day.

The Volume can quickly create lightboxes for Soft Fill, Side Light, Overhead light ... you can create a digital 20 x 40 soft source at the touch of a button and move that anywhere around or on top on the set. Change its colour, size, shape, and intensity in real-time, the only lights we had to add were the harder backlights, we mostly used Nanlux Evoke 1200Bs for these.

For example, if we are shooting Scene 1 Shot 1, during the testing day we would have the stand-in cast on set and put them in position and adjust the background plate's position and zoom in and out to make sure the scale was correct, after that we would



adjust the exposure then move onto the look of the environment and how the volume light was cast onto the actors, we may have one side of the volume black for neg on one side as well as adding digital light mats around the volume for backlight, fill, overhead, etc. Once we are all happy with this all these adjustments, they are saved in the appropriate Scene 1 Shot 1 folder with the "brain box" team. Once we commence shooting Scene 1 Shot 1 all these tested parameters will come up, then say your next shot is profile shot with a different background, you would have all that set at shot 2 and so on.

We shot on the Alexa LF, the large format providing a shallower depth of field that helps eliminate any unwanted moiré effect on the LED screens, we also added a fine level of haze to help blend it all together.

The Volume can quickly create lightboxes for Soft Fill, Side Light, Overhead light ... you can create a digital 20 x 40 soft source at the touch of a button and move that anywhere around or on top on the set. Change its colour, size, shape, and intensity in real-time, the only lights we had to add were

"this technology is definitely not going away and will continue to improve, its real-world uses are limitless to the imagination."

the harder backlights, we mostly used Nanlux Evoke 1200Bs for these.

There was a shot of a jigsaw puzzle on a glass table, we were able to move the virtual ceiling fan on the overhead panel and make the current size and location to see it in the reflection of the table, at a practical location you would either have to move the table or the fan to archive this, whereas in the VP set in took less than a minute, on top of that advantage we were also able to increase or decrease the brightness on the virtual fan and adjust its rotation speed. We were quite spoiled on the production working with many of the same team that worked on *The Mandalorian*.

Unreal Engine was used to create the *Memory Xpress* set, with a team in Taipei and another team in Los Angeles creating the world and the virtual props

for the production.

The "Brain Bar" is new terminology referring to a group of highly sort after technical artists that control the LED Volume. The Brain Bar work with the Director and DOP and can move things up, down, left, right, add light boxes, add digital props, colour correct shots all on the fly.

I highly recommend all filmmakers to at least get some basic understanding of Unreal Engine and VP production technology, this technology is definitely not going away and will continue to improve, its real-world uses are limitless to the imagination.





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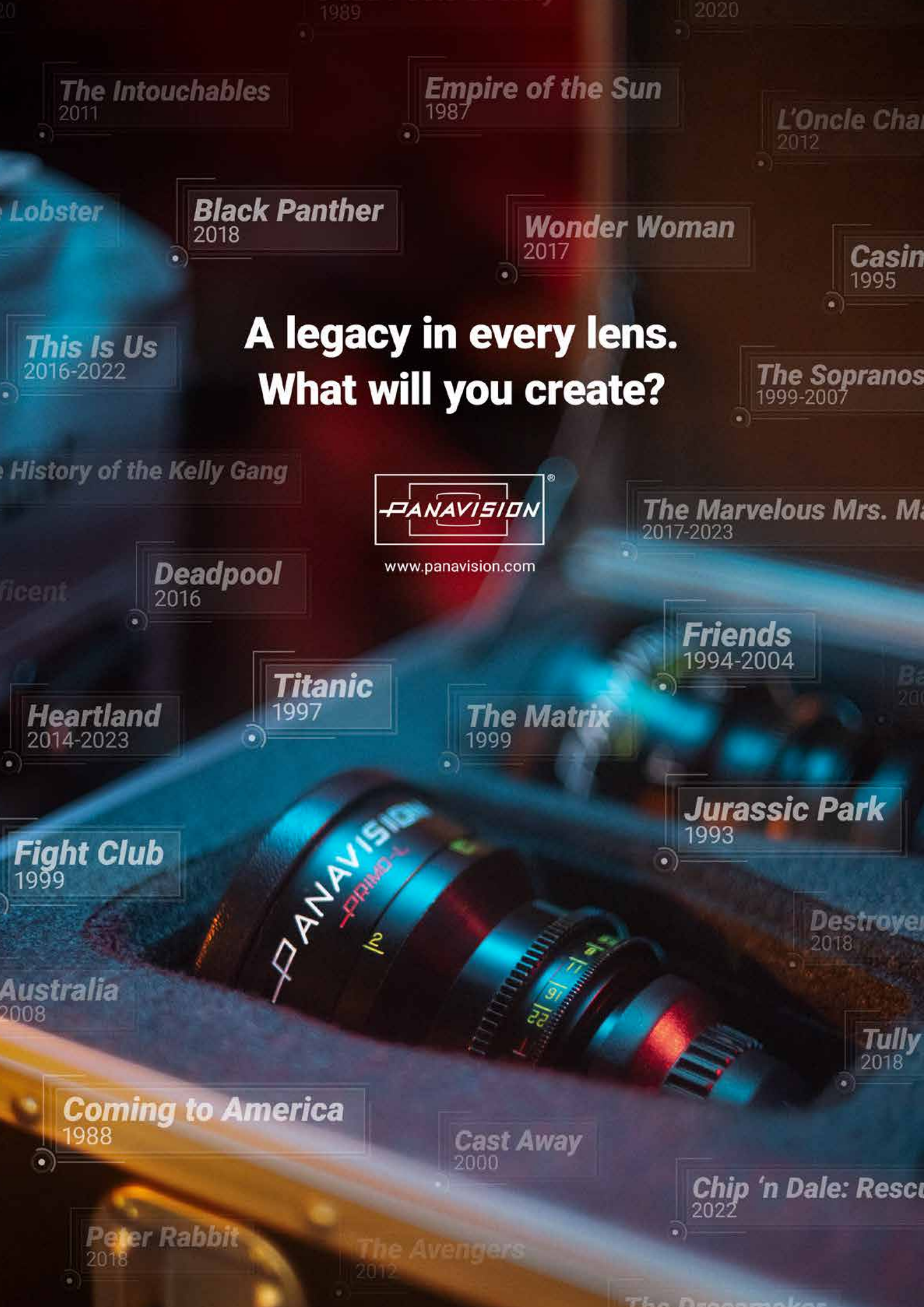
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The Intouchables
2011

Empire of the Sun
1987

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2012

Lobster

Black Panther
2018

Wonder Woman
2017

Casino
1995

This Is Us
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The Sopranos
1999-2007

The History of the Kelly Gang



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Deadpool
2016

Friends
1994-2004

Titanic
1997

Heartland
2014-2023

The Matrix
1999

Jurassic Park
1993

Fight Club
1999

Destroyer
2018

Australia
2008

Tully
2018

Coming to America
1988

Cast Away
2000

Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Rangers
2022

Peter Rabbit
2018

The Avengers
2012

The Dreammaker