

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF CINEMATOGRAPHERS

SUMMER
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ISSUE

CANADIAN
CINEMATOGRAPHER

VOL. 15
NO. 2



UNTIL BRANCHES BEND
with Jeremy Cox

1.66:1 24fps iso500-2500-500T 180° British Columbia 49°28'50.23" N | 119°35'9.02" W

LITTLE BIRD
with Zoe Hopkins, Guy Godfree csc,
Claudine Sauvé csc, Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers

THE COLOUR OF INK
with Nicholas de Pencier csc

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Cinematographer*



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The CSC provides tangible recognition of the common bonds that link film and digital professionals, from the aspiring student and camera assistant to the news veteran and senior director of photography. We facilitate the dissemination and exchange of technical information and endeavor to advance the knowledge and status of our members within the industry. As an organization

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Left images: DP Claudine Sauv  csc
Top right: DP Guy Godfree csc



Sioux Valley, MB 49°50'59.99" N | 100°29'34.79" W Brokenhead, MB 50°20'25.20" N | 96°36'8.39" W



The Land that Calls You

Aki Kii wee kii piiniigon

BY ZOE HOPKINS
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN CINEMATOGRAPHER



Winnipeg, MB 49° 53' 42.2772'' N | 97° 8' 18.4236'' W

"There's love in this family." This is the phrase that stayed with me when reading the pilot for *Little Bird*, a premium six-part, one-hour limited series that follows an Indigenous woman on a journey to find her birth family and uncover the hidden truth of her past. Bezhig Little Bird, the woman at the centre of this story, is forcibly removed from her family in Saskatchewan in the 1960s at the age of 5 and raised by a Jewish family in Montreal, where she becomes Esther Rosenblum. Bezhig's physical connection to her homeland, family and culture are severed, and so are her memories of her beginnings. Based on historical events but set on a fictional reserve in Saskatchewan in the '60s, and in Montreal in the '80s, Bezhig learns through her search that her family was torn apart at the hands of the child welfare system, and that she wasn't abandoned, neglected or unwanted, like she was told. She was stolen, along with tens of thousands of Indigenous children across the country in the name of assimilation, systemic racism and government policies that amounted to genocide. This era of child apprehension became known as the Sixties Scoop. Bezhig survives, where others like her never got to find their home.

While character-driven, this story carries with it the responsibility of depicting history and one family's experience with colonial violence. This legacy of trauma has echoes from the Indian residential school era, which reverberate into today. There are more Indigenous children in custody of the child welfare system now than ever before. Despite these dark truths impacting so many people, *Little Bird* will reveal to many Canadians about the reality of the Sixties Scoop for the first time. It will be the first time Sixties Scoop survivors will have this story told on this grand a stage. It was important to everyone involved to tell this story the right way and with great care.



Above and right: DP Claudine Sauv  csc
Below: DP Guy Godfree csc





When making things primarily, it's important to take care of our audiences. What does it mean to put these difficult stories on screen in a way that doesn't have that trauma spectacle to it?

Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers

I'm a writer and director, Heiltsuk and Mohawk from Bella Bella and Six Nations. I carry with me the responsibility to tell stories about my people in a good way. Writing this article, to me, is an extension of that work, and as a writer of three episodes and director of the final three episodes. I had the wondrous opportunity to work with Claudine Sauvé csc, who lensed my episodes with such an eye for nature that I felt lucky every day to be paired with her to tell the last half of Bezhig's story. In Claudine, I discovered not only a friend and an ally, but a truly great artist. She paints with the camera. Our collaboration was easy and full of trust, allowing us to have a singular vision.

Claudine had Bezhig's call to the land at top of mind. I see in her body of work how nature always finds its way into her frame. She says, "I think if there is something that I have, it's this call of the land, for water, rocks, forests, nature, birds. Sometimes it's so strong, so beautiful and powerful and I'm so impressed with everything Mother Nature creates. I think Mother Nature is the most talented artist in the world."

In urban spaces, Claudine brought tree shadows into the interiors, or against big exterior walls. Glass surfaces reflected buds and leaves. Every space danced with nature in some way. The call to the land in this story for me went back to visiting the Qu'Appelle Valley and Muscowpetung First Nation in Saskatchewan, Treaty 4 territory. This is the homeland of showrunner and co-creator Jennifer Podemski's mother, and where Jennifer took us to meet our cultural advisor Sharon Anaquod, her aunt. We stood on a hill overlooking the incredible beauty of the Qu'Appelle Valley while listening to Sharon's stories of incredible grace and power through incredible loss. This beauty, those feelings, and that energy inspired the fictional reserve of Long Pine. Although we wouldn't be able to shoot





We really fought for that story at every level. It was important because the scripts were so powerful. And it was a mission this call of the land. That was my mission. And to honour the scripts and the stories of all the people.

Claudine Sauvé CSC



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in Saskatchewan, since we were a Manitoba/Quebec production, we fought to film in Indigenous communities and not in studios or farmland as a stand-in. We shot entirely on location in Manitoba with our homebase being in Winnipeg. We found vistas that spoke to us in Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. We also filmed on Brokenhead Reserve. Both places were so important to the *Little Bird* world.

Taking the writers to Muscowpetung before we began to write was part of the care that Jennifer took on to make this series in a different way. She worked tirelessly to uphold the community-minded values that are integral to Indigenous screen culture. Jennifer speaks of standing on the front lines of “narrative activism,” meaning we are changing how things are done in this industry in all aspects of storytelling to take back the representation of our stories and of Indigenous people. Our set had a training program for Indigenous craftspeople, as well as a space to smudge, and a cultural safety steward.

Jennifer co-created the show with head writer Hannah Moscovitch. Hannah, Jennifer and our EPs Christina Fon and Jeremy Podeswa uphold the representation of the Jewish characters in the story. We also had the support of Sixties Scoop survivors Raven Sinclair and Nakuset, who was raised in a Montreal Jewish family. Raven's presence in the writer's room and Nakuset's presence on set were so important.



The process is about learning. And how I look at things and learn how to see them differently. And of course, that has an impact on how to visually tell the story.

Guy Godfree CSC

Top images: DP Guy Godfree CSC
Right: DP Claudine Sauv e CSC





My sister director, Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers (*The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*, *The Meaning of Empathy*) is Blackfoot from Kainai First Nation and Sámi on her father's side. She directed the first three episodes with Guy Godfree csc as her DP. Jennifer fought for Máijá and I, opening the door for us to be at the helm of this show. Everyone eventually agreed that this story should be told by Indigenous women.

Little Bird begins with the abduction of Bezhig and her siblings. These were difficult scenes. Máijá cites the work of Barry Jenkins as an inspiration to interrupt the colonial gaze. "When making things for Indigenous people primarily, it's important to take care of our audiences. What does it mean to put these difficult stories on screen in a way that doesn't have that trauma spectacle to it," she says. "It was very much in the script already. We see it in the home and in the land and the sense of freedom and love. It's there on every single page."

For Guy to have a way in to this story as a non-Indigenous person, having cultural advisor Sharon Anaquod share her insight was meaningful. "The process is about learning," Guy says. "And how I look at things and learn how to see them differently. And of course, that has an impact on how to visually tell the story." Elle-Máijá adds, "We brought in this handheld feeling of freedom and movement and thinking of how to witness the world through a child's eyes. The handheld camera offered that."

This is a story that begins and ends with the depiction of Indigenous love. Everyone involved revelled in showing a family that loves one another, cares for another, from child to child, and from parent to child. It's beautiful to see them all together in their homeland. It's a love that shows on Esther Rosenblum's face, played with such depth by the enigmatic Darla Contois.

The *Little Bird* home is the first location to house this family love. It was beautifully designed by production designer David Brisbin (*My Own Private Idaho*, *Race*). The house is pink, its wooden slats a cheerful presence on the prairie. The big sky and tall grass are the playground for the *Little Bird* kids. The colour pink represents the feelings of this place, and that colour and warmth return to Esther's life as she begins to remember her past. We used it in lots of details along her journey. Where Máijá and Guy's work ends, mine and Claudine's work begins at the same pink house. We begin here to transition as she re-integrates from the coldness of the various institutions and re-emerge into the warmth of the natural world.

When Bezhig begins uncovering truths about who her family is, she returns to Montreal and confronts her mother, only to realize the call to home is stronger than ever before. She returns to Saskatchewan with a fierce determination, now adrift in her solitude. The story took us to many urban locations like a motel, a social services office, a hospital and a mansion. Claudine recalls, "These environments fed us inspiration. In Esther's fiancé's family mansion, for example, the space quickly inspired us to do some shots where we were able to isolate her, make her look and feel alone." Whether she is tiny against the big prairie sky, or alone on a winding staircase, Bezhig is unmoored. Until she finds her family.

Finding her family means finding her home. We leave the family wrapped in complicated grief, but with a sense of hope and a sense of healing. The intense feelings on the page moved Claudine deeply. "What I will remember is how much I wanted to honour this story," she says. "I hope, I think we did it with all our hearts and that's the most important thing. We really fought for that story at every level. It was important because the scripts were so powerful. And it was a mission this call of the land. That was my mission. And to honour the scripts and the stories of all the people."

Guy, our other ally behind the camera, was so affected by the *Little Bird* shoot that he couldn't work for months afterwards, just taking it all in. "I'm a White man, but the energy in the air of dealing with and working so closely to say, the blade of trauma, from this subject matter and also having to navigate that responsibility to the material in being respectful," he says. "What will stay with me in 20 years is remembering how important that felt. I'm not a person who is immediately, or even by proxy, affected by this material, but I can feel that energy. From a human being standpoint, that's what will stay with me."

I felt the intensity with which people wanted to do things right, and it moved me. Our art department listened to Máijá and Jen and I so carefully about what the *Little Bird* home and what Bezhig's brother Leo's home should look like that I wept as I walked through the rooms. Everything was perfect. Every detail we spoke about was present. From the type of curtains to children's drawings, to the kind of food thawing on the counter, to windows from where you can feel the land everywhere like paintings on the wall. It felt like visiting the home of a relative. My tears came not just from the beauty of the sets, but from the deep care taken. Big respect goes to production designer David Brisbin, art directors Robert Laurie and Jon Van Winkle, set decorator Summer Holmes, and prop masters Mark Stratton and Kim Hamin. Of course, there were many more art, props, paint and greens department people who made this world come to life in the right way. Across the entire crew, from my 1st AD Reed Makayev who also led with love, to the cast who gave their all, I felt an immense amount of heart.

Jennifer Podemski's efforts to do things differently on this show worked. *Little Bird* wasn't just a show for us. It was an experience that we all hope will continue to open doors and change what people know about our shared history on this land. Like Máijá says, "There are people who want to learn, who want to do things differently, and who want to change things for future generations in a better way. That's what will stick with me. That spirit and intent and the love that existed throughout our entire team. I'm forever grateful for that."

My mind turns to the stolen generations of Indigenous children. I hope what we did here makes the survivors feel seen. I hope that when people experience the depths of *Little Bird* they learn not only about the Sixties Scoop, but about Indigenous love: for one another, our communities, and for the land.

"There's love in this family." ❖



Previous page and top two images this page DP Claudine Sauv  csc.
Bottom image DP Guy Godfree csc.

STRANGE Fruit

BY FANEN CHIAHEMEN

On a blistering summer day in an idyllic West Coast orchard town, a pregnant cannery worker finds an invasive insect in a peach at work, setting off a chain of events that threatens the economic stability of her community. As the factory is closed and farms are put under quarantine, the fruit picker, Robin, is blamed for the loss of livelihood, leading to her alienation from her coworkers, as well as from her younger sister, Laney, all while struggling to seek an abortion.

The psychological drama, *Until Branches Bend*, is the feature debut of Vancouver-based writer/director Sophie Jarvis, who chose to capture the pastoral beauty of Keremeos and Penticton, where the film was shot, in 16 mm. When cinematographer Jeremy Cox was brought on board, he was struck by how the physical surroundings of the story could reflect the character's situation. "I loved how Robin's character arc existed within a changing landscape," he says. "The community's vindication of Robin's actions culminates both physically for Robin but also for the landscape the film is set within. It is great to be able to develop a relationship between the character and the environment they exist in. I appreciate when a story has a strong relationship with its setting. I love being able to consider atmospheric shots that create narrative tissue. We discussed the idea of Robin being 'stuck' geographically, but also emotionally. It was a great motif to consider ways of showing stagnation, this lack of forward movement, and thinking of how that could be illustrated throughout the film."

Shooting on location, roughly four hours outside his hometown of Vancouver, Cox knew that the format choice would help sell Robin's state of mind. "There's a fragility that's undeniable to 16 mm. You immediately start to see the edges of what it can hold and what it can resolve," the cinematographer observes. "It was interesting using 16 mm to play into Robin's fragility and insecurities. [In the film] there is emphasis that Robin's findings were fabricated or false. The lack of clarity or certainty of 16 mm plays into the uncertainty of what Robin has seen or what she has done. I have found 16 mm has a unifying quality despite a range of interiors, exteriors, time of day, the quality of the grain and image binds them together."



The resulting dreamlike visual quality of the film ironically serves to heighten the emotional tension within Jarvis' story. "We were always interested in there being something below the surface," Cox offers. "In the first two thirds of the film, there's this premonition that Robin has. So we were asking ourselves what is beyond that? What is below that? And how does that influence what we're seeing on the surface layer? We were able to ripple this outwards and consider things not necessarily at face value but for what could be just beyond that. I think the theme about something being beneath the surface or invisible, the layers of film structurally reflected that."

Peaches, being central to the story, are seen in abundance in the film, and Cox's photography infuses them with significance. "I've always loved finding photographic images or finding frames with subject matter that drives the narrative despite lack of action. In Robin and Laney's home there was a pile of peaches that Robin had been going through, and we let them sit there for a couple of days. The degradation disrupted the picture-perfect idyll previously established. We were always looking for visual opportunities to not only pace out the narrative but fill out the tone of the film," Cox says.

"The story's emphasis on the well-being of the fruit underscores its important role in the community, as it is crucial for everyone's livelihood. On the surface, it's just a peach, but it's loaded with Robin's experiences as a woman in this community and the power dynamics she experiences with her boss and trying to have her voice heard. There's a parallel with how beautiful yet delicate the peach is. They also have a very short harvest window of one to two weeks. The precariousness of the peach as a stone fruit parallels nicely with Robin's experience and what the community is going through. The short harvest window of peaches compressed our shooting window and meant we had to be strategic with our approach."

Shooting at a real peach orchard in August, cast and crew were present when the fruit was in harvest. "We did all the shots of them in the packing house," Cox recalls. "And then we shot at Happy Valley Organics in Penticton, and we were able to have a bit more time there and stage some scenes and sequences around the trees before they were all picked off. When we started shooting, there were peaches on all the trees. As the shoot progressed, we had less and less room to work with."

Interior locations were more predictable. "The main location that we had the most control over was the house that Robin and Laney live in. It was a full dress, as the house was previously empty," Cox says. "So finding curtains and window coverings that had been stained and had this kind of quality steeped into them. Taking that idea across different aspects of the production design. Everything had to have this worn-in quality. It's a fun filter to be putting on things and allowing the surprises of what comes from used, previously stained materials."



**There's a fragility that's undeniable to 16 mm.
You immediately start to see the edges of what
it can hold and what it can resolve.**

Jeremy Cox





Cox always had the rich textures and strong palette of late summer British Columbia to draw on. "One thing that's so striking with Keremeos is this consistency of colour. So in a lot of the locations that we were choosing we really wanted to focus on sun-baked pastels or colours that were once prime or once saturated that have now faded," he says. "In colour grading we were focusing on finding the fragile balance between lushness and the pastel quality. I think it was also a reason why we were interested in shooting on film in that it strikes that balance well."

He finessed the look with colourist Yves Roy Vallaster, first spending about two weeks doing a remote colour grade before heading to 8horses GmbH in Zürich to complete post on the film, which was a Swiss-Canadian co-production. "Yves was such a treat to work with," Cox recalls. "We did the grade remotely via set streamer. From there, Sophie and I went to Switzerland to finish. Because we did it online, we had space and time between the sessions to reflect on it, which was valuable. I think being able to let the look grow over time, rather than in a condensed session, worked really well for us."

Although Cox normally appreciates a natural lighting style, environmental factors forced him to take a different approach on *Until Branches Bend* when shooting outside. "We ended up doing a lot more lighting than I thought,"

he recalls. "We had one M40 and one M18 which we would put into a mirror board or shiny bounce. The biggest challenge was the smoke. The year that we were shooting, there were forest fires happening in very close proximity. We would start a scene and it'd be blue sky and then by the end, it would be a thick smoke. Having the consistency of our own continuous light ended up being essential. The smoke was so bad, but in some cases, it created flexibility for the exteriors and being able to shoot between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. as it added diffusion to the regularly harsh high sun. But for many other aspects, like working conditions and air quality, it was very challenging."

"Because we knew that capturing the environment was going to be very important to the film, we shot with a 416 as the A camera, which was provided by Keslow Camera, and then my personal Arri SR3," Cox says. "I would keep it with me for scouting as well as driving to and from set. The drive from Penticton to Keremeos, which we would do every day, is quite stunning. Being able to shoot at different atmospheric conditions before and after shooting was liberating in taking advantage of sunsets and moon rises. "During prep, there was a day when the smoke almost entirely engulfed the sun. It looked like a giant peach suspended in the sky. It's pretty devastating the environmental aspects of what the fires did. Visually, you can feel the tension in it."



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During prep, there was a day when the smoke almost entirely engulfed the sun. It looked like a giant peach suspended in the sky. It's pretty devastating the environmental aspects of what the fires did. Visually, you can feel the tension in it.

Jeremy Cox

Despite growing up not too far from the community where the film is set, Cox indicates that shooting *Until Branches Bend* was an eye-opener for him. "From a city perspective, it's easy to idealize a farming lifestyle, of working outdoors on the land and cultivating a crop. But spending time on these orchards reveals the labour-intensive and precarious nature of the work, as well as the extensive infrastructure needed to maintain the health of the crop, through spraying for bugs or various pests in the environment," he muses. "You quickly realize just how much labour goes into the end result of producing a single peach found at the grocery store.

Considering climate change implications on agricultural industries and the communities that rely on them, it raises questions about the future of families' livelihoods. So at first glance, you might see this vision of people working in an orchard that seems straightforward, but upon a closer look, there's a lot more complexity and depth to everything it takes to produce a peach. There was a humbling precariousness shared between the process of growing peaches and the process of filming itself. We both shared particular uncertainties while trying to control as much as possible." ❖

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Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Ra
2022



Teen Spirits

Le cœur adolescent

PAR/BY TREVOR HOGG
COLLABORATION SPÉCIALE POUR/ SPECIAL TO
CANADIAN CINEMATOGRAPHER

To beat the summer doldrums of being a teenage lifeguard at a waterpark, 16-year-old Billie embarks on a series of fanciful daydreams that amplify the emotional state of her sexual awakening before becoming part of a love triangle that involves her sister Annette and a local racing cyclist named Pierre. Directing the cinematic adaptation of the *Cœur de slush* series of books by Sarah-Maude Beauchesne is Marilou Wolfe, who had the author write the script and associate member Simon-Pierre Gingras shoot the antics of the cast, which includes Lilianne Skelly (Billie), Camille Felton (Annette), Joseph Delorey (Pierre), François Létourneau, Salma Serraji, Vivi-Anne Riel, and Jacob Whiteduck-Lavoie.

"The challenge in adapting a book into a movie is to capture the essence of the story and characters while making it visually engaging," Simon-Pierre Gingras says. "You need to have an understanding of the book's themes, motifs and atmosphere, as well as a clear vision for the movie's look and feel. There also has to be a willingness to take creative risks and make changes to the story when necessary." The goal was to be raw, naturalistic and poetic. "Billie's psychological evolution is portrayed through the recurring use of red and blue. To achieve the desired look and feel, the camera work had to be subtle and elegant, which would also capture the naturalistic elements of the story while creating a sense of grit and realism. The use of natural lighting and framing techniques helped to enhance the raw and poetic nature of the movie."

Pour contrer l'ennui produit par son boulot estival de sauveteuse dans un parc aquatique, Billie, une adolescente de 16 ans, se laisse aller à des rêveries fantaisistes qui amplifient les émotions qui accompagnent son éveil sexuel, puis se retrouve dans un triangle amoureux avec sa sœur Annette et un coureur cycliste local, Pierre. Marilou Wolfe, réalisatrice de la version cinématographique de la série de romans *Cœur de slush* de Sarah-Maude Beauchesne, a demandé à l'auteure de rédiger le script et au membre associé Simon-Pierre Gingras de filmer les prestations des acteurs, notamment Lilianne Skelly (Billie), Camille Felton (Annette), Joseph Delorey (Pierre), François Létourneau, Salma Serraji, Vivi-Anne Riel et Jacob Whiteduck-Lavoie.

« Le défi de l'adaptation d'un roman à l'écran est de saisir l'essence de l'histoire et des personnages tout en faisant en sorte que ce soit attrayant sur le plan visuel, déclare Simon-Pierre Gingras. Il faut bien comprendre les thèmes, les motifs et l'atmosphère du livre et avoir une vision claire de l'apparence et de l'ambiance du film. Il faut également être prêt à oser sur le plan créatif et modifier l'histoire au besoin. » Le but était d'être brut, naturaliste et poétique. « L'évolution psychologique de Billie est illustrée par l'usage répété du rouge et du bleu. Pour obtenir le look et l'ambiance recherchés, les prises de vues devaient être subtiles et élégantes, ce qui capterait également les éléments naturalistes du récit tout en créant une impression de cran et de réalisme. L'éclairage naturel et les techniques de cadrage ont aidé à souligner la nature brute et poétique du film. »



Visual references were presented to Wolfe through sorted Google Photo folders. "This allowed us to efficiently share stills from websites, like ShotDeck and Filmgrab, along with other images ranging from photography, painting and architecture," Gingras states. "Once the overall visual style was locked in, I created a Google slide document listing every scene and associated them with selected references. The end result was a visual bible that we could refer to at any phase of the production."

Central to the narrative are the daydreaming sequences. "They were often associated with water and had a poetic quality, so it was important to keep and convey that feeling on screen," he says. "It became more a matter of how to translate them properly on screen and how many of them we could shoot during principal photography given we only had one full day of underwater photography. A visual document strictly regrouping these sequences showed us their evolution and was modified regularly to assess whether moving them out of the water context would still make them relevant and efficient in our movie."

Most of the cast had minimal experience as actors. "In order to be quick and efficient in capturing all the necessary shots, we had to design our lighting approach with a minimal footprint and be almost invisible to the young cast," Gingras remarks. "I'm a huge fan of giving the director a fairly wide playground thus allowing for quick resets and turnarounds in general. Regarding our numerous night exteriors, for large areas, we needed a moon box as our main source. The Sony Venice helped us a lot in using a fairly high ISO [going between 2500 and 4000] and reducing our light sources to smaller and more friendly units for our given budget. In the waterpark, for the kissing and the rescue scenes, using the MoviBird 35-45' crane with the MoSys L40 remote head was a total no-brainer. Hovering anywhere and at any height above water to position for known camera placements was crucial while some other times, it proved itself to be the perfect tool for a rapid glance at slightly different camera angles."

On a présenté à Mariloup des références visuelles dans des dossiers sur Google Photo. « Ça nous a permis de partager, avec efficacité, des photos de sites Web, comme ShotDeck et Filmgrab, ainsi que d'autres images comme des photos, des peintures et des images d'architecture, raconte Simon-Pierre. Une fois le style visuel général déterminé, j'ai créé un diaporama sur Google énumérant chaque scène, à laquelle certaines références étaient jumelées. Au final, on a obtenu une bible visuelle que nous pouvions consulter à n'importe quelle étape de la production. »

Les séquences de rêverie étaient essentielles au récit. « Elles étaient souvent associées à l'eau et avaient une saveur poétique, donc il était important de garder et d'exprimer ce sentiment-là à l'écran, poursuit-il. Il a fallu trouver comment les traduire adéquatement à l'écran et déterminer combien nous pouvions en filmer pendant les journées de tournage principales, car nous avons une seule journée complète de photographie sous-marine. Un document visuel regroupant strictement ces séquences-là nous montrait leur évolution et était régulièrement modifié pour déterminer si, hors du contexte aquatique, elles seraient toujours pertinentes et efficaces dans notre film. »

La plupart des acteurs avaient peu d'expérience. « Pour obtenir rapidement et efficacement toutes les prises de vue nécessaires, nous avons dû concevoir l'éclairage de sorte qu'il ait une présence minimale et soit presque invisible pour les jeunes acteurs, explique Simon-Pierre. Je préfère donner au réalisateur beaucoup de latitude, ce qui nous permet de faire des ajustements et des reprises rapides en général. Pour nos nombreuses prises de vue de nuit à l'extérieur, pour les grands espaces, il nous fallait une " moonbox " comme principale source d'éclairage. La caméra Sony Venice nous a beaucoup aidés à utiliser une sensibilité ISO assez élevée [entre 2500 et 4000] et à utiliser des sources de lumière plus petites et plus conviviales en fonction de notre budget. Au parc aquatique, pour les scènes du baiser et du sauvetage, l'utilisation de la grue MoviBird de 35 à 45 pieds et de la tête MoSys L40 télécommandée allait de soi. Il était



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Principal photography lasted from September 6 to October 16, 2022, with the main Quebec locations being Saint-Sauveur, Brome, Frelishburgh and Calixa-Lavallée. "Challenges were everywhere," Gingras admits. "The waterpark was an extensive location, and the logistics of getting around the park and sometimes up the hills were tricky for all the departments. Weather is always so random in Quebec, forcing our technical crew to be ready for any kind of lighting situation jeopardizing continuity. The temperature varied from very cold in the mornings and at nights, peaking to somewhat warm in the afternoon. For one of the key scenes where Billie and Pierre kiss for the first time at night in a pool wearing next to no clothes, we had to stop shooting because the actors were too affected by the cold weather and couldn't carry on doing the scene. We quickly readjusted and came up with a new game plan using our body doubles to frame all the remaining medium and close-up shots in order to shoot background plates and complete the scene in a controlled dry-for-wet studio environment at the end of our schedule."

Cœur de slush was shot in the 2:39:1 aspect ratio and captured in 6K and 3.2K. "I saw no use in building a specific LUT for this show," Gingras states. "I felt comfortable that the REC709 from the Sony Venice was versatile enough to be used in an all-time-changing weather schedule where we needed to shoot rain or shine. In the DI suite, I worked with long-time collaborator Vickie-Lynn Roy establishing our final look through Baselight at Difuze in Montreal and completing it with a finely developed recipe of film grain slightly adding texture to our images."

Nostalgia and the desire to exploit the full frame sensor of the Sony Venice drove the choice in lenses. "We elected on shooting with Canon FD lenses for their warmth and pleasant flares," Gingras explains. "Principal photography was mainly about one camera most of the time except for bigger scenes like the bike race finish where two cameras were used for all coverage and crowd reactions. The A camera remained on the Canon FD Prime lens whereas the B camera was always on the Canon FD 50-300 mm zoom lens. For underwater camera work, we found out the Sony Venice was overheating abnormally in an underwater sealed bag reducing dramatically our underwater time. To avoid that, we switched it for an ALEXA Mini coupled with Zeiss Standard Speed lens."

For the glowing heart scene, hidden underneath the tank top of Billie was a small custom LED sheet. "It was seamlessly wired to a tiny battery pack and a transmitter for wireless control," Gingras reveals. "As we dolly in on her during the scene, on cue, all the lights in the room dim down as the 'heart' dims up. The reverse action follows as we dolly out. In postproduction the edges of the LED sheet were



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Simon-Pierre Gingras

essentiel de pouvoir survoler n'importe où et à n'importe quelle hauteur pour permettre les placements de caméra connus, mais à d'autres moments, ils se sont avérés être les outils parfaits pour avoir un aperçu à divers angles de caméra. »

Les principaux jours de tournage ont eu lieu du 6 septembre au 16 octobre 2022, les principaux lieux de tournage au Québec étant Saint-Sauveur, Brome, Frelishburgh et Calixa-Lavallée. « Il y avait des défis partout, confie Simon-Pierre. Le parc aquatique était très grand et c'était difficile pour tous les départements de s'y déplacer et de parfois avoir à monter des côtes. La météo est toujours capricieuse au Québec, ce qui a forcé notre équipe technique à se préparer à toute éventualité en fait d'éclairage, ce qui mettait l'enchaînement en jeu. La température variait entre très froid les matins et soirs, et chaud l'après-midi. Pour l'une des scènes principales où Billie et Pierre s'embrassent pour la première fois, la nuit dans une piscine, ne portant pratiquement rien, nous avons dû arrêter de tourner parce que les acteurs étaient trop affectés par le froid et ne pouvaient pas continuer la scène. Nous avons rapidement changé de cap et adopté un nouveau plan d'attaque, utilisant nos doublures pour cadrer tous les plans moyens et les gros plans qui restaient afin de tourner les arrière-plans et de compléter la scène au sec dans un environnement de studio contrôlé à la fin de notre tournage. »

Cœur de slush a été tourné en 2:39:1, à résolution de 6K et 3.2K. « Je ne voyais pas de raisons de créer un LUT propre à ce film, révèle Simon-Pierre. J'étais sûr que le REC709 de la Sony Venice était suffisamment polyvalent pour être utilisé selon un horaire où les conditions météorologiques changent constamment, où nous devons tourner, beau temps, mauvais temps. En étalonnage, j'ai travaillé avec



Vickie-Lynn Roy, une collaboratrice de longue date, pour établir le look final à l'aide de Baselight chez Dífuze à Montréal et le terminer selon une recette soigneusement créée où le grain du film ajoute une légère texture à nos images. »

C'est la nostalgie et le souhait de tirer profit du capteur plein cadre de la Sony Venice qui ont déterminé le choix des objectifs. « Nous avons décidé de tourner avec des objectifs Canon FD en raison de leur effet chaleureux et de leurs beaux halos, confie Simon-Pierre. Nous avons tourné les principales prises de vue avec une seule caméra la plupart du temps, sauf pour les plus grandes scènes, comme la fin de la course de vélo, où nous avons utilisé deux caméras pour tout saisir et pour avoir les réactions de la foule. La caméra A avait toujours l'objectif Canon FD Prime, tandis que la caméra B était toujours dotée de l'objectif zoom Canon FD 50-300 mm. Pour les prises de vue sous-marines, nous avons remarqué que la Sony Venice surchauffait anormalement dans un sac scellé sous l'eau, ce qui diminuait radicalement la durée du tournage. Pour éviter cette situation, nous l'avons remplacée par une ALEXA Mini à objectif Zeiss standard. »

Pour la scène du cœur lumineux, une petite feuille à DEL sur mesure était cachée sous la camisole de Billie. « Elle était connectée, sans fil, à un petit bloc-pile, et avait un émetteur pour le contrôle à distance, révèle Simon-Pierre. Alors que la caméra s'avance vers Billie pendant la scène, à un signal, toutes les lumières de la pièce baissent alors que le cœur devient en plus lumineux. L'inverse se produit lorsque nous reculons la caméra. Lors de la postproduction, les bords de la feuille à DEL ont été estompés et un effet d'étoile a été ajouté pour accentuer l'image. Pour la scène du baiser dans la chambre de Pierre, nous avons créé un effet sur caméra en utilisant et en ajustant des images d'archives en ligne représentant des vagues dans l'eau. Dans une petite pièce sur le plateau, nous avons un projecteur HD défocalisé à courte distance avec un filtre ND. » La technique avait une qualité thématique. « J'ai constaté que la projection de l'eau était une manière futée de relier le monde imaginaire de Billie et la réalité, en soulignant la puissance de ses rêveries. C'était également une magnifique représentation visuelle des émotions de Billie, donnant aux spectateurs un aperçu de ce qui se passait dans son esprit. »

Pour la scène du sauvetage, on a exécuté une prise unique complexe. « Billie sort sa sœur inconsciente de l'eau, la voit rapidement reprendre vie, puis la serre dans ses bras dans une réconciliation émotionnelle, raconte Simon-Pierre. Nous avons prévu cette scène à la fin de la journée, souhaitant filmer un magnifique coucher de soleil au-dessus de la piscine. Après une autre journée chargée, le soleil se couchait déjà pendant que le premier assistant-réalisateur chorégraphiait l'action supplémentaire, et il fallait installer une longue grue à bras fixe avec tête télécommandée sur le bord en béton inégal de la piscine, ce qui donnait du fil à retordre aux machinistes, dirigés par le chef machiniste Martin Renaud. Nous n'avons presque pas eu le temps de répéter ce mouvement de caméra compliqué du début à la fin. En incluant tous les ajustements, nous n'avons filmé que trois prises pour tout saisir. Je ne me souviens pas laquelle nous avons retenue, mais je me souviens que ce jour-là, chacune des prises comprenait quelque chose d'unique à regarder. Grâce à cet effort collectif magnifique et habile, elles étaient toutes utilisables. »

smoothed out and a flare was added to accentuate the visual. As for the kissing scene in Pierre's room, the whole in-camera effect was developed by us using and tweaking stock online footage of rippling water patterns. In a tiny room on set, we had a short-throw HD defocused projector coupled with an ND-filter." The technique had a thematic quality. "I found the water projection was a clever way to connect Billie's imaginary world to reality, emphasizing the power of her daydreaming. The water projection was also a beautiful visual representation of Billie's emotions, giving the viewers a glimpse of what was going on in her mind."

For the rescue scene, a complex one was executed. "Billie gets her unconscious sister out of the water, sees her rapidly coming back to life and finally grabs her for an emotional reconciliation hug," Gingras states. "We planned that scene for the end of the day, aiming to shoot a gorgeous sunset over the pool. After another hectic day, the sun was already setting while the 1st AD was choreographing all the extra action and a long fixed-arm crane with remote head had to be set up on the non-levelled pool concrete shore giving a hard time to the grip crew led by key grip Martin Renaud. We had next to no time to rehearse this complicated camera move from beginning to end. With all the resets included, we only had three takes to nail it all. I can't remember which one made the final cut, but I do remember that on the day each of the takes had something special to watch. Thanks to this magnificent and skillful group effort, they were all usable." ❖

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BLOOD OF THE EARTH

BY FANEN CHIAHEMEN

Ink has been around for almost as long as humankind, yet most of us never give the substance much thought even as it's woven into our daily lives. However, ink has a hidden, rich and fascinating story of its own, and it's the subject of journalist and filmmaker Brian D. Johnson's latest film. The *Colour of Ink* takes a deep dive into the power and history of the world's oldest storytelling medium and its profound impact on humanity. Guided by the cinematography of Nicholas de Pencier csc (*Anthropocene, Watermark*), the film follows Toronto artist, illustrator and inkmaker Jason Logan as he travels the world making ink from just about anything he can find – weeds, berries, bark, flowers, rocks, rust. Logan then sends his custom-made inks to artists working in all corners of the globe from a cartoonist in New York to a calligrapher in Japan. The documentary crew planned the film as a road trip shot across seven countries. They had covered Canada, Mexico and the United States when the world shut down to contain the COVID pandemic. To complete the film, local crews were directed remotely in Japan, Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom. De Pencier – who won this year's Canadian Screen Award for Best Cinematography in a Feature Length Documentary for *The Colour of Ink* – tells *Canadian Cinematographer* about the experience of shooting this unique documentary and what he learned along the way about ink and, in turn, filmmaking.

Canadian Cinematographer: Many of your past documentary projects – like *Anthropocene* and *Watermark* – consider humanity's impact on our world. What appealed to you about telling the story of ink and its impact on humans?

Nicholas de Pencier csc: My degree is in English literature, not in filmmaking, so I'm a reader. I grew up in the analogue era of communication. I think there is an interesting dialectic in making a digital documentary about an analogue subject. And when I understood it finally, the value of pursuing subject matter like this in the age of electronic communication, it's kind of like people going back to vinyl in music and all this sort of slow, hands-on, tactile material movements. To me, it was a way of thinking about communication in those terms. That ink as a temporal medium has value to it when we want to slow things down. A lot of valuable communication is possible through a medium like ink.

CC: With ink as the subject matter, how did you decide what your approach to shooting this documentary would be?

NP: My job is always to listen and absorb before I act or react. So there was a good amount of that and really watching Jason and his process and his approach. I tried to absorb that and then reflect it back. Even when the first seed was planted, I knew there was room to grow in terms of the cinematic approach because there's so much about the form itself, about the materials. I knew that visually, there was going to be this fantastic creative arena to consider a blank page that gets taken over by colour and form. Often the most beautiful moments are abstract with ink. But then there are moments of real cold hard writing and calligraphy, and we have cartoonists, of course. It's not always something that defies definition, there's that whole range. So I tried to approach it with the cameras with that same really big horizon of possibility of what it could be visually. And it's so much fun to work on a film like that where it's about something that's visual, it's about something that is about colour, it's about texture, it's about form. I mean, that's the palette that you work with as a cinematographer, and the subject matter was all concentrated on that, so it's a beautiful moment to be able to intersect with someone else's work.

CC: What tools did you rely on to capture compelling footage?

NP: I used an ARRI Amira as the A cam, with an ARRI Lightweight Zoom, Canon 17-120 mm Cinezoom, or Sigma FF Primes. Sometimes I would have a Komodo locked off above the page that Jason was working on when I wanted to get Jason in his lab or one of his various studios with all of the accoutrements, all of his brushes and palettes and bottles and the mad scientist side of it all. But then I also wanted to go in and really get textural and almost molecular in what's happening on the page. I'd be constantly switching lenses and quite often on zooms, so I could get a wide but then quickly zoom in and catch what's happening on the one page. I used to shoot a lot of nature cinematography, and I had a friend who had an old medical probe lens, which was this amazing trick lens. Now Laowa makes them. They need a shit ton of light; you almost need to set off a nuclear bomb beside it to get enough light, but it really is the lens that gets you that close. It's three dimensional too, as opposed to just a straight macro lens. That lens really gives you some figure and ground within that macro realm.

We weren't afraid ever to try and make it beautiful and make it flow. Because both of those words are equally applicable to ink and to art and to Jason's work and a lot of the other artists. There's a real premium on the aesthetic dimension. And there is flow. There's flow as ink takes over a page, as a brush moves across a page. So I think we were happy to have the camera move, have the camera flow. It was often the opposite of informational journalistic documentary, because so many of our subjects were visual artists and have work that we want to be able to riff off, so I think we weren't afraid to add some of that filmmaking language to the scenes and we had the time to do it.

CC: Talk about how you handled the shoot once international borders shut down.

NP: In those cases, to varying degrees, I had to work with directors of photography who we could find locally. And obviously by then, there were enough rushes, and even scenes, that were assembled. Those could be shared so that there was a bit of a template and a starting-off point. I would not ever want to direct shot by shot, in the moment what another DP is doing, because I would never want that. There's a performative aspect that can only happen in real time when you're following reality when you're a documentary cinematographer. You don't want somebody in your ear saying, "Go here, go there," who isn't there. You have to educate yourself with enough of the style and the look and the parameters of what the creative team that you're interfacing with are looking for and have established and then go and be free in the moment to follow your intuition. So that's how we worked. We had a lot of Zoom calls beforehand. We talked tech, we talked creative on the meta level and then those shoots happened with Brian directing the action and making sure he was getting what he wanted.

CC: So how do you convey the style and parameters to those local cinematographers?

NP: In a way, that's a really interesting exercise because a lot of times you just internalize your process and it's a more intuitive set of guidelines and motivations, but in this case, you have to express it, you have to find words that describe it, and it makes you think about it in a different way. So that was an interesting by-product of that process. But then because we were more than half shot when COVID hit, it wasn't just words that had to be the way that we could be on the same page creatively. We had scenes, we had shots that I had shot that would demonstrate what we were looking for. I think it's way more efficient when you have those visual touchstones of things you've actually already generated for this project.

CC: Brian Johnson describes the film as being about curiosity, "noticing what's at your feet, picking it up, and giving it a second look." What did you discover or re-discover in the process of making this film?

NP: I think what struck me the most was just how visceral and textural ink can be. And to have that extreme macro lens on a sheet of paper with the texture of the fibres. You think about a page being two dimensional, but it's not, it's really three dimensional when you get right in there. And then to watch the capillary action of the ink being absorbed into the paper and being drawn down into certain fibres and the colours mixing, it's almost



like it's alive. That kind of alchemical moment when Jason would do what he calls an ink test, it's much more like a work of art than just a moment of communication. So I think that materiality of the medium is what I was really trying to capture with the cameras. And of course, the story behind where all the inks would come from and the amount of mindfulness. I think when you slow down, when you're not just tapping on your phone to get a message out, when you really slow down and be extra mindful and deliberate about your communication like Jason does, there's time to weave in all of these wonderful layers and nuances and motivations and philosophies, and I think he's beautifully articulate about that.

CC: What similarities did you draw between inkmaking and filmmaking?

NP: There's a parallel track with Jason's process, which is a very specific process to do with ink. Jason's work really challenges us to think more deeply about ink and the possibilities and how mindful and deliberate he is. Every time he embarks on a new offshoot of his overall project is a great lesson to any filmmaker and one that I certainly tried to take to heart as I was working on this. Just because I've been a cinematographer for 30 years, doesn't mean that I shouldn't approach every scene, every location, every situation with a completely open mind of what it can be and what it should be and not just fall back on routine or rote, but to try and be mindful and deliberate about what this wants to be. What is the most impactful way to tell this particular story? So I think there's a lot of parallel lessons in how deliberate Jason is with how really good filmmaking accesses that same deep thought and deliberate, creative approach. ❖





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FEVER DREAM

BY FANEN CHIAHEMEN

Brooklyn-born actress Zoe Lister-Jones is known for her comedic turns in such sitcoms as *Life in Pieces*, *New Girl* and *Whitney*, but she has also made her mark behind the camera, directing in roles she has written for herself like the feature films *Band Aid* and *How It Ends*. Lister-Jones' latest project, released on Roku this spring, is a seven-episode surreal journey of self-discovery which the actress also wrote and directed. In *Slip*, Lister-Jones stars as Mae Cannon, a New York art museum curator growing increasingly unhappy in her 13-year marriage to Elijah (Whitmer Thomas). While Mae's professional life is thriving, her marriage to Elijah has become stale and uninspiring. One night, Mae gives in to her desire to stray and she has a one-night stand with a famous musician, only to wake up the next morning to find that she is married to the handsome composer and her real husband is nowhere to be found. Mae soon discovers that sex for her is a wormhole through which she can slip into other dimensions, living out various versions of herself in parallel universes as she tries to find her way back to the life she knows.



According to series cinematographer Daniel Grant csc, just reading Lister-Jones' script was a trippy experience. "I read the first episode, and I was intrigued right away. I started reading it in bed – sometimes it's the only time I can find to read scripts – and I just read through the entire thing and stayed up very late until the middle of night. And I told Zoe I had the most messed up dreams afterwards," Grant says, laughing. "Because it just takes you on such a journey. And I was excited about it because it's such a singular point of view; everything is written by Zoe with the intention of her also directing and starring and producing. Which to me is the kind of project that I'm most interested in, both as a cinematographer, and as a viewer. So right away, I knew that it was going to be very special."

Grant also knew the project would be unique because of the subjective visual approach Lister-Jones wanted to take with the material, despite *Slip* being a comedy. "Often comedy is photographed from a very objective point of view, because for certain humour that's often funnier if the camera is not really commenting on the humour of a situation," Grant states. "So what interested me was that Zoe really wanted to lean into a very subjective camera language and point of view, which to me really fit the themes and tone. And that subjectivity extended to the lighting language as well, which again, can be unique for comedy, but to us it felt like there was a lot of opportunity to play with that subjective language as part of the humour and as part of the storytelling."



I read the first episode, and I was intrigued right away. I started reading it in bed... and stayed up very late until the middle of night. And I told Zoe I had the most messed up dreams afterwards. Because it just takes you on such a journey.

Daniel Grant csc

Although Grant's first instinct was to shoot the series spherical, Lister-Jones leaned towards anamorphic. "We worked with William F. White, and they laid out almost every lens they had available," Grant recalls. "We just tried different things and Zoe gravitated right away to anamorphic. And we leaned into that because we wanted the world to have a slightly distorted or slightly magical point of view. There are elements of it that are very grounded, but we wanted it to have a slightly otherworldly quality. With anamorphic, there is a slightly distorted, slightly impressionistic quality to the image.

"One of our references was a lot of earlier Paul Thomas Anderson films like *Magnolia* and *Punch-Drunk Love*," Grant reveals. "Because they have

elements of humour in them, but they're also very emotionally raw. And it's a grounded world in front of the camera but photographed using a subjective camera language and a sense of magical realism layered into everything that we really gravitated towards."

A key effect in the first episode that signifies Mae realizing she's slipped into a parallel universe was achieved through a combination of dolly and zoom, known as "zollies," according to Grant. "We did a lot of testing early on just looking at ways that we could combine dolly and zoom, and that particular moment is the camera pulling back while zooming in.



"We got this idea early on to do some zollies," he explains. "And while we were shooting, I was watching *Severance*, which is shot by Jessica Lee Gagné. It's so brilliantly shot and features the most precision use of zollies throughout the show I've ever seen. And I just thought, 'Oh my God, zollies are completely ruined now, we can't do that.' But then I had the idea to combine it with a flare. Because I just thought, 'How can we use this in a way that I haven't seen before?' I wanted to use the real sun for that, and it just happened to work out, but it was a really difficult shot to execute, particularly for my A cam operator Kaelin McCowan and 1st AC Ciaran Copelin. As we were doing the shot, the sun would move just a little bit every time, so every take, they had to shift the camera very slightly in order to get the flare back. They executed it beautifully and it was something I hadn't seen before. The effect was like a veil was being lifted visually because the flare distorts and then disappears as Mae realizes what is happening to her. We were really happy with how it came out."

As Mae evolves, Grant wanted the language of the camera to evolve with her. "At the beginning, the camera is very controlled and static," he observes. "Because Mae is kind of lost in her own life, she's not fully alive. So we used very static frames, very symmetrical, almost like she's in a box. And then as her world starts to expand, the visual language expands too. As the series goes on, the camera becomes more free and more expressive. And the lighting becomes more expressive and there's more colour. Basically, the language is always echoing Mae's internal world."

"Zoe loves colour. And she has a very sophisticated sense of colour and contrast," Grant states, adding that DIT Rany Ly was live grading throughout the shoot. "So that gave us a first draft of a colour for everything. During the camera tests, Rany built an initial LUT that was a FUJI stock emulation that she based on [Xavier Dolan's 2012 feature film] *Laurence Anyways* [shot by Yves Bélanger csc]. Zoe and I love the colour in that film and it was another big reference for us. We brought that test footage to [colourist] Brett Trider at Picture Shop, and he made his own version of what became our shooting LUT. So when it came time to do the final colour, a lot of the broad strokes were in place and Brett was able to focus on refining the image."

On set, Grant's lighting became "more and more subjective" over the seven episodes, he says. "As it becomes more subjective and the image becomes more abstracted, there's a lot more negative space in the frame and more space to project your own imagination. Whereas early in the series, the lighting is a little more banal, because it's just reflecting the world that she's living in. There's a lot less mystery." Working with gaffer Jordan Hégu, Grant used LED lighting throughout almost the entire series, "because it allows you to change colour on the fly and experiment," he says.



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Zoe gravitated right away to anamorphic. Because we wanted the world to have a slightly distorted or slightly magical point of view. There are elements of it that are very grounded, but we wanted it to have a slightly otherworldly quality.”

Daniel Grant csc

Repeated frames were used as a visual motif to symbolize Mae's unending routine. "Especially in the first episode, we would repeat the same frames over and over in different scenes. There's a specific moment where she's waking up in bed and we used a Technodolly to repeat the same motion control camera move several times. The camera is on the side pushing towards her face and she's in the exact same place, and it cuts back and forth between day and night and different kinds of weather and lighting, because we wanted to show how when you have no novelty in your life, time starts to feel like it's moving very quickly and your days dissolve together. At the same time, because you see all these different versions of her face intercutting, it foreshadows her being transported to different versions of her life."

But love scenes are *Slip's* strongest narrative devices. "Those were really important to us, and we wanted to approach each one uniquely," Grant states. In one scene, Mae has a one-night stand with another woman in the bathroom of a bar. "It was a really creative process working with production designer Danielle Sohota, and she would design the sets to accommodate camera movement ideas that we had," Grant says. "For that scene, we knew that we wanted it all to be one continuous shot in the bathroom. And we wanted to create kind of an impossible shot, so we worked with Dani to figure out how to build a set to accommodate that. For instance, the bathroom is only a two-walled set because we knew exactly what we would see. But it also had to be designed for certain parts of the set to open up or slide away to accommodate the camera and Technocrane, because we wanted the camera to basically float over top of the bathroom stalls and then go inside and wrap around the two characters, and then at the very end

of the scene we wanted to have a match cut to her waking up in a new life. That was one of the most challenging shots."

Building trust with the actors is crucial for sex scenes, Grant says. "It was spending a lot of time talking about those scenes, which are choreographed in a very specific way. And it was also working with Mackenzie [Lawrence], our intimacy coordinator," he recalls. "We would work out the visual ideas in advance. Those were probably the most technical scenes, so you spend a lot of time kind of breaking it down into its individual parts. It's like choreographing a dance scene or fight scene. And another key consideration is choosing people to be on my team that I felt would contribute to that very positive, relaxed, professional environment."

Fortunately, he was able to put together a strong team – which included B cam/Steadicam operator Greg Francovich, B cam 1st AC Chris Reilly and video operator Michael Flax – but the DP was particularly grateful for Lawrence's work in the intimate scenes. "I think it's been a really positive change in the industry," Grant says of having someone in Lawrence's position on set. "The intimacy coordinator also takes on the responsibility of making sure that only specific monitors are in use, and making sure only the essential people are in the room. It's something that as DPs, we also have to be very conscious of, because a lot of what we do affects the actors' level of comfort. How we approach the process, both technically and also your attitude and the team that you bring to the project, that affects everyone's experience on set, and the goal is that it all contributes to an environment where people feel safe and creativity can happen." ❖

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Just another dolly shot. *Made in America* (1993).

LINE OF SIGHT

BY ROMAN SOKAL
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN CINEMATOGRAPHER

As far as A camera operators go, it's easy to see why Harald Ortenburger is considered a legend. A small sampling of his feature credits includes *A Christmas Story*, *Moonstruck*, *Titanic* and *Open Range*. He has worked alongside the likes of Haskell Wexler ASC, Vilmos Zsigmond ASC, HSC, László Kovács ASC, William A. Fraker ASC, Dante Spinotti ASC, AIC, Conrad Hall ASC and David Watkin BSC, to name a few.

"When you get to work with these artists, they're already familiar with your work; you're no longer in the position of auditioning or sending in a resume," Ortenburger says. "There's a huge level of trust established before you walk in the door, and you know your career is on the right path.

Besides being artists, they were great teachers, and maybe not in the way one might think. From them and others, I learned that the job is really about problem solving. And problem solving is really the number one job of each and every person on a set. Because that's what movie making really is, a series of problems that need to be solved on a daily basis, and to stay calm and reassuring while doing this."

Although there have been many ground-breaking advancements technology-wise throughout the history of cinema, the role of the camera operator has stayed the same, according to Ortenburger, who began his career in operating in 1979. "It was definitely a steep learning curve,"



Clockwise from top left: The beauty of Alberta captured from a Titan crane on *Open Range* (2003). Vilmos Zsigmond ASC, HSC setting up on the insert car on the set of *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987). A childhood dream come true, working with a legend. Kirk Douglas in *Draw* (1983). B camera crew on the research vessel *The Keldysh* during the shoot of *Titanic* (1997). Director Norman Jewison setting up the last scene on *Moonstruck* (1987) with Cher. Director Sidney Lumet in Times Square on the set of *Gloria* (1999). All images courtesy of Harald Ortenburger CSC.

when he started out, he reveals. "For instance, I came in thinking, 'If I just master the gear head, I'll be an operator.' But I quickly discovered that it's almost the last thing to worry about. It's everything surrounding it: setting up shots and sometimes entire scenes, designing moves to accomplish the impossible, and looking at the frame and realizing your job is to interface with every single department including the production and set designers, obviously the DP, the director, the boom operator, and of course the actors. Basically, you're more or less a group of strangers suddenly thrown together, and an almost instant bond needs to be formed. These are the quickest relationships you'll ever form in your life.

"What was different when I started out was that crew members were not celebrities, and most people didn't go to film school. It was just a job," Ortenburger says. "In Munich, where I'm from, I was a technician who built Arriflex movie cameras. I was given the opportunity to continue that career in North America and jumped at the chance. Obviously, that profession had me interacting with the camera world at large so I was able to easily segue into becoming an AC on commercials and from there get a job as A camera operator on a feature called *Nothing Personal*."

The star of *Nothing Personal* was actor Donald Sutherland, "who clearly knew I was starting out," Ortenburger recalls. "He was kind, encouraging and helped me along. It was also incredibly fortunate that the DP was Arthur Ibbetson BSC. He basically laid the groundwork for whatever knowledge I possess today. It was a crash course for sure. When we finished the movie he said to me, 'Now you're an operator; it's like having done 10 pictures in one.' And that was the best thing I ever heard of course. And since that experience, I learned that the dynamic on every set is different. You need to come in with an open mind and pay attention. Don't let your ego get in the way. Your job is to accommodate the picture."

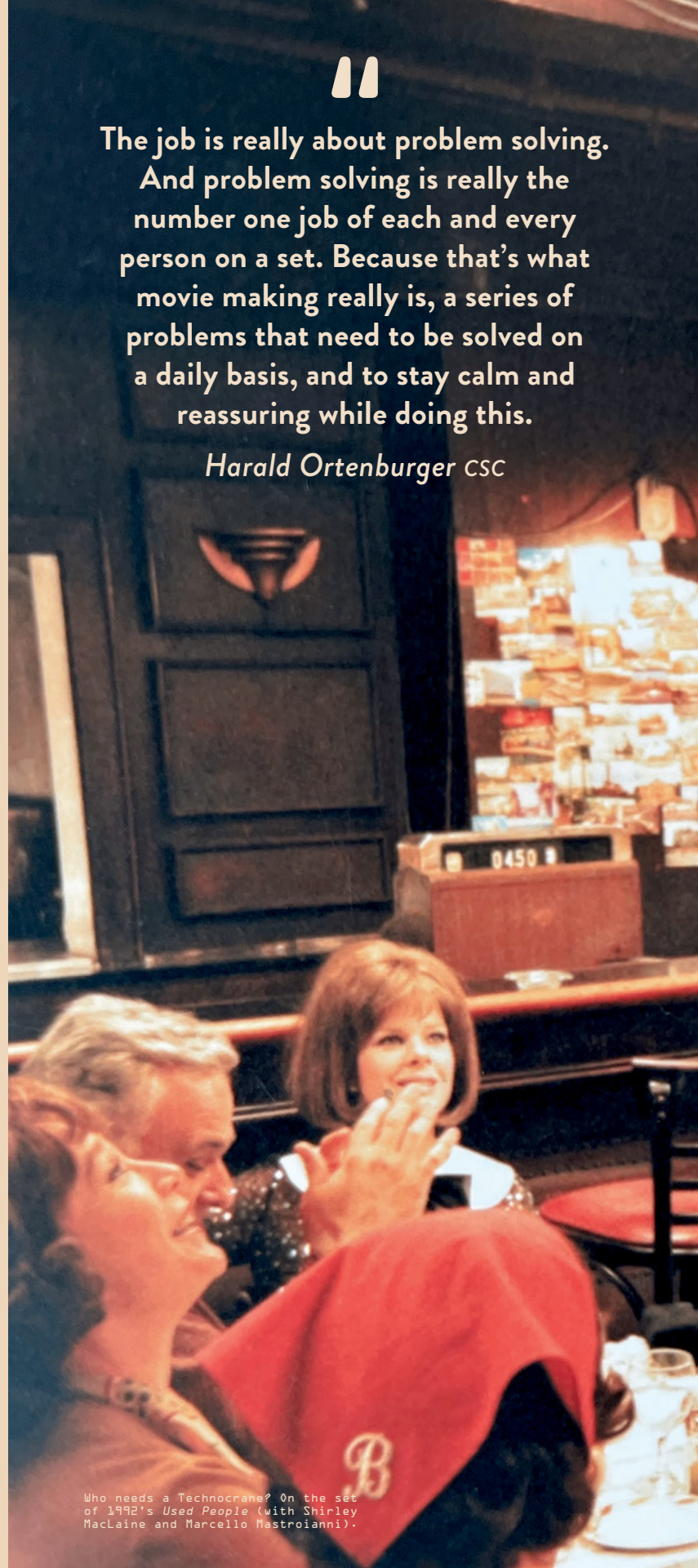
Nevertheless, camera operators are not unaffected by developments in filmmaking technology, and they have to stay abreast of it all, from the cameras themselves that have changed so drastically to remote heads, drones and CGI. "Operators today have to constantly educate themselves and develop awareness of all the new options," Ortenburger states. "When I started out, everything had to be done on camera and it was the responsibility of the operator to deal with a lot of issues that CGI would take care of today. Prior to video assist, which didn't arrive until I was 10 years into my career, I was the only one who saw what was actually being captured on the camera. The director, DP and sometimes even the actors, would all look at you and ask, 'How was it?' So sometimes the operator is the one who's determining if another take is needed, which needless to say is a tricky place to be especially if the actor was happy with their take. Also, for me at the time, there was an immense amount of pressure viewing dailies.

"Now, with HD monitors on set, there is a lot less potential for nasty surprises," he says. "I would have sleepless nights worrying about some shots; I would befriend the lab timer and sometimes call him nervously at 6 a.m. to get the first word on the previous day's rushes. Always good to be prepared or even better, get good news. I don't know if it made us better, double and triple checking everything, but it was the protocol that had to be followed at that time. You couldn't take any shortcuts because one slip turns into panicked insomnia."



The job is really about problem solving. And problem solving is really the number one job of each and every person on a set. Because that's what movie making really is, a series of problems that need to be solved on a daily basis, and to stay calm and reassuring while doing this.

Harald Ortenburger CSC



Who needs a Technocrane? On the set of 1992's *Used People* (with Shirley MacLaine and Marcello Mastroianni).





The set of *Open Range* (2003) at the Stoney Indian Reservation, Alberta.

With the ever-building alterations of equipment, Ortenburger notes that “the responsibility of the operator has segued into the tech aspects. They have to be much more into it. All the material that’s available, like drones, for example, the operator needs to know everything that’s possibly available to the production. I’ve seen what ops in my time had to do that doesn’t seem to apply anymore. There’s too much CGI in the pictures. When I started out, everything you see had to be done in camera, and the responsibility laid on the operator to deal with everything. Today if there’s a cable in the shot you can take it out with an Apple computer or whatever.”

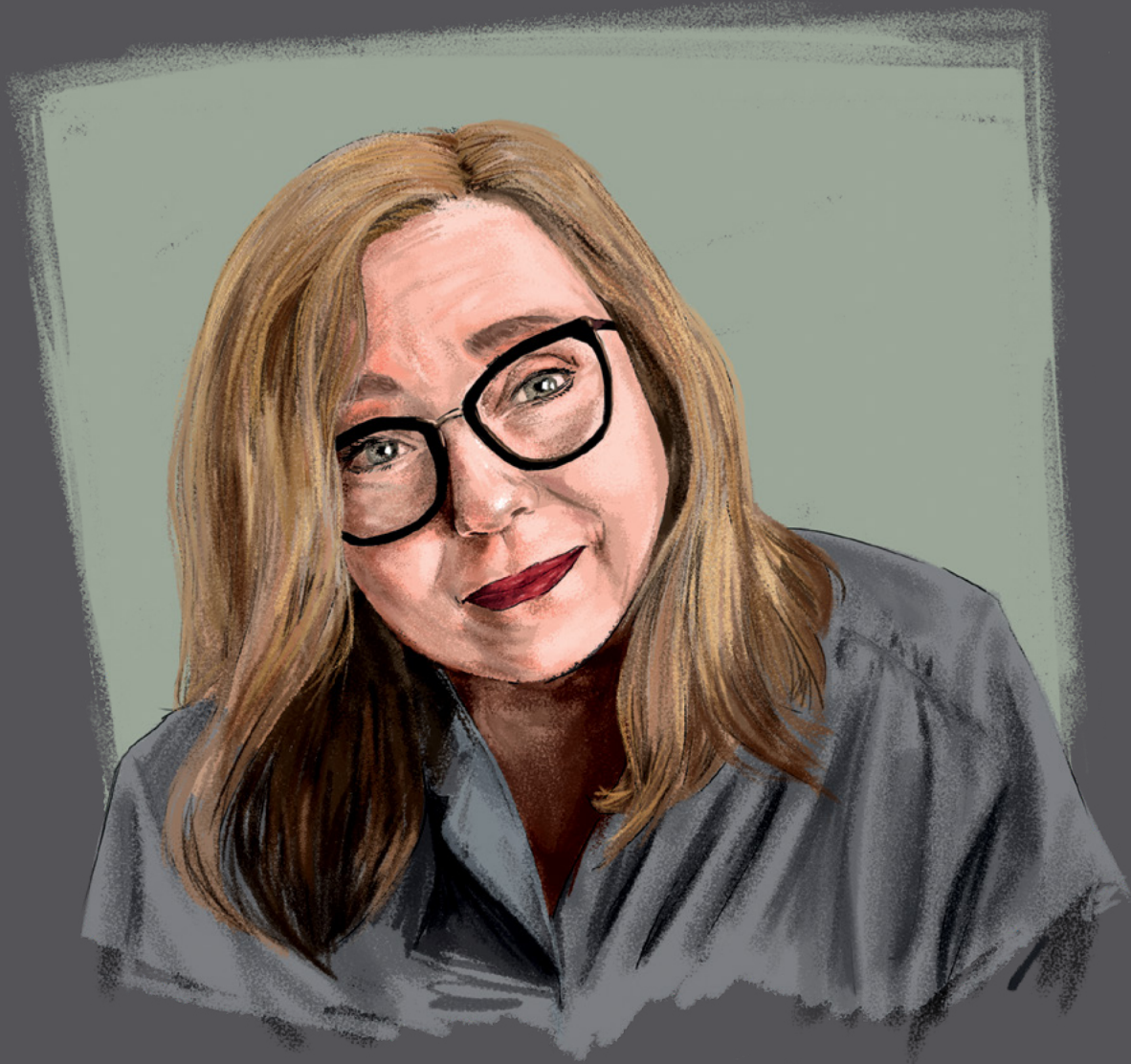
Some of the advancements have streamlined the process even as the physical demands of being an operator may not have changed. “That’s something you have to bring at the beginning. But when it comes to say, setting up a dolly shot, in those days you needed to know – as there wasn’t any Steadicam then – where you set the track. And keeping it out of the shot. Believe me, it’s not easy. If you see it, then you set it up the wrong way,” he says.

Camera operating, and the path to a career in it, remains the same even though major changes have altered the production landscape. The solid fundamentals required of the craft are provided succinctly by Ortenburger: “Tip number one, fake it till you make it. Listen, don’t talk. Make friends on the set,” he says. “First and foremost, believe in yourself, but equally important from my point of view is to save your money. And what I mean by that is try to put yourself in a position where you can make decisions based on what’s good for your career longevity, not just what’s good for your bank account. And those choices can be related to a lot of different things. Size doesn’t always necessarily matter. You never really know what leads to what, but at the very least find something that really turns you on about a project if you can. It sounds simple and it doesn’t always work out the way you thought, but believe me, there’s something to it.”

The quality, reputation and stature of the on-camera talent often affects the camera operator’s experiences and can align or perhaps dictate their career path. Ortenburger has worked with notable actors like Jack Nicholson, Kirk Douglas, Kevin Costner, Robert Duvall, Marlon Brando, Robert De Niro, Jane Fonda, Michelle Pfeiffer and Susan Sarandon just to name a handful. “When it comes to relationships with actors, trust must be established as soon as possible,” Ortenburger says. “You don’t need to be friends, just let the talent know you have their back. I was lucky enough to work on several pictures with the same actors as a result.”

For example, Ortenburger worked with Oscar winner Cher on several features and videos. The camera operator says one of his favourite projects to work on was *Witches of Eastwick*. The film had the biggest budget of any film he had ever worked on, and early on Ortenburger was sure every day that he would be fired. “[Director] George Miller was a genius, Vilmos Zsigmond was the DP, and the cast was absolutely stellar and at the top of their game,” Ortenburger states. “It was quite intimidating initially, but I gained confidence, and, in the end, I believe my operating was at the highest level and I was very proud when *Time* magazine referred to the camerawork as ‘camerabatics.’”

Cher and Ortenburger would work together again when both landed *Moonstruck*, a film that Ortenburger cites as his personal favourite. “Norman Jewison, Canada’s greatest director, and his producer Patrick Palmer brought me in to work with DP David Watkin BSC, who had just received the Oscar for *Out of Africa*,” Ortenburger recalls. “It gave me the opportunity to work with Cher again. It was David’s style of working that made these people think I was the right choice. David was only interested in lighting, and I was very comfortable working the English system, as well as the American system. In the former, the operator designs and sets up shots more directly with the director. We were obviously the perfect fit as he became an important mentor and friend. We did five pictures together including *Gloria* and *Critical Care*, both directed by the brilliant Sidney Lumet. There was nothing better than working with Sidney. If I had done nothing else, having two Sidney Lumet pictures on my resume would have been enough. It was a really important time for me because I fully understood why I was hired. You have to be at the top of your game and in a position to recognize that. But there are other great operators out there as well, some better than me, and knowing that keeps you level and hungry to keep getting better. It keeps you grounded.”



KIM DERKO csc

What films or other works of art have made the biggest impression on you?

Still photography has influenced my work as much as films have. The work of Stan Douglas has been a huge inspiration and I've followed Nan Goldin's work since I was in art school, where I also discovered Diane Arbus, whose honesty inspires whenever I revisit her work. It's impossible to name all the films and series that have inspired me, but here are a few: *The Shining*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Us*, *Wings of Desire*, *Black Christmas* (the original), *Videodrome*, *The Wrestler*, *X-Files* and *True Detective*.

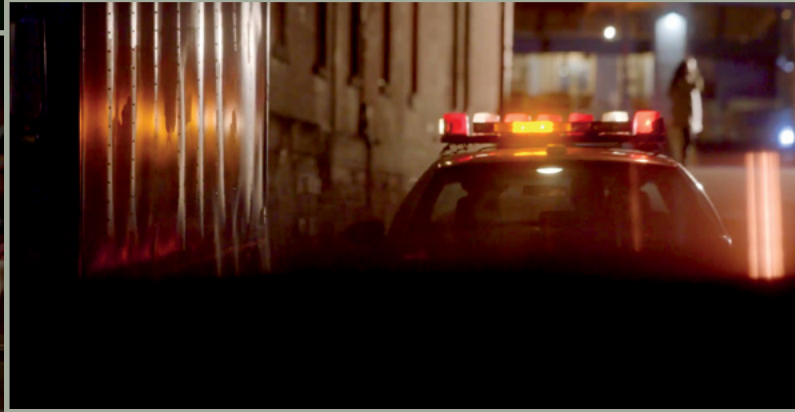
How did you get started in the business?

I went to Emily Carr University of Art & Design in Vancouver. I studied

art history/colour theory/photography and film. In my graduating year there I was accepted into a camera training program at the NFB Studio in Montreal. From there, I landed in Toronto and began shooting music videos and films for my artist friends. I also began operating in IA667 and slowly doors opened up to shooting series and features.

Who have been your mentors or teachers?

So many people have helped me along the way. All the DPs that hired me to operate were types of mentors. Watching different shooters' approach to lighting and their work with directors was a huge education. I'm also hugely grateful to Zoe Dirse csc, who was at the NFB Studio when I trained there. Zoe was the first woman DP that I saw shooting, and it made a huge impact. I'm also incredibly grateful for all I learned from the early wave of women technicians in 667. They



all seriously had the chops. They excelled at their craft in an environment that was less inclusive than the current one we work in and did so with very little opportunity to climb up the ranks as quickly as their male counterparts. Not only did they excel in their field, but their determination set an example for me.

Name a cinematographer who has recently inspired you and why.

Hoyte van Hoytema ASC, FSF, NSC is a massive inspiration. Shooting that moon rover chase in *Ad Astra* using a custom rig with a 35 mm and a modified infrared Alexa to shoot those panoramic night exteriors that are so strangely stylized but somehow blended to look less VFX or CG. Also, in *Nope*, Van Hoytema used a 70 mm film camera in the same technique to shoot the day for night or combination of day and night shooting for those vast nightscapes, which remain true to the eerie tone and narrative of the film while being wildly stylized.

Name one of your professional highlights.

Working with the team on *What We Do in the Shadows* was a total ride. I was alt DP on Season 5 with David Makin csc and Michael Storey csc. Shot

in a faux mockumentary look, the show was originally lit by D.J. Stipsen. This aesthetic is very responsive to the performers, the camera is always moving, except in the talking heads. *WWD* is about 50 per cent in studio with stylized sets, and while trying not to look too much like it, there's a great deal of lighting going on. There's a lot of following rogue actors, so you really have to know how dark something can go when a character wanders off and how unlit looking it can be. The super saturated palette is unique to the show and the look has evolved since the first season but staying true to the intent of the original pilot. It was a complete challenge and a delight to work on *WWD/ITS* with so many super talented creatives.

What is one of your most memorable moments on set?

One of my favourite and most demanding setups was night lighting [Toronto's] Meadowvale Road for *Sex/Life*. The scene covered a huge area of what is essentially a highway on the way to the Toronto Zoo. It is lined with practical sodium vapour lamp standards, but we added several lifts and large fixtures to augment what would have fallen into complete black void in the distance. The scene involved actors in a series of walk-and-talks through a trail of (carefully placed) emergency picture vehicles. The



What do you think has been the greatest invention related to your craft?

The revolution that has been RGB programmable fixtures – Astera, Helios, etc. So lightweight, small, variable within a scene, these things have opened up so many new creative possibilities. In terms of palette, this has been super exciting and there's a lot more colour to explore.

How can others follow your work?

Instagram is @kimderkocsc

Rep: The Characters Talent Agency

Website: kimderko.com



Clockwise from top left:

1. *Rabid*
2. *Paradise Institute*
3. *Rabid*
4. *The Next Step*
5. *In Contempt*
6. *In Contempt*

practicals of these vehicles did a lot of heavy lifting to light the scene. We positioned, dimmed, gelled and sprayed many of the Emergency Response practicals while adding Asteras in every nook we could hide one in. I love doing this kind of work with multiple picture vehicles.

What do you like best about what you do?

I really enjoy formulating the blueprint for palette and camera style with a director at the beginning of the show. I also love those times while shooting when all our creative efforts sync up right in front of your eyes. When you nail the shot and everyone sees their work "working." Those moments when the whole team is in it and realize that the shot you are shooting is really good. I love that.

What do you like least about what you do?

Along with the sometimes-unreasonable hours, which is I'm sure every film tech's first reflex answer to this question, I'd have to say I hate the competitive aspect of show business. I'm terrible at self-promotion and schmoozing. I just want to do the work.

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DP Suzanne Pierce (associate member) on the set of the feature film *Back Home*, directed by Nisha Platzer.
 📷 Jeremiah Reyes.



DP Shawn Seifert (associate member) on the set of the feature film *Bau: Artist at War*, with Michelle Remnant (operator) on the dolly and Mark Kent as the dolly op.
 📷 Kory Tremblay.



Associate member Michael Jari Davidson (right) lines up a reverse over a pensive Daniel Kash on the sci-fi feature *Den Mother Crimson*, with 2nd AC Adrien Benson slating.
 📷 David Bastedo

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THEATRICAL FEATURE CINEMATOGRAPHY

Sponsored by SESLER

Douglas Koch csc

Crimes of the Future

The challenge of lighting scenes at night in the ship cemetery was you couldn't get a backlight behind the ships because there was nothing but water out there (see October 2022 issue). The hulking shipwrecks are beached, and I wanted to show them by lighting the moisture in the air behind them from the sea side of things so

they would start as just big huge silhouettes, which I could then selectively light portions of. Being big black objects with white trim, I knew it would not look great. When we visited the location at night in the tech scout, the full moon was rising over the sea beyond the ships. I was able to point and say, "something like that!"





**NON-THEATRICAL
FEATURE
CINEMATOGRAPHY**

*Sponsored by
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Grant Cooper
Peppergrass

We knew right from the beginning that this film was going to be dark and very naturally motivated. We never wanted to be shy with how we were trying to make the audience feel. We wanted to hold shots, we wanted it to feel uncomfortable at times, we wanted that sense of urgency contrasted with a strong sense of isolation. It was an interesting process as I was working

with two directors that were tackling different things. Doing nine overnights in a row with a fairly small crew in the rain and mud during November was probably the hardest part. Just the sheer drive it took the entire team to power through that stretch is impressive to me. I am thankful I had the experience as I learned a lot from it.



**FRITZ SPIESS
AWARD
FOR COMMERCIAL
CINEMATOGRAPHY**

Adam Marsden csc
Enbridge
"Tomorrow is On"

A couple of inspirations of mine for this project was the work of Emmanuel Lubezki [Asc, AMC] on the films *The Tree of Life* and *The Revenant*. His beautiful work using natural and motivated light at the right time of day was a great reference for us. It was a very challenging project in the sense that we had four days to shoot a 60-second film that narratively all took place at dawn. We shot for four days in mid summer, which provided us with

14 hours of daylight and because of our 12-hour daily shooting schedules, we could only get either sunrise or sunset on any given day. We spent the middays in our interior locations as much as possible to artificially recreate the feeling of dawn. This project as a whole was quite challenging but incredibly rewarding once I saw all the elements come together in the final film.

MUSIC VIDEO CINEMATOGRAPHY

Sponsored by Astera,
distributed by Lumenayre

Peter Hagge

Niko - performed
by performed by
Jordan Klassen



The inspiration for the video comes from the song and lyrics. They tell the story of losing a friend down the conspiracy theory rabbit hole. Lester [Lyons-Hookham], the director/editor, started with a concept and then we went on to find themes in our visuals that reflected it, such as isolation, making connections that aren't there, the search for hidden truths being exposed (literally

and figuratively). The most rewarding part was being able to work with friends and laugh the entire time. It's why I still love making films. Just to be nominated with such talented cinematographers is a huge honour. It's a career highlight and totally surreal. The win is a gentle reassurance that we've made the right creative decisions for the work to be bigger than us.

DRAMATIC SHORT CINEMATOGRAPHY

Sponsored by ARRI

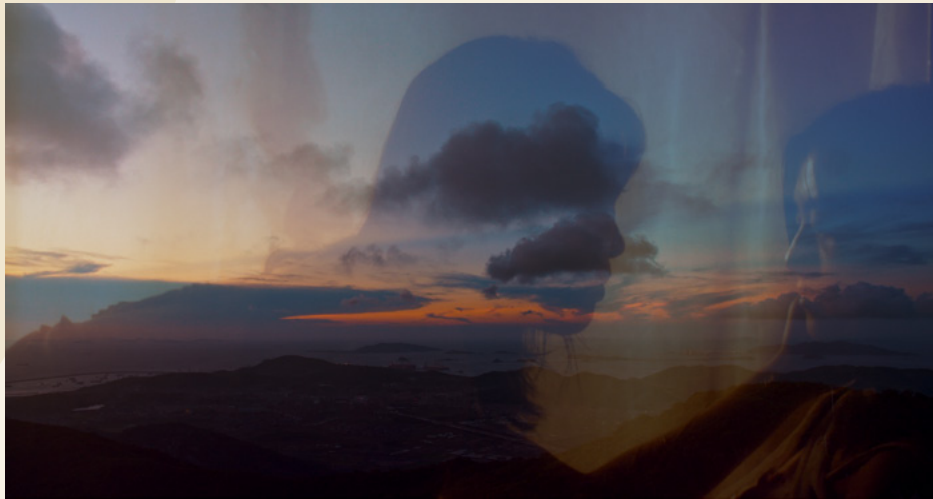
Brendan Steacy csc

Demon Box



This is a very personal project for [director/co-writer] Sean [Wainsteim], and we know each other really well, so when I read the script, I pretty much knew exactly where it was coming from, so we kind of just started figuring out how to actually get it made. I love when the actor version of his Zaydie emerges from the demon box before morphing into

an animatronic Nazi-fighting deer. Because this project is so personal and was such a special experience, it's really exciting to know that others appreciate its merits. I love that more people may actually see it as a result of this award.



STUDENT CINEMATOGRAPHY

Sponsored by Panavision

Yufei Jim Zou

Naked Island,
Sheridan College

I was both director and cinematographer for the project. The main reason is that we faced COVID-19 restrictions while filming in China, and our crew members had to be limited. Since I studied directing and cinematography in college, I took both positions so we could save a few crew members. The overall visual inspirations come from Andrei Tarkovsky and Emmanuel Lubezki [ASC, AMC].

Tarkovsky inspired me to use slow long-takes, as this approach helps emphasize the sense of isolation the characters in our film feel. Lubezki, on the other hand, inspired me to use natural light and a small aperture to shoot most of the film. We shot many scenes during the golden and blue hour to capture the magical tone the story needs.



DOCUMENTARY SHORT FORMAT CINEMATOGRAPHY

Sponsored by Aputure

Jeremy Cox – Like
Father Like Son

In the context of documentary work, I love the objective perspective. It is such a fun way to explore new relationships and environments and create a semblance of order in an uncontrolled environment. I was interested in exploring how this could be used alongside closer proximity subjective camera work. I loved filming with Ron and Skip Bowman. They owned a printing shop together which was full of traditional printing equipment. Being able to create

composition with the layers throughout the space was a lot of fun. Because of the road trip nature of the project, we could not afford to have any crew. There were a lot of times where I found my own focus pulling underwhelming. The award is a culmination of years of support from friends, family and vendors. To be recognized for work that I love doing is truly rewarding!

**ROBERT BROOKS
AWARD FOR
DOCUMENTARY
LONG FORMAT
CINEMATOGRAPHY**

Goh Iromoto

Land of the Living



Having spent months filming the most extraordinary settings and creatures on our planet, I have so many favourite scenes in this project. If I had to choose, it would be the final shot of the film where a lone bull elephant walks peacefully in a long aerial shot. The camera starts off close then gently soars wide as it wraps continuously around the elephant until it becomes a small speck. I loved how an ominous cloud nearby cast a

shadow that was about to engulf the whole landscape. The moment was extra special because our guide this day, Joseph Kirui, who had become a friend over the years, was overjoyed to be our drone assistant learning how to catch the unit rather than landing it on uneven terrain. Before finishing the film, I learned that he passed due to an unknown illness, so there's a layer of personal meaning to this moment as well.

**HALF-HOUR
SCRIPTED SERIES**

Bobby Shore csc

Conversations

with Friends

"S1.E9"

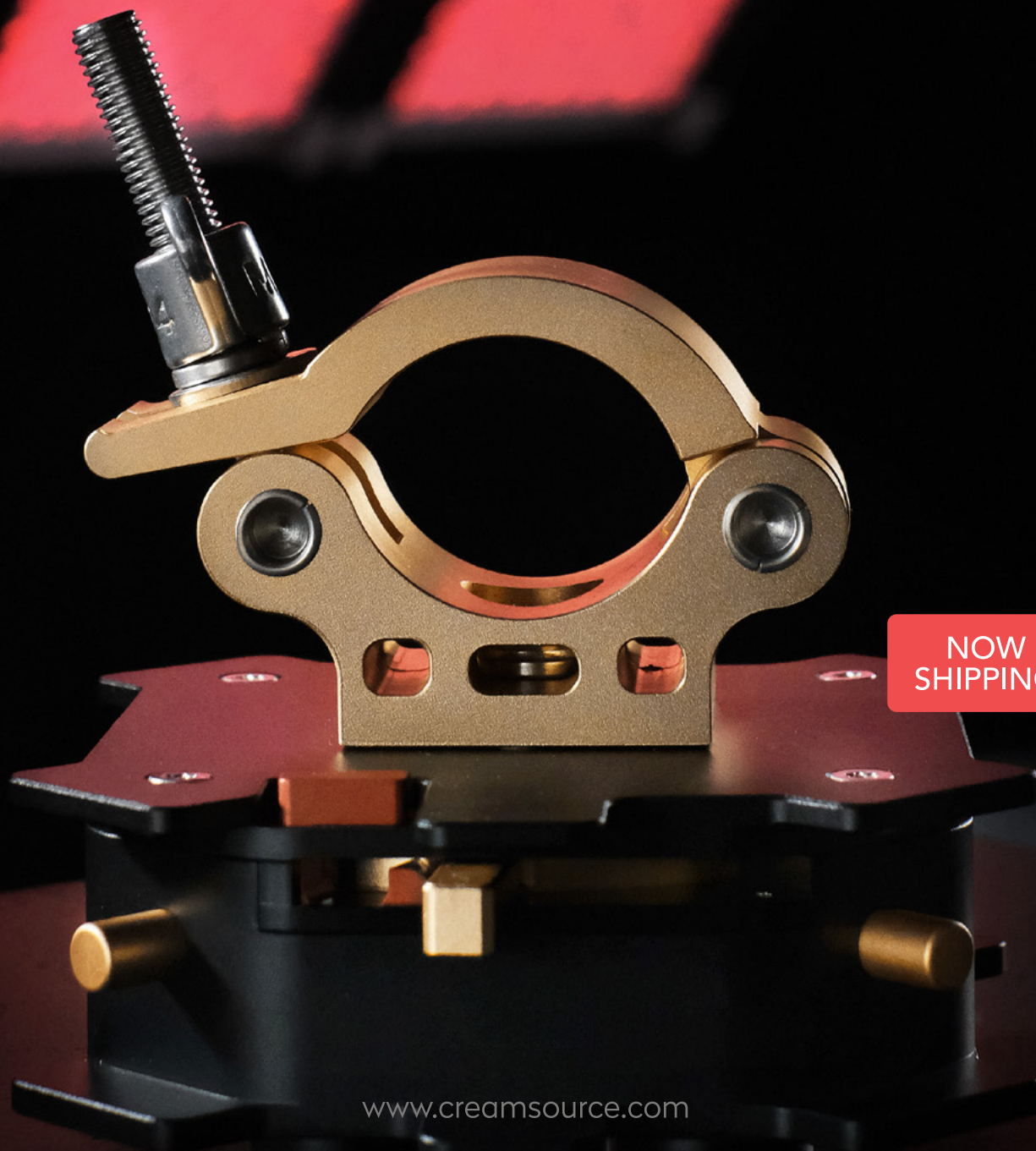


The approach to the show was very stripped back, shooting mainly with a locked off camera and the odd handheld scene (see May 2022 issue). So we spent a lot of time concentrating on framing, discussing which lens felt like the right fit for each shot of each scene. Part of this simplicity was often only using one focal length for one scene to create a visual consistency shot to shot. This was honestly one of the best project's I've ever been a part of. Everyone was so supportive of the work

and of the craft. Shooting 35 mm single camera for a show was a dream and having the time to really create a simple yet specific world felt incredibly rewarding. There was a such an immense respect for all the work that we were doing from the producers, and it felt like the visual approach, though intended as wallpaper, was given a lot of time to create. Also, working with such great actors really made me realize how important an imperceptible visual language can be.

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**DRAMATIC SERIES
CINEMATOGRAPHY
– COMMERCIAL**

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Craig Wroblewski csc

*Under the Banner
of Heaven*

*"S1.E7, Blood
Atonement"*



I came onto the project on Episode 5, so the look was well established. My goal was to try and visualize the feeling of being trapped in a structure and system of belief when those beliefs are shaken. The showrunner, [Dustin] Lance Black, and I had discussed it having aspects of a horror movie. A favourite sequence was Andrew Garfield's character, Pyre, searching through the Circus Circus Hotel in search of the Lafferty Brothers. The director, Tommy Schlamme, and I discussed the sequence feeling like Pyre's descent into hell. He has travelled

so far, physically and emotionally, to get to this point and his search through the bowels of the hotel was a journey through a world he knows nothing about given his sheltered Mormon upbringing. We wanted the search to take him through a range of colours and textures until he finally finds them in a grungy bathroom. The story of *Under the Banner of Heaven* was a complex and layered story, and to successfully bring all of that scope and sweep to a successful and emotionally satisfying conclusion for the audience was very rewarding.

**DRAMATIC SERIES
CINEMATOGRAPHY
NON-COMMERCIAL**

*Sponsored by Vanguard
Artists Management*

Fraser Brown csc

Titans

"S4.E1, Lex Luthor"



I was inspired by the two main parallel visual storylines: the dichotomy between hope, represented by Superman and the city of Metropolis, and despair, represented by Mother Mayhem and her control over the city's underworld. My favourite scene is when Starfire (Anna Diop) meets Lex Luthor (Titus Welliver) for the first time. Lex Luthor is such a significant character in the DC universe, it was thrilling to be able to shoot that

character within the *Titans* universe. I started working on *Titans* in Season One as the 2nd unit cinematographer. By Season Four, I was the lead cinematographer. The confidence and faith that the past cinematographers, Boris Mojsovski csc, ASC and Brendan Steacy csc, and production showed me has been truly satisfying and I couldn't be more grateful. The win feels especially meaningful with *Titans* coming to end this year.



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