A conversation with

Joan Hutton csc

David Greene csc
THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL

D. Gregor Hagey csc
THE DARK STRANGER
The Canadian Society of Cinematographers (CSC) was founded in 1957 by a group of Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa cameramen. Since then over 800 cinematographers and persons in associated occupations have joined the organization. The purpose of the CSC is to promote the art and craft of cinematography in Canada and to provide 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 dedicated to furthering technical assistance, we maintain contact with non-partisan groups in our industry but have no political or union affiliation.

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FEATURES – VOLUME 7, NO. 1 APRIL 2015

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From the President

George A. Willis csc, SASC

Generally speaking, when making decisions about any given situation, one has a choice – to be either positive or negative. On the day following the CSC annual general meeting, I reflected upon the proceedings and wondered what path I would take.

I questioned whether to react negatively and make comment on the fact that the membership turnout (or lack thereof) was due to general apathy. I also wondered why the same few familiar faces could always be counted on to show support and why the rest of the members were absent.

As the negative seemed intent on taking hold, I decided to ignore it and instead adopt a positive attitude and touch on a single word: value. In fact, the word “value” could be heard many times during the evening after the various reports had been read and as discussion ensued.

The purpose of the AGM is self-explanatory and it is the forum for evaluating and democratizing initiatives.

It is also the perfect time and place, as well as the opportunity, to give voice to one’s thoughts and be heard. Here one can shout out loud from the rooftops or, in this case, from the boardroom that our sponsor, Technicolor, kindly provides so that ideas can be floated and discussed – and voted upon. Likewise, comments, criticisms, questions as well as observations regarding the role that the CSC plays in the life of its members, may be proffered.

It goes without saying that the poor turnout was disappointing, but unfortunately this has proven to be par for the course and something we constantly hope will change. Apart from the regulars, there were a few members of the new generation – and I say this with great respect for they hold the key to the future of the CSC.

These members offered great insight as well as serious food for thought and it was refreshing to hear a completely different perspective as well as variations on old themes.

Attention was drawn to the framed document in the CSC Clubhouse, which during the 50th Anniversary celebrations symbolically handed over and entrusts the next generation of filmmakers with upholding the traditions as well as the values and the CSC mandate: “to promote and foster the art of cinematography.”

While listening to the debates and the ensuing discussion, the temptation to address my frustrations was indeed overwhelming and at times I asked myself just how we (the Executive) could be more effective in running the CSC. I feel that we need to dissect and disseminate the information that might not be fully understood by the membership as it relates to how the CSC is run and what it takes to keep it going.

The Executive committee is always hard at work, trying to provide the best platform possible for its members. The countless hours that go into running the society is formidable and the dedication and commitment of so few on behalf of so many needs to be understood and valued.

This column unfortunately does not allow sufficient time nor space for an in-depth analysis and description of the role that the CSC plays, therefore, I have undertaken to write an article, the sole purpose of which will be to discuss the value of the CSC.

I would like to acknowledge as well as thank those members who took the time and made the effort to attend the AGM. Your presence and loyalty is greatly appreciated and is the Executive’s reward for doing what we do.
SPECIAL HONOUAREES

PRESENTATION TO CSC PAST PRESIDENT JOAN HUTTON CSC

THE PRESIDENT’S AWARD
John Hodgson
“For outstanding service to the Canadian Society of Cinematographers.”

THE BILL HILSON AWARD
Technicolor
“For outstanding service contributing to the development of the motion picture industry in Canada.”

THE MASTERS AWARD
David Moxness CSC, ASC
“For outstanding contribution to the art of cinematography.”

THE CAMERA ASSISTANT AWARD OF MERIT
Eric Bensoussan, Rob Mountjoy, Gottfried Pflugbeil & Jim Teevan
“For excellence and outstanding professionalism in the performance of the AC duties and responsibilities

STUDENT CINEMATOGRAPHY AWARD
Sponsored by Panavision Canada
James Gill One With the Devil University of British Columbia
Charles Hamilton A Dark Winter’s Night SAIT Polytechnic
Zachary Healey Shattered and Sundered York University

CINEMATOGRAPHER AWARDS

THE ROY TASH AWARD FOR SPOT NEWS CINEMATOGRAPHY
Marc D’Amours Acute Malnutrition Gnawing at Afghan Children, CTV National News
Chris Dunseith Volunteers Rally Around Moncton, CTV National News
Chris Dunseith Honouring the Fallen in Moncton, CTV National News

NEWS MAGAZINE CINEMATOGRAPHY
Allan Leader CSC Lava Tubes Discovery Channel
Kirk Neff LCS Levin 16x9, Global News

CORPORATE/EDUCATIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY
Sarorn Ron Sim CSC Dow Chemical Company Rainfall
Sarorn Ron Sim CSC Dow Chemical Company Beauty of Water
Sarorn Ron Sim CSC Dow Chemical Company Every Car Tells a Story

LIFESTYLE/REALITY CINEMATOGRAPHY
Mark Foerster CSC Mighty Ships “Stella Australis” Discovery Channel
Ian Macmillan Illusions of Grandeur
Martin Wojtunik Unusually Thick “Par for the Course”

WEBEO CINEMATOGRAPHY
Rob Barnett and Jay Ferguson Guidestones: Sunflower Noir “Episode 8”
Robert Scarborough Whatever, Linda “Episode 106”
Tony Wannamaker CSC Pristine Antarctica

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

DOCU DRAMA CINEMATOGRAPHY
Francois Dagenais CSC and Stan Barua CSC Close Encounters “Episode 107”
D. Gregor Hagey CSC & Stan Barua CSC Close Encounters “Episode 109”
Brett Van Dyke CSC King Tut: Unmasked

ROBERT BROOKS AWARD FOR DOCUMENTARY CINEMATOGRAPHY
Kevin A. Fraser Twenty Eight Feet: Life on a Little Wooden Boat
Van Royko Monsoon
Vic Sarin CSC The Boy from Geita

MUSIC VIDEO CINEMATOGRAPHY
Kris Belchevski Majid Jordan Her
Evan Prososky Paul McCartney Early Days
Bobby Shore CSC Austra Habitat

DRAMATIC SHORT CINEMATOGRAPHY
Sponsored by REDLAB digital
Colin Akoon The Incident(s) at Paradise Bay
Jeremy Benning CSC Josep et Aimée
Ray Dumas CSC The End of War
Daniel Grant CSC Entangled

FRITZ SPIESS AWARD FOR COMMERCIAL CINEMATOGRAPHY
Sponsored by William F. White
Nicolas Bolduc CSC Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS)
Jeff Maher Parapan Am Games
Adam Marsden CSC Canadian Armed Forces “Ready When You Are”

BRANDED CONTENT CINEMATOGRAPHY
Sponsored by Deluxe
Nicolas Bolduc CSC Enemy
Guy Godfree Wet Bum
Douglas Koch CSC The Grand Seduction
Peter Suschitzky Maps to the Stars

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Peter Suschitzky Maps to the Stars

ANNUAL CSC AWARD NOMINEES

PRESENTING THE 58TH
CSC Members Honoured with CSA Awards

The CSC congratulates the following members for their 2015 Canadian Screen Award wins:

• Best Photography in a Documentary Program or Factual Series: John Minh Tran (Our Man in Tehran)
• Best Photography in a News or Information Program, Series or Segment: Kirk Neff (16x9 – Lev Tahor)
• Best Photography in a Comedy Program or Series: Douglas Koch csc (Sensitive Skin)
• Best Direction in a Children’s or Youth Program or Series: Phil Earnshaw csc (Degrassi)

Kodak Finalizes Deals with Hollywood Studios

Kodak announced earlier this year that it has finalized new film supply agreements with all six major Hollywood studios. As part of these agreements, Kodak will continue to provide motion picture film to 20th Century Fox, Walt Disney Co., Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., NBC Universal Inc., Paramount Pictures Corp. and Sony Pictures for their movie and television productions. Kodak has been engaged in broad discussions with prominent filmmakers, studios, independent artists, production companies, and film processors to enable film to remain a fundamental medium. Last July, the studios made known their intent to play a key role in leading this industry-wide effort. The agreements make it possible for Kodak to continue to manufacture motion picture film while also pursuing new opportunities to leverage film production technologies in growth applications, such as touchscreens for smartphones and tablet computers.

ARRI Announces Compact and Lightweight ALEXA Mini

ARRI in late February announced the ALEXA Mini with design features that include integrated and environmentally sealed electronics, a lightweight carbon housing and a solid titanium PL mount that connects directly with the new internal sensor mount. The ALEXA Mini can be operated by wireless remote control, as a normal camera with the ARRI MVF-1 multi viewfinder attached, or with an on-board monitor. See News page 22

The Gak Shack supplies Cine Bits in a Pinch

If you forget your duct tape, green laser pen or iPhone charger while working long hours at North Shore Studios, there’s no more need to send your PA on a trip to the store. The Gak Shack vending machine behind Truffles Fine Foods, next to Stage provides all of these items, and many more goodies, 24/7.

The dispenser looks like a regular vending machine and contains a decent assortment of gak (depending on the source, the acronym comes from “Gear And Equipment” or “Goods of All Kinds”) such as highlighters, phone chargers, flashlights, utility knives, Tylenol, deodorant and even Tim Moshansky’s book A to Z Guide to Film Terms.

“The idea for the Gak Shack came to me when I was looking for opportunities to make work during the slow times,” says creator and owner Matthew Tingey, a Vancouver AD and second unit director. “I noticed there was a need by film crews for film supplies and personal items during the course of a shoot, but they had no time after work to get these things.” Tingey first thought of opening a small shop at the North Shore Studios, but was discouraged by the idea of needing staff around the clock.

“That’s where the idea of the vending machine came in – a 24-hour, automated, film tool dispensary system,” he says. Tingey, who restocks the machine on his days off from set, is especially proud of his deal with film equipment rental house William F. White International to carry some of their film specific products like tapes, sprays and gloves. “Having them support my idea was like gaining a big ally,” says Tingey. “I guess you could say I felt the love from the people who run the Vancouver Whites.”

The AD-turned-entrepreneur’s next step is to find other Vancouver locations and studios out of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, where supplies sometimes are harder to get.

“I’d like to see a Gak Shack unit in every major studio in Canada; then the States; then the rest of world,” says Tingey. “But until then, I’m very happy working out of Vancouver and being close to my wife Shauna, who also works in the biz as a VFX coordinator.”

Repurposed with permission from Reel West Magazine.
THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE DOWNRIGHT UGLY

Advice comes in many different shades. When it’s good, it can become a career-making credo, and when it’s bad, well, we can only scratch our heads in bewilderment. Canadian Cinematographer asked full and associate members of the CSC the following question: “What was the best and the worst advice you ever received during your career?” This is part seven in the series.

ROD CROMBIE

Associate CSC member Rod Crombie is considered one of Canada’s finest camera operators, including Steadicam. After 30 years and literally hundreds of productions, Crombie recently hung up his Steadicam rig, but remains a much sought-after camera operator, whether it’s handheld, on a dolly and gear head, or a pedestal camera. He is based out of Toronto.

Best advice:

I’ve been given lots of sound advice throughout the years from many good people. It was mostly institutional, with some of the advice pithy, to the point and technical, while some was more general, almost philosophical. At the base of all the advice was the idea of trusting your instincts.

A few years ago, I was operating on a series. It was mostly handheld with some Steadicam. The scripts would arrive for each episode and the actors would follow them fairly closely. I was expected to follow the action and dialogue. However, as the series progressed it became more and more apparent that the scripts were becoming just outlines. We knew who was in the scene and the supposed story arc, but the details and the dialogue could change at any moment, since the actors were given lots of freedom to ad lib and improvise. For example, in the script there could be an argument, but that could easily develop into a full-blown fight with punches thrown. I never really knew where things were heading much of the time, so I had to draw heavily on my news camera background to try to anticipate the action. One director noticed I was having trouble with one of these heavily improvised sequences. He told me not to worry so much about getting who was speaking. Instead, he told me not to be afraid of trusting my instincts and shoot what I thought was interesting, such as reactions and odd movements, etc. I did follow my instincts and it worked out quite well. We usually did three or four takes of a scene and if I missed something that the director felt was important, I usually had another shot at it.

Worst advice:

On another series, the director was looking for magic of some sort, and I was told to “follow the subtext.” I wasn’t quite sure what the director meant by that, so I guessed and shot what I thought they wanted. At the end of the take I looked over to the director who said, “I guess your subtext is different than mine.” We re-shot the scene. What did I take from this? For your instincts to work you have to have enough information.

OTHELLO UBALDE

Associate CSC member Othello Ubalde is the cinematographer behind the short film The Lamp, which was selected for the Vancouver International Film Festival and won best see Othello page 28
February Freeze
Heats Up

While Toronto’s temperatures were well into the minus double digits, it was decidedly cozier inside William F. White’s Toronto HQ for this year’s February Freeze Technological Showcase, where the international supplier of motion picture and television equipment had turned up the heat on their annual event.

“Broader, bigger and more scope,” Paul Bronfman, CEO of William F. White International, said. “We’ve bumped up February Freeze in terms of the number of suppliers, in terms of some delicious food and some good wine to make it a little more festive, as opposed to just a trade show.”

What greeted event attendees was 35,000 square feet of show space deep inside the Whites complex where more than 40 vendors had set up shop with their exhibits. Lowell Schrieder, director of marketing and communications at William F. White, pointed out that a large portion of what is on display at February Freeze is available gear in their rental freezer.

“Since our rapid expansion, started in 2010, we have invested heavily in recent equipment. Much of this product is exclusive to Whites,” Schrieder said. “It’s brand new to the floor and brand new to the eyeballs in Canada. We’re showcasing our exclusivity.”

For many of the vendors, February Freeze was exactly what the doctor ordered to get rid of the winter blahs. Tom Schwartz, the head of Global Market Development, Film and Television for Rosco Canada, has been a part of February Freeze since it started 14 years ago.

“This year February Freeze is much better than it has ever been. There’s much more open space,” Schwartz said. “Lots of people are walking by and stopping at our installation, looking at our LED lights, our RoscoVIEW filter and our Soft Drop, which is our main focus at this particular show.”

Trading the warm sunshine of Los Angeles for snow-bound Toronto was Malcolm Mills, sales director and partner of Cinemills, which manufactures lighting for motion pictures and television. It was the first time Cinemills put down stakes at February Freeze, and Mills said that while he’s more used to the larger trade shows south of the border, he likes what he sees at William F. White.

“It’s first class,” according to Mills, who is particularly pleased with the February Freeze crowd. “They cut right across the board, from students to cinematographers to veterans alike. I’m very pleased with the show and we’ll come again next year.”

Highlighting the carefree mood of February Freeze was an aerial spectacle staged in the middle of the trade show floor. Two aerialists, one with a hoop and the other on a ribbon, took flight displaying graceful gravity-defying manoeuvres that mesmerized the crowd. But aerialists weren’t the only stars in the air grabbing attention. A remote controlled Super Techno Dolly with a Super Techno Crane 50 hoisting an ARRI ALEXA was artfully capturing the acrobatic movements on screen. This was only one of several Super Techno Cranes for people to try out at February Freeze.

An aerial spectacle in the middle of the trade show floor highlights February Freeze. Inset: Paul Bronfman, CEO of William F. White International.
“The Techno Crane set-ups in the supplier space were simply amazing,” DP and CSC associate member Tony Edgar said. “They were very cool to watch and play around with.”

For DP John Tarver csc, there were several items that caught his eye at the showcase, but he left his best praise for a camera. “I’m very impressed with the new Panasonic 4k VariCam,” Tarver explained. “Remarkably, at 5,000 ISO it has incredibly low noise. If you compare what 5,000 ISO looks like on a RED EPIC this thing has way less noise at that sensitivity.”

Tarver added that while new developments in gear and lighting technology is a big draw for February Freeze, it is not the only attraction. “There’s a really nice ambiance, a laid back environment,” he said. “It’s a terrific social event to meet colleagues and talk shop about new developments in gear and cinematography.”

The CSC clubhouse, which is a donated space by Whites in its complex, also had its doors wide open for February Freeze. Located near the front entrance, the clubhouse was the first stop for many attendees and sometimes the last stop on the way out. Greeting and talking up a storm with visitors was CSC President George Willis csc, sasc; CSC Vice President Carlos Esteves csc; CSC Public Relations Chair Bruce Marshall and CSC Executive Officer Susan Saranchuk.

“Being a part of February Freeze gives us a chance to show off our clubhouse, meet new people and talk about the CSC,” Saranchuk said. “We signed up several new members, made loads of new friends and talked with even more old friends. It was a busy night for the CSC.”

To Bronfman, February Freeze is merely a reflection of the William F. White philosophy. “We’re focused on our core business,” he mused. “We’re not into clothes, we’re not into cameras, we’re not into on-set data and all the other fancy things that other folks are getting into. We’re focused on just what we do best.”

Bronfman may not be entirely correct with his assessment of William F. White simply being an equipment supply shop, though. With February Freeze, he may want to add “top-notch event producer” to the company’s credits.
A Conversation with

Joan Hutton csc

In 2014, a seismic shift rumbled through the Canadian Society of Cinematographers. After 22 years, the tenure of Joan Hutton csc as president of the society had come to an end. Having governed the CSC for more than a third of its existence, Hutton has left her fingerprints all over the society, guiding it through some of its leanest and most turbulent times.

By GUIDO KONDRUSS

Being one of Canada’s first female cinematographers, Hutton is considered a vanguard and pioneer in a field almost exclusively dominated by men and has become an inspiration to women in the Canadian film and television industry.

Soon after starting her career in the industry as a camera assistant, Hutton joined the CSC as an affiliate member 40 years ago. She eventually became a camera operator and ultimately a director of photography. Later, Hutton was the first woman to receive the significant “csc” designation behind her name.

Hutton’s highly regarded work has garnered her many honours, including three CSC Awards for best documentary cinematography and a Gemini for her distinctive camerawork on the groundbreaking CBC comedy series The Newsroom. Hutton is also the recipient of the Crystal Award for Outstanding Achievement from Women in Film and Television (WIFT), the Fuji Award for outstanding service to the CSC, and a Blizzard Award for the documentary If Only I Were An Indian in the Best Cinematography Non-Dramatic category.

Canadian Cinematographer spoke with Hutton about the CSC, cinematography and being a female cinematographer.

Canadian Cinematographer: What were the circumstances surrounding your becoming CSC president 22 years ago?

Joan Hutton csc: I became president because no one really wanted the job. Everyone was busy with their own careers, leaving a void in the CSC executive. Plus, the CSC was just bleeding money. Rob Rouveroy [csc], who was CSC president, had retired and set things up so that we had one person running the office and doing the CSC newsletter. Suddenly, we went from Rob working out of the basement doing everything himself for free, to having a paid employee that we couldn’t afford. That was problematic, because the society was operating at a loss of around $2,000 a month. It was easy to see that bleeding money at that rate, there wouldn’t be a CSC much longer. Before becoming president, I spent a year as vice president, so I knew what was happening in the executive and could see where we had to make some solid changes. I was prepared to spend the time to do it.
CC: What did you mean “the time to do it”?
JH: It boils down to making the time and having the interest in dedicating yourself to a course of action over the long term. You can’t just drop in at a meeting, give your opinion and let someone else follow through. That doesn’t work. You need to find the ideas, get the consensus and implement. Implementation for the CSC was a real problem at the time.

CC: So what did you do?
JH: The first thing was look at the paid employee, because I felt that one person could not organize and run the office, plus put out the newsletter. It was just too much work. Something had to fall by the wayside and that was the newsletter. There was no income from it, and each issue was consistently two or three months late. I needed to find an editor who was also willing to bring in advertising dollars, and that turned out to be veteran journalist Don Angus. This is when it got a bit tricky, because the existing employee wasn’t happy to see part of her job cut and she didn’t want to continue being an administrator. I had to tell her there was no other possibility here, so she left. Phil Earnshaw then suggested Susan Saranchuk as administrator. Those were the two best decisions I ever made, bringing them on board.

CC: Why is that?
JH: Well, Susan hit the ground running, getting the CSC organized and making sure members paid their dues, laying the blocks for her becoming the administrative backbone of the organization. While Don Angus immediately started bringing in advertising dollars and turned the newsletter into
a magazine, *The CSC News*, which was so much better written, with photos, and he got it out on deadline. You could see the progression month by month in the magazine and the organization, until finally we weren’t losing money, but breaking even or making a profit. Later, to some extent, the awards also became a revenue stream. But the initial turnaround got us working on a solid business footing and allowed us to grow once again as a society.

*(Editor’s Note: The CSC News evolved into Canadian Cinematographer under Hutton’s tenure as CSC president.)*

**CC**: What other changes took place within the CSC while you were its head?

**JH**: There were three causes that I always championed. The first was to take what was essentially a Toronto-centric organization and expand the CSC across Canada. This is always a challenge in a country with as large a land mass as ours and with much of the work concentrated in Toronto. But the playing field levelled through the years with Vancouver and Montreal coming into their own as production centres and literally every province developing a regional film and television community of sorts. Today, we are truly a national organization, but still, I would like to see more CSC events and courses outside of Toronto. It needs more work, but I think that will always be the case to a certain extent. The digital age has helped with communications, like Skype, because now we can have executive members who don’t live in Toronto plugged into our meetings and participating in running the CSC. That is a huge change.

The second area is education. It is one of the most important fields the CSC can be involved in. It’s always been part of our mandate and we’ve managed to change with the times. Our programs are not just for people starting out but also DPs and operators who want to remain current. Let’s face it, what better organization is there than the CSC to teach all aspects of cinematography? We certainly have the knowledge and it comes from the best players in the field.

Finally, when I took over the CSC, there were only eight sponsors, and I felt we needed more involvement from our immediate industry. We actively set out to forge new relationships and partnerships. Today, the CSC is sponsored by over 30 companies. Sponsors are very important to the CSC, and we’re just as important to them. They help us with our initiatives, and we provide them with a much focused market. Who else besides cinematographers are going to rent cameras, lights, do post at their studios or all the other things related to a sponsor’s business? I’ve always felt that sponsors get a good bang for their buck being associated with the CSC.

**CC**: I’d like to move over to the art of cinematography. You’ve seen the film and television industry evolve from an emulsion-based industry into a digital-based industry, which had a huge impact on cinematography. How big of a challenge was the transition?

**JH**: I think good shooters took it in their stride. Those without experience might have struggled a bit with it. But to me, digital wasn’t the hump to get over. The hump was the first video, which was so dreadful. We were used to shooting film, and then suddenly there are these betacam images that just looked flat and ugly in video. The quest was how do you make video look as good as film? We never really succeeded. Actually, it wasn’t until digital came about that you could produce an image that could compete with film.

**CC**: Would you say film is still the benchmark for today’s cinema?

**JH**: I don’t think there is one benchmark anymore because digital has got to the point where it has its own artistic sensibilities. Film and digital are two very different and distinct mediums now. Unfortunately, in Canada we don’t get to shoot film anymore because producers have the idea that digital is cheaper, which may or may not be true. To me that’s a bit of a wash. I think you have to look at each project on an individual basis and decide.

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**CSC Members Share Their Thoughts on Joan...**

Twenty-two years is a long time to be dedicated and committed to a cause, in this case the Canadian Society of Cinematographers. During this time, Joan has been at the helm of our society and has steered a course, which has taken the CSC on a long journey of discovery, ultimately establishing the society’s credentials at an international level. This will forever be Joan’s legacy and one that the CSC membership will always be indebted to her for. When asked how she made solid changes within the society, Joan said she was prepared to “spend the time to do it.”

The following quote is very powerful and for me epitomizes, as well as speaks to, that commitment and dedication: “It boils down to making the time and having the interest in dedicating yourself to a course of action over the long term.”

*CSC President*

George Willis CSC, SASC

I first met Joan Hutton way back when we were both starting our careers as cinematographers. She was the only woman that I can think of who was making a living as a shooter. It was tough.
in those days, a very male-dominated industry, especially in the camera department. She struck me as a confidant, determined and clear-thinking individual who did well because of her abilities and her belief in herself. She was a groundbreaker and a great role model for the women who followed in her footsteps.

Phil Eamshaw csc

It was 1979 when I first saw Joan working as a professional assistant camera. The occasion was the filming of a boxing match at the Kitchener Arena for the feature film Title Shot, starring Tony Curtis and directed by Les Rose. I was the coordinator of the Film Program at Conestoga College, and we had been invited to see the filming, as well as being extras in the crowd scenes. Joan replaced me as president of the society when I just couldn’t devote the time necessary to make the CSC a success. The CSC is what it is today because of Joan’s devotion. It takes a special kind of individual to work as hard as Joan simply for the love of the profession. As the longest serving president, she has been able to take the society to new heights and recognition, working with an executive that shared her passion for the society. This is one member of the society that cannot thank her enough for the hard work she has done for the society.

Robert Bocking csc

A good director of photography needs to get every member of a project’s team to contribute effectively and efficiently. Joan also applied these skills to leading the executive, staff and committees over the longest incumbency as president of the CSC. Whenever a member suggested an interesting initiative for advancing the CSC, shooting for the National Film Board in the Yukon.

CC: There have been many words spent on the relevance of cinematographers with the digital age making the craft readily accessible to anyone. Your thoughts?

JH: Someone somewhere said, “With digital anyone can shoot a movie but not everyone can shoot it well.” That’s crucial, isn’t it? You can make an image, expose it, but that doesn’t mean people will watch it. I’d say cinematographers are more relevant now than ever to exploit digital innovations. Don’t get me wrong, digitization has made filmmaking accessible to almost everyone, and that’s good, but it doesn’t mean it’s necessarily better. A GoPro in the hands of Bob who likes to jump out of planes on the weekend is definitely not going to have the same relevance as if it was in the hands of a John Bartley, [csc, asc] or a Rene Ohashi, [csc, asc]. Of course, there will always be cheap productions that have a quality that make them exceptions to the rule, and that’s because they have a cinematographer with talent. If you look at any well-crafted film, the DPs are people with vision, skill and purpose. No, cinematography and cinematographers are not irrelevant. It’s a silly notion.

CC: Cinematography in the eyes of the Canadian government is not considered an originating artistic platform such as producers, directors and writers, moving it below the line for support. Is this fair?

JH: That’s a load of garbage. I think cinematographers are one of the originating artistic producers of an image. Without the cinematographer what have you got? You’ve got a radio. This plays squarely into the notion of visual authorship, which has a firmer hold in Europe. In fact, in some European countries – and Poland comes to mind – cinematographers have legal standing as authors of their images. Not so in North America, where the concept is totally foreign. Authorship also means residuals for your work, which causes producers here to have a meltdown. I’ve written presidents’ columns on this subject. This is also one of the reasons I pulled the CSC closer to IMAGO. That’s the international umbrella organization for cinematographer associations from around the world. Authorship rights is a huge part of their lobbying mandate along with better working conditions and safety for cinematographers. It’s good that the CSC has joined IMAGO as a full member and is now standing side by side with them, fighting for these same causes. As far as the Canadian government is concerned, I think it’s disgraceful that they have not done one iota to help develop cinematography in Canada. When you think about it,
this makes the work of the CSC even more remarkable because we’ve done it under our own steam with no government help or money.

CC: I’d like to switch now to women in film and television. When you became president of the CSC it was essentially an all-male organization at a time when women cinematographers were rare. Was this difficult?

JH: I was one of first women camera assistants in Canada and I had a lot of trouble at the beginning. You’d get a DP saying he couldn’t take you on location because his wife wouldn’t like it, or another would say he’d have to carry cases for you. A business agent kept telling producers they shouldn’t hire me because I wasn’t robust enough for the work and so on. But that was never the case with the CSC when I joined as a young AC. I never felt an iota of sexism or condescension. It was a very welcoming organization. Founders such as Bob Brooks [csc] and Fritz Speiss [csc] were always there with advice and encouragement. To me that is the epitome of the CSC – no one thinks of sex, race or colour or anything like that. It’s are you interested in cinematography or are you not? If you’re interested, then we’re interested in you. Unfortunately, that was not always the case outside the CSC.

CC: How would you describe the general attitudes towards female cinematographers today?

JH: I don’t think it’s changed a whole lot. The stumbling block I feel is still with producers and directors and their hang-ups. With fellow cinematographers and crews it’s not so much a problem anymore. But let’s face it, cinematography, as with our industry, is male dominated. There are exceptions, and no doubt attitudes are changing. And yes, inroads have been made by women. It’s better than 20 years ago and it will be better 20 years from now. Still a lot of work remains to be done.

CC: Is affirmative action needed then for women in film?

JH: I personally don’t think affirmative action works as well as education because it doesn’t push people to excel, while education does. As president, I always made sure there were openings in the CSC camera assistants’ course that were filled by women. It empowers them with the knowledge and confidence to do the job once they get it. Still, it’s always up to the individual in the end and how eager and determined they are to get their foot in the door.

CC: Yourself excepted, who are the role models for women wanting to become cinematographers?

JH: There is Kim Derko [csc], Zoe Dirse [csc] and Sarah Moffat, who are excellent and happening cinematographers. But 40 years later, I can still count the number of women cinematographers on one hand, and I find that so sad. But our profession is a hard slog even for guys. Not every man who starts as a camera assistant becomes a DP. Some become career assistants; some decide that the film business isn’t for them. The same happens to women, but we have the double whammy of children. Bearing a child and being a mother are not very compatible with the long hours of a cinematographer. That’s something we still need to figure out.

CC: How did being a cinematographer affect your personal life?

JH: (pause) Hmm. It can be rough if you let it be. I did not have children. I guess my biological clock didn’t tick loud enough, and besides, I was extremely focused on my career. I did go through one husband, though. He was in the business, I was in the business, and it was simply too much. Yes, there are trade-offs. But I did marry again to a wonderful man and I have an incredible stepdaughter.

CC: Any regrets?

JH: No, not really. Cinematography has been very good to me, no doubt about it. It also provided me with a sense of purpose that I could make a difference, and I think I did. That’s very gratifying.

On the set of the TV movie Escape from the Newsroom.

Joan would deliberately cajole that same member into volunteering to spearhead the initiative. The technique was applied so subtly that the person was honoured to be participating, and the reality of conscription faded into the background. Even though I know full well that I have been the target of such coaxing on occasion, I greatly appreciate how Joan’s leadership managed to attract the huge contributions of volunteered skills and time that have been crucial for the CSC’s fiscal viability.

Joe Sunday

Being an accomplished cinematographer, I’m sure Joan never realized she was gifted in another area. Right from the moment I met Joan I knew she possessed exceptional leadership qualities. She is one of the most talented and intuitive administrators that I have ever worked with. Her decisions were always immediate, precise, and more often than not, accurate. Joan is a very supportive and encouraging person, who is appreciative and places high value on hard work and the efforts of others. I have learned much from her over the years and will be forever grateful for Joan’s inspiration, kindness and guidance.

Susan Saranchuk
Few television plays make the journey from small screen to stage to big screen and back again, garnering major awards and nominations along the way. But that is the success that American playwright Horton Foote enjoyed after the debut of his 1953 stage play *The Trip to Bountiful*, a 1940s-era drama about a strong-willed, aging woman named Carrie Watts, who lives with her son and his wife but dreams of returning to her hometown of Bountiful. The octogenarian wants one last look at her childhood home, and when her son and daughter-in-law, fearing for her health, refuse to let her travel, she escapes the confines of her son's apartment and sets out to make the journey alone. *The Trip to Bountiful*’s latest incarnation is a movie produced for Lifetime Television and featuring some of the cast members from the 2013 Broadway revival, including Cicely Tyson and Vanessa Williams. Having worked with David Greene csc on another project, the TV movie’s producers brought the cinematographer on board to craft images for the latest small-screen version of the play. Greene’s work on the film earned him a CSC Award this year in the TV Drama Cinematography category, as well as an ASC Award nomination, and having just shot Season 1 of the sci-fi mystery drama *12 Monkeys*, the cinematographer has a lot to be proud of these days. He took time out of his busy schedule to take Canadian Cinematographer behind the scenes of the *Trip to Bountiful* shoot.

**Canadian Cinematographer:** How did you come up with a visual mandate for this movie, and bring a fresh perspective to a story that has already been made for the small screen?

**David Greene csc:** We saw four distinct segments to Carrie’s journey, and we treated each section slightly differently. The first would be where she felt captive in the apartment with her daughter-in-law and son, the next component was her breaking free to go to the bus station, then the third was when her journey is halted at the bus station, and the final part was when she finally arrived in Bountiful. For the first component, we used a mixed colour temperature; it was moody and dark to give it the sort of claustrophobic feeling that Carrie had. When she first breaks free and enters into the world that she hasn’t been a part of for a while – the big city – we went with wider lenses and a bluish palette, and that worked really well with the costumes of the period, which were just gorgeous. They brought in all the costumes from the New York play. The next section was kind of like an Edward...
Hopper painting, which is something [director] Michael Wilson wanted. And then when she reaches her destination – Bountiful – we wanted it sunny and warm just like she remembered it.

CC: One of the things that is unique about this project is that the director, Michael Wilson, comes from a theatre background and had never directed a film before taking on The Trip to Bountiful. How did you both prepare for the shoot?

DG: The advantage was that Michael knew the story front and back. In fact, he can recite the whole film to you. So my job was to help him visualize his strong understanding of that story and put a strong shot list together. The way you do that is you go location scouting, you find great spots, and then you plan how you’re going to photograph them.

And one thing Michael was very strong with as a theatre director was blocking, understanding and moving people through space. And when things were getting too complicated schedule-wise, he had an understanding of how to make adjustments without it hurting too much.

CC: How did you adapt to Michael’s style as a first-time director?

DG: My theory on the director-cinematographer relationship is that as cinematographers we have to be able to adjust our working style to someone with minimal experience all the way to someone who has tremendous visual style and a complete understanding of cameras. And there’s all kinds of directors in between those two points. So we’re constantly adjusting to the director we’re working with. We understand we have to adapt. So there’s going to be some directors who rely on you heavily, and there are going to be others who know exactly what they want from the camera and from the visual side of the movie, and that’s great too because then you can really add to that.

CC: The story takes place in the 1940s – in what ways were you able to use practical lights?

DG: I love practical lighting. To me practicals really help not only create a strong visual look, but they’re great to frame with and put in the backgrounds of shots, which really opens them up and fills out a frame. In the apartment I wasn’t using as many practicals as I would normally use. It was a very small set, so we had not only practical lights, but also windows that we’d bring moonlight or daylight through and let bounce around the room. We used small soft sources for motivating lamp light; we used Kinos because they are compact and relatively thin and you can diffuse them, and when you diffuse things you tend to take up real estate in a set, so starting with something small is good.

CC: At one point in the story, Carrie Watts spends the night at a bus station, and we see her there late at night as well as in the early morning light. Can you talk about creating the looks for the two different times of day?

DG: Actually, we made them intentionally strikingly different. I wanted that to be quite a jarring thing when the sheriff shows up in the morning. It’s like a real awakening for her. She’s waking up and going on the next part of her journey. The night-time stuff was darker; it had more of a Hopper-esque painting feeling, using warmer tones – yellows and oranges, that kind of thing. That location was actually a boxing gym when we showed up, and Eric Fraser, our fabulous production designer, really turned the place around. He found an authentic, old Greyhound ticket booth – basically a rounded piece of architecture that the attendant sits in – he found it in a prop shop somewhere and he added on to it.

The night scene we shot day for night. Cicely Tyson is 80 plus, so we couldn’t have put her through a night shoot. We had to build as many daylight hours as possible. So for the night sequence, we put a big tent out the back, and there were window treatments that helped hide the fact that it was day for night. Thankfully, there was a nice big overhang outside, so we could use the structure to build a tent. We had a lot of depth which is important. I think there was a good 12 feet between where the windows were and where the blacks were. We also had blinds inside the station that were essential just to break up the blackness. And then the lighting was really simple, we put light bulbs outside on stands, and we put them on dimmers and it made them look like city lights in the distance.

CC: What was your approach to lighting the house that Carrie Watts eventually returns to in Bountiful?

DG: We shot that at a house we found about an hour outside Atlanta, and first of all, we were struck by the beauty of this decrepit run-down home. It just presented so many visual opportunities. There really wasn’t a bad shot from the interior or the exterior. One of the
Al Lindsay

Back in the time when film was still king, Al Lindsay was part of its Toronto royalty. Anybody who worked in film knew of Lindsay, knew of his extraordinary talents as film lab manager, his grand generosity and his lively spirit. To clients, he was the “go-to guy” who always went the extra mile to get the job done no matter the size or how short the time. However, it was with young people that Lindsay held a special place. Knowing that they were the future and undoubtedly short of cash, Lindsay would process their film under their arms he would then send them off with an encouraging “Good luck, son” or a “Take care, darling.”

Born in Knightswood, Scotland, in 1943, Lindsay immigrated to Canada with his family at the tender age of 10. School could not hold onto the feisty Lindsay, who at age 17 headed into the working world. He wasn’t looking for a career in the film industry, but rather it chose him. After hearing about an opening at Pathé, Lindsay toured their lab and was immediately mesmerized by the processors and printers. He took the job, sparking his lifelong love affair with film. By 1974, Lindsay was manager of Eastern Film Labs in Halifax, before returning to Toronto a couple of years later to take up residency at the renowned Spot Labs, where his reputation for excellence was solidified and a lab star was born. After the demise of Spot Labs in 1996, Lindsay formed a partnership with cinematographer Ed Higginson csc and others, establishing the legendary film processing house, The Lab in Toronto, which specialized in 16 mm and 35 mm film dailies for commercials. In its peak years, The Lab processed 90 per cent of the commercial film in Toronto. Lindsay and Higginson successfully ran The Lab until it was sold to Deluxe and they retired in 2005.

Lindsay had a loud boisterous laugh and a wicked sense of humour that always kept co-workers and friends in stitches. He never ran out of jokes or wisecracks and had a creative penchant for using some of the bluer corners of the English language. Being around Lindsay was always interesting and he made work fun. It never mattered to Lindsay whether one was simply an assistant or the president of a corporation, friend or client, he treated everyone the same, as if you were the best thing to have happened to him all day. “The guy with a big heart” will be greatly missed.

Al Lindsay died peacefully in Toronto, November 24, 2014. A memorial for Lindsay is being held Sunday, April 12, 2pm -5pm at the St. James Gate Pub, 5140 Dundas St. West in Toronto.

Trip from page 15

things that struck me was that there were lots of opportunities from a framing point of view to put that decay in the foreground of Cicely Tyson’s shots whenever we could because it’s an important story point. She’s come back to her family home, trying to pick up the pieces and make sense of it all. And I thought it was important to see her surrounded by that decay, so that was one thing we did from a framing point of view that really worked. And we used some filtration there just to give it a warm feeling, which I thought was important. The film Days of Heaven was a big reference for me, and we took a little bit from that. And the lighting was pretty simple: whenever we were outside we would try to keep everybody backlit, and you usually can’t go wrong with that.

We spent three days shooting at that house, and there were days when it was full-on sun and then other days when it was overcast, which can be a lot easier actually. As beautiful as the sun can be, there’s not a lot of cinematographers that don’t breathe a sigh of relief when it’s overcast because it is a little easier and there is less potential for harsh lighting. Thankfully when you keep things in backlight, the actors aren’t lit with harsh light, they are lit with ambient skylight. So when all of a sudden you have to cut in a shot that is overcast, which is soft light, kind of like ambient skylight, then it’s not too bad, so that’s what we did. Also, we spent lots of time in colour correction fixing the changes in the weather.

CC: What was your favourite moment on this shoot?

DG: I remember the very last thing we did. We had shot the whole movie and we needed Cicely Tyson to do some ADR and sing some church hymns. And it was 3 a.m., and Cicely is in her 80s. So we just put the mics close to her in the studio, and I remember the whole studio went quiet as she sang these beautiful hymns that brought people to tears. It was just so moving. I have to say that would be my favourite moment.

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The Dark Stranger

D. Gregor Hagey csc Lights a Shadowy World

By FANEN CHIAHEMEN

The Dark Stranger is a contemporary story of a troubled artist haunted by her own artistic creation. In an attempt to recover from a recent trauma, a young woman, Leah, pens a graphic novel from which a mysterious character emerges and begins to take over her life.

While the title hints at the film's psychological thriller and horror elements, writer-director Chris Trebilcock says that to him the story is really about an artist struggling with depression. "The whole genesis of the story was what if depression was manifested in a character," Trebilcock, whose film received the Brian Linehan Foundation Award, says. "The whole theme of artists fighting depression is something I've wanted to deal with and do in an original way in a story."

Treibilcock cast Katie Findlay in the lead role, with Enrico Colantoni and Stephen McHattie as co-stars. For cinematography, he turned to D. Gregor Hagey csc with whom the director had worked as a second assistant director and who he felt had the experience to shoot The Dark Stranger. "In the prep for shooting I did a really detailed shot list for the entire film, and then we went through the shots together and he was very good at trying to accommodate what I was going for but also making suggestions to help think it out visually and augment what I wanted," Trebilcock says.

Because The Dark Stranger is a first-person narrative "and we're seeing the story unfold through Leah's eyes, I wanted the cinematography to reflect her mood and feelings as the story evolved," Trebilcock says. "So at the beginning, visually, I wanted it to feel very drab and confining, and then as the Dark Stranger enters her life, the lighting changes and becomes moodier and slightly more colourful, and also a bit menacing, and then there is a little more colour that comes in throughout the film, and at the end there's the warm tones when she manages to overcome the Dark Stranger."

While taking some visual cues from other iconic scary movies – the director and DP watched films like A Nightmare on Elm Street and Spider before shooting – Trebilcock put his own spin on The Dark Stranger, including animated sequences. "I'm a big comic book fan and I love graphic novels," he says. "And I love using different realities to get at where the main character is. I'm also a big fan of the fantasy life that we all carry within us and how that reflects our waking life around us. I think it's an innovative way to get at some of those issues and feelings."

Hagey explains that in The Dark Stranger there is more than one reality in which the story takes place. "There is the real world where the main character, Leah, interacts with her family, and then when she's alone there is this other reality where this evil dark presence starts haunting her. And then there is the reality of her art work that comes to life. So that gave me a lot of leeway to play with some different creative ideas. How to subtly show the different realities, and in the end of the film they all collide," Hagey says.

With 90 per cent of the National Screen Institute-funded film shot inside a multi-storey house, Hagey says he wanted the smallest camera "that gave the most bang for my buck, and the [RED] EPIC and SCARLET are great little cameras," which he used interchangeably.

"In the normal reality we used the SCARLET with the FUJINON zoom because it's very light and small, and the quality is good and it would allow me to quickly change frame sizes without having to swap lenses," he says. "I just wanted to maximize versatility versus weight and size. Because working in a house can get really difficult if your cameras get too big and heavy. It's also a
great lens for handheld work.”

For the B camera, Hagey mounted the EPIC onto a Cambo Ultima view camera, which uses medium format lenses. He opted for the view camera because it allows you to swing and tilt, to shift the lenses and to control focus and perspective. On The Dark Stranger, Hagey and his team also used it to add distortion. “It’s a very powerful tool,” he says.

The view camera offered some creative possibilities that were ideal for the film. For example, he used it in scenes in which Leah feels the presence of the Dark Stranger so he could shift the focal plane to enhance the sense of paranoia. “You can have just one eye in focus, or you can control where the focus is,” he explains. “It also allows you to manipulate where the camera sensor is to add distortion. So I could have the camera at eye level to the character and tilt my camera sensor backwards to make it feel like we’re underneath her looking up, or vice versa. Selectively controlling focus and adding distortion to the shots definitely creates an uncomfortable and slightly disturbing image.

“The beauty of the EPIC is you can switch lens mounts,” Hagey continues. “So I have a custom lens mount that goes on the EPIC, and I have a custom dovetail that goes onto the view camera’s rear standard. The view camera also has a custom O’Connor bridge plate that goes onto it so it integrates with everything. The front standard has a rod mount on it, so you can mount a follow focus or a matte box and use your normal accessories on it,” he explains. “It’s something I built a couple of years ago and have only used on shorter projects. This was the first long-form project I’d really used it extensively on. And it was a lot of fun to use it.”

Manoeuvring camera and equipment in a house was tricky, and, thankfully, Hagey had on hand a 3-foot slider and a doorway dolly. “It’s just basically a piece of plywood with some wheels,” he explains. “We ended up using the 3-foot slider a lot. It was a great way...
to add movement to the shots. It was a very basic approach, nothing fancy, just trying to maximize what angles we could shoot with very basic tools."

Hagey says he kept the lighting on The Dark Stranger "fairly small," mostly using Kino Flos, as well as Rifa lights – a soft tungsten box made by Lowel. "The Rifa is a very pretty light, and we had a 4K and a 6K for the day scenes' windows." He describes how he lit a night scene in the laundry room of the house. "We tented the basement windows and used daylight Kinos with cyan 30 gel to have a cyan moonlight on the windows. And on the inside we had a Rifa light through a frame, to give a warm amber tungsten keylight," he recalls.

"A lot of the creepiness in the film takes place during the day and there are some scenes where there's a fairly bright wash of sunlight coming in from a window or lighting up a room. And even within a brightly lit scenario some really dark disturbing things happen," Hagey says. "In some ways it's scarier when strange things happen and you can very clearly see everything around you, like in The Shining." So sometimes inside the house, "we'd bounce Kino Flos into foam core and side light whenever we could. And we would also use the Joker bug light with a chimera. It was a pretty straightforward approach to the lighting. We only had a modest budget for lighting, so I just used a few tools in different ways to try to get different effects."

As for practical lights, Hagey used them more as set dressing than sources of light. "It was just something we could turn on in the background occasionally as needed. I'm not a fan of having practical lights for day scenes. We tended to keep them off for day scenes. And then for night scenes we'd turn them on," he says.

Most of Hagey’s discussions with production designer Lisa Soper revolved around the colour of the walls and the set dressing, and they agreed to paint the walls of the house in darker colours that would contrast skin tones. "I find it much easier to light when the background walls are darker tones than skin tones," Hagey explains. "It allows the character to separate from the set more easily. [Soper] came up with this great colour – this kind of cyan gray colour for one room which looked amazing for the climax. Then there was a red room as well, which looked great, I thought."

Hagey also gives a nod to first-time director Trebilcock of whom he says, "He is probably the most polite man I know. He's an extremely humble individual. It was a real pleasure to go into work and know you really like the person you're working with."
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IATSE Local 600 (International Cinematographers Guild) and Local 479 (Studio Mechanics) in February joined forces with several grassroots film and TV production social media sites for a memorial campaign honouring Sarah Jones, the camera assistant who died on February 20, 2014, in a train accident on location in Georgia. The program, “Spirit of Sarah,” called for production crews worldwide to take a moment of silence for Jones before making the first production shot of the day, now known as “the Jonesy.” They posted their photos and videos and remembrances on social media sites dedicated to promoting safety. In addition to the Facebook pages run by Local 600 and Local 479, the effort included We Are Sarah Jones, Pledge to Sarah, and PSA: Production Safety Awareness. These sites all support the common goal of “Never Forget, Never Again” by promoting crew safety inspired by Jones. Local 600 has launched SOS: Safety on Set, an initiative to communicate established safety practices and training programs through all member communications including their website, cameraguild.com, internal publications, and an app, ICG Safety, which has been available in the iTunes and Android/Google app stores for several months resulting in over 1,700 downloads.

IATSE Locals 600 and 479 To Support Online Campaign in Memory of Sarah Jones

Whites Digital Sales & Service Acquired in Management Buyout

William F. White International’s sales arm, Whites Digital Sales & Service, has been acquired in a management buyout led by former general manager Larry Lavoie. The former Cinequip-White was rebranded Whites Digital Sales & Service in July of 2013 and provides sales and service for the broadcast, video, film, entertainment and theatrical industries. William F. White in February was finalizing a deal to sell the sales arm and its assets, to be known as Cine-Source Sales and Service Ltd. Terms of the deal were not disclosed. William F. White plans to focus on equipment rentals with no affiliation to Cine-Source.

PS Honours Alexandra Raffé with the Douglas James Dales Industry Builder Award

Rob Sim, president and CEO of SIM Group, recently announced that Alexandra Raffé, vice president of Production for Thunderbird Films, is the recipient of the 2015 Douglas James Dales Industry Builder Award. The award was presented to Raffé at the annual PS Dinner on the Hill, held during the Canadian Media Production Association Prime Time Conference in Ottawa. Raffé is the former CEO of the Ontario Film Development Corporation and has served on the boards of Film Ontario, the National Screen Institute and the Canadian Film Centre Feature Film Project. She is also a past member of the National Board of the Canadian Media Production Association (CMPA), a member of the CM-PA-BC Branch Council and currently serves on the Board of the Youth Media Alliance. Over the years, Raffé has helped bring many critically-acclaimed Canadian feature films to the big screen, which have collectively won 11 Genie Awards.
The lighting was subdued and moody. The music was loud and pulsating. The atmosphere and decor was techno. The crowd on the floor was large and urban. Hmm, had I wandered into an East Berlin Nachtclub? No, this was definitely downtown Toronto and this was SIM Digital’s head office, and a nearby banner confirmed that this was indeed their Annual Technology Showcase. Yet something was delightfully unusual about the 10th anniversary of this SIM event.

While the main SIM space had the look and feel of a nightclub, there were also no supplier booths on the floor. As it turns out they were on the second tier, a mezzanine about 9 metres up, looking down on the action below. Not that there wasn’t any action with the supplier, because there was lots of it. Showing off their cutting-edge technology was a good sized contingent of CSC sponsors such as ZGC/Cooke, Vistek, ARRI, HD Source, Canon, Sony, The Source Shop, Technically Yours, PS Production Services, Rosco, Fujinon, Panasonic and of course the hosts SIM Digital.

Downstairs at Club SIM, the centre of attention was an attractive DJ bathed in soft light who had set up with her computer system atop a small circular stage. As the DJ was spinning out her tunes, the stage also slowly revolved. Surrounding her was a circle of about 20 cameras on tripods with monitors. Anyone could step up to a camera such as a Sony, an ARRI or a Canon to frame, tilt, pan and zoom the DJ to their heart’s content.

Equally impressive was a nearby set-up with a flamenco dancer in a sultry red dress dancing to the passionate strumming of an accompanying guitarist. Behind them was a stunning Rosco day/night backdrop of New York. Front row centre, ready to catch the flamenco artist’s every move, was a bank of cameras that anyone could test drive. And test drive they did, with heads to the eyepieces and wine glass in hand. And who said cinematography wasn’t fun? 😄
Smarter, Lighter Gimbals Offer More Options

Gimbals have broken through as a much more affordable and simple-to-use tool for cinematographers over the last few of years. It all started, of course, with the Steadicam back in 1975. More recently, technology on both the digital electronics side and construction materials have converged to create smarter, lighter and – perhaps most interestingly – more affordable shooting platforms.

While DJI’s new Ronin stabilizer will set you back somewhere around US$3,000, it’s worth it in the time it saves in set-ups and the versatility it offers. The brushless digital motors make zero electronic noise and have fairly low ambient noise, while the chipsets mean the response and precision are crisp and fast. It works in three different modes – upright, in which the gimbal is flipped over for overhead shooting; underslung, for low-to-the-ground shots or from a jib; and briefcase mode, in which the rig is carried at the side much like a briefcase. It also features a second operator transmitter to allow a second operator to “pan, tilt, and roll independent of the Ronin’s movement.”

On their website (dji.com) they show a camera operator shooting from a Segway, which seems like a pretty cool platform to work from with that kind of set-up. CSC associate member Othello Ubalde, co-owner of Pink Donut Visuals in Toronto recently rented a Ronin on a B.C. shoot using a Panasonic GH4 and was impressed with its versatility. “We were shooting a feature on Salt Spring Island, and so there was lots of moisture around, but it withstood all the elements,” he says. “There was a little noise from the motors as they engaged but nothing that would interfere with the boom, and no electronic interference at all.”

The Ronin was easy to unpack out of the Pelican, quick to assemble and came with a collapsible stand so working with it was easy, he adds: “We were up and running in 30 minutes. It’s carbon fibre so really robust but lightweight, which is really important if you’re working all day with it.” Configuration was quick and simple, and even changing lenses, which shifts the centre of balance, only required quick adjustments.

“I have used a Steadicam as well,” says Ubalde, who was working with The Lamp’s writer-director Trevor Juras on the project. “But this has come a long way.” The Ronin is a great value for money, he says, noting the three different modes were invaluable, as was the ability to monitor it wirelessly in an iPad. “There’s also a ⅝th stud so you can actually mount it on a jib and use it that way with the remote control to pan and tilt; it really is an amazing tool,” he says.

Similarly, the Letus Helix Three Axis Camera Stabilizer runs for about US$4,000 and also offers a range of advantages. At just 16 pounds, it’s light, robust and has option remote control via RC or Bluetooth transmitters. The onboard 32-bit MCU (micro controller unit) is an ARM Cortex M4. ARM is a leading manufacturer of mobile chips and this unit is their latest offering designed for servomotor control.

Toronto-based cinematographer Barry Cheong arranged for one to be brought out to a networking session in January at Frame Discreet and IPS Studio on Geary Avenue in Toronto’s west end, and says he walked away generally impressed. “It is unlike any other traditional gimbal design, in that those were adapted from helicopter mounts and they put handles on it so they’re sort of under-slung,” he says. “There are some immediate issues or challenges with that. Because of overall height you have to hold it up to get an eye-level shot, and it’s really tiring to have to hold it for any length of time.”

The Helix, he says, was originally designed to balance on its optical centre: “Then they added some additional motors, and it sort of evolved from there.” From the outset, he says, it’s a different beast. One, with the design and flat bottom, the rig acts as its own stand, which is a plus because it can be put down almost anywhere between takes and there’s no need to hump around a stand if the shooting plan calls for a lot of moving around. “Also, because of the design it’s more of an over-slung device, and so it’s easier to get that eye-level shot,” he says. “You’re able to jam your elbows into your body and get a much better stance for shooting. It’s a little more stable, and you can shoot for a longer time, maybe double over other gimbals before fatigue sets in.”

Each axis can be balanced separately, and because it’s on the optical centre, once set up, changing a lens only requires rebalancing the fore and aft weight, so it’s quick and easy to work with, whereas with other gimbals all three planes have to be recalibrated.

Cheong says he’s had a long relationship with Letus and they were more than happy to send a unit up for the demo. “There’s no distributor in Canada; they sell direct, so this was a good chance to check it out,” he says. The event, with CSC associate member Justin Lovell, was the first of what they hope will become a more regular night with more gear on display for hands-on assessment and discussion. ☞
“I’ve loved the Cooke S4 lenses since shooting my first film. It’s that special organic feel that Cooke lenses have always had; not so vintage to be uneasy and compromising, but not so tack perfect and orthodox that you end up looking ‘standard.’ And, they have a solid range of focal lengths to choose from. Today I insist on shooting with them. Now as before, it’s that great Cooke Look.”

– Alex Catalán, AEC, Director of Photography, La Isla Mínima (Marshland)
David A. Geddes csc, asc

What films or other works of art have made the biggest impression on you?
Films: Lawrence of Arabia – the scope; Slaughterhouse-Five – non-sequential storytelling; Sugarland Express – the drama that was created in confined spaces; Children of Men – everything. Art: Edward Hopper for realism and wit; Cezanne for use of perspective.

How did you get started in the business?
I bought a 35 mm stills camera and used it everywhere. I was a logger at the time, in camps part of the year and travelling when we were shut down by weather. I went back to school in still photography, at the Banff School of Fine Art and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. The program included courses in chemistry and in the physics of light, as well as photography from all perspectives and from the ground up, even making our own emulsions. In the second year, we did a unit on cinematography. Until then, I thought there was nothing better than image, but image combined with motion ... I was hooked. I went to Simon Fraser University’s Film Workshop after NAIT, bought a 16 mm camera and just jumped in. That practical grounding in physics and technology has served me well over the years in transitioning to a digital filmmaking platform.

Who have been your mentors or teachers?
Bob Crone csc, who trusted me as co-camera on The Fifth Estate when I was just starting out, and guided me in documentary and journalism cinematography. Richard Leiterman, who inspired me with his cinematography on Who Has Seen the Wind when I was a film student, and later steered me into dramatic film. And Raymond Hall, who owned Petra Films when I was shooting documentaries and inspired me to really think about how to tell the story with the camera.

What cinematographers inspire you?
Who doesn’t? There is something to be learned from everyone and from every niche of cinematography, whether it is feature, television drama or lifestyle. We are all pushing the boundaries and trying new products and techniques.

Name some of your professional highlights.
In my documentary days, it would be hard to beat standing next to the Queen, Margaret Thatcher and Charles and Diana. Another highlight was a summer where I circled the globe on a documentary that had me sharing meals with nomadic reindeer herders in Siberia; two days later, my lunch was in Los Angeles with [Aaron] Spelling representatives prior to shooting the original Beverly Hills, 90210 series. It has also been a great pleasure to see so many great young actors like Johnny Depp, Josh Brolin, Jason Priestley, Keanu Reeves, Brad Pitt and Bridget Fonda work on local series and go on to such impressive careers.

What is one of your most memorable moments on set?
When my son, Shane, joined my crew as a second assistant after going through the IA Trainee program and completing a film degree at Concordia University. He was a real asset to the crew and is now a cinematographer in his own right, with two Leo Awards (British Columbia’s film and television industry awards) under his belt. My daughter, Sorrel, also works for a university film school in California. It is great to be part of an industry that spans generations.

What do you like best about what you do?
For me, cinematography is a perfect blend of art, craft and technology. Storytelling is a universal passion, and I get to help bring stories and characters to life while playing with great toys! All while collaborating with amazingly creative, hard-working people.

What do you like least about what you do?
The hours. At a point when most professions are starting to wind down their work days, our crews are usually just breaking for lunch, with another six to eight hours of shooting ahead of us. You need strong, understanding support to keep you from losing touch with family and friends.

What do you think has been the greatest invention (related to your craft)?
LED lighting. You need to be fast and flexible to deliver a feature look on a television schedule, and the portability of LEDs allows me to be creative and bold while keeping on schedule. Another great step forward is the increasing adoption of having alternating directors of photography. It enables me to be involved with tone, locations, visual effects, etc., far enough ahead to avoid problems that can arise the day of.

How can others follow your work?
IMDB and www.davidgeddes.com

Selected credits:
21 Jump Street; Dark Angel; Tucker and Dale Versus Evil; Fringe; Under the Dome; The Last Ship
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JUNE
7-10, Banff Media World Festival, banffmediafestival.com

APRIL
10-19, Cinéfranco, Toronto, cinefranco.com

Othello from page 5

Drama at the 2014 Toronto International Short Film Fest. He’s recently completed shooting the drama/horror feature The Interior. Also a commercial cinematographer, Ubalde works through his Toronto-based company Pink Donut Visuals.

BEST ADVICE:
The best advice I’ve ever received came from Carlos Esteves csc when he was leading a CSC lighting workshop. Before we touched any equipment or put up one light, Carlos spoke at great length about the supreme importance of developing your vision. I had been to other cinematography lectures and courses where the talk was all about the latest gear, the technical aspects and technique. But here was someone, for the first time, talking about how to use these tools to develop a vision. Carlos’ passion was inspiring and his words truly resonated with me, changing how I work.

WORST ADVICE:
This is not so much bad advice, but more of a lament and a dread. I’m sure most cinematographers can relate to this scenario. I was working with a director who wanted to create a dramatic scene using shadows on an actor’s face. I suggested side lighting the talent, but time was running short and he wanted to forge ahead by just throwing up some lights. I said I’d need some time to light the scene properly. He then came out with the classic, “We’ll fix it in post.” When I hear that, I can pull out my hair. When something like this is not done in-camera, it’s unfinished work as far as I’m concerned. Besides, lighting effects in post always look artificial to me.

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* In the 1927 movie The Jazz Singer, Al Jolson uttered the first words in the first “talkie”. And the words he uttered were frighteningly profound, “Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You ain’t heard nothin’ yet!”