

— Association of Camera Operators —

# IN THE FRAME

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**NO TIME TO DIE**  
JASON EWART ACO





association of camera operators

***Training is another issue that I believe is highlighted by the production boom and one that the ACO needs to concern itself with.***

It is a pleasure to be writing my first President's POV at a time of unprecedented production activity in our industry. Although the last 18 months have been incredibly tough for many of our members, hopefully fortunes will change with the current production boom, which seems to be going hand in hand with the construction of a number of new studio complexes. This kind of investment would suggest that it also represents a long term development. I think it is a time for general optimism, despite the continuing issues of working in the shadow of a pandemic. However, with increased production comes challenges presented to us as camera operators and aspiring operators, and which the ACO will need to face on behalf of its members.

I'm currently taking a break from shooting, having been pedal to the metal for the past few months. The break has given me a chance to reflect on the crazy working and travelling hours we did throughout our production. Fitness and stamina have always been issues for camera operators. Some train in the gym, others in the bar—each to their own but presently it seems that we must be Olympic athletes who don't need to eat or sleep, to survive the long hours culture. Ours is a physical job requiring high levels of concentration and creative decision-making. We very rarely get to leave set for a break and I've lost count of the number of times I've eaten with my lunchbox balanced on the top of the remote wheels or dolly seat. If I'm on Steadicam, I very often skip lunch altogether. I can hear you all nodding in agreement.

There is no doubt that this situation must change, regardless of the glut of work currently on offer. After all, there is no point in being the wealthiest technician in the graveyard.

What can be done about the situation? By now you will all have seen the BECTU survey which will eventually be used as the basis for negotiations with the TV producers. In my opinion, it is the best chance for our voices to be heard regarding current working conditions, whether you're a union member or not. I hope that the same process will follow for the features agreement. I would urge all our members to follow these discussions and contribute wherever possible. The alternative? A lot of pitch-side sparring with unsympathetic production managers and a lot of bellyaching in the bar I'm afraid.

Training is another issue that I believe is highlighted by the production boom and one that the ACO needs to concern itself with. We have already seen an influx of operators from abroad to fill positions on UK based productions. There has been some concern that this is taking jobs from UK operators. A more robust way of checking that UK operators have been genuinely contacted for availability before employing foreign operators needs to be established. However, I think we also need to look to our training and upgrading of skills to ensure that the CVs of UK operators are strong enough to compete with our foreign counterparts, to increase the selection choice for productions.



rather than relying on forms of protectionism. This is where, I believe, the ACO can help its members. It has been almost impossible to arrange workshops during the pandemic but we are hoping to restart the programme over the next year to share the considerable skills that our members possess. Already, some of our patrons have stepped forward to help in our efforts to achieve this. We will need their valued and continued support if we are to achieve these aims.

So my hope is for the Association to keep an international perspective. We can pride ourselves on having members from many different countries and diverse backgrounds. We ourselves have many opportunities to work abroad with foreign crews and DoPs, despite the recent redrawing of boundaries with our neighbours. We have an awards system that considers work from around the world and all of this feeds our reputation as an outward looking organisation.

Finally, I would like to mention and pay tribute to the work of outgoing operator awards representative and board member, Rodrigo Gutierrez. Rod is a founder member of the ACO and a driving force behind the resurgence of The Operators Award. His contribution to the development of the ACO and the award is immeasurable. His departure from the board and awards committee should not go unnoticed. Rod's commitment to the cause of the camera operator—and his drive to have it recognised—is one of the reasons that I'm sitting writing this POV to you all today. I wish him all the best for the future and hope that he feels free to heckle us all from the back benches, which I suspect he will relish.

**Pete Robertson  
ACO President**

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## ONE SYSTEM – ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

"I operated 2nd unit with DoP Steven Hall on Warner Bros' *Tom and Jerry*, using the AGITO remote dolly to achieve some wonderful, extremely low-level and fast-tracking shots on a Sony Venice in 'Rialto' mode. I became intrigued by its versatility and possibilities. This is a very sophisticated tool ."

Jamie Harcourt ACO | GBCT | ASSOC BSC

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## ACO MEMBERSHIP NEWS 2021

### FULL MEMBERS

- Junior Lucano
- Eric Bialas
- Jason Ellson
- Mitch Mommaerts
- Ray Carlin
- Watcharawit (Koon) Ya-inta
- Adi Visser
- Sébastien Joly
- Allan Wilson
- Richard Bellon
- Sam Garwood

### ASSOC TO FULL

- James Burgess
- Daniel Edwards
- Richard Bradbury

### ASSOCIATE

- Rupert Peddle
- Piers Leigh
- Julia Green
- Alexis Castagna
- Akhilesh Patel

### FRIEND TO ASSOC

- Kat Spencer
- Jay Coates

### FRIEND

- Ben Roberts
- Liam Morgan
- Piran Miller
- Angus Hudson
- Catherine Goldschmidt
- Catherine Hulme
- Kate Eccarius
- Casper Van Oort
- Philip Smith
- Guillem Zamora
- Lucrezia Pollice
- Arabella Cristerna
- Natalie Brown
- Jack Mealing
- Miaya Rose
- Jessica Lamb
- Bridie Bennett
- Ashlea Downes



# Taking The Leap

*"In April 2021, coming to the end of my time Loading on Dr Strange, I had a big decision looming over me for quite some time... Should I take the leap?*

*Should I stop assisting?"*

Jumping from loading on features, into the unknown of a fully fledged Operator was a terrifying decision! Although I'd been spending most of my "free time" doing Steadicam on shorts and low budget promos, I had barely had the chance at traditional operating... I wasn't sure how to convince others I could do it! But all I had to do was believe in myself first.

My biggest concern giving up loading, was that I wouldn't be on set with some of the most talented operators (Iain Mackay, Pete Robertson, Roddy Gutierrez) and could no longer learn from them. However, staying an Assistant as long as I did helped to ensure that I could reach out to them at any time if need be.

Luck would have it, I received a call during *Dr. Strange* from producer Stu Butterworth telling me that none other than Seamus McGarvey had asked for me to operate with him on a short film. "Who was directing?" I ask... Joe Wright!!

Goodness, I genuinely couldn't believe it. I was A-Cam Operator for six days. The weeks leading up to it were full of excited nerves, but I had the most incredible week. It was a very special project, that became dear to the entire crew's hearts. I learnt so much from both Joe and Seamus.

I'm not quite sure why Seamus was so generous in offering me this short, but it helped my confidence in leaps and bounds. I'm sure that it also helped others believe in me too; having Dr McGarvey as a reference seemed to work wonders. I then got to work alongside Barry Ackroyd, Anthony Dod Mantle (ADM) and Zac Nicholson—all incredible cinematographers.

Barry gave me some brilliant tips on handheld whilst working on an Audi commercial. Zac let me operate traditionally, as well as Steadicam on a pick-up day for the feature film *The Lost King*. I got to meet and work with ADM on *Pistol*, which was the most insane month of dailies. On my first day, I came in expecting to be a Second Camera on a stunt unit that Iain Mackay was running.



Joe Wright, Seamus and Hannah line up the shot

**by  
Hannah Jell**



30 minutes into the day, I'm told to go to Main Unit and cover Steadicam using Iain's gear (thank goodness I learnt on it!) following the main cast, with Danny Boyle watching over my shoulder!! Another day, later on I found myself operating "Hannah Unit" (named by wonderful producer Tracey Seaward) on the Southbank, giving cast directions whilst Danny Boyle was filming elsewhere on a boat. I had to give myself a hard pinch on that day.

This was all the perfect preparation for what was to come...

I got a call one afternoon—whilst waiting for my shot on a low budget music video—from the lovely Kate Collier of ARRI Crew. She told me that my name was put on a list of potential Operators for a Netflix series! This was just two months after I'd decided to step up and take the leap... two months?! I genuinely never would have thought that I'd have an opportunity for something long form, even within my first year; just being in the mix was enough for me. Just a few hours later, I was told I would have a Zoom interview with DP Nick Remy Matthews ACS and Director Colm McCarthy.

Goodness. The prep began: lots of research, lots of watching their work. Then I dressed up nicely from desk-height upwards, making sure my living room was nicely lit, broke a sweat trying to answer with the right things, thinking of interesting questions and coming across well. Then the wait began. I was fully prepared to be told that I didn't have enough experience, as I was sure that there would be others with much more. Though as I said, just the opportunity at an interview was enough to make me happy! It's an experience in itself.

Less than 24 hours later, Kate told me the good news: I got the job! B Camera/Steadicam!!



The job is 90% handheld, 9% Steadicam and a final 1% on an O'Connor and sticks. During the first few weeks, I could really feel the toll on my body. I felt exhausted but didn't want to speak out too much. From the beginning, I told myself that I never wanted to not be able to do a shot just because I wasn't physically able to keep up with Job on A-Cam. I was so glad to hear him say that he found it tiring too; I was so worried that I wouldn't be strong enough for the job.

Operating is hard, whether you're a man or a woman. Though I think I can confidently say that I've learnt that being a reasonably small woman doesn't work against me. I have Simon, who instantly takes the camera from me the moment cut is called and won't put the camera on my shoulder until we're about to put the board in. I can always stand on an apple box, or we can do our best to raise actors if needed. I can also fit into tight spaces!

*"Operating is hard, whether you're a man or a woman. I think I can confidently say that I've learnt that being a reasonably small woman doesn't work against me."*



Currently I've been on the job for 6 weeks. It's been incredible! So so physically demanding, hard split days everyday, all location work.. but it's been absolutely amazing!

Yes, a lot of tough days, but I can easily say I'm having an amazing time. I feel so lucky to be able to be creative every day. I have a brilliant team with me: Abi Catto on Focus; Molly Burcham loading; Maxim Dunn as our Trainee; and Simon Thorpe as my Grip.

I have never been more appreciative of those around me. We have had some very difficult shots, especially as most of the time we're flying in last minute with a very long lens, fitting in where we can around Job Reineke's A Camera.

I've known Abi since I was a Trainee, and she has been fantastic to have by my side. I know I can rely on her. The day also feels seamless with Molly and Max, both working very hard to make sure our camera is always ready with no delay. Simon has also kept us all safe; not just the camera.



L - R  
Shun Kitagawa (Trainee), Job Reineke (A Cam Op)  
Nick Remy Matthews ACS (DOP)  
Elliot DuPuy (A Focus) Hannah Jell (B/Stedi Op)  
Abi Catto (B Focus) Molly Burcham (B Loader)  
Matt King (A Loader) Maxim Dunn (Trainee)

My first three months of operating have been some of the most enjoyable months of my career, and this really only feels like the beginning of it. Right here and now is where my journey truly begins. I really want to say a HUGE thank you to anyone who has helped me throughout each stage of this

adventure, whether it's just been encouraging words or even taking the time to teach me—it's all invaluable, and I will always remember you. There are far too many to name, but you all know who you are. Thank you.



# the Operators Award 2021

2020 WINNER:  
Benjamin Treplin for *Das Boot*

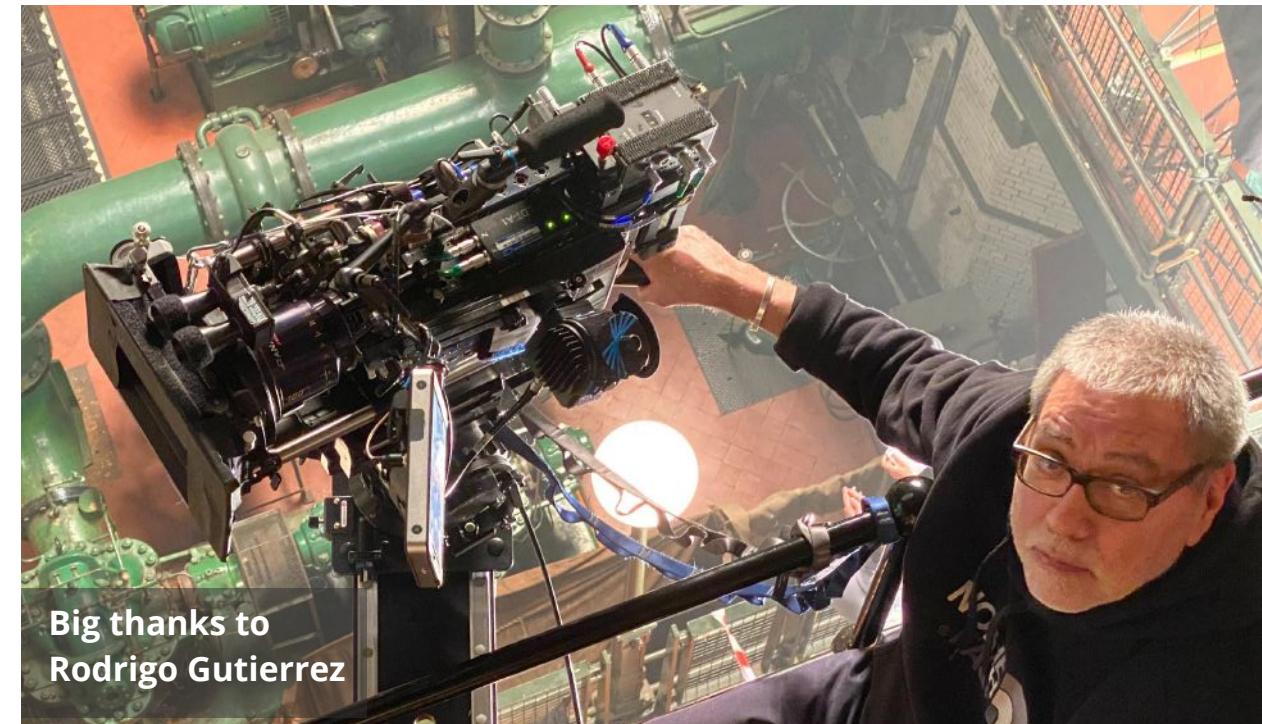
**HELLO ALL!**

This is Matt Fisher here. As many of you know, Rodrigo Gutierrez has stepped down from the duty of running The Operators Award. I think it very fitting that I take the time, on behalf of the ACO, to acknowledge the huge amount of work and dedication he has put into The Operators Award in the last 10 years. Without him, it would not be in the position it is now, that's for sure. So I would like to say thanks and I hope I can take over from where he has left off, giving it the same time, love and dedication.

I was approached by Sham Whittaker, our ACO secretary, on 21st June this year. She was looking for an ACO member who could join the team and follow on from all the good work that has been done. I have a very busy life and it's never a good time to take on lots of extra work! But I'm very fond of the ACO and proud to be a member. I knew it was time to do my bit, so I'm in! I believe that the work of the ACO—in promoting and recognising the craft of a Camera Operator—is very important to us. The Operators Award is an important part of this ethos. I have always been amazed that out of all the hundreds of film festivals all over the world, there is not one recognition for the craft of the dedicated Camera Operator. TV drama has seen some big changes in the last 10 years and is no longer the poor cousin of the film world; budgets and ambitions have grown exponentially and now represent some of the best funded projects around. The quality of the directors, cast and crew have grown accordingly.

The TV Drama Award was started about 10 years ago to acknowledge the Operators that work in this sector. I think this is probably larger than the film sector now. Currently, The Operators Award is run by a group of four of us: Sham Whittaker, our ACO secretary; Oona Menges DoP, Helen MacLean from the BSC; and myself. I know from talking to Rod that the TV Drama Award has always suffered from poor take-up among our members and it was this point that I wanted to address as a priority. We have made a few changes to things this year, mostly to the TV Drama Award. We have attempted to bring the dates of eligibility, the submissions period and the voting periods in sync with the Features Award, and as close as we can to the BSC Cinematography Awards. This will hopefully simplify the process for our members and means that voting across the two categories can be done at the same time.

For TV Drama, all accepted submissions will be listed in the long list, along with a 10 minute reel. Members will vote for 5 productions each. From these votes, a shortlist of five productions will be created, to be voted on by a panel of judges. We have chosen this route, in the hope that it will encourage a greater uptake among our newer Operators, who can showcase their work here. Personally, I really enjoyed watching the 10 clips last year. I looked at work from projects I didn't know and from Operators that I did not know. It was good to be able to see what other people are up to. This year, we are putting the onus onto the entrants to create their own clip reel. I think most Operators are more comfortable choosing their own clips to show.



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One of the biggest hurdles for the TV Drama Award in the past has been the ability for operators to obtain and cut a showreel for their entry. I have done it myself a few times in previous years and it has proved very difficult to obtain material in a useable format. This year, we have a new sponsor: SceneClipper. They provide an online service that will source and download material and has a super simple editing process so that you can create reels instantly. I have tried this software and it works brilliantly.

They have a massive database of material available to them. It took me about 3 hours, start to finish, to cut a test reel. SceneClipper have agreed to sponsor the TV Drama Award and



process all of the submission reels for free. They have also offered a lifetime 15% discount for all our members (ACO, BSC and GBCT). More details about this will be uploaded to The Operators Award site in the coming days. This should take the pain out of creating a reel. We would also like to announce another new sponsor: MK-V have agreed to sponsor our TV Drama Award—a Manchester-based company who design and manufacture the Omega AR head and the Nexus sleds. This year, they have very kindly offered a prize. The winner of the TV Drama Award this year will have the loan of an Omega AR head and motorised monitor bracket for a year. We are hoping that this should help generate some added interest.

**by Matt Fisher ACO**



# NO TIME TO DIE

Who doesn't want THAT call one day?  
ACO members do that's for sure.

Jason Ewart ACO talks operating on the  
COVID-delayed *No Time To Die*

In November 2018, I received an email from Linus Sandgren ASC with the subject title "Maybe Maybe". It was the email I'm sure any operator would dream about. Linus said that there was a very good chance that he was going to be offered the next Bond film and that if he was, he would love me to do it with him. I had had the pleasure of working with Linus a few years earlier on *The Nutcracker*. He is the most talented and kind DOP you could hope to work for, as well as a good friend. He has operated on some of his previous films, but was very keen to concentrate on the lighting on this one and asked me to do the A Camera for him. "Maybe Maybe" turned into "Definitely Definitely" and the *No Time To Die* adventure began.

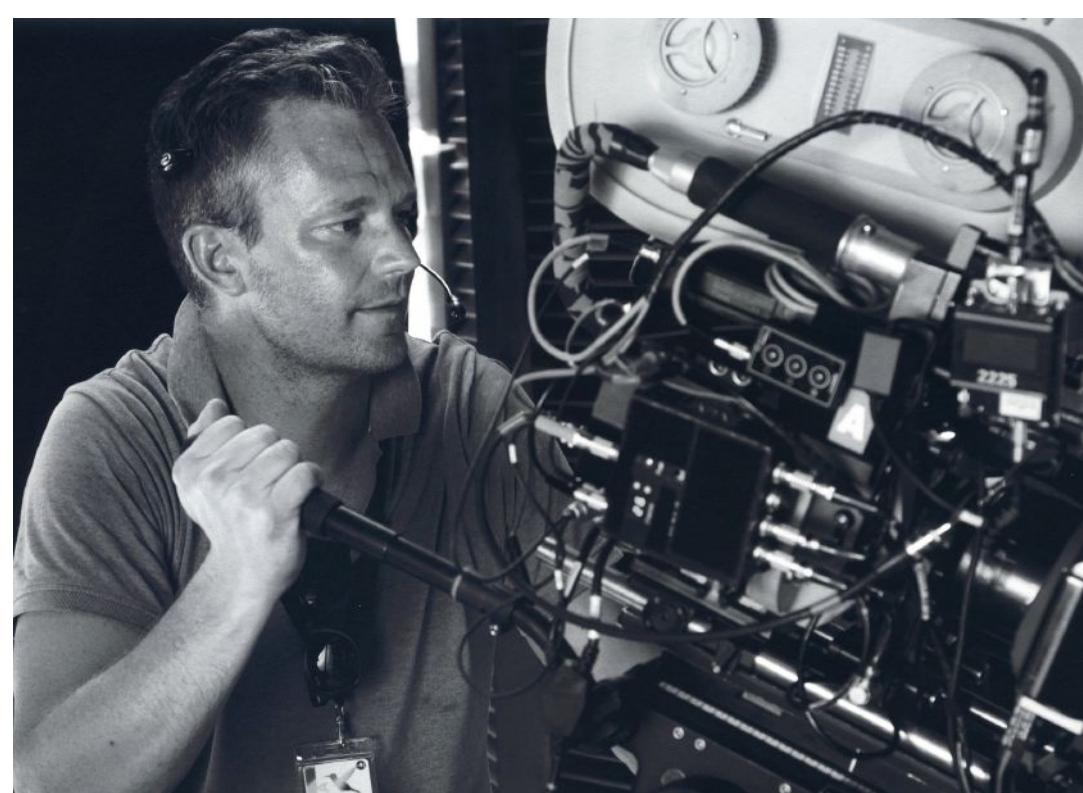
With a fantastic camera crew, including Jorge Sanchez as 1st AC on A Camera, Olly Loncraine operating and Olly Tellett 1st AC on B camera, (Olly would later leave to step up as 2nd unit DOP on another project and was replaced by Ozzie McLean) we had a pre-shoot in April 2019 in Norway, filming all the scenes of a young Madeline and Safin on the frozen lake. The art department had constructed a house on the lake but as we had been delayed by a few weeks and we were starting to get into Spring, the warmer weather had begun to melt the ice. This proved challenging because not only was the house they had built slowly sinking, but the plans to use a crane on the ice had to be rethought as the ice had melted so much, it couldn't take the weight of the crane. This in turn forced our very innovative key grip Dave Appleby to come up with some great solutions to move and track the camera, such as a goal post rig, basically on large ice skates, to get our tracking shots following a young Madeline over the ice.

The main shoot then started and we were off to Jamaica—the spiritual home of Bond. The locations were stunning and this is where it really hit home that we were making an iconic Bond film.

One location that particularly stood out was the house that Bond had retired to, which the art department had built on a private cove. We filmed quite a lot of boat-to-boat, with a 42ft Hydroscope crane on the camera-boat, helping us to get the camera where we needed it for the sailing and sea plane shots. Jamaica also doubled for Cuba, where a big action sequence was set.

After Jamaica, we continued the shoot back in London at Pinewood studios (including the backlot where the massive Cuba streets set was built) and in central London. We also went to Scotland, which doubled as Norway, and Matera in Italy as well, to film all the film's opening scenes and a car chase.

We shot a mixture of 35mm anamorphic and 65mm film. Most of the 65mm was shot on IMAX, with some System 65mm used for the dialogue scenes, as the IMAX cameras are a bit too noisy to record sound. All of the opening of the film up until the opening credits was shot on IMAX. We used these again for some big action sequences to provide scale, such as the Cuba backstreet sequences, so it ended up being quite a big portion of the film. When we were shooting IMAX, we framed for 1.43 protecting 2:40.





"The size and weight of the cameras took a lot of getting used to."



This took quite a lot of getting used to as the frame is so big and there is such a large area to protect, but after a while we got used to it and your eye would naturally go towards the 2:40 in the middle of the frame.

These cameras can be very awkward to operate; they are a lot bigger and heavier than most normal cameras, as they weren't designed for shooting action sequences on. We did a lot of handheld with these, which was challenging to say the least. The sheer size and weight of them took a lot of getting used to due to how unbalanced they are on your shoulder. It was physically demanding trying to be nimble and able to follow these fast-paced fight and action scenes. It really helped that Ozzie and I are different heights, so depending on if it was a high mode or low mode shot—sorry Ozzie!—that would decide who did the IMAX handheld on some setups. I used Steadicam a lot throughout the shoot but thankfully mostly with Millennium XL2 and only the odd shot on IMAX. It turns out that 500ft of 65mm film moving around a mag causes quite a lot of your balance to shift, and in pre-production I tested the Steadicam Volt to help with the film displacement in the IMAX mags. The Volt is a great bit of kit. I had been doing Steadicam for over 20 years and didn't think I needed to get one, but it turns out it was a very good investment when shooting IMAX. I now use it on my rig all the time and I can't imagine operating without it.

I had never worked with our director Cary Fukunaga before but I was a big fan of his previous films and his *True Detective* series. You work with directors who are scrupulous in their planning and others that go more off instinct. Cary falls into the latter; he needs to see a shot and then change it to make it what he wants. He is very talented at knowing how to change something to make it work better and has a meticulous eye. Cary is a DoP as well, so operating for him was very challenging. He knows exactly how he wants his shots framed and operated, and he challenged and tested me on a daily basis. They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger and I definitely came away a better Operator for it. On some shows, an Operator gets to have a big say in the blocking and how the scene would be shot

but with Cary, the camera movement and framing were so precise that it was my job to execute it for him exactly as he wanted.

Linus and Cary both love a curious camera and wanted the audience to feel like another character in the story. On a film this size you tend to have a lot of toys to help tell the story, but we used a lot of traditional platforms such as dolly, handheld and Steadicam. We actually used the Steadicam a lot, as Cary loved the fluidity and the sense of being with the actors. The crane was kept for the bigger sets and sequences, to help with the sense of scale. Cary also likes to tell the story by using as few cuts as possible so we had a lot of developing and continuous shots, which was very enjoyable and a great challenge to work out how to operate and execute them. A lot of the time, this would change and evolve from take to take. As any Operator would tell you, you are only as good as the grips around you; I was lucky to have Dave Appleby, plus A Camera Dolly Grip Jack Flemming and their team to help us achieve these shots. It helped that Linus was an Operator as well, as it meant he understood the challenges of the trickier shots and always had a way to help us achieve them. Working on a Bond film is incredibly exciting as we did some big action sequences, but with this came a lot of pressure and the need to get it right in as few takes as possible. Operators are always under pressure to deliver on a daily basis; pressure to not be the reason to have to go again. If you make a mistake, there is a lot riding on every take and somehow on this job, it felt like that pressure went up a few notches. One night in particular comes to mind, when we were doing one of the big fight sequences on the Cuba streets set: I had a particularly tricky shot following Bond

and some stunt men, fighting and then falling from the first level of a building, to then crash on top of the bar below. I was operating a Scorpio remote head on a dolly and it's not something we could rehearse due to the height we were at and the nature of the shot with all of the boxes and safety mats rigged below. Trying to imagine how quickly they would fall to the level below was impossible,

so after they momentarily dropped out of shot on take 1, I really felt the need to get it on take 2. Unfortunately, I tilted fractionally too early on take 2 and we had to go again. It was a 45min reset and it's not nice to be the reason that 200 people couldn't go home at 4am. With my heart beating out of my chest and half a dozen producers looking over my shoulder, I got it on take 3 thankfully and all was good in the world again.

Another big scene with no rehearsal stands out: We were doing a shot on a repeatable head, of a Land Rover flipping in a wood and just missing Bond. It was broken down into two parts, with the stunt of the car flip first. When we got that plate, we would then shoot the element with Daniel in it, so he was in no danger. Again, this was not something we could rehearse and the pressure of not wanting to miss the flip, but also not knowing how fast and how close it would be travelling past the camera, were the great unknowns. Thankfully we got it on take 1.

It was also an important reminder that everyone's safety is always the most important thing and this was adhered to throughout the shoot. The car clipped the end of the track, but as we were on a remote head with a pre-programmed dolly move, no one was in any danger as we were all a long way away from the action.

Cary loves a "oner" and we did a particularly good one which we called the "brutal stairs". In it, Bond fights his way up a staircase whilst fighting various heavily armed guards until he reaches the top where he fights one of the film's main protagonists.

"These cameras can be very awkward to operate; they are a lot bigger and heavier than most normal cameras, as they weren't designed for shooting action sequences on. We did a lot of handheld with these, which was challenging to say the least."



The stunt department did a fantastic job designing the shot and choreographed it so it could be done in four parts, and then stitched together to look like one continuous take. We had a rehearsal day for me to learn all the beats on the actual staircase that had been designed and built at Pinewood. The first shot in the sequence was the most complicated and on the day we shot it, I can't remember ever being as nervous. Having all these beats and cues to remember, I was also very aware that the slightest mistake would mean we had to go again with an hour or so reset due to all the pyrotechnics and squib hits. On a shot like this, an Operator is very reliant on the actors and stunt performers as it's like a dance and all comes down to rhythm and timing. Thankfully, all of these elements came together and we were able to get it on the first take—a very rare feat on a shot that complicated. I can still remember the adrenaline surge after the take, from all the gunshots and explosions, as well as sheer relief that we got it without having to go again. It was exactly what you would expect from working on a Bond film and was such a great team effort.

Linus is a master of lighting and he has an incredible knowledge of how much he could push the stock and what the film could take. We shot a lot of the location scenes at magic hour, especially in Jamaica. We would rehearse our scenes, block and rehearse the camera positions, and then turn over and shoot when the light was perfect, which a lot of the time was after the sun had set. We therefore had a very small window to get it right. Although it put everyone under a little more pressure, it was very satisfying when you see the results. We called it the "Fukunaga sunset scramble" and this became a constant on most of our location work.

I feel it's so important as an Operator to have a good relationship with the actors. We most definitely have the best seat in the house and as this is a very emotional film, we saw these actors quite vulnerable from time to time. I was lucky that I had a really good relationship with Daniel. He was very generous to me and always helpful. One time in particular in Scotland, I was doing handheld and running out of some woods that had been completely filled with smoke. I couldn't see two feet in front of me and veered off the narrow path and fell into a small hole. When Daniel realised I wasn't behind him, he came to see what happened and when he saw the hole I tripped into, he went and got sandbags to help fill it in "so I wouldn't break my ankle". Being helped out by James Bond is not something that happens at work everyday!

Behind the scenes taken by  
Nicola Dove. Courtesy of  
LLC, MGM and Columbia Pics



I have always loved Bond films. When I left Australia in 2011 to move to the UK with my English wife and people asked me why I was moving, my answer—more often than not—would be because I wanted to work on a Bond film. It was an amazing career highlight to work on *No Time To Die*, with plenty of "pinch yourself" moments. It is a very exciting film and whilst there was great pressure to nail the operating, it was an absolute joy to see these amazingly strong and memorable performances up close. It was an honour to work on such an iconic job, with a bunch of fantastic people, so well-led by Linus. All in all, it was an amazing experience, one that I will never forget, and with memories made that I will cherish forever.

**by Jason Ewart ACO**



Linus and Jason line up the shot

# SPECTRE

## THE OPENING SHOT: REVISITED



SPECTRE © 2015 Danjaq, LLC, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc.,  
Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

By Julian Morson ACO, with contributions from Lukasz Bielen & Gary Hymns

In anticipation of the long-awaited release of the 25th James Bond film *No Time To Die* (2021), I have been approached to take a retrospective view on how the continuous single opening shot in *Spectre* (2015) was achieved.

From childhood, I had been a huge fan of the 007 movies and its heroic secret agent James Bond. I was therefore thrilled to have been invited to join cinematographer Hoyte Van Hoytema ASC FSF NSC, director Sam Mendes and the *Spectre* camera team.

The 007 movies are one of the longest-running and most successful film franchises of all time. The opening sequences in Bond movies are famous for being energised with fast cut action, as a prologue before the themed front credits. The complete opening sequence in *Spectre* runs for about 11 minutes and 30 seconds, and took six months to prepare. The opening continuous tracking shot occupies more than a third of this sequence, lasting approximately 4 minutes and 10 seconds—a first for the franchise.

The challenge of any continuous shot is not only to engage the viewer but more importantly to convey a story without losing momentum or becoming a distraction. There were only a couple of lines of dialogue midway through this tracking shot, so it required dynamic, strong imagery and for every frame to have a purpose.

Centrally-punched composition was used stylistically to place the subject and the audience's attention classically in the centre of the frame.

The 'single' shot was in fact created with six separate set-ups, seamlessly stitched together. The main segments were crafted over three shoot days on location in Mexico City and a few additional days on sets built at Pinewood Studios, using two 50ft Technocrane positions; three Steadicam set-ups; and another angle on the apartment building facade.

Hoyte and Sam designed the shot utilising a computer animated previz to assist the staging of the action and logistics. The ambition was to capture as much of the principal action in-camera without employing any motion control.

The previz was originally animated with the 27mm Primo lens angle but we discovered through a camera test—in a mock-up of the narrow hotel lift interior—that the previz did not fully account for the footprint of the Steadicam, Operator or Focus Puller. It became instantly apparent that when the camera was pushed back into the corner of the lift, the 27mm field-of-view would be too tight. After showing Hoyte and Sam tests with 24mm & 21mm Primos, the previz was subsequently re-built using the 21mm, resulting in a more appealing composition of our heroes ascent in the lift, and added scale to the expansive city vistas.

The majority of *Spectre* was photographed on 35mm Kodak film in the 2.39:1 aspect ratio, with a combination of Panavision Primo Anamorphic and C Series prime lenses. However, the opening sequence was photographed with Panavision Primo spherical lenses to help VFX with the transitions, crowd extensions and the face replacement elements during a helicopter flight. The night car chase sequence in Rome were shot with Arri Master Anamorphics and the finale along the nightscape of the Thames in London was photographed digitally on Arri Alexa 65 cameras with Primo 70 lenses.

Sam Mendes' ambition was to drop the audience "right into the middle of a very specific, very heady, rich environment" of the Day of the Dead parade (*Dia de los Muertos*).

Set-up 1:

From the first frame, the viewer is immersed into the middle of the festival parade, which included 1,520 background artists in Mexico City. The camera wraps around the skull of a giant puppeteer skeleton, swooping down towards a white-suited man who walks against the tide of the procession and passes Bond (Daniel Craig), escorted by his lady friend Estrella (Stephanie Sigman), who we then follow, entering a hotel. This segment was shot with a 50ft Technocrane on a 100ft track, navigated by key grip Gary Hymns and his team.

A Camera Operator Lukasz Bielen recollects:

'...We were rehearsing the first move on the Techno when we see Bond and his girl. We did many rehearsals with stand-ins but no crowd. Eventually we got it down and we started shooting. The first few takes were not very good due to the timing of all the moving parts, background artists, actors and of course the crane which had three or four elements moving at the same time. So I had to guide the boys according to what I saw with timing and actors. As our heroes emerged from the crowd, they grew on us a bit and then we dolly with them from a profile angle at about a cowboy size. During one take, everything was going well until the profile moment where we got way too close to Daniel. (We went into a big-close-up unintentionally) But being a great actor and always aware of the camera, at that moment he turned his head back as if to see someone was following him. Thankfully, Focus Puller Julian Bucknell nailed it and it became an iconic shot— a complete mistake that made the film. Someone once said: 'make mistakes, beautiful mistakes!'

#### Set-up 2:

The first stitch was a handover from the crane shot to Steadicam, as the couple cross the threshold of a hotel entrance, passing a Day of the Dead poster. The beautiful, art nouveau Gran Hotel Ciudad de Mexico is located in a different part of Mexico City, so a section of the entrance was precisely rebuilt to match. Having studied a series of key freeze frames with mix-and-overlay from the preceding Techno shot, we mapped the path of the actors and the trajectory of the lens to help marry the two locations and action together.

Thankfully, Sam Mendes chose a take where their body positions, the camera distance and the velocity of the camera matched perfectly from one cut to another. The couple then climb the stairs past carnival revellers, and cross the lobby, pushing into a close two-shot in the hotel lift.

Every inch mattered in the narrow lift, so we used 200ft magazines and counterweighted the camera centrally on the Steadicam sled, to reduce the footprint without compromising the balance. The iron and brass concertina doors were cumbersome and slow to close, which created an inconvenient pause before the lift could ascend. So, the electrics were re-wired to allow the lift to operate without the doors closing, and to move the instant I stepped aboard, enabling me to step backwards as soon as we landed on the top floor of the hotel. We travelled several floors with Leigh Gold focus pulling, crouching below the lens - the camera inches from the exposed passing floors. Leigh did a remarkable job keeping it sharp, and himself out of the frame, with B-Cam grip Adrian Barry ensuring our safety every step of the way. The journey continues, leading our heroes across the top floor of the stained glass atrium towards a hotel room doorway. We also had the old standby trick of having some greenscreen people in a separate element pass close to the camera to help hide the wipe, but thankfully that was not needed and if anything, they would have highlighted the fact that some trickery was going on. The in-camera foreground wipes worked better without them.

#### Set-ups 3 & 4:

Continuing on the Steadicam, we transitioned to the hotel room built on stage back at Pinewood Studios, where we hinged around the couple kissing. As they parted, we followed Stephanie to the bed and there's a 180-degree whip pan back to Daniel stepping out onto a balcony. To overlap with the next transition, the lens had to track him parallel through a French window, but we discovered that to exactly match the frame size, the rear of the camera body would have had to pass through a section of the set wall. This forced us to put an edit into the whip pan, so the B part of the pan was completed after cutting a piece of the set away! I remember Sam saying:

'...no problem...that's where an audience would expect a join!'

Another benefit was that Daniel did not have to remove his festival robes in a matter of seconds and therefore could remain composed and immaculate as the frame landed back on him.

#### Set-ups 5 & 6:

Wiping past the wall, we transitioned back to Mexico City as Bond steps onto the balcony and struts confidently along the rooftops to take aim at his target, Marco Sciarra (Alessandro Cremona), the man we saw earlier in the white suit, now meeting his fellow conspirators in an adjacent apartment block. The final set-up were elements of the apartment set built on Pinewood Studios backlot.



SPECTRE © 2015 Danjaq, LLC, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc., Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

After months of planning, Gary Hymns collaborated with a construction team to erect a 200ft long by platform spanning several rooftops on top of a 50ft high building to support a 50ft Technocrane. The remarkable shot effortlessly pivoted around Bond on his precarious journey from the hotel bedroom balcony (set piece), along the edge of the building overlooking the parade below, towards the opposite end of the block. This section was operated by a team of ten grips, including four on the crane base; three on the bucket; Malcolm McGilchrist on the 'pickle'; and Gary on the rooftop, guiding the Head towards Bond and over the rifle barrel towards his target. Lukasz remembers:

"The one reason we chose the Chapman G3 stabilised head was because of its profile. The camera had to pass very close to Daniel's face as he was aiming his weapon. We really wanted to get as close as possible. It is also a very reactive head, Operator-friendly and one can always rely on it; the head would comfortably take a larger payload than any other at that time."

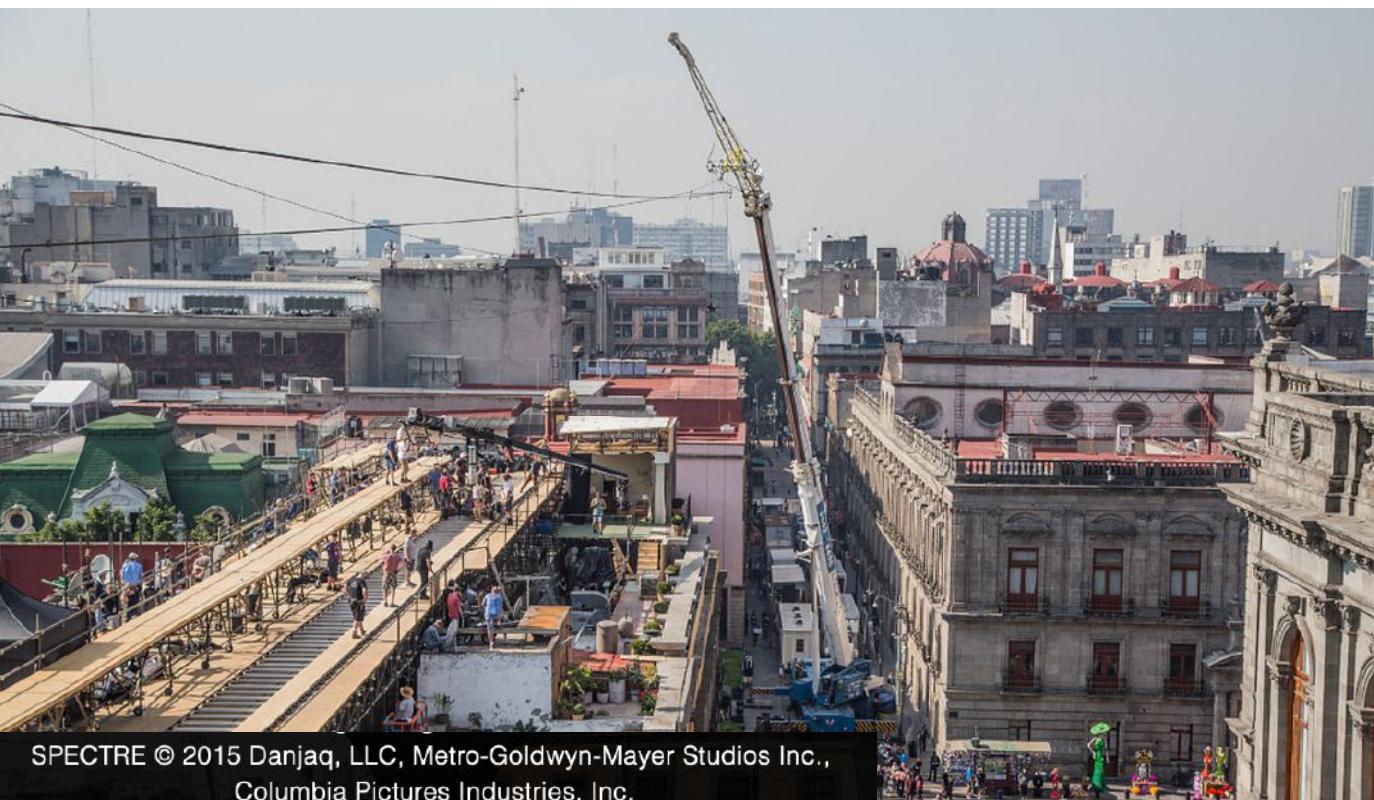
Gary described how the team had to throw the weight bucket up and let go, to allow the camera to descend steeply from a high angle, while simultaneously tracking the base (with no-one in contact with either end of the arm) before Gary gently caught the Head and then steered it along its final path. Gary recalls:

"It was a nerve-racking shot, not only because the huge platform had to be engineered in the weeks before we arrived on location, but there was no time to do any tests or make any adjustments before the shoot day. When Sam called 'check the gate', Daniel & I hugged with joy and relief."

Executing these technically complex shots is naturally extremely intense, with everyone working at a high level of concentration and adrenaline. No matter the length of a shot or the scale of the production, every shot presents different challenges, and all are equally as important. For me, collaboration is key and motivates me on any shoot. Fundamentally, the team spirit and the collective achievement makes the creative and technical process so much more rewarding.

P.S: Gary Hymns shared a great anecdote: A couple of years after completing Spectre, he met cinematographer Roger Deakins CBE ASC BSC to discuss his next project. Roger complimented the success of the opening shot in Spectre, but then explained that Sam Mendes wanted to shoot his next movie entirely in a continuous "single" shot. With a wry smile Roger teased: "Thanks Gary.... that's all your fault!"

The movie was of course the highly acclaimed 1917.



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A TRUE STORY OF LOVE, LOYALTY AND A FIGHT FOR JUSTICE



STEVE COOGAN SHARLENE WHYTE HUGH QUARSHIE

# STEPHEN



15



## By Grant Sandy-Philips

*Stephen*: A three-part mini-series giving an insight into the investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence.

For those of you who might not know, Stephen Lawrence was waiting for a bus in Well Hall, Eltham on the 22nd of April 1993 when he was murdered in a racially motivated attack. No one was found guilty of the murder until 2012. This story covers a small part of a very controversial investigation. The lead investigator—DCI Clive Driscoll—was played by Steve Coogan, Doreen Lawrence by Sharlene Whyte, and Neville Lawrence by Hugh Quarshie.

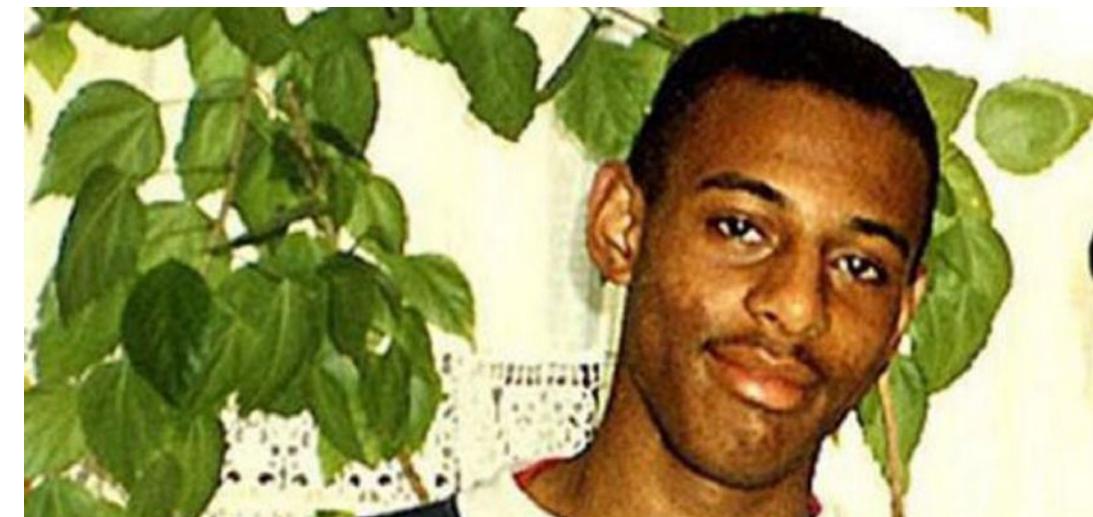
My family was very proud when I told them I would be involved in this project. It is a delicate subject and needed to be approached with sensitivity and care. It was important to give the actors a comfortable environment, as their performances were important to this story.

I have been fortunate to work with our DoP Aaron Reid regularly throughout my career and to be a regular collaborator on many great projects. I was glad he asked me to come on board. I had also previously worked with him and our director Alrick Riley on *Unsaid Stories*, a mini-series for ITV. Aaron brought me onto the ITV project while the country was still deep in the pandemic, and I was operating on set while the heads of department were on Zoom streams. When we started filming *Stephen*, it was nice to finally meet Alrick in person.

We shot on a Sony Venice with Leica Rs and the Angenieux Optime x12 24-290. Aaron Reid had Tom Pittman as his grip. The A Camera lived on a Ronin 2 and Aaron sat on the wheels while Tom aided in finding interesting angles. I was on B-Cam with a set of legs and a 4-foot slider. The 24 - 290 lived on the B-Cam body, using the full range of the lens in most of the setups. My B-Cam Grip Maja Jensen masterfully found ways of fitting us into small gaps and speedily bouncing us around the room for coverage. We had a great team, with James Matai as A-Cam Focus Puller and Matt Hillier as B-Cam Focus Puller.

There was a great sense of camaraderie on set and a few challenges were thrown at each camera team. When A-Camera would have a difficult shot or nailed a challenging focus pull, B-Team would celebrate their victory, and vice versa. The synergy between the two teams resonated on set and we all banded together to get through each working day.

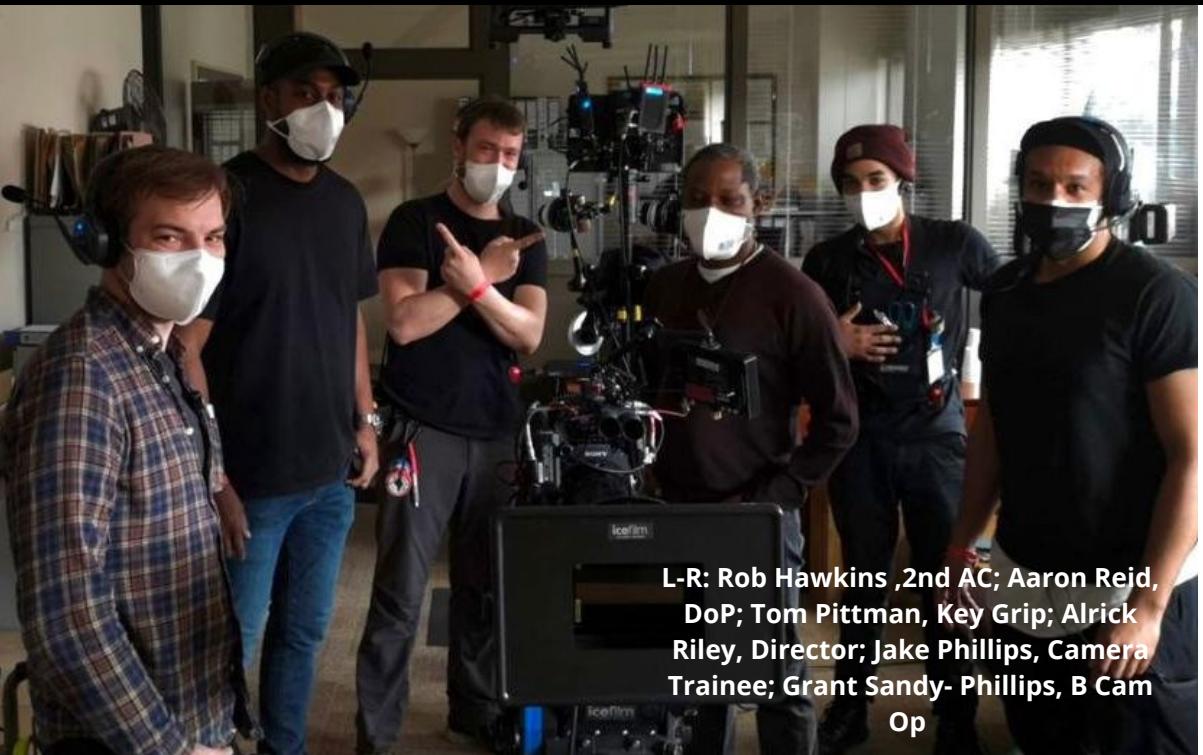
My role for this job was to compliment the A-Cam by finding interesting shots, angles, and a different perspective for the scenes. It was nice sitting on B-Cam. Sometimes we would butt the cameras together: one on a tight, the other on a mid-shot. On occasion, I was able to flex my creative muscle and offer an alternative, creative shot or perspective that stood out to create a new feeling for the scene.



### Stephen Lawrence 1974-1993



*"For those of you who might not know, Stephen Lawrence was waiting for a bus in Well Hall, Eltham on the 22nd of April 1993 when he was murdered in a racially motivated attack."*



Having worked closely with Aaron, and understanding Alrick's approach to shooting *Stephen*, our team would quickly help in getting the camera set up and in position to present a frame that worked well for the scene.

The story drew us towards a very voyeuristic style, using the long lens shooting from a distance, or placing items in front of the lens. Often our lovely art department and props team would come in and say "a little bit of foreground here". It was a great energy on set.

Each day was approached with a very structured plan; it was very clear how Alrick wanted to cover his scenes and he often came in with a drawn-out plan for us to follow. A lot of our locations were small offices and, following the Covid protocols, our team were very respectful in handling our new on-set rules. Due to the cramped conditions, our art department was regularly on standby moving props and allowing us to fit in small crevices in the room.



The moment that stood out for me was in the court room: The first day, we travelled around the room covering dialogue, eye lines and reactions, fitting the cameras in small gullies with the huge Angenieux 24 - 290, having just enough clearance to tilt. Aaron and Tom had set up the Ronin on the dolly with a small Jib arm. We shot in a court room in Kingston—a location I had visited before. The jib Arm allowed A Camera to speedily adjust for the range of heights in which our different characters were positioned. The judge and witness stand were quite high and had a steep viewing point to the defence and prosecutors. Similarly, the jury were slightly higher than the prosecution. The accused, where the Dobson brothers sat, and the public seating area, where the Lawrence family sat, were at the same height. In a wide, this location looked amazing, but we were covering over-the-shoulder shots to connect characters. We had a set of tall and short legs with a 4-foot slider to muscle around, hoovering up the coverage. Unfortunately, we were unable to stay in one position, due to availability of cast etc. We quickly learned how to configure our setup in different positions of the room. Maja Jensen, Matt Hillier, Sam Johnson (2nd AC) and Jake Phillips were great. We had a graft, but the team pulled together, worked hard under pressure and remained patient.

For the unveiling of the Stephen Lawrence centre, we had set up a thirty-feet track to shoot Doreen's arrival in a taxi to what was meant to be the building site for the centre. This was shot next to our studio setup, and we had dull grey warehouse buildings in the background that wouldn't look anything like the original location. The track had to be set up on a very uneven, open wasteland and we chose to use a doubler with the Angenieux zoom at 290. (Matt Hillier earned his nickname "290" with shots like this one.) Maja and Tom had built a sturdy setup, with the head tension on high. We managed to provide a rock-solid shot that tracked the taxi and picked up Doreen as she arrived, with no vibration or bounce; just sharp all the way.

It was a great story. Each moment we would unveil a different challenge with the case and find new evidence. I learnt a few things about the case, which I won't reveal now, but if you get a moment to watch it, it will get very interesting. I really enjoyed observing our director Alrick Riley with the cast; seeing him explore the performance and guiding options for his edit. His understanding of the emotional output needed from an actor is beautiful to watch. Also, I want to thank our amazing covid team that kept us all safe and did a great job. This was an amazing drama to work on from beginning to end.



Tom Williams ACO  
operating Steadicam  
from the Cobra on  
Cyberware



Bickers Action is proud to offer one of the largest ranges of camera tracking vehicles and camera tracking equipment in the world: In excess of 45 Plus Tracking Vehicles / Insert Cars to choose from for any type of tracking shot achievable.

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*a retrospective look at operator*

# MIKE ROBERTS

by Alan Parker (2000)



## World-renowned Cameraman who captured film masterpieces for Attenborough, Zinnemann, Joffé and Spielberg

Last week, while on location in Bath for Lasse Hallström's new film *Chocolat*, Mike Roberts—for the first time in his career—failed to make the morning bus that takes the crew to the film set. He had died peacefully in his sleep, aged 60.

Roberts was one of the finest Camera Operators in the world, and probably the greatest British film Cameraman ever. Working for more than 40 years with directors like Neil Jordan, Richard Attenborough, Roland Joffé, Fred Zinnemann and Steven Spielberg, he elevated his art and craft to new levels. He was an essential part of four films that won Academy Awards for Cinematography, and received four further nominations. In 1997, he was awarded the Michael Balcon Award by Bafta for his outstanding contribution to British cinema—the first technician to be so honoured.

As a Director, I made eight films with Mike as my Camera Operator, and the thought of filming without him, frankly, fills me with dread. Like many Directors, I will miss him terribly. He was our eyes; his understanding and "knowingness" of a scene were consummate. Although he had no formal arts training, his perception of composition and light was instinctive and intuitive, as was his mastery of how subtle and artful camera movement could add power and energy to a shot.

Born in Woking, Surrey, Mike started out as a runner in Fleet Street, catching the bug for film at Southall studios while working for Pearl and Dean. He moved to ABPC Elstree studios as a Central Camera Loader, and after six years went freelance, working his way up from Clapper Loader on films like *School For Scoundrels*, to Focus Puller on *A Man For All Seasons*. One day when the Camera Operator had flu, he moved up to the seat on the dolly, which he occupied for 65 films.

A wiry, slender man, his face craggy and leathery from the wind and sun of a thousand locations, he had a gracefulness and agility that made him the acknowledged master of his craft. As the camera swooped and dipped across a set, balanced on a small platform, Mike would twist and pivot, gently shifting his balance from one leg to the next, his face glued to the eyepiece.

Liam Neeson once said: "It's incredible to see him at work, bent over the camera, be it 60ft high or racing along a track. It's as if the camera is an extension of his body."

Mike was also extremely brave. No matter if he was filming a Khmer Rouge explosion in *The Killing Fields*, hanging from a tank on *Empire Of The Sun*, braving the Iguazú falls on a raft on *The Mission*,



L-R: Chris Plevin;  
Colin Manning, Grip;  
Paddy Kiely, Loader; and  
Mike Roberts

or facing the collapsing walls of a burning church in *Mississippi Burning*, he never moved away from the camera eyepiece for one second.

Receiving his Balcon award, he generously thanked his long-time Camera Grip Colin Manning, who, he said, "has probably pushed me halfway round the world to get me here tonight." And all around the world was where Mike filmed, as he relentlessly and passionately worked on one film after another, often without a break, first choice as he was of directors worldwide.

The producer David Putnam remarked: "If ever there was proof that film is a collaborative art form, then Mike is it." On every shot, he would interact with almost every member of the crew, and always with grace and calm professionalism.

He also had an extraordinary rapport with actors, being, as he very often was, the closest person to them on a film set. His gentle manner and unselfish technique put great actors at ease, allowing them the freedom to be at their best; he never needed to ask for repeat takes because of the camera's imperfections, such was his skill.



L-R: Mick Coulter, DoP;  
David Appleby, Stills;  
Mike Roberts;  
Bill Forsyth, Director

Last week in the bars of Pinewood and Shepperton studios, the conversations were all about Mike, touching, as he had, the lives of three generations of film people. The sad news of his passing was attached to the call-sheets of the films in production. In many cases, filming literally stopped in Britain and abroad because crews were just too shocked and devastated to be able to work.

That a Camera Technician should have had this effect—not a movie star, Director or Producer, but an unpretentious, self-effacing brilliant man, who was never once known to raise his voice—is testament to the respect everyone had for Mike. He is survived by his wife Eileen; his two daughters, Danielle and Georgina; and his mother and sister.

On the set with a great Operator, Neil Jordan writes: "I first met Mike Roberts on the set of *The Company Of Wolves*. He was then in the middle of an extraordinary career as a Camera Operator, having worked with Directors out of the mists of the past, like Henry Hathaway and Fred Zinnemann. But I didn't know that. What I did know was a lined, gypsy face, a pair of steady blue eyes and a thin, sinewy hand that guided his camera effortlessly to that magical place where the scene, the setting and the actor's face begin to make sense."

The film I was making—with its unreal settings, its stories within stories, transformations and leaps of fancy—made very little sense to anyone else on the crew, but that didn't trouble Mike. What he saw was what he saw, and if a crane shot, for example, that travelled through a forest, beginning in summer and ending in winter, allowed him a smile at the absurdity of the conception, it was executed beautifully.

In fact, as he executed shots and gave them as gifts to the director, he collected stories as a kind of payment. And between shots, he would tell these stories, of past setups, past movies—hilarious stories, always pivoting on the absurdity of the film-making process.

## THE "NOTTING HILL" CAMERA CREW

l TO R. JOHN JORDAN (FOCUS) M. COULTER (O.P.) MIKE ROBERTS (OPERATION)  
JOE GORMLEY (TRAINEE) + COLIN MANNING (GRIP).  
STANDING. TIM BATTERSBY (LOADER) + LIBBY BARR (SCRIPT)

WE WERE SHOOTING AT THE RITZ HOTEL, AND WERE ASKED TO DRESS IN AT LEAST SHIRT + TIE, IF NOT SUIT.

LOOKS LIKE THE OLD DAYS EH! 745

Over the years, I came to work with many great Cameramen, but somehow always with the same Operator, and that was Mike. He would come off a Steven Spielberg film, an Alan Parker film, a Roland Joffé film, to whatever small obsession I had made for myself and step immediately into its world.

He would tell his stories as the tracks were being laid and the shot lit, about whatever absurdities he'd encountered since I last met him, then suddenly click into action when the cameras rolled.

He loved first takes, unrehearsed shots, impossible setups. With what Chris Menges called his "Cartier-Bresson thing", the moment was what he valued, the sense of unique happening, and, for Mike, whatever happened always happened through the actor.

Technically, he was extraordinary. He did a shot on a hothead once, with a crane that moved through 180 degrees, and during the second take, his video monitor blew. He executed it blind, and that take made it to the finished film.

I thought he would abandon operating, as most operators do, and light his own films, but for some reason that never interested him. What did interest him was his seat on the dolly that Colin pushed, the actors in front of him, and maybe even the Director behind him.

While I was shooting the death of *Michael Collins* in the hills of Wicklow, with Liam Neeson in the foreground and a line of silhouetted extras in the hills beyond, one of the extras fell into a fissure in the mountain. We found out that he was uninjured, and, while waiting for a helicopter to arrive and winch him out, I set up another shot.

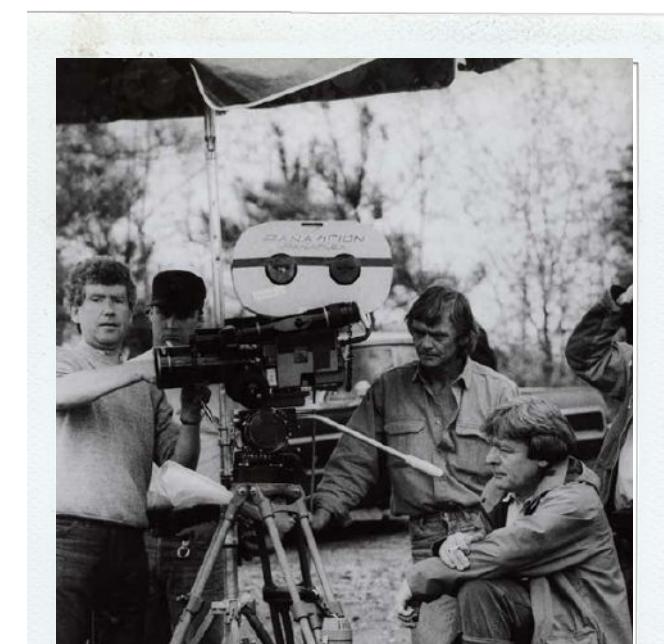


Sarah—my daughter and assistant on the film—berated me for my heartlessness. I tried to explain that keeping a crew down here waiting idle wouldn't help the rescue process up there. Mike said he fully expected to die on a dolly one day, and be hoisted off it and replaced as quickly as possible.

Over the past few years, as Pinewood and Shepperton filled up with gizmo-driven movies, and as the camera became subsumed beneath a wealth of digital effects, his enthusiasm for some of the films he worked on waned a little. For him, nothing could replace an actor's face.

But his repertoire of absurdities gained immeasurably. I always hoped that he would one day write them down— "Mike Roberts: The Collected Absurdities Of A Life In Film". And now he has been tragically denied that opportunity. So maybe those of us who remember them should write them down for him. But I doubt if we could ever tell them as well.

Mike Roberts, Film Cameraman  
July 20 1939 - May 24 2000



Eamonn O'Keefe (Camera Assist),  
Mike Roberts & Alan Parker

Written by Alan Parker  
Courtesy and Copyright of *The Guardian*



On the beach in Morocco  
with Grip Colin Manning



# BRIDGERTON

Leo Bund ACO

My time on *Bridgerton* started about three weeks into principal photography, when the current B Camera Operator decided to join another production. The camera team was led by the hugely talented DoP Jeff Jurr ASC, whose credits include *Dirty Dancing* through to *Dexter* and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. I joined a fantastic B Camera team—my Focus Puller being the very talented Elhein De Wet, who was supported by super efficient Clapper/Loader Andrew Marsden and Grip Dylan Newton.

It's always interesting going onto a production that's already in full swing, but I received a warm welcome by the head of the camera team, "Skip" Peter Howard. Because I was not on *Bridgerton* from the beginning, I was not part of the camera prep, but we soon had the B Camera configured and were able to transfer between Steadicam and conventional mode in around 10 minutes.

As we were shooting 6K on the Sony Venice with the beautiful Signature Primes - focus was critical... and Elhein nailed it every time. I remember a dance sequence, when the wonderful Tom Verica was directing, which turned out to be one of my favourite scenes where Phoebe and Regé began one of their first dances. They began to move as I circled them with the steadicam... no one knew where they would land, but when we'd completed the scene, I remember looking over at Elhein who gave me a raised eyebrow because his hand had practically cramped up from pulling the focus wheel (LCS).





In addition to my Steadicam, we used my Ronin2 gimbal on the series quite a bit, and it became the tool of choice both on the crane and on tracking vehicles. It's a brilliant gimbal that worked well with our Venice B Camera and it remained in the camera package pretty much the whole time. We used it on a number of setups, including the Black-Tek vertical jib tower, onboard an electric tracking vehicle so as not to spook the horses.

As B Camera, we often shot alongside A-Cam, mostly creating all the tight shots. A lot of the big dining and ball sequences would take days to film and there was a huge amount of camera visual lines to be respected and not crossed.

I find whenever working with a new DoP, I will always ask if they want me to suggest B Camera shots, or if they'd prefer to direct B Camera shots. More often than not, DoPs will want the B-Cam Ops to take responsibility and suggest shots. I find as a B Camera Op, it's not just about creating B Camera shots but also looking for "bogies" or unwanted reflections, lighting stands and leftover marks. Most importantly, I think we should be easing the burden on the DoP; I cannot stress enough the importance of preempting what the DoP may be thinking and giving them one less thing to worry about (if that makes sense).



I think Bridgerton's success was based on a number of factors, and I know a few people might find this weird, but I think COVID was a key helper in its success. In an online interview with Chris Van Dussen (Bridgerton's Show Runner), he was asked about its success he mentions that Bridgerton was the perfect escape at quite a mad time that the world was going through. We wrapped on the 28th of February 2019, just as the world started to realise the seriousness of what we were about to go through. 10 months later Bridgerton was released on the 25th of December, when the whole world was stuck inside and wanted a bit of escapism. Which is exactly what Bridgerton is: pure escapism. Nothing wrong with a bit of escapism...

Many talents came together to make Bridgerton the success it's become, Phoebe, Molly and Claudia were all such an important part for me to its success, but Jeff's vision was always key. During a night shoot at Wilton House we performed a wonderful 'Steadicam Step-off', where all the carriages are arriving as fire breathers blow flames towards the camera. We craned down and as the we landed I stepped off the platform as the grips stepped on (to counter my ballast). I then rush through the horses and carriages up the stairs and into the ball to meet a fantastically choreographed ball sequence. (This episode was Directed by Sheree Folkstone).



Other shots included the very involved boxing ring sequences at Chatham Docks where my camera literally became the opponent whilst fighting Regé-Jean, to the extent that Regé was literally clipping my Clip-on MB (and his knuckles...).

The sets of Bridgerton were brought to life by the master designer Will Hughes-Jones. His incredible sets were just that perfectly big to get dollies and Steadicam through with ease. I loved my conversations with Will about his incredible achievements in creating the Bridgerton sets.... Apart from one in which we were filming in a very special house in London that has one of the very few Counter-levered stair cases still in existence. During an intimate scene on the stairs with Phoebe and Regé, I used the Steadicam rig to film over Phoebe's right shoulder as Regé looks up to her... little did I know that my quick release pull-handle on my vest had worn over £10,000 in damages and created a hole into the wall behind me.

Bridgerton 2 is now in full swing and destined to go for another 6 series, I had a huge amount of fun shooting the first series and wish the cast and crew all the best for the future.





## Who are Mo-Sys?

We are a pioneering innovator and manufacturer of virtual production, remote production, and image robotic products for film, broadcast and television production. For more than 20 years, the Mo-Sys team has pushed technical boundaries, producing unique products that set the benchmark for quality, precision, and performance.

## Innovation and problem solving

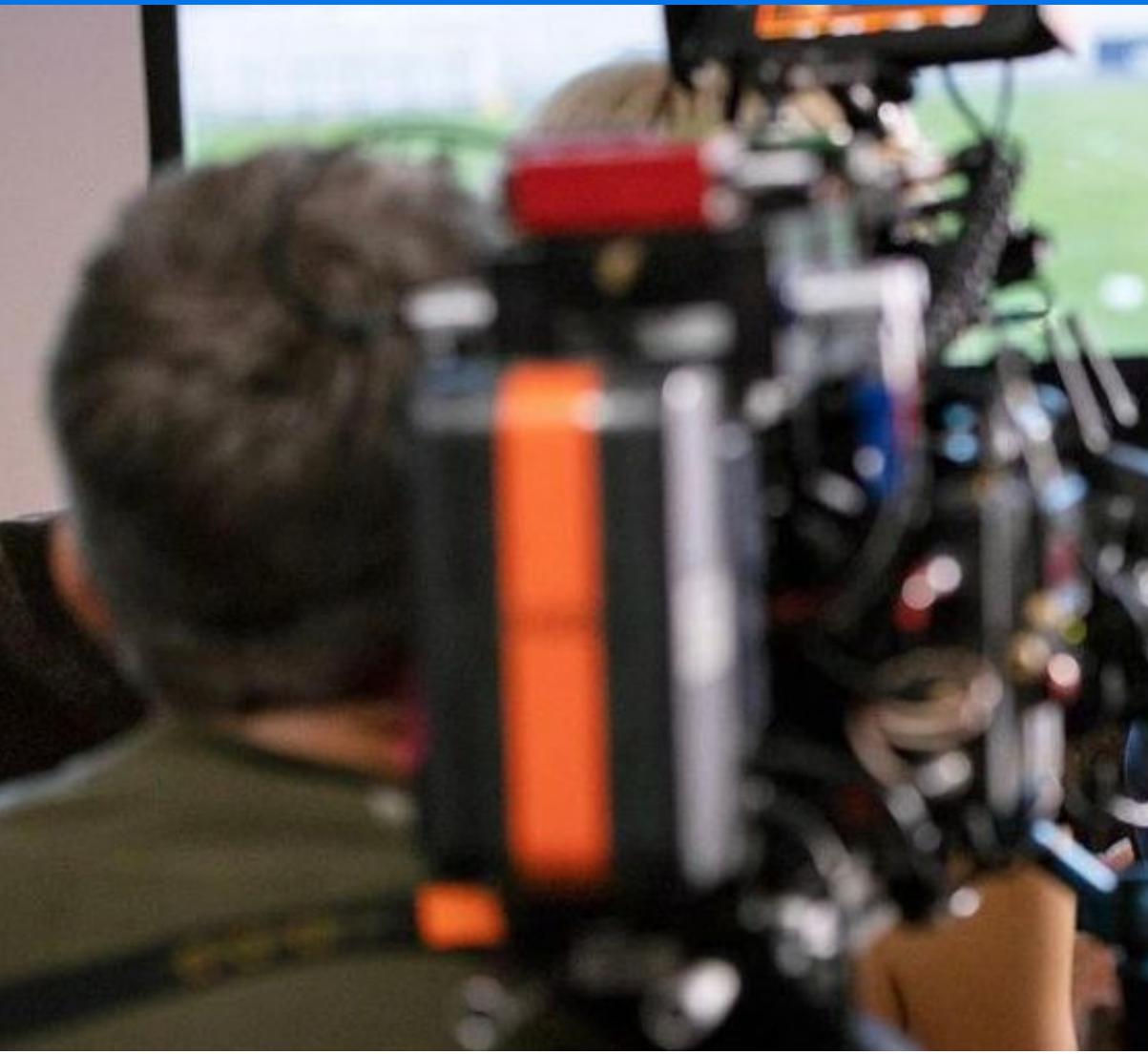
Innovation is at the core of our ethos, whether it is finding smart solutions to existing problems, or inventing the next generation of class leading product. Working with and listening to the top customers in film, broadcast and television production, provides the real-world input we need to match our innovation and experience in creating differentiated products with real value. Whether it is for a live production, the latest streamed television series, or for bespoke projects such as our remote head work for the Academy award-winning film Gravity, Mo-Sys products offer a smarter approach to resolving complex moving image projects.



*"The L40 has fantastic Build quality, great engineering and realistic feedback at the wheels.*

*When I invested in the Mo-sys L40 2 axis remote head, this was my criteria and it has delivered all these. Plus, it takes a heavy package with ease. Highly recommend."*

*Sean Savage ACO*



## By Rich Cornelius ACO

*Ted Lasso* season 2 started principal photography on the 4th January 2021, just as the 3rd lockdown came into effect, directly after the cancelled Christmas break. Apple TV's Covid protocols were very strict—something I hadn't experienced up until then and certainly not since. Standard testing procedures ensued many weeks before the start date and flagged that I had in fact caught the virus, just a week before we were due to start. I quarantined myself for 10 days, which then became 14 due to the Apple policies at that time. I came back onto set in the second week and took over from the Operator who had kindly covered for me up until then. The crew were all kept in check with daily Covid meetings prior to starting the day, together with on-set "Masks Marshalls" that would politely ask you to remain vigilant with your social distancing and mask-wearing—something that was difficult to get used to mentally and also when your eye was up against the viewfinder during the bitterly cold winter months, as clouding the eyepiece was a common occurrence.

For those that aren't aware of, or haven't seen the first series: the show starts with a husband and wife duo that manage the failing, fictitious Richmond FC Premiership football team. It's obvious from the very start of the pilot that it's very dysfunctional, from management down to the locker room. The wife Rebecca, played by Hannah Waddingham, is divorcing her philandering husband, Anthony Head, and decides to punish him by trying to drive the club into the ground, as she realises it's the only thing he really loves. She believes hiring a low level American Football coach from across the pond will create even more chaos and make a laughing stock of the club even though Richmond FC continues to have a popular following due to its legendary players.

Enter Ted Lasso (Jason Sudeikis), the devilishly charismatic and optimistic coach, eager to please despite knowing absolutely nothing about football. Indeed, the show isn't really about football; it's merely a backdrop to how a great life coach can rebuild individuals to be their best self, and the trials and tribulations they go through to get there. The show is peppered with wacky jokes, Americanisms and hilarious fast paced dialogue from Jason (which I was constantly amazed by), poking fun at the differences between our two countries and much more. Spoiler alert: Ted Lasso and his righthand man/walking encyclopaedia, Coach Beard (Brendan Hunt)—who is also infatuated with all things football and has untold knowledge of the game—manages to turn the club around, to the amazement of all who are in it.

The show's football team has an ensemble cast, but the main players are the following: Brett Goldstein plays captain Roy Kent, the legendary veteran player with an attitude, who I believe is loosely based on Roy Keane but I'm no football fan so don't hold me to that. Jamie Tartt is played by Phil Dunster and is the arrogant star striker, dating the supermodel Keeley Jones, played by the lovely Juno Temple. Cristo Fernandez plays Dani Rojas, the lovable Spanish forward and Tartt's rival, a great character who lives and breathes soccer with his catchphrase "Futbol is Life".

which can be heard echoing around the first season. The cast is rounded off with Nick Mohammad, who plays the ex "boot room boy" turned wonder coach, Nathan, and Jeremy Swift, who plays Higgins, the bumbling team secretary. Higgins is akin to an English butler and I'm told the American viewers love him. Lastly, Sarah Niles plays the team Psychologist Dr Sharon, a new character for this season.

Most of the camera crew came back for a second helping but with a little shift in the Trainee and AC positions. DPs David Rom and John Sorapure headed up the department again in pre production and prep. However, John only completed the first two weeks of shooting before stepping off onto a different project and handing over the reigns to David, who became the sole HoD. The 10-part show was shot in blocks and gave space for guest DPs and directors to come on board, allowing David to prep every other episode.

The camera package stayed the same; after some careful consideration into some alternative glass, the decision was made to stick to the original look from the previous season.

The photographic inventory consisted of: 3 Arri Mini LFs; 2 sets of Tokina Vista Primes (18,25,35,40,50,65,85,100 and 135); Arri/Fujinon Alura 45-250mm; Zeiss 28-80mm; and a Zeiss 70-200mm. There were also some extra cameras and lenses brought in, particularly for the "TV" football coverage when needed. We shot at 4.2K for 2:1 extraction.

Grip gear was aplenty and keyed by Anthony Ward, who brought a plethora of options, including GFM jibs and sliders among the standard items we are all used to. The two main cameras remained on Fisher and Chapman dollies, unless we were shooting on the pitch, in which case the dollies were placed on a Western to utilise the bigger wheels. For some of the more action-based football shots, we used a Custom Easy rickshaw and raptor head with a 3 axis gimbal. The Technocrane was also on speed dial and came out to play whenever pre-arranged.

Stabilisation on the show was taken care of via 2 full DJI Ronin 2 packages, operated by myself and Barny Crocker ACO. We alternated blocks accordingly—a slight change from Series 1, which I operated alone. These fantastic devices have changed the way in which I like to work. You can obtain shots only before realised with expensive daily hires via stab heads. The 3rd minLF, C Camera, was always prepped and rigged into the R2 ring and was ready to go at a moment's notice; just a swap of handsets and we could quickly go from handheld to hard mount, either on dollies or cranes or to rickshaw and vehicle mount, all remote-operated via the Master or Inertia Wheels. We had a fantastic 3rd AD who also doubled up as a football drill coordinator, so once the skills had been practiced, all the action football shots were executed on pitch using the rickshaw with a Raptor isolator arm/Ronin 2 combo and either Barny or I had the luxury of sitting in a warm tent operating the head—a great place to be to get out of the cold.

I always use this method of working and have carried this set up with me for a couple of years now. I'm constantly putting it forward to DPs and directors I've not worked with, who have been amazed by its flexibility despite not knowing anything about it previously. It's a pleasure to receive feedback after a project has been completed, so much so that I sold my Steadicam just before lockdown as I found I just wasn't using it.

The shoot ran for a total of 22 weeks and took place mainly in West London studios in Hayes, which was picked due to Hayes and Yeading football ground conveniently being across the road from stage—a location we used frequently, whenever we needed to shoot any football action or on-pitch scenes during training. This season, Apple took over the entire space of 6 stages. This included the boardroom, locker room and adjoining treatment rooms; the gym, press room, entrance hall, hallway and showers; Higgins' and Keeley's offices; Ted's apartment; and the real Richmond pub (an exact carbon copy of the watering hole used in the first season and a set used a lot throughout the course of the show as it became a place where Ted and Beard went to decompress and work over ideas to help the team). This also became a place where you would find some of the show's other comic relief, in the landlady of the pub, May—a loud-mouthed Barbara Windsor type character, not afraid of a curse word, alongside the lovable trio of diehard Richmond fans: Baz, Jeremy and Paul.

A lot of our days and weeks were spent shooting the locker room, the gym and the coaches' office, which was sandwiched between the two. The locker room—especially when the entire team was present inside—took up a lot of time blocking and eventually shooting. Sometimes there may be anything from 8 to 10 characters speaking during a scene, which often involved multiple eye lines and sometimes a lot of movement. That, combined with a room full of lads, with the first season behind them, made it very easy to lose control; a recipe for a very raucous changing room, just as it should be. This however, was managed very well via the multiple ADs we had on the show. Many a morning we'd get the news we were in the locker room, which always came as a shock, particularly if you'd failed to read the advance schedule the day before, and you needed to mentally prepare.

Another trying location was the coaches' office—often a three-hander, if not more. And with very limited space and glass all around, it became a delicate dance of dollies, two boom swingers and everything else that comes with it, all with a degree in looking like a ninja or becoming invisible. The hallways and corridors were an obvious place for tracking "walk and talks", which were a joy to shoot as I had just taken delivery of the new Flowcine Gimbalink—a support system that incorporates two mini X-arms units that fly any gimbal from underneath and attach to their new X-spine vest. The results were buttery-smooth shots—something I have been obtaining previously with an easy rig and serene arm, which was also fantastic but you came unstuck as low ceilings or doorways became your Kryptonite. I feel it's a game-changing piece of equipment, unlike anything before it.

The season wasn't without its locations, and most of them were in or around Richmond and the Green. Outside the pub and Ted's apartment were great places to be; cobblestone streets, full of character. A stone's throw from there was Rebecca's house: a huge mansion overlooking the common that was mostly used for its grand kitchen, bedrooms and occasionally the guest room. I shudder to think of the location fee.



The production were allowed (and utilised) two football stadiums during the season, one being Crystal Palace FC and the other, the grandaddy of them all, Wembley Stadium. Clearly, the show had an abundance of footy fans and certainly there were a few in the camera department. My ACs were beside themselves when they entered the hollowed turf and were allowed pitch-side, millimetres from the perfect blades of grass. (God help you if you stepped over the line and onto the pitch.) Access was also granted to the home and away changing rooms, in which we filmed an important scene involving one of the star players and his father—an emotional turning point in the show's story.

VFX were prevalent whenever the team were playing league or championship games. Amazingly, the visual effects team managed to work their magic; they allowed us to use the football pitch located over the road and were able to put the players into any situation and on any pitch in the Premier League. However, the most impressive work they completed was the crowd replication. They managed to fill stadiums and composite pre-recorded crowd shots, dropping them into the foreground to create huge depth in the crowd.

There are actually some very interesting walk-throughs online into how they completed those shots so intricately—something I certainly wouldn't have the patience for. Some of the football enthusiasts on the crew managed to get themselves imbedded in the crowd of their own teams. (Whenever they were lucky enough to play them, hopefully they made the cut.) It was extremely handy to have the pitch next to the studio as it was a small move to get the magliners and trucks over. However, the location seemed to be in the twilight zone of weather. We were filming in the heart of winter but I've never experienced cold like it. It was absolutely freezing. We quite often managed to experience all four seasons in one day so any daily coming onto the show was told to bring all their clothes. All of them.



The poor talent from L.A didn't know what hit them and they made us all laugh by constantly asking between takes "is this as cold as it's going to get?" while trying not to let their teeth chatter reciting lines. With the temperature being what it was, and with a crew full of football players, a property department full of balls and a pitch with a goal at both ends, everyone thought they were in the Premiership; many a kick-about ensued to keep warm, whenever the moment arose. One day, we had extreme sun and then a snow blizzard all within one scene. Miraculously, we managed to shoot around it but at one point, we were looking at summer sun on one side of lunch and then a snow covered pitch on the other.

As the months progressed, we managed to get some better locations and one scene in particular posed a slight problem. The new character Dr Sharon lives by the river and the episode called for her to ride her bike—something her character loves to do. Whilst filming the scene, after a dialogue heavy preamble, Dr Sharon had to get on her bike and cycle off. After a few takes and several aborted attempts to push off uphill, it became obvious she couldn't ride a bike and consequently we found out that she had only been practicing a few days before the scene.

# # WE ARE RICHMOND



Micaela Assaad; Irina Cernea; Lucas Campain (on phone as absent); Iwan Prys Reynolds; Barny Crocker ACO; Rich Cornelius ACO; David Rom; Callum MacDermott; Rich Jakes; Robbie Chapman; and George Pedol

It was a funny moment and once it was common knowledge, we all put our heads together to visually get the idea across to the viewer that this person could actually cycle. The geography of the shot hadn't quite been established so we managed to move the action to an area with a slight downward incline, which enabled her to push off, get up some speed and therefore balance to sell the wide shot. The rest of the day was spent towing Sharon on an electric tracking vehicle, supplemented with wide shots of a double who could actually ride a bike. We eventually managed to collect some wonderful shots in the sun along the river.

With the show and its content embedded in football, it wouldn't be right if there weren't a few guest appearances from the sport's famous faces. Amongst the game's well known commentators and referees, we had the honour of working with cameos from Ian Wright, Thierry Henry and Gary Lineker (all legends of the game), many of the crew members squealing with joy when they saw their names on the call sheet. One of the scenes towards the end of the series is an episode where Coach Beard goes on a crazy night out. He starts to get tormented by Henry and Lineker and can't seem to shake them from his mind. They end up following him everywhere. I've worked with footballers before and you never know how it will turn out, especially if they have to act and recite lines. I must say, I was absolutely blown away; not only could these two get through the scene without even a stutter but they were really decent actors, with quite an impressive range.

This season has really put time into developing all the different character arcs, so it really feels like a third series is imminent.

The first series dropped just at the beginning of lockdown and was simply the best tonic for a depressing situation, with its upbeat comedy and heart-warming tone. It was nominated for a number of awards, including the Golden Globes, Writers Guild, Screen Actors Guild, Peabody and Critics Choice, whilst also racking up 20 Emmy nominations alone. There was one moment midway through the second season, not long after all the nominations came in: We were all called in to the locker room. It was a Covid nightmare and something they turned a blind eye to. Every crew member was in there as news came in that the show had starting winning. Many of the actors had won, but the main event was Jason Sudeikis picking up a win for best actor. Upon arrival onto the stage, the whole place erupted and everyone went crazy. We all knew then that it was confirmed as something special, and his humble speech made it all the more so. I feel privileged to have been a part of something that has brought happiness to so many people and made them smile at a very difficult time. We were all given gifts by Apple and received one heck of a bottle of wine, as a thank you for helping make the show what it is.

News just in and just before going to press: Ted Lasso won 7 awards at the Emmy's on September 19th for the following:

Outstanding Single-Camera Picture Editing For A Comedy Series 2021

Outstanding Lead Actor In A Comedy Series 2021

Outstanding Supporting Actress In A Comedy Series 2021

Outstanding Comedy Series 2021

Outstanding Sound Mixing For A Comedy Or Drama Series (Half-Hour) And Animation 2021

Outstanding Supporting Actor In A Comedy Series 2021

Outstanding Casting For A Comedy Series 2021

It's inspiring and rewarding to be part of a show that is so well received. Well done to everybody involved.



Roll on season 3...



Junior Lucano  
on Trinity.

# Who is operating on what?

## Wendy Schneider Entertainment Agency

**Peter Cavaciuti** just wrapped *The School of Good and Evil* with DoP John Schwartzman and is currently shooting *The People We Hate at the Wedding* with DoP Oliver Stapleton. **Mike Heathcote** is currently shooting *Transformers: Rise of the Beasts* with DoP Enrique Chediak. **Christopher McGuire** recently wrapped *Black Adam* with DoP Lawrence Sher for Warner Bros. **Andrew Fletcher** is currently shooting *Masters of the Air* for HBO with DoP Adam Akrapaw.

## ARRI CREW

**Paul Edwards** completed B Camera/Steadicam duties on *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* in April and has since concentrated on Steadicam dailies, including *Havoc* (starring Tom Hardy) and reshoots for the untitled Guy Ritchie Film. Paul starts the second *Enola Holmes* film in September. After completing several back-to-back Netflix films in Scotland, **Derek Walker** took the place of Ben Wilson (thanks Ben) on the latest Star Wars TV series *Andor*, which was great fun. He is currently on the 2nd unit of *Aquaman 2*. Derek would like to thank all the amazing crew he's worked with recently for their support and for being great to be around! **Chris Plevin** is just finishing up on *Matilda*.

## Sara Putt

**George Amos** is operating on *Masters of the Air* for Amblin TV. **Andrei Austin** is operating on *The Man who fell to Earth* and will then go on to *Anansi Boys*. **Andrew Bainbridge** is operating on a block of *Lockwood and Co* for Dir Joe Cornish. **Jon Beacham** is operating on *The Lark*. **Danny Bishop** has been busy doing dailies on "Indy 5", *Citadel* and *Masters of the Air*. **Ed Clark** is about to start on the second series of *Good Omens* with DoP Gavin Finney. **James Frater** is on location in Berlin working on *John Wick 4*. **Ilana Garrard** has now wrapped on *The Swimmers*. **Zoe Goodwin-Stuart** is prepping on *Wonka* before shoot starts at the end of September. **James Leigh** is working in Belfast on *Tom Jones* with DoP David Mackie. **Will Lyte** continues on *The Lark*. **Vince McGahon** continues on See Saw's *Embankment*, which stars Gary Oldman for See Saw Films. **Julian Morson** is on the much-anticipated 5th instalment of Indiana Jones (Indy 5). **Aga Szeliga** continues working on *Red Gun* for HBO. **Tom Walden** has recently wrapped on *The Midwich Cuckoos*. **Rick Woollard** has been operating Steadicam on commercials for Booking.com, ASOS, BP and Habitat.

## SARAH PRINCESTONE

**Junior Agyeman** Steadicam Operator is shooting *Inside Man*. **Simon Baker** Camera and Steadicam Operator is filming *The Crown* series 5, directed by Benjamin Carron. **Cosmo Campbell** Camera and Steadicam Operator has just finished shooting B Camera and Steadicam on *The Power*, a TV Series for Amazon Studios.

**Michael Carstensen** Camera and Steadicam Operator is shooting *Willow* for DoP Stijn van der Veken, a Disney+ TV series based on the 1988 movie with Warwick Davies. **Matt Fisher** Camera and Steadicam Operator is currently shooting *Conversations With Friends*. **Rob Hart** Camera and Steadicam Operator is the DoP on *Consecration*. **James Layton** Camera and Steadicam Operator is shooting the Apple TV+ series *Wool*, from the *Silo* series of novellas by Hugh Howey. **Nic Milner** 2nd Unit DoP and Operator has just finished on *The Peripheral* for Amazon Studios and Warner Bros. **Dan Nightingale** Camera and Steadicam Operator is shooting *Sherwood*. **Peter Robertson** Camera and Steadicam Operator is shooting *Wonka*, for Warner Bros. The feature film stars Timothée Chalamet as a young Willy Wonka. The director is Paul King and the DoP is Seamus McGarney.

**Eric Balias** has finished Netflix show *Mallorca* as A Camera and Steadicam for the Spain Unit. **Marc Bénoliel** has wrapped up a few features film and a tv series this summer. He is about to work on Netflix feature film *Apnea*. Richard Bradbury is currently A Camera Operator on the fourth and final series of *Killing Eve* for BBC America/AMC. Earlier this year, **Lucy Bristow** did B Camera on a film called *The Outfit* for FilmNation. Dick Pope was DoP and Graham Moore directed.



Adam Mendry  
on #BBA  
in The Baltic Sea

**Anthony Bowes** is currently working on *Fate: The Winx Saga* Season 2 (block 2-3 and dailies on Block 1) for Netflix, as Steadicam/B Camera Operator. **James Burgess** is B-Cam and Steadicam on a show called *Evergreen*. **Richard Cornelius** is on *Man Vs Bee* for Netflix. **Barny Crocker** is working on a Netflix action film called *Havoc*. **Paul Donachie** is in New Mexico, DoP *Better Call Saul*. **Jamie Harcourt** and **Gareth Hughes** are working on an Apple TV series, working title: *Brussels*.



Simon Jayes,  
feeling the force on  
*The Mandalorian*

Bob Shipsey and Mihalis Margaritis on *Pennyworth*



**Chris Hutchinson** ACO is A Cam/Steadicam on the final block of the HBO/BBC production *Gentleman Jack* with DPs Nick Dance BSC and Johann Perry. **Simon Finney** is working on *The Crown* Series 5: Episodes 1,2,4,5,7 and 8 with DoP Ben Wilson. **Torquil Fleming-Boyd** has finished working on *Blood Sisters* in the US. **Sven Joukes** starts shooting B-Cam/Steadicam on a new series for Netflix and VRT called *Diamonds*. **James Leigh** is currently shooting *Sanditon* in Bristol. **James Burgess** is operating B camera on the film *Enforcer*.



Watcharawit Yainta is on *Shantaram*

Right now, **Junior Lucano** is doing some TVC jobs, having completed a big Chinese film this year. (It will be their first film using the ACO next to their name!) **Mihalis Margaritis** is on location for *Pennyworth* S3 as B-Cam/Steadicam (DP: Milos Moore, Bob: A-Cam). Since August, **Adam Mendry** has been working dailies on a Polish HBO series near the Polish Baltic sea. **Darren Miller**: "The most recent productions that I have been working dailies on as Drone Camera Operator/Aerial DoP are as follows: *The Lark*, *Bridgerton*, *The Crown*, *Devils Hour*, *Red Rose*, *Brussels*, *Trigger Point*, *Peaky Blinders* and *The Bubble*. We are often requested now to fly the Arri mini LF or Sony Venice cameras with anamorphic lenses on heavy lift aircraft. **Matt Poynter** is working on a Lucas Films/Disney project with **Michael Carstensen**. **Bob Shipsey** is on *Pennyworth* Season 3. **Peter Taylor** is currently doing DP Splinter Unit on HBO *The Nevers*. (There is no official second unit.) **Jonathan Tyler** is on *Aquaman 2*, working with **Sean Savage** and **Julian Bucknell** in London.

**Tom Williams** ACO is A Cam & Steadicam (with DoP Guilo Bicarri) on location in Blackpool. They have just finished shooting 8 Episodes of *Stay Close* for Netflix, with Director Daniel O Hara. **Tom Wilkinson** is STILL working A Camera and Steadicam on *Jack Ryan* season 3. **Watcharawit Yainta** is currently working on *Shantaram* (starring Charlie Hunnam) as B Cam/ Steadicam Op in Bangkok, Thailand.



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# The weirdest picture I ever shot

by Fabrizio Sciarra ACO

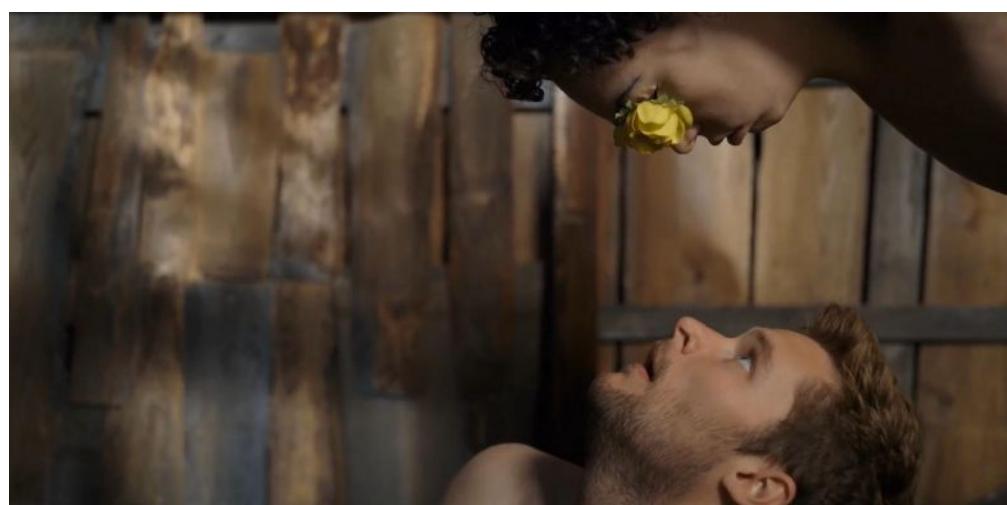
It all started for me on a quiet afternoon during the spring of 2018, when I had a video call with Paweł Pogorzelski, Director of Photography, at the time fresh from the success of *Hereditary*. My agent didn't have many details about the project, so to me, much was left as a surprise. A bit uncomfortable (a lot actually) not knowing what was coming, as soon as Paweł started unraveling what the picture would be about, it got even more uncomfortable (if that was even possible). Completely out of my comfort zone due to the total lack of knowledge about the genre, I still felt an irresistible and inexplicable attraction to it. Well, actually I know what it was: it's not every day I get offered a single camera feature film, and Paweł and Ari Aster (DP & Director) were looking for a skilled Operator on wheels and Steadicam to shoot the film. How to resist this offer?

Long story short, I was packing for three months to spend in the lovely Budapest, only to realise that *Midsommar* (admittedly the title is a giveaway) would be shot 95% in exteriors and in plain, straight, unforgiving and brutal daylight. The set was smartly built on the outskirts of town, just 20 minutes drive from the centre, and to my surprise, next to a local airfield (eyes rolling). The ambitions were very high, and Ari proved himself to be the genius he really is, right from the very beginning. "Visionary director" is definitely a description that suits him. His mind—as I discovered during the following shooting weeks—was a melting pot of precise and well-defined vision. My duty was to assist him and Paweł in putting the ideas into practice and to block and execute the shots. Now, as a disclaimer, I have never in my life shot anything even close to such an "unconventional" picture. It's hard to describe it for me. I've heard and seen reviews that are just at the extremes of the scale. Some described it as a "masterpiece" (I dare to say!), while some others label it as "unwatchable".

Well, it definitely left a mark, in one way or another.

Every single frame was coming from Ari's mastermind and followed his directional specific instruction: that the camera would only be allowed to witness the events as a real participant, almost as if it had a life of its own, but at the same time (hopefully) never generating distraction or dragging viewers attention from the events. Since I was still very uncomfortable on what and how to shoot, I was "forced" to frame in a way I would never choose, even at gun point. But of course, respectful of the director's vision, I had to obey for each and every frame. (Admittedly I cheated a few times, but I think Ari knows by now!) Paweł chose the Panavision DXL2 cameras to shoot the picture—at the time only a "prototype", known on paper and via rumours heard on the grapevine. I'll leave all the techy details out of this as it's already been discussed in depth in various articles for the American Cinematographer magazine.

After a very tough start—which included losing the first AD and my entire camera crew in week one!—we found ourselves climbing back to a very punishing schedule, in what I can only describe as a hellish 42 degrees Celsius on average, every single day of our shot. The cast was phenomenal, considering the difficulties faced on set everyday. It's hard to understand if you haven't seen the picture, but what basically happened filming-wise, is that each and every scene in the film has no coverage, at all. I mean none. Nicht. Nada. Nothing. So if I was uncomfortable before then, my dolly seat started to get real hot. "What do you mean with 'no coverage' Ari? Are you sure? Serious? Have we got this?" It took me a couple of weeks to "understand" the flow and eventually start enjoying it.





So, going back to the cast: this picture has provided me with the most beautiful memories brought home from a project, ever. As we were all sharing the same hostile temperature during the loooooong shooting days, and each and every one of us was dutifully committed to it, we developed some sort of "brothers in arms" atmosphere. On top of that, the fact that we were all staying at the usual New York residence made our stay very pleasant, sharing a lot of evenings together and culinary weekends exploring the local restaurants. I made a lot of great friends on that set, who I'll cherish for life. The experience of being spoon fed pasta AND pizza by Florence Pugh sitting next to me is hard to un-see.

Difficult to believe, but we had three different cast "groups" on set (I'm unsure of how to better describe this): The main cast from the UK/US; the local cast; and for those who aren't aware, the Swedish cast. Yes, most of the supporting cast was originally from Sweden— Ari wanted real Swedish actors.

Most of them were (and still are) top cast actors in Sweden! The oddity is, that they mostly had no lines at all, which would lead you to believe they were simple extras, but you couldn't be more wrong if you thought so. Actually, they really brought a lot of the Swedish Midsummer to the project. Plus, Ari's maniacal attention to detail wouldn't have allowed anything less. I still have an infinite number of anecdotes from the set, but I'm afraid this would get really too long, and please accept my apologies for cutting this short, but while writing this I've been prepping for the next picture, and tomorrow, principal photography will begin. (I'll have some more tales as I'm shooting with Tim Burton, but I'll tell you later!)

Anyway, to conclude, the immense pleasure that I mostly enjoy is that people constantly ask me how the shot was, and how amazing it was. (How would they know?) I really consider myself privileged to have had the chance to shoot it, and I am still very grateful to Ari and Pawel for having me on board with them.

Skol!

**Thanks Fabrizio Sciarra ACO**

# Magnificent 8

By Andrei Austin

ACO, ASSOC BSC, SOC

## 1) What was it that got you into operating?

My story started at an early age, looking with amazement at the photographs my dad would take on his medium format camera.



The ones taken on our European holidays were especially enthralling. Many were in Black & White and when I look at them now, they bring memories flooding back and even back then, indicated to me the power of the image.

Fast forward to my late teens, I'd also become a keen amateur photographer; taking photos, processing the negs and printing the pictures at night in the family bathroom, using the sodium street light as a "safelight".

My professional career though, started with a job as Trainee Camera Operator at the BBC, where I spent 9 happy years helping to make anything and everything, from news, current affairs and State/Royal events, to light entertainment, sport, commercials and TV drama, both studio-based and on location.

After picking up many skills and developing expertise in the many crafts of camera operating, including Steadicam, I left the BBC for a career as a Freelance Drama Operator.

## 2) What 3 films inspired you when you were younger to pursue a career as a Camera Operator?

The films that made a deep impression were the Ridley Scott films, *Alien* and *Blade Runner*, and also the film *Apocalypse Now*.

All three films have the ability to transport me to their worlds, be it outer space, a dystopian metropolis or the tropical rain forest.



## 3) The Death On The Nile Camera Team.

On the recent film *Death On The Nile*, I was contacted by the fabulous Haris Zambarloukos BSC GSC to work as his B Camera Operator.

I would be joining an established team comprising Luke Redgrave SOC as A Camera Operator; Dean Thompson as A Camera 1st AC; and Dom Cheung A Camera 2nd AC. On my team, 1st AC was Simon Heck and 2nd AC Richard Davis.

Our C-Camera/Stedicam Operator was the amazing Stamos Triantasylos. Our Trainee was Mia Castles and our Central Loader, keeping it all together, was Rana Darwish.

The Director/Producer/star of *Death On The Nile* (*DOTN*) is Sir Kenneth Branagh. Luke has operated for Haris on many of his films, so they have built a trust and modus operandi over the years. I cannot thank them all enough for allowing me the space to slot into that relationship.

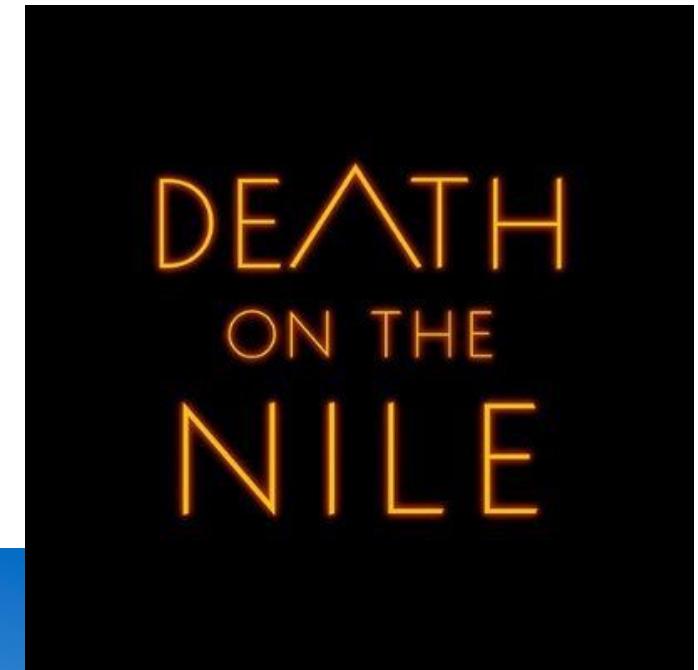
## 4) The DoP-Director-Operator Triangle

Sir Kenneth trusts his camera teams a lot, so whenever Luke was shooting a sequence that required just one camera, Sir Kenneth would send me off with a splinter crew to shoot inserts or SFX. We were shooting on 65mm with the Panaflex 65 cameras, so my previous film experience came to the fore.

The shots were choreographed by me according to his brief and I would then record a rehearsal on Qtake, show Haris for his feedback, then grab a spare moment with Sir Kenneth to get his amendments or the go-ahead. Once everyone was happy, I would go back to the setup and commit it to film.

Haris is a special DoP and as well as being an artist, he is very up-to-date with technology, so I loved the creative working environment he creates.

Sir Kenneth decides every shot and will select his lens with a Director's finder (or on occasion Artemis Pro on my iPad). He will ride the dolly, making sure every detail in the frame is just right. His capacity to multi-task from Director to Actor to Producer is huge, and I could only marvel at his abilities.



## 5. Describe a particularly tricky shot

The Panavision 65 is a very large and very heavy camera, so normal rules of camera placement don't apply. Sir Kenneth wanted a shot through a hatchway on the Nile cruiser on *DOTN*. No matter how we tried, we couldn't place the camera exactly where he wanted the shot. I had to admit defeat, but I suggested a slightly adjusted viewpoint that he was delighted with.

Stamos did all of the Steadicam on the film, so respect must go to him, because his timing & choreography were IMMACULATE, especially carrying the weight of the camera package for such long takes. When the film is released, you'll see what I mean.



## 6) What do you enjoy most about being an Operator?

Operating on films/TV is absorbing and I love immersing myself into the story the director wishes to tell. The mechanics of camera operating are a component, but the emotion that an Operator can impart to the audience is also a major factor in how I put a shot or sequence together. It gives me immense pleasure to see the finished production and to know that I have made a contribution.

I love the collaboration between the Operator, Grip(s), 1st AC and Actor(s) in bringing a shot to life. The "dance" that occurs between those cohorts is probably the most satisfying part.

## 7) What else have you been working on recently?

During the recent Covid-19 lockdown, I received another call from Haris to work on Sir Kenneth Branagh's film *Belfast*.

This was a smaller film than *DOTN* and much more personal to Sir Kenneth. This time it was a digital film but in Black & White.

More recently, I joined Ben Smithard BSC on his comedy film *The Bubble*, directed by Judd Apatow. Ben likes to operate A Camera, so I slotted in as B Camera/Steadicam. Judd's way of working was fascinating, as he'd shoot long 20 minute takes with the actors loosely rolling the script and Judd interjecting over a loud-speaker with funny lines made up on the spot.

Needless to say, there were many occasions where the team and I would be shaking the camera with pure seam-bursting laughter.

More recently, I've been A Camera/Steadicam on CBS/Showtime's *Tinkertown* (aka *The Man Who Fell to Earth*) starring, among others, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Naomie Harris and Clarke Peters.

## 8) What's Next?

I've been using digital technology for a while now, so I want to advance that to take advantage of the virtual platforms that are emerging.

I can also foresee robotics increasing their impact on the art and craft of camera operating. These can only enhance and improve our skills as I see it. So bring it on!

A nice way to end is with the quote Sir Ken gave Luke Redgrave about the role of the operator...



# Sir Kenneth Branagh's views on an operator:

*"An imaginative and creative Camera Operator is a kind of magician. When their technical mastery is allied with the vision of the Director and Cinematographer, the contribution they make is mysterious and beautiful. So much is wrapped up in the feel for the shot, whether static or moving, and this quality is not one to teach or learn but to be constantly open to, and experience. When the great operators access this, the results are sublime."*