



IN THE FRAME

Association of Camera Operators

NOV - OCTOBER 2022

On set with Danny Bishop
“ALL QUIET ON
THE WESTERN
FRONT”

Peter Robertson Danny Bishop
Adam Samuelson Martin Foley Chris Plevin
Peter Taylor Richard Bevan Koon W. Ya-inta
Jamie Harcourt Jasper Van Gheluwe



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PRESIDENT'S POV

Peter Robertson - ACO



Working late again but hopefully creating screen magic. In Italy on *Without Blood* L-R: Pete Robertson ACO (A Cam Operator); Massimo (B Camera grip); Emiliano Tupai (B Cam Operator); Seamus Mcgarvey BSC (DOP).

Looking back through my documents, I see that around this time last year I put my first President's POV together, after an intense work period involving long shooting and travelling hours.

A year has moved on and I'm back on a break between jobs— a break that was much needed after long hours took their toll, once again. So what has changed? The world has moved on in significant ways. We have a new monarch, prime minister and numerous football managers. More importantly, another monarch, king of cinema Jean-Luc Godard has sadly left us but not without bequeathing to us a legacy of innovation and brilliance to be utilised by those who have the imagination.

As I bob my way slowly up the Croatian coast on a car ferry bound from Greece to Italy, the slow pace of the journey (which I've made many times over the years) is perfect for decompressing and reflecting on such issues. What is obvious is that the long hours culture has to change. Of course, our job is to chase the light and create screen magic. In Godardian terms, we are keepers of the cinematic imagination but we are all experiencing work-life balance issues. Nothing could epitomise the situation more acutely than the conversation recently conducted on "The Inn" about the positions being adopted by producers over the bank holiday for the Queen's funeral. Although some producers, who must be applauded, have taken an enlightened approach by paying crews a day off and rescheduling in a reasonable way, others have not been quite so understanding. On a day when GPs have been given time off, it seems ludicrous that we, who are considerably further down the life-saving ladder, should be asked to work. If there was ever a need for a "standardised" approach, so we all know where we stand, it's right now. We all have to make sure that our next round of negotiations on the PACT agreements stick, demanding full and committed involvement from all of our members, union and non-union alike.

This matter is important for our own health and that of our families, not to mention the more effective productivity a healthy workforce brings. It also means that I may be able to take a speedier route to Greece on future holidays, with less need to decompress... I may take the train next time.

IN THE TRENCHES OF “ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT”

By Danny Bishop - ACO



When I was around eight years old, my father sat me down and made me watch Sergio Leone's *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. A lot of the film and its meaning went over my head but I remember the emotions I felt as a kid during certain scenes—emotions I still feel when I watch as an adult. One such scene occurs when Morricone's music starts and the camera drifts down on a crane, revealing a huge battle scene vista as Eastwood walks onto the front line of the American Civil war and meets the drunk captain. I remember, even as a child, the music and the sadness of seeing those soldiers laying there in the trenches as the captain describes the destruction of man and the futility of war. My grandfather Douglas Bishop had served in the Second World War in the Royal Artillery, stationed in Egypt and the Middle East. He was a quiet man who spoke little about the war, and I wish I had the chance to speak to him now. When he did tell me stories about it, I didn't think I could believe it; it didn't seem real but it was always exciting to hear. He always called it The Great War and his dislike for the Germans was very real. It's only now, as an adult, that I understand what he—like many soldiers—went through, especially when I read his letters to my grandmother a few years ago. He was a young man, who'd never left London, and here he was in Kuwait, in an oil field driving generals about. I grew up constantly thinking about him and about soldiers and battles. Like much of my generation, he was my direct link to the war—thankfully, a link my children don't have and are lucky enough not to think about.

I was also at that age where I sat and watched a deluge of films repeatedly with my dad. They all seemed very exciting to me at that time—*Where Eagles Dare*, *Hamburger Hill*, *The Dambusters*, *Saving Private Ryan*, the list goes on. They all appeared to convey the same message about war: there just never is a winner. The breathtaking scenes in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, photographed by the legendary Vittorio Storaro ASC AIC, always resonated with me. The scenes of Sheen going into the American camp at night, lit by flares, fires and festoons, smoke in the air, the soundtrack, those beautiful lenses showing war in all its harrowing craziness, and then compounded by Oliver Stone's *Platoon*; Willem Dafoe running through the jungle, collapsing with his arms in the air to haunting classical music. I've never forgotten these images, and this was all before the war we are now seeing unfold in the Ukraine.

In 1929, Erich Maria Remarque wrote a novel: *All Quiet on the Western Front*. It spawned a new literary genre and

told the story of a group of friends, detached from civilian life, who went out to the front line, just as Remarque had done in 1917. It was adapted into a movie in 1930 and won Best Picture and Best Director in the second year of the newly formed Oscars. It was an anti-war film, told from the Germans' point of view and therefore, unique; the massive loss of life and negligible gains from the fighting are constantly emphasised. It was clearly a film people wanted to see, in order to understand both sides, after the conditions and loss of life of World War I. This was a film and book I had seen and studied at school, so I knew it well, and certainly on my list of movies which have shaped my perception of war. It was also the starting point for the next 100 years of cinema and its relationship with war.

I have been very fortunate to work with Director Edward Berger on his last few jobs, including *Patrick Melrose* and *Your Honor*, all of them photographed by James Friend ASC BSC, whom I have worked with since 2008. Ed is a unique and gifted director and in both of those jobs, the story follows strong characters who are central to the narrative and composition. Berger has always pushed me as an Operator to think constantly on set and always go for the best shot, without compromise. He raised my level and I love operating for him. The collaboration between Ed and James, and the Director/DOP/Operator triangle, allows beautiful storytelling and precision framing. When they asked me to operate a Camera on Netflix's remake of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, I actually couldn't believe it. I had never operated on a war movie before, but had so much respect for, and memories of, this genre. Unsurprisingly, I was excited to get started.

At the tail end of 2020, we were of course in COVID-19 hell and lock down had grounded the world to a halt. James and Ed sat in a hotel in Berlin shot-listing the movie. I remember getting the shot list emailed through, along with the story boards and I had never been given so much detail for a picture before— all of the main action scenes were storyboarded. I already had a very good idea of the film in my head and this fitted Ed and James' shot list perfectly. I could read them and have a good understanding of what they were aiming for and how they wanted it to look. In January 2021, I left London for the last time, knowing I wouldn't come back until June. It was incredibly hard to process with two small children. I checked all my kit in at Heathrow terminal 5 and went through to departures. There were no shops open, no restaurants and no people. It was so spooky—like the world was fighting its own war. Once in Prague I had five weeks prep with

Ed and James. The biggest challenge on my first day was working out how to move the camera in the mud. I cannot put a big enough emphasis on how it felt on the first day when I arrived at Milovice, an old Russian air base and run way. The battle field had been designed around the sun path, south facing, so James could always shoot against the light. All the way to the left was the French trench and all the way to the right was the German trench. Designed by the brilliant Christian M. Goldbeck, no man's land had been captured perfectly; there were burnt out trees, the land had been shredded, craters were dug, and corpses littered the vista. It was like I was there. It had an immense sadness to it. I walked around the trenches, which hadn't been dressed; it was all new wood, just the structures, but it took my breath away. I knew it was going to look so real and the thought of running about with a camera was beginning to really excite me.

The mud was insane—like a liquid soup. The service roads that were around the trenches were so tricky to walk in, let alone manoeuvre a camera or indeed an actor in. James and I sat in our flat for hours on end, late at night, discussing what we wanted to do. One option that was floated was the wire cam with four towers, like goal posts either end of the battlefield. That way we could move the camera anywhere we wanted and keep it off the ground. It was an expensive idea but worth exploring, so we went to Berlin to test it. I knew instantly that Ed wouldn't like it. The process and programming of it would be too slow; I know the way Ed works and he loves to be with the character and shoot fast, giving the time to the actors and maximising the correct amount of shots to suit the scene in the time we have. I didn't think the wire cam would have given us that. We had to fly back to England for a day as James was testing cameras and I managed to hijack the end of the test to look at the Stabileye. I had never used it before but had heard such good things. I devised a shot in Arri like I would a Steadicam shot and used one of the members of staff to be a soldier. I knew it would work well if we were doing fast shots, so I deliberately devised a shot that was slow, creeping with the soldier holding a flag arm as a gun. Slow steps, testing high to low and moving round the soldier, finally he got shot and I was about 15 feet away. I got the grips to walk the Stabileye into him slowly as he lay on the floor, into a close up. It blew me away. I could see that the possibilities of it in the mud were endless, as long as I could work with the team well and come up with the shots. Back in Prague we watched the test in a viewing room, with Ed and producer Malte Grunert. I had to stand up there, talk about it, and put my belief behind it, as well as my operating. I was understandably nervous, but



convinced it was right. They agreed to have the Stabileye with us in Prague, run of show, which would now become our main head on techno cranes, plus arms and vehicles as well. James also decided upon a mixture of cameras; the main camera would be the Alexa 65 with DNA and Tribe 7 lenses. We used the Arri LF as our camera on the Stabileye due to weight issues and we even had a 3D printed clip-on matte box to keep the package light, carrying the Sony Venice for night shoots and low light photography.

Arri in Prague were awesome; they gave us a techno crane for testing in the warehouse and we built the Stabileye and practised with it going on and off the crane, up and down stairs. We then spent a week in Prague at the battlefield, testing out moving the camera with UK Key Grip Matt Budd and the Czech key grip Michal 'Schala' Hersálek. In freezing cold conditions, using comms and operating remotely, we first tested moving the Stabileye in the hand, running about with it on foot, stopping and starting. Then we had it on a 6x6 quad on a black arm and on a jib, backwards and forwards, exhausting the 1st AD Benedict Hoermann, who was running. In the end our Stabileye tech Peter Witcombe, who had worked with Deakins on *1917*, asked us to explore the option of just holding it on the quad. So Budd just sat there at the back, holding the Stabileye, his arms operating like a Steadicam arm. Over the hills and craters and mud, it was the best option. It looked fantastic and we had complete control over what we could do, adjusting speed and height. We also spent a day testing it on the Hexatron—a custom built 8x8 self-levelling hydraulic base that carries the 50ft Techno through the muddy river. The Stabileye was rigged so we could take it on and off, with a cradle system Peter had built out of scaffold. On and off, on and off, over and over, dipping it into the trench, taking it off, running through the trench, back on and pulling the camera out. I think Matt and Schala hated me, but I didn't want to be in a position where I didn't understand the process behind how I could achieve the shots in the simplest way.

The shoot itself was fifteen weeks long with the filming of the battle scenes divided between two sessions—an inspired idea by the brilliant 1st Assistant Director Benedict so we could learn about working as a unit on the battlefield for four days. Then we went away and came back two weeks later, to film the rest of the battle scenes. His idea was to give us time in between to regroup and hatch a plan for any shortcomings and things we had learnt to make our lives easier.

The beginning of the film shows you

the cycle of uniforms and human life, starting with a foot soldier called Gerber. Ed and James had devised the opening of the film as essentially three shots: a high wide shot showing death and destruction that floats straight down, tilts, and reveals the German trenches; the second shot tracking through, revealing the trenches and Gerber—he would take us up and out of the trench and into the battle. Finally, an explosion would help us cut into the third shot, consisting of Gerber on the ground and ultimately leading to his death. The second shot was the trickiest. Ed, James and I stood at the trench on an afternoon on our own and walked through how we imagined it and what I felt would help the move and the camera. We worked out the base position for getting the crane in and where the explosions would help us. On our down day, a small crew came with the crane and the full stunt team rehearsed it for the first time. I was above the trenches with a 360-degree view from which I could follow where the camera was located. Budd held the Stabileye and we walked it over and over again, working out where we needed to speed up, slow down, have the camera higher or lower, put extras in, take extras out, cover the camera in mud, or add smoke. It was glorious to have this time to really work it out. As Gerber waits to climb out, the Stabileye is being attached to the techno crane whilst I am having to whip tilt up and down, following a soldier as he falls past me. My heartbeat was 150 for sure. We then climbed up out of the trenches. I asked Ed to put in an explosion at the top, allowing me a second to get the camera off the crane, and then the grips ran with the camera flat out with Gerber. We must have rehearsed it one hundred times, but I would have taken 5 more if I had the chance. That night I lay in bed and visualised the shot repeatedly—the pans, the walks, the communication, all of it. I don't think I slept.

The day of shot 2 arrived and I travelled to work on my own, got out in the dark and helped set up, making sure we were on schedule. Watching the sun come up over the trenches was beautiful, whilst seeing each department work well together in freezing conditions, covered in mud. I went down into the trenches and walked the route of the camera; I like to picture and preempt anything that may be problematic. The feeling of being in those trenches was like being at war; it was dressed perfectly and it felt hyper real. I had a brilliant standby Art Director, Bryce Tibbey, whom I worked with very closely throughout the film to move things around to dress for the camera. For each shot, his energy and enthusiasm was unparalleled, and he was always willing to work right up until the first shouted action, to get the set looking perfect. The process of actually

executing the shot took ages as everything is slowed down by the conditions. Once we started, it was like completing a massive jigsaw against the clock. Edward called me into Video village and we watched shot one back. Between him, James and myself, we tweaked it to smooth things out. The hand-offs between grip Budd carrying by hand, passing it to the crane crew, following Gerber up as he climbed out the trench, then quickly releasing it so Shala could run with it, proved to be problematic. It got stuck and sometimes wasn't quick enough but these are things we ironed out throughout the takes. It was quite an experience to have to concentrate so hard on operating, whilst directing about 9 people on comms as to where I needed the camera, at what height, a bit to the left and so on. Eventually, after about 3 or 4 takes, I was quiet. People knew where they needed to be and what they needed to do. I just made sure the shot was framed precisely how Ed wanted it. I think this shot and the set up of the trenches in particular showed the world we were going to live in for the next three weeks perfectly—the conditions of those poor soldiers—this was our world now and we had to get used to it too.

Because of scheduling, I was yet to meet all of the actors playing the film's central group of boys at the same time. During the first scene we did, we had rain effects all around the trenches and the conditions were like hell. Our hero actor Felix Kammerer (Paul) walks into the trenches with a gas mask on and we follow him with the Stabileye. Ed asked me to whip tilt up to an explosion and back down, which has a really nice effect on your feelings as a viewer. Next, the crane pushed in from no man's land, past the soldiers on the machine gun rat-a-tat-tat, came off the cradle and walks with Felix to meet our other hero, Kat, played by Albrecht Schuch. It was the hardest conditions I've worked in; tackling rain effects, explosions, walking in mud backwards, Budd holding me up so I didn't fall. This scene reveals that the trench has flooded, with water up to the soldiers' knees as they begin bailing it out with their hats. It was cold. Freezing. The first time I saw all the young boys together, they were all so excited to be on set in the trenches, despite the rain, and to get started with the filming. By now I'd already been filming there for a week and was struggling with how hard it was. It's hard to not draw a parallel with the very real war we were aiming to depict. We filmed the scene standing in the water, getting constantly soaked. The scene was about them having cold hands, but not once did anyone complain. They just got on with it. At the end of the day I climbed out, my boots full of water. I could barely move my hands. My teeth were chattering. B Cam Op



Mark Rimmer shot the final shot of the day—high wide of the scene. In the trenches, the conditions remained harsh as the boys were filmed one last time, the rain falling down on them, the smoke drifting by. The reality up on the service was the sun setting over the trenches—a beautiful evening—and I sat there thinking about the day, happy with what we had, watching the boys climb up and out on the ladders, laughing and smiling at their experience, emulating in many ways the story; their first day all together on set was their beginning of their war too.

Our main battle in the film saw Paul and company advance on the French trenches, before the French chased the Germans back through no man's land to the German Trench. The scene in the film is one continuous sequence, but of course in reality was filmed over a week. I think the biggest change to my approach for operating on a film was the sheer amount of prep and thinking ahead I had to do. Crane resets were sometimes two hours, meaning I had to think where I needed to put the base constantly, so we were always following the sun path. Was it hand held? Was it Stabileye? Did we need the Steadicam? I referred to Ed and James' shot list constantly. The night before each shoot, I would sit down in my apartment and work out where I needed to be the next day. This level of prep was needed because of the ambition; we wanted the film to have such a huge scale and it meant shooting fast whilst maintaining the rhythm so we could execute everything to the standard we wanted.

We tracked on the Stabileye with Paul on foot, also on the 6x6 tracking vehicle with the Stabileye in hand, following his journey into no man's land. This was the German attack and finally we were shooting the battle. It all seemed so real. The camera was with him the whole time, on his shoulder, seeing what he sees. I think it works so effectively, that it's almost hard to watch. With a massive team of stunt men and extras, plus an SFX team and rigging explosions everywhere, a lot of what you see is done in camera, and I think that adds to how real the film feels. Once Paul got into the trenches, we went into hand held. It's the first time as an Operator I have felt I am on the same journey as the actor; I felt like I was right there with him, going through his emotions and experiencing first hand the brutality of what he is seeing. It was hard for me to deal with emotionally. When he killed the French soldier in the trench, it was a bloody hand to hand combat fight. I was throwing the camera about and mud was exploding over us and it was so dusty. Paul looks at him, into his eyes—just a scared kid laying there—

and I'm looking into his eyes as well. Felix was overcome with sadness and so was I. The battle continues on foot through the trench, fast and dirty. Ed wanted me to whip-pan between soldiers and the effect is so effective; it speeds the film up and puts the war in your face. I stripped the Alexa LF right down; nothing was on the camera body except the monitor and lens. Everything else was tethered to a battery and video sender, which I put in a backpack. This gave me the ability to move the camera round very easily as it was such a light package. That type of hand held—I love it. You can be so quick on your movements, see the rehearsal, follow the action. It feels real - I was running through the trenches, showing each soldier's story. There's a beautiful moment where the French tanks arrive and the German soldiers line up. We had the crane set up at sun set and we pushed in low over the mud, a sea of helmets, Paul centre-framed. You can see just how scared he is in his eyes. He was wonderful on camera.

My favourite image/moment in the film comes when Kat and Paul are stealing eggs from a French farmhouse. As luck would have it, we turned up and it had snowed. It looked beautiful, white, clean and new, albeit cold. We had to work fast to preserve the snow before it melted and also not to show crew footprints on camera. Whilst Paul is in the barn, Kat stands and keeps watch. His hands are in his pockets keeping them warm. He's just standing there, still. Ed got me to just grab a wide of Kat, high head room and the snow falling through. I loved it at the time and I love it in the movie. It's a beautiful moment of calm, no cranes or dollies, just static, and Ed has added beautiful classical music. Kat is staring out into the distance, just thinking. I wonder about what, perhaps his family, perhaps his friends. Perhaps he's enjoying the moment of stillness as well. That image to me shows a young boy who represents an image of all those poor boys in the First World War and what they may have thought about, so I'm incredibly proud of that shot.

Sometimes, the pressure is quite hard to deal with. One of the shots involved Paul running down and jumping whilst I had to whip tilt up, pan right and whip tilt down on a moving Stabileye. There was a 45 minute reset and I had one rehearsal with the actor and all the extras. Ed let me have a few rehearsals with the stunt man alone so I could practise the muscle memory of the shot in my mind, but then I had to sit there whilst SFX do their thing, Art Department does their thing, Costume is sorting the actors out and so on and so on and suddenly I felt very lonely. I was sitting at the monitor thinking of how it takes so

long to do the shot, that by the time it comes to me, the pressure is huge. As I was sat in my 4x4 floppy tent, behind the wheels, I sent a text to Peter Robertson ACO for support and asked him if he ever feels like that. He replied that he did, sending me encouragement, and I think I needed it. So thank you again Peter. I got three takes in the end, landing the last two perfectly. My emotions sank out of me, tears in my eyes, Ed and James came and hugged me. I think the whole process of filming a war movie is hard to take in; it gets into you, into your soul.

The harsh reality is, in all these scenes, as the story continues, we are killing off each of Paul's friends one by one—that's the story. When we finally see Paul's death, he is stabbed and I follow him up out of the trenches on Steadicam, tilt up to the sky to watch the ashes and come back down to see him sit down and die. It was hard to watch him die. I felt I had been on this journey with him, watching people die day in, day out, and here at the end of 15 weeks I was sitting in the mud with him, filming his final scene, living the story that Remarque had written nearly 100 years ago. It was incredibly sad, but war is—that's the message.

I don't think it will be lost on anyone that all this time later, the world is at war again. Ed chose to write and direct this film, an anti-war movie, long before Putin invaded Ukraine - Netflix's first German language adaption of this German Novel. *All Quiet* is a story of repetition. The film shows this: a cycle of young boys marching to their deaths and Albrecht's character Kat saying, "we are just boots with a rifle." We see the young boys come in with enthusiasm and either leave as men with PTSD or they just don't make it out at all. I think it's important that films show these messages, and especially the one told in *All Quiet*. It's hard to comprehend its release with the backdrop of a real war, where people are fighting in the same way, on foot and hand to hand—that the cycle is there in real life and also on screen. I think there's a sadness to this message, which makes it even more important to tell now.

An operator is only as good as the team around them and I'd like to give special thanks to Matt Budd, Schala and their grip team for all their incredible hard work, also my camera team 1st AC Filip Sturman, Loader Stanislav Valeš and trainee Radka Filipská for their incredible dedication and commitment.

I feel a real privilege to have operated on this movie with Ed and James—an experience I find it hard to imagine experiencing again.



Optical Filters

The Tiffen Company has been manufacturing high quality glass filters using their award winning Colour Core technology for over 80 years servicing the film and broadcast industries. Tiffen filters have always been the first choice for DP's for creative looks and optical quality. Available for sales and also rental through Tiffen Rentals at Pinewood (UK). Tiffen also manufacture screw-in filters for the consumer market, and a range of drone filters.

Steadicam

Steadicam® systems have changed greatly since the introduction of the M-Series modular sleds which now offer great versatility not only in terms of finding the best system to suit the operator's situation but also in terms of real world use in the field. Combining this with the great tool-free G-series arms and revolutionary Exovest makes a system which is fast and comfortable to use and has the ability to handle any situation. Current technology combined with several years of development and some inspired thinking has allowed the use of modern micro sensor systems culminating in the Volt electronic horizon assist. This is an aid for the operator combining the ability to hold a good level with the traditional Steadicam® operating skills but in a transparent complimentary way rather than by active physical movement of the camera.

Lowel lighting

Lowel has moved on from small portable incandescent fittings to an all LED range focussed on location use. Within this is also an update of the famous Rifa light based around an LED source. Now Rifa may be updated negating the need for high wattage bulbs and glass reinforced diffusers.

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For further filter information please contact rental manager Eren Ibrahim ebrahim@tiffen.com

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THE LOUMA AND ITS LEGACY

MADELYN MOST WITH ADAM SAMUELSON

The very beginning of remote camera heads

To find the origins of the first remote-controlled motion picture camera crane and indeed, the Louma, we must travel back in time to France in the late 1960s.

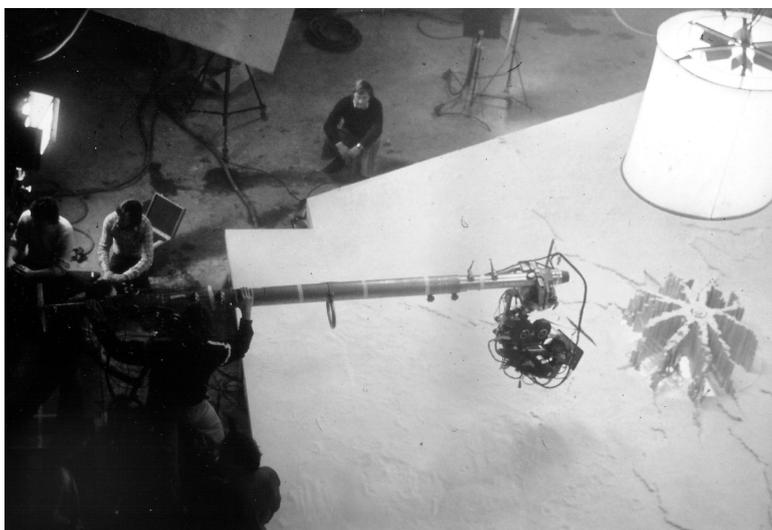
In 1968, two young French cinema fanatics were about to meet during their national service, where they were assigned the film department. Jean-Marie Lavalou had just completed his diploma at the renowned Louis-Lumière academy while Allain Masseron was already experimenting with cameras and exploring ways of tracking in confined places. He had attached a camera and fluid head to a long pole to film the installation of steel tubes inside the walls of a nuclear power plant, with the dolly outside the room. In 1969, to film a girl wading through marshes, he suspended camera over the water on a long wooden beam.



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So, when director Michel Picard wanted to create complicated shots in the narrow confines of a submarine, Masseron and Lavalou came up with the idea of attaching a Cameflex camera on the end of a 12' pole. With no video assist to look at what they were shooting, they modified a fluid head by incorporating planetary gear gyros. They were then able to manually start a pan and tilt move which would continue until the next person could reach the camera and alter its direction of view. With a very small profile, they were able to track along the submarine through the various bulkhead doors over tables in the control and mess rooms. The results were never-before-seen camera moves that astonished anyone who saw them.



Returning to Paris, they brought the film to Albert Viguiere, founder of Alga Cinema rental house in Paris, which had just been bought by Samuelson Film Services. Formerly a respected Camera Operator, Viguiere understood the potential of the device and very quickly left for London to show the Samuelson brothers the submarine film.

This was a very different era of how camera manufacturers and rental houses worked.

Camera manufacturers such as Arri made camera bodies and magazines, but very little in the way of accessories which could make kits practical to use in studios or on location. Samuelsons

had expanded rapidly in the late '60s to become a large camera rental facility with offices around the globe. They listened to what DPs and crews wanted and geared up to manufacture all manner of camera accessories that set them apart from their competitors. Everyday items that we use today—multi tray matte boxes, inclining prisms, lenses of all sizes, rain deflectors, adjustable wedge plates, rigidised aluminium cases, the list is practically endless—all started in the large machine shop facilities in London. As well as the smaller items, they also built six-wheel tracking vehicles and a series of ride-on cranes to rival Chapman, up to the Titan-sized SamMighty, and even had their own inhouse film helicopter with pilot. Occasionally, items such as top hats and four way levellers can still be seen on sets today with the SamCine insignia.

The Samuelson brothers were amazed by the submarine film and an agreement was reached with the young French inventors to build 3 prototypes by the end of 1973. The team consisted of Vigier and chief engineer Guy Tournier in Paris, the Samuelson engineering department in London, including Joe Dunton (who was working on the first video assist systems), draughtsman and chief design engineer Derek Lee, as well as optical genius Bill Woodhouse.

Amongst the inventors and engineers, it is acknowledged that it was David Samuelson (the technical director of the company) who came up with the eureka moment of combining the camera on the end of a pole with video assist system, electronic geared head, and hand wheels to remotely operate the pan and tilt. "We realized our clients would want to use this on the long end of a zoom, and that required very precise operating, so what we would need was an electronic head that emulated a geared head" said David Samuelson.

Lavalou says it was Joe Dunton in particular who had a lot of input with the video assist and with the remote aspect of the crane. "Lavalou was such a perfectionist," says Dunton. "Sometimes he drove Derek Lee mad over every detail. To make the remote head work, and keeping the idea of handles, we had to find an electronic servo drive system. To me, the secret of the Louma was that the camera had to be in infinite balance, where all vibration is eliminated. Alain and Jean-Marie had already accomplished that by 1971 and I had been making video assist systems since 1965.

I built one on a PVSR, the Arri blimped camera and the BNC. When Ossie Morris was photographing *Stop the World* in 1965, they asked us if the Mitchell S35 could become a video camera. Bill Woodhouse and I worked out how to use a television camera to look through the Mitchell camera whilst still having an optical viewfinder. Also, the first video recorder had just come out, which let us record the picture from the film camera. In 1967, when Ossie was photographing *Oliver Twist*, I built the first video assist camera so that the 7 choreographers could see the 400 dancers. We made the Louma portable with the head, the camera, and the monitor all running off of battery power."



In 1974, the first Louma prototype with a motorized remote head was used utilising a video assist system to film *Le Dormeur Du Val*— one 250 metre (750ft) long tracking shot, through rocky mountainous terrain in France. Then, in 1975, it was used on *The Tenant*, photographed by Sven Nykvist, where director Roman Polanski was the first ever to take the remote head off the crane arm and hang it on ropes in the centre of a very narrow staircase for a remarkable shot following the actors up the stairs.

The following year, the promoters of Woodstock held a jazz festival in the south of France called Riviera 76, where a 16mm Aaton on the Louma filmed continuously for 36 hours. Helping out his friends at the festival was an American cameraman who noticed the camera in the air on the end of a long arm that pointed straight down, rotated 360 degrees and then backed away like a helicopter. Deciding this early version of the Louma and its remote console was the most

amazing thing he'd ever seen, Andy Romanoff planned there and then to bring it to America. Romanoff contacted Lavalou and Masseron in Paris, who then sent a demo reel of a camera weaving in and out of windows on different floors of a building. Romanoff showed it around, but it was Steven Poster ASC, who had just finished 2nd unit photography on *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* who knew who to bring it to. Fortunately, Steven Spielberg was about to travel to the Deauville Film Festival in France, and it was there that they set up a demonstration outside his hotel. Everything went perfectly and Spielberg was so impressed that he immediately said "This is my new toy. I will use it on my next film".



The Louma was sent to LA for *1941*, initially to work on the miniatures, "but after seeing how versatile it was", Spielberg said, "I made it my A Camera. I'm very demanding when it comes to filling the frame and composing it nicely, and with the arm on the Louma Crane, I could get just the shot I wanted". "There were times when I loved it, and times when I hated it!", says DP Bill Fraker. "Steven understood the problems we were having with it and the video assist, but the dailies the next day were fabulous. The Louma has given *1941* a distinctive look. The real secret to the Louma is finding a director who knows how to use it— Steven Spielberg knew how". What was to be a few weeks' work, became a 9 month engagement for the Louma and new technician Andy Romanoff with Jean-Marie Lavalou, who relocated from Paris.



Meanwhile back in Paris, electronics whizz Herve Theys joined the team. Before going into the production of several cranes, Herve—along with Guy Tournier—completely re-designed the electronic architecture of the Louma, including handmade slip rings enabling the camera to pan, tilt and roll continuously without being restricted by cables.

Honouring a previous commitment, the Louma prototype returned to Europe to work on Lewis Gilbert's Bond film *Moonraker*, photographed by Jean Tournier with Alec Mills as Camera Operator. "The quality of the video was not that great" says Alec Mills. "We had ghosting problems and a slight delay on the monitor. I worked out my timing on the handles with my grip Chunky Hughes and by communicating through the intercom. Despite some early hitches, Lewis Gilbert and I fell madly in love with the Louma and used it whenever possible". He adds, "until that time, cranes carrying 2 or 3 people were slow and ponderous; they got in the way of the lights so were rarely used except to reach difficult positions or for that 'rising up in the air' shot. Camera movement was there to make a statement, whereas now with the Louma, it could just follow the action. The Louma and Steadicam arrived at about the same time, and both were seminal tools for creating a new sense of camera movement. The inventors

of the Louma system were pioneers in many areas.

They invented the witness camera, a 2nd video camera that looks at the lens to ensure the focus and zoom settings are correct. They introduced intercom headsets for the Operator and grips to communicate through in order to coordinate their shots. The Louma was the first modular crane made out of sections so that the arm could become large or small depending on what was required for the shot".

ACO patron Adam Samueslon recalls: "I was working in the video department at Samuelsons, which was integral to the Louma. I first teched the Louma in 1980, probably because no one

else wanted to do it. I was a very young man, which I don't think would happen today! In those early days when we were the only remote crane system, convincing and converting DPs and Camera Operators was not easy. The main problem was the relatively poor quality of the video assist, and at times, night work was particularly fraught. Despite the occasional glitches, it was exciting to be with the Louma and do shots that were just not possible before then. One day I'd be at Pinewood or Shepperton on a feature film and the next, an 18 hour day on a music video, when MTV had just begun, and then straight back to Pinewood”.

Notably around that time, Adam worked on *Yentl* in 1982, when director Barbra Streisand asked DP/Camera Operator Peter Macdonald if the camera “could fly like a moth around a candle”. He says “the Louma was the obvious choice and we used it to choreograph most scenes”. For the end of the film, Streisand asked Peter “what hasn't been done before with this?” and he replied, “the Louma has never been taken to sea”, and so the Louma was mounted on a side platform of a steam ferry in the middle of the Irish sea for the famous rendition of “Papa, can you hear me?”

Development continued with the first ever Smartpan (backpan) compensation system in the mid 90s and then the first fully three axis remote head.

Back in 2005, Camera Operator Peter Taylor said “I have worked with the Louma for over 20 years, on *Harry Potter*, *Love Actually*, *Troy*, and many other films. Whether it's 8,000 ft. up in the Alps or on the tiniest of sets. I like the control desk, the Smart Pan, the light balanced handles, and the 3rd Axis.”

At the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles, there are two annual awards ceremonies, one of which is the main glitzy event that everyone knows about. Every year, about two weeks prior to The Oscars, the great and the good of the film technical community gather to recognise the achievements of camera and technical equipment designers. There are three categories of such recognition decided upon by technical committees. Depending on the size and scale of new equipment, the entry award is a certificate. After that, it's a plaque with an Oscar in silhouette. The Louma was awarded such a plaque in 1980. For major inventions that have changed the way films are made over a sustained period of time, an Oscar statuette of Merit is awarded. In over 90 years of the Academy Awards, less than 40 statuettes from this category have been awarded for technical Merit. Think: register pin camera, zoom lens, HMI lights, crab dolly, Steadicam etc.. and in 2005, the Louma.

“It's amazing how many cranes and remote heads have followed on from the Louma. I'm incredibly proud to have played a part in the Louma— the first remote head” says Joe Dunton.

Louma systems was set up with a new independent partnership to produce a telescopic crane. With the same ethos as before, incorporating new ideas to aid the art of camera movement film making on set. Louma 2 was the first system to have variable backpan, Smart Tilt, slaved 3rd axis roll, and of course, straight line arm compensation known as “planning” The term is a mix up in the workshop of French and English; “plan” being the French word to describe a travelling camera movement and “plane”, a confusion of “pane” to describe the two dimensional virtual “wall” that the camera travels along when the arm is moved by the grips. Hence, “play-ning”



Adam concludes: “After all this time, it is still exciting to be on set, setting up the Louma and seeing all the efforts of the designers put into good practical use. Unfortunately, and unexpectedly, Jean-Marie passed away recently, but his legacy of co-creating the first ever remote head and crane system will live on. We are continually working on new software and other ideas that will benefit Camera Operators and film makers for years to come”.



Jonathan Tyler

ACO SOC

SEE HOW THEY RUN

Dir: Tom George/DOP: Jamie Ramsay SASC/FOX SEARCHLIGHT

In October 2020 I was beginning to breathe a little easier as the world hadn't completely fallen apart at the hands of COVID 19. (Not trying to minimize it— it was horrible). I was back working and adjusting to the new way of doing so within the restraints of the pandemic.

I was getting on with life in and out of work, which brought me to a surf trip I took with a Focus Puller mate from South Africa. To cut a long story short: post surf, Damo (1st AC Damian Walsh) and I sat down for a bite and I got chatting to the friend he'd brought along, fellow Springbok Jamie Ramsay SASC.

Little did I know that in the following months, this chance meeting would lead to a huge opportunity for me as a Camera Operator.

Jamie was about to begin work on *See How They Run*, a fictionalized version of events which take place during the staging of Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*. To be slightly more specific— during an attempt to bring the stage play to the big screen. Meanwhile, a murder mystery is going on that parallels the play's events. So it's a film about a film about a play about a murder mystery within a murder mystery... I'm still a little confused.

I was asked to come on as the A Camera/Steadicam Operator. It was to be a predominantly single-camera shoot. This was a big opportunity and something I was proud to even be considered for.

Both Jamie and Tom George (the Director) were enthusiastic to go for a creative and stylized visual language for the film. To complement the playful storyline, we kept the frame as interesting as possible; lots of symmetry as well as loose framing to allow the cast to play in the scenes without limits was the goal. The cast were all wonderful and at the top of their game so I was quick to jump on board and get behind this approach.

The shoot was somewhat making lemonade out of the Covid lemons; since all theater productions were shut down due to the pandemic, we were able to film in various locations in the West End that otherwise wouldn't have been available to us. Entire streets of Soho, as well as St Martin's Theater, The Savoy and The Dominion theater became our backdrop, to name just a few.



During prep as the A Camera, I was able to attend every recce and spend as much time as possible with Jamie and Tom to understand what they were trying to accomplish visually with the film. We were shooting large format to capitalize on the design and locations we had at our disposal, as well as using stabilized gimbal to keep the frame symmetrical and solid where possible. Fortunately, the relaxed vibe of surfing with Jamie spilled into our working relationship so we got together regularly to look at storyboards and still references, as well as grabbing a coffee in Broadway Market, followed by kicking back to watch a film which we thought spoke our visual language.

Whilst shooting, I was fortunate to be given Jamie's trust to discuss with Tom the blocking of a scene. The film has an amazing ensemble cast, so Tom would often have a tableau wide shot in mind to contain all the actors. We would find that and then work backwards to flesh out the coverage.

Although there was time dedicated to staying true to the planned visual style, we did have to be very pragmatic with our time. Fortunately, the camera team and my 1st AC worked like a well oiled machine from the get-go. A lot of the faces were new to me at the beginning of the shoot, but we very quickly developed a hard working yet enjoyable environment.

It was during a night shoot well into production that I took a moment to appreciate the brilliant situation I had found myself in. We were shooting the opening shot of the film—a complex technocrane shot that jibs down the outside of St Martin's theater, landing as a motorcycle courier arrives to deliver a telegram to the producers of *The Mousetrap*. The camera follows the courier across the period dressed street, busy with vehicles and supporting artists, all whilst rain FX are flooding down. At this moment it occurred to me; if 5 years earlier you'd told me I would be part of a film like this, let alone operating the A Camera with a Director and DOP who I thoroughly enjoyed working with, whilst having the responsibility to make it as great as possible, I probably would not have believed you.



I could go on and on with anecdotes and memories from the shoot, but I promised not to waffle on. Suffice to say, the entire shoot was not only a great chance to do what I love but it was also just damn good fun. Primarily, this was the result of the brilliant team we had: Damien Walsh (1st AC); Amy Yates (2nd AC); Lauren Byrne and Natasha Saxby (Trainees); Alex Van Huerden (B Cam 1st AC); and Emin Atilgan (B Cam 2nd AC).

I guess the moral of my story comes in two parts: firstly, you never know where this business will take you and I think embracing the uncertainty of your journey with positivity and enthusiasm is the best way to offset the anxiety and instability that it can present. And secondly, go on as many surf trips with random South African Filmmakers as possible—you just never know where it may take you!

EXPERIENCES & ADVICE FOR WORKING WITH TRACKING VEHICLES



Martin Foley
ACO

“The lesson I learned was that, had I been facing the action, I would have been able to anticipate when to pan the camera...”

In the old days, by which I mean the late 70s (as a trainee), 80s (Loader and Focus) and even into the 90s, (some early operating) working with a tracking vehicle mostly meant hard-mounting the camera to the vehicle and strapping a tripod directly to it. The only decisions were whether to front, rear or side-mount the camera, before getting the height about right and choosing a lens. In the days before stabilised heads, you just put up with the inevitable shake and vibration of the shot, even justifying it as “adding some drama”, or simply accepting that it was unavoidable and the audience would neither notice nor care. There was very little attention paid to the safety of the crew until maybe the mid-80s. I remember seeing a top hat clamped to a “camera platform”, bolted to the front of the camera car.—ot even a tracking vehicle, just the truck that delivered the camera gear. The Operator and Focus Puller clung on as this was driven round a race track following the action vehicle.

Things moved on a little when the vibration isolator arrived and then finally, stabilised heads, that can take out all the shake, pitching and rolling of the tracking vehicle. But you can still come unstuck, even with all the help of some very clever equipment. Recently I was on a Netflix job in Prague and we were on a night shoot in a forest. The action was a chase sequence, our hero being pursued by the bad guys, all on horseback. We had the Panavision DXL2 mounted on a Movi XL and Flowcine Black Arm. The arm was rigged to the back of a small and narrow off-road tracking vehicle. We planned to track in front of the action. The route was through the trees on a narrow, rough and winding trail.

We started on a long straight run, mainly to get up to speed. Then the track took a sharp left turn, followed immediately by a sharp right and a little further on by another, more gentle left.

My first mistake was leaving the vehicle to be rigged while I walked the course with the DP and Director. When I returned, I saw that my controls were rigged “in the only possible place”, alongside the driver facing forward, away from the action. My second mistake was not following my instincts... I should have insisted that it was re-rigged so that I could face backwards, but I let it slide. So, after the inevitable cry of “Let’s shoot the rehearsal!”, we set off, got up to speed and the vehicle made the first turn. This involved the driver almost “flicking” the car through the gap between the trees so quickly that the rear, where the camera was, jumped to the left. The flowcine arm followed and threw the camera with it. Facing forward, I was unable to anticipate when this abrupt change in direction of the vehicle was about to happen. I was just concentrating on the pack of horses behind us and on keeping them framed. But as the vehicle lurched around, the camera swung wildly away to a shot of passing trees. So I panned right of course, to find the shot, just as the next sharp turn arrived and same again, a shot of the trees. The lesson I learned was that, had I been facing the action, I would have been able to anticipate when to pan the camera, simply because Operator, camera and horses would have been all on the same axis, in the same space. As it was, all I had was a screen to watch and to react to, usually too late. But I just got caught out on that night, sort of got away with it and learned that lesson— always face the action.



Chris Plevin
ACO

“Design of the shots and risk assessment is key. Safety is paramount for crew, stunts and public.”

The very basic approach of a hard-mounted camera on a vehicle with soft suspension can still be used very successfully and often adds atmosphere and life to a shot with manageable vibration and movement. Using a vibration isolator, I suggest mounting the camera as near to the centreline of the vehicle and between the axles if possible, to minimise movement.

With stabilised heads and telescopic cranes, the job becomes safer and opens up some amazing potential for great shots. The Libra head, Maximus and the Flight Head are the go-to tools for this, although there are many other excellent heads. Using a crane or jib arm helps immensely to eliminate unwanted movement in the Z (vertical) axis since the inertial mass of the crane and the arm extension helps the head to remain closer to one point in space, rather than being thrown up and down as the vehicle bounces around. The U-Crane and similar systems take this principle to a perfect pitch, and the skilled drivers and crane Operators who wrangle them enable the Operator to get the camera to places impossible by any other means.

Design of the shots and risk assessment is key. Safety is paramount for crew, stunts and public. Recently we had a shot on *The Northman* where the camera was required to follow a group of raiders across a forest clearing filled with tree stumps and scrub, up onto a ridge, then rush with them towards a fortified village and up the

wall with them as they attacked. The terrain was too difficult for Steadicam or a carried gimbal, or for laying a track. A drone was too imprecise and wouldn't be able to hug the village wall.

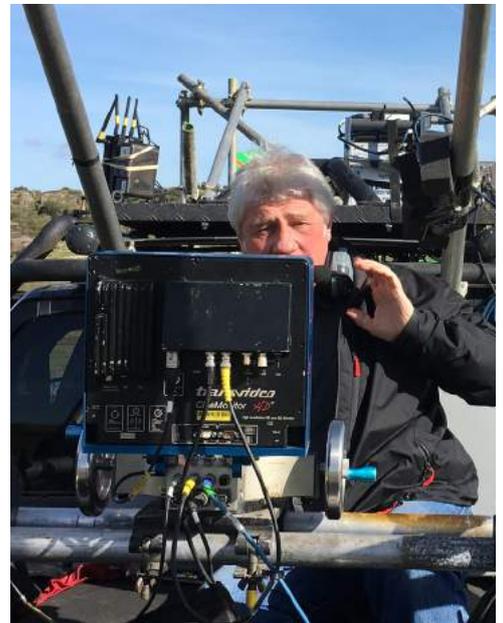
The solution was to use a 45' Scorpio telescopic crane and Libra head mounted on a Silverado, but first we had to build a road! A section of brush was cleared, a gravel road laid, and a small bridge constructed across a ditch. The camera was then able to move through the correct path at the right speed and resulted in the shot the Director had wished for. It was a combination of planning and cooperation between departments, and a skilful execution of the shot by a very capable crew of grips and driver.

The technology has changed over the years and there are many technical innovations which can help. The ability of a head to "back-pan" and keep it pointing in one absolute direction as the tracking platform moves around underneath it is probably the biggest game changer.

Usually when setting up for a high speed tracking shot, there are several things I will do. I make sure I am as tightly wedged into the vehicle as comfort will allow, and that I can see the monitor clearly without any problems from the sun or external lights. I generally start by turning off all softening and damping on the controls, to allow the sharpest and most agile responses from the head. Communication with the grips or crane Operator and driver are key and should be rehearsed so that there is no ambiguity. The shot should be discussed fully. Whenever possible: quarter, half and full speed rehearsals will be a good investment— better to rehearse several times and minimise full speed and possibly hazardous manoeuvres. Calm and clear communications are essential, as is the understanding that the driver is in charge.

I've nearly always used wheels, but I do think that competence using a joystick is desirable; they have some advantages as in a non-linear or ramped response, the further you push the stick, the faster the head will move. Whereas with wheels, you are (in linear mode) limited to how fast you can spin them. The Libra has a logarithmic or accelerated mode where the speed of the head increases proportionately, the faster you go on the wheels. And once you have got used to this, it can be a real help with fast pans. A joystick may also be less prone to unwanted movement of the head when you are thrown around in the vehicle. But if you are properly wedged in, this shouldn't happen on the wheels.

Bear in mind that any fixed mount gimbal or stabilised head will compensate for vehicle sway or roll, but cannot compensate for the movement in space of the mounting point. This can lead to some odd effects where the foreground subject may be stable in the frame, but the background shifts as the camera moves from side to side. The way round this is to use a crane or jib arm so that the movement of the vehicle is not locked to the camera and the inertia of the rig keeps the camera more or less in one place. Small four-wheel-drive buggies with a low centre of gravity and a long suspension travel can be particularly prone to this when the camera is mounted high, for example when filming characters on horseback.





Peter Taylor
ACO

“If you need the fluidity and versatility of changing height, then one of the purpose-built, powerful 4-wheel-drives with a centre-mounted crane is probably the best option for most circumstances.”

Due to innovation and safety reasons, there have been many improvements in our approach to camera tracking vehicles. Obviously a camera at a fixed height, mounted on either the front or rear of a tracking vehicle, is pretty limited in what it can do, unless perhaps you are towing a car on an ‘A’ frame. In this case, you may have multiple cameras set up on a driver and passenger, most likely locked off, perhaps on a slider for adjustment.

A few years ago, I filmed a car chase at night in London. We were mounted on a large American tracking car and charging along through narrow sections of closed roads whilst manually operating—not really a good idea, not because it can’t be done, but it just doesn’t feel safe. Late, to finish the sequence on the same movie, I had remote cameras mounted on the two stunt cars and they were operated safely from the side of the road.

If you need the fluidity and versatility of changing height, then one of the purpose-built, powerful 4-wheel-drives with a centre-mounted crane is probably the best option for most circumstances. However, if the budget won’t allow and you have to hard-mount a camera on a tracking car, then I would strongly suggest using an on board monitor. It’s a lot easier than trying to keep your eye to the eyepiece; I can see what is going on around me and any changes in height or sudden moves will not mean straining to keep glued to the eyepiece!

When working in deserts and bumpy environments, I would always use a good stabilised head. They work extremely well, leaving you to concentrate on composition. On one of *The Mummy* action units, I thought it would be clever to use a Joystick, the theory being that it would free up my left hand to utilise the zoom if needed. It was a big mistake and I quickly reverted back to handles. Joysticks are extremely sensitive, and any unwanted hand movement is transmitted to the head, making

them less than ideal for charging across harsh ground whilst tight on the face of a galloping warrior.

I should mention that whatever type of track you are doing—remote or hard-mounted—how you hold the “handles” is really important. I was taught the traditional way, which is thus: The knob of the handle should be held gently between your index and middle fingers for both handles. This frees up your thumbs, third and little fingers to be spread across the wheels, which achieves a major result. It means you can hold the wheels relatively still, however bumpy the ride, whilst maintaining control of the camera. Obviously, the gearing settings are a matter of choice. However, I would recommend the slowest setting you can manage.





Richard Bevan
ACO

“Of course, practice is always the issue, and unfortunately most of us don’t get to sit in a Russian Arm everyday. You may spend more time on remote heads on cranes on solid ground, so the main principles are there.”

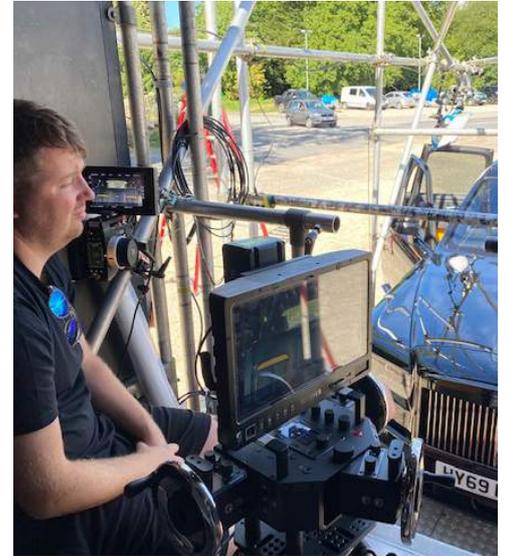
I’ve sat on many tracking vehicles of various shapes and sizes, including those that pull a low loader (vehicle sits on it) or an A Frame (attached to front axle). Whatever the case, it allows actors to act and not drive. Then there are the “Russian/Ukrainian Arms”, such as a Porsche Cayenne with a motorised arm and remote head, controlled from within the vehicle.

Low loaders are the most versatile as generally you will have a platform surrounding the vehicle so you can place head and legs/bazooka, sometimes even a dolly, meaning you can more or less carry on as if you are on solid ground. There is also the possibility of mounting a small crane/remote head on a tracking vehicle and using it with a low loader.

An obvious issue is how proficient you are with handles on a remote head. You need to be wary that holding onto the handles whilst going over rough terrain can transmit movement to the head, even if good dampers are in place. Of course, practice is always the issue, and unfortunately most of us don’t get to sit in a Russian Arm everyday. You may spend more time on remote heads on cranes on solid ground, so the main principles are there. I just try to use as little force/pressure as possible on wheels anyway. As I use a geared head occasionally, I set up remote heads in the same way: Clockwise is left pan on left axis, and clockwise is tilt up on tilt axis. Roll is useful (although not standard on geared head) on “East” Axis. I also like to have horizons set up on the monitor. Other than that, I try to minimise “electronic” assistance, (i.e. pan/tilt dampers/speeds) have everything turned down/off, and be as “natural” as possible. Try practising with a Ronin/Movi with Grips, holding the rig with you on the wheels. Play with the settings to minimise electronic movements. And get used to communicating with everyone on comms, with multiple sets, to the Grips and DoP/Director.

On a crane, you try and avoid backpanning, and it’s the same

for when mounted on a tracking vehicle. Sometimes it may be necessary, in which case I just focus on the image on my monitor and shut out my surroundings (as long as using wheels is second nature), especially if in a Russian Arm and the arm swings through 180’.



ACO WELCOMES

FULL MEMBERS

DANI DAGHER

UPGRADE TO FULL

BEN EELEY

ABRAMO DE LICIO

MARC HILL

ASSOC MEMBERS

LUKE SNOWBALL

DANIEL GADD

FRIENDS OF THE ACO

BEN THOMAS

ALEXANDER HARRISON

AUSTIN PHILLIPS

AGATA RAFALSKA

MOOKIE MA

RANA DARWISH

AMY WILSON

MAHALIA JOHN

BRADLEY PANDA

MARCO ALSON MONEDERO

JACKIE READ

MATT CHOULES

KIERAN MARTIN

FULL TO FRIEND

HAMISH DOYNE DITMAS

ASSOCIATE TO FRIEND

LILIA SELLAMI

DAN SHORING

LIFETIME MEMBER

TONY GAUDIOZ



ACO ASKS KOON W. YA-INTA



1. What is it that got you into operating?

The things that influenced me to pursue operating were the physical and mental challenges of the execution of the shot. I just love watching behind the scenes, and my eyes are glued to the Operators behind the wheels. And as a Steadicam Operator, I also like the process whereby I have to communicate with every department to work together in-sync.

2. Which 3 films inspired you when you were younger to pursue a career as a Camera Operator?

3 films that inspired me are: *Saving Private Ryan*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*.

3. What do you enjoy most about being an Operator?

I enjoy every process of working as a Camera Operator. From communicating with a DP and a Director, blocking the shot with a Director, and communicating with other departments to make the shot work flawlessly and efficiently. (Eliminate the idea “Not my department, not my job”.)

4. What was your most high profile project like to work on?

The latest high profile project I've worked on that is going to air in October on Apple TV is *Shantaram* starring Charlie Hunnam. I was B/Steady on the 1st block and A/Steady on 2nd block. It was a 15-week long shoot in Thailand (summer 2021). I was so glad to work on this one. Despite restrictions during Covid lockdown in Thailand, the working atmosphere was very collaborative. The talents, the director, the DoP and I were totally in the flow zone; we stick to what's on the paper but occasionally allow ourselves to experiment and see how things turn out. It was very enjoyable.

5. Tell us about the DoP/Director and Operator dynamic?

The working dynamic of DoP/Dir and the Operator can be very broad and flexible. It mostly depends on how the director and the DoP like to work. But most of the time on narrative projects, a DoP would let me communicate with a Director directly while blocking the shot, so the DoP can focus on the lighting. Sometimes the DoP would give me a basic idea to start off with then it's me to develop and finesse it.

6. What else have you been working on recently?

I recently worked on Netflix's *Thai Cave Rescue*, HBO Asia's *The Forbidden*, which is going to be aired later this year.

7. What is the best advice given to you as an operator?

Being an Operator is not only about operating a camera. We can heavily influence and impact the atmosphere of the set. For example, I personally would occasionally ask "how are you doing?" to everyone when I have a chance, just to check up on how my colleagues are doing. I would have a small chat with 2nd team to make them feel comfortable while doing pre-light and/or blocking. Or if I feel anyone is having difficulty during the shot, rehearsal or in general, I'd check up on them just to see if I can do anything to help them make their work easier. So yeah, I'd say having an act of kindness and compassion for your fellow at work can go a long way.

.....
I just love watching behind the scenes, and my eyes are glued to the Operators behind the wheels.



ACO

AT THE EURO CINE EXPO

JAMIE HARCOURT - ACO
JASPER VAN GHELUWE - ASSOC. ACO

Peter Robertson phoned me back in June and asked me if I would represent the ACO at the covid-delayed inaugural Euro Cine Expo in Munich at the beginning of July. This was an event organised by Rob Saunders and his company; the same team who put together the BSC Expo each year. I said yes and duly booked flights and a basic motel room.

I was to meet up with Jasper Van Gheluwe at the venue in Munich on the day before the exhibition and prepare the stand with the ACO kit that had been generously shipped out from London by Optical Support, alongside other bits and bobs that Sham had organised. Arri in Munich also kindly lent us a 27" monitor and stand.

All went well until I tried to check in at Terminal 5 at Heathrow and was greeted by a large red cross on the check-in turnstile before being told that the flight and nine others had just been cancelled with no notice by British Airways on the instructions of Heathrow Airport Ltd. "Join the queue", the guy said. Looking

to my left I saw 600 people in a straggling line that stretched the entire length of the terminal building. After a couple of conversations with supervisors, I learnt it would take hours to sort out the mess so I decided to get the Railair bus back home and try to sort out another flight from there. I was told later that there were no available flights for four days and after trying other airlines with no luck, I double checked and saw that there was a BA flight at 20.30 that night priced at £940!! After another painful conversation with British Airways, I was left with the impression that they were virtually trying to con me into buying a club class seat for an upgrade price of over £600, so I refused their kind offer! I sadly never got to the Expo in Munich and as of the beginning of September, have not yet received my fare back from BA. I have also been refused the €250 compensation on the grounds that it was an "extraordinary event" beyond BA's control. What I think of British Airways and Heathrow Airport Ltd is unprintable here! P.S. The Munich Hotel repaid my cancelled booking in a matter of seconds. Thanks to our treasurer Bob Shipsey for his patience awaiting the return of valuable funds from BA.

Jasper Van Gheluwe ACO kindly also wrote a small piece about the event which he got to with Optical Support and we owe him and Danny Bishop ACO, Benjamin Treplin ACO and Fares Corbani ACO a huge debt of thanks for getting the stand up and running, and manning it as best as could be attained under the circumstances.

Oh and just to rub salt into the wound, five days after my son dropped me off in his car at Terminal 5, he got a demand from APCOA parking for £80 for failing to pay the drop off fee that Heathrow now charge for the privilege of entering their useless airport!! They are not going to get it without a fight!! Cheers, Jamie Harcourt, ACO.

ACO moving up to the EU, an Operator's perspective:

Last summer I attended the first edition of the Euro Cine Expo in Munich. I had the honour of representing the ACO at this event. This was a great experience, although challenging at the start. On the first day of the build-up to the event, I got a phone call from our chairman, Jamie Harcourt ACO, letting me know most of the flights from the UK were cancelled and he couldn't make it, so I'd have to start on my own. No pressure... It would not have been possible without the help of our patrons Optical Support and ARRI providing equipment so we could showcase our great work.

It was a great experience and the organisers of the show were very supportive and made sure everything went smoothly.

For me, these moments are a great opportunity to learn to know more people in the industry and spread the word about the art of Camera Operating. It's also not a secret that it's a good way to get my name out there and advance in my career as a young Camera Operator.

A huge thanks also goes out to our full members Danny Bishop, Benjamin Treplin and Fares Corbani who helped me manning the stand and were always in for a friendly chat.

Euro Cine Expo, I hope we see you again in 2023
Jasper Van Gheluwe, Assoc. ACO



LED & Low Energy Lighting Workshop for ACO Members

VMI will be hosting an LED and Low-Energy workshop specifically inviting members of the BSC, ACO, GTC and GBCT on Wednesday 12 October.

Our latest lighting workshop is being tailored specifically for DPs and Operators and will be held at West London College in Ealing Green, the ex-home of BBC Studios.

LED Lighting Technology has been progressing at a rapid pace, with each generation improving brightness, performance and colour accuracy, to the point where modern fixtures are scarcely comparable with the early 1x1 litepanels. There are fixtures and solutions available today which are suitable for a multitude of different applications and all offer some degree of protection from the elements, quite in contrast with previous HMI fixtures.



Where once serious DPs were wary of using LEDs, the latest lights now provide a credible alternative to conventional tungsten, fluorescent and HMI lighting technology without compromise. Making TV programmes more sustainably is in everybody's interest but making informed decisions about which are the best lights to use, given the extensive diversity and range of lights now available, is challenging for all of us.

This series of 3-hour in-person workshops will directly compare and contrast the latest generation of lights, for busy producers and crew alike, enabling attendees to experience the

raw power of a 1.2KW LED COP fixture and appreciate how it compares with a 1.2K HMI (measurably 10x brighter). A studio-based lighting workshop is vastly superior to viewing websites alone, and since so much has changed since pre-COVID times, we have a lot to show you!

Best of all, these events are free of charge. But book soon, as we expect them to sell out.

<https://vmi.tv/events/>



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Dod Mantle: “He asked me to build a crazy Crystal Glass prism on the front of the lens, which is quite good fun. Also did some dailies as B Cam and Steadicam on a feature called *Boudica*.” **Junior Lucano:** “Right now I’m in another war film, but the film I was working on at the beginning of this year will be in cinemas in October.” **Darren Miller’s** recent work engagements include: Aerial Camera Operator on: *Bodies*, for Netflix; *A Recipe For Love* (Netflix); *Better*, a BBC TV Drama; *The Diplomat* (Netflix); *Jewels* (Netflix); and *Fast & Furious 10* (Splinter Unit). **Adam Mendry** just finished a Bollywood feature film Shot in Poland, *Bawaal*. **Steve Mitchell** has been doing Steadicam Dailies for the BBC on *Casualty* and various events on and around The Queen’s Funeral. **Rory Moles:** “I’ve been doing Steadicam on *The F*ck It Bucket*, *Sexy Beast* 2nd Unit, and *A Cuban Girl’s Guide to Tea and Tomorrow*”. **Guillermo Moreno:** “Right now I’m on my way to set for the first day of shooting of a beautiful and very needed film. Actually, for the first time I found myself crying when I read the script. Based on the true story of a teacher who arrives to a small village and changes the lives and minds of the kids and villagers, just before the beginning of the Civil war. The fascists captured him, tortured him in front of the whole village and shot him. His body, like the remains of tens of thousands of other Spanish people, is still missing in some common grave—a dark side of Spanish history that still needs to be told to remind us all how dangerous still are those who don’t respect other’s freedom and use fear and hate as their arguments to justify their actions and convince others. The title is *El maestro que prometió el mar*, directed by Patricia Font, cinematography by David Valldepérez AEC, and I’ll be the A Camera Operator and Steadicam. **Martin Newstead** is currently working on a show for Hat Trick called *Loss and Return*. DoP is Nick Gillespie and the Director is Jennie Darnell. **John Piggott** is currently shooting *The Great* with Catherine Derry DOP. **Akhilesh Patel** operated Steadicam Dailies on the TV drama *Dalgliesh 2*. And In June/July, did Steadicam/B Camera on a feature film called *The Problem with People*. **Dale Rodkin** is currently A Camera/ Steadicam on Season 3 of *Warrior*. **Luke Snowball:** “Currently I have not been on a long-form job for a while. The last one I worked on was a Daily for *Maternal* with Richard Mott DoP (Steadicam and



Adam Mendry

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B Cam). That was for ITV. Recently I have done a commercial for Jack Wills and their new holiday campaign (Trinity Op). That was with DoP Sam Friend and Director Jourdan Gomez. **Gary Spratling:** “Been busy; worked on *Batgirl* in Glasgow, *Our Man from Jersey*, and *Heart of Stone* in beautiful Lisbon. Enjoyed operating these large 2nd units without all the politics you sometimes get working on main units. Having said that, I’m just about to start on *Lord of the Rings* operating on the main unit for a while, based out of Bray studios.



Gary Spratling

Jonathan Tyler: “I’ve been flat out this summer on an Apple TV series called *Kingdom*.” **Laura Van De Hel** has operated on a Dior commercial with DoP Marc Pritchard, with Elizabeth Debicki as talent. **Peter Versey:** “Being semi-retired (almost fully previous 2 years) I have only done a few Crane camera operating jobs on the wheels (my expertise you get a seat !) Most recently a music video for Chris Brown US DoP Jon Chema”. **Adi Visser** is A Camera / Steadicam on *Halo* Season 2.

Schneider Entertainment Agency

Christopher McGuire: “*Red One* for Amazon Studios (starts shooting 9/26 I believe)”. **Andrew Fletcher:** *Loki* Season 2 (Marvel)

Arri Crew

Peter Cavaciuti has recently finished *The Red White & Royal Blue* as A Camera Operator with DoP Steven Goldblatt and director Matthew Lopez, mostly shot in and around London. **Tom Wade** finished his B Camera Operator responsibilities on *Fast X* and is now shooting C Camera and Splinter Unit on *Secret Invasion*, additional photography. Having just wrapped on the



Tom Wade

A Camera and Steadicam with DoP Linus Sandgren ASC

on *Saltburn*, **Ossie McLean** has flown to Croatia to join DoP Alan Stewart BSC to complete filming of *The Union*. **Kat Spencer** is back from some RnR after a summer on *Snow White* 2nd Unit, operating for Director/DoP Carlos De Carvalho and B Camera and Steadicam for Doug Milsome BSC ASC on independent feature *Warchief*. **Pete Batten** is operating the B Camera on the additional photography for *Secret Invasion* with DoP Eben Bolter BSC. **Shaun Cobby** is the A Camera and Steadicam for director David Ayer and DoP Gabriel Beristain on the Jason Statham

Ossie McLean



action thriller *The Beekeeper*. **Iain Mackay** has wrapped a stint of additional photography on *Secret Invasion* with Eben Bolter BSC, and is now on a film with Zac Nicholson BSC about Sir Nicholas Winton, a British humanitarian who rescued 669 children from Prague before the Second World War broke out. **Barney Piercy** has been operating B Camera / Ronin and Steadicam dailies with *Ted Lasso* DoP Richard Dunton and is now busying himself with various Christmas commercial campaigns with DoPs Steve Keith-Roach and Ottar Gudnason. **Chris Plevin** has just finished as A Camera Operator on *The Union* for Netflix with Alan Stewart DoP and is heading off to Iceland to operate on *True Detective: Night Country* for HBO with DoP Florian Hoffmeister. **Dora Krolikowska** has been busy on dailies for various projects including *Disclaimer*, *Witcher* and *One Life*, while looking forward to a long-form job coming up.

Sara Putt

Andrei Austin is working on a block of *The Witcher* for Netflix. Andrew Bainbridge continues as A Camera/Steadicam on *One Day*, the adaptation of the novel by David Nicholls. **Jon Beacham** is operating on reshoots of *A Town Called Malice*. **Danny Bishop** is heading into prep on *The Acolyte*, where he will be A Camera/Steadicam Operator. **Ed Clark** has been on location in Jamaica working on *Black Cake*. **James Frater** is off to Prague to work on *Ballerina*, which is a female-led spin off from the *John Wick* movies. **Ilana Garrard** is working on one of the Red Book anthologies: *Joan is Awful*. **Zoe Goodwin-Stuart** continues on *The Burning Girls*, and will join the *Acolyte* team in October. **James Leigh** has recently started on the second series of *The Lazarus Project*. **Tanya Marar** has been working dailies on New Pictures' *The Blue* and operating on *Season 3 of Top Boy*. **Will Lyte** continues on *Project IV* for Moonage Pictures and Netflix. **Vince McGahon** is A Camera/Steadicam Operator on the new series of *Slow Horses*. **Julian Morson** has recently started on *Wicked Little Letters*, which stars Olivia Colman and Jessie Buckley. **Al Rae** has been doing dailies on the new series of *You*. **Aga Szeliga** is on location in Italy, working on the Ferrari project. **Tom Walden** continues on Disney's *The Ballad of Renegade Nell*. **Rick Woollard** has operated AR for Dog Eat Dog (Aston Martin), North One & CG Production. He recently operated Steadicam in Paris for Louis Vuitton & shot commercials for Academy, Iconoclast, & Caviar & Somesuch.

Princestone

Junior Agyeman is still shooting in Birmingham A camera / Steadicam on *Champions*, a TV series for Netflix

with director John Ogunmuyiwa and DPs Christopher Sabogal and Robin Whenary. **Simon Baker** is filming A Camera / Steadicam on *The Crown* Series 6, for Left Bank Pictures and Netflix. **Michael Carstensen** has been filming A Camera & Steadicam for DP Scott Winig on *The Witcher* – ‘Everyone’s Enemy’ shooting at Longcross Studios. **Thomas English** has been filming dailies on *Strangers*, a horror film from Blueprint Pictures, directed by Andrew Haigh and starring Jamie Bell and Claire Foy. The DP is Jamie Ramsey. **Rob Hart** is about to start filming A Camera /Steadicam on *The Burning Girls* a TV series directed by Charles Martin for Buccaneer Media and Paramount+ and starring Samantha Morton. **Tony Jackson** has been filming A Camera / Steadicam for Insert Unit on *Street Dogs* with DP James Friend ASC, BSC and director Jamie Payne. **Tony Kay** has been shooting A Camera /Steadicam on *Red Book* –series for Broke and Bone and Netflix. **James Layton** is about to start filming Steadicam on *Promised Land* for Revolution Films with director Michael Winterbottom. **Dan Nightingale** is still shooting A Camera / Steadicam on *Sexy Beast*, a prequel TV series of the film for Paramount+, with DP Bebe Dierken. **Peter Robertson** is about to start filming A Camera / Steadicam on “M” a Mussolini biopic at Cinecitta studios in Rome with director Joe Wright and DP Seamus McGarvey ASC, BSC. **Joe Russell** is about to start filming A camera & Steadicam on the 2nd series of *Pilgrim* in Pinewood with DP Christophe Nuyens. **Fabrizio Sciarra** has been filming Steadicam dailies on TV drama series *Debutante* in Scotland, with director Susanna White and DP Laura Bellingham. **Peter Wignall** has been shooting Camera & Steadicam on a feature *Tartan* with DP Ed Wild BSC.



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IN THE FRAME

Association of Camera Operators

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