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CINEMATOGRAPHY ART

a quarterly Magazine

Master Class with Barun Mukherjee

Buddhadeb Dasgupta

on collaborating with Cinematographers

Bijon Dasgupta

Art Director on legendary Ashok Mehta

Sudeep Chatterjee

DOP on shooting Dhoom-3 at
WICA-OPEN HOUSE

**Bishwadeep Chatterjee
& Nihar Ranjan**

Filmfare award winning Sound Recording
Team on "MADRAS CAFE"

Senthil Kumar:

Veteran Cinematographer
Recollects His Journey

Anil Mehta

DOP on Shooting "HIGHWAY"

Kamal Negi

Filmfare award winner DOP
on shooting "MADRAS CAFE"

Sunita Radia

DOP on shooting "JAL"

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Editor's Desk

With the April issue we have completed our first year. We always believe that a DOP works in direct or indirect collaboration with many other departments. It has been our endeavor to include all those areas which influence the work of the DOP, be it costumes designing, art direction or direction.

In this new section we have interviews with Bijon Dasgupta and Buddhadeb Dasgupta who are living legends in their respective fields. The interviews will give you much to reflect on the expectations of a director from his DOP and the Production Designer. Bijon talks about Ashok Mehta in a much focused manner which must make you realize why Ashok Mehta is a great cinematographer. Bijon has dwelled much on minute things about cinematography and art direction and his talk was, indeed, an eye opening experience for me.

Buddhadeb has collaborated with about nine different cinematographers and has repeated Venu and Sunny Joseph in a few films. I am very confident that his interview shall definitely be a memorable reading for many of us.

Though sound is not directly connected with Cinematography but it certainly complements the visuals. You will find Filmfare Award winning sound recording team of Nihar and Bishwadeep's insightful talk on the sound designing of 'Madras Café'. I am sure that their interview will appeal to everyone connected with film-making. We also interviewed another member of the 'Madras Café' team, Kamal Negi, who received Filmfare Award for this film, about his journey across the world of cinematography.

WICA is actively working towards the dissemination of knowledge about various aspects of cinematography. It has started a new website and also an open house series where veterans would share their experiences. This issue is carrying the details of the session held by WICA with Sudeep Chatterjee and his team sharing experiences of working on "Dhoom-3".

Anil Mehta is one of those few cinematographers whose contribution to Indian cinematography is unparalleled. We engage him into an elaborate discussion on the challenges of shooting 'Highway'.

The magazine gives space to not only the award winning or established cinematographers but also to the young generation of DOP's. As such, we have included Senthil Kumar from Hyderabad who is well known for his association with Rajmauli. It also includes a feature on Sunita Radia about various challenges while shooting her latest release "Jal".

Cheers!!

Naresh Sharma

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Master Class



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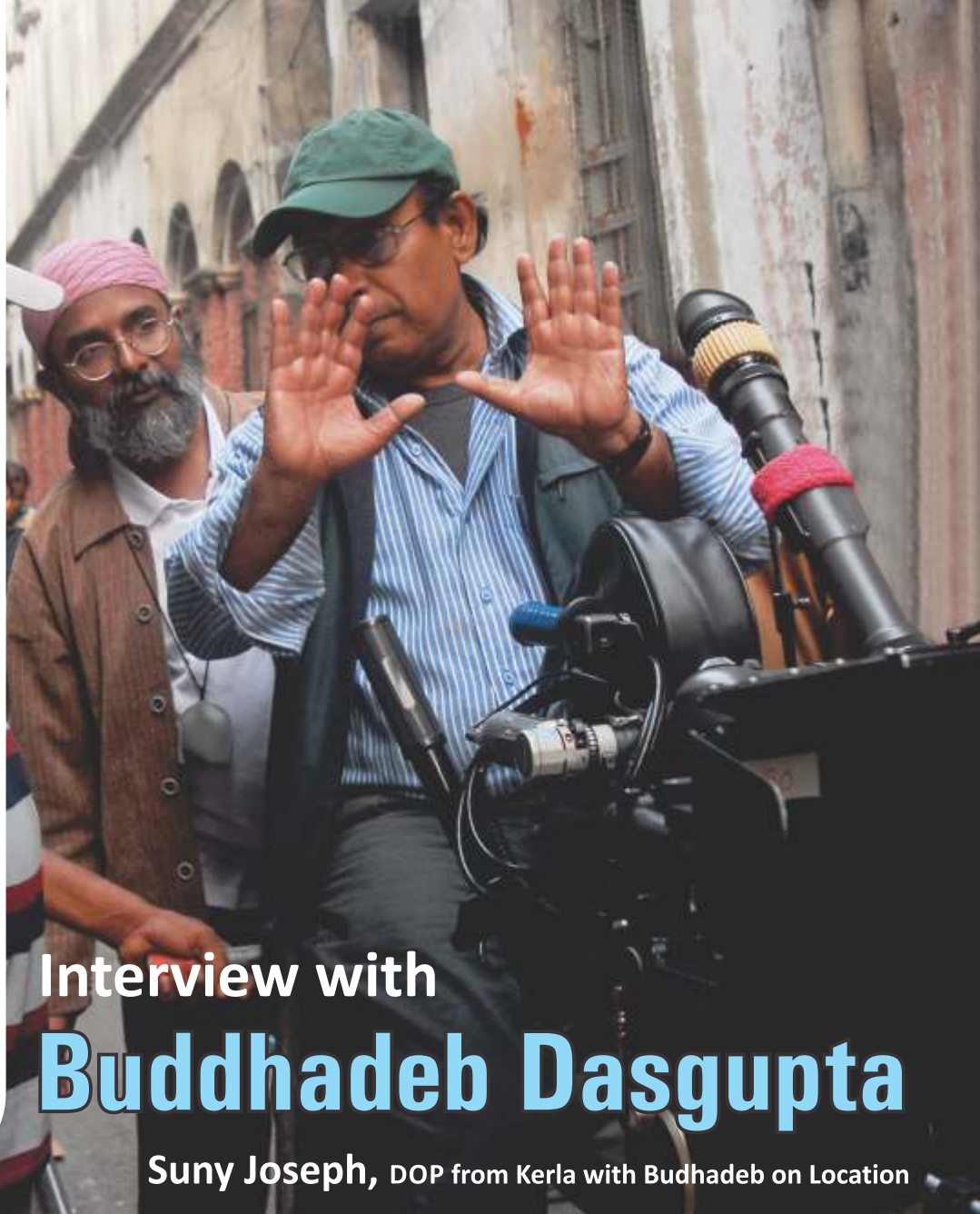
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Buddhadeb Dasgupta is a poet and prominent contemporary filmmaker, most known for films like *Bagh Bahadur*, *Tahader Katha*, *Charachar* and *Uttara*. Five of his films have won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film, *Bagh Bahadur*, *Charachar*, *Lal Darja*, *Mondo Meyer Upakhyan* and *Kaalpurush*, while *Dooratwa* and *Tahader Katha* have won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Bengali. As a director, he has won National Film Award for Best Direction twice, for *Uttara* and *Swapner Din*. Over the years he has published several works of poetry including *Govir Araley*, *Coffin Kimba Suitcase*, *Himjog*, *Chhaata Kahini*, *Roboter Gaan*, *Sreshtha Kabita*, and *Bhomboler Ascharya Kahini O Ananya Kabita*.

In this interview **Arijit Seth & Robin Banerjee** tries to find out about his relationship with various DOP.



Interview with Buddhadeb Dasgupta

Suny Joseph, DOP from Kerla with Buddhadeb on Location

You have worked with more than ten different cinematographers in various films, what is your general brief to a DOP and what do you expect from him to realize your vision?

I have definitely worked with quite a number of cinematographers in my 40 years of journey with cinema. I expect two things from my DOP. One, technically he has to be very sound. I mean he must be an expert on his equipment, know all the technical details which I cannot teach him on the sets. He has to have his own vision of images and needs to be a very good observer of light and also of life. He should know the lens like his finger tips. These are the basics.

Secondly, he should be a very good human being and a tolerant person who respects his co-workers, takes care of them,

and should have the spirit to lead his own team. He should try to know my vision because finally it is my vision he has to project. As it is my vision technically, so I must decide first how to get it and this includes the things like at what time I will shoot, what my lens will be, what kind of movements of the camera I need and accordingly what the movements of the characters will be. These are the things which I always decide. The DOP is an integral part of my team, may be the most important part, but those who have been working with me know thoroughly that this is my domain and I decide everything.

I would want my DOPs to be careful listeners, sensitive human beings, someone who can adjust easily and understands my style of working. It is important that whatever may be his style of working as a

DOP, he has to know my style of film-making and should absorb that. These are my minimum expectations from my DOP.

You have worked with different DOP's. Can you elaborate the style of working that you like the most?

I made my first film when I was a student. There was All India competition of scripts organized by FFSI. Satyajit Ray, Vijaya Muley, Chidananda Dasgupta were in the committee. I was still studying. I just wrote a script and sent it to them because I was deeply in love with cinema. *Dooratwa* was my first feature film. Before that I had made quite a number of documentary films. Many of them I had to shoot. They are not very good films because I had to make films for others just for money sake. It was my initiation into films and they taught me a

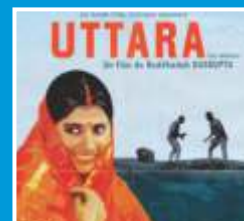


lot, especially in getting the nuances of cinematography.

It is very good if my DOP loves music, painting and literature, especially poetry. I am greatly indebted to the images that I got from literature or derived from music, poetry and painting. I am not a film school product. I did not get that chance. I studied economics and taught economics for some time. When I was a kid, my mother used to play Piano and recite poetry. She would always ask me to close my eyes and listen to her. I was not happy with that dictate but had to follow. But, then, slowly something started happening. I found that from music I have started getting some images. From some lines of the poetry some images also started coming. These are the images which have become my constant companion. Those images stayed with me. I talked with those images. I lived with those images and images started living with me. Through this you may know I write poetry and when I compose a composition, I take that composition from those very images that are imprinted in my mind. I would want my DOP to understand that.

When I started making Dooratwa, I just wanted to make this film. Whatever little money I had made from documentary films, I invested everything. My mother gave me some money but that too was very little. Somehow I made Dooratwa with Ranjit Roy from FTII as the DOP. It was his first film after FTII. What I really liked about him was his confidence. I was new and he too was new and so also was my editor from FTII Pune, Mrinmoy Chakraborty. I have never heard Ranjit telling me even once that this or that was not possible. Whatever I wanted, he did that for me; whatever way I showed to him, he followed that. There was no video assist monitor to see and so you had to have full trust in the DOP. He was such a well known name after Dooratwa that he started getting more and more work. He got one film for Mrinal Sen. It was a different kind of film out and out. Satyajit discussed it many times and he also praised the cinematographer very much. What we did from day one was that we never followed the rules laid. We just invented certain things. That is exactly what I have been doing till now. That invention has extended and now become a style being talked about all over.

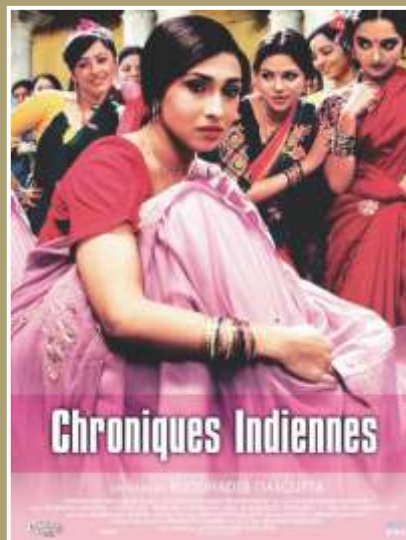
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Important Films of Buddhadeb Dasgupta



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One of the master cinematographers you have worked with is Soumendu Roy in Charachar (1994). How much was his experience useful to you in your film?

I don't rest on anyone else's experience. I just want my DOP to give correct focus. I want my DOP to handle camera rightly. I am pleased with well lit and well exposed shot. When we decided to work together he was not quite used to my style of film making but he could absorb that immediately. That may have happened because of his experience but that was very helpful. He did exactly what I said. Where you are placing the camera, what lens you are using, what kind of movements you are adding to that and where you are also positioning your characters -- all these things together make a shot complete. That is very important and you cannot ask your DOP to do that for you. You have to do it yourself.

I always like to use wide angle lenses because I want everything to look very real. In that reality what do I do? I allow the non real to come in such a way that you don't even start realizing at what point it has come in. It has been brewing slowly and finally when it has taken over the reality, at that time real and unreal remain no more two different things and become one unit. You just take in reality and at the same time you find the zone of unreal, and that is the magic. Besides reality there comes the role



of dream and there comes the role of magic. So when I compose all these three things, then unknowingly something takes place and all the three elements give their contribution in composing an integrated frame.

I have seen all my DOP's falling in love with this kind of work. This mutual respect has really helped me a lot. Be it Sudeep Chatterjee, Venu or Sunny Joseph. All of them say that dada has made us forget the conventional photography or whatever we were taught. It is because my style of cinematography is exclusively mine. You have to give your hundred percent to achieve this and if you can give that, then you can definitely achieve it.

A documentary film on me is being made by a girl called Supriya Suri. It's being produced by Films Division. They were shooting with me and wanted me to show to them how the movement of double trolley happens. When I went there, I found that these people had already laid the trolley because they learnt about that from Ashim Bose who did "Uttara" for me. These are the things that have been contributing to other films. This idea of double trolley where two trolleys move together is something that I decided long time back because I was shooting outdoor on uneven surface where you cannot put anything.

You have to somehow manage to lay the trolley and I also had to add another movement to the first movement in order to further that design. In those days it cost me 700 Rupees and when I told it to Venu on the phone he was in Trivandrum and I was calling from Calcutta. He almost started laughing at me thinking dada must have gone mad, otherwise how can two trolleys move together with one camera and if it can happen, that cannot but be magic.

When the whole thing was brought home to him at the shootings in Orissa, he immediately fell for that. So you may know that I have invented many things that came to my mind automatically and just for my own shots, but it is good that some other people started practicing it. The cinematographers have been using it for reference.

I think Venu is the most spirited person and I really love him like my brother. Now he is a family friend although we have not been working together since some time.



I will never forget the day when I was shooting in Bolpur and that was the last day and last shot. I told Venu to go to the Monitor and watch what I was doing and then just to do that for me.

Since I was also doing it for the first time, I myself was a little uncertain and all I could say to my DOP was to just to go on doing things the way I was telling him. I went on doing what I myself wanted to do.

I told Venu a few things and looked at him. He said to me, "Dada, just 10 minutes." It was because I have told him not to use any artificial lights. He just saw what I did and he did that again so well that a beautiful shot was taken. So many times Venu really helped me create the kind of images I needed for my films.

When Sudeep worked with me he was almost a newcomer. He was not very well known and was a struggling cinematographer. I called him and he started working with me. After finishing the work he also said the same thing that he had learnt so many things. I believe that a film-maker must have his unique style. When a cinematographer comes to work with that film-maker, he realizes that this is the style and from that he absorbs many things.

Sudeep had never worked with me before, but for my kind of camera-work, he can fit the bill very nicely and his lighting is very good though it takes a little more time.

To tell you very frankly I never had any problem working with any DOP. I met this Spanish DOP Diego in Madrid. There was a retrospective happening in Madrid film festival. He used to come every day and he just met me and that's all. He never told me his plan to come to India. But then one day my daughter called me and told me that this

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person was here. My daughter Alokandana is a music director. She has been working in Mumbai. Diego and my daughter were working together in a Marathi film and it was there that he started talking about me to her. Then she told him that I was her father. Then one day Diego said that he really wanted to work with me and requested me to give him a chance. And thus he came. He is really a very nice person. But he was not used to this type of situation as he had never seen this style, but we started working together. I tell all my cinematographers what exactly I want and how to achieve it. Even after that I show it to them in the monitor.

Sometime some problem would crop up and I had to scold Diego but it was almost a lesson for him and he really did the things nicely. He is a very nice person and very young. We worked together for another film and he did it so nicely that it is worth seeing. What I really expect from my DOP is correct exposure.

I always ask my DOP not to trust his meter but his eyes and his mind. Meter reading is very important but don't think the meter will always guide you correctly. Put your mind, put your experience whatever it is and put your senses in it and then only you know what the correct exposure is.

I think that if I can tell a DOP after seeing his film that here he has put this light and there he has put that light, then he has failed.

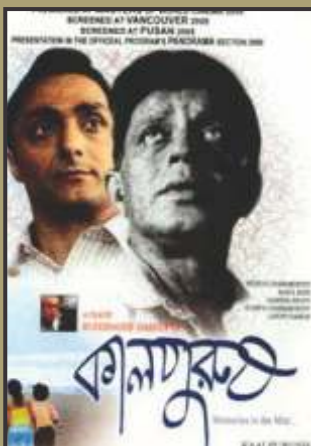
A film-maker or even a cinematographer should not be able to know exactly where the lights have been placed and that's very important. I have observed this problem many times while watching a film. Placement of lights is very

important, and the DOP should know where he should put lights and where he should not. You don't have to lit everything. You must leave some space for darkness. Darkness in cinema doesn't mean that you don't have to have any light. You have to create darkness also through light but then you must know how to create that.

I was once in Cannes with Sven Nykvist, a legendary cinematographer worshipped all over the world. Sitting in the hotel lobby we were waiting for a car to take us to some theater for seeing a film. I was just telling him that every director dreams that one day his DOP will be Sven Nykvist. He loved that and said—'But for that I have to become a Subroto Mitra.' I found that kind of respect only for Subroto and I think that India's all time great cinematographer was Subroto Mitra.

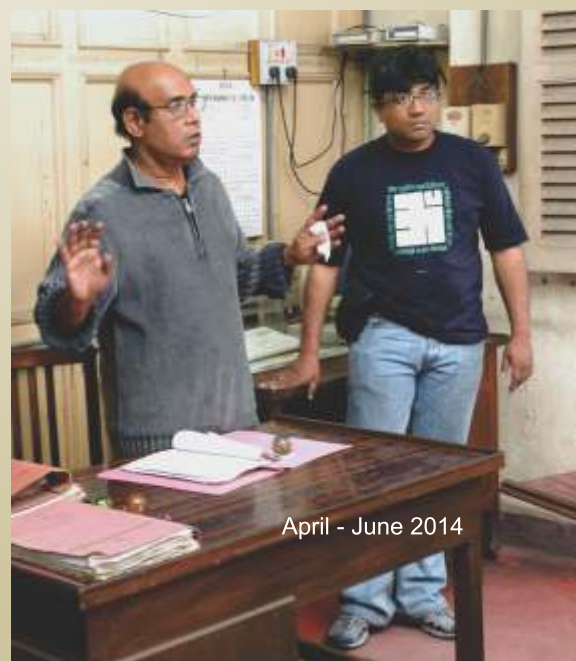
It is not important what style the cinematographer is easy with. It is because he has to realize finally what style a particular script demands. Each and every script itself tells you how to take a shot. So you cannot come with any set style and start making film with it because it doesn't

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Important Films of Buddhadeb Dasgupta

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the next day I took him to show the place and the location where we'll be shooting. It was cloudy and drizzling all the time. We had umbrellas and we went. I told him that that was the location. Venu got very upset and said, "Dada, we have to change it ; this location will not work ; forget about it. Let us find out a different place." I

Location'. A location has to be supportive to the script or a particular sequence and then the way you will show it in your film should also be supportive to your sequence. This is what exactly you are doing to that location. You can change so much of a location that someone will say this is not the same place as we saw. You have to be thoroughly knowledgeable not only about the script but also about how to achieve it.

No DOP should come to a film-maker as a rigid follower of a particular style. The Director has his own style and the DOP should absorb his style.

Cinema is so magical and so deep that you can place it in between music and poetry. Knowledge has no end and I am still discovering so many new things. These images have contributed so much in my life that I am extremely indebted to these images.

In the beginning I was not very confident while using something. I was not sure that this magical element or the dream element would be accepted. Your images should be such as can absorb the audience fully so that they start a new journey with your images. Then one after another, they start their journey to the point where the magic has started or where the dream has started or where reality has started extending to the dreams. It makes you conscious of so many aspects in our life. Your DOP can really do wonder if he can feel what kind of treatment he needs to apply with a particular Director. Images are my language and so I value my DOP a lot. I need to depend, trust and love my cinematographers. I am lucky that I have been able to do that most of times if my life.



work. Every script is a different film as every script makes you aware of one thing that stylishly it has to be different from the film that you have just finished.

I have often seen that the directors themselves don't have any clue about cinematography and they begin to bank only upon the DOP. Now this is a dangerous thing. If you can't make yourself clear to your DOP what exactly you want or what kind of style you are going to follow or what kind of treatment a particular script demands, then you are not a director.

Finally for a good DOP it is essential to work with a good director. It is also essential that there is good script and the DOP has read the script several times and noted down the questions and has discussed them with the director again and again.

After Venu, Sunny Joseph is another cinematographer who has worked with you in maximum films. Could you please elaborate the way Sunny worked with you?

BD: Among all the cinematographer I have worked with, Sunny is the quietest. I have never seen him getting angry. While it is quite common to find Venu bubbling with his anger there Sunny is a very quiet person and at times that quietness also is very irritating. Sunny is a very good cinematographer, his shots are always perfect, the exact movement I want and besides that he is a 'Pundit', I mean, a very scholarly person.

He is a very good teacher and he loves to teach. I will not be surprised if one day he gives up film-making or DOP as a profession and gets fully in to teaching as he is a very good teacher.

I tell you one situation when we were shooting. It was 'Lal Darwaja' and we were in Diamond Harbor. We were to start shooting and we were waiting for Venu and he joined us after two days. After he came,

didn't say anything except telling him, "Let us go to the hotel."

Next day it was a little better as one could notice that it was a little sunny. I again took him to the place and that time he said, "Dada, what can I do if you insist? Then I will have to shoot." After two days we started our shooting.

We went there in the morning to lay so many things. When everything was ready, I asked Venu to start shooting and we rehearsed all the shots because you only get 15 minutes to complete the entire scene at that particular light after which it gets completely dark. It was the time when Venu shouted excitedly, "Dada! It looks so brilliant!"

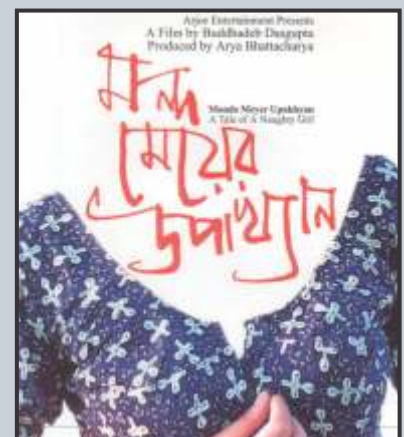
And that is what I mean to say. The DOP may not see what the right time is or what the right position or right lens is. When all these things happen together rightly, then the entire thing will change.

That has happened with me so many times with each and every cinematographer. They have to know what time shooting will start, from which angle, what will be the lens, where the characters will be and whether the backdrop is right. Even your background will change if you change the lens. If you use 24 mm lens, the background will be different and with 40mm or 100 mm it will be altogether different. If you use 150mm, then it is very difficult to say that it is the same location which was shot with 24mm. You can change the shape of the location. I have gone to Purulia and shot certain locations but in my film so many times I have heard people saying the same locations looked different.

There is one house where Mrinal Sen made his film with Smita Patil. In the same building I also shot a film. It is very difficult to realize for the audience that it is the same house. There is nothing called 'Great



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Interview with Art Director Bijon Dasgupta

Bijon Dasgupta is a veteran "Art Director" who has worked on more than 100 feature films. Bijon has shared his expertise on some important international projects too. The names of acclaimed films such as "Tusk" directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky as well as "The Mighty Heart" directed by Michael Winterbottom bear testimony to his artistic as well as creative vision.

He has worked with established directors such as Subhash Ghai, J.P. Dutta, Mukul Anand, Rahul Rawail, Ramesh Sippy and others. For Bijon Dasgupta, reality on screen mattered a lot. Keeping this adage in mind, he created sets which gave a sense of heightened reality to film viewers. This effect can be seen in some of Hindi cinema's biggest blockbusters such as Dil, Gupt, Hum Apke Hain Kaun, Mr. India and Umrao Jaan.

In this interview film critic Lalit Rao (FIPRESCI) tries to find out more about the relationship between a DOP and an art director.

Can you please tell us how did you begin your Initial Journey?

I am from Bangalore and it is from there that I did my graduation. However, films always fascinated me. The first film I saw in a cinema was Satyajit Ray's "Pather Panchali". Later, I met M.S. Sathyu and Zul Velani when I was studying in Bangalore. I would rate them as the two most important people who influenced me. During my school days, I had started working for M.S. Sathyu in Bangalore doing theatre and other related activities. I then started to work on a lot of Russian and Indo-Russian films as M. S. Sathyu's assistant. It was in 1972 that I applied to FTII, Pune for its film direction program. At that time, I was involved in a Spanish flamingo group touring in India by doing lighting and sets for them. I could not enroll myself into FTII due to some problems from Kolkata and the seat was already taken. Thus, I came back to Bombay as I did not want to go to Bangalore because I knew that my family would not allow me to get into movies; they were very against the field of cinema. M. S. Sathyu asked me to join Bombay Doordarshan. At that time television was coming up. During that time people did not have any idea in India of what television was all about. I joined Bombay television centre but I did not get into the art department. The German people were looking after everything. The government of India appointed M.S. Sathyu as its ad-hoc art director to train people. As

he couldn't make it there, he asked the Director of Bombay Doordarshan to let me do the set. Thus I was compelled to do it. Hence, I started reading books about television like three camera setup, line of crossing etc. I wanted to learn the basic grammar of television.

In this manner, Mr. P. V. Krishnamurthy, director - Bombay Doordarshan asked me to become the scenic designer. For television, scenic designer was considered to be a very important post. My initial tasks included creating a workshop and to employ people on temporary basis. This is how I established the art department at Bombay Doordarshan Centre. It has been observed that in television media, the scene designer is linked with the property department and makeup department. For this reason, I looked after all those departments. Finally, I was employed on a permanent basis over there. I was the youngest art director at Bombay television centre. I worked over there for nine years. I think that it was the golden period of Indian television. We had some of the most amazing productions coming out of Bombay Doordarshan. Shukla Das was making super documentaries, dance programmes, programmes for children like "Magic Lamp" based on the Sesame Street. Television taught me a lot as we had one studio in which we had morning recordings. Once the recording was over, there were live programmes being shot over there. You had to learn to use the same thing, as there were few props, you had to

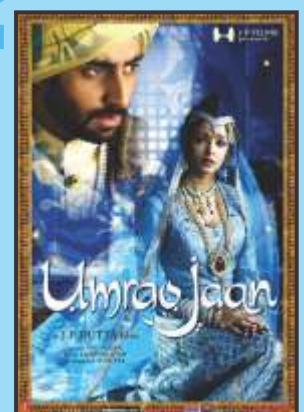
change them continuously. One had to know about lighting and sound because when one is designing a set in television and making a plan, it may not be accepted because it goes through the production meeting and the engineer who is in charge of CCU, who will be looking in the lighting parts etc.

In a television studio, you always have lighting grids. Grids have plug points for each of the lights, which are dimmer, controlled. The sets have to be designed in such a way in the plan that the grid can come down and the back wall does not hinder its way. It should also have audio output points to enable audio to go in.

As one is using a three camera set up, as an art director, one should know which is the back light to some character, which will

Important Films of Bijon Dasgupta as Art Director

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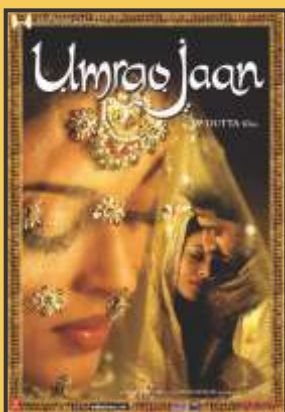


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become face light for other character etc. Sometimes some lights may come into your camera frame so you have to be careful with your camera positions. One has to mark the camera positions and says this will be camera position A, camera position B and camera position C. One has to learn all the camera processes. So we are also taught that you had 1 to 10 grey scale and everything you did was into 1-10 grey scale. The depth of field in a set was in terms of the colour gradation of the walls making it look darker, lighter, so that one could get the depth. In black and white, one can do a lot with your shadows by lighting to create an interesting visual.

All this experience helped me a lot in terms of understanding what lightning is all about, how lighting is done. For example if one has a boom, how does one position the angle so that boom shadow does not fall and your settings don't disturb. While I was in television, I also got involved into doing a lot of advertising films. Actor Jalal Aga was very close friend of mine. "Amul" was the very first advertisement on which I worked. At one time, I was doing almost every advertisement in Bombay for people such as Kailsh Surendernath, Zafar Hai, Shyam Benegal, Deven Khote etc. To me in art direction, one's own aesthetic sense is the most important thing. One cannot learn aesthetics. It is within a person. It is 'what is the type of colour you like', 'what is the type of look that you like'. One also gets influenced by the people with whom one stays. When I came to Bombay, I was very lucky as I got to stay in Shabana Azmi's house. She has a lot of aesthetic sense. I learned how one could pick up cheaper fabrics and make curtains out of them. One grows by watching people as being in somebody's house, one gets to see that the kind of people with whom one is involved are different. Sardar Zafari would come every day, Muzaffar Ali used to sit there.

Important Films of Bijon Dasgupta as Art Director



Baba Azmi became my friend when I was working for Doordarshan.

What is the Role of an art director in a film and how he helps the director in realising his vision?

Personally for me, art direction facilitates the writer's vision and writing into celluloid. A writer pens scenes such as a big haveli or a rich man's house. The writer does not describe that house in the same manner as it is done abroad in a fiction novel where the setting is described. A writer's script is conceived to tell you in brief about scenes namely a villain's house, a bar or a hut etc. One starts to visualize based on what the writer has written as when one reads that whole scene and one at least gets the basic idea of what one is looking for. The director tells you how he wants to do the scene. When I was doing films, we did not have proper scripts at all.

"Make a wonderful set"- that's the only brief we would get. Make a "DhansuFloor" etc. This was the kind of language one always used. On most occasions, industry people would tell us that our sets worth two laks should appear as if they cost Rs. 25 laks. For them, art directors are not art directors unless they are able to achieve such a high level of perfection. In such a scenario, camera becomes the most important factor to everyone. When designing work is to be carried out, as an art director one should know the angles on the set are going be more than anybody else. As one knows about the angle for a long shot, one cannot keep crossing every angle in a set. This is also true for one's low angle shot. Hence, one has to know in a studio the height until where the walls have to go. One should know where to put a little temporary ceiling because if a cameraman goes low angle then the light will be seen. If one has to remove the ceiling I should know how it will be removed. This is precisely the reason why I use skimmers. The skimmer should look like a ceiling and it can be lit and still be able to get a soft light. It is in this manner, one's thought process works on angles, which are being visualised at the time of creating the sets. One also needs to start thinking about the source of lighting. This is why one puts windows, as the set has to have the depth of field. A set designer also thinks of backdrops. In the past, background paintings were made but these days there are no more backdrops. In current times, blue croma and computer graphics are used.

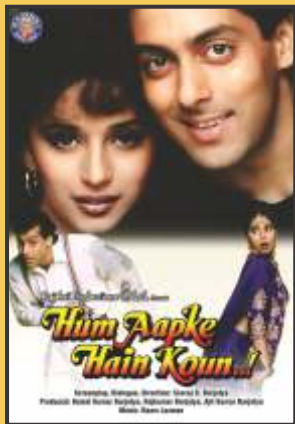
How can an art director help a DOP in creating depth and how do you go about choosing your colour scheme?

Important Films of Bijon Dasgupta as Art Director



The whole depth of field on which one works in a film may not be in a house. For example one is sitting here and there is dead wall. If this was a set, I would have an opening here probably to see something there; may be a dining room or a passage. One may place a table lamp and try to source the lighting pattern. It is at this point that DOP comes and he may say, why don't you give me some light in that area. One starts to incorporate these things. The colour scheme of a set plays a large role. In the past, sets were brightened up a lot because of the manner in which lights were used. Today the cameramen prefer darker walls. They prefer everything darker as they just want the artists to be lit. Personally, I find that photography has changed a lot. We have currently faster films with sensitive cameras and labs have also improved a lot. These days cameramen prefer to work in an environment where the actors are lit but the background is lit slightly as you keep everything more to a darker tone. This is one reason why the colour scheme of the set depends heavily on a DOP.

In black and white, we had 10 grey scales. I would create grey scale in colours. I would use different colours for different backdrops, just to give the depth. How big the window should be, because sometimes you make huge windows and the light cannot be placed, as it will be seen. Hence one needs to create number of walls so that the DOP can keep the lights there, hide them and do cross lighting. It is important to know what he will light up. For this reason, your sofa has to be there or something else which he can light. Keeping this in mind, I think that the entire working relationship of a DOP, an art director along with a costume designer is important .If I



am shooting a scene involving a sofa set, what kind of a fabric would be used so that it would not clash with the background. It is very easy to make a wall very jazzy for any scene but the director has a very emotional scene for which he would like to keep set very low in order to enable the scene to come out well. As an art director, I might do a very Jazzy gold kind of background but the whole scene will die down as that background is being watched all the time. Somewhere an art director cannot go beyond the script. He has to play a very subtle role in the entire narration process unless one is doing a science fiction project.

What is the difference between old school of cinematographers and current generation DOP?

In the past, if you would put a stuffed tiger somewhere in a room, a cameraman would put a bulb inside the eye. He might even put a red light on it. Many cameramen have done it. When the colour film came, cameramen thought that it would help if a lot of colour gel was used.

I remember having done a film called "Himalaya Se Ucha" for Prakash Mehra. We were shooting. I was putting up the sets of snow inside the studio using salts and marble powder. The cameraman was old school. The sunlight was hitting it and it was glaring. He asked me why I did not make it blue. He showed me "National Geography" to convey that it should look blue, but I explained to him that he could achieve that in his lighting. He actually put blue gel on the lights to make it look blue. He was not willing to understand.

However, today's cameramen have changed. They have seen so many international films during film festivals etc. In the olden days, a DOP would light up the

background wall red and since I had not made it red, they would put red gel on the light and make it red, put green colour gel on the light for a pillar. There was a time I was doing 10 films at a time. Today, I work on one film at one time. Today, I have to be present on the set all the time. When we are working on a long schedule film, there is much more concentration and you are able to utilise your resources properly. In present times, a DOP has realised how important it is that an art director has to be continually present on the set. He asks your help to make the frame more attractive.

You have worked with various cinematographers. Why Ashok Mehta is consider as one of the great cinematographers.

I have worked with Ashok Mehta on many films like Kalyug, Gupt and many advertising films like Bombay Dyeing, MRF tyre etc. He was a dream DOP for an art director. He would light the set so beautifully. I have not seen a DOP taking so much pain in lighting. Ashok would be so concerned about highlighting a small painting in a frame. We use papers to make the set. The painter who is painting may have not seen the strokes of the brush or the paper joints and later we would start doing the texturing etc. Sometimes I would tell Ashok Mehta that due to shortage of time I could not complete some part of the wall properly. Ashok would do something to hide that untidiness and he would light it up in such a way that it would look beautiful.

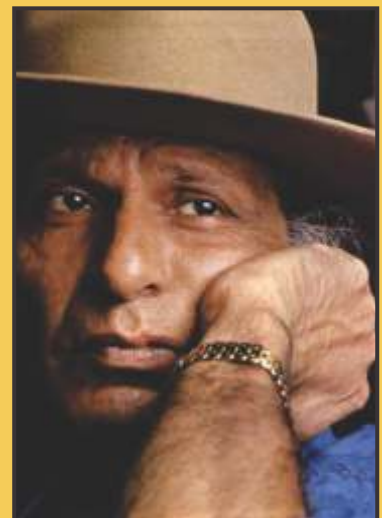
I might have even put a small flower vase in frame but Ashok Mehta's camera would even light that to make it come alive. In one of the sequences of Prem, Boney Kapoor got Ashok Mehta to shoot. It was a sunset shot in the studio involving a romantic scene between Sanjay Kapoor and Tabu. Ashok asked me to get a mirror and place the mirror where the sunset can be seen and I placed a round mirror at an angle. He put up a white skimmer on the top and started lighting up the skimmer with colour gel and the skimmer was reflecting into the mirror and creating a wonderful glow. He used Digel smoke machine and the moment smoke settled down to form amazing cloud shapes, he shot it.

There was a sequence in the film Khalnayak. Subhash Ghai is a very economical producer. It is from Mr. Ghai that I learned how one could make a film economical and yet make it look bigger. We were shooting actress Madhuri Dixit's house at Filmistan studio. He told me that we would need a small hut type of thing and some field of crops in the background etc.

The scene has Madhuri coming from the temple with a "Thali". In the scene, the mother opens the door and actor Jackie Shroff comes in and sits. We made painted steps in the backdrop, going into perspective higher up the mountain and there was supposed to be a small temple at the top. Ashok Mehta came and told me to put a cutout of the temple over there. He lit up that scene like early morning magic hour light and with smoke. The scene shows Madhuri Dixit coming from the edge of the background towards the house and Jackie Shroff is standing there. Subhash Ghai came and shot the whole scene outside rather than inside the house. He kept the house just as a backdrop and got the scene shot in the middle of the studio with Jackie and the mother only due to the backdrop and the way Ashok Mehta had lit up the outdoor set and created a mesmerising atmosphere! It looked like as if there was a real temple on the mountain and that is what Ashok Mehta was really all about!!

There was another sequence involving a helicopter, which is coming down, and actor Sanjay Dutt is hiding inside an old house in a village. Subash Ghai said that we would use sound effect. I used a storm fan as the helicopter was coming down and kept on increasing its speed. I moved the tiles of the roof. I made the tiles in such a manner that they would not fall on the actor's head but when I would move the tiles, the light coming through the shacks would give the feeling of the helicopter coming down due to light streak movement inside. Ashok put the light on the top, which gave a flickering feel inside on the character's face.

I have also done several films with cinematographer Baba Azmi. Baba does not



light backdrops and avoids highlighting backgrounds. In such cases, I have to think of giving depth in other ways. His framing is superb. This is what we learnt from a director called "Bapu". He would hardly use a crane. He is one man who would break even a small scene into many shots-close up, mid shot. I have never come across a director who shoots an actress' face so beautifully. He would fill up the walls so wonderfully and would keep asking me to fill the background.

Pravin Bhatt is a person who could make even ugly women look so beautiful. I have done a lot of films with him. There are also cinematographers known for bigger blocks with crowd. One look at N. Chandra's film like "Narasimha", one would know how to put crowd in a frame to make it appear massive. Today all top cinematographers are conscious of what an art director is going to give them.

Most of my films are set based. Normally I would ask whether a crane would be taken on to the platform. I would ask if it would be moving on a track? In the past, most cranes assembled in India were very heavy. When the camera moved, the platform would have a little vibration. Now days, due to progress, one uses beams instead of wooden planks to stop vibration. If one is doing a big set then one can have a catwalk and there won't be a problem. If it is in a house or a smaller set up, one has to keep a loose wall, one has to fix and put a paper on the joint, or keep a prop in the corner. One needs to keep it dark so that the joint is not visible. If there is a wall and the DOP is lighting it and it is spilling on a certain area, which he will not be able to cut, I will put a black cloth in the background so that leakage of the light is blocked. This is a kind of arrangement, which the art director works out with the DOP.

Today computer aided design are becoming popular. Is it an advantage for an Art Director?

Today computers are being used in a big way to help in the design domain. However, computer aided designs have both advantages as well as disadvantages. It has become a mundane cut, copy and paste job. It is really frustrating when people palm off other people's work as their own. One can google and anything one wants is made available namely fashion shows, award functions. One can copy it, modify it with the help of "Auto CAD" and present it to the director. In the past, we used to copy the black book-bible of advertising people. They used to refer to it and would state that they need this look and that was it.

Computer technology has its advantages too. It is easy to dream the impossible. Today there is a set and everything else is computer graphics. It has enhanced the cost of production but it costs a lot to do CG.

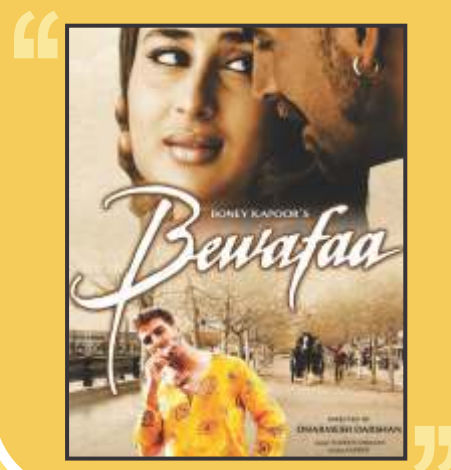
What is the difference between production designer and an art director?

I think that in India we have not yet truly understood the concept of production design. I have done various international productions. Production designer is the first technical person hired by a producer abroad. He designs the whole production. He reads the script, sits with the director, discusses which locations have to be shot at and plans out the entire look of the film in terms of costumes and lighting etc. Then DOP comes in and the whole chart is presented to him. The DOP gives his inputs about location lighting etc. The production designer's job is to transport the entire script to cinema with the help of the director. He employs an art director who constructs the sets; he employs a set decorator who decorates the set. If one observes, there are three Academy awards-one for production, another for art director, and one for set decoration. The set decoration will source out the property, furniture, particular kind of fabrics etc. You might say that he/she is the interior decorator who decorates the shell you have created.

In India we have an art director who is the production designer and will design the set and execute it with the help of his assistant and then interior decorator will decorate it with the help of Prop Department.

Can you share your experiences of some international projects which were great learning experiences?

I learned a lot while working with Paris based Mexican director Alejandro Jodorowsky, who is famous with cinéphiles for "El Topo" (The Mole). I worked with him on "Tusk" in 1979. We were shooting a hospital scene where the actress had to deliver a child. We were shooting in Mysore in a big bungalow. The film's DOP was Jean-Jacques Flori from Paris who could not speak English. There was a porch with the railing. He asked me to get the entire bed out and create it there. I was wondering what he wanted to do. I did whatever he said. I took the bed out, put curtains on the sides. He wanted a lot of green plants, hence, I put a lot of green plants. Later, he showed me on the video assist. He took a paper and explained to me that at any given point of time 70% of the frame - is your art direction! Even if it is your tight close up, there is a



blank screen left. Even if there are two people in a close up, there is blank screen in the frame in the middle. Whatever you see besides your actors is the art direction. I think that it was the most amazing thing a cameraman could tell you. Look at American films, the frame is always filled. There will be lights hanging or something else so that frames look very interesting.

I did "Mighty Heart" directed by English director Michael Winter bottom starring Angelina Jolie, with Marcel Zyskind as DOP. He is famous for his camera work for Danish director Lars Von Trier's "Dancer in the Dark". We rented a society where everybody would be around that house. The director was very sure that he didn't want more than 5 people at any given point of time inside the room on set: cameramen, camera assistant, sound recorder, director and his assistant. The reason was that he wanted to shoot wanted in a documentary style. The director wanted his actors to go wherever they want. The cameraman told me that all my lighting would need to be with practicals. He asked me to give him the light source there. As there was a curtain, I informed him that I would put my light inside the pelmet. If he needed the light at some other point, he would need to give the point source and hang the light from there as a lamp shade or something like that. No single wiring would be going on the wall. For this reason, all the wiring was concealed within the wall. We broke the wall, put all the wiring through a pipe to the main box so that any light which one wants to switch on, one can do that using it like a main switch board. No cable was running in the house. He had 2-3 lights which would move around with him for the faces. It was amazing to see how a big Hollywood production can work so efficiently with a small unit!



Interview with Filmfare Award Winner Bishwadeep Chatterjee on Madras Café



How did you prepare the sound design for the film Madras Café ? Realizing that is a different kind of film which you have been doing so far.

BC: To start with this was a very interesting and unusual subject for Bollywood. Shoojit Sircar has been living this subject for quite a few years before the conditions were conducive enough for him to actually start making the film. There is a considerable amount of research that has gone into making the film and apparently John agreed to do the film. So when Shoojit actually sat down and explained the whole idea about that the journey of an Indian intelligence officer with the backdrop of the LTTE, the Sri Lankan problem and the assassination of the ex prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, a vital part of our History (which my generation lived through) came alive.

The film was shot in N. Delhi and

Kerala. Being a very sensitive subject, shooting in Sri Lanka was out of the question, so they decided to shoot in Kerala, as the terra firma is very similar to Sri Lanka.

During the post production, Shoojit would call us after every sequence that was edited to show us the feel of film. Then he would discuss what sort of Music and effects he wanted. I would sit with him and make my notes... What were the types of guns that were used, what kind of helicopters and aircrafts were used by the IPKF, radios, communications, types of computers and tape recorders, telephones etc...slowly piece by piece the entire soundscape started unfolding.

It was a bold subject to approach keeping in mind the kind of mainstream films Bollywood turns out every year, but it had to be treated realistically. It was a story

that was told through the eyes of an intelligence officer, his angst, his traumas, his emotions and eventually his guilt of not being able to prevent the assassination of a political leader. Though the character was fictitious, the situations were very real. The treatment had to be very delicately balanced. It wasn't a war film, it had a very strong political backdrop, one couldn't take sides and it had grim and dark overtones. We had to be very careful not to go overboard and make it sound like a war movie!

Almost co incidentally Dolby came out with a new theater format called the "Dolby Atmos" during our Audio post production, and naturally, as a technician who has always wanted to stay ahead of time with the latest technology, I wanted to have it for Madras Café. Most of us are aware of Surround Sound. We now commonly have



5.1 and 7.1 formats in surround, in public theaters but here was something which was even beyond these. It was actually "128.1"! While 5.1 and 7.1 had the conventional LCR in the front and various divisions of surround speakers along the sides and behind the viewers, Atmos took it a step further by adding two arrays of speakers on top, added more speakers to make the surrounds sound like they were an extension of the LCR and reinforced the LFE by adding more sub woofers to the surrounds with crossovers. This film just HAD to be in Dolby Atmos..

Why you felt so because lot of action were involved chase, firing etc?

BC: Yes. From the candid back offices of the government, straight out into the war zone, then back to the protagonist's personal and protected home and again straight out into the war zone, then again the war coming onto our shores, destroying his own house and family, and eventually the assassination of the very person his department was supposed to protect... The sound had to be very dynamic.... I needed the range but not the volume, so if I had adequate dynamic range and a very proportionate reproduction of sound almost like a 3D effect in audio, there was never a need to go high on the volume to create a dramatic impact. I could achieve this by the silences of the more mundane scenes opening up really "wide" when it came to the action scenes.... Even a distant chopper flying over us was enough to create tension. When it came to explosions, the impact was created more by the falling debris from above than just the loud bang. Similarly, the travelling and crisscrossing of bullets and missiles were more dramatic than the sound of gun fire and rocket launchers..

Important Films of Bishwadeep as Sound Designer



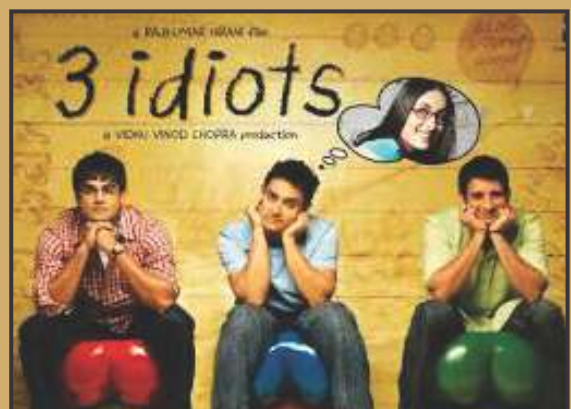
Could you elaborate the scope of stylization in terms of sounds in this film.

BC. The film starts with a faint chopper sound at a distance in the quiet mountainside of the Himalayas... The sound of the chopper amplifies...and suddenly in a flash you are dragged into a war zone where the choppers are flying above you and there are bullets flying and there is an explosion and...you realize it was a horrible dream of a traumatized retired government agent, our protagonist.

There are several such moments in the film. The scene where the assassin, a lady, was being made to wear the now famous belt-bomb. The extremists went through an entire dress rehearsal as to how the assassination would be carried out....in that sequence when she is dressing up and other women are dressing her up, you can hear

the sounds or ornaments, bangles. I shut out every other sound and you could just hear the twinkling of the ornaments, the payal, the bangles and I kind of spread it all over so there were little twinkly sounds of all these emerging all around you. It was to highlight a very feminine quality of a woman dressing up as though she is going for a wedding. This was in complete contrast to what was going to follow next... a very ghastly end. When eventually she did pull the trigger, what followed the sound of the explosion was a continuous high frequency note. I tried to simulate what happens to us when there is a sudden loud explosion near our ears. Because it is a very unusually loud explosion which you are not prepared for, your ears start "ringing", so I tried to recreate that effect. As he is lying on the floor, thrown off by the blast I blurred out all the sounds and just kept a heartbeat, as though from his point of view everything

Important Films of Bishwadeep as Sound Designer





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comes to a standstill.... Everything is in slow motion and there is smoke, there is grime and there is this high frequency note which creates a sense of shock, till faintly you hear a child crying, women crying, ambulance sirens and the sounds of chaos bringing him back again to reality

Tell us something about Background music Required for Madras cafe.

BC. Shantanu Moitra composed a beautiful theme for this film. He used an electric solo violin which laced all the moods together...whether it was the violence, the loneliness, or the tragedy or the overall somber mood of the film. But the music was minimalistic and very much like an undercurrent. Most importantly, he worked around the sound design.

Can you talk about the foley part for this film?

BC. In this particular film I was very concerned about the foley because that is what really brings out the texture in sound. I needed grit.... I wanted a lot of metal, leather, dirt and

grime. I wanted to smell the gun powder, the machines of war, the dust, the wet forest... and I think good foley almost lets you do that.

Which are the other films in Hindi language are been done in this Atmos?

BC. Madras Café is the first Bollywood film that has been fully done in Native Atmos. Now most big banner films are wanting to mix in this format.

What about the theaters playing this sound system?

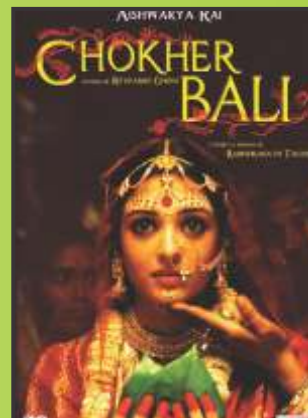
BC. Well, there are only two theaters currently in Mumbai that have Atmos. Chennai has a chain of 5 or 6 theaters that have the same. Probably by the time you publish this there may be a few more all over.

How Do you see the future of Atmos sound system in India ?

BC. I see a good future of Atmos in India. Its just a matter of time, but we'll get there.

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A Complete Film & TV Directory
EDITOR – RAMESH MALHOTRA

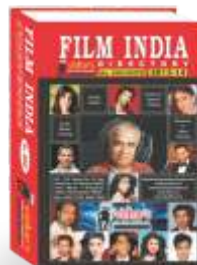


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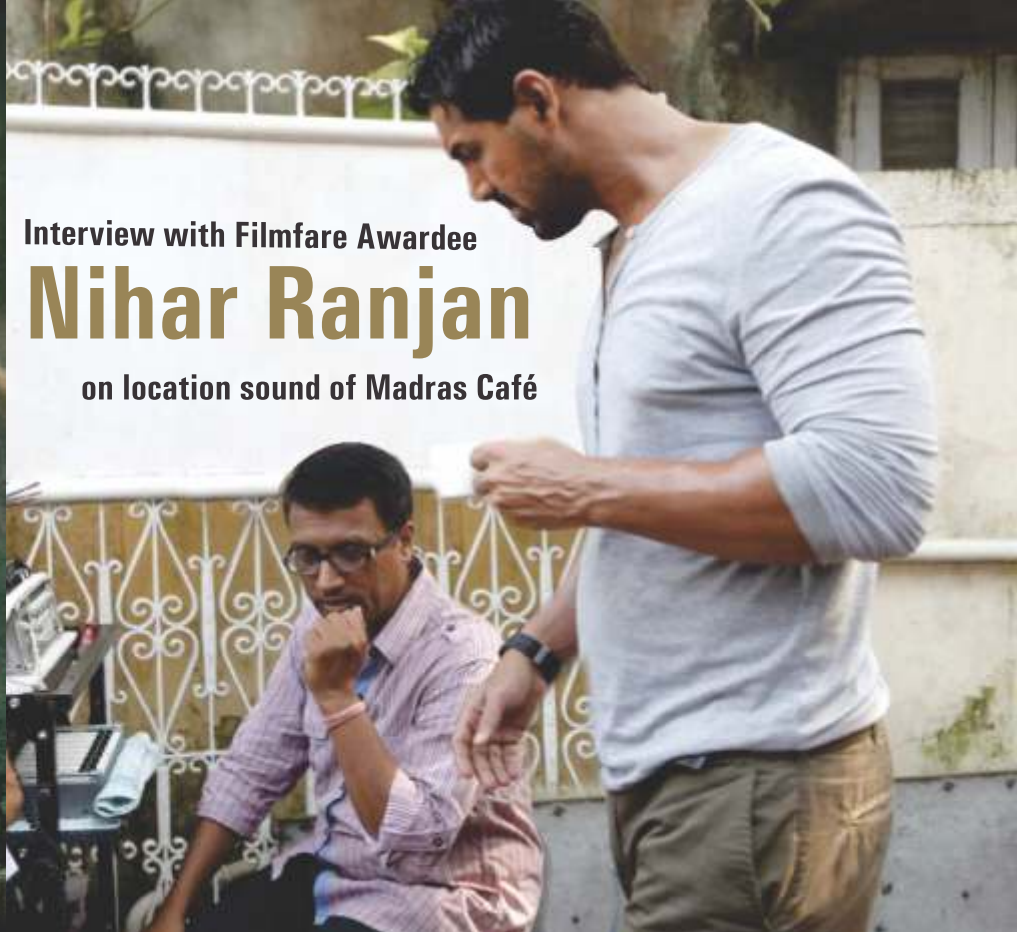
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Interview with Filmfare Awardee

Nihar Ranjan

on location sound of Madras Café

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2013 The Coffin Maker (sound recordist)
- 2013 Prem Mayee (sound recordist)
- 2012 Ferrari Ki Sawaari (production sound mixer: sync) / (sound mixer)
- 2012 Vicky Donor (sound recordist)
- 2011 Tanu Weds Manu (sound recordist - film segments)
- 2010 Pairon Talle (sound recordist)
- 2010 Lafangey Parindey (sound) / (sound recordist)
- 2009 3 Idiots (production sound mixer: sync) / (sound recordist)
- 2007 Strangers (sound recordist)
- 2007 Natasha (sound recordist)
- 2007 Eik Dasttak (sound recordist)
- 2006 Take 3 Girls (sound recordist)
- 2006 Prema Rutu Aslilare (sound)
- 2003 Baaja (sound)
- 2003 Harivillu (sound designer)
- 2002 The Name of a River (sound recordist)
- 1998 Kareeb (pilot track - as Nihar Samal)

What kind of equipment did you use for location sound recording for "Madras Cafe" and why did you opt for those specific models ?

Nihar: I generally use the Zaxcom Deva 5.8 recorder. It is a 10 multi track digital recorder and Lectrosonic radio microphones with Sanken -cos11D tops and Schoeps CMIT-5u and CMC 641and Nueman KMR-81i and 82i as boom microphone. Zaxcom Deva software is very user friendly while I am working on locations and the pre amplifier of the zaxcom also provides more headroom and mirroring in external hard drives for backups.

How much percentage of the entire location sound was used and how much the dubbing of the dialogues was done and what were the various reasons for dubbing?

Nihar: "Madras Café" was a very difficult film from sync sound recording POV as story was told in war zone background and most of the shoots were out door and the shoot was done on real locations. There was nothing like studios or sets. All the indoors and outdoors were real live locations. It was challenge for me to capture all emotions and cohesive performances on such locations. So if you consider all these

parts, I think 20% dubbing has been done and that includes the creative decisions of changing the scripted dialogue. Moreover, they also wanted to change the voice of some actors due to accent problem as the story was based in south India. Very few scenes have been dubbed due to sound recording issues, for example, if the dialogues are not being heard clearly due to heavy winds or external noises. If you have seen that boat sequence when Vikram meets Jaya, that sequence has been dubbed. Again, Bangkok fish market scene where Vikram is meeting another spy agent, that part is also dubbed.

The Director preferred dubbing for certain parts as he wanted to change the voice of a few actors because of their dialogue delivery. This film is a political thriller but they wanted to have changes for politically correct words. For instance, if someone has said "TLF" then they wanted to change it to "PLF". As such some sort of patch dubbing has been done.

What were the problems faced due to existing noise and how they were tackled?

Nihar: In "Madras Café" there were multiple problems as many a times we were shooting very near to the road



sides and back waters in Kerala. So frequent motor boats and ship movements were great issues for me. We shot in Kochi, Athirapuli jungle, Delhi & Ramoji film city. While shooting in Kochi it was very noisy as lots of diesel autos and huge crowds gathered to see the shooting. As you know the film has been narrated in flashbacks during the period of 80's, so it is supposed to be in Jaffna (Sri Lanka). Now my great challenge was to record clean dialogue without people's voices and less of traffic sounds. I didn't have the production support for the sync security to have control over crowds and traffic. Some houses where interior scenes have been shot were very close to roads. I was under lots of pressure to get my work done properly.

How much cleaning of the sound was required in post production?

Nihar: If you have seen my earlier films you will notice that I don't do much of cleaning because I work so hard on the location itself that I don't have to use more of noise reduction on my dialogue tracks. Noise reduction artifacts create more hassle and change the voice tonality of characters which becomes clearly noticeable in big speakers.

I do much of my homework in the beginning right from pre production till shooting so that I may get neat and clean



dialogues on the location itself. My prime motive is always to record neat & clean dialogues as much as possible. I also try to interpret existing ambience in dialogue tracks to final ambience of that location. In case of in-door situation for live location reverb and delays were great challenges for me to get dialogues with less of reverb as you know reverb kills the clarity and voice

presence. I used various patterns of boom microphone and mic techniques like putting floor mats and hanging sound blankets on walls and ceilings in order to minimize the reverb in dialogue track as much as possible. Because of sync sound the performances of all new actors have been appreciated by the audience.



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What was the contribution of costume designer in supporting the choosing of fabrics which don't give rumble or rustle etc?

Nihar: Before going for shooting I would visit the costume department and they showed all the fabrics and the uniforms in detail. Now what Vikram (John Abraham) was wearing a thicker material, which was creating a problem -- not the rustle but it was giving a muffled sound. So by changing different mic positions I was able to get more openness of dialogue tracks. Wardrobe people are always very helpful to modify some costumes for positioning radio mics and thus help the sound dept.

Did you face any problems due to camera/lights like HMI rumble etc?

Nihar: Yes, these problems always exist in every shoot due to HMI booster and light dimmers. In India we have got all these latest Arri light gadgets but they don't have much of accessories. I always fight for the noise free HMI booster, especially in the indoor scenes. Fan of ballistics creates more hiss-sound and it becomes rather difficult to kill it in later stages.

Each member of the camera department and light-men in the unit has to be helpful to get a better sync sound. So I had to meet them individually to rectify all these issues and they really helped a lot. Camera department has done a lot of contribution to get the better sync sound. Apart from that the film is always shot in

the candid way with multiple cameras and my work suffers because when wide and telephoto lenses are used simultaneously, it restricts the boom mics to reach proper headspace of actors. I need to depend upon radio mics tracks. I always talk to DOP and the Director to minimize the use of extreme wide angle shots. For close ups shots I insist upon them to shoot with single camera.

Since it is the directors vision which you take it forward, how much was Shoojit Sircar involved in terms of sound?

Nihar: I always prefer that my Director should feel very much comfortable with me. I was very much comfortable with Shoojit Sircar as a director. He was very keen for sound and gives liberty to work for perfection. For retakes for sound he doesn't have any issues. Except some emotional scenes, most of the time he goes for a retake if I need one. Sometimes he will also ask me if the performance is correct or not. Without my consent, he never says OK and that is the best part of working with Shoojit Sircar. Before going to shoot, we had a meeting and he showed some of the films. He gives a clear idea what he wants from us. In fact he had made some sort of audio visual montages before going to the shoot. But this is my third film with Shoojit Sircar and he knows my involvement in projects. He always insists that I should take sounds at all locations. In Athirapalli jungle and back-water areas, all the jungle sounds have been recorded differently.

In "Madras Café" he has chosen very less background music & all the ambience and sound effects being used have come out very well with sync sound in the film. It elevates character performance and emotions and moods even if they are new



HIGHWAY

The French Wine in Eric Rohmer Style



When a stone is cast into a pool, ripples spread all around with an intensity depending upon the force with which the stone is cast. The extent of ripples, however, is always subject to the size of the pool. 'Highway', indeed, is a stone cast into the film world with a highly forceful intensity as it could create ripples as far as Berlin. The extent of ripples, however, varies in accordance with the size of the pool of our consciousness. So some would interpret the movie in terms of Stockholm syndrome, the others might call it a road movie with a difference, and still others could regard it as a sojourn that starts with a bang but ends with a whimper.

Our movie-viewing sensibilities have, indeed, been so fed upon linear progression of stories that the only scope of novelty left with the writers or directors is either a startling flashback or an exciting dream sequence. Our critical abilities too have been shaped in terms of either the theme or its aesthetic treatment. However, in 'Highway', when our itching urge for that linear progression gets no soothing relief even from the flashes of a distressing past or the dreams of a pleasant future, we get restless. The theme too tends to become quite elusive since not even the protagonists themselves are sure where they are heading to. The restlessness tends to develop into frustration. The only way left with most viewers is to wish the movie had said something more than it actually did.

And this is exactly the temptation we must not succumb to since doing so would be a grave injustice to its maker Imtiaz Ali with whom -- as he himself told -- the story continued brewing in mind for no less than fifteen years and could not get any final shape till the finish was actually reached and executed.

It is because it is a movie playing with symbols, and the symbols here are not static but dynamic, building up associatively to present a contrast between the artificial life we are accustomed to leading and the natural life we are capable of leading. This contrast starts symbolically with the cramped in side of a house preparing for the ceremony of tying a young girl in the shackles of nuptial tradition. But the bride having an element of a deep seated resentment against cultural ties feels so suffocated that she begins to yearn for some fresh air. The way she comes out of the car and stretches out her hands to embrace the open air is suggestive of her latent wish to be one with nature. But she is too innocent to know that a petrol pump is not a benign lap of nature but a natural habitat for malignant elements.

Right from the moment of Alia Bhatt's abduction, the movie goes on demolishing the edifice of so called civilization that we have built with the mortar of hypocrisy and the bricks of compromises, even immoral and forced at times. Simultaneously, the movie goes on building up a case for realizing our innate natural self that needs a painful soul-searching and a bold stance challenging conventions.

This journey from outer to inner self has been graphically traced on a highway that takes us away from the halogen light of towns to the sun-lit snowy peaks of mountains. The pangs of journey are symbolically and aesthetically described through the sad tales both the protagonists had to tell. The girl looking sweet and chocolaty from outside has an inner bitterness and hardness supposedly cured by pills of gagging relational ties. The boy looking hard and strong from outside has quite a soft and fragile interior preserved in some sweet and shocking mother images. Both of them have encounters with their real inner selves and are carried away off feet by the freshness and strangeness of this vision. The rest of the movie is about their inner preparation to welcome and accept their inner natural selves. But the outside is also prepared to smother and crush any such threat or challenge to its existence.

The focus is more on the inner progression than the outward happenings. And therein Imtiaz Ali has taken a risk that only the likes of V. Shantaram and Guru Dutt had the courage and acumen to take. Mr. Ali's team deserves all praise and credit for projecting his vision so aesthetically and successfully. The foremost contribution has been made by the cinematographer Mr. Anil Mehta whose visuals not only enhance the director's vision but also add substance and meaning to it. Alia Bhatt and Randeep Hooda have quite artistically revealed the innerness of this vision with their perfect performances. A. R. Rahman and Irshad Kamil have lived up to their unsullied reputation. But still the 'guddi-patakha' song sung by Nooran sisters Sultana and Jyoti has a charm of its own and even the briefest summary of 'Highway' deserves a special mention of this unique experiment made by the film-makers.

Anything deleted from or added to this unprecedented movie might disturb the precarious balance the director has achieved and maintained so dexterously and adroitly by perhaps refusing to budge even an inch from his conviction in his own vision and artistry.

- Dr. Madhu Bhushan Sharma, is script writer. (madhubhushan.sharma@gmail.com)

actors. Because of the DOLBY ATMOS, all the soundscape we have designed in depth and in very detailed & multi-layers of voices.

What according to you were unique features of the film "Madras Cafe" in terms of sound that the Filmfare jury decided to give the award to "Madras Cafe" rather than to any other film?

Nihar: "Madras Café" was a very special film for us because of multi-layered sound elements used for telling the story. Sound played a very important role in engaging the audience effectively and giving it more information to get lucidity in changing space and time of the film. Sound does not play larger than life. It is rather realistic in nature & sometimes sound does not follow objectively to the visual. Sound had its own dimension to narrate the story. If you see "Madras Café", sound elements have also been used to elevate psychological journey of the main protagonist while he is in nightmare and sound helps the audience to keep in mind the war zone space constantly. These war zone sounds keep disturbing Vikram as the main actor. For example, in an opening scene, we hear the helicopter sounds and blast sounds. The use of silence in sound tracks also interpreted very intelligently to enhance character psychosis. Also we always have radio voices coming and going so as to engage the audience in each frame. Sound elements used in "Madras Café" make the audience perceive visuals in a much faster and elaborate way by getting its realistic nature. I really appreciate Shojit that he gave us the freedom to deliver our best. □□□



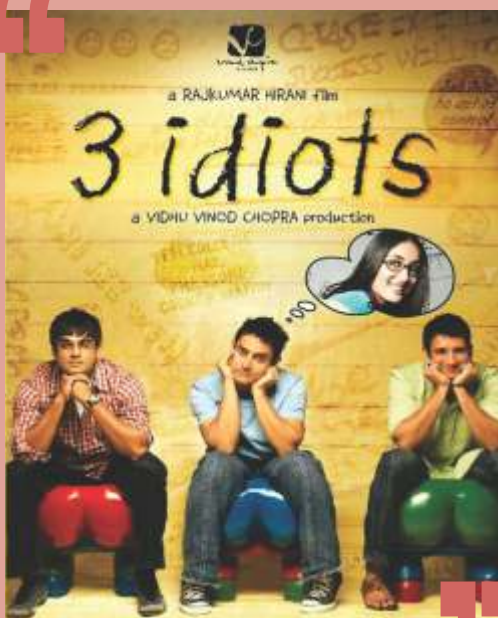
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Important Films of Nihar as Sound Recordist



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Anil Mehta on Shooting Highway

Anil Mehta is a much sought after DOP in both Advertising and Bollywood. After doing graduation from Hindu College, Delhi University, he took his diploma in cinematography from FTII, Pune in 1984. His scintillating talent behind the camera has been coming to the fore with movies like Lagaan, Jab Tak Hai Jaan, Veer Zara, Cocktail and Wake up Sid.

Anil Mehta was an established DOP in Advertising much before he Started as DOP in bollywood with Khamoshi : The Musical in 1994. He beautifully transcribed into images the scripts of Straight from the Heart, Agniversha : The Fire and the Rain, Saathiya, Kal Ho Na Ho, Marigold, Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna and Rockstar.

During the last two decades he has indeed been on the "Highway" of glory and fame in the world of indian cinematography, winning on the way Screen Weekly Award, IIFA and the National Film Award for Best Cinematography for his work in 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam', Screen Weekly Award for 'Khamoshi' and 'Lagaan' besides being nominated for the Screen Weekly Award for 'Kal Ho Na Ho' and 'Veer-Zaara'. He has worked with top art-house Directors like Mani Kaul (Cloud Door - International Series of erotic tales) as well as the most impressive names of commercial cinema like Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Ashutosh Gavarikar, Karan Johar, Yash Chopra and Imtiaz Ali. At present he is also taking care as the President of Western India Cinematographers Association and reviving the organization.

As all the masters liberally bequeath their legacy to the coming generations, so did the Anil Mehta . He has contributed generously to the growth of Indian cinematography by passing on his tremendous experience and fabulous expertise to cinematographers like, K.U. Mohanan, Amitabha Singh, Anil Chandel, Guru Raj , Setu, Rafe Mahmood and many more who themselves are now very respectable and established names as independent cinematographers of today's Bollywood.

In this interview Naresh Sharma engages Anil Mehta into a stimulating discussion on the cinematography-aspects of his most recent work " Highway " directed by Imtiaz Ali for whom he has already shot Rockstar. HIGHWAY was in the official selection of the Berlin International Film Festival 2014 for " Panorama Programme" having Wieland Speck as its curator. The selection of films is made to provide insights on new directors in art house cinema and Auteur Films. In this section one finds new discoveries and films by renowned directors like Pedro Almodóvar, Jacques Doillon , Mika Kaurismäki and Chantal Akerman .

The DOP always helps the Director in the realization of his vision. What kind of locations came to your mind regarding that vision when Imtiaz narrated the Script to you and how did you go about choosing the locations?

To begin with Imtiaz narrated only the idea, not the script, he was still working on it. Straight away it was very clear to me that this film was going to unusual places. It's a kidnap story that starts in Delhi. So in a sense it's a story that has to stay off the Highway. Locations were first plotted on a map in Imtiaz's office, what route would the kidnappers take. Imtiaz's long time Associate, Rajesh Tibrewal then went on the first recce by himself.

My chat with him before he left was 'don't think logistics, find places that 'smell' right for the movie, lets push ourselves and production.' We were more interested in what is true for the film. The Salt Factory, near Sambar, where she is kept captive is not a very friendly place-there are no hotels nearby and you have to travel one and a half hour to the nearest hotel, but we were not concerned about all these things.

The spirit of the film determined the locations. We trekked 45 minutes from Aru in Pahalgam to reach the village location for the climax.

In the upper Himachal the roads and hotels had not yet opened for tourism, we shot in towns like Reckong Peo, Nako, Kaza.

It was -5 degrees one night in a hotel in Kaza, without electricity and water.

Imtiaz likes to shoot his films in script sequence and he is very loyal to real locations. That sets a tone for the film.

What was your basic approach to cinematography in "Highway" ?

I approached Highway with an 'Indie' spirit. Minimal Gear, Shoot from the hip, Keep it simple...

When we finished shooting in Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan I shed all the big lights, because everything from thereon was day exterior. There was some night scenes in Punjab and Kashmir but I kept stripping down the kit. For the climax we were down



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What I found really good about Sony F-65 was, it's color rendition in our conditions, our skin tones, the kind of landscape, the kind of light we deal with and the wide palette of colors in our frames.

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to a portable generator, some household fixtures and polyboards. A lot of the film is shot handheld and available light.

On certain occasions one happens to see wall graffiti in the foreground, say when the Truck is going away in the frame. Was it the result of conscious efforts to bring out the local area feeling or it just happened?

Following the Graffiti on the walls for changing areas and changing languages was one of the motifs that Imtiaz had in mind. Another motif was electric poles. Every time we'd see a set of electric poles and electric cables or for that matter communication cables like telephone cables, we would be doing tracking, passing shots with them. The cables and poles did not make the final cut.

Since most of the time in the film the shots are being taken while the truck is moving, in such a situation what were the rigging plans for the camera ?

We knew that the TATA 407 was going a large part of the middle section of the film, a lot of scenes were going to be set within it. It had me worried initially, because Imtiaz wanted a very generic cabin at the back, like a metal container.

Gradually after much discussion between Sumit Basu, the Production Designer, Imtiaz and me we arrived at the truck that now features in the film.



Production bought a brand new vehicle and every single detail on the truck is put in there by the Art team. The other big aspect was shooting the truck from the outside, again no fancy gear, No tracking vehicles



with jimmy jib, no low loaders, no gyro stabilisers, just some pipes, clamps and ratchet straps..

We got in Arjun Bhurji as key grip and he designed and fabricated platforms on 3 sides of the cabin. I could ride all of them

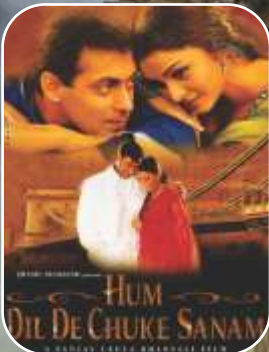
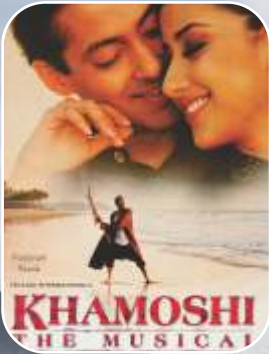
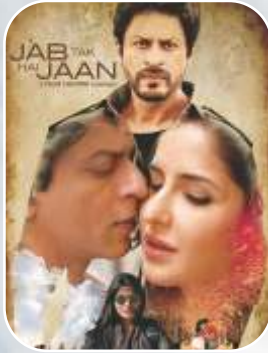
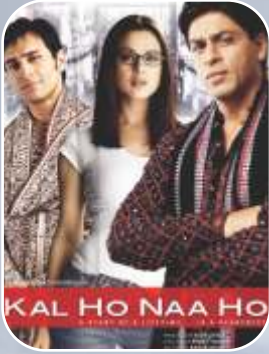
with camera and director tucked in. There were times when Imtiaz and I would be just sitting along and I would be shooting by looking through camera. We wanted that kind of flexibility rather than the locked off camera feel. But because we were not shooting locked down roads, we often had hard rigs on the body of the 407.

We also did a lot of parallel tracking stuff from another vehicle, again Vibration Isolator on a Innova or Eeco or a small pick up with an open back, whatever we could get. We lived precariously sometimes.

Most of the night sequences having long shots in the outdoor are lit up very realistically as if it were lit by real moon only . How did you plan the lighting scheme for these sequences?

Night lighting in exterior in the open fields was another of the major concerns for me. The sensitivity of the Digital cameras in low light conditions was very useful. I rated the SONY F-65 at 800 ISO. Again the lighting schemes were simple.







We used two units of 12 bank Dinos just giving a one sided wash across the entire filed. Maybe there was one 2k or 4k soft box as a fill but I did not complicate the lighting beyond that. In the petrol pump I just ensured that all the Practicals were working. In the torch lit scenes the torches lit the scene. In the exterior of the salt factory, I got the Art Dept. to buy a Sodium Vapour Fixture, it's in the frame and it lights up the entire shot. A tube light here a naked bulb there, that was the philosophy. Alia's free run in the salt pans is Day for Night. It took a lot of time for the VFX team to get the "day for night" effect to look right. I don't think we cracked it fully, but I do know that it was very hard work. The fact that we had 5D mixed in will all that motion blur.. did not help.

How did you light up sequence of Alia inside the Tata 407, where there is no direct/indirect penetration of the sun light in any obvious manner?

I have to give credit to Sumit and his team here. The phatta/boards at the rear allowed me some fill at times,

The 3" perforated strip along the length of the metal body turned out to be a great lighting solution. Small improvisations went a long way. Sensitivity of the camera and lenses helped a lot.

What were the other occasions where the Production Designer was of great help in achieving your lighting plans?

On a location based film the Production Designer is still a very useful person. For instance in the Salt Factory where Alia Bhatt is held in the night, there the entire space on the top where she sleeps and wakes up the next morning looks like part of the factory but actually it was all dressed by the Production Designer. When we went there, there was nothing but pigeon shit. All the Industrial debris was brought there by the Art team. I got them to fix in the practicals where I thought they would be useful. In the Dhaba sequence, where Alia has a meltdown, I told the art guys to erect a street lamp pole with a tube light.

Which camera and set of lenses did you use for shooting 'Highway' and any specific reason for choosing the particular model?

Sony F-65 was just out and couple of feature films were already shot on it. I had the opportunity to test it and found it quite faithful at 800 ISO. What I found really good about it was, it's color rendition. I feel in our conditions, our skin tones, the kind of landscape, the kind of light we deal with and the wide palette of colors in our frames, I thought it would help. I chose the Master Primes primarily for sharpness and speed. Our Projection quality takes care of the rest.





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A FILM BY GIRISH MALIK

IN CINEMAS 04 APRIL 2014

What was your approach for lighting any scene/shot for "Jal" ? How did you prepare your cinematography scheme while working for this film?

We were very much concerned about the look of the film. Neither one of us wanted a glossy and pretty look. We wanted to emphasize the harsh aspect of the story. We wanted to add to the discomfort of the audience by manipulating their emotional response by the style and look of the film. But how was this look to be achieved? Seize the opportunity, point the camera and shoot but how were we going to do it for the entire film? How was that to be achieved technically ? May be by being attentive, punctual, observant alert with your best team always.

Shooting at 48- 50 degrees was an intentional call to capture the harshness of it. Sometimes you have to believe in your instincts. Unlike a painter, a cinematographer is strongly guided by many factors. The most important guideline is the story as depicted in the screenplay then the vision of other creative teams budgetary limitation, scheduling requirements and availability or unavailability of equipments etc.

What were the challenges you encountered while shooting " Jal" in desert of Kachch? Please elaborate a few of them.

The challenges were clear to us after reading the script .Every day was full of challenges and surprises. The place was surreal. Mornings and evenings had their own beauty. To stay alive in extreme temperatures at 48-50 degrees, sand storms would daily garnish our meals. We eventually started to enjoy all this. Every day, there was one way drive of 2 hours to location. We had to enter and exit Rann of Kachh in a convoy. I would like to share one incident. We reached the location 4 days prior to shoot. While coming back, we got a bit late and took one wrong turn as we thought that we can go back on our own by following white stones. We were roaming in the Rann for more than an hour . In the beginning, we were having fun and enjoying the full moon drive but after a point we panicked. As we had fear of running out of fuel and getting lost in Rann and also we had heard the ghost stories of Chir Batti etc. We all got very scared. The local driver also panicked and said that he can see a lady in white and she is doing all this. We heaved sigh of relief when we saw two tribals and they guided us. We drove about 150 extra miles.



Interview with *Sunita Radia* DOP of the recently released film *Jal*





I am extremely fortunate as after having explained look and feel of the film, Girish gave me full freedom and allowed me to do all possible experiments. I never felt restricted as he gave me freedom to explore. The most amazing part was that he had a fantastic team. Being attentive and alert, greedy was the key to achieve the best in such tough situations. Crew is falling



**Sunita Radia
at Work**

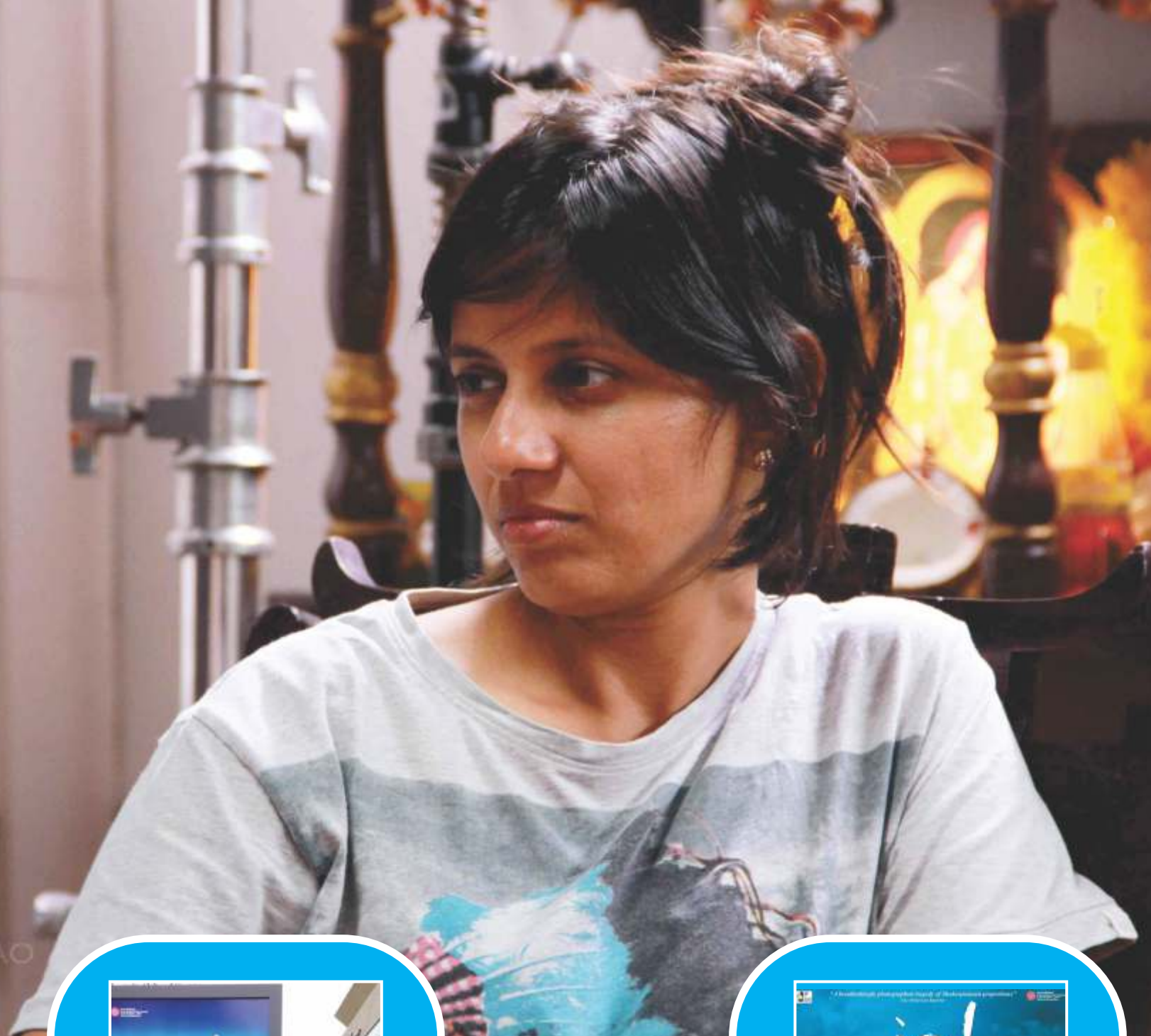
sick, somebody or the other was being hospitalized but that it never reflected in our schedule. It is worth mentioning that extremely supportive actors and team has made "Jal" possible.

From where did you draw your inspiration for doing the same thing differently in terms of lighting ?

Honestly, inspiration comes from the story and the place where we were shooting. In the middle of nowhere, nature instigates you to do your best.

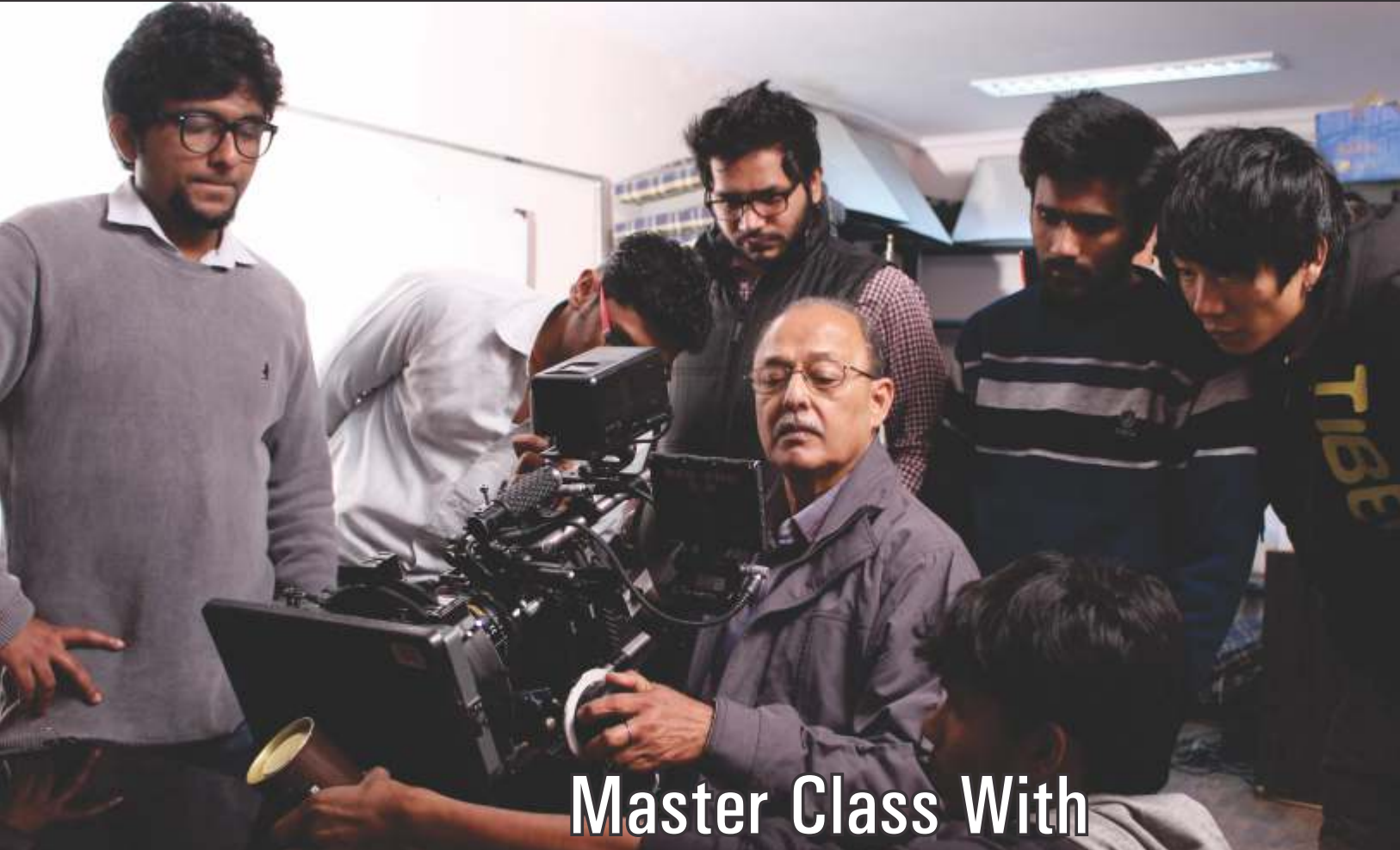
What did the director Girish bring in to your lighting approach for the film "Jal".

Girish is extremely particular about the authenticity of every bit. During



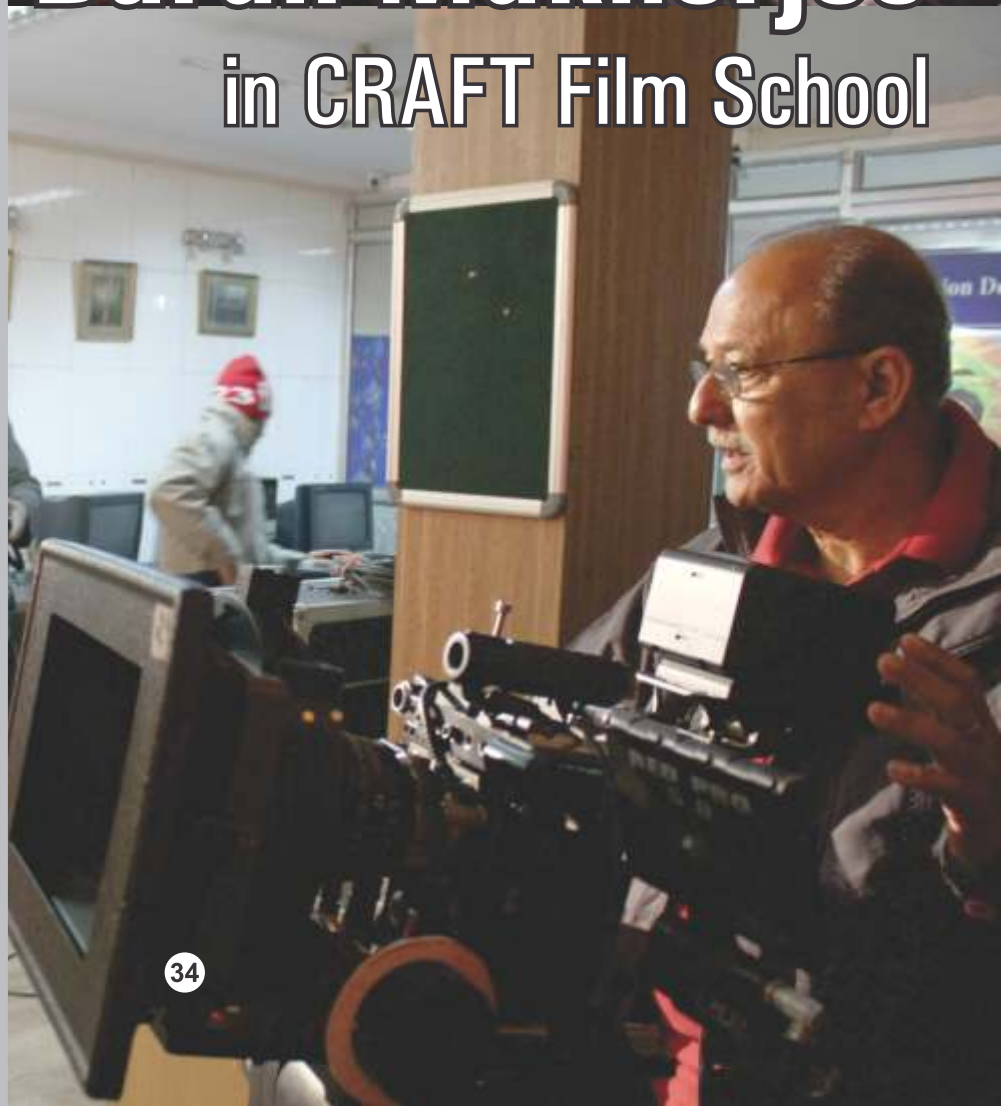
reconnaissance, we went to tribal villages, spent lot of time with them, attended their weddings, ate food at the wedding, listened to their music, met real water diviner and conservationist. In the film you will see a type of rock which signifies and indicates the existence of water. The research is endless.





Master Class With **Barun Mukherjee** in CRAFT Film School

A man who with the luxury of his cinematographic talent, made Lux beauties like Hema Malini, Zeenat Aman, Sri Devi, Meenakshi Seshadri, Juhi Chawla, Pooja Bhatt, Raveena Tandon, Aishwarya look at their luxurious best, an eye that gave Raymond men the look of 'Complete Man', a vision that captured Reid & Taylor Amitabh Bachchan in a fabulously gorgeous format, a crusade that added to the ad world the ravishing Emami smiles of Madhuri Dixit, the lyrical Liril dimples of Preity Zinta, a cinematographic 'mantra' that catapulted the magical luster of Samita Patil, Sushmita Sen, Deepika Padukone and many others to unprecedented illustrious heights, and a magic behind the camera that cast its spell for more than thirty years to wrought on the screen the subtle sentiments of 'Baghban'.





MASTER-CLASS WITH BARUN MUKHERJEE

A long awaited dream came true when I heard that Mr. Barun Mukharjee was coming to the CRAFT Film School in order to conduct a two-days lighting workshop. Though I finished my PG DIPLOMA in cinematography in 2013, I was called by our CRAFT Director, Naresh sir to take production stills of the workshop. As such, that way I too could observe the lighting. Workshop was shot on Red Epic camera with our existing lighting set up.

Day one was fixed to light up the pack shot of some product. We had a collection of around 30 products which we normally practice during our academic semester. So we decided to light up "cafe coffe day" Pack. Barun da suggested that we should try various cookies as an accessory which could go with the pack. We brought about three to four different shapes and he selected the one which would complement the pack and he explained why he selected one particular shape as it had an interesting texture and design.

Everybody was given the opportunity to arrange the pack shot in terms of compositions and before Barun da had arranged the pack, it never struck anybody's mind how one could





create motion in the pack shot to make the space look dynamic. Since the product had the Cylindrical Shape, so he created a small roll-in of the pack along with shifting focus and this gave a feel as if it were a motion picture shot and not any still photograph. Since he also shot it 100 FPS the slow motion also reduced the rolling speed of the product to give it more smooth entry. I think it is where four decades of experience comes in. After we had finished shooting the pack exercise, he discussed with us various commercials he had shot, and told us to our advantage how he would keep adding small things without which the shot could fall flat.

He also asked us what else we could try with the same biscuit available to us. Then he suggested trying out breaking the biscuit. When we shot breaking biscuits, only then I could understand why he advised us to have crispy biscuits with texture. It was because when we broke the biscuit and shot it on 120 fps, we were able to capture the particles against the dark black background.

On the second day of the workshop he asked us to come at 9:00 am instead of normal 10:00 am so that we could get more time. He showed to us various ads he had shot and had a long discussion on the making of those ads. It was an eye opener piece of information when he told us how just a satin cloth was used beside the lead actress Shree Devi in the Lux commercial, and that created the High Key and a pleasant feel of smoothness. During the discussion he explained to us the small aspects which we might not bother to notice while watching a commercial but which are very important for a cinematographer as they are a part of the techniques which a cinematographer employs in creating a shot.

In our CRAFT Film School, there is a corridor which we all light up as day and night in our own different ways. Every batch has to do that exercise, but the way Barun da used the lights to create drama with color gels like red and orange without making it look "filmi" was something I would never forget. The same corridor was looking totally different than when we used to light up normally. The placement of lights, trimming them and controlling the exposure of various lights-- everything was very enlightening. How I wish we could have a one week long workshop! But, then, getting the taste of the master's style even for few days is something that any student would relish for a long time to come.

MITHUN BISWAS is an ex cinematography student of CRAFT:
mithun.biswas@live.com











A photograph of Kamaljeet Negi, a man with a mustache and a black cap, operating a professional video camera. He is wearing a black t-shirt and a watch. In the background, a framed portrait of Mahatma Gandhi is visible on a yellow wall.

Interview with Filmfare Awardee *Kamaljeet Negi*

I grew up in New Delhi, with a keen interest in Journalism and started my career in media as sports reporter in print and radio. Later, a job in Television as a researcher lead to the journey in moving images. I was trained by broadcaster, Jitendra Ramprakash, my mentor who taught me the nuts and bolts of storytelling and exposed me in all aspects of image making. He gave me my first break in camerawork by asking me to do independent camera knowing that I had no experience operating the camera but was assured of my passion for image-making. This turned my career from being Assistant director to a cameraman in a production company, 'News & Entertainment Television', run by Umesh Aggarwal. Here, I got the opportunity to shoot a lot of TV news capsules, featurettes, docus, Art and Culture shows. Thus, I became a Cameraman.

With no formal training, I learnt camerawork by reading Focal Press books on Broadcasting at British Council Library and American Center; watching a lot of BBC and CNN on cable tv and most importantly practicing at work with lamps I had in our camera van, which were - 1 porta light, 3 baby, 1 multi10 and a multi 20. INTERNET played a vital role, it helped me connect to the world on various cinematography forums and communicate with DoP's from around the world. I started to

Important Films of Kamaljeet Negi as DOP



realize the potential of camerawork beyond Television.

MY FIRST MAJOR ASSIGNMENT

Working for over a year as a cameraman in a production company it was time for a change and started freelancing. Jitendra Ramprakash collaborated with me on a corporate film showcasing a boarding school, Welham Boys in Dehradun, for their diamond jubilee celebrations. This turned into a landmark film in our careers. It was supposed to be a simple corporate film but after our recce, director suggested it to be a single shot film. It was exciting and challenging idea and we started working on the execution of it. A humungous task to deal with hundreds of students and most crucial was to deal with different lighting situations where camera had to go through six different interior and exteriors without being cut. Another important aspect was choosing the camera and equipment to achieve the shot. After research and discussions with peers I decided to shoot the film digitally, it was the begining of digital age in India. I chose to get steadicam, which could carry the camera without shaking the shots. We knew it wasn't going to be an easy job especially lighting the interiors and make them look naturally lit. The decision to shoot at magic hour made things more challenging. We shot unsuccessfully for 2 days with 2 and half shots. All the shots were NG for some reason. We had spent all the budget of shooting on lights, was using 120KV which was supposed to be a lot for small corporate



film. Students were disappointed on hearing we had no film at hand. Everyone involved was very attached to the film and were ready to support the project in any manner. I suggested one more attempt without any professional movie lights. And asked for senior students help to make our own lights by buying the halogen lamps from market. Students helped me placed them strategically wherever required. We made another attempt and created history by making 23 minutes long single shot film in 1996.

In 1997, Vishakh Rathi, an editor friend of mine, after returning from Film Appreciation course at NFAI, Pune, suggested I should speak to a graduating cinematography student and get exposure

in celluloid. Sirsha Ray, the cinematography student at FTII, invited me to FTII to assist him on his film. I spent ten days with him at the FTII. It was a great exposure. I used to be on the catwalk putting up diffusion frame or setting up light for him. Later that year, I was asked to shoot my first drama by an NGO, on the victim and families of HIV positive. It came out really well and appreciated by peer group. I started to enjoy playing with moods through light.

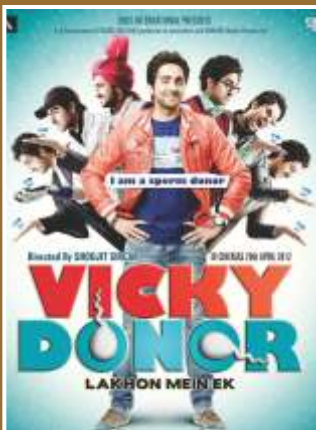
My quest for technical expertise in the craft of cinema led me to steadicam workshop with Paul Taylor at International Film Workshops at Rockport, Maine in US and later, even moved to Mumbai looking for job as an Assistant Cinematographer but was unsuccessful and back to pavilion, Delhi. Fortunately, assignments from international production houses started coming in for documentary which helped me creatively as well as monetarily. But there was a strong desire to enhance my technical and creative skills.

INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE:

I looked into FTII, Pune but found that I was ineligible for Cinematography, as I had no Math and science in 10+2. Therefore, kept my eyes open for reputed courses abroad. The money I had earned working for international assignments helped me go to attend Polish National Film School in lodz for a year.

Poland provided me the opportunity to breath, eat and talk cinema day in and out. Interacting with other students, listening to their views about cinema and their reasoning, opened up my not so open mind towards cinema and life. And that's when I realized, what matters most is one's own

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Important Films of Kamaljeet Negi as DOP

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opinion, idea and belief in something based on one's experiences and that is what reflect in one's work. Otherwise a camera is something universal and it would create an image anyway.

In Poland at Camerimage film festival, I found myself interacting with cinematographers like Roger Deakins over a dinner or chat with Rodrigo Prieto and Lazlo Kovacs at a party. It was a thrilling experience as a budding cinematographer.

While in Poland, the exposure in European cinema lured me to further pursue Masters in Cinematography at the NFTS, UK. Even though I had exhausted my funds, yet I tried and was lucky to be one of the final six students selected at the Nationals and was granted 'Screen Arts Scholarship' for 2003 and 2004. But it was still a long and gruelling task to organize the funds for boarding and lodging in UK. During those days Indian banks were not willing to give study loan for Film and Art courses and it took a lot of legwork and mortgage of my parents flat to set me off to UK.

National Film and Television School at Beaconsfield in UK was a turning point in my career. Trained under Brian Tufano (BSC) and Sean Bobbitt (BSC), I graduated with a showcase of films, which got acclaims around the world.

INDIA CALLING

In late 2005, I was traveling in Nepal

for South Asia Film Festival with my Graduation Documentary Film 'My Brother My Enemy' where it was awarded best debut film. At the same time I made a short visit to Mumbai and met a few directors one of them, Koushik Sarkar an NID graduate and promising TVC Director working for REDICE films. He looked at my showreel and offered me a commercial for World Space Radio. It was set up in a studio and quite a big budget commercial, something new for both of us. I used a lot of practical lights and a few Kino flos to light the set. Camera on 36fps and movement in all the shot was the key to this lovely commercial. The collaboration turned out successful with beautiful looking film. And opened doors for me in India. We collaborated on numerous TVC's after that.

My first Commercial with Shoojit Sircar came in the end of 2006 for Annapurna salt, which led to another

commercial of ENFIELD TVC. The TVC won lot of advertising awards in 2007. From then on we both have been collaborating on hundreds of TVC's which also includes Gujarat Tourism, Airtel, Tata Capital, etc. and that lead to my first feature film.

VICKY DONOR:

Over the years the rapport build up between us had helped in executing tough and complicated scenes simply and elegantly.

Vicky Donor was a tough subject to deal with and was not a regular song and dance bollywood drama. It was not only light and healthy comedy but sensitive as well. I decided to keep the camera very natural and straightforward. Camera's presence demanded subtleness. Film was completely shot in Delhi mostly on real locations. Since the title wasn't very family savy, Shoojit was very clear that the presentation of the film should be pretty looking. We used to rehearse the scenes first then would decide on the blocking of the scene accordingly. Most of the film has been shot in natural light with lamps enhancing the nature.

ON MADRAS CAFE:

I have always been excited by the idea of thrillers and when Madras café came my way I was on a high and am thankful to Shoojit da for giving me that opportunity.

I am quite glad that Madras Cafe has been accepted by the Film industry and film critics at different forums because in Indian cinema we love pretty pictures. Madras Cafe was set up in a certain time period though we didn't force to create the period. For me it was about getting the true feel of the scenes being portrayed through the images. I have to feel the scene or the emotion which the story will go through so that I can decide my tools.





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Also I make sure where I am going to be lenient and where strict about certain things while shooting. There are times when you can forgive things in the frame. I feel every shot has a value for money. The time you spend on the shot and lighting up vis-a-vis how much time it is going to be on screen is also important.

In Madras Café, I think the way the camera is being placed is very crucial. The camera is inside the action without being obtrusive. The film we had in mind was constantly moving all the time until towards the end of the film where we get shocked by the nature of events. Although, I grew up reading focal press books in which it is suggested not to use zoom every time yet

went against the norm and shot predominantly on OPTIMO ZOOM lenses. Shoojit da, judiciously used it in the film.

Madras Café was shot on locations in Cochin. Most of the places were old godowns in fort area of Kochi, with no places to keep lights outside the buildings. These limitations helped make them look gritty and dark.

Further, I like myself keeping away from action without disturbing the actors. I believe in giving freedom to actors and play for them rather than actors playing for the camera.

My experience of film grading before Madras Café was only Vicky Donor which

was pretty straight forward. We graded Vicky Donor and Madras Café on Base light and I find it a very versatile platform. I prefer to collaborate with colourist, who can sense the feeling of the scenes and come up with the appropriate colours. I worked with colorist Kiran Kota from Prasad labs on Madras Cafe. We were dealing with lot of greenery in jungles and costume too. The dominating thing was landscape, greenery, water and , of course, a lot of fire. So the time when we started grading I kept thinking may be some aqua feel to it – teal would suit to the idea of the film.

Madras Cafe was shot primarily in Kochi, Kanyakumari and Ramoji film city, Hyderabad to simulate srilanka. We kept in mind to have similar vegetation and landscape and also to keep correct skin tone.

Not everything we shot was planned. Shoojit and I work on instincts and take things as they come. We are always ready to adapt to the situations we are thrown in. We picked shots on the go for eg. while shooting a scene we saw some choppers airlifting a Maruti Gypsy. It became part of the film. A lot of things was improvisation.

One beautiful but risky shot we did was when John, Shoojit, Ravi kiran the focus puller and I went on a small boat inside the sea. We were going against the waves, like a sea-saw. Waves lifted the boat up in sky and then would drop back on water. I was engrossed in getting the shot which looked very powerful but could not judge the



height of the waves and I lost control, thankfully I dropped safely on my safety bag with camera.

I believe everything cannot be done in the post. As a cinematographer it is better to have everything on camera rather than to leave it for later. But with pressure of producers and actors, sometimes it is difficult to get it all. Tools like diffusion material helps a lot in molding and sculpting the light. I rely a lot on Lee filters, as Rosco is not easily available in India. I don't prefer to use filters on lens. I like it clean. I sometimes use black Promist. I really enjoy using SoftFX on a few beauty commercials but again there are so many tools available in the post that it's better to have the information and then tweak it later.

As far as Camera is concerned, I think right now the combination which is working very well for me is the Red-epic and Alexa Plus. The Red-epic gives me the opportunity to shoot at 300 frames per second. That's why I have used it in Madras Cafe because some action was supposed to be in slow-motion and it is very light weight to move around. I like Arri- alexa for its steadiness of the image and the latitude. I feel more close to Alexa as the images are much better than with any other cameras. I would love to use Sony F65 and Red Dragon also.

I personally feel, what camera we use is not important rather what we do with the camera is more important.

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at*

WICA

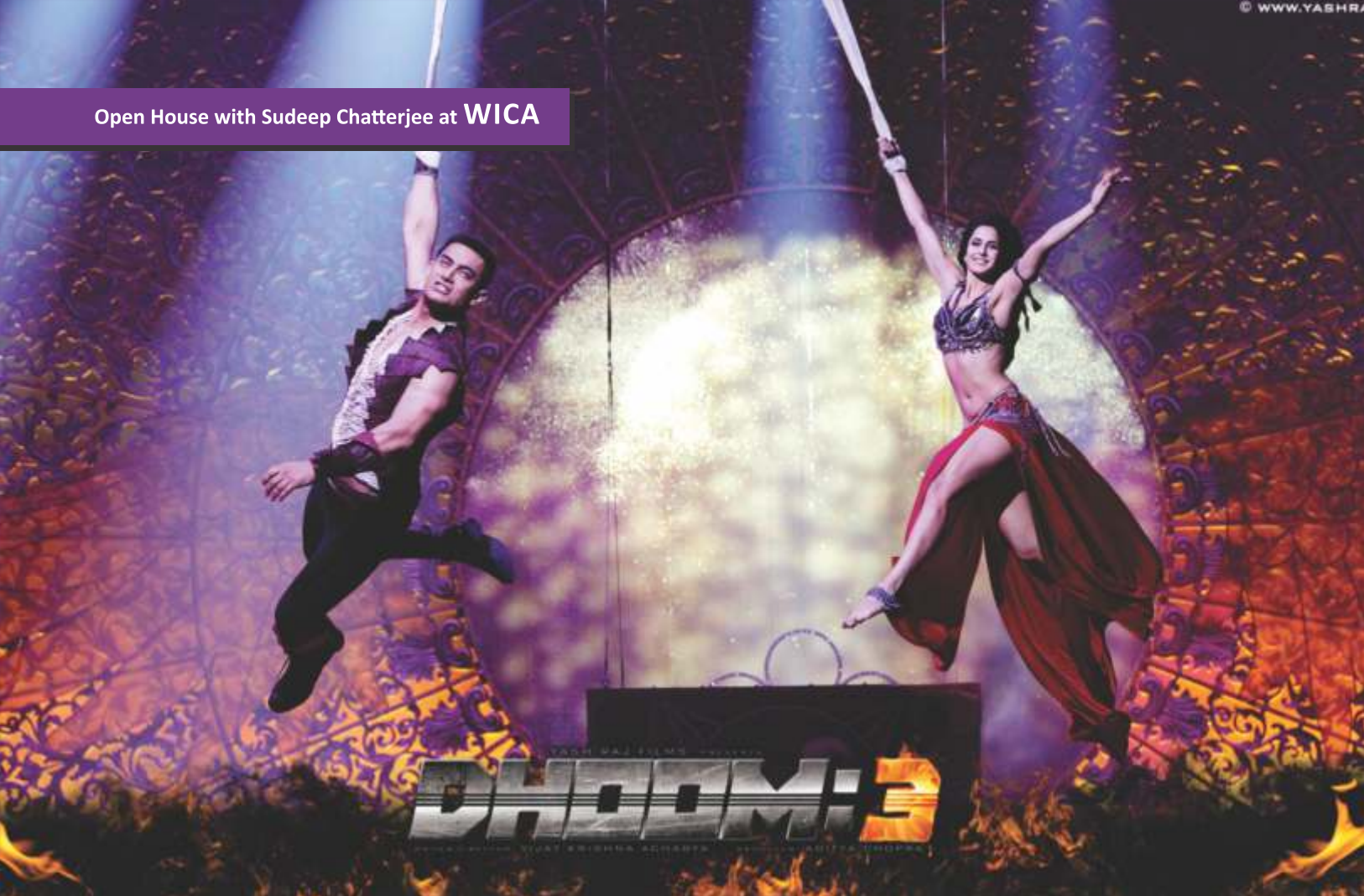
Western India Cinematographer Association

YASH RAJ FILMS PRESENTS
DHODH 3
A FILM BY ANURAG KASHYAP
SUDHEEP CHATTERJEE





YASH RAJ FILMS PRESENTS
DHUM:3



WICA has been revamped not only in terms of the posh look of its office in Hera Panna Mall in Andheri West but also in its activity.

Thanks to its new office bearers Anil Mehta as the President and Mahesh Aney as the Secretary.

If you enter the WICA office, you can easily judge how well organized it is. All the previous issues of the magazine "American Cinematographer" are there in the form of bound books . A properly catalogued vast collection of books on cinematography is there and members can get them issued. The ambiance of the WICA office is alluring enough as to make you sit there and enjoy reading. The efforts are being made in updating the existing database of its members in terms of their mailing address, cell number and e-mail address .Various committees have been formed to address the grievances of the cinematography-community and a revised rate card is being proposed.

A completely new website having interviews of Indian and International cinematographers is being launched with further links of related organizations to facilitate the networking.

An OPEN HOUSE series has been started to encourage the knowledge sharing. In this series of interactions with renowned cinematographers the first session with Sudeep Chatterjee of DHOOM 3 fame along with his technical team was held at WICA Office on 15th Jan 2014. Many students of Whistling Woods along with WICA member cinematographers attended this session. Sh. Binod Pradhan was there to grace the house. In this write-up we present the discussion moderated by Anil Mehta, the President of WICA.

An OPEN HOUSE Session with a
SUDEEP CHATTERJEE.

Cinematographer of DHOOM 3 was held at WICA Office on 15th Jan 2014. This was, hopefully, the first in a series of interactions we propose to have on a regular basis. Many students of Whistling Woods, young and old Cinematographers attended, Binod Pradhan was also in the house. Anil Mehta the current President of WICA, moderated the Discussion.

AM: *This is intended as an open house, an intimate and free wheeling session with the people who were involved in the making of Dhoom 3. The Tech. team and the Cinematographer.*

Sometimes Cinematographers can get typecast, a certain DP for a certain kind of film, however, the way I approach Cinematography its completely the flip of that. The script and director have an approach which talks to you and the Cinematographer then adapts his “Style” that works for that film. Evolving a storytelling and visual idiom for the film is the Cinematographer's primary job. I think

Sudeep's work is a little like that. If we go back, the first film that Sudeep shot was Road, Dor, Chak De, Guzaarish and then Dhoom. There is a very varied approach here to the films that Sudeep has shot. And that is an essential hallmark of a good Cinematographer. Having said that, there is lot of critiquing we can do today as he is here and it is 'Open House' making Sudeep quite vulnerable.

We have Neil here who did data handling for Dhoom 3 which is like a humungus amount of RAW DATA. Data handling was also a big aspect of this project and all of us have to understand the significance of that.

And then there's Sumit Basu, he is a prolific Production designer and a good friend. Dhoom 3 must have been a huge challenge because while he was working with me on Highway he used to only talk about Dhoom 3. Sumit has also worked on Bhaag Milkha. Again a case of very varied and expensive work from a very accomplished Production Designer.

The Colorist from Prime Focus, Ashirwaad, and Vishal from the TataElxI VFX team are also here.

Sudeep why don't you start by just going back to the beginning of this project.

Sudeep: The Scale on Dhoom 3 was a very big deal... I am also scared of scale. So I look at 'big scale' as an assembly of many small pieces then I take one piece at a time. The first thing the director told me is that this is not a 'Double Role' film. It's a story of two brothers, imagine that two actors are going to play the two brothers. What he was trying to say to me was, don't think technical. Imagine the scene, how it would be played by two actors. Do the lighting like that, evolve the shot design like that.

The other big thing was Action, it had to be spectacular. Since the Hero is also in a circus, a showman really, so there has to be a certain grandeur in the visual presentation. It has to be presented with a certain amount of flair and visual spectacle. So once the basic line of action was decided, we all used to put in our bit on how to enhance it, make it more dramatic and visually exciting.

AM: *In the initial stages of Prep what was the core team?*

Sudeep: I started meeting Victor in Aug 2010 right after Guzaarish got over. It was only me and Victor initially, then Sumit da came in much later in March 2011. In Jan 2011, I read the finished script. When Sumit da came on board then we started discussing the look of the film, at that time the film was supposed to start in November

2011. So I started refusing work from 2011 June.

AM: *Any visual references*

SU: Dhoom 2 wasn't a reference point. There were no specific film references. Largely we all threw in whatever was in our minds. In March 2011, Victor and I travelled through Chicago, however it was not locked in, and we had options like London, New York, San Francisco. These were the cities we were supposed to look at. But Victor, Sumit Da and I, we were somehow keen to go to Chicago first. And when we went there it kind of fitted in. It's a beautiful city, also it's never been shot before in any Hindi film. And for the kind of stuff that we wanted to do, there was a lot of options and variations, along the river side..roads through the middle of the city.. the bridges .. tunnels, so for a chase we could be going through various kinds of spaces, it would not be monotonous, It would give visual variety, and a very varied texture for sound ; which eventually got covered with background music, but that's another story. But yes it was first thing that we all felt...that action and chases in this city are going to look fantastic.

AM: *So was this the core team, the director, cinematographer and the production designer?*



Open House with Sudeep Chatterjee at WICA



Sudeep: Yes and the first AD, Rohan Khambati. Four of us went together. That set the tone of the film. After the recce was over, Sumit da and I travelled a bit on our own just looking at buildings, looking at architecture, taking photographic references. Then over a drink we would sit and discuss. That formed a lot of references that we have in the film..they have come from our personal travels, we would see some architectural detail, pick up something from a restaurant, one light detail may be... take a picture of a wall texture....

AM: *So are you saying Sumit, you knew then that you are going to build a set for the interiors? You knew from the beginning that you were not looking for a real space? That's a big element of the film, the interior performing space... so did you go into real spaces at all?*

Sumit: No, just the architecture and not inside the house, only architectural references. Chicago is a city of Frank Lloyd Wright, the famous architect. We got all the reference points from his architecture. Its American Victorian architecture so we get those kind of pillars and column heads. It's a big presence in the film.

AM: *The exterior of that Great Indian Circus is a real location and the interior is constructed. The façade also looks constructed though, because there is nothing behind it?*

Sumit: The real building is like that, it is located in one corner. And the entire city is opposite that building.

Sudeep: It's actually an Aquarium building in Chicago, only the logo is CG.

Sudeep: The interior space in the Past and Present is the same. Aamir's room in the house is the same room where Jackie Shroff was living. It is the same set with changes to reflect the new world. The idea was that Aamir came back years later and took that same place to realize his unfulfilled dream.

X: *Lot of 'Prep' 'Pre Viz' for the action scenes and Circus Performance scenes?*

Sudeep: When you do action of this magnitude, you have to go into massive pre visualization because without that no one will know what's going on. We will also have to decide about how much we are actually shooting...how much is action department doing... how much is VFX going to create. So, we had done it in a very detailed way. Starting with story boarding with a detailed brief from me and Victor. Once the story board was there we took it to the VFX department. We then got an animated story board which was edited and put to music and we had the whole sequence like a final edit. Based on those animated videos we actually asked the Stunt Team how much of action could be done for real.

Vishal: We located the three action

sequences in a specific geography. First was where the bike comes down from one building to the other. For doing that we had location photos. We 3D mapped the city scape and then took that into Previz. Google is really good; it gives you the dimensions of the building. So, we extracted that from Google and put the buildings into the correct place, the dimensions are all correct. When you put a 35 mm lens there in the 3D Pre Viz, what you see is what you will get. So when you see a bike travelling at the speed of 140 kmph, it is actually travelling at that speed. We did this entire exercise for the three major action sequences.

Sudeep: IW was really helpful. We were able to plan it in terms of lighting too. with the Sun Path calculator, six months later what will the sun position be, I could actually see it like that in PreViz. I was very happy with the fact that I could have a lighting plan well in advance. There is a certain time that a beautiful patch of light will come through the Ltrack and then I could tell the first AD that we should try and shoot that scene in top sun. We managed to execute what we had developed in Pre Viz and that for me was very satisfying.

X: *Would you tell more about the collaboration between you and the VFX team, shoot and post stage?*

Sudeep: Personally, it doesn't matter

to me whether I have shot something Live or it has been created by CGI. To me that final image is paramount and we all went out together to get it.

Vishal: To help him achieve that we were always on location getting all the plates shot, coordinating with Production Design to get all the elements right.

X: *Most people forget this coordination?*

Vishal: Fortunately we had really good experience working together on this film.

Sudeep: One of the really nice things was that Vishal was always there on the set with me. There would be many times when I would open up wide and some tower would interrupt the frame and I would tell Vishal to erase that. There were many such things where I felt that "ok this much I can do ... rest you (Vishal) have to do".

Vishal: This was not a 'waking up later' kind of scenario. It was pre planned and then it was all cohesive.

AM: *Any particular Complex VFX scene that you want to walk us through*

Vishal: Complexity wise, the twins in their den was pretty complex, you have eye lines to match and then there was camera movement and then there was Aamir who is so fussy about everything about his portrayal on screen. That sequence was complex. Another one was when Aamir takes the leap off the bridge and bike does some strange things and gets converted into a sea bull. That was a slightly nightmarish one.

AM: *the live interaction shots of the twins with camera movements, How were they achieved? Was there a body double?*

SUDEEP: No, there was no body double. In the interval shot, it was done with a motion control pass by pass. In the beginning, Victor played the other brother Samar. Victor and Aamir would play the whole scene for us like two actors would play it. And in terms of breakdown, I would always go for ... this is how I would normally shoot the scene. We had that as the starting point, we used to record that and then VFX team and our motion control team would come in. The motion control team General Lift was from Los Angeles. It's a smaller rig, slightly less time consuming. They are very specific and fast, much faster than the MILO experience. The good thing was that they would let me operate the camera on

the first pass. The motion Control rig would memorize that move, ofcourse we had to refine it and put in Key Frames etc. but overall it was a more organic approach.

Vishal: Basically, when Sudeep was doing his pass, the rig was recording whatever he was doing and after that it was breaking it down into its various key frames and later we would tweak it.

Vishal: We had about seven cameras running in sync on Set which were 25fps cameras. We call them Witness Cams. We had a very senior supervisor Joe Highney from Los Angeles; he came down for the shoot as well. He has a lot of experience in this kind of stuff. So, he had 5 to 7 cameras for the actionist. These cameras were focusing on various parts of the set. There would be one camera that would focus on Aamir's feet. They were all static cameras and they all were running in sync, so if you needed to refer that what was Aamir's footsteps in pass A, so he could react to that in Pass B, you have that reference. Then there was one camera which was only logged on to his face. After he ended up performing one pass, we could play that back on another monitor right in front of him with the same size as him so that you get natural reaction in his eyes.

AM: *it's not as if any of those additional cameras are picking up information that will be part of final picture?*

Sudeep: No, there was only one Alexa which was recording everything that you will finally see in the film. We would play the first pass video and audio through that and then first part audio was put to mute when Aamir was about to speak. Those lines are second time the sound was recorded.

Vishal: All of this had to be in sync ed to a flash in front of the A Camera. Only then would all the info of the Witness Cams be useful on set.

Sudeep: The fantastic thing was that all of this was happening almost instantly. As soon as we finished the composite image was ready, the technicians on this job were fantastic.

AM: *That's a lot of gear on the set?*

Sudeep: Yes, we could not walk on the set. My biggest problem was how do I light up for the second pass because like Vishal mentioned we needed a head size image of Aamir from his first pass in front of him for

his second pass. Generally, when you are shooting two actors talking to each other, lighting is not a problem. But here we used to have a 40 inches monitor right in front of him for him to interact with. That really used to limit me in terms of lighting.

AM: *Was light emitting from that monitor?*

Sudeep: No, that we had bent it down and we had kept that too minimal. I tried putting a tube light. I also tried putting small tubes, taped them on to the monitor to light up the face but if I used the tape then Aamir could not see his image. It was quite a struggle. Yes it was difficult to walk on the set. It was just cameras, monitors and cables everywhere.

Vishal: The advantage with motion control is you can have a light that is visible to the camera. In the next pass, you can take that light off and roll just the background. You can get exactly the same camera move.

Sudeep: This was an option that we could have used and I think we ended up doing that once.

AM: *Can you draw a list of other specialized gear that we are not used to do in our environment here which you brought down for this film?*

Sudeep: For the double role it was General Lift, the motion control team from LA. David Presley from their team was doing the real time comp and playback.

Vishal: He had a multiple video recorder which could take many feeds together and he could play them back with any kind of sync and stagger them if required and feed them to multiple monitors. It was actually a combination of various recorders – a multi channel recorder.

Sudeep: That was very competent, even on my on-board monitor, like on one switch I could have the comp image and other switch I could have the camera image. Without those things, we would really have been slow.

AM: *Digital cinematography for this film was inevitable. Is that safe to say?*

Sudeep: I would say so, although I didn't get on to shooting this on digital keeping that in mind. My decision to shoot it on digital had come much before that.

AM: *Tell us about that, these are the early films to be shot in digital. So tell us about the choice of ArriAlexa and shooting Raw.*

Sudeep: I had a very good time with the post production of Guzaarish. The way the images had been scanned, the way we did the DI and finally the way we did the output. But on my next film, 'Mere brother ki Dulhan', I was struggling with the scans. That's when that idea came to my mind that this is one large issue that I have to completely monitor in order to get consistent images.

AM: *What was the problem with the 35 mm scans?*

Sudeep: The scans were not consistent, and sometimes I would be very surprised on the DI. It was largely with the contrast issues. Many times I would get thrown off with what I would expect or what I have seen on the tele cine and finally when I have gone on the DI screen, I would be like... Really! Is that all you are getting? Then I would ask the colorist that why is it looking like that? Or this is not how I expect it to look. And then they would say let's re-scan it and then it would be okay. That was one element which was continuously bothering me.

Sudeep: Yes, there are various settings for the scanning which were not done properly.

X: *Do you think that if you give them a proper specification it would have been better?*

AM: Speaking from a Cinematographer's perspective, it is very difficult for a cinematographer to get inside of every black box that exists today. If you are telling me to tell an engineer how to set a scanning machine, you are pushing the threshold.

Sudeep: I did an extensive round of tests, testing it in every possible way, in worse possible situation like over expose of sky by 12 stops and try to extract some face which is completely in shadow, try to extract information there, like really beating the digital medium and film stock and I had Ashirwad from very early stage. The more I tested I felt like leaning towards digital capture, It was cleaner, better and the post advantage was there. I was quite excited to shoot it on digital camera, I thought that if one has to do the jump, this is the right film because the Production House has the budget and we would get all the bells and whistles.

Having said that, before this I have shot 19 films all on film, throughout this one I was quite insecure. I kept asking finally it would look like a film na? Ashirwad had to keep reassuring me, he finally did a great job. I bothered Binod many times too.

AM: *It is interesting to have Binod here because he also made the transition at the same time...*

Sudeep: Ya, in fact he transitioned to Digital within a film, many portions of Mausam were shot on digital, transition from film to Alexa. Red came in Milkha

X: *In retrospect do you think digital gave you more control over your image?*

Sudeep: Yes, I am very happy with all the stuff that we shot on RAW and Pro Res. There is a large part of the film, particularly towards the climax in the night that we had to shoot on 120 fps because my director wanted to have the option of being able to ramp the image. Almost everything was shot on 120 fps, which went on HD. So, I am not happy with that at all. I think that could have looked much better. I have had to add a little bit of sharpness to everything. If you compare the image to the film image, I thought the digital image on Alexa were little softer. I was continuously missing that sharpness, so I kept on asking him to add a little sharpness.

AM: *You are actually saying something contrary to what most cinematographers worldwide are saying that digital is too sharp. They are finding the digital image too crisp as compared to film.*

Sudeep: It's crisper but it's not so sharp particularly the pro res and you see that on wide shots.

AM: *Binod Sir, have spent many years originating images on Film and today you are dealing with a new kind of image making. How do you feel about it?*

Binod P: This is definitely a better medium because there are fewer variations, there is no scanning involved, there is no processing, and there is no dust busting. That way, there is lots of consistency.

Sudeep: There is one thing though that makes me unsure in a way, when you were color correcting on film, there was a lot of trust on the colorist judgement, and the conversation would be quantified in RGB terms. Here, there is a Fly Wheel and you don't know how much a colorist is moving it, there are too many variables and there is so much that you can do..

AM: *It's good that Neil is also here, since this whole new area. Data Management. we are generating all these images which first used to come in a can which we could hold and now its all going downstream through some cables into some box which Neil is holding...*

Niel: I come from a background of editing and I have actually spent many years editing films on Steenbeck actually physically cutting films. And transitioning from that into storing materials on hard discs, LTO tapes... obviously there is insecurity. When I used to edit on Steenbeck, at the end of the day when we finished editing something, it was in the can. It was saved, it couldn't corrupt, and it couldn't hang or crash. Next day you opened the can and put it, it was there, nothing could happen to that.

But after having handled digital data for film specifically for a project like Dhoom3 which is a very long project, I think systems have become reasonably safe now. Although it is a little scary like what you shoot is copied somewhere and that same card is erased and re used in the camera. That fear of "what if", I'll have to go back and re shoot. And doing a film like Dhoom there is no such thing... bike jumps through the air and landed upon its back... you can't make that poor chap do that all over again because oops! I forgot to save that. These things happened but we have come to that point in technology where things are reasonably secured.

AM: We have also come to that point because we have realized there is a very important role for a data handler to play on set. If a camera is recording everything, there is somebody who is checking that data. That person has become an inevitable and an important part of the set including post. But, on set one needs to emphasize that that person is now part of the camera team.

Neel: That is totally right. Another reason for Dhoom going digital was because we thought nobody on this project wants to end up feeling that we are running out of stock or too much stock is being consumed. I think that sort of helped the decision.

AM: *Alexa studio and Alexa M was that all the Cameras you had on this job.*

Sudeep: On action sequences we had more Alexas.. Alexa plus, that we hired from Chicago. We also had a few Go Pros and something called Lipstick cams, these

Open House with Sudeep Chatterjee at WICA



very small Sony cameras actually have the size of lipstick. And the gopros which we had quite a few, all the action guys had their gopros and they were like can we put a camera here. Mostly we had the gopros at the impact points and we lost a few cameras because the car would bang into them. Lot of impacts in the film, there are small cuts of POVs of the car flying, the go pros would crash and we would just recover the chip. My assistant would go after the shot looking for the remains of the go pros. The quality is not great but the kind of shots we got made them worth it.

Neel: Gopros would perform really well at night; it is actually a night camera.

AM: Was there some kind of Gear that you used in *Chicago* which we are not used to seeing here?

Sudeep: This was like a Hollywood Union project. And because it was a union project we could access to certain kind of technicians and equipments which otherwise you won't get. We had this car called the Pursuit car, it is basically a powerful SUV with a remote control head on the top of the car that is Gyro Stabilised head that takes the camera and can take a zoom easily. Like the Russian arm. Inside the car there would be the driver who has a video monitor. A crane operator next to the driver and behind him would be the camera operator who would have a joystick. I would

usually sit next to him telling him how I would like the shot composed. Also, I had a camera control unit from which I would control the exposure. I was freaking out with exposure control like when we would get into the tunnel I would go full open and would come out and I would slowly close the aperture. And my focus puller would be next to me.

We could do a lot of stuff with this. This could really shoot fast stuff. These guys were highly trained stunt drivers. So they could easily do reverse traffic shots.

When we were planning the river action sequence, we were missing the pursuit, the kind of speed that it could do. I suggested to Mike, the main person of the pursuit car, if we could take out the whole set from pursuit car and put it on the boat. He was like... Are you kidding? Firstly, he was not convinced but I kept pushing and then he somehow gave in. He agreed and he took two days and pulled the whole camera mount of the Pursuit. So, we had a pursuit boat which was exactly like a pursuit car. It was doing the same thing. We had a very high quality splash deflector where the camera was wrapped in plastic and it was actually going through splash. I didn't think that the splash deflector could withstand the water because when a speed boat runs there is a huge amount of water that comes onto the lens and the splash deflector was actually taking care of it.

AM: What about lights?

Sudeep: Chicago was a pretty well lit city. For the night action, we had lot of Condo cranes. We had about four condos which were sometimes left in the frame and the VFX guys erased it later.

AM: 'OnSet Dailies' Neil did you generate those for *Dhoom 3*, are cinematographers asking for it

Neil: Yes we setup that provision Sudeep wanted it initially, then time constraints etc. dictated that we did not end up using it that much.

AM: Was the workflow all 'Linear' VFX, DI ..?

Vishal: All linear, in fact, this is also the first time we did that.

Sudeep: That was one of the concerns I had. Previously what used to go for VFX, it used to come back more compressed. you could clearly tell the difference between a VFX shot and a non VFX shot.

AM: This was DPX era problem...

Sudeep: Yes, I was very happy to see that I have full latitude on the shot post the VFX work. it was just like RAW stuff.

VFX: As good as a RAW image.



AM: You finished on 2k .

Sudeep: Yes

AM: Was 3D a consideration?

Sudeep: No. We did do a 3D test. The producer liked the idea of D3 in 3D, Victor and I were very anti converting it into 3D. If you want to go 3D then actually try and shoot 3D. So, we did a test shoot, it was really fantastic. We shot with SI 2k cameras; these people had come from Bangalore. It was quite exciting; we shot some snowfall and some rain. We saw it on a 65-inch monitor with glasses and there was a

stereographer sitting next to you. The estimate was 40 per cent more time on the shoot. That doesn't really translate in box office terms.

Z: You said you had done 19 films on film; this is your first one on Digital. Now if on the 21st film you have an option, what would you prefer?

Sudeep: I think I will go for digital. I would be romantically inclined to shoot on film but I feel I am pushing the envelope a lot more with digital. I am enjoying that.

AM: From the point of

cinematographer keeping aside the technicals involved, what would be the riding factor that would tell you whether or not make a film on 3D?

Suddeep: As a cinematographer the way I have been trained, I think it's my job to give you a more three-dimensional experience. You are supposed to make a two-dimensional thing look three-dimensional. So if you are asking me to shoot a film on 3D that is one thing you are taking away from me. Probably if you want more engrossing and more enveloping kind of experience, 3D really works for a film like Gravity.


AM: Dhoom had 4500 prints out in India not a single one was a Film Print

Sudeep: There were 30 prints for Pakistan only, no prints for India.

AM: Thank you all for coming in. Like I said this is a start. Hopefully, we can take this tradition forward and do these sessions regularly.



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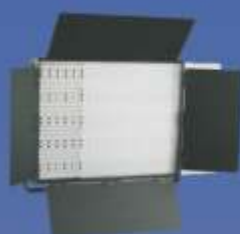
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K. K. Senthil Kumar

Veteran Cinematographer recollects his journey

K.K.SENTHIL KUMAR is one of the most respected cinematographer in South Indian film industry today and is known for “detailing in lighting”. Senthil is among those who have raised the bar in cinematography to another level with his impressive work in films such as *Aithe*, *Sye*, *Yamadonga*, *Arundhati* and *Magadheera*, *Eega*.

After having graduated from FTII Pune, it took Senthil a long time to find a breakthrough in Telugu film industry. His journey as a cinematographer began with a popular TV show *Amrutham* for which he shot 13 episodes. Chandrasekhar Yeleti had directed these episodes & incidentally, Senthil was roped in as the cinematographer for Chandrasekhar Yeleti's debut film *Aithe*, which released in 2003.

So far, he has worked on more than 12 films out of which five have been S S Rajamouli's films and right now, he's onboard Rajamouli's upcoming magnum opus *Baahubali*.

In this Interview, Film Critics **LALIT RAO** takes Senthil Down the memory lane on various films he worked as DOP and his most talked about *Eega* on the challenges involved, and working with Rajamouli.

Important Films of Senthil as DOP

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You tell us how you started your Career as a cinematographer in Telugu Film industry?

I was born and brought up in Hyderabad. My interest was towards civil services as a career, My entry into films is a sheer accident. may be a call of Destiny.. As a part of preparation i was writing as many competitive exams as i could, a friend of mine was applying to Pune Film Institute and asked if i would take the test as it would help in preparation for civil services exam. FTII pune had an amazing selection process. 40 people were called for the interview ,half day training, half day of G.D.s for a week. They selected eight out of 40 for admission and i was one of them.

Since I had graduated from Pune film institute, I thought that I would get a red carpet into Telugu film industry. Disappointment is all i got as i had no contacts or background in the industry back home, Hyderabad. At Prasad Labs, i met a film grader called Punneyya who asked me to assist any cinematographer before expecting an opportunity.

I joined cinematographer Sharath Sir. My first film as assistant was Premaku Velayara and worked till Jabili movie. Working as an assistant cinematographer.

I realised that people work for you in the film institute and you work for people in film industry.

Lots of people went to Mumbai and Chennai after their graduation. I came to Hyderabad because of economical reasons I could stay with my parents and try for the movies. I was lucky to get a break in hyderabad.

How did the “Aithe” happened for you?

Chandra Sekhar Yeleti asked me to work as cameraman for his TV serial Amrutham. Short of opportunities in films I agreed though television never interested me. I worked for 13 episodes. My television migration turned out to be my platform. Chandra Sekhar Yeleti directed Aithe and took me on as the cinematographer. This movie debut a team of actors and technicians.

We created a realistic look for Aithe. People felt that we shot the movie without lights. But lights were used and still brought the realistic tint to the movie. I was jobless for six months after Aithe though my work was acknowledged well in the industry.

“ Rajamouli” is big name in Hyderabad



Important Films of Senthil as DOP





film industry. How did the association happened ?

Rajamouli called me and narrated the story of Sye. I loved it. I asked him why he had chosen me. He said he knew under what circumstances I did Aithe . He promised better time and budget. When someone like Rajamouli believes in you so much, you stop at nothing but the best.

Sye was a movie based on Rugby, Rugby is not a popular game to Indians, at that time Rugby world cup was telecast in India for the first time. I observed TV telecast of Rugby to understand the the game as wells the camera angles used as I had to recreate the live atmosphere in the climax of Sye movie. We had two months of Rugby training for the cast. We were able to pull the climax scene with realistic camera work.

In Aithe movie, we didn't have glamour angle as it was a realistic movie. But Sye was a commercial film. Hence we needed to show artists (Nitin and Genelia) glamorously without compromising on the realistic aspect of the movie. I learnt the nuances of showing stars with a realistic look with Sye.

I cannot remember who said it but I always believe that my next shot is the best shot. I am always trying to give my best to

Important Films of Senthil as DOP



April - June 2014



every shot within the constraints that I have.

I remember a meeting with Ganga Raju Gunnam (the producer of my first movie) while shooting the song sequence for 'Aithe'. Time was running out and we had no idea how we were going to do it. Then I told him that if he gave us some more time we would do a perfect job, he asked me in return 'what is a perfect job?' I had no answer. And then he said, 'if I give you 15 days you'll do a better job, and if I give another 15 you will better that. But that is not important. What is perfect for us is what we deliver in the time frame we need to'. I always remember that.

What were the unique experiences while shooting Chatrapati?

I strongly believe that cinematographer's work is not to make visuals look good. But to help director tell his story more efficiently. My work should be in perfect sync with the director's narration. Since Chatrapati was a harsh story, we used a good lot of brown tint. We deliberately avoided a colourful look. There are two interesting aspects from cinematographer's point of view in Chatrapati. There is a pre-interval mud fight in the movie shot in the rain. We needed constant light to cover a wide outdoor area. Balloon lights did not exist in hyd at that time. I used a 40 ft x 40 ft iron frame and stuffed it with lots of lights, diffuser and dangled it using a 100 ft industrial crane. I used very soft lights while shooting the fight which had lots of slow motion.

We had a song called 'A vachi B pai vaale'. I wanted to have a monotone-color feel to it. It was never done in recent Telugu films. The choreographer objected that monotone-color theme will not highlight his steps. The results were amazing.

Chatrapati was my first step towards visual effects. We canned a shark fight sequence in the movie where we did major blue-mat work for it.

Ashok was shot on super 35mm camera, first to be shot in tollywood. What was your Experience on working with a Different Format

Ashok was the first movie to be shot on Super 35 and to do complete DI (digital intermediate) in Telugu films. DI is an integral part of cinematographer's job. There is a sequence in the movie where dead friend (Rajiv Kanakala) of hero (NTR)



appears on the screen. To show the contrast we did Rajiv Kanakala in black and white and the rest of the frame in color.

I used to like the greeting cards done by the photographer Ken Anderson in black and white except for a small thing like rose in a red color. I always wanted something like that. In a fight sequence of Ashok, I wanted the blood to be in red color and rest of the frame in black and white. When I asked director Surrender, he agreed. And the concept was well recognized in the movie. I learnt a lot about DI while doing the movie Ashok.

What were the most challenging scenes you remembered from Rajamouli's Chatrapathi and Yamadonga from lighting

point of view?

I like the scene which begins with Shivaji (Prabhas) defying Kaatraj's (Supreeth) orders to not enter a circle and ends with Shivaji threatening a politician to not enter his area ever again. In the midst of all this, there's a mud fight which is set in the slum where Shivaji lives. Lighting was a major issue for this fight sequence since it had to cover a huge area and to get the right effect. I used 40 x 40 ft iron frame and stuffed it with lots of lights, diffusers and dangled it on top of the area using a 100 ft industrial crane. It's an intense sequence and no one could take their eyes off everything that was happening on screen.

Doing Yamadonga movie gave me

Important Films of Senthil as DOP





Magadheera was a very large scale Production film. How did you live up to the Expectations of Rajamouli?

I am always fascinated with movies like Gladiator, Ben Hur and Brave Heart. When Rajamouli narrated the story of Magadheera, my joy knew no bounds. At that same time I was skeptical if I could pull it off. Rajamouli gave me lots of confidence, that we pulled off Yamaloka set so we can also achieve bigger things with Magadheera.

Visual effects were never used in such a large scale in Indian movies before. I had to co-ordinate with VFX team even before the shooting started as visual effects are to be seamlessly integrated into my work.

The film which made Ram Charan a big star is a result of great team work. The mind boggling visuals from the flashback sequence, the onscreen chemistry between Ram Charan and Kajal, especially in Panchadara Bomma song and the overall epic nature of the film have to be seen to be believed.

One of the best scenes in the film is the chariot race episode which was shot in a salt land near Dholavira, Gujarat. Scouting for locations was fun. We were looking for dry, open lands for the chariot race scene. We went to Gujarat to look for it. Out there Some passersby told us that there are white lands around 200 km away. We were thrilled to find salt lands in Dholavira. The vastness of the salt land perfectly complements the azure skies and in the midst of all that we see two warriors chasing a chariot.

We doubted whether horses could run on salt. While shooting, we needed a light weight vehicle to follow the horses. So we bought a Maruti van and cut off the top part and used it to mount the camera along with jimmy jib to shoot the race. We shot a part of Dheera Dheera song in Dholavira salt land. I wanted a dry tree in the backdrop and the art director got one from nowhere.

Rajamouli conceived 100 warriors episode first. We had to make the hero kill 100 warriors, but it had to look convincing. It would be believable if the hero fought with 4-5 people at a time. It struck us that we could use a passage to restrict the number of fighters. Then the conception of a bridge, a cliff and bhairava kona came into existence.

We created the kingdom of Uday Ghad

immense confidence about my abilities as a cinematographer. When Rajamouli decided to build a Yamalokam set in Ramoji Film City to shoot an important part of the film, once again lighting the entire set became a huge issue for me. The Yamalokam set erected was the biggest indoor set in India. I never worked on such big sets. I was not sure of how i would light up such a massive set as I needed huge number of lights for it.

I am not a big fan of specular light, which casts lots of shadows i don't like so many unwanted shadows in the frame. Hence I got the whole set under a huge skimmer. Soft lights so that there will be no strong shadows. When Rajamouli asked me for glittering effect on the crown and the jewellery of the artists, I took a day's extension. Then I got a huge box of household lights behind the camera and lit them up. Since these were specular lights, they give the glitter without casting shadows. We used all the available lights in Hyderabad to light up Yamalokam set. That's how we captured the grandeur of the

entire set.

Arundhanti was your first film which has amazing Visual Effects.What were the first time attempt in the film from cinematography point of view.

Arundhati was a period film with a fantasy element to it. It was like a dream come true to work with a passionate producer like Shyam Prasad Reddy. Arundhati was a big learning step towards visual effects. Working for Arundhati was an out-of-the world experience. It had mind-boggling visuals for the standard of any Indian movie.

In this movie we used motion control camera for the first time in Telugu films to can a few sequences. the Motion control camera remembers the camera movements and repeats it. Using that we could shoot glittering fort getting converted into a dilapidated fort in the same shot. That camera is not available in India. We imported it from Australia.

Important Films of Senthil as DOP



on computer graphics but Developing it was a tedious process. We don't have the culture of arena fights in Indian history as it belongs to roman culture. Conceiving and shooting in that arena set was one of most cumbersome and satisfying experience.

There is a specialty in Panchadara Bomma song. Hero and heroine shouldn't touch each other, but the romance should be strong between them. It is one of the best songs we ever shot. We explored Golkonda in Sye and Yamadonga before. It only got bigger and better in Magadheera.

Eega was the most audacious and experimental Telugu film in a long time and it's also a major triumph in cinematography. What were the Challenges in shooting Eega?

Immediately after Magadheera, Rajamouli said we would do an experimental film--a digital movie on a small scale. We started the testing of digital cameras, but the idea was then put to rest. I got busy with another film. Rajamouli started the film with a foreign director of photography but they parted ways on account of creative differences. Then he called me and told me about the film.

Shooting a film with an imaginary fly is easier said than done. It was one of the toughest films I've shot. Later, when we began shooting, we felt the story had universal appeal and had the potential to become bigger. Not wanting to waste the idea, we developed it into its present form.

Eega is my fifth film with Rajamouli .He is a task master who will not settle for anything but the best. I feel honored to have worked on such good projects with him. We understand and respect each other's strengths and limitations.

In films such as Magadheera and Arundathi films, actors were in the foreground and the CG effects in the background. Here, it was the reverse. It's easy to visualize a shot where the fly moves from one point to another but difficult to shoot. It was as though we started digging a mine not knowing what to expect. If a fly is on a table, however much you focus a lens on it, the lens is a mammoth object compared to the fly. So you require special lenses that can get as close to the fly as possible.

Arri, Canon 5D and Go-Pro cameras were used with probe lenses and macro lenses capable of extreme close-up shots. "Go-Pro is the smallest possible camera that



offers close to professional resolution. A probe lens is tubular and needs to be handled carefully. A small jerk in my hand would result in a huge camera shake. Precision of shooting was put to the test," he says. Phantom cameras were used to capture extreme slow motion sequences. For Eega/Naan Ee , we shot certain sequences at more than 2000 frames/second.

The film was a learning curve that involved both pain and pleasure. In photography language wide apertures of 2.8 or 4 are ideal for low light conditions. The probe lenses used on Eega had a minimum aperture of 8 or more, which called for more lighting especially for slow motion scenes. We had to light up an entire room with high intensity lights, which emitted a lot of heat.

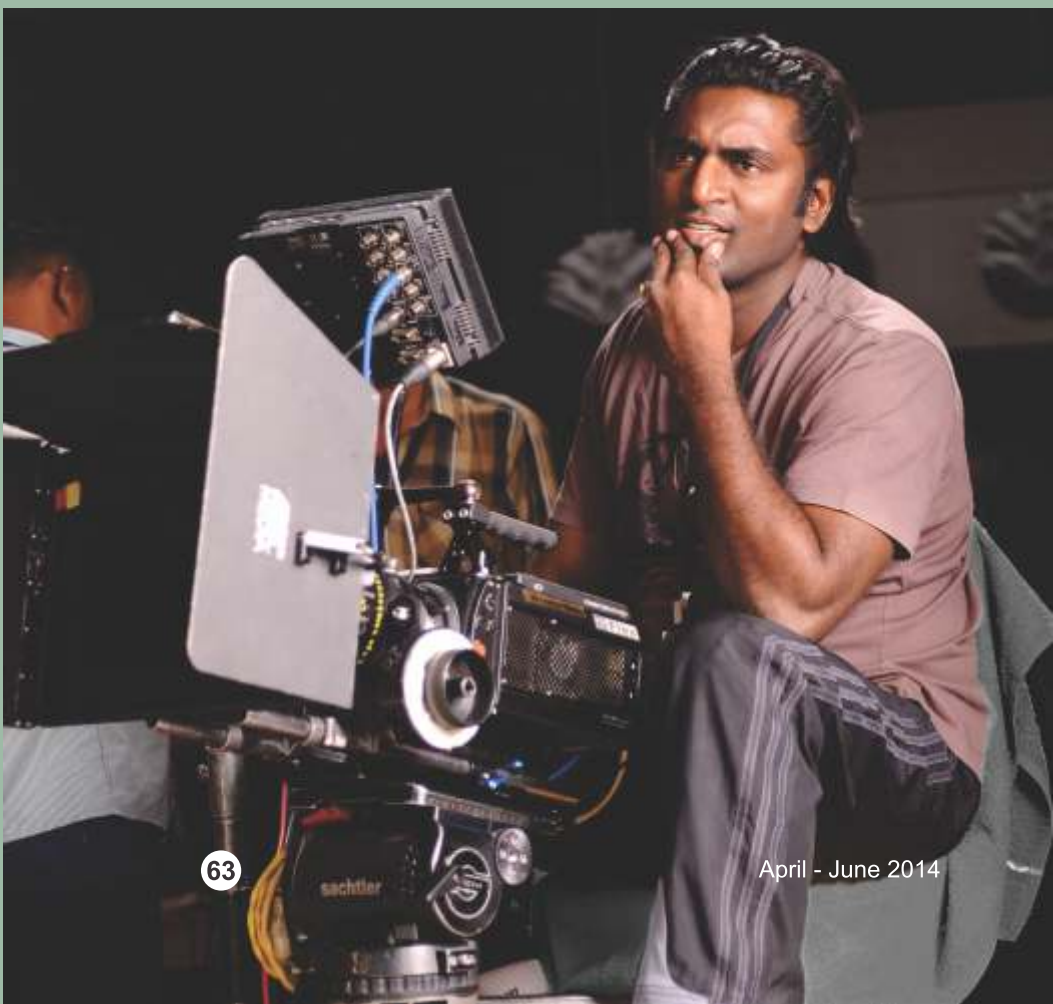
Dummy houseflies were used in some

scenes. But mostly I had to deal with vacant space since the fly was inserted later using computer graphics. Sudeep is one of the finest actors today. If Sudeep moved in a certain angle reacting to an imaginary fly, I had to follow his movements with my camera. It was crazy at first. For me A Bug's Life and Bee Movie were reference points, but Naan Ee was a new experiment for me . The pre-climax scene was particularly challenging. Apart from the two imaginary birds that were chasing an imaginary Ee, the sequence had to be shot in low light.

The graphics team was on the sets working alongside for each shot.

We researched on house flies.

We captured flies and photographed them using macro lenses so that the graphics team can design an appealing Eega/Ee.



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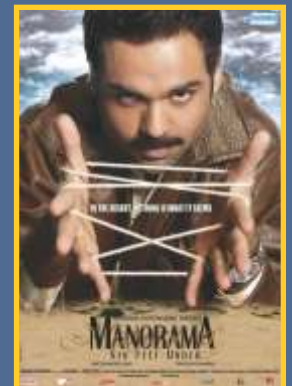
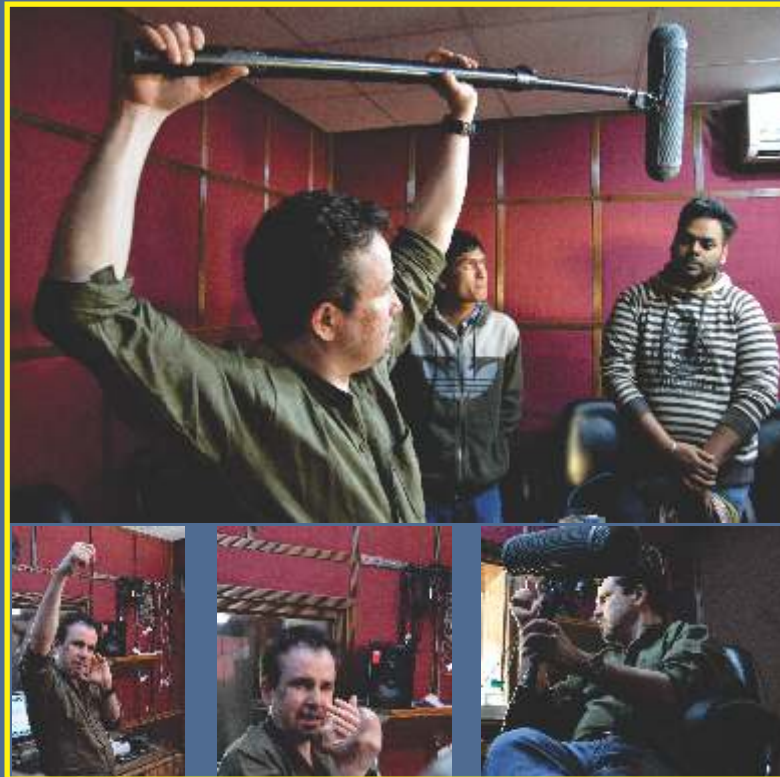
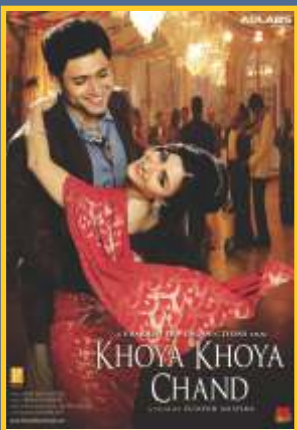
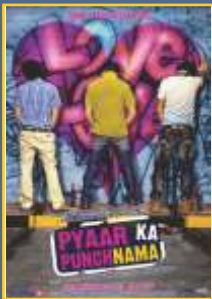
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