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A Quarterly Magazine



Seeing beyond



Interview with
Kunal Girotra

Business Head – Consumer Optics, Carl Zeiss India



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Interview with DOP **EESHIT NARAIN**

A 2014 film cinematography graduate from F.T.I.I., Pune, and an alumnus of Asian Film Academy (Busan, 2013), Eeshit has worked on several collaborative and international projects from documentaries to feature films, short films to over 200 commercials. His films have traveled to festivals across the globe and won many accolades, including the Open Doors, Locarno Film Festival (Switzerland), Student Emmys (USA) and National Film Awards (India).

His feature film work includes - 'Once Again' (2016), 'Qarib Qarib Single' (2017), 'Thundenek' (2018), 'Chhalaang' (2019), 'Maska' (2020), 'Ray-Spotlight' (2021) amongst other projects.

'Doctor G' is his most recent film released in theatres.

He has also operated camera and done Second Unit photography on Shantaram, an Apple TV+ original for Anthony Dod Mantle, ASC and on Dev Patel's directorial debut - The Monkey Man.

His upcoming feature film - 'Gulmohar' - a family ensemble starring Sharmila Tagore and Manoj Bajpayee, amongst others is slated for March 2023 release by Disney Studios.

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As a Director of Photography what is more challenging for you, to work on, a Feature film or an Ad film?

We were never really trained at FTII with how advertising or set life actually works in Bombay. It's only once you move and start being on sets in the city do you get to start picking up what advertising entails. Personally, advertising has allowed me in a way to be a lot more experimental. It allows to test out new lenses or new equipment that's available - there is a certain luxury and access to resources on an ad shoot. It is this kind of experimentation that has allowed to make more informed choices whenever a feature film schedule has come up. Thus, advertising has always supported me to move at a fast pace to make the day and adapt tools to the feature films as well when needed.

How does lighting differ from feature films to advertisements and what is your primary approach for lighting?

When it comes to feature films, we have a lot of conversations with the director in the pre-production, mostly on what is the kind of mood one is trying to build from the script that we are working on. I enter any film project with a mindset that the writer and the director have lived with the material, the story for far longer that it is first of utmost importance to understand their thoughts through all conversations. This process gives certain initial ideas of what the possible mood can be. For lighting, I try not to be stuck on a particular shot but more of designing the whole space where the actors can be free to perform. What matters is where the conversation and the scene is taking place - the location itself, that guides you into doing a certain kind of lighting and taking shots accordingly. But when it comes to advertising, more often, a lot of it is story boarded material and the frame is very specific itself. Therefore you know what you want within the frame and start working with the lights accordingly. Both have a different approach and compliment each other in a way. I feel fortunate to move in different projects and not just try one kind of photography.





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In your recent film Doctor G, what was the brief from the director to you?

The debutant director, Anubhuti has been associated with film projects for over a decade, but has been extremely patient with finally getting to make her first film. We'd spoken to each other a couple of times for her previous shorts and it hadn't worked out, but when she came up with this film, things just fell into place. She is an incredible team leader and so frank and open to all conversations. This was always going to be a mainstream commercial film with a studio backing and leading actors involved, thus as much as both of us were coming in from an indie film space, we had to ensure certain look and feel for the film. Being a social comedy, she wanted the film to feel colourful and bright yet realistic in every way.

As a cinematographer what was your brief to the art director for this film?

After several detailed discussions with Anubhuti, to execute the setting for this film, there was extensive planning done with the production designers - Bindya & Arvind. Building a believable hospital from scratch in an academic building of a 100 year old university was one of the many challenges!

The English department of the Allahabad University was converted into the gynaecology department. The designers were very meticulous with the set and they built every little detail in that space. I had developed a mood book of about 300 images as a reference starting point for the costume designer, production designers and the director to know how the film possibly could look like. In this film I wanted to embrace all the colours of a lived-in world, however odd they might be, rather than enforcing a particular colour through the story.

What was your interaction with the costume designer in reference to this particular film?

The costume designer of "Doctor G" is Rohit Chaturvedi. He's a great collaborator and brought in ideas, solutions to support the vision. For example, in our costume trial we had 6 to 7 shades of white lab coats to find the right one in an off-white space for the camera. Every space - the house, the labour wards or the operation theatre had a distinct colour on its own. Once the production design was decided, the costume colours were complemented.

How do you compromise the realism versus star value on the faces of lead actors and some secondary actors?

I have been extremely fortunate with the kind of actors I have worked with so far - they have been encouraging and supportive in the way the film needs to be shot. Sure, when a film is based on a lead character throughout you need to frame the person in a certain way to justify and show the prominence of the character. Ayushman Khurrana, Shefali Shah and Sheeba Chaddha in this film or Irrfan Khan, Manoj Bajpayee, Rajkumar Rao in my other ones are some of those great actors who never objected saying they are not looking proper in the frame. For me it's always about building the mood of the space where the actors can play out the scene, then only make the tweaks in lighting, composition if needed to find balance between the so-called gloss and the realism for their faces.

Did it ever happen where you wanted to redevelop a scene by yourself & come out with the best shots in Doctor G?

It occurred a few times in different sets where the location was very restricted. For example - The scenes set in a canteen were actually done in a small science classroom which had to be converted into an actual mess of a medical school department. The place was so tight after placing all the props. There was lack of space to place the camera and choreograph the scene, despite the plans seeming good on paper. When the director and I finally entered the set to shoot, we had to take that pause and reorient the whole setup to make it work.



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better for the scenes to play out. Fortunately we had a supportive crew that made it all happen in time!

How many effective days did it take you to shoot the entire film?

We shot the whole film in 40 days, with a few more days for promotional shoots in Bombay later on. Courtesy the pandemic lockdowns, we had plenty of time to prep. Hence, we managed to wrap the film earlier than planned.

Did you insist on a particular camera and set up lenses for the film?

Doctor G had to be shot with ARRI Alexa LF with Signature Prime lenses - primarily for a 4K delivery and a clean look for the film. Personally, it's always the lenses first that I'd insist on any project based on the story and then build the camera package accordingly.

Given a choice, if there's enough budget, which is your first choice of lenses?

It totally depends on the story, but I tend to lean on softness in the image which is hard to find in newer, sharper, extremely clean lenses. I really like the older HAWK lenses a lot more than several spherical sets. If we are doing a 2:40 ratio film the older Anamorphic lenses are my go to.

Even when I was at the institute, I used old Zeiss Mark II lenses over the new Ultra Primes frequently for my projects. Lenses/Digital Sensors are way too clean now days, and I feel the older lenses aid in getting the organic feel we strive for in the narratives we deal with.

Who was your choice for the colourist of this film?

The colourist for Doctor G is Navin Shetty (Nube Studio). He's supported me right from my FTII projects from 12 years



back and continues to grade a lot of my commercial work as well. He's an artist with incredible experience, working extensively on celluloid for years before adapting to digital.

When lighting, how do you reinvent yourself to do something new which you never did before?

I am unaware as yet whether I am successful in reinventing myself or not. Every project comes with its own dynamics and challenges that guide the approach. For me, the choice of location is key to understanding the lighting possibilities. The digital sensors now have so much more detail in the shadows than ever before, how do we adapt to that? RGB LED lights have flooded the markets - one is not bound to add colour gels on kinos or tungsten lights. We have the flexibility to play with colour temperatures which allows a very non-classical way of approaching lighting. Thus, it's the constant embracing of new technology in a way which allows you to tweak lighting and yet not lose your basic foundation of it.

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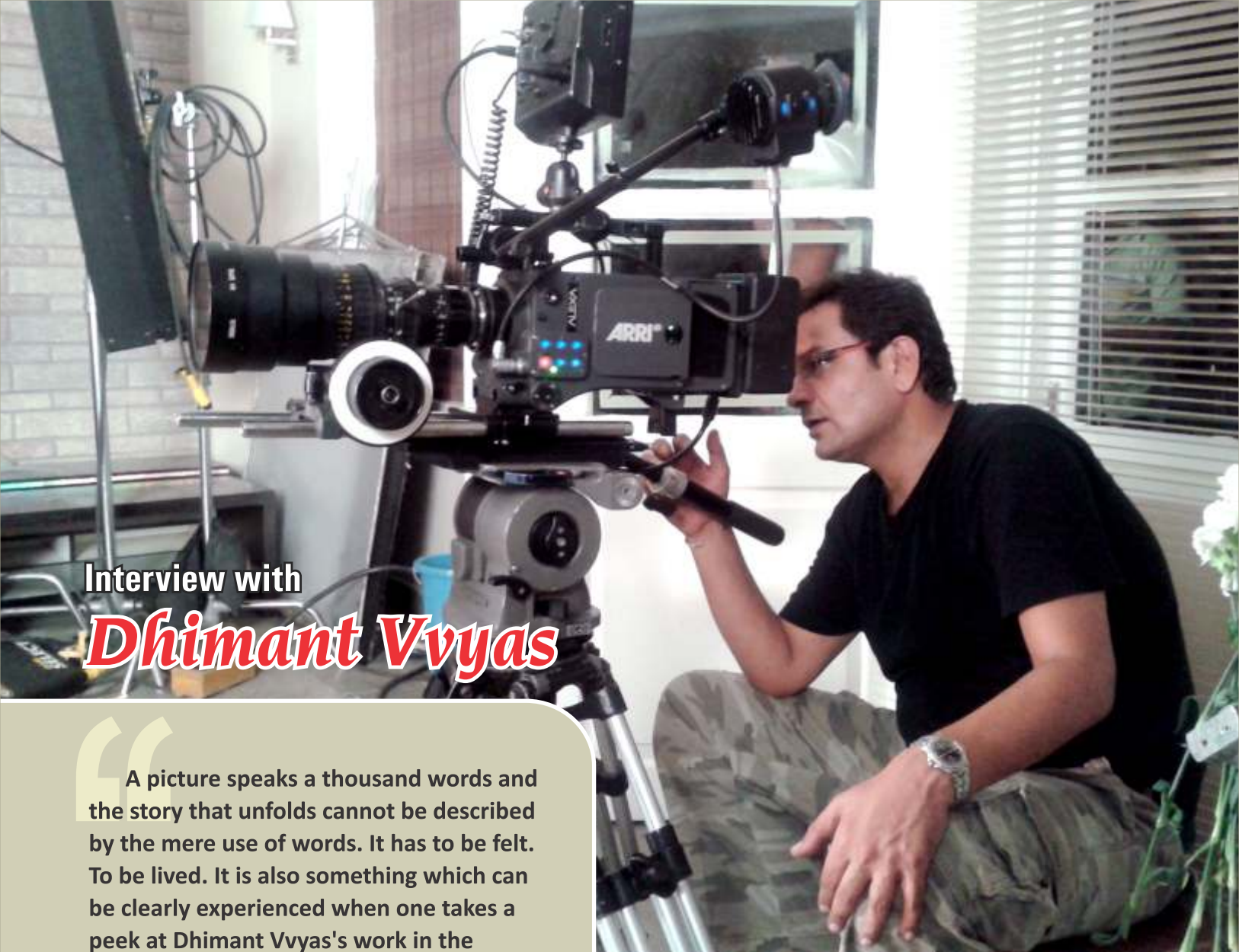
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Interview with ***Dhimant Vvyas***

“A picture speaks a thousand words and the story that unfolds cannot be described by the mere use of words. It has to be felt. To be lived. It is also something which can be clearly experienced when one takes a peek at Dhimant Vvyas's work in the industry.

Dhimant's eclectic portfolio speaks volume about the equally eclectic personality behind it. Dhimant began his career as an assistant cameraman in 1992 working under the celebrated DOP Vikas Sivaraman. Dhimant's work is emblematic of the belief that continuously challenging oneself to a greater degree of creative genius and innovative intellect is the only sure footed way to professional excellence. With the use of advanced technology and grueling dedication over the years, Dhimant has created for himself a concrete position in the industry.

What differentiates your working experience in the television industry after spending 3-4 decades while working on advertisements as a cinematographer?

In advertisements everything works as a cycled process. But in the television industry this seems to be so uncommon. Challenging moments in an advertisement happen very rarely and minimally as prior groundwork has been done already.

For instance, last time I did a sitcom for Sony Sab called “Jijaji Chhat Par Koi Hain”, I shot on the same set every day. It was during the pandemic time so we couldn't step out of the studio and it was a daily telecast show. We had to shoot and put out the content everyday and the channel needed the episode 7 days in advance.

In television it was different because sometimes the script arrived at 9.00 am in the morning as compared to advertisements, where everything was structured in its own way when it comes to storyboard, Locations, Gaffers, Art etc.

But in the television industry everything works in a bit more unpredictable manner. Besides that you need to churn out an episode a day.

Recently you shot an underwater sequence in the feature film Ram Setu. Please share your experience related to it.

Both Kedarnath and Ram Setu were huge films. We shot in a pool for safety of the the actors as most of them aren't trained divers. Some actor's are comfortable under water and some aren't . So we usually shoot in a pool with all safety measures.

But Ram Setu was one of very challenging sequences, as the shoot was scheduled in January 2022 which had ambient temperatures of 10°C. Water temperature was around 5°. Add to this 4 storm fans and multiple rain machines. It was a night sequence where we used a softbox with 4x 4 HMI suspended off a crane to simulate moonlight. We did use underwater lights when doing close ups.

For the Kedarnath sequence an iron platform was sumeged underwater. This being the exterior of the temple. The sequence is of the temple submerging under the flash floods. There were huge water dispensing troughs bult to simulate the gush of water. This was also a night sequence. We also had underwater churners to move the water constantly simulating turbulence.

Was it blended with the actual footage or you shot it yourself ?



No, the sequence was entirely shot for the film. There was CG involved too. The final sequence was very well executed.

What makes you feel satisfied in your job as a DOP ?

For me every shoot is a challenge. To be able to deliver the directors vision, by achieving the highest quality and to do that in the stipulated time.

What do you find most intriguing about the product shoot in advertising?

During my days as apprentice, i got very interested in product shoots (pack shots). It was so much creativity making products come alive. Now products are mostly made by CG. Also product shoots are now a specialised segment of advertising industry.





Seeing beyond

Interview with ***Kunal Girotra*** Business Head – Consumer Products, Carl Zeiss India

How are you able to use exhibitions like Broadcast India Bombay and others to position the Carl Zeiss Brand for cinematographers and rental houses?

People around the world value Carl Zeiss as a trustful partner to deliver market-shaping solutions with uncompromising quality.

Our range of Cine lenses have been used in the making of cinemas and series on OTT platforms across globe and industries including Bollywood, Tollywood (Telugu), Kollywood (Tamil), Sandalwood (Kannada), Pollywood (Punjabi) and Bengali films among others.

To connect with our audience and other decision makers, we remain invested in ensuring our presence wherever our consumers, customers, or even potential customers are present. Hence, exhibitions form an important platform for us to introduce and showcase Carl Zeiss brand and the wide array of products to the industry at large. We also actively participate in most Indian film festivals, which enables us to interact with the professionals of the film and the larger broadcast community. We are always eager to learn the experience of our users- cinematographers, directors, student filmmakers, etc.

An exhibition for us isn't just a mere product demonstration outlet but also a feedback process. When we participate in any event, our intent is not just to showcase our products and generate business leads, but also to interact with our existing and potential customers. We encourage a



dialogue where our consumers can share their expectations and feedback. Their valuable feedback encourages us to remain humble, continue to do better, and continue to offer innovative product solutions and technology that solves their purpose.

During demonstration, do you just explain to them orally or give them a proper format to give feedback about your product?

As the pioneer of science in optics, we continue to challenge the limits of imagination and with the passion for excellence the brand creates value for its customers and inspires the world to see in new ways. In line with this thought, we always encourage our users to experience our product offerings instead of just engaging in verbal demonstrations.

We schedule "Lens Test" (demonstration of our lenses for Directors of Photography/ Cinematography) where we offer a user a hands-on experience of our Cine Lenses which would be best suited for their project. The idea is to understand the requirements and extend a product solution that matches their expectations and the needs of the projects.

In fact, sometimes the production company is also involved in creating the perfect scenario for the test. The most valuable feedback comes from here when we test our Cine Lenses in different scenarios.

Carl Zeiss India's team of Technical and Business representatives across the nation keep interacting with

professionals in the industry. Based on the customer insights and preferences, we continue to innovate and upgrade our offerings.

How do you conduct the tests with the DOPs? What is your process in terms of organizing testing?

Lens testing is an ongoing activity for us. Since every artist has a unique vision for his/ her film project, doing a group test activity doesn't solve the purpose. Hence, we conduct these tests on one-on-one basis and customized to one's need.

Every creative requirement is different and unique in its own way. While some project may require a sharp lens, on the other hand other project could need a vintage look with flares, and some may want to have more resolution. Similarly, every script also has its own requirement. Hence, it is best that we connect with the DOPs and understand their requirements and accordingly provide solutions. The lens testing process also involves preparation for live color grading facilities, so that the DOP could grade and see the result all in one go!

Please tell us more about your expensive series like the Supreme Prime Radiance Lenses.

ZEISS Supreme Prime Radiance is our latest product in the Cine Lenses category. It comes with a coated with our T* blue coating, which offers a unique look.

ZEISS Supreme Prime Radiance lenses enable cinematographers to create beautiful, consistent and

controlled flares in the image while maintaining contrast and avoiding transmission loss. Yet, they offer all attributes of a modern cinema lens: large-format coverage, high speed, robustness and smooth and reliable focus.

The range is available in eleven focal lengths: 18 mm, 21 mm, 25 mm, 29 mm, 35 mm, 40 mm, 50 mm, 65 mm, 85 mm, 100 mm and 135 mm – all T1.5. It covers a full frame and Full frame+ sensor and is also suited for the Super 35 sensor.

It is a perfect lens for Super 35 and new generation Full Frame+ cameras from Arri, Red, and Sony that comes with PL or LPL mount. One can also use it with other cameras with the help of external adaptors.

How did you position ZEISS in an expensive range of lens so that the cinematographer prefers this than something else?

Carl ZEISS is a 175-year-old brand and a veteran in the business of lens manufacturing. People around the world value us as a pioneer in the science of optics and a trustful partner to deliver market-shaping solutions with uncompromising quality.

Whether one is shooting a commercial where exquisite color rendition and high contrast is important, or a tense, dramatic sequence in low light situations for a feature film, ZEISS lenses offer the performance that any cinematographer or a photographer needs to get his/her perfect scene right.

Do you also conduct workshops for students learning cinematography in film schools?





Yes, we are very active in engaging with film schools through workshops and on-ground trainings for students. In a strategic move to cover key film institutes in India, we tap talent at the grassroots level and give them first-hand experience of Zeiss range of cinema and photography lenses.

We realized that budding talents in the film industry aspire to try their hands on ZEISS range of products. Hence our initiatives aim to provide them with a hands-on experience of at a very young stage.

We have also joined hands with Whistling Woods (WWI), Mumbai as a part of which the students are using ZEISS Cine Lenses as an integral part of their curriculum. Similarly, we have hosted workshops for the students of Marwah Studio in Noida, Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute (SRFTII) among others. It is also in our plan to host a 2-day workshop for the students of Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) and Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute (SRFTII) very soon.



India is a country where there is an extreme climate in terms of heat and cold. How is the after-sale service of Zeiss in India for their lenses?

We don't want any film production to face any challenge in any given situation. ZEISS lenses are engineered in a way that they won't fail even in extreme climates. That said, if there is any technical issue or an accident, the lens rental houses instantly replace the lens with their additional set.

If a rental company doesn't have the additional set to provide, we (Carl Zeiss India team) help them with our demo set of lenses. We quickly service or repair the lenses and give them back to the rental company, until then they can use our demo lens. Technical failure or accidents are somewhat common occurrences in a film set. We try to support our rental customers or users in whatever way we can.

Does ZEISS have service center in five major cities – Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi, Hyderabad and Chennai?

Carl Zeiss India has an authored service partner named 'Ashoka Enterprises', which is headed by Mr. Kamal Kadwani. He is considered the Best Lens Service Technician in India.

In addition, ZEISS India has an extensive network of branches across the nation including metros, tier I, II and III cities. Any customer can walk up to these branches and seek assistance from the experts.

Kunal Girotra

Business Head – Consumer Products

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Interview with DOP *Shailesh Awasthi*

Shailesh Awasthi started his career as an apprentice under DOP Mr Kamalakar Rao in 2005. Since then he has worked in many films of Indian languages such as Hindi, Marathi, Bengali & Malayalam as a DOP. He got recognition as a DOP for his work in Me Shivaji Raje bhosle boltey, De Dhakka, Paltan. His upcoming Projects are : Garmi, a web series for Sony Liv directed by Tigmanshu Dhulia, White Gold, a web series for amazon Directed by karanjeet. Among Upcoming films are CHAAR, Hindi feature film, Lucky Vs Lucky, Shaatir . He has worked as second unit DoP and operator for HFF Kalank, Chehre and an International project Heidi.

Could you please elaborate on any interesting incident from the webs series “Garmi” directed by Tigmanshu Dhulia?

Oh, yes. There are so many interesting incidents that happened during the shoot.

Once we were shooting in Bhopal city, Tishu sir told me that we have to shoot one sequence in one take. I said Ok, and thought to myself that it must be a small sequence so there should be no problem but when we reached the location i got to know that this one take shot is a car chase for an action sequence which was approx 3.5km long.

Lighting the entire stretch was not difficult but it became a challenge because we needed some equipment to complete the task in the given time. Getting equipment was not possible at that point of time. I discussed it with my team and then explained to Tishu Sir about our plan that we shall be using steadicam gear with alexa mini LF short zoom for zoom in & zoom out & 3rd c motion unit (1 for focus & 2 for exposure & 3rd for frame adjustment.

Tishu Sir as a seasoned director always supports his team to take the call in such situation but without compromising his vision as a director. And he supported me too. Thanks to him

and my team, we shot the sequence timely, effectively and above all to the satisfaction of Tishu Sir.

How do you apply filters in camera and shoot according to the scene?

Actually I give more importance to lighting according to the scene and script. And NDs filters work for me.

How much of a difference does it make in post production with different cameras?

There is a saying that the man behind the machine matters the most. It applies to both, camera team on the location and the technician sitting in the post studios. Post production does make the difference but the Dops competence also matters. Like He should have the full knowledge about the camera configuration and how to use it according to the sequence at the same time keeping in mind the end result of different cameras being used in the same project.

I have shot simultaneously with different cameras like Red Epic, Alexa XT and even Canon 5D Mark III. and the result can be seen.

Now DI has become an important part, especially on machines like Davinci Resolve or Baselight. How much does it affect the final result of the image if it's shot by a good D.O.P ?

Even a good DoP needs to have a proper shoot plan to enhance the final result. We can not go for a shoot with the



intention to correct everything in the DI post. DI is just a tool to improve the quality in terms of colour, contrast and sharpness.

Are there any other situations in digital cameras where you have played with the shutter/ aperture ?

Once I was shooting abroad. Weather was unpredictable. We needed the sun on the top but all of sudden it got covered with clouds. Waiting for the sun to come out was not possible as the actor needed to be relieved. Therefore, to save time I asked for dino lights to be mounted on a hydra crane to create the feel of sunlight. I played with the shutter and ISO and got the real effect. In Italy I was shooting a night sequence on the street. Customarily people increase the ISO: If by default it's 800 they will go to 1200 or 1600 for the shot but I did the



opposite. For instance if there is a street light which I cannot control, I always drop the ISO with shutter normal. In the recent shoot of Garmi there was a scene where the character was coming from inside to outside, I used c-motion to control the aperture from f 2.4 to f 16 in between the shot to get the correct exposure.

How did you start your career in the initial stage?

I come from a middle class family from Lucknow which had no connection with film world except watching movies once or twice in 6 months. Being the youngest, I had some liberty to choose my path as all elders were well settled.

I wanted to be a cricketer but very soon I realised that in UP one needs to have the political and financial clout to get into the cricket world. So after graduating from the lucknow university, I came to Mumbai to explore the city. I had the chance to visit a film set of Bachchan saheb which was next to possible at that time for a person like me. The film set and its working attracted me and I thought to join this profession but there was n clarity as to which department I should join.

Once I saw Bachchan Sahab touching the feet of a D.O.P so from there I realized there is no other job bigger than this. I started going from one studio to another studio to observe. Then one day someone called me on a set to observe and things started falling in place. I have 2 gurus who have helped me a lot, Kamalakar Rao jee and Sushil Chopra jee. Specially Kamalakar ji helped me a lot. I started my journey with a Telugu film as an assistant with him.

Later Mahesh Manjrekar sir helped me a lot as he was the person who had hired me as an independent cinematographer for a feature film and that's how I started working in the Marathi film Industry. Later on I got recognition and awards as a D.O.P for my work in Me Shivaji raje Bhosle Boltey, Vitti Dandu Even while shooting Garmi, Tigmanshu Dulia sir has supported and praised my temperament, dedication and quality of work. So keeping my fingers crossed.

Feedback: dopshailesh007@gmail.com





Interview with
Advertisement Film Maker

Harsha Prabhakar

ON TWO MOST CREATIVELY SATISFYING AD FILMS.

What were the challenges you faced directing the Spotify commercial ads?

I started my career making AVs which were basically good looking shots set to music, so when I first read the script, I thought it was a blast from the past getting people and actions to sync to music. But the creative head at Leo Burnett, Vikram Pandey tossed it out when he said "I don't want it to look like a choreographed music video".

Now that meant song selection, cinematography, editing, set design, staging, acting all done so carefully that it was invisible!

Song selection : We were working on 20 second masters. So we had to choose a small portion of the song, not necessarily the chorus, but a ear-worm that would stick in the viewers head and make them hum the next lines after the ad was over.

Cinematography : Jason West, the cinematographer and I squeezed ourselves into tiny corners of the set to be true to the POV of the character wearing the headphones. We had to find ways to place both characters so we could read their lips and emotions without jumping axis. But as we went into the market and aeroplane films we started taking small liberties. Experiences with my earlier films like "Raymond Fathers Day/

Surprise" came in handy in telling stories within one single space.

Acting: I typically don't like rehearsing much as it takes away from their instinct on set and my ability to direct them or at times shock them! But here, 2 days before the shoot, we were rehearsing with the edited track, storyboard animatics, only enough for them to remember the lines but not too much so it looks acted out.

I also had a choreographer to sync their actions in between the lyrics, to the beat. And that call was the problem with the very first film we shot "The traffic film". On shot one we realised that both the actors were so focused on their actions matching the beat that it had started to look like the choreographed music video we were dreading.

After 6-7 takes, we changed tact and told them to say in their own words things like "Can't you see?", "I gave the right signal", "Where are you going?" etc,. After they did that for 3 or 4 takes, we asked them to replace the lines with lines from the song.

It took 30 takes to wear down their choreography and deliver a natural take, and that worked. This informed my technique for the rest of the films that followed. Our focus was on rehearsals where the actors had to bring the lyrics



What were the specific preparations for the film's outdoor scenes?

We already had VFX plates of the stadium and environment around the boundary at Tunbridge Wells from VFX partners Double Negative and facial scans of Kapil Dev sir shot by Prodigious and them even before we went into the shoot.

After scouting over a dozen grounds across 4 cities for a stadium with green cover behind the wicket and softness of light, we landed at a stadium in Vashi thanks to small hillocks covering some part of the boundary. While a lot of the stadium and ground was to be built on vfx, we constructed a portion of the pavilion on location to help the vfx team have a live element to match and extend.

While we were aware that there is going to be a lot of replacement in vfx we still had to shoot in the right lighting conditions to make it look real.

We specifically chose to shoot some scenes under cloud cover and avoid harsh light to recreate the feel of the Tunbridge Wells stadium on the day of the match.

We sourced cars from 1970s and 80s to cue the time.

For the Indian players we cast actual cricketers through multiple cricket clubs across the country. Although they were real cricketers, they were put through a 10 day training camp to study and learn the body language of the characters they were playing. Abhaash who played Kapil sir wore prosthetics and even rubbed his nose like Kapil paaji did then.

We spent a lot of time detailing the costumes and looks of our actors including people in the crowd, their hairstyles, the cameras they carried etc,...

Although it was a film of big scale, due to tight delivery timelines, I had to carefully choose the number of face replacement shots and VFX shots but still retain the graph of the film. There were multiple vantage points to choose from

into the mood of the scene but forget the tune. Because if they sang the song, we could tell on camera.

The airplane was shot in the next schedule in a set built from scratch by Durgaprasad Mohapatra. To allow us some working space, we made the seat they were fighting for, the emergency seat. This time I did not get a choreographer. But there was something else that came up.

For the airplane we were working with very good actors cast by Varsha Varadarajan. I had clearly characterised as opposites, a wealthy wholesale trader who shows that he is well travelled at every chance because people don't give him the respect he deserves. A millennial woman who had booked this seat 2 months in advance, because she dreaded this very situation.

At the rehearsal right at the peak of the argument, the man handed his neck pillow to the girl while continuing to search for his boarding-pass. It was hilarious and we were all laughing uncontrollably, but we realised it had become an acted out joke that did not rely on the idea of situational humour.

In the Airtel film, what was the idea of having the tube light on the top while you had those major windows and the practical lights generated through lamps?

When we were shooting The Missing 175 for Airtel, we blended research of a historic space and some visual license from that era into the space. The tube light with that specific acrylic cover was personally a strong representation of the 80s for me.

Since it was set in Tunbridge Wells, the chill of early June, the soft sunlight justified keeping the tube lights on indoors while the sunlight chills the ambience.





for this story but I wanted to treat this as a retelling of what it might have felt to be Kapil Dev on that day when India's cricket history started.

Our first shot was a long Steadicam shot in the dressing room where Kapil sir sets the context. We took 5-6 takes and in each take Kapil sir was narrating his story with more intensity recalling the fear and intensity from that day. But the more intense it got, the more unbelievable it felt. It looked dramatic and enacted. So I gave the crew a 5 minute break and walked with Kapil sir asking him to not visualise the stress he felt that day, but look back at the tough moment with a nostalgic smile like he would today. It seemed unusual to him but he trusted me.

Another thing I realised on my walk was that I was walking next to him and not in front of him like the Steadicam operator was. That framing from the front made his performance more intense, so I got the operator to match my position on KD sir's side and that's how we got the opening shot that you finally see in the film now, a real and honest narration of his story.

After the shot was completed, I told him how much I liked the take and he said "When you become a captain at the age of twenty four, you forget how to smile". Such was the pressure of India's youngest captain leading a whole bunch who were many years his senior.

Harsha Prabhakar

feedback: harsha@blackpictureco.com



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Rohan Chahande, Country Head India & Emerging Markets, EIZO Corporation



Santosh Sivan receiving Award in the category "Iconic Cinematographer"

K K Senthil Kumar receiving Award in the category "Hall of Fame"







Umakant Choudhary, Deputy Director, Madhya Pradesh receiving Award

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Arindam Bhattacharjee

On Three Challenging Commercials

The first one which I would like to discuss is for the fashion brand “Sukkh Jewelery”. Sukkh Jewelery signed well knownstar “Karishma Kapoor” as their Brand Ambassador and it was their first with her, hence it was important to set the right tone. I was shooting for Ram Bherwani productions owned by the celebrity wedding photographer Ram Bherwani whose brief was simple, lighting should be striking and she should look glamorous. Me and Director Gaurav Panjawani, with whom I was doing my 9thcommercial, were on the same page from the very beginning. But the challenging part was to have right references for the shoot, since most of the fashion commercials which we liked had a western look or had wedding set up, Sukkhi is an Indian brand, and Karishma was wearing Indian attire. Hence the lighting and the production design need to complement that. Gaurav was very clear he was looking for something in black and gold. Production Designer Retesh Narain, who was also the Stylist for the same, came up with some stunning textured and floral black walls which complemented his costumes instead of getting into solid blacks. Me and my Gaffer Arun Narayane spent a day during set constructions and lot of our lighting plans were done based on observing it. We created Shafts for the first set

Arindam Bhattacharjee studied Film Studies from Jadavpur University and later went on to specialize in cinematography from the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. He is based in Bombay and has shot multiple commercials, with celebrities like Deepika Padukone, Karishma Kapoor, Sachin Tendulkar, Hardik Pandya and many more. “Ma Nahin Bhoolti” (Domino's pizza) “Sabki Sister” (Max Bupa) are considered to be top ten commercials for “Mother's Day” and “Rakhi” respectively. He has won best cinematography award at SMFF for his short film “EkKadam” starring Renuka Sahane and Rajesh Tailang. His recent short film “EK Chup” based on Shadow Pandemic starring Mona Singh is streaming now exclusively on Hotstar. He has shot an Indo-Bangladeshi feature film “Icecream” which is considered to be one of Best Romantic Film in Bangladesh. Arindam has also shot many music videos including a musical web show “Sonic Roots”, with Amit Trivedi streaming on Voot, and his music video “Lamberghini” has been the biggest hit till date. Another of his short film “Bhranti” with Sneha Ullal and Anant Mahadevan is streaming exclusively on MX Player. He has also been part of various international projects, recent one being American-Indo-Nepal HP shoot with the award-winning adventure sport and documentary photographer Jody Macdonald.

Arindam has just finished shooting Comedy Web Series “Gupt Vigyan” with Rajesh Tailang and Vidya Malvade for Endemol.



up and insisted on having lots of black lamps for the second one, for which Retesh immediately agreed. Karishma wanted to look her age and she immediately loved her look at the first glance.

I have used large format camera Alexa LF to have more shallow depth for shots and have used beautiful Supreme Prime lenses to complement with it. I have used half radiant soft filtration for the face, and to my grader Prashant Dhotre, the brief was simple to have contrast and solid blacks, but to keep the details intact and bring the gold out. The commercial

was shot in between covid waves, so all the more we had time constraints. But seeing the set ups and looks Karishma happily gave us some extra time to shoot a beautiful film.

Second Commercial, which I would like to talk about is 'Domino's Pizza', 'Mother's Day' commercial. It revolved around an old aged mother and her relationship with her son. It became Viral as soon as it got aired, and is considered to this day as one of the best Mother's Day Commercial. This was a one minute Commercial with storytelling. We had budget constraints, had many set ups and had to complete the commercial in a single day.

I chose a smaller camera, Sony FS7, which was newly released at that time, to have more mobility. To get a proper cinematic look, I installed my Arri Luts on my Sony Cam. Since my Director Happie Mongia wanted a gloomy look, I used Arri D65 Lut as my reference which had slightly desaturated look. We kept it very fluid with Hand Held camera movements, and used the Track Shots in the last portion when the song kicks in. Me and my gaffer Arun Narayane kept the lighting very naturalistic and most of the camera movements and lighting were motivated by the actor who played the lead character of the mother. I wanted to be like a fly on the wall. My colorist Prathvish Hegde did a splendid job in bringing out the muted colors and enhanced the realistic and gloomy look.

Third one I shot for OML production house. We had to shoot two comedy based commercials in a day, but the second one was special, since it was my first attempt in





Horror-Comedy Genre. I enjoy shooting comedy based commercials and have done more than fifteen comedy genre commercials, for various brands with actors like Sumeet Raghavan, Sheeba Chaddha, Prachee Shah Paandya and many more. This one was special since it had a reference of my favorite horror film 'Ring'.

It was a commercial for 'Doctor Dreams Mattress', where a boy is watching a horror film while eating popcorn and suddenly the ghost comes out from the TV just like Samara in the film. The boy doesn't get scared and in fact asks the ghost to pass the chips, and there comes the tag line of Doctor Dreams. The ad ends with both of them watching the film together. It was a thirty seconder, but had lots in it - lightening effect, ghost coming out of TV, TV flickering and plenty of Dolly Shots and we had got only three hours to execute all of this.

My director Ankit Dahiya was crystal clear he wanted the Ring look- dark and that green blue look. We were all so synced for this, that we hit the nail from the very first shot. One thing while shooting it I had to keep in my mind, it had to have that cinematic look but at the same time cannot go way from the glossiness of the Advertising world. My Colorist Tapasvi Asija helped me to hit the right saturation and yet create a darkness around it. He helped me to create a nice green tone on the highlights and strike a balance between the cinematic look of the Ring and the Commercial look. I have



used vintage Cooke Panchros lenses for this one on Alexa Sxt. The challenging part of the shoot was the sequence where the ghost comes out from the T.V. We placed a chroma in the background for the frontal shot coupled with few side track shots following the feet and hand movements. Lighting up the chroma evenly in this mood lighting was a tough task, but me along with my gaffer and first AC found out a way to do it.

I used lot of intelligent lights, mix of Sky Panels and Nova to have the flickering and thunderstorm effect, which was all connected to a board to get the timing right.

The shot of Samara, the ghost, inside the T.V was shot in color and we used lot of hard lights keeping in mind we would go monochromatic in post. Me and my colorist created a Cyan Monochromatic look for that shot. The commercial was covered by "Mad Over Marketing".

<https://www.arindambhattacharjee.com/>

feedback: arinbh@gmail.com



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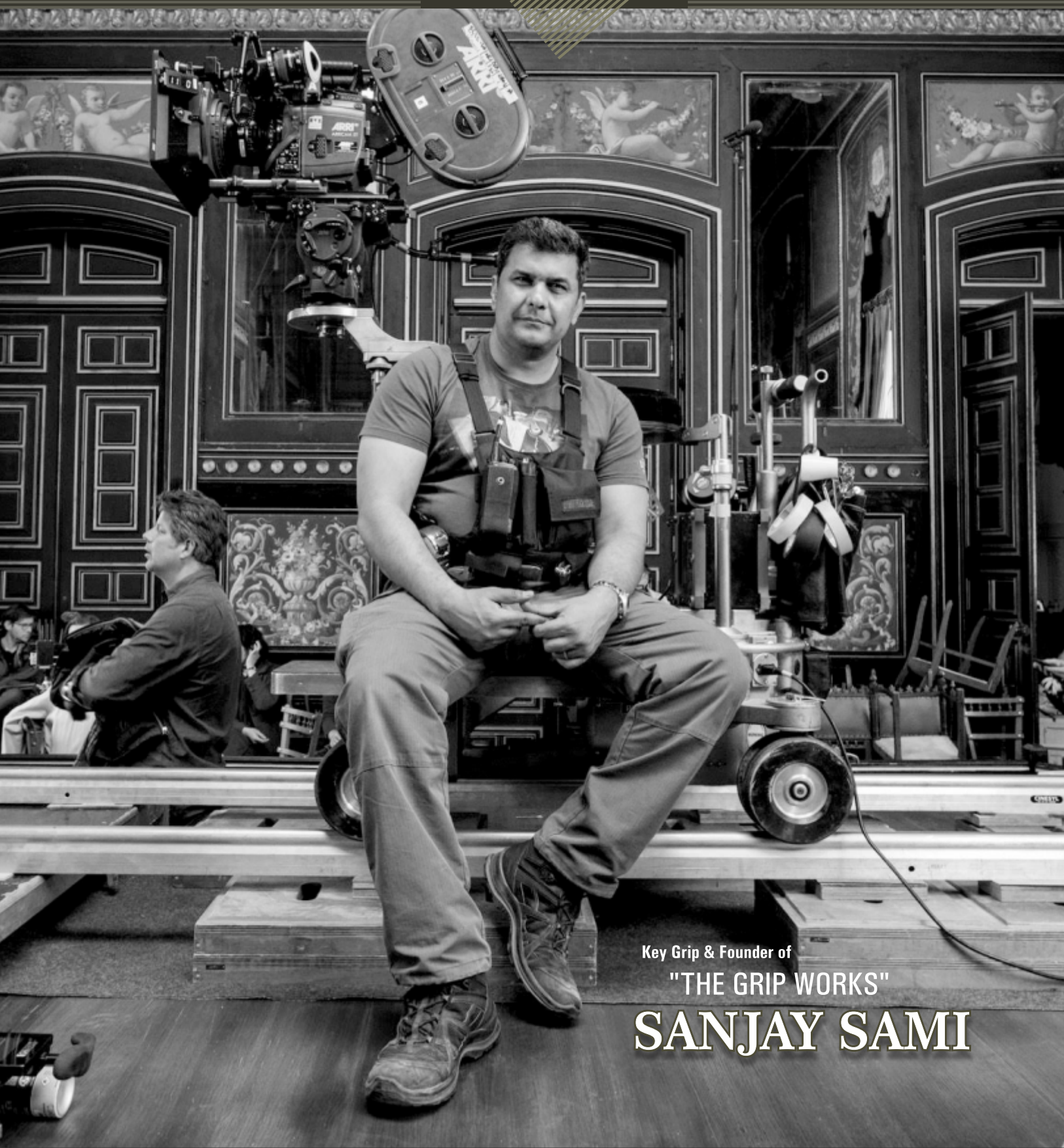
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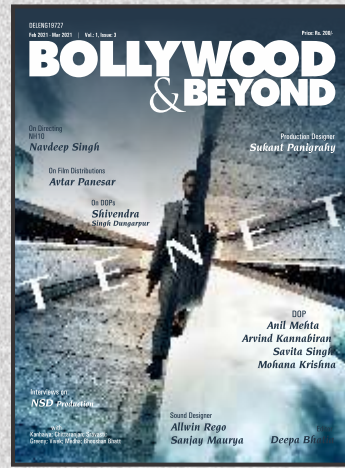
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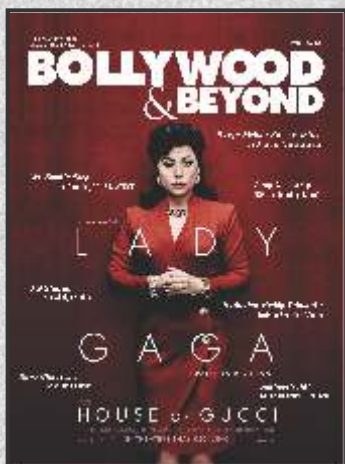
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Editor's Desk



Greetings!

This is January 2023, and we come up with the 36th edition of our "Cinematography Art". We are going to share experiences of a DI artist, a Key Grip, an electronics technician and many more, which will help our reader to know their work and what they face while making a film.

The aim is not to publish high profile DOP's Interviews but to also provide space to newcomers. In this issue you will get the views of first time DOP Tuhin Biswas on Box office success of an Art House film "Dostojee".

Key grip artists play an important part in the success of cinematographers, when it comes to complicated camera movements. We had a talk with Sanjay Sami who is Key Grip and has worked both in India as well as abroad. He has been part of major films like "The Grand Budapest Hotel", "The French Dispatch", "Serenity" and many more.

Finally before the film goes to the Big screen, it is the DI artist who adds the magic to the image created by DOP. We have master Magician Ashirwad Hadkar talking about his experience being a DI Artist in many well known films like "Bajirao Mastani", "Brahmastra", "Dangal", etc.

In Today's time, electronics have become an integral part of Cinematography equipment. Anything can go haywire and if that happens, do we have competent technicians in India to repair?

We reached out to Padma Kishore, who is saving grace to Indian cinematography equipment. He shared his experience on how the camera parts or any technical parts are taken care of by him.

Zeiss is the Pioneer among Cine lens manufacturing. Kunal Girotra, the Business Head-Consumer Products of Carl Zeiss India, discusses efforts the company is making to retain its no.1 position in India and abroad.

Hope you enjoy this issue!

Cheers!!

Naresh Sharma

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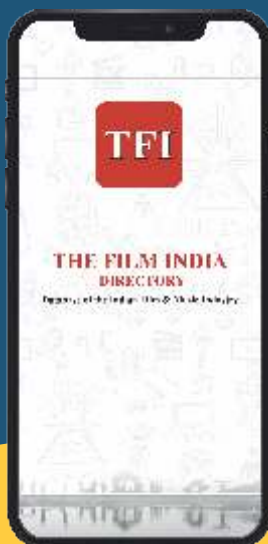
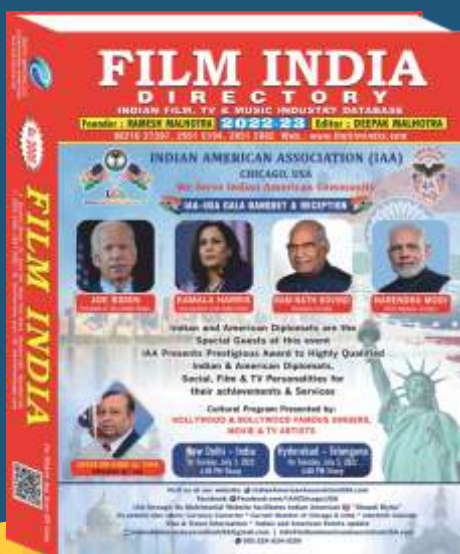
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Interview with Sigma Lens CEO *Kazuto Yamaki*

Why did you decide to pay attention to your strong presence of Cinema Sigma lenses in India while other competitors are still passive in that price range bracket ?

In the Indian market we believe that there is a great potential to grow further and also users very much appreciate the quality of our product, India is very broad in market .

What are your future plans for Sigma Cinema lenses for international markets including India too?

I cannot share our plan for the new product. But obviously the full frame camera is the trend in recent years. Our plan is to release more lenses for full frame or large

format cameras in the future and we will actively do so in the coming years.

After sales service becomes very important for rental house. What are the facilities for the Indian market to offer the after sale service whenever there is a technical problem in the lens?

Shetla Agency is distributing Sigma cine lenses as well as photo lenses in India. we have our office and team in every metro city. And we take the service obligation and service commitment for sigma specially cine lenses more than even photo lenses because it has an important usage. Whenever there is a project going on. Whenever there is a service

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requirement we send a tech team and bring the lens back . At the end of the day the show has to go on for them.

I cannot tell you how we can solve a problem because in the cine sector the problem is always new. Suddenly there is a shoot in hill stations and there the lenses drop, they face a problem they call us. So it is a complete adventure trip for us, sending them the replacements and all. But i think i will say that we are very happy with the responses we have and the industry is quite secure with us and also they are confident with us. From the Japan side the we provides the service directly to the customers in India, whereas from the Japan side we provide information and provide the training service which will happen very soon in India. And we will also try to deliver the spare parts soon.

So when it comes to providing the spare parts, do the parts already exist in the repair centre here in india or as and when they need they ask for it and then you provide it to them?

Actually we are holding all the spare parts, and Japan supports us extremely in real time with spare parts, and in regards to diagnosing a problem. And its this close connect with the head office and the tech team by which we are able to give really good support to the customers

What brings you to attend personally BI mumbai and come over here while other people are just happy sending their representative ?

Actually I had a plan to come to India several times in 2019, but due to the big typhoon that hit Japan I had to cancel it. And after that I planned to visit but due to covid I couldn't come. So this is the first time I am here. And in recent years our business in India thankfully is growing rapidly; for Cine



,India is one of the biggest markets for Sigma ,within the top 5 markets in the world. So I really wanted to understand or grasp the situation here personally, and take into the account and make the business branding for the future.

Do you want to pass some messages to the cinematographer community in India ?

We believe that we make one of the best optics in the market today. We always invest heavily in the new or most advanced technology. So we can design and manufacture the best quality products in the smallest of all factors. So it is a future proof, even if the pixel count of the camera increased from 6k to 8k or even higher the sigma lens can be compatible or usable in the future. But at the same time we understand that the DOP's like to create their own look or their own style. For that we have the classic series which creates a better look in the image. Because we have the technology we can make more advanced and modern lenses.



January - March 2023

10'



Interview With Key Grip & Founder of "THE GRIP WORKS"

SANJAY SAMI

One of the best known film professionals from India, Sanjay Sami, has been working in the business for over 30 years. He has been a key grip on more than 80 Indian and international feature films. Starting out as a commercial diver, Sanjay moved into the film industry in 1992, working in construction, locations, production as well as post-production. Following his passion for all things mechanical, he found his true calling in the Grip Department. He began working as Key Grip on movies in the late 1990s.

In the early 2000's he founded 'The Grip Works', a full facility Grip services company, based in Mumbai, India. He has worked with several Oscar winning and nominated cinematographers like John Toll, Robert Richardson, Robert Yeoman, Darius Khondji, Hoyte Van Hoytema, Rodrigo Prieto, Yves Belanger, Anthony Dod Mantle, Anil Mehta, Jehangir Chaudhary, Ravi K Chandran, Sudeep Chatterjee, KU Mohanan and many others.

He has often collaborated with Robert Yeoman, a well known cinematographer from 'The Grand Budapest Hotel' which was nominated for nine awards at the 87th Academy Awards, winning four, and received numerous other accolades. His work in the 'The French Dispatch' also received wide appreciation which premiered in the Cannes Film Festival. Sanjay joined Darius Khondji in Rome for a short film named 'Castello Cavalcanti'.

Among various Impressive Projects, Sanjay also got the opportunity to join Hoyte van Hoytema on Christopher Nolan's masterpiece 'TENET' and 'SILENCE' with Rodrigo Prieto directed by Martin Scorsese .

In this interview with Naresh Sharma, Sanjay Sami talks about various challenging moments as key grip in different movies like The Grand Budapest Hotel and The French Dispatch.

What were the challenging moments you faced being a Key Grip as you worked with the best DOP's in India as well as abroad?

I've been working in the film industry since 1991, and this year completed my 31st year. 2020 was a washout because of the pandemic. In 2021 I did a movie called 'Asteroid City' in Spain, and in 2022 I did "The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar" and 'My Mothers Wedding' in England. The gaffer on one of the movies I did in England was of Indian descent, but born and raised in the UK.

On many of the movies I do abroad, I'm generally the only Indian on set, so it was interesting to work with him. He was keen to work with me as well, as he was curious about an Indian Key Grip that was being brought to the UK to work on jobs there.

I look at my job on set as the person responsible to translate the vision of the cinematographer and the director into a physical shot.

One of the challenges of the job is to find solutions to achieve shots that haven't been done before, or to create a solution for a shot that's new to you.

One of the directors I work with frequently - Wes



Anderson - plans his shots meticulously. Almost all the sequences in his movies are pre visualised using animatics.

It is often a challenge to execute a shot that has been pre visualised on a computer. Many of the constraints of the real world do not exist in the world of animation, and therefore present very real challenges in a world where the laws of physics exist.

While shooting "The French Dispatch", there is a shot that has multiple direction switches of the dolly on track to cover a scene that had to be shot as a 'oner'.

It was an extremely precise move with the character Roebuck Wright played by Geoffrey Wright. The scene unfolds with the character walking through the building. He goes through multiple rooms with multiple changes of direction. It would have been a logical steadicam shot but because of the





precise and hard stops and starts it wasn't a good choice for this shot with this level of precision of the hard stops and starts with multiple 90 degree changes of direction. Robert asked me how we were going to pull this off and I was struggling to come up with a solution.

I messaged Wes Anderson to ask him if this was truly a single shot. He said that's what he wanted, and asked if there was a way it could be achieved as a single shot. There weren't any real pauses in the direction switches, so I was sitting there with my kids toy train set to figure out ways to switch directions..

We came up with a solution to switch track multiple times with over 500 ft track. I sketched the plan out, because I knew the id have to get some sections of track specially manufactured, with female joints on both sides, to allow some of the tracks to switch. We had spoken to the French company CineSyl that we had got the track from, and they agreed to make the track for us.

Until the day of the shoot, I wasn't certain that this would work seamlessly. At the end of the first rehearsal I heaved a sigh of relief. It was better than I had even imagined.

Here is a website where you can take a look at the shot:

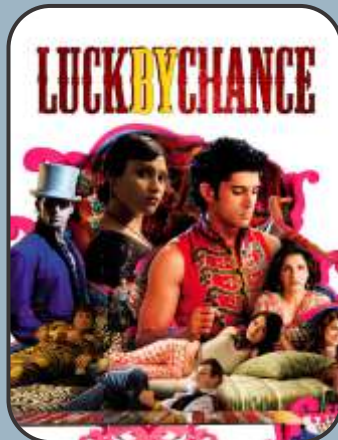
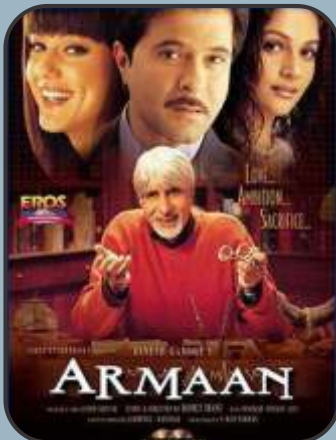
<https://www.vulture.com/2021/11/behind-the-scenes-of-the-french-dispatches-long-shot.html>

As computer graphics are being powerful nowadays, didn't it strike Wes Anderson to use graphics rather than physically shooting it on the set?

Wes Anderson typically doesn't like VFX. Although he has done two animation films, both of them were stop motion films with puppets. One of the big challenges in Anderson's



Important Films of Sanjay Sami as Key Grip



films, is that he wants to do everything (as far as possible) in camera. Many of his scenes are shot as single takes, so there's a lot of pressure on the Cinematography department (Cinematographer, Gaffer and Key Grip).

Strict adherence to Anderson's film making grammar is a challenge for all of us.

Could you recollect any of the episodes from the Wes Anderson film particularly The Grand Budapest Hotel?

One example would be a shot of Willem Dafoe riding a motorcycle through the snow. The camera needed to be mounted in front of the handle bars looking back at the actor. We also had Ralph Fiennes with Tony Revolori riding the same bike. It was obviously impossible to ride a motorbike on ice and snow with a camera rigged to it. We couldn't get a low loader to the location we needed to film in, so eventually we came up with a completely different solution.

I asked Wes to show me the frame he was looking at, with a view finder. I saw that only the handlebar and headlight were at the bottom of frame. It was an old antique BMW motorcycle and I pulled the headlight and handle bar off with control cables and built a rig at the back of a pickup truck on which the actors could sit and rigged the handlebar and headlight on it. We rigged the camera in the back of the pickup truck, and it was exactly the shot that was needed.

Another super challenging shot in The Grand Budapest Hotel was the jailbreak sequence. There is a shot where the characters dig a hole through two floors climbing down the prison with the help of a rope. The director wanted the camera to go through another hole tracking with them. It was complicated because the sequence was shot in a real prison in Zitau in Eastern Germany.

We broke a hole in 2 floors of the prison for the actors to go down and parallel to that hole we broke another hole through the first and second floors of the prison. then we used a piece of equipment called a Towercam. Above the hole we rigged a Truss kind of system and hung the Towercam upside down. The Towercam was not designed to be under slung, but because I knew the shots beforehand I met the guys at MAT in Berlin (who designed the Towercam). I told them my requirements for the shot and they modified it for me so it could be mounted upside down, without the telescoping sections falling out.

Could you also recollect some episodes from SERENITY, as many sequences were shot on a boat?

SERENITY was shot in Mauritius with Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway. It was a big challenge to shoot a large section of a movie at sea.

One of the major challenges was the logistics of moving all the equipment out to sea and making it all workable.

We had a floating platforms which had a Technocrane on it. To this we had to attach the picture boat.



Transferring expensive, heavy equipment from boat to boat at sea is very stressful work!

We had a particular shot, where the director wanted a point of view of Jason Clarke the actor, being pulled overboard of a boat and being dragged down underwater. We had to figure out the way to have the camera transitioned from being on the boat to being pulled very violently underwater. We dropped an anchor block to the seafloor and rigged a pulley system with a lift bag on one side and on the other side we had a cable attached to the camera in a Hydroflex housing. When the housing was released, the rising lift bag pulled the housing into the sea and under.

How did you get the momentum of the Hydroflex so as to obtain the normal speed ?

There is some deceleration when the Hydroflex hits the water. It's being pulled down by the lift bag. The lift bags are designed for salvage operations and they vary in size according to the weight that they need to lift. They can lift objects weighing several tonnes. It's volumetric, 100 litres of air will have a lift of 100 kilos. We can adjust the speed of the lift bag. If we put a lot of air in it is going to pull very fast and if not needed, by venting air we can fine tune the amount of pulling force that we need.

On the same movie we had another interesting challenge. The writer and the director of that movie was Steven Knight (the creator of 'Peaky Blinders' and 'Locke').

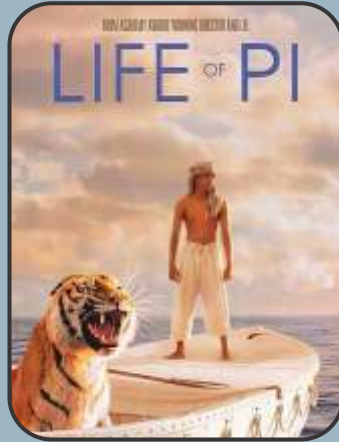
As part of the visual treatment he wanted very surreal camera movement. Something that cued a feeling of things not being 'quite right'. The reference he gave me prior to this was from the video game called Grand Theft Auto. He showed me a reference where the camera is following the actor - slightly above the back of his head, and when he stops the camera suddenly swings around into a frontal and lowers down slightly, to face level.

Again, trying to find a physical execution for something designed on a computer. He asked if we could try this with a Steadicam. I said it was impossible to have this kind of move, the precision, the speed following a very precise half circle arc with Steadicam.

Was the computerised camera movements via "Bolt" existed at that time?

The Bolt existed at that time but we were shooting in Mauritius. It wasn't practical to bring a bolt in there. We had to figure out how to shoot it using the equipment we already had available to us. After a few experiments I came up with a simple solution. We used a Hybrid Dolly and put an offset on the Dolly which would track right parallel to the waist of the actor. Along with that we put a riser on it and then we use a rotating off-set.

While the actor was walking, we were tracking behind him and slightly above him. At a certain point the director wanted the move and we manually swung the offset. The



centre of rotation was the actor, so it swung a perfect arc around him, and I boomed the dolly down to get the frontal height needed. The shot worked exactly as the director had imagined with a very low tech solution.

An important part of our job is understanding what the Director and Cinematographer want to achieve.

Over the years you come up with a variety of solutions to a variety of problems. Many new problems are solved by adapting your experience with other problems and sometime using a hybrid of 3 or 4 different solutions. A key part of gaining experience, is knowing what doesn't work. It's as important as knowing what does work. It enables you to arrive at workable efficient solutions faster, by not wasting time with methods that result in failure or a sub-par result.

How do you execute the imaginative way of thinking of the director and the cinematographer because achieving their designs are sometimes next to possible?

This is where "knowing what doesn't work" can be useful. As the key grip, I assume responsibility for achieving the shot.

If we are discussing a particular shot and the director says he wants to use a Technocrane, but I know from experience that its not going to work, it is my responsibility to share my experience of what I feel will or will not work. I could agree with the director and absolve myself of the responsibility for making the wrong choice, but that's not how it should ever work. I love collaborating with Directors and Cinematographers who trust me and appreciate the team effort that movie making is.

Logistics and planning is another important factor. For example, in SERENITY, there was a debate about whether to shoot the sequences at sea on stage with green screen or shoot it at sea for real.

When the decision was taken to shoot at sea, a whole lot of real world issues had to be tackled.

Now we had to think about the whole mission to transport tonnes of equipment to shooting platforms at sea. We had to move Technocranes on barges, set up all the shots and also cameras underwater, we had to control the picture boat direction for lighting continuity.

It would have been easy and controlled in a studio environment but we were shooting in real locations and in the open ocean. In Mauritius, we couldn't get a lot of the equipment that we needed for the shoot. We had to ship container loads of equipment from Cape Town, South Africa. Everyday we had barges coming into the Dock, loading up equipment and heading back out to sea. In Mauritius we had to find a dock that was capable of handling the cranes that we needed to load up and off load.



All of these things had to be worked into the schedule with the Assistant Director and Production Manager. As one of the departments with a lot of heavy machinery, ours was always a bit of a challenge.

Did you have to learn scuba diving as in *SERENITY* you had to go underwater several times?

I was a diver before I became a Grip, so I didn't need any specific training. I've done a lot of marine work.

On the movie "Silence", we faced some very tough situations while filming in Taiwan. The sea off the east coast of Taiwan is a very rough. Strong winds and very violent sea conditions. We had to shoot from the sea looking back towards the land. I had a small Jib Arm on an rigid hull inflatable boat, there were waves crashing over the boat.

There were scary moments where you were torn between focusing on the requirements for the shot, and assessing what your chances of survival were if the boat flipped over. The waves were tossing the boat and us around. It was a job just staying stable enough to control the arm.

At the same time we had the wireless headset, and the cinematographer (who wasn't on the boat) very calmly giving instructions on what was needed for the shot. Its a challenge

to stay focused on the shot and try and keep your mind clear of all the other challenges you are up against.

Do you have your own trained people who are allowed to take your equipment for some other shoots?

I started The Grip Works not because I wanted a rental company, but because I wanted access to world class equipment. I bought the equipment primarily because it is crucial to the way I work. When I work abroad I don't take my equipment with me.

I work with local equipment, I only take some specific rigging equipment that I have designed over the years. As a Steadicam operator, I take my Steadicam with me. I have four other Key Grips who have worked with me for years and have trained with me. They work with my equipment on the various jobs that they do, independent of my involvement.

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Interview with DI Colourist

Ashirwad Hadkar



What is your brief to the D.O.P/Director before you start with your initial work?

Since I started my work in the film processing lab with 35mm negatives, a lot has changed. Unlike back then, when the colorist's role used to be performed at the end, participation from the colorist is now necessary right from the start. The colorist collaborates with the D.O.P. to determine the film's appearance and colour palette based on the genre and mood that the director wants to convey through it. The Art Direction and Costume Departments collaborate in order to implement the chosen colour scheme.

For the overall look, the referencing part is very necessary. Do you show the references to them or do they show the references to you.

Yes, referencing plays a significant role in the colour grading process. We both provide examples of what the genre calls for, and after engaging in a creative conversation, we settle on a specific colour scheme and the overall appearance of the movie. Since 70% of the look is accomplished during the shoot, it is crucial to set this before it begins.

What are the issues that can be sorted under the DI and what cannot be?

Nowadays, DI may be used to manage nearly anything.

Examples include scenes taken with multiple cameras, matching the range of skin tones and complexions, matching non-VFX and VFX shots that heavily rely on CGI, and much more. However, there are a few situations that are a little more challenging to handle in DI, such as shots that are drastically underexposed, shots that mix strong sunshine with cloudy intercuts, out-of-focus shots, etc.

What are the advantages you have today as a colorist then those days of 35mm negative grading when there were only primary colour grading systems ?

In today's time, there are more advantages because now what you see is what you get. The potential for DI is endless as you watch on a large screen. It was really difficult for me to grade on a little CRT monitor while having to picture how it will seem on a large screen after chemical film processing. After which, CMY lily filters were used to do table correction. It was fun and challenging because you need to see that one small frame and then you have to visualize how it will look after that +1 and -1 on the positive print. I spent 7 years in the lab and did more than 150 films as a lab colorist. My experience of working in the lab has helped me a lot in DI. Things are much more under control your control when you work on digital systems. Now things are much easier and there is more creative freedom to enhance and grade selectively.

What is your process to maintain mixed footage consistency shot with a variety of cameras in different aspect ratios?

We employ the ACES (Academy Colour Encoding System) pipeline, which allows us to put footage in the same timeline from several different cameras and they react more or less in the same way. For example, you don't need to make a different configuration for Alexa, Red, Sony, Black Magic, or DJI drone cameras. After DI is done, it is difficult to pinpoint which shot has been taken from which camera.

How much comfort does it give you to do the Grading on Baselight DI Machine? Does DaVinci Resolve or some other color grading software make any difference in color grading? If you are grading the same film with a Base light machine or with another machine. Would the film look different on the same screen?

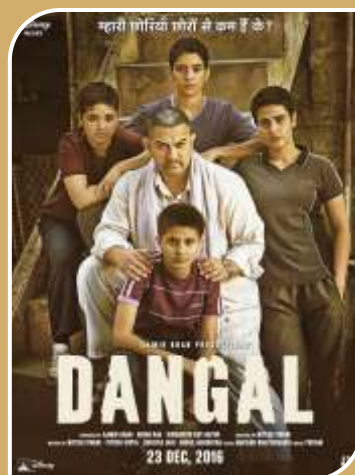
That's difficult for me to answer since I have been working with base light for the past 14-15 years and I never had any issues with it. It's a matter of comfort, so whether you do it on DaVinci Resolve or some other color grading system, I think it might look the same.

Why do people prefer Base light over any other software?

It's true, the market has a healthy demand for base light. I think it's a matter of getting used to a particular system. Since I've been using the base light for 15 years, my hands and eyes are accustomed to operating the console, which speeds up the procedure while I'm working in a dark environment.



Important Films of Ashirwad Hadkar as DI Colourist





When you are dealing with the color correction of heavy files of 4k resolution, does the software compatibility in terms of RAM and Computer Processors count?

Yes, it is very important. When OTT platforms enter the picture, the pipeline totally switches to 4K resolution. Given that 4k files (EXR) are substantially larger than RAW. Due to the real-time playback of this camera footage in 4k, 6k, 8k, etc., the operating system, software, and processing of large files are all crucial nowadays, so if the machine is more powerful, it will be a lot simpler. Both, Baselight and DaVinci Resolve have access to upgrade to the newest technology.

India particularly uses VFX software which has been perpetually present in films till now. What are your ways to operate when VFX is present in the movies from time to time?

All of the movies I've worked on in the last six months, including Gangubai Kathiawadi, Shamshera, Bhramhastra, and Bhediya, consisted lot of visual effects. Additionally, VFX movies take a slightly different approach than regular movies. For instance, VFX make up more than 80% of the movie Brahmastra. Therefore, grading takes longer than it would for a non-VFX film. Prior to sending VFX shots off for balance, the VFX team, the Director, and the D.O.P. inspect the shots on the big screen after VFX has been applied, and I grade the shots with matte in the final edit.

What's the most difficult thing you faced in the color grading which gives you a nightmare?

One of the most challenging things a colorist has to face is the difference of opinion between a Director and the DOP regarding the look of the film. Finding the right look that appeals to both of them in the given situation is not an easy task. Another, and arguably the most challenging, circumstance is when the editor becomes accustomed to watching the movie in the incorrect LUT on an uncalibrated display for an extended period of time while editing. As a result, he becomes too comfortable with the look and feels. It is therefore challenging for the director to comprehend the grade assigned by the DOP and colorist when he arrives for the final grading. A certain period of time is required to get him on the same page.

There are various credit lines given now days to DI department - DI Technician, DI Line Producer, DI Color Assistant and DI Conformist. What are their exact roles in the DI department?

DI producers are an indispensable part of the film industry and their job role starts right from the shoot nowadays. All the DI producers are the one point of contact between the colorist, studio, and the client (including VFX house). Their role is to get the material from the client and line up with the conformist and give it to me for grading then they take my graded Timelines and make the DCP and inform the client. The coordination between the DI studios, artists, and Clients is all about the management process.



DI Technician generally is a technical guy who will look into the corrected timelines as per the camera in which camera it's shot and what kind of output you need whether it's Netflix, any other OTT platform or a film. Because OTT and film specifications are different. As per the specifications you need to make the timeline. Also, if there are any technical issues in the projector, in the light or in the pipeline then he is the one who will look into all those things.

DI Conformist role is generally to confirm the timeline as per the offline film edit. Hence Conformist will sit on the confirm machine and will match the Timelines as per the offline footage and put the VFX shots through the Baselight Assist machine which will be passed on to me, this process is just before the DI process done by me.

DI Colour Assistant matches the entire Timeline with the reference once I set the look. Hence, they help me to grade the film to match the VFX shots and the Base Grade of the film.

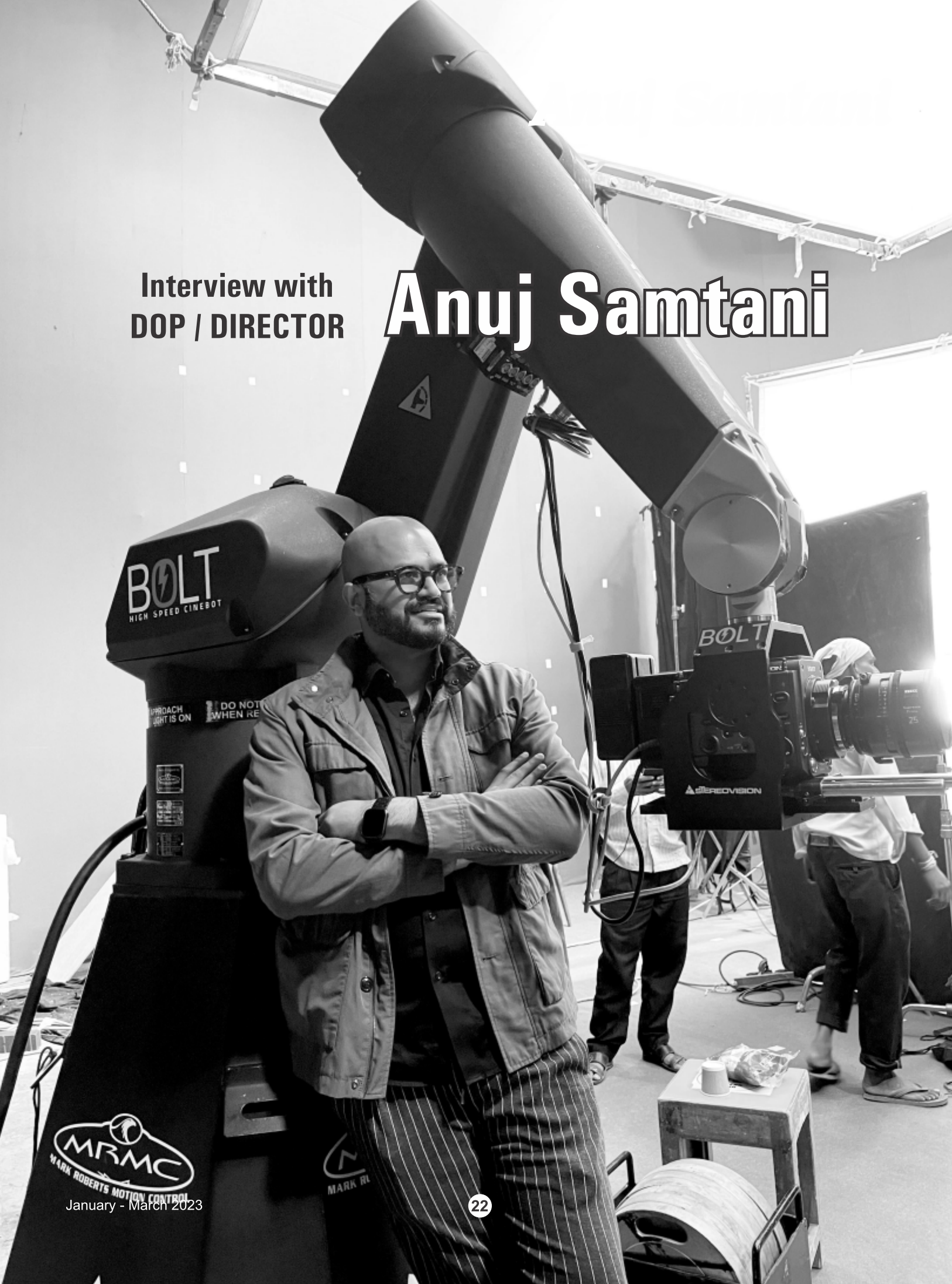
What does exactly the Base Grade term mean?

Sometimes the film has few Green Chroma sequences which need some creative correction, hence for those shots we need a Base Grade because a lot of VFX houses ask for it to fix a few Chroma sequences just to match the background correctly. Base Grade is like 30 to 40 percent of your final grade and it happens on the same Base Light machine.

Fedddback: ashirwad1977@gmail.com □□□

Interview with
DOP / DIRECTOR

Anuj Samtani



MRMC
MARK ROBERTS MOTION CONTROL

January - March 2023

Anuj Samtani, aged 33, comes from a family and a company background that has been in the field of electronics and subsequently into movie-making technologies 25 years ago. As a naturally progressed he, having a keen eye on film making was enrolled in the famous Whistling Woods facility which had just been launched by Mr Subhash Ghai. He studied the craft for 2 years and then encouraged by his family and his Oscar-winning uncle Kish Sadhvani began attending master classes with the ASC and various academia to hone his craft. All the companies that company that he is now an active partner in encouraged him and imparted training in the tech that he now works with diligently. At a very young age he was fortunate to learn about the nuances of High speed imaging (a.k.a slo-mo) filming which has been the bed rock for as-film makers and for action sequences. This technology was brought in earlier than Anuj's foray into this industry but once he learnt and grasped the technique he simply ran with it and is involved in over 200 ad films as Cinematographer and other related projects including being part of a missile test project. He has shot for OTT platforms Netflix and Amazon prime and brands like L'Oréal, dove, Mcdonalds, KFC, NBA, American Express, subway, Samsung and many more! Currently he is resting on his laurels after doing an impeccable job behind the camera for Masaba Masaba S2 and another which is awaiting release very shortly. With positive energy, top-of-the-line tech available to him in-house at his beck and call there is no stopping his way forward to capture some incredible images in the days to come!

What are the challenges a cinematographer faces in his day-to-day life and how do you overcome them?

One of the biggest challenges a cinematographer faces is being able to execute an image that's in their mind when you read a script uniquely. Be it a lighting style, a camera movement and being able to do it in a unique way.

It gets easier with experience. Proper prep, creating visual mood boards, experimenting with setups and keeping track of new technology and rigs is a great way to overcome these mental blocks. Nowadays, with new technology and social media platforms making the world a smaller place, Directors have gotten very tech savvy and love to explore new and challenging shot taking. Keeping up to date with all tech and gear is vital!

For the last 4-5 years, I have been working regularly with Devang Singh, the director who runs Studio Fry. The first commercial I did with him was a Budweiser commercial. The visuals turned out great, and was one of the most beautiful ad films I've shot. It's important to have good synergy with your director for the best visual outcome.

We had this artist who created an art installation for the beer dispensing machine, in the sense that we wanted to have a steampunk theme in the ad and we wanted the beer to be an integral part of this art installation that we had captured.





Goldwin Fonseca (one of India's top product stylists) was rigging all the pipes and putting beer through the machine, and that was the day everything I had planned unfolded beautifully lighting wise. Being a good cinematographer alone doesn't translate into stunning imagery, you need to coordinate with the rest of the team for which you need to prepare well in advance and plan for it to make everything magnificent. Teamwork is key.

So a really important thing to overcome challenges is to make sure your communication with your team internally and the HODs are solid and your prep is on point.

We used a Phantom Flex4k Camera, Red Monstro (full frame) with the Supreme Prime Lenses and some Innovision Probe Lenses in this shoot provided by India's top rental house Stereovision.

I also decided that the largest sensor would work for a nice shallow depth of field experience, as I preferred a bit more contrast and a higher resolution image. It worked well for that commercial, but later I started shifting towards Sony Venice. Hence most of the advertisements and other films were shot from Sony Venice. People have asked me why other cameras cannot replace Sony Venice. It was simply because you saw a certain image that pleased and attracted you towards that image and made you feel comfortable with that camera because you knew what you could and couldn't do with it.

In "Masaba Masaba" Season 2 on Netflix, I was going for an international, high fashion glam look. I shot that too with a Sony Venice with Supreme Primes. The Supreme Prime gave me the perfect look with crisp images. Sony Venice gave me beautiful skin tones. The Dual ISO capability makes the camera so sensitive when shooting outdoor or night scenes that it's fantastic to switch and use just the 2500 ISO.

What is your mechanism to reinvent yourself to avoid the regular ways of shooting?

The beneficial and exciting part of being a filmmaker is not just being a cinematographer but also the rapidly evolving technological landscape. I took frequent courses to develop my skills, meet new people, and learn something new every couple of months. There was not a single Director of Photography person in the world who would tell you that he knew everything.

But to stay at your creative peak, you have to be a constant learner. I did film school, and went to Whistling Woods when I was very young. I finished film school, and then I started as a technician. This meant that I was one of the first Phantom Camera DI technicians in the country for our company Stereovision. I used to be the dry operator for the Hydroflex Underwater Housing.

People have undervalued the knowledge that you can gain by becoming a technician vs. AC. One Monday, I was shooting a L'Oréal commercial with the French Director of Photography. On Tuesday, I was shooting a song sequence for a film with Binod Pradhan sir. And the other day, I was shooting for an action show. Prior to that, I did product ads for the next three days. It opened my spectrum a bit and made me feel like many people joining the industry these days need to value technicians and how much they can learn in those roles. I took a course on robotics because we had invested in the MPMC Bolt Cinebot, and I was so interested that I became an operator as well.

I went to Mark Roberts Motion Control Company to study a motion control course on robotics. Later, I went to the American Society of Cinematographers in Los Angeles. I took a master class which taught me a lot. After going there, I saw the facilities that cater to the Director of Photography requirements to learn about new technology and new challenges and talked about their issues and how they run their sets. That's why these master classes or hanging out with the filmmakers keep you on the edge.

Did you have any different method of lighting for a web series released on the OTT platform as compared to a feature film released on the big screen?

Framing and lighting are a whole different ball game for OTT. We are creating images for smaller devices like smart phones, tablets and TVs these days. So brighter images with higher amounts of mid and close ups tend to dominate the platform. Directors understood it might not be a good idea to shoot a lot of wide-angle shots to tell an important part of the story, and hence, they were trying to avoid it. It was also turning out to be a very heavy mid-close-up game because you want to see as much detail and emotion as possible. Wide shots of establishing the setting up were fine. Sometimes in feature films, there's only so much you can tell in a single wide shot.

So, we joked with some Director of Photography that we live in an age where it's the death of the wide shot. We hoped people would understand that when you were viewing this content, just make sure that the brightness level on your device is correct with things like night mode (making screens warmer), etc are switched off. We work hard on our images and hope you all see them the right way.

All my Netflix shows are delivered in HDR Dolby vision. Which is a new technology of brighter images 1000 nits with insane amounts of contrast and colour range. I have had to adapt to this style of delivery in my lighting and exposing my images a certain way.

Do you prefer an anamorphic lens and then crop it to 1:2 when doing DI or use a normal lens and then composing for 1:2?

Answer. For me choosing anamorphic or spherical is usually decided by the script. It's mainly a creative choice. For my show, "Masaba Masaba" I used both lenses. There was a part of the show showing a montage of her growth played out as a music video 'I'm your King'. I wanted that part to look different. It was not supposed to look like a normal show. I shot that with the Atlas Orion Anamorphic from Stereovision. And the show went to 2:1, but that sequence went to 2.35:1. It was a creative call for us to change the aspect ratio and lensing!

What is the quality check in OTT in terms of visuals?

Essentially, in the world of web series shooting, OTT platforms have high end technical specs that need to be adhered to. From the delivery resolutions, audio qualities, etc. Some even give a list of 'approved cameras'

from which a DOP decides. This is to avoid any mishaps and quality loss from a production. For a long time even the Arri Alexa was not on the list as they did not shoot 4k.

From the planning stages to the execution to the post, OTT platforms have technical teams who are always involved and are there to help out and guide you to follow the specs that they intend to receive the footage.

Creatively a DOP has to make a deck which is presented to the OTT teams on how we intend to tell the story visually. But they only get involved in the technical side to make sure we are using the correct gear and the footage has no faults by working closely with the DIT to monitor Dropped frames, dead pixels, etc. For netflix, there is an app called PIX where dailies are uploaded for everyone on the project to watch with watermarked footage.

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Interview with DOP *Tuhin Biswas*

How did you come on board as the DOP for this film?

I am a still photographer and a primary school teacher in West Bengal by profession. I met Prasun Chatterjee the director of the film in 2016 and he used to admire my landscape and stills. He was searching for some producers and gathering funds at that time. At some point, he told me the story of "DOSTOJEE". Then we both decided to make it as a crowdfunding film and at that time I was proposed to be the production still photographer in this film. However, due to the limited budget and long 60 days of outdoor shoot, we couldn't afford the astronomical amount to approach any recognised

cinematographer. The director, Prasun called me one day and asked me to do the cinematography of this film. At first, after hearing it, I denied it because I didn't have any film school background, and neither did I have any proper idea about cinematography. He somehow managed to convince me to do this job and then the journey started. We started the pre-production in the year 2017. We shot the entire film in the year 2018. That's how I became a part of "DOSTOJEE".

Which particular camera and kind of lenses did you use in your shoot?

We were not able to rent any big-budget cameras. We just rented a Sony a7S II and we shot the film with CP2 Zeiss lenses. After the first schedule, we rented an ARRI ALEXA mini for a few days. The budget then again became a constraint in the second schedule. Unfortunately, we again shifted to Sony a7S II.

You decided to choose a village where there is no electricity in the film. How did this choice strike you to shoot in a village where there is no source of electricity?

Actually, this "DOSTOJEE" is Prasun's story and he frequently visited the village for a long time where we shot the film. He was connected to this village for 15 years and as the plot is of 1993 when there was no electricity we decided to place the set as same. So the story was written and formed based on a real situation.

What were the precautionary majors you took while shooting in the rain sequences, and the river sequences where the boy drowns, to save the camera from getting moist and wet?



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The camera technicians and the camera caretaker were quite puzzled by Prasun and my behaviour. We used to check out the weather forecast for tracing cloudy and rainy days then plan and carry out the shoot accordingly. We always tried to make it appear as original as possible. Most of the rain sequences are original and shot in cloudy weather. Some of the rain sequences were shot with a handmade rain machine.

Let me tell you that the outdoor rain sequence was enhanced by some VFX. But we mainly shot the film in the original rain. The precautions that were taken by us were mainly with the plastic covers for covering me and camera equipment in which tripods and the local boats were also used in the river shots. In the fish sequence, it was not the VFX, we shot the entire scene originally. We used a 6ft by 5ft mosquito net and cast it in water which helped us to catch 4 to 5 KGs of fish and thus the shot was taken.

There was a "fire flies" sequence at night. Was it shot during the day for night? Were the fireflies edited in the graphics?

Yes. It was shot "day for night" and since it was cloudy weather, it was easy to avoid the hard sun and get an authentic feel of the night. It should be pointed out that not all the fireflies were graphics, there was a plastic cap used when they were

Important Film of Tuhin Biswas as DOP



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fighting. We stuck the fireflies there with an adhesive for implementing the original fireflies. We took some plates of fireflies. Then the motion was given by VFX and we are quite satisfied with the work of the VFX artist Rajib Paul.

In the interior sequences, there is a diya where you can see the flame and then there is a lantern. So in the lantern did you use any high-intensity bulb to give proper exposure and later added the artificial lights?

The interior sequences are mostly during the night. We used only the tungsten bulb, candles and lanterns to illuminate the entire location. There was no big budget light used.

There is also one particular sequence where we see that the deity is smoking after the Jatra scene. There's a bulb hanging. So was it a deliberate choice that you wanted to show a source of light in that space?

Yes. Actually, when we were children we used to watch these types of Jstras. In the green room, there used to be only a tungsten bulb of 40 watts or 60 watts. So we chose to show the same for getting the original vibe. Director Prasun and I both spent our childhood in the '90s. Hence, we wanted to show the real life of the 1990s.

How many days did it take to shoot the film?

We shot the entire film in the year 2018. We had a 60 day outdoor shoot.

There is a particular sequence where these two boys are getting photographed by a photographer and there is a

mirror where we get to see the photographer. How did this idea strike your mind that let us show the photographer as well in the frame other than these two boys?

The mirror was already placed in the shop where we shot the sequence but in a different place. When I entered the shop and planned the scene, I placed the scene in my mind that how we can use the mirror and show the photographer along with the boys in one single frame.

Most of the outdoor film is in diffused cloudy weather rather than a sunny bright part. Before the sad part of the film, there are many happy moments. But none of those happy high-key moments were shot in bright light.

There was a particular reason why we did so. We shot in Sony log, while shooting the film Sony alpha 7S II, its minimum ISO is 1600. In bright sunlight ISO 1600 is much more than required. So we planned to shoot the film in the cloudy weather and not in the bright sunlight.

But you could have used the ND filters or cut down so much exposure.

We used one or more than one ND filter in cloudy weather. But when you get bright sunlight more ND filters are required which could affect the sharpness of the film. That is the reason why we got this shoot done in cloudy weather or dawn or dusk.

Did you use any artificial light as a filler on the actors' faces in any sequences?

We just managed with the reflectors and thermocol. As thermocol is the best replacement for reflectors and we didn't use any filler for daylight shooting and there wasn't also any makeup.

How did you decide on the colourist's choice?

From Cherrypicks, we rented the camera, which is also one of our co-producers. The colorist of our film Manas Bhattacharya is a cinematographer from SRFTI. He was the appointed colourist for Cherrypicks. Hence we got the chance to work with him. He did a wonderful job. During the lockdown period, we had much more time for DI, etc very minutely. The lockdown affected the social structure but somehow it was effective for us.

Is there anything specifically important from a cinematographer's point of view that you would like to share?

We had no budget but had all the preparations. In 2017, when we got into pre-production, we made many notebooks. We made the film in those notebooks first. We wrote everything: lensing, colour palette, costume colour and background colour, everything. Now people are saying that the world of the kids was much bigger, green, vibrant and blue etc. And when the communal part came into the film it was more closer frames and gloomy light, etc. It should be noted that those all were planned and they worked.

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Interview with - Cine Equipment Repair Technician *Padma Kishore Deunaboyina*

Padma Kishore a renowned Electronic Engineer who studied MCA Electronics From Andhra University and Master of Diploma in computer hardware. Padma Kishore worked as an Automation Engineer for 7 years before entering into the Indian cinema industry. He established DVS Electronics and wireless device solutions from scratch that he had learned and built his own business.

He has extensive experience in telecommunications and mobile computing devices. He is adept at routing embedded circuits, gauging resistance devices, and designing effective circuit boards. He specializes in small, handheld electronics.

He is professionally skilled and has knowledge about RF Amplifier, power electronic circuits and operation for Hybrid electronic automotive applications. He is also familiar with high voltage power semiconductor devices technology such as silicon IGBT, and SIC MOSFETS. Adding up he gained immense knowledge in Motor control Systems, Wireless Modules Systems, Wireless video transmissions and has excellent experience in circuit analysis.

Who is the engineer of your company who repairs electronic gadgets, and how did he get into this profession?

It's me who looks after the issues. I used to work in industrial automation, where I used to fix a lot of complicated equipment. Later, Shri. Nageshwaram from Hyderabad introduced me to this business. He has a company named "Gimbel House" here in Hyderabad.

Apart from optics, we can repair all remaining issues in electronics, such as lens communication, servo control, and

servo calibration, on which we have a strong grasp.

What exactly could be wrong with servos if there is a problem with the electronic component of the lens?

These lenses can be rugged in certain situations. Assume a wildlife photographer will be travelling extensively. Hence in that situation, the electronics are susceptible to damage because of the elements of nature, like moisture, humidity, or temperature. Apart from the optics, they affect the electronics too. Corrosion is the major issue that damages the

microscale electronics when they are exposed to moisture. Photographers do go to extremes to shoot candid photos. Mishandling is a different thing; a professional won't do that intentionally.

What are the basic problems that you encounter on the monitor?

There are various sections on the monitor, starting from the input side, like an HDMI port. Every component is subjected to wear and tear on a gradual basis over time. The problem starts initially with the input ports. These HDMI ports are always so sensitive to connectors that they are difficult to repair. Hence, people switch it to SDI, which is much simpler and more commonly used by us. However, SDI has both a continuous connection and a disconnection. Though that may happen with wear and tear, it may cause signal transmission issues.

I'll just start with one point. When the client is having an issue with the device, like the input of the monitor, you just need to check the SDI ports first. There are some minimal tests that they can do to reduce the downtime if they are having an issue. Sometimes a little pushing or squeezing of the connector may resolve the issue for that particular time. Later, they can send it in for service to change the entire port. There's one more problem: they're communicating via a Prompter Coaxial Cable. If the cable is not properly clipped and there is a short circuit in the cable, the entire electronics, from the video conversion ICs to the internal electronics, may be damaged. Because these short-circuiting cables do cause such issues. They actively burn out because there are no proper ethics. We have seen situations where they have burned out entire electronic circuit boards because of the reverse current. So it's not just the monitor that causes the issue; the input cable and the coaxial cable also do so. The person who is using this must be well aware of how to crimp, maintain, and check them regularly.

How can I check these regularly as a technical attendant?

For checking, there are many tools available in the market that are priced at Rs. 50 or Rs. 60, like a continuity tester and all. At some point during the week, attendance will be free at the office, if they are dedicated to the work, at least they can do this kind of minimal maintenance to check whether the cables are working fine. If there is a short circuit in the coaxial cable, they can find out easily with a simple continuity test.

With monitors we say the colours or the registration is going haywire. What are the basic problems you often hear from the client?

When an LCD screen is damaged, brown or blackish blocks appear on the screen. If the team is in a hurry while handling this equipment, they may be susceptible to a little force or a burden from the entire case that the monitor is having. This thing may cause minor damage to the display of the monitor. I can surely say that the attendant will be carefree. Next, it may happen that the temperature changes. Suppose the monitor was at an extremely low temperature, around 15 or 18 degrees, and then you took it outside in an



open area. When it is a hot day outside and there is a huge change in temperature, this results in the expansion of internal electronics. When it comes to glass crystals, these are susceptible to temperatures. If the device is old and the processor is working harder to process the input, then the processor overheats. And because of this overheating, sometimes it damages the display, and you see patches on the screen.

How do you figure out which part needs to be replaced in a monitor when an IC is burned or the circuit diagram goes haywire?

Although some experience is required for this part, the person who is repairing the IC also needs to be aware of the many purposes that each IC serves. The equipment manufacturer uses the IC in accordance with their requirements. Therefore, IC is created for common uses before being provided for technical publications. Even technicians are capable of understanding an IC's technical documentation. After taking those actions, he will be instigating the IC on the board and resolve the complicated IC issues.

Are all of these electronic spare parts easily available in India?

The major component vendors are from China. It plays a major part in IC manufacturing, and it is easy to purchase the item from Ali Express as they transport it from China. The current market, particularly the Chinese markets, has less component availability as a result of COVID.

Even the companies that have designed the IC in various other countries are giving the final manufacturing to China.

There are three video transmitters: the Hollyland, the Teradek, and the Vaxis. Do you also take care of these transmitter gadgets?

I have a very good hold on this video transmitter. A friend had three or four Vaxis video transmission devices that were completely dead when I first entered the film industry and faced a lot of issues sending them back to China. As I worked on electronics, he gave it to me and told me to experiment with it. When I opened those video devices, I realised they were no different than regular electronic devices; the only difference was the application. They just programmed it to

work in a different way. Therefore, I started experimenting on those three boards, and among them, I fixed two, and the third one didn't happen because components were unavailable.

At the end of the day, the frequency must match, and many other factors are required. Is it true?

That all comes from the software end, but that's a different thing. Suppose you have connected your video transmitters to any of the cameras in the studio; after using it for an hour, if you touch it, it will feel very hot. The reason is that whenever there is a device that is transmitting a signal wirelessly, it uses some kind of energy to generate that signal. A bit of energy is wasted in the process of generating this signal, which comes out in the form of heat. Sometimes, if the internal fan is not working, the internal electronics may be clogged with dirt, and have no proper ventilation, with a high-temperature area. These issues may affect the functionality of the board. And if the temperatures rise too high, we damage the component once again. So this is the way the major issues with the video transmission are happening.

Once upon a time, this TERADEK took over Animon who had designed the IC's for the HD video transfer. If you open Vaxis or a Hollyland device, you will find IC's Animon. As Teradek has taken over this company, Animon's contract with Vaxis and Hollyland has ended. Then they both developed their own video transmission units. Animon is a pro at manufacturing those video transmission units. Till then, Hollyland and others got their video transmission IC from Animon, belted the remaining body, and then supplied it to the client. When the contract ended, they started developing their own transmission devices, some of which are currently in the market, like the Vaxis 500, etc. Still, we are experiencing a bit of delay when coming to the previous Vaxis devices. This is the new technology that came into the market, and though it is promising, it is still in the budding stage. That is the reason for the delay when compared to Teradek.

Technically, if I say that I am buying gadgets from Vaxis and Hollyland, will they be more or less similar?

The production of the new-generation devices started two years ago. Compared to them, the delay has been reduced by around 80 percent. I think the way technology is developing, they may get over these delay issues in the next six to eight months. The algorithm that they design to transmit the signal, the encryption and the algorithm, once if they master them they can cut the delay further.

Is it possible that, at some point, this transmitting signal will become an in-built feature of the camera, rendering these devices obsolete?

Not always, because integrating something external into the camera is costly. Larger productions in India, such as Red Chillli or Yash Raj, can afford the pricey camera configuration. But consider the smaller productions they need to manage in order to accommodate everything. And if they purchased it at a higher price, they needed to find a similar rental for further recovery. And all the rental houses cannot afford this.

But consider the scenario if it is only the video transmitter that has to be repaired, and if it is integrated into the camera, we need to send the entire camera back for repair.

As of now, the wireless transmitter is at the back of the camera, where you can separate it. When it stops working, disassemble it and send only the transmitter to be repaired.

Cineom has their own service center for ALEXA, but RED or Blackmagic don't. Do you also repair these equipment?

As per our skill set, we can fix most of the issues, but as I mentioned at the beginning itself, component availability and the fact that these cameras are custom-designed require specifications. Assume if someone is manufacturing a camera and orders a custom IC, just as certain companies design custom ICs exclusively for certain companies. If RED is ordering a custom IC and the component isn't available in the market, it is the only company that has to do so, or they authorize a service center and are literally in the supply chain of the components.

When it comes to the other issues, like the power module issues, all these can be fixed by us. We don't just need to dive deep into the camera electronics to fix this, as these are a little more exterior. When it comes to sensor or recording related issues that are completely linked to the processor, they are complicated and need to be repaired by the manufacturer or by professionals who are trained by the manufacturers.

Do you also take care of the expensive lights like ARRI, that have electronics involved?

When it comes to lighting, it is a lot less important compared to the monitor or other equipment. These light electronics can be fixed; for example, it transfers the simple brain but runs various parameters of light, the colour temperature, etc. Apart from this, it is nothing but an LED or a tungsten bulb light. When it comes to powering these HMI lighting blasts, we know how it works. LEDs are a new technology that is easy to fix and can be handled.

Lotus Cine has a special mechanism with which they figure out the problem in light and what needs to be replaced in it.

Every manufacturer provided a diagnostic tool to the vendors to sort out the issues to a certain level. Whether it is a software or hardware tool, the manufacturer will provide the seller with support because it is not possible to send to the manufacturer every single time. Thus, the manufacturer offers tools because they are aware that there might be minor concerns that the buyer can address.

As there are wholesale distributors of the equipment, is it easier for them to get access to the replacement unit inside the light?

It is definitely easy for them to get the component because they are directly linked with the manufacturer. Apart from these film industries, I do work for other industries as well.

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