EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO
Differences in Shooting Documentaries and Highly Stylistic Feature-Length Films

BLACKMAGIC CINEMA CAMERA
Advantages, Solutions, and Tips

MUSIC VIDEO PRODUCTION
Canon Cinema EOS C300

TECHNOLOGIES AND TECHNIQUES
HD Shoot to Post Workflow

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Gain More Exposure

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Professional Networking

5 FATAL DISTRIBUTION MISTAKES
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*Differences in Shooting Documentaries and Highly Stylistic Feature-Length Films*

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**5 Fatal Filmmaker Mistakes**

*Do Any of These and You’re Doomed*
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DIFFERENCES IN SHOOTING DOCUMENTARIES AND HIGHLY STYLISTIC FEATURE-LENGTH FILMS

DANISH CINEMATOGRAPHER, MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO, DISCUSSES THE DIFFERENCES IN THE TECHNIQUES REQUIRED FOR SHOOTING DOCUMENTARIES AND HIGHLY STYLISTIC FEATURE LENGTH FILMS LIKE LARS VON TRIER’S MELANCHOLIA.

Q&A

YOUR WORK IS FAIRLY ECLECTIC, SPANNING FROM DOCUMENTARIES, TO SHORTS AND FEATURE LENGTH FILMS. WHAT ARE THE MAIN DIFFERENCES IN FILMING TECHNIQUES BETWEEN THESE GENRES?

MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO: In the projects I work for, I often find that fiction is stylistically inspired by documentaries and vice versa. In fiction where you have a lot of control you miss the natural life and surprising elements of documentaries, and in documentaries you strive for a more controlled visuality.

It is a little like fighting against the built-in circumstances of the genre, in the quest for cinematic life. Generally I believe that any interesting approach has a built in conflict...like life, no?

IN CHRISTOFFER BOE’S DEBUT FILM, RECONSTRUCTION, MOST OF THE SHOOTING WAS DONE IN AVAILABLE LIGHT. WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO THIS KIND OF CAMERA WORK?

MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO: The challenge is that you have to be able to adapt to what’s out there! This approach can work very well if you work with a director who is very flexible and is cool with changing things last minute. I would say Christoffer Boe and I take 70% of the decisions in the prep, but very importantly leave 30% to the shooting day, but you have to be able to make quick decisions and go with your gut feeling.

WHAT TECHNIQUES AND CAMERAS DID YOU USE FOR THE ASTROPHYSICAL ASPECT OF MELANCHOLIA? WHAT WERE YOUR COLLABORATIONS WITH THE ART DEPARTMENT LIKE?

MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO: We used an Arri Alexa for the main film and a Phantom camera for the slow motion shots in the opening. The collaboration with the art
department was good. I think the location in many ways inspired the style. It kind of gave the whole film a somewhat gothic feel. We tried not to dwell too much on the monumental aspects in the camerawork, generally shooting it more documentary-style, focusing on the characters, and saving the monumental for what we called "Wagner" moments.

COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE VFX CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS? WHAT WAS YOUR COLLABORATIVE PROCESS LIKE WITH THE VFX TEAM FOR THIS FILM, COMPARED TO OTHER FILMS YOU'VE WORKED ON THAT MAYBE REQUIRED LESS VFX SHOTS?

MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO: Every shot that included the planet or some other "fantastic" element, was carefully planned together with VFX supervisor Peter Hjorth. We story boarded all the shots in the prep, and he was always on set when we shot anything that he would work on in the post. For example the shot where the planet rises outside the castle, was shot in many passes, both at night and in the daytime. We had SFX shoot emergency flares in the sky at night in order to get moving shadows. For the reverse close-ups of the actors we had a light on a moving crane to emulate the moving planet.

APPEARENTLY VON TRIER WAS VERY SPECIFIC IN CONVEYING THE KIND OF CAMERA WORK AND ATMOSPHERE THAT HE WANTED FOR MELANCHOLIA. WHAT WAS THIS LIKE IN TERMS OF HAVING ROOM FOR YOUR PERSONAL SENSE OF ESTHETICS?

MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO: Every director has their own ideas, a cinematographers job is to translate those into a specific visual approach that the director feels conveys their vision. Of course I also have my own taste, but fortunately I feel that when I am asked for a project, it is because the director connects with this taste as well as my style. Concerning VonTrier, I always felt close to his style when watching his earlier films. It has been quite an easy working relationship so far, especially because, in my opinion, he is very clear about what he wants, but also because I admire and agree with his choices most of the time.

WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY FEEL WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING SCENE THAT YOU HAD TO FILM?

MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO: The most challenging situations for me as a cinematographer have been doing documentary. These were situations where you know that the "actors" don't realize the context you are working in and what the goal is for the project. It's an ethical problem. You can try to be honest and explain what you want to do, but many times it is very difficult to offer a clear understanding. Many times people participate for very personal reasons, which have nothing to do with the film, so everybody is making their own film somehow. That can be tricky afterwards, because things rarely turn out as you thought they would. In fiction, the rules are somehow more simple. There is a director who decides how things should be and that's what you try to implement, and that should go for everybody in the crew.
SHOOTING ON SET AND ON LOCATION
Real-world tips from Manuel Alberto Claro

Listen...Especially to the director.

Give the actors the best possible working conditions. And steal respectlessly from reality.
I just received my BMCC in January. Since then I have used it on a music video, a Microsoft commercial, and an Adult Swim commercial.

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I chose the Blackmagic for these projects for the dynamic range and the incredible amount of detail. Plus with two of the three projects being run-and-gun style, I knew I could rig up the BMCC with everything I needed while keeping it light enough to shoot handheld all day long. I shoot a lot on the Red Epic and Scarlet and while they are both considerably smaller and lighter than the Red one, they are still quite clunky and heavy compared to the BMCC.
Another factor for all three projects was turnaround time. None of these projects really had time or budget for a RAW workflow. Having the ability to shoot ProRes, while still keeping the dynamic range was a major plus. In the case of the Microsoft commercial, I had to hand off footage at the end of the day with no idea where it was going and how sophisticated the post process would be. So I shot in "video" mode which applies a LUT to the flat footage and basically makes it look great right from the camera.

**BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES**

I love shooting with this camera. Because I am also a colorist, I don't like to create a look in camera. I prefer to keep things very flat and neutral so I have the most room to work in post. The BMCC is perfect for this. Because the camera is designed to shoot this way, it greatly reduces the complexity of the menus. It is so easy to shoot with this camera. It has all of the control you need, and none of the stuff you don't.

This may sound funny but I love that they put a tiny internal mic on board. It's always a good thing to have a scratch track, especially on music videos. Every time I shoot with a RED, I find myself scrambling for a microphone at the last minute. It's funny because since the microphone input of the RED is a tiny little 1/8" plug, usually someone's ear buds get used as a microphone. They get plugged in and just hang off the camera – such a ghetto component of a high-end camera. Kudos to BMD for adding this seemingly unimportant component to the camera.

**CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

I kind of knew my challenges going in. While I was waiting (for months and months and months) for the camera to arrive, I learned everything I could about it. For me, the biggest things to deal with are, getting wide shots with the smaller sensor, and not having the ability to over crank for slow motion. The other issues that you expect from a digital camera (rolling shutter, noise, moiré, etc.) are on par or improved over the majority of other cameras out there, so those things are negligible.

I was able to get my wides. I just had to get further away from the subject. I have shot plenty of stuff on 2/3" cameras and this chip is much bigger. The slow motion thing is a tough one. I always find myself wanting it. I have heard some chatter about BMD possibly being able to get the camera to do 48fps or even 60fps in ProRes mode, but nothing official yet. BMD if you are listening, this would be HUGE.

**TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES**

1. Power down the camera when changing the lens. The boot up time on this camera is so fast, there’s really no reason not to do this. If you don’t, sometimes the camera can get confused as to what f-stop the lens is on. The result is inaccurate readings and possibly the inability to open the lens all the way.

2. Get an anti-glare screen protector for an iPad or other tablet and cut to fit the BMCC. Not only will this protect the touchscreen from predators, it will provide easier viewing in bright light. And because it is designed for touchscreen use, it will not inhibit your ability to control the camera.

3. Do not trust the LCD. This camera has 13 stops of latitude. This means it can handle a much wider range of light than a DSLR. Depending on the situation, simply making the image look good on the LCD will either have you blowing out highlights or shooting too dark and introducing unnecessary noise. The camera has a little "iris" button. Pressing this button will set your iris to what it needs to be to allow the most light in, while protecting all of your highlights. From this point you can then decide what doesn’t need protecting. For instance, a tiny reflection from a shiny object may be fine to let blowout, while detail in the clouds would be something you want to protect. In almost all cases, the image you see on the LCD will either be really bright or really dark. You really have to trust the camera and just go for it.

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TECHNOLOGIES AND TECHNIQUES
~Rick Macomber on how tech and tools contributed to the project

I SHOT THE VIDEO WITH MY CANON CINEMA C300 USING AN ASSORTMENT OF FAST LENSES FOR A FILM LOOK AND A TILTA RIG WITH MATTEBOX. WE ALSO USED KESSLER SLIDERS AND CRANES AND A GLIDECAM 4000 HD. IN POST WE GAVE THE VIDEO A RETRO FEEL COLOR GRADE. THERE WAS A SCENE WHERE THE GIRL HIDES IN THE UNFINISHED ATTIC. IT COMES AT A LULL IN THE SONG, AND I WANTED THE VIEWER TO BE SUDDENLY SURPRISED AT THAT MOMENT BY BATS OR PIGEONS FLAPPING IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA AS SHE ENTERS THE ROOM. I HAD CONTACTED SOME NEW ENGLAND HOMING PIGEON GUYS HOPING ONE OF THEM MIGHT WORK WITH US AND RELEASE THEIR BIRDS IN THE ATTIC ON CUE, BUT I WAS TOLD THE BIRDS COULD ONLY BE RELEASED OUTDOORS. INSTEAD WE USED A PRE-PRODUCED ANIMATED BIRD CLIP, WHICH I KEYED OVER THE ATTIC SCENE. I ADDED SOME FOLEY OF WINGS FLAPPING AND IF YOU SUSPEND YOUR DISBELIEF FOR A SPLIT SECOND, IT LOOKS QUITE REAL.

Q&A
HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE MAKING OF THE MUSIC VIDEO “READY OR NOT” BY AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER?

RICK MACOMBER: I’m a musician, and I play at some bars now and then. I met singer-songwriter Dave Munro, lead singer of ATC at his brother Jeff’s open mic in Malden about eight years ago. We became friends. I’ve shot a few other music videos for ATC in the past. When I heard Dave sing “Ready or Not” solo acoustic one night at the bar, I knew it was a very personal and emotional song, and it touched me. When the new NORDO album recently dropped, and I heard the studio version on the CD, I knew then and there I wanted to produce and direct the music video for it. I had developed an emotional attachment to that song.

BEING ONE OF THE WRITERS, HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE CONCEPT?

RICK MACOMBER: My original idea came from the opening words “Ready or Not.” It reminded me of the childhood hide-and-seek game. So my vision was to start the video as a narrative short film with children playing the game in the woods. Then it blossomed into another parallel story where two adults have an argument, and the guy chases after his girlfriend.

Dave and I kicked this premise around over some beer in a bar in South Boston one night, and we decided the video did need the adult back story. So now, there were the children and the adults involved in a search. From the start I had planned only to use the performance video of ATC for the chorus segments, as I liked the way the chorus slams at you with lots of energy compared to the rest of the tune, which is softer and more emotional. I also wanted the ending to be unusual and different than the happy Hollywood-style ending, so I decided to do something to the two parallel stories to surprise you at the end. It’s very ambiguous and open to interpretation. By design.

WHAT WAS YOUR PRE-PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS LIKE?

RICK MACOMBER: I wrote a simple film-style script using the lyrics and my camera shot ideas next to each line. Then I developed a shot list, which is crucial to moving the shoot along quickly on production days. For instance, having scouted the mansion ahead of time where the kids hide, I worked the shot list around getting the lights set up for each floor and executing each shot, starting in the attic and moving down each level of the property and out to the exterior shots. All the shots would be completely out of order in relation to the linear timeline of the story, but it makes it so much easier for the setup and breakdown of each scene. When there is no budget you want to move as quickly as possible because everyone on board is pretty much donating their time on their days off from their day job.

DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY OBSTACLES, AND IF SO, HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

RICK MACOMBER: The only obstacle we had was the fact that the band was busy
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until it became too cold outside to shoot their performance scenes. We overcame that by shooting those scenes in a studio. We actually shot the entire narrative portion of the script first and laid that into the sequence in post production and left black holes for the band performance shots to be inserted later. We even shot the string section separately and dropped that scene into the sequence independently of the band performance shots. We were finally able to nail down the band performance shots after their tour ended in January. By then it was freezing outside.

How did we make it look like the band was outdoors in the same location as the string section and stay warm and dry as well? The day I shot the string section in the forest, I had rolled the camera on a sunset time-lapse as we were wrapping up for the day. I ended up projecting the moving image of the forest sunset on a large curtain behind the band in a studio. It worked out pretty damn good I think.

MARKET YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS
~Insights from Rick Macomber on artists marketing

"MARKET YOURSELF AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. USE SOCIAL MEDIA. IT’S FREE. AND IT’S A FANTASTIC WAY TO ADVERTISE YOUR BRAND AND YOUR PRODUCT. BUILD A GOOD WEBSITE, AND PUSH IT. NETWORK WITH OTHER CREATIVES ON TWITTER AND FACEBOOK. GO TO EVENTS WHERE YOU WILL MEET OTHER FILMMAKERS, DPS, PRODUCERS, DIRECTORS, EDITORS AND ACTORS. AND ABOVE ALL GET OUT THERE, AND MAKE FILMS. STOP ALL THE SHOP TALK ABOUT THE LATEST GEAR, AND STOP SHOOTING TESTS ON THIS CAMERA OR THAT CAMERA, AND JUST CREATE COMPPELLING STORIES THAT WILL BE INTERESTING TO WATCH."
ADVICE FOR SHOOTING FOOTAGE IN AN UNFAMILIAR PLACE
~Tips from Joe Capra shooting on location~

The best advice I could give someone who is planning on filming in an unfamiliar place is to do as much research and planning as you can. Even if you don’t follow your plans exactly, you will be as familiar with your locations as you can be. This allows for a less stressful and more successful trip. I used many online resources such as travel forums, travel books, Google Earth, Flickr, and many more to help in my planning for Iceland. Also, take backups and spares of your most important pieces of equipment. You don’t want to spend all the time, money, and effort getting to a location only to find out that something didn’t survive the trip.

Q&A

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO UNDERTAKE TIME-LAPSE CINEMATOGRAPHY SPECIFICALLY?

JOE CAPRA: I initially started out strictly a still photographer, mainly shooting landscapes. In addition to still photography, I also had a strong interest in motion pictures and film cinematography. After being introduced to time-lapse and inspired by amazing work being produced by Tom Lowe, I took my camera out one night and gave it a try. The initial results were pretty bad, but I was immediately hooked. I realized that, for me, time-lapse was the perfect combination of still photography and film. I decided that this was something that I really wanted to pursue further. Time-lapse allows you

[Image of camera on tripod in a snowy landscape]
to see things that you can’t see with the naked eye, and there is something very special and exciting about that.

**ON YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH ICELAND, WHAT CAMERAS AND GEAR DID YOU TAKE WITH YOU?**

**JOE CAPRA:** I had my 3 main cameras, 2 Canon 5D II cameras and 1 Canon 7D. … And my trusty iPhone as a behind the scenes camera. I also took two Dynamic Perception time-lapse dolly rigs with me, and also a Kessler Crane KC-Lite Camera Crane.

**DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY ISSUES WHILE SHOOTING FOOTAGE IN ICELAND? HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?**

**JOE CAPRA:** The biggest and most unexpected issue I ran into while shooting in Iceland was the wind. Iceland is a very windy place, and heavy wind is a big time-lapse killer. There were more than a few occasions where it was just too windy to get out of the car to shoot anything. A lot of my shots had to be stabilized in After Effects in order to remove the “camera shake” caused by the wind.

**WHAT WAS YOUR CAMERA TO POST WORKFLOW LIKE?**

**JOE CAPRA:** I shot about 2TB of data on my Iceland trip. After every day of shooting I would offload all my images for that day onto a portable hard drive, and then back that drive up to a secondary backup drive. When I got back home from Iceland, I imported all my images into Adobe Lightroom and organized everything into their own folders. I had a folder for each time-lapse shot, one for all of my video footage, and another folder for my still photographs.

I did all the initial RAW process for each time-lapse shot within Lightroom. Some shots that required a little more attention and processing had to be brought into an amazing piece of software created by Gunther Wegner called LRTimelapse. LRTimelapse allows you to key frame and animate any of the RAW adjustments available to you in Adobe Lightroom. This allows you to easily change things such as exposure, white balance, and levels over the duration of your time-lapse shot. After all the shots were processed with either Lightroom and/or LRTimelapse, I would then import all the processed RAW files directly into Adobe After Effects. I did some additional
processing for each clip within After Effects; this usually involved adding an unsharp mask, additional levels adjustments, stabilization, and noise reduction.

The final step in After Effects was to render all the completed shots out as full 5K tiff sequences. Once all my shots were rendered out of AE I would then import them all into Adobe Premiere Pro. Premiere was where I did all my editing and final assembly. The final master video was rendered out of Premiere Pro as an uncompressed 5K Quicktime movie. From there I used Adobe Media Encoder to render out various video sizes, resolutions, and compression types for display.
When did you start filming weddings and why?

Joel Colthorpe: I started in 2005, very nervously. The reason I began was because I had been making some short films and a friend of mine decided I had some talent, so they suggested we start filming weddings. I quickly realized what a brilliant work environment it was. You are surrounded by people in the best mood they will probably ever be in, and they are there to celebrate something great. That’s about as good as it gets, and despite moving into many other areas of film, I have never left weddings.

What cameras do you use to shoot weddings?

Joel Colthorpe: I use the Canon 5D MK III. There are lots of options out there that are all great, but, for me, the pluses of the MK III are the compact size and inconspicuousness, because people think you are a photographer, the “look” of the image, the 60fps capability, and the fact that all of my lenses are already Canon.

On a shoot I would very rarely even use three cameras. I know there are guys out there that rock up with like 10 DSLRs, but I couldn’t possibly do that to someone’s wedding. I think if you remember what is really going on there and respect the significance of two people committing their life to each other, it forces you to notice the right things and not turn it into a Hollywood Q&A

Wedding Videography Challenge and Solution

Real-world tip from Joel Colthorpe

This happens all the time, you sit down for your meal and bam! Without fail the MC will announce the first speech, and you scurry for your camera with a mouthful of food. What I now do is speak intentionally with the MC when I get to the reception to make sure his announcements reach me before they reach the crowd. After doing that I forget that I even said it and assume he has already forgotten, because he probably has, and then keep my audio recorders and cameras ready to rumble and close by.

At the very least, your audio needs to cover you, so you need to be able to hit that before any of the speakers get up. If you have audio, you can grab some B-roll footage, or generic footage of the crowd, during the speeches and cut this in later in the blank gap where you were sliding around the reception trying to get your camera on a tripod.
production, but let it be what it is and capture that.

I’m a purist. My experience is that the more authentic and real emotion will come down to your lens with that approach, and the film will have something real about it that you can’t put your finger on, even with a few technical boxes going un-ticked. I also find that it forces me to be creative and focus on my craft, rather than compensate with angles and kit. For our style at least, that works.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE “LOOK” AND STYLE OF YOUR WEDDING VIDEOS, AND HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE CAPTURING AND CREATING THE LOOK?

JOEL COLTHORPE: The best I can do to describe our “look” would be “youthful and colorful”, at least that’s what I’m going for. When it comes to style I am always thinking from the angle of what I want the film to have. I’m always going for a youthful energy and for beautiful, emotive colors, and I think that translates into the post-process.

For me, “look” is partly camera work, and partly post production. I am always looking for ways to use the light to give the image a certain quality or feel. I love the haziness of back-lit scenes and don’t shy away from shooting directly into the sun. I am almost never looking for a “nice, clean shot.” The shot should carry some kind of emotion with it. I go handheld a lot, and I try to hang back from getting in people’s face so I can get an authentic shot rather than having people aware of me. For example, I’d rather have a 135mm on and stand back than have a 35mm on and be in their face, even if the technical quality suffers. I love grabbing a nice lens flare and making it work with the shot, and sometimes I do freelensing or “lens juggling” which is a fun little technique, if you’re getting bored, where you take the lens off the camera mount and hold it in front of the sensor freehand. It gets some really cool results if you want something crazy. The only real point of doing any of this stuff though is to add value to the film.

Post production wise, I color grade everything, and every wedding is a little bit different. You have to grade for the scene you find. Picking a look that you like and then trying to force it on everything doesn’t work. Some weddings I grade very minimally, and others I do a lot to. It all depends on what’s going on. I use Nucoda Film Master for grading, which, I admit, is not accessible to everyone, but a great tool. Regardless, there are lots of tools out there, and you can grade a beautiful shot with any of them if you understand color.

COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR CAMERA TO POST WORKFLOW FOR WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHY?

JOEL COLTHORPE: My workflow is basically MK III footage on CF cards – ingest from CF reader - Premiere Pro CS6 or Final Cut Pro 7 NLE for edit – Nucoda Film Master for grade – Adobe After Effects for menu creation - Adobe Encore Blu-ray authoring or Adobe Media Encoder for a web output.

Along the way I will use stabilization at times, sharpening tools and sometimes grain/noise reduction, or the other way around when I want more grain. It’s all case by case.

I have always been a FCP7 editor and still feel it is the smarter NLE of the two. However, the Adobe NLE is now starting to move away from FCP on the technology front. FCP is my favorite, but I was surprised at how good the Adobe NLE is now.

The one other piece of software I may use is Apple Cinema Tools to conform 50/60fps footage to 25p for slow motion shots. I work on both Apple and Windows machines and when on the Apple, I will use this app. This can also be done directly in Premiere Pro by choosing to interpret the footage as 25p.

WANT TO SHOOT WEDDING VIDEOS?

Real-world tip from Joel Colthorpe

If you care and put the significance of the day first, your films will reflect that. I know that sounds vague but if you approach someone’s wedding like it’s your production, you will miss the point, and the film will miss the point as well. At the end of the day, you are not trying to make a slick film that will impress your friends, you are trying to create a moment on someone’s couch, where they remember what it felt like to look at their husband or wife on their wedding day.
Once your movie or documentary is finished, distribution is the next step for most of you. But you should know, it’s a landmine out there that must be navigated carefully and strategically. Despite your probable desire to get on to your next film, now is not the time to be cavalier. With that in mind, here are five very common and fatal errors committed by Producers & Directors every week — that you must avoid making — when dealing with distributors. (And distributors absolutely hate that I’m telling you this.)

1. **DO NOT MAKE WORLDWIDE RIGHTS DEALS**

It saddens me every time a filmmaker tells me they’ve done this. Or when I hear about it from a colleague. Several times a month I learn about some Producer or Director who’s made a Worldwide Rights deal on their movie, giving ONE company both domestic (U.S.) rights and international rights. Everyone: Stop doing this. **STOP DOING THIS.** When you make this kind of deal, you are doomed, as you will never see any money beyond any advance — if you even got that.

Making Worldwide Rights deals is an unscrupulous practice by many, many companies. The reason it’s unscrupulous, is because there are NO companies (outside of the Studios, Mini-majors and a few others) that distribute directly to both the domestic and international markets. They either distribute ONLY domestically, and then farm your film out to someone else for foreign (and take a piece of your pie there too), or vice versa where they distribute internationally but then farm your film out to someone else for domestic. Not only does this eat into your revenues and profits, it makes it easier for an unscrupulous distributor to cross-collateralize — which is a fancy word that allows them to deduct any losses across the globe against any profits, thereby ensuring you’ll never see a dime. The only exception to not making Worldwide Rights deals is if it’s with a Studio or Mini-major, who is giving you a nice fat check as an advance for the World, and you’re satisfied with that advance. Because that advance is likely the only money you’ll see from a Studio or Mini-major. For more on why you should split up domestic and international rights when making deals, see my article here: www.Distribution.LA/sales.html.

2. **DO NOT MAKE DEALS THAT DON’T EXPIRE**

Once in a while I’ll hear about this happening, where some filmmaker has made a deal for their film that never expires. The word for this in a contract is “Perpetuity.” Never make this kind of deal. **NEVER.** Why in God’s name would you give up the rights to your movie forever? Are you being paid millions of dollars? If so, then maybe you would make such a deal. But absent any large amount of money paid upfront, don’t do it. Look, your movie or documentary is an asset. A real asset. While the actual worth of any film is subjective to a large degree, building what I refer to as “pedigree” increases the value of your film. Producers and Directors who understand this concept (one of the things I teach), build the perceived value of their films, which can then pay dividends for the rest of their lives. (And longer.) Given you have or are spending two years or longer to make your feature, understand that you’re creating a real asset that should not be given away forever.

The other thing to beware of? Those frequent clauses in contracts that automatically renew the agreement, if you don’t end them before the auto-renew date. I see this all the time in filmmakers’ contracts. **DON’T ALLOW THESE CLAUSES IN YOUR CONTRACTS.** Remove them, strike them from your deal. If you’re happy with the distributor at the end of the contract period, great, then at that time, you can mutually agree to renew that contract. Or mutually agree to negotiate a new contract. But don’t allow any contract to automatically renew. (Exceptions: Maybe you make a licensing deal with, say, HBO for 18 months. And in that contract, they could re-license for another 18 months if they so chose, by paying another licensing fee. Fine. But this is not an “in perpetuity” contract.)

3. **DO NOT GIVE FREE REIGN TO DISTRIBUTORS**

What does this mean, exactly? It means stop signing contracts that allow distributors to recoup unlimited expenses.

Like the mistakes above, I see this EVERY WEEK. Some filmmaker is thrilled to be getting a contract from some distributor, who has in the boilerplate contract that the distributor can recoup $50,000 or $100,000 or $200,000 in expenses. **WHAT??** Why does anyone agree to this crap? If you’ve made an independent movie, without stars, NO ONE is going to actually spend $50,000 or more on marketing & distributing your film. **NOT GONNA HAPPEN.** And if there are stars in your movie, okay, then maybe they will spend $50,000 — but that will depend upon the level of stars in your movie, the genre of your movie, and the actual caliber of the distributor. (i.e., A tiny distributor isn’t going to take the risk of
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spending a lot of money.)

Therefore, you must negotiate the boilerplate contract that you’ve received, and remove these high or unlimited recoupable expense clauses. You must get into the contract, what’s called “Expense Caps.” Every distributor in the world knows what these are, so when you start negotiating this, no one is going to say to you, “What are you talking about? I don’t understand.” But it’s your job as a film businessman or businesswoman, to know about this and negotiate it. Do not rely on your Producer Rep (if you’re using one, and I hope you’re not) to inform you, because they won’t. Do not rely on your attorney to inform you, because, frankly, many attorneys don’t feel it’s their job to educate you.

(This is not a slam against entertainment attorneys; just understand that they’re hired to review contracts and yes, you’re hiring them to help protect you. The really good ones will, and will help educate you along the contract negotiation journey. But there are many who are either lazy, or just don’t feel that education is part of their job.)

Here’s an extreme example about recoupable expenses that is absolutely mind-blowing. I recently saw a copy of a contract signed by a filmmaker, who not only agreed to a recoupable expense amount of $200,000 in his contract with a distributor, but agreed to a clause that said: IF the distributor does not achieve sales that equals this $200,000, the filmmaker is financially liable to PAY the difference to the distributor, up to this $200,000!!

I am not joking. Sound outrageous? Sound like only an idiot would agree to this? Well, I don’t think filmmakers are idiots, but they agree to stuff like this all the time. PLEASE STOP DOING THIS.

For more about Expense Caps, view my 3 minute video on this page: www.Distribution.LA/Film.html
(The video clip is the one titled “Don’t Sign A Deal Without This!”)

4.DO NOT MARRY A CROOK

Here’s what this means: Do your “due diligence.” Check out any distributor that you begin negotiating with, before you get “married” to them. Look them up. Don’t just be happy someone’s offered you a deal and allow the endorphins in your brain to cloud common sense. Research any distributor you might make a deal with – before you sign a contract with them – and make sure they’re on the up & up. You do this by looking at films they’ve handled in the past, and contacting those producers for appraisals. This is a professional courtesy most producers will do for other producers.

Do not bother asking the distributor for references as they’ll just give you the good ones. You want to do a random sampling of those films that have been with that distributor for at least one year. (You can determine that by researching the film’s release date on IMDB, IMDBpro or Amazon.com.) I recommend contacting the producers of 3 other films, as this will give you a good sampling on how the distributor has performed. Not just in terms of sales made, but of revenues actually received by those producers, receipt of timely reports, and so forth.

You MUST do this. Most Producers & Directors don’t. NOT doing this is playing Russian roulette with your movie. Unless you play Russian roulette with your life, WHY would you do it with your film?

5.DO NOT HOP INTO BED BECAUSE SOMEONE SAYS “I LOVE YOU”

This is similar to the one above, but here’s the issue: More than likely, you’ve spent at least two years or more making your movie or doc. You’re exhausted, you’re fatigued. You’d just like your journey to be over – or at least be on to the phase of hopefully receiving accolades. And herein lies the trap. Some distributor comes calling, praises you and says your film is brilliant. You then immediately fall in love with this distributor, throwing all caution to the wind. You begin dreaming of big paychecks, getting on to your next film, and a career as a Producer or Director. But you don’t really know anything about this distributor.

So... don’t immediately hop into bed and sign whatever is put in front of you. Do your due diligence – and as importantly – moderate your enthusiasm until such distributor checks out, and you get the contract fully negotiated so you’re not making a bad deal. I’ve lost count of the number of Producers & Directors who’ve made bad deals because they finally had a suitor. Seriously. I’m not making this stuff up. They were so happy to have a distributor court them and tell them they love their movie, that the rational part of their brain – the frontal lobe – stopped functioning and took a hike.

If you mess up and make a bad deal and get burned, the likelihood that you’ll ever make another movie again drops at least 80%. As it is, the number of filmmakers who move on to a second feature film is already staggeringly low. Bottom line: Do not screw up and make a bad deal. Educate yourself about what a good deal is, AND what a good contract is. They are not necessarily the SAME thing.

FINAL WORDS:

You need to build various things into any contract with any distributor, including a "safety valve," so that if things aren’t going well and the distributor is doing a poor job, you can get your rights back without having to lawyer up. Most filmmakers don’t do this, or even know to negotiate this. Thus my comment above about educating yourself. Unfortunately, too many don’t think they need to know any of this. And a number of filmmakers exhibit an arrogance that they don’t need to know. OR they think they already know the game when they haven’t a clue.

If you’re one of these filmmakers, don’t allow your arrogance to destroy you or the film you’ve put SO much heart, time and money into. EVERYONE: Treat your distribution journey with care and diligence. Yes, I know you love the creative part of filmmaking, and this is where you’d prefer to devote all your time. But unless you’re a hobbyist who’s making films for the fun of it, this is a business, and your thriving as a Producer or Director requires you to learn and embrace all that comes after making your movie or documentary.

Film Producer & Distribution Expert Jerome Courshon has assisted hundreds of filmmakers with achieving successful distribution through his classes, speaking engagements, and consultations. For more info about him or his acclaimed 3-Day Program, “THE SECRETS TO DISTRIBUTION: Get Your Movie Distributed Now!” visit: www.Distribution.LA
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Produced by:
I've just completed a series Taboo (Season 9) which aired on NGC [National Geographic Channel]. This is based on community’s rituals which are taboo for other communities and countries. I've shot around six films based on stories from India. Before that also was another series The Witch Doctor Will See You Now. This was also for NGC.

All these docs were shot on Sony HDW-900 HDCAM. Next month, I am off to Bangladesh for doc where we are zooming to HDW-900 with combination of PDW-700 and C-300.

HD PRODUCTION WORKFLOW
My doc The Girl Who Cries Blood, which was under Bodyshock series for Channel 4 and NGC, was shot with the Sony HDW-900 with Canon HJ-11 and Canon HJ-22 lens. We used Canon 5D II for a few shots. This was edited by an amazing editor friend of mine, Chris, on Avid.

FAVORITE HD CAMERAS
MY FAVORITE CAMERA IS THE SONY HDW-900 WITH A COMBINATION OF A WIDE AND A TELE LENS. I'VE WORKED WITH THIS CAMERA FOR EIGHT TO NINE YEARS. AND I LOVE IT. IT GIVES AMAZING RESULTS AND I'VE USED IT IN EXTREME CONDITIONS LIKE -20 DEGREE CELSIUS TO +50 DEGREE CELSIUS. FROM A LOW LIGHT SITUATION WHERE, WITH ANY OTHER CAMERA, IT WOULD BE IN BIG PROBLEM BUT WITH HDW-900, I KNEW WHAT FANTASTIC RESULTS THIS WILL GIVE ME.

OVER THE YEARS, I’VE RECEIVED OPPORTUNITY TO WORK IN DIFFERENT FIELDS WHICH RANGE FROM WILDLIFE DOCS, HARD-CORE DOCS, CORPORATE VIDEOS, VNR’S, FICTIONS AND THAT WITH RANGE, I’VE GOT OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH DIFFERENT DIRECTORS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD WHICH HELPS ME A LOT TO LEARN DIFFERENT APPROACHES AND STYLE.
I've worked in video production since I was 15 years old and now I'm 38. I started working on a production in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The owner of the production is my cousin, and I started as a camera assistant. And over time I became a cameraman, steadicam operator and cinematographer and "love my profession".

HD PROJECTS AND WORKFLOW

At the moment my newest work is doing a music video. I'm recording in HD 1920x1080 29.9 fps, edited on MAC PRO, and colorizing with DaVinci Resolve. At this moment we are finalizing the first clip of the six. I worked on a commercial shot with the Canon EOS C300 at a hotel in the city of Bonito, MS, Mato Grosso do Sul.

EVOLVING WORKFLOWS

I am from the U-Matic age and today we can say that technology is well advanced. We are thinking of buying a Canon EOS and C500 4K recording with a recorder AJA KI PRO. We're still thinking about entering the recording 4K, but we do not know yet what will be the demand upon the 4K.

www.reportercinematografico.blogspot.com
There is a short film I shot called, I Am Super. It’s a great little indie-style comedy/drama written and directed by Brandon Agan. We had very little money to shoot the 30-minute film. Because of cost and time, we shot everything on a 5D MKII, except one shot we used the 7D, and one fight scene setup, we shot with three 5D MKIIIs. The workflow is incredibly easy as well. My editor just took the files, backed them up, opened up Premiere Pro and started a DSLR 24 fps sequence, and it was ready to edit. Simple.

Evolving Workflows

HD has completely changed my world as a cinematographer. Before, it took much too long to process. Between sending stuff to the labs like I did in film school, to MiniDV tape, and now to CF cards. Just the processing time itself is so much faster, and continues to be. It’s quite wonderful knowing exactly what I’m getting before I even leave the set. Dailies are now moments away, not 24 hours.

In terms of production, HD has transformed the entire industry. With a digital format, I’m now able to obtain images with a $2,500 camera and a $1,000 lens that 10 years ago would have taken a $65,000 camera with another $75,000 lens. Plus the cost of film is no comparison to the cards we use now. The only issue is really the storage space, but we had to deal with that for film anyways. For me, depending on project of course, I will most likely choose an HD format over film unless it’s a feature. Commercials, shorts, music videos, documentaries, etc. are much easier delivered in an HD format and usually don’t get the time allowance that a feature can get.

Favorite HD Cameras

It really depends on the project. I always want to go for the best so I’m always thinking about using the EPICs. And now that RED has released the DRAGON, I’m very excited to try it out. A lot less light will be needed to create the image you’re looking for. But not everything I shoot can afford the REDs or have the time to make the setups with the REDs. In those situations, I’m going to shoot on the 5D MKIII. Nothing beats it in low light and the portability of the body just makes it the perfect run-and-gun camera. And really for post work, if you have to turn it around quickly, you have to use the Canons. So it does depend on the project but I will always carry my DSLR with me, even as a C camera.

HD Projects

I’m full-time freelance. I no longer do photography but am really busy working as a cinematographer. Currently, music videos are a huge part of my work. I am also starting a 3-day shoot on a short film called, That Which Falls Apart directed by a good friend of mine, Leighton Silvestro. The following few weekends after that I’m shooting a short film with an up-and-coming director Lucas Omar called, Show and Tell. And for both of those films and for other upcoming projects I will be shooting HD and 5K.

Most everything I am shooting is on a Canon 5D Mark III, but I’m also hooked up with a production company that has two RED EPICs. So I’m getting some really great experience on some great high quality cameras while I’m shooting my other stuff on the side.

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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Gary Dunkel
Independent Filmmaker

HD WORKFLOW
OKAY SO BACK IN THE DAY (A FEW MONTHS AGO) WHEN I USED FINAL CUT PRO 7, I WOULD HAVE TO CONVERT ALL OF THE FOOTAGE TO THE CODEC APPLE PRO RES 422 USING A PROGRAM CALLED MPEG STREAMCLIP FIRST IN ORDER TO MAKE THE FOOTAGE MORE EDIT FRIENDLY. BY DOING THAT THERE’S LESS RENDERING TIME. HOWEVER, SINCE UPGRAADING TO FINAL CUT PRO X, I NO LONGER NEED TO CONVERT THE FOOTAGE. ALL OF THE RENDERING IS DONE IN THE BACKGROUND. IT’S GREAT! NOW I JUST IMPORT ALL OF MY HD FOOTAGE INTO FINAL CUT PRO X, AND I CAN BEGIN EDITING RIGHT AWAY. IT DEFINITELY SAVES YOU A LOT OF TIME. FINAL CUT PRO X GOT SOME BAD REVIEWS SAYING IT’S TOO MUCH LIKE IMOVIE AND IT KIND OF IS. I’LL ADMIT WHEN I FIRST STARTED USING IT, I WAS A BIT THROWN OFF BECAUSE I WAS SO USED TO FINAL CUT PRO 7. AFTER A FEW DAYS OF PLAYING AROUND WITH IT, I LOVE IT.

HD PROJECTS
Currently, I have a few comedic sketches that I am writing with my co-writer Jordan Wapner, which we plan to shoot in HD and upload to YouTube and FunnyOrDie. We are also writing several spec scripts including a 30-minute sitcom pilot, an hour-long drama pilot, and a feature film. We are both moving out to Los Angeles as well in October.

TIPS AND TECH
Shoot to Post Workflow
1. When shooting HD video on an HDSLR make sure that you use a 95MB/s SD card and nothing less. Any card that is slower might run into problems where it stops recording while shooting. The faster cards allow the data to write faster while shooting and they don’t stop recording.

FAVORITE HD CAMERAS
Currently I’m shooting on a Canon Rebel T2i and I love it. I have also shot with the 5D and 7D, and they are both excellent cameras as well. HDSLRs are great because they’re very lightweight and portable. Sometimes I do a lot of guerilla type shoots and these are fantastic for that. With the right lens they put out amazing footage that I believe can rival any film camera.

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CCW brings together the most inspired minds in media and entertainment production, post and distribution. Interact with the latest products and technological innovations firsthand and learn from industry experts. Discover, define, and deliver your vision with CCW. Get your complimentary pass.


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WORKSHOP: Lighting For Mood with Peter Stein, ASC
DATE & TIME: Saturday, September 21, 1pm-5pm
VENUE: StudentFilmmakers.com Workshop Studio
COST: $175

- Real-world applications for using small lighting units including softlights, fresnel (lensed) lights and open face lights; three point lighting techniques.
- Hard light and soft light: the benefits and problems of each type, and how to apply techniques during different shooting scenarios.
- How to change a hard light into a softlight and apply techniques for different needs.
- How and when to use fresnel lights and open face lights.
- How to cut lights with barndoors, flags and nets.
- Where to place the key light to help achieve the desired look.
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- How to make a background more interesting.
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After completion, participants receive a Certificate of Completion.

WORKSHOP: Screen Direction, Coverage and Shot Listing with Peter Stein, ASC
DATE & TIME: Saturday, October 19, 1pm-5pm
VENUE: StudentFilmmakers.com Workshop Studio
COST: $175

- The essential concepts and knowledge in shooting narrative films.
- Coverage; and different types of shots necessary for cutting a scene.
- Breakdowns of scenes and their shots from selected films.
- Necessary elements that make shots cut together seamlessly. How to make all the different shots within a scene "match": camera placement and screen direction, the 180 degree rule, matching sizes, matching eyelines, and matching angles.
- How to "cheat in coverage" will be demonstrated.
- Classic tricks cinematographers use to make a shot more "powerful."
- We will compose shots with the use of a DSLR camera and studio monitor.
- We will collaboratively construct a shot list and storyboard from a shocking script. Then, we will construct a shot list and storyboard for the same scene - in a typical comedy, murder mystery and horror film.

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As a Director of Photography one should always go into a lighting set-up with a firm plan in mind, but be ready to throw it out the window if necessary. It is often the innumerable chance occurrences that happen as the lighting progresses that are the stuff that brilliance is made up of.

~ Peter Stein, ASC

StudentFilmmakers.com has advanced my knowledge as a cinematographer through both their information-rich website and hands-on workshops in Manhattan, New York, with industry leaders and experts.

~Andy Levison, Steadicam Operator

The lighting workshop with Peter Stein, ASC was great because, I have been working in TV and film production for over 10 years, and Peter taught some tricks that I will definitely use to make my projects have a more polished look. Peter Stein, ASC knows how to control light no matter what the situation is.

~Will Fonseca, Director

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