



Credit: Brent J Craig

What films or other works of art have made the biggest impression on you?

Apart from some obvious films from my generation such as *Apocalypse Now* and *Blade Runner*, there is one strange little psychedelic film from the '60s that really had the biggest impact in terms of my chosen career path. When I was a kid, I saw the camp classic *Barbarella*. It made my jaw drop. Until then, I had thought that the purpose of cinematography was to make things look as real as possible. Everything about this movie from a visual standpoint was pure artifice, and watching it was like being in a dream state. It was like Kool-Aid for my eyes.

How did you get started in the business?

I grew up in Sudbury and learned about filming when I discovered my grandfathers' double 8 Yashica turret camera in a closet and learned to use it by trial and error. It was a long process as I had to bring the developed reels to Woolworths and wait a week for it to come back from Palo Alto, California, to learn from my mistakes. I fell in love with it and used it to make a demo for York University, where after four years I earned a 12-month film apprenticeship award from the Academy of Canadian Cinema. That helped me get onto several big-budget feature movie sets right away as a trainee in the camera dept.

Who have been your mentors or teachers?

Antonin Lhotsky csc taught me cinematography at York and made a huge impression on me. He was the best teacher I ever had. When I got into the real world, I worked at Black Walk productions as a focus puller with Chris Soos csc, who

was gaffing at the time. He quickly blossomed into an amazing shooter, and I'm glad to call him a mentor. Finally, Jeremy Benning csc, whom I once mentored as a Steadicam op many years ago, is now teaching me a lot about modern cinematography.

What cinematographers inspire you?

Vittorio Storaro ASC, AIC for his artistry, Benoît Debie for his inventiveness, Emmanuel Lubezki ASC, AMC for his bravery, Jordan Cronenweth for his vision, Yves Bélanger CSC for his realism, Bill Pope ASC for his mastery.

Name some of your professional highlights.

When I was an assistant, I got to travel to Arizona and Texas with The Tragically Hip for their video "Gift Shop," directed by Eric Yealland and shot by Sean Valentini csc. A few years later, I was fortunate enough to be director of photography on "It Can't be Nashville Every Night," shot in their personal studio space. It felt like a reunion and was a very special experience. More recently, I'm very proud to have been part of the filming of the 360-degree *HORIZON* project for Canada's 150th birthday (*Editor's note: see February 2017 issue*).

What is one of your most memorable moments on set?

I was hired to film a spot for a mutual fund company in Kenya that consisted of a two-week safari filming lions hunting wildebeest. From the moment I was dropped off by Cessna on a dirt airstrip in the middle of the Masai Mara to the moment I was paid with a wad of cash in my tent and used it to continue my adventure in Zanzibar, it was the most memorable experi-

ence of my life. It felt like I had lived inside a Rudyard Kipling novel and getting back on the plane to go home, I was never more sure that I had chosen the right career path.

What do you like best about what you do?

Travel, and the fact that no matter where in the world you go, you will automatically have a good blueprint of what each person in the crew is going to be like depending on what position they occupy. It's remarkable.

What do you like least about what you do?

The long hours and the inherent danger involved when it comes to driving. The toll it can have on relationships.

What do you think has been the greatest invention (related to your craft)?

The whole digital revolution has re-written the rules of how we shoot. The single biggest advancement to me as a cinematographer currently is the development of ultra light sensitive sensors. If cinematographers are truly masters of light, we are now about to enter new and uncharted territories as ASA ratings begin to hit five and six digits. So incredible.

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