



DP Jorge Diaz-Amador



DP Bob Johnson

Despite the abundance of potential film work in Hawaii, Johnson says people who commit to creating programs locally, instead of sitting back to wait for projects to come to them, keep the market going. Johnson is able to fortify his long-format work with commercials for clients like Kentucky Fried Chicken and Kaiser Permanente.

And although he enjoys shooting film, Johnson is beginning to embrace a local trend toward originating in HD because of the immediate ability to see results in the field.

WORK FLOWS IN THE WINDY CITY

"I'm in a unique position because I'm one of the only freelancers in the city who has steady employment," jokes Chicago-based video DP Dave Weaver. His newsmagazine experience has landed him regular jobs for city agencies. From shows about the Chicago Police Department to a mini-series from the Chicago Housing Authority called *A Better Place*, Weaver's work has been filling up Chicago municipal channel airwaves for several years.

Weaver began shooting for a small cable news program in 1986 and then worked his way through news departments before purchasing a Sony D600 Betacam SP camera and going freelance fulltime. His business has since expanded to include a fully-equipped production truck.

"I'm a newsie," Weaver confesses. "I love news and am always trying to get onto exciting stories." Though he finds the network news world is difficult to break into as a freelancer, Weaver has managed to shoot a few recent stories for CBS and Fox News Channel. In 1999 he bought a second camera and began to hire other freelancers to keep up with the demand for his services; he recorded at least 25 double-bookings in 2002.

"I enjoy that every day is different," Weaver says about his work. "I'm at the point in my career when I have every kind of gear to handle any kind of curve balls that come my

way." By keeping his operation small and at-the-ready, Weaver plans to continue capturing Chicago stories as long as they're happening.

THE JOB STARTS IN PRE-PRO

"I'm getting to do things that people don't get to do on a daily basis," says Atlanta-based DP Marc Dobiecki. "That's one of the most fascinating things about this business: You get to experience a lot of elements in life you wouldn't have the opportunity to otherwise."

Although he must remain flexible in medium and format, most of Dobiecki's work is shooting various promos on film. One such project had Dobiecki traveling worldwide to produce 36 10-second promos for CNN International. Since much of the footage was time-lapse, Dobiecki has since been catapulted into more time-lapse, motion-control and effects projects. The Weather Channel hired him to create its *Evening Edition* open, and he recently shot time-lapse footage for MSNBC's *Roll Across America* campaign.

But shooting footage for later manipulation has its challenges. "It used to be that if you knew the camera well, that was good enough," Dobiecki explains. "Now the more you know about the post end, the more you can offer the client."

Today's DPs must also be masters of communication and leadership. "By and large, most of us don't get flown first class to the set and have our assistants running around us," he says. So to make sure clients get the end product they expect, Dobiecki stresses as much pre-production discussion as possible. He says matching the creative expectations with the budget is often difficult, but most of the time potential problems can be solved by taking the time to discuss options.

To keep his work looking fresh, Dobiecki sometimes finds himself asking clients to try new looks or approaches. "I'll say, 'Am I making you nervous?' And if I am, that's my job. If I'm not pushing clients a little bit and stretching their vision, I'm not doing my job."

PUSHING THE POSSIBILITIES IN MIAMI

The combination of his education at University of Miami film school and his training in equipment repair at rental houses has made Jorge Diaz-Amador an expert on the possibilities of film cameras. Having bought an Arriflex SR11 Super 16mm camera, Diaz-Amador fell in love with the Super format. Even for 35mm work, Diaz-Amador encourages clients to allow him to expose perf-to-perf. Much of his work gets transferred to video, so "since we don't need that room for a soundtrack, the film's there, why not expose all of it?" he asks.

Diaz-Amador knows "it's not a big deal to switch cameras into the Super format" and has found that Miami transfer houses have stopped charging extra for the gate in the past few years. The additional image-width costs the same and allows wiggle-room to change the framing in post if needed.

Along with excellent lenses, what really excites Diaz-Amador is new film-stock technology. "Every time they come out with a new film, I like to say that I get a new camera," he remarks. For a recent short film, *The Girl Next Door*, directed by Carolyn SeRine, Diaz-Amador was able to test Kodak's new Vision II, a 500 high-speed film with very little grain. "You don't really need all that much lighting," he says, "so it opens up some creative possibilities to do things and not necessarily put yourself into debt."

After the heavy indie activity in the mid-1990s dropped off, Diaz-Amador found himself working on more commercials, promos and music videos. But independent feature work is picking up again with the introduction of improved film stocks. Diaz-Amador, whose latest feature project was Michael Selig's *Heavy Southern Nights*, enjoys the opportunity in independent film to match angles and work with lighting to tell a story. "It was nice to get back to that," he says. "My roots have always been in dramatic film." ■