

1.) Hi Ollie, and a hearty welcome to Vents Magazine! How have you been during these strange and tumultuous times?

Thanks for having me! Obviously it's a worrying period for everyone right now, but on the up side, having this time with the family has been great, as I normally spend a lot of time away from home. It's a really tough industry to get any sort of work/life balance in. That said our two little boys (age one and three) keep us on our toes, and I'm definitely ready to go back to work now!

2.) Congratulations on your recent work on season two of the Amazon Prime show, Hanna. What was your reaction being thrown headfirst into this wonderful and wonky world?

Thank you. I loved it, I think it's a really unique show. It is just that, a wonderful wonky world. The team behind the show are incredibly welcoming and nurturing. Tom Coan the Exec, is the driving force, and the Series Producer Laura Hastings-Smith is just brilliant. Both are very switched on visually, (Laura produced Steve McQueens Hunger and Justin Kurzels Macbeth), so you know that they are expecting a level of visual sophistication, and that's a great challenge for a Dp. We shot for 10 weeks in London, Wales, Dunkirk, and Paris, and then finished with 2 months in Barcelona. It was pretty busy, but we had an endlessly good humoured cast and crew to keep us going.

3.) For the uninitiated who may not be familiar with Hanna, how would you describe the show to them?

So Hanna is a really unique combination of a coming-of-age drama and pan European thriller. It's a lot of fun to make and (hopefully) to watch. It's about an orphaned girl (Hanna), who is rescued from a shadowy American military programme in Eastern Europe. Having been raised off grid in the safety of a forest by her father, she sets off to find out who she really is, whilst avoiding the clutches of the CIA. The second Season expands our world, and introduces us to a number of other orphaned young women being trained by the same morally dubious military programme.

4.) Prior to coming onboard as DP, did you familiarize yourself with both the film version of Hanna along with the first season?

I was already familiar with, and a big fan of, Joe Wright's 2011 film. It's a great movie but very different from the first Season of the TV show. Like most people I'd seen the advert they played during the Super Bowl for Season 1 and then checked it out. It certainly didn't disappoint.

5.) Season one of Hanna really established a look to this world. Did you attempt to capture that first season spirit with your camera work while also attempting to bring new things to the look of the show?

We absolutely attempted to capture the tone and visual spirit of the first Season, and in particular Dp Dana Gonzales work in Episode One. Visually, it's a really sophisticated hour of drama with subtle, elegant cinematography. (Dana is an ongoing inspiration - check out his brilliant work on all 4 series of Fargo). The look had to evolve, but we wanted to bring the sensitivity of Dana and Sarah's imagery into this new world of ours. Whilst Season 1 had a fairy tale or fable like quality, Series 2 is very much a coming of age story with mother / daughter relationships at its core. Although it's still part action thriller, there's a real vulnerability to it. The cinematography had to reflect that, and needed to be sympathetic to the emotional state of the 'recruits' (the orphaned young women in the training programme). As such we focused on soft naturalistic lighting and kept the camera close and observational to really get into the cast's heads.

6.) You shot five episodes of the second season: Tacitus, The List, To the Meadows, The Trial and Safe. Out of these five, do you have a particular favorite?

I think the last episode, The List, would be my favourite. Last Eps are great anyway because you get the big denouement, and the resolution of the individual journeys. We had action sequences (gun fights in a Hotel and a beautiful Villa up in the hills), stunt sequences (an agent being thrown off a building and Hanna being hit by a car) and then this great change of pace with the resolution of Clara's story, when a lovely sense of melancholy creeps in at the end of the episode. The last 2 Eps were shot in beautiful Barcelona, with my camera crew from the UK joining the brilliant local crew (led by Gaffer Jose Luis Rodriguez and Grip Javi Gonzalez Leonardo). Personally and professionally it was just a wonderful experience, we made friends for life, rode motorised scooters and ate a lot of good food.

7.) Your directors on these five episodes were Eva Husson and David Farr. What was it like working with these two very talented directors?

Eva Husson and David Farr were great to work with but couldn't have been more different, it's fascinating to see how Directors have such individual processes. Eva really feels the emotion and is led by it on set. David, as the writer, knows exactly what he needs long before he gets to set and is very well organised. John Hembrough, our Camera Operator deserves a mention here as he's the third point of the triangle. He brings a wonderfully supportive energy to the set and is excellent at interpreting a Director's needs. I should also say that there were actually 3 very talented Directors involved in the series. Whilst we were prepping for the last block in Barcelona, Uglia Hauksdottir was directing the second block in the UK (shot by Dp Stephen Murphy).

8.) Hanna features an insanely talented ensemble of actors such as Esme Creed-Miles, Dermot Mulroney, Mireille Enos and Luis Angulo. How did it feel for you to come to set every day and get to play with this group of thespians?

Esme, Mireille and Dermot are all class acts, and it's a pleasure to be around them and watch them work. They are all very gracious and real team players. Dermot is very down to earth - as he approaches the Villa for the shoot out in Ep 8 he's actually wearing my battered old Reebok trainers (out of shot) with his suit, as he kept slipping in his costume shoes. The newer cast members were the real surprise though, Aine Rose Daly, Gianna Kiehl, Cherrelle Skeete, and Yasmin Monet Prince are all wonderful. Yasmin Monet Prince's performance as Clara is heartbreaking, I can't wait to see what she does next.

9.) Will there be a third season of Hanna and will you be returning as DP for it?

Hanna Season 3 has been confirmed, and I couldn't be happier for both Exec Tom Coan and Writer/Creator David Farr, both absolute gentlemen who work incredibly hard on all aspects of the show. I won't be returning and I think that's important. A show like Hanna needs to keep evolving. I'll look on enviously to see where the next series takes them!

10.) What led you to want to become a cinematographer?

When I was 6 or 7 I watched North by NorthWest with my grandfather and was just blown away by the imagery - the low flying crop-duster pursuing Cary Grant through the fields, and the wifes of Mount Rushmore really stuck in my mind. Before I understood what cinematography was I was hooked on it. I went on to study Art, and intended to follow that path, but became frustrated by the solitary nature of it. In my teens I was an avid viewer of Barry Norman(!) and was discovering all the early classics of Scorsese and Coppolla, and so cinematography just seemed a natural step. I started assisting and worked my way up through the camera department, all the while shooting low budget music videos on weekends. This went on for years (and years) until I was eventually shooting more than I was assisting.

11.) Are there any cinematographers that have inspired you such as Roger Deakins, Bobby Bukowski or Conrad Hall?

So many! Conrad Hall was a wonderful Cinematographer - I could watch Cool Hand Luke and Butch Cassidy on repeat. I'm just reading a great book on Darius Khondji, he probably wouldn't agree but he's a true artist. He has such an interesting and varied body of work from Delicatessen to Uncut Gems, via Seven and Amour. He's definitely an inspiration.

12.) A number of well-regarded directors have also been noted DP's such as Freddie Francis, Jan de Bont and Jausz Kaminski. Have you ever thought about directing?

I don't think I could direct - I'd spend too much time obsessing over the images and hanging out with the camera crew! Projects last so much longer for the Director, and I really enjoy the variety of work, and length of projects that being a Dp offers.

13.) I have your first listed DP work as being the 2007 short film, Cat's Smack. Any memories of this first shoot?

So Cat's Smack was a short directed by my pal Joon Goh that we shot in this beautiful chapel in Hackney in East London. We didn't have any money but managed to blag a 7.5 tonne truck of lights and grip gear, and persuade our mates to crew it. It's such an exciting time in your career, anything seems possible and you have that endless energy. Joon has since moved back to Malaysia and is doing really well directing out there. He's got a couple of films in the pipeline.

14.) What's coming up for you in the future? Can you give us any hints?

Nothing to report as yet! I'm very keen to do a film next, but there is so much good television being made we'll see.

15.) Going forward in these uncertain times, how do you think the entertainment industry will rise to the challenge of responding to the global pandemic?

Obviously it's going to take some time for the Industry to adapt. Shooting schedules may have to expand to allow for safe practices, and foreign travel may be limited for a while. Insurance though may be the biggest hurdle. Some of the larger streaming services may be able to look after themselves, but they will be in the minority. If a key member of cast or crew becomes ill and you have to stand down for a couple of weeks the cost is astronomical for an insurer. You'd hope that the government, recognising the positive impact that the film and television industry has on the UK economy, would underwrite insurance policies for a while. Long term though I hope this period has shown how important the arts are, and how much we all rely on them.

16.) Final (Silly) Question: Better film featuring a cinematographer as a main or supporting character: Living In Oblivion (featuring your Hanna star, Dermot Mulroney as the DP) or Ed Wood (featuring Norman Alden as "Cameraman Bill")?

You know what, the one regret I take from this job is that I didn't remember Dermot played 'Wolf' the Dp in Living In Oblivion until it was too late. One of the crew mentioned it as he drove away on his last day, and we cursed ourselves for not remembering. He's such a fun guy that I don't doubt he would have regaled us with stories of shooting the film, and he may even have revisited the character for us?! So it has to be 'Living In Oblivion' for me.





**LILLIE
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