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STORARO AND HIS DIRECTORS





Ollie Downey (▲) and Stephen Murphy, BSC, ISC (▶▼) share cinematographer duties on *Hanna*.



Phantoms. On the [long-format] specials, the cameras take a phenomenal pounding, often running for days on terrible roads in dust, extreme heat/cold and sudden downpours. The Amira has been very reliable.

“On a special, we tend to have four units — A, B and C cameras [all Amiras] and a tracking-car unit [that uses Minis]. Each [unit comprises] a camera operator, AC and sound recordist, and the tracking car [includes] an operator, head technician and professional driver. Additionally, we have a dedicated, three-person mini-cam team that handles all the in-car recording of the hosts. They are the heroes of our crew, as they work in the worst conditions and are constantly maintaining the whole unit’s equipment! We also always bring in at least 10 to 15 local production crewmembers; we could never complete the journeys without their knowledge and support.

“We shoot in all weather and conditions and often camp in tents at night, and that can’t help but influence the way we emotionally interpret and frame these journeys. A special might be 15 days of continuous filming every day for 12 to 14 hours while on the move. Everyone on the cast and crew goes through the emotional ringer on those trips, and I think that comes across on camera.

“One of the show’s great qualities is our trio’s performance when something spontaneous happens with a car or the environment, and

zoom lenses have been our way of keeping up with them at these moments. We have a package of Canon zooms [17-120mm, 30-300mm and 50-1,000mm] and an 11-16mm Tokina modified by Duclos, along with a sweet TLS 80-200mm Morpheus.

“For locations, we carry a very small lighting package of bi-color LED panel lights and practicals. We will often just try to augment and blend with what we find on location or use the practicals that our [hosts] have installed on their cars or torches they carry with them to light a scene. We also crank the ISO on the cameras if need be, as it’s better to have a crucial story moment on camera, even if it’s a little noisy, than to not have it at all.

“For the ‘beauty’ or ‘power’ test films, we go to the other extreme. These will usually feature a static sequence of the car, wherein we take the hero vehicles into a bespoke car studio and do a full beauty-lighting setup on them. We aim for a commercial-level look on these sequences.

“The long-format specials are all about capturing the essence and feel of a particular country and what

it’s like to take on a challenging journey in a car that might not make it! For Colombia, for example, we went with a slightly warmer grade to draw out the heat and lushness of the environment. In Mongolia, the look was all about the epic scale of the country and the diverse environments within it; the HDR grade on that episode really sings. I think that episode captured everything a *Grand Tour* special should be: a visually ambitious journey [with] a sprinkling of lunacy and the camaraderie of friends.”

Ollie Downey and Stephen Murphy, BSC, ISC
Hanna
Amazon Studios

Part high-concept thriller, part coming-of-age drama, the series follows an extraordinary teenager as she tries to unearth the truth behind who she is.

Downey: “The first season is kind of a fairytale: the girl coming out of the forest and the wicked stepmother. The second season is a coming-of-age story addressing mother-daughter relationships. [Episode director] Eva Husson comes from French independent features, [and] she felt the second season, because of the subject matter, should be naturalistic rather than stylized. So those tropes we often see in TV drama — shafts of light, atmosphere, [uncorrected] fluorescent tubes — were a no-no. She wanted the visuals to be very subtle. →

Hanna still by Christopher Raphael, courtesy of Amazon Studios.



Cinematographer Benjamin Echazarreta (▼, at center) lends a whimsical tone to the comedy series *Los Espookys*.



“We shot at a variety of international locations. People used to do four-week blocks, but now a 10-week block is pretty normal. Our first block was London, North Wales, Paris and Dunkirk. The third block was a five-week shoot in Barcelona. [Writer/episode director] David Farr directed the third block, and Barcelona is his favorite city — he knows it like the back of his hand. He was keen to show all the beautiful spots he knew. For four weeks, we were doing two locations a day.

“We had a wonderful team. Gaffer José Luis Rodríguez and grips Javi González Leonardo and Andy Bailey were central to us getting through the third block.”

Murphy: “Also invaluable on Block 2 were camera/Steadicam operator Roger Tooley, camera assistants Alice Canty and Kerry Arthur, and gaffer Kevin Heatherington.

“You maintain a visual consistency across blocks through working on the same locations with the same production designer and the same costume designer, so what you’re putting in front of the lens is consistent. We used slightly warmer skin tones and slightly more cyan shadows. That worked for us because Esme [Creed-Miles] has very beautiful blue eyes. The production design, combined with our LUT, helped to separate the eye color from the skin tones.

“We shot with Alexa Minis and Panavision PVintage lenses. I also had Panavision modify an 11:1 Primo zoom so it would cover the open gate of the Mini. We were shooting everything for a 2:1 crop. I used some low-contrast filters, but sparingly, because the PVintage lenses are quite low-contrast on their own.

“We graded with Asa [Shoul] at De Lane Lea. He helped design the LUT Ollie used in Block 1. I was able to go in during prep and spend some time seeing how that LUT reacted to certain colors. We graded in HDR, and then Asa would do a very quick grade in SDR. By and large, we had to do very little work to the SDR version.

“I thought HDR was absolutely fantastic — I was converted within 20 minutes of being in the room! The blacks look like a nice, first-generation ENR print.”

Benjamin Echazarreta
Los Espookys
HBO

This primarily Spanish-language comedy follows a group of friends who turn their love for horror into a peculiar business in a dreamy Latin American country.

“The show is filmed in and around Santiago, Chile, where the strange and eerie are a part of every-

day life. I am Chilean, and I often film in South America, but I’ve also filmed in Asia and Europe. In my experience, the methods of filming are not so different among the different countries.

“The look is rooted in the South American queer experience and Latin telenovelas, with their baroque color aesthetics. I studied each sequence with art director Jorge Zambrano to define an exuberant palette of saturated colors and create intentionally unreal and absurd environments.

“I used two [Arri] Alexa Minis with Cooke S5/i lenses, filming in the 16:9 aspect ratio and capturing 3.4K Arriraw Open Gate. We had to shoot quite fast, so having sensitive lenses allowed us to reduce the number of lights, and the Cookes have a beautiful contrast that gave us clean, saturated colors.

“The difference between filming for television and filming for cinema is the speed of the work. On a series, you have to be efficient, anticipate each set, and meet the daily goals of the shooting plan. This requires a significant human deployment and good communication among all departments. We try to maintain a less invasive crew so it’s easy to move around with the camera and allow multiple cameras to shoot at once with only small adjustments between each shot.”