

# The Camera Department

Contributed by John Waterford

The top film productions in the world have a very talented crew of cameramen to make sure that one of the most vital cogs in film work smoothly and properly, ever wonder who these people are and how they manage their section of the workload. Take a look at a brief overview of the camera department in this article.

The camera department is lead by the Director of Photography. The DOP is also known as a cinematographer and is responsible for turning the Directors visual intent into reality. He does this by overseeing the lighting and the camera departments, coordinating them to properly present the desired look on film. His relationship with the Director varies depending on the personalities, sometimes the DOP has more leeway to manage the scene, and other times the Director micro-manages the DOP. In the camera department, there are Camera Operators, First Assistant Cameraman (A.C.), Second A.C., and sometimes a Loader and a Camera Production Assistant. The DOP often acts as a Camera Operator as well, trusting only his eyes to capture the scene as the Director desires. The Camera Operator's skills include the ability to frame scenes, and the knowhow to use various camera components including lenses, filters, and other camera equipment to best portray any given scene. Although that person is called the Camera Operator, he is not the only one who will be operating the camera for a shot. There is also the First Assistant Cameraman there acting as a focus puller. His job is exactly that, to pull focus for each scene. You will notice this person whipping out his measuring tape and figuring out the distance to the actor in each section of the scene, or wherever he will be focusing. Once they begin rolling he will be controlling the focus on the camera, either by physically turning the focus knob or using a remote unit if the camera is on a crane or such. When the film camera uses up the roll of film that is on it, he is then responsible for changing out rolls as quickly and skillfully as possible. This is a pretty intense moment for the First A.C. as production is usually waiting for him to move on. You will see the Second Assistant Cameraman helping him with this by grabbing the used roll, and handing him another. He will also usually be holding a flashlight towards the camera to make sure the First A.C. can see everything. This leads us to our next camera person, the Second A.C.. This person most noticeably is the guy who claps the clapper board in front of the camera and says "camera (A) mark",. This person's duties include keeping track of how many feet of film the camera has on any particular roll, and writing down specific data about each take, including how many feet were used for it, the lens used for it, any filters used for it and the scene that was exposed on it. He is also the "best boy" of the camera department, meaning he is responsible to know where all equipment is at all times and keeping things orderly and organized. Moving along, there is also usually the need for a Loader. The loader is responsible for making sure there are plenty of rolls available at a moment's notice to be brought to set and used. He is also responsible for taking the used rolls and removing them from the magazines and inserting them into cans. Seeing as how in most productions lots of film is being used each day, he is usually busy as hell as there is a lot of workload. Included in the camera department but having nothing to do with the physical filming is the Still Photographer. His duties are to capture high quality stills during the shoot for promotional purposes. He usually is lurking around during shots snapping away with his camera snugly tucked into a sound blimp box. This interesting device keeps the action of the camera nearly silent so that it does not interfere with the sound being recorded. © SoundBlimp.com