

## CINEMATOGRAPHY

Cinematography is the use of the camera to record on film the scenes of the screenplay for a movie production. The work of the cinematographer involves the use of correct lighting and composition to create the images that will bring out the significance of a scene as visualized by the film director.

The elements of cinematography are: lighting, which helps to create drama, mystery, suspense, and humor; composition or the arrangement of people and objects within the frame; and movement, which includes the mobility of the camera to change a vantage point in an instant.

Cinematographers work directly with the production crew or shooting unit in the setup of a particular scene. They scrutinize the set together with the director and instruct the camera operator where to position the Mitchell or Arriflex. They tell the gaffer where to place the lights and how to adjust the lighting, run an exposure meter over the faces of the actors, and peer through the contrast filter to check the relationship between light and shadow. When everything is set up,

they advise the director who then steps up to the camera to approve its setup shot. On the director's signal or call for "Roll Camera . . . Action . . .!" the camera starts grinding, the actors perform until the director yells, "Cut!"

From "photographer" and "cameraman" the title has evolved into "cinematographer." The early Filipino director/producers like Jose Nepomuceno and Jose Domingo Badilla were first of all highly competent professional photographers. Lighting then was basic illumination, merely to allow the camera to record images on film. But these pioneer filmmakers knew that cinematography was more than that. They knew the magic of the camera and lighting devices and followed their products to the laboratory, nursing each picture up to the projection room where it told its story on screen. Later, they learned to improvise to find solutions to problems of illumination and lack of

**CAMERA CREW.** Cinematographers in major studios were honed in their craft by veteran directors like Gregorio Fernandez, here shown with his camera crew on the set of LVN's *Luksang Tagumpay*, 1956. (LVN Film Archives)





proper lighting equipment. They made use of available lighting, using even automobile headlights in place of klieg lights. It became increasingly necessary to compensate for the adverse effects of strong lights which could melt a hairpin on a star's coiffure.

Since there has never been a school for cinematography in the country, most practitioners learned their craft through training and experience. They start out with the camera crew, work their way up as electricians and gaffers, finally become camera operators or find themselves promoted as assistant or full-fledged camera operator.

Higino Fallorina, Maria Clara award winner for *Baguio Cadets*, 1950, and *Roberta*, 1951, started at Philippine Films in 1935 as a still photographer. A year later he became assistant cameraman and in 1937, full-fledged cameraman with *Gamu-gamong Naging Lawin* (The Moth that Became a Hawk).

Tommy Marcelino first worked in the photo department of the *Philippines Free Press* before becoming assistant cameraman for his father, Ricardo Marcelino, at Premiere Productions. Both father and son are FAMAS awardees, the elder Ricardo for the Gerardo de Leon film, *Huwag Mo Akong Limutin* (Never Forget Me), 1960, and the younger Tommy for *Paltik* (Crude Gun), 1955.

Remigio Young, FAMAS awardee for *Luksang Tagumpay* (Dark Victory), 1956, started in pictures with Jose Nepomuceno as camera crew member. After he became cameraman, he worked with various studios and established his own company for technical services in 1940. He is credited with the camera tricks in the fantasy film, *Ibong Adarna* (The Adarna Bird), 1941, and for Rosa del Rosario's flight over the Bureau of Posts as the wonder woman, *Darna*, in the 1951 film by Fernando Poe Sr's Royal Productions.

For years, particularly during the transitional 1950s and 1960s, it was assumed that no intimate film could be made in color. Monochrome was the medium of the "art film," of neorealism, of the New Wave and film masters from Bergman to Kurosawa. Black-and-white was the medium of unities and contrasts: the intensity of shadows, patterns of light and darkness, and the varying rough textures of a brightly illuminated or dimly lit scene. Color was used only in dream sequences and big production numbers in musicals where it added to the spectacle.

The first attempts of the major studios to shift to color in full-length films are seen in LVN's *Batalyon Trece* (13th Battalion), 1949; Premiere's *Ang Lumang Bahay Sa Gulod* (The Old House on the Hill), 1949;



**TWO BY DE LEON.** An ace cinematographer before he became a movie director, de Leon guides his camera crew on a dolly for this tunnel scene from LVN's *Kakabakaba Ka Ba?*, 1980, opposite page. Cinematographer Rody Lacap received an Urian for his unique camera techniques in Bancom Audiovisions' *Kisapmata*, 1981, left. (Cesar Hemando Collection)

and Sampaguita's *The Big Broadcast*, 1962. The shift to color called for drastic changes in filming and cinematographers had to subject themselves to a different orientation. During the early years of color production, the costume movie became very popular. The choice of material increased the cost of production, emphasized costume and set design. LVN played a leading role in the production of such films as *Prinsipe Amante* (Prince Amante), 1950; *Rodrigo de Villa*, 1952; *Dagohoy*, 1953; *Hawayana* (Hawaiian Girl), 1953; *Prinsipe Teñoso*, 1954; *Medalyong Perlas*, 1956; and *Casa Grande*, 1958.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, when the studio system was in vogue, most cinematographers were part of the regular studio personnel assigned to particular film units. Now with the studio's power broken, cinematographers parcel out their services to film producers and directors with whom they feel artistically compatible. Mike Accion worked with Lamberto V. Avellana in *Walang Sugat* (Not Wounded), 1957, and Gerardo de Leon in *Ang Daigdig ng mga Api* (World of the Oppressed), 1965. One of de Leon's early favorites was Emmanuel Rojas, first FAMAS awardee for cinematography of *Sawa sa Lumang Simboryo* (Python in the Old Belfry), 1952. Conrado

Baltazar, Lino Brocka's favorite cinematographer, was awarded the Urian three years in succession for his work in Brocka's *Gumising Ka Maruja* (Wake Up, Maruja), 1978; *Jaguar* (Guard), 1979; and *Angela Markado*, 1980. Baltazar's creative association with Brocka ended with the cinematographer's fatal heart attack in 1988, while another latter-day Brocka cinematographer, Pedro Manding Jr who worked on *Miguelito: Ang Batang Rebelde* (Miguelito: The Young Rebel), 1985, and *Gumapang Ka Sa Lusak* (Dirty Affair), 1990, was murdered in 1990.

Some cinematographers have created a distinctive style, like Mike de Leon who did *Maynila, Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (Manila, In the Claws of Neon Lights), 1975, and who is now himself a prize-winning director; Romy Vitug, the acknowledged master of controlled brightness and bold color combinations, who did *Mga Bilanggong Birhen* (Caged Virgins), 1977; Rody Lacap, who exhibits his originality without contradicting a film's directorial intentions as seen in *Kisapmata* (Split-Second), 1981; and Manolo Abaya, whose intense personalism has become his own trademark as seen in *Karnal* (Carnal), 1983. There is also Ely Cruz, who has shown considerable mettle in his craft, particularly in the polish and expressiveness of his camerawork as seen in *Scorpio Nights*, 1985. Notable are the achievements of certain cinematographers in the following films: Johnny Araojo and Romulo Araojo in *Bagong Hari* (New King), 1986; Ricardo Jacinto in *Ibulong Mo Sa Diyos* (Whisper to God), 1988; Ver Reyes in *Panday II* (Blacksmith II), 1981; Sergio Lobo in *Ang Lihim ng Guadalupe* (The Secret of Guadalupe), 1979; Fredy Conde in *Bakya Mo, Neneng* (Your Wooden Clogs, Neneng), 1977; Felipe Sacdalan in *Ito Ang Pilipino* (Behold the Filipino), 1966; Loreto Isleta in *Igorota*, 1968; Nonong Rasca in *Nardong Putik*, 1972; Justo Paulino in *Lilet*, 1971; Eduardo Jacinto in *Pahiram ng Isang Umaga* (Lend Me A Morning), 1989; and Ricardo Remias in *Kapag Puso'y Sinugatan* (When the Heart Is Wounded), 1967.

The local cinematographers guild, the Filipino Society of Cinematographers (FSC), is represented in the Film Academy of the Philippines. • N. Cruz and J. David. With notes from P. de Castro III, B. Lumbera, N.G. Tionson