

WITH JIM SOTO

# THE CREW- THE CINEMATOGRAPHER



**For a cinematographer, every frame has to be important.**

**- Karthik Subbaraj**

# THE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The director of photography (DP) is the person who supervises the filming of any filmed production. It is common to see this term and “cinematographer” used interchangeably. DPs work closely with the Director and Production Designer to give a film its **visual signature**.



Conrad L. Hall prepares a shot for *Road to Perdition* (2002).







**Lighting is a fundamental element in filmmaking DPs utilize; how light falls on an actor's face, reveals an interior space, or illuminates a landscape, can create mood, drama and excitement for the audience. Remember that films are supposed to be visually pleasant to the viewer. The DP's role is to provide a film with a distinctive visual identity or look.**

# IN THE FILM INDUSTRY

DPs are known as a *Director's best friend* because more than anyone, they help bring the Director's vision to life. DPs must discover the photographic heart of a screenplay, using a variety of source material including stills photography, painting, other films, etc. They realize the desired look using lighting, framing, camera movement, etc.







**DPs work closely with a camera crew consisting of: Camera Operator, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Camera, Camera Trainee and the Grips).**

During Production, DPs work closely with the Gaffer (whose lighting team are crucial to helping create the required look of the film), the Production Designer, Costume Designer, and the Hair and Make Up Department.

Having read the screenplay, DPs discuss the visual style of the film with the Director. They conduct research and preparation including analyses of the shooting locations. They prepare a list of the required camera equipment, including lights, film stock, camera, cranes and any other accessories. During preparation DPs also test special lenses, filters or film stocks, checking that the results are in keeping with the Director's vision for the film.

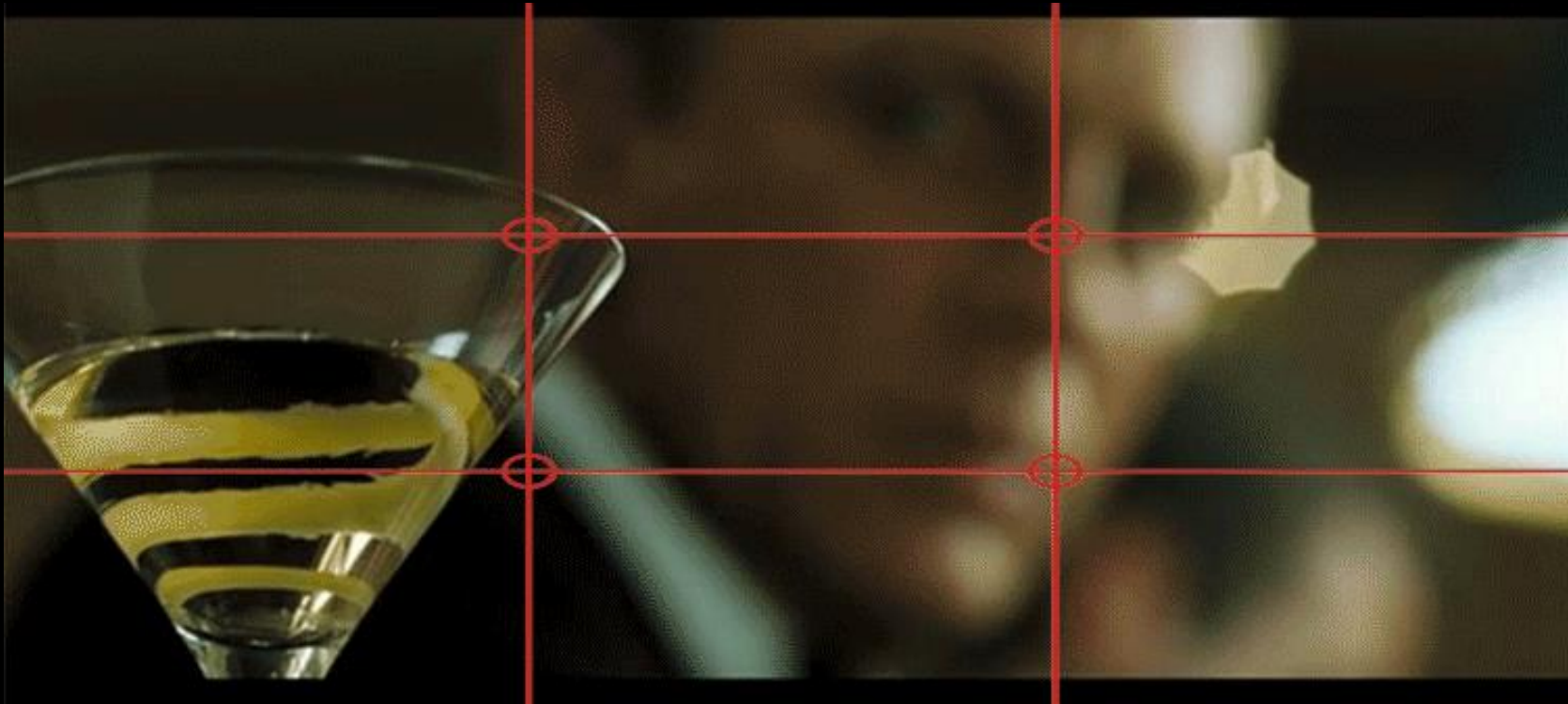


On each day of principal photography, DPs and their crews arrive early on set to prepare the equipment for the day's work. During rehearsals, the Director and DP block (decide the exact movements of both actors and camera) the shots as the actors walk through their actions, discussing any special camera moves or lighting needs with the Camera Operator, Gaffer and Grip.



Christopher Doyle gets ready to shoot another scene of *Hero* (2002).





Each shot is then marked up for focus and framing by the 1st Assistant Camera also known as the Focus Puller, and while the actors finish make-up and costume, the DP oversees the lighting of the set for the first take. Then it's up to the Director and the Actors to work their magic.

# FAMOUS CINEMATOGRAPHERS



**Eduardo Serra**

*Harry Potter and  
the Deathly Hallows  
– Parts 1 & 2*



**Ellen Kuras**

*Eternal Sunshine of  
The Spotless Mind*



**Wally Pfister**

*Batman trilogy, The  
Prestige & Inception*



**Matthew  
Libatique**

*The Whale, The  
Fountain & Iron  
Man*



**Janusz  
Kaminski**

*Schindler's List,  
Saving Private Ryan  
& Lincoln*

# IN YOUR PLANE OF REALITY



**A DP or Cinematographer must have a knowledge of photography, painting and, particularly of the moving image, is essential. Some knowledge of film history may be useful, as it enables DPs to be inventive, and to have a working knowledge of how technologies evolve.**



Here is some advise for the aspiring cinematographer:

1. Study as many techniques as possible and try to be on top of the latest technology. The internet is a great learning resource and there are thousands of web sites where you can learn about photography, cinematography and lighting.



2. Get a camera. Photography is the basis of cinematography, through photography you will learn framing, composition, exposure, etc..
3. Get out there and shoot! The more you shoot the more comfortable you'll be with cameras, working with actors, directors and the more you'll understand about lighting, composition and camera language.



4. Get out there and meet people. The more film makers and enthusiasts you know the higher your chance of getting a cinematography job, any set job even. It doesn't matter if you're the DP, a lighting technician, or a production assistant. Just get your foot on the door.





# RESHOOT

1. The collaboration between the Director of Photography, the Director and Production Designer is supposed to provide what to a film?
2. Which fundamental element of filmmaking does the DP work more than any other?
3. Why are DPs known as a Director's best friend?
4. What does the DP and his team do each day of principal photography?



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