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# American Cinematographer

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## ROGUE ONE

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**PLUS:** NANCY SCHREIBER, ASC RECEIVES PRESIDENTS AWARD  
RISING STARS OF CINEMATOGRAPHY

## Rising Stars of Cinematography

By Jim Hemphill

Every accomplished cinematographer has an origin story, and AC has set out to capture a few as they happen. From an immense field of worthy candidates, we present the tales of 10 up-and-coming directors of photography whose impressive work to date in commercials, music videos, shorts, series and features promises stellar achievements in the years to come: Carmen Cabana; Bjorn Charpentier, SBC; Ruben Impens, SBC; Kira Kelly; Jakub Kijowski, PSC; Oona Menges; Becky Parsons; Quyen Tran; Pieter Vermeer; and Ed Wu.

At this point in their careers, these promising cinematographers have all managed to find agency representation through firms that include Agency for the Performing Arts, Worldwide Production Agency, ICM Partners, Intrinsic, Claire Best and Associates, Lenhoff & Lenhoff, Dattner Dispoto and Associates, William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, and Murtha Skouras Agency. Throughout our coverage, a number of their agents share advice for others who aspire to a career behind the camera.

### Carmen Cabana

Growing up in Colombia, Carmen Cabana dreamed of a career in filmmaking. "I never wanted to sit behind a desk and follow a routine schedule," she says, explaining her decision to move to the U.S. in 2005. She trained at the Art Institute of California—Los Angeles, where she planned to pursue a career as a writer until she realized she had other strengths. "Midway into my education I objectively realized that I had no talent for writing, but my fellow students kept asking me to shoot their shorts because they thought I had a good eye."

The emphasis at the Art Institute was in postproduction and screenwriting, which Cabana ultimately saw as a benefit. "Having knowledge in other aspects of filmmaking has given me an advantage by allowing me to understand other people's jobs," she explains. "When I work I am conscious of the needs of others and I see the big picture."

Cabana filled in the gaps in her education by reading books like *Masters of Light: Conversations with Contemporary Cinematog-*



Cinematographer Carmen Cabana on set.

raphers and consuming as many *American Cinematographer* articles as she could — in fact, she credits AC circulation director Saul Molina as her number-one mentor. "He introduced me to the magazine and to the first books that shaped me as a cinematographer," she recalls.

Cabana received what she considers to be her big break on her second feature, *Cartas a Elena (Letters to Elena)*, which came about under surprising circumstances. "My friend who was doing a very low-budget comedy needed extras in swimsuits, so I put an ad

Cabana photo by Gustavo Brum.

on Craigslist," she remembers. "A producer, Peter Odio, saw the ad, and for some reason he contacted me. He told me he was not interested in wearing a Speedo for our car-wash scene, but that he was looking for a female director of photography who could speak Spanish." *Cartas a Elena* put Cabana on the map, leading to multiple features and to the cinematographer's highest profile work to date on season two of the Netflix series *Narcos*.

Cabana has earned accolades for her action photography on the show, and revels in the opportunities it has created for her. "I love action, and *Narcos* gave me an opening to do things I have never done before — explosions, car chases, shootouts, miniature work — and to use tools that I never had available due to budget restrictions."

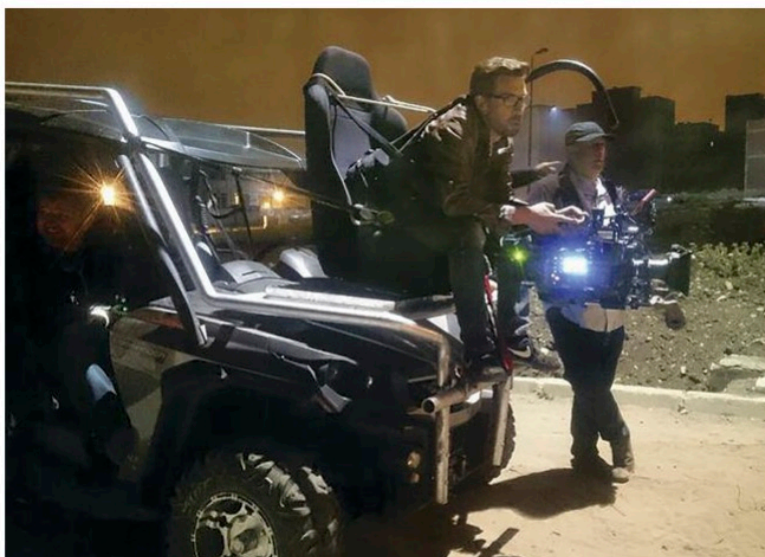
When asked what's next, Cabana excitedly responds with a long list of projects and ideas; she's especially interested in creating VR content while continuing to pursue her aspirations in features and TV. "I dream of shooting a show like *American Horror Story* or *Westworld*," she says. Laughing, she adds, "Just putting that out there."

### **Bjorn Charpentier, SBC**

Belgian cinematographer Bjorn Charpentier, SBC was always a movie lover, but one film in particular made an impression. "When I saw *The Rock*, directed by Michael Bay and shot by John Schwartzman, ASC, I was blown away by the dynamic framing and lighting," he recalls. "That film made me interested in photography."

Charpentier began his formal training at the Narafi campus of the Luca School of Arts in Belgium, and went on to work with Danny Elsen, NSC, SBC as a camera assistant. Charpentier's career was further facilitated by a Belgian directing duo known as "Norman Bates," who brought him on board for several international projects.

Now, Charpentier divides his time between commercials, music videos and features. He recently received high honors at Cannes with a promotional spot called *100* that he shot for Leica, which won a Grand Prix and a Gold Lion in 2015. "That



**From left: First AC Lurie Bustiuc (inside tracking car); cinematographer Bjorn Charpentier, SBC; and 1st AD Ahmed Hatimi on location in Tangier, Morocco, for *High Wire Act*.**

was a career changer for me," he says.

Charpentier enjoys moving back and forth between film and digital — sometimes on the same project. "I shot several commercials where I combined both," he says. A Jeep commercial that spans various time periods, for example, "was shot on Alexa, Super 8mm, 16mm, and even on the iPhone, all in one project." He adds, "The advantage of digital is that you can push the image further because you can see the direct result on the monitors. You don't have sleepless nights waiting for the prints. Also, the sensitivity is greater, so I can use less light and a smaller generator, and I have fewer reloads with digital, so the director can keep shooting and find more emotional moments with the actors."

In terms of his narrative feature work, Charpentier is particularly excited about a pair of features that he shot in

anamorphic format with vintage glass on Arri's Alexa Plus 4:3 with an XR Module upgrade. "Over the last two years, I've been shooting an epic sci-fi story titled *Behold a White Horse*. Every shot looks extremely expensive, even though we shot it with a small budget and with small lighting setups, as we wanted to keep our footprint to a minimum. The idea was to take items away from the existing locations and to turn lights off instead of adding them."

For director Brad Anderson's *High Wire Act*, "Brad wanted to push the limits of darkness and night scenes. The theory was that we would light everything from within the location with lots of practicals and a lot of murky industrial lights and old fluorescents. Given the aesthetic we were going for, I shot with a lot of reflected light, which meant that all the sources in the frame would have to be shiny — the walls and even the makeup." Charpentier

### **On the agent-cinematographer relationship:**

"It's a partnership. We're in the same two-man canoe. We have to be in sync and operate in tandem to move smoothly through calm waters and through rapids. I have to find what works for each client and tailor that; it's not just one-process-fits-all. Some clients are great communicators; others need help in the promotional area, selling their personality and selling their artistry. A lot of cinematographers disdain self-promotion, and that's why they need an agent."

— Charles Lenhoff, Lenhoff & Lenhoff