

# Streetfighter tales

With principal photography underway on *Streetfighter: The Legend of Chun-Li*, Geoff Boyle charts the ups and downs of production in part two of his shooting diary.

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One week into the *Streetfighter: The Legend of Chun-Li* shoot and I've been in Thailand for seven weeks. We have some great locations, but it has been a struggle. Places that have been empty for five years suddenly got offers of leases just after we expressed an interest in using them as a location. It was almost as if we were being sabotaged – we weren't, it was just one of those things. Still, if you have property you need to lease/sell, then you may want to try offering it to us as a location. It'll sell the next day!

We've tried to get as much kit and crew locally as we can, but in some areas this just hasn't been possible. Cameras and lenses are coming from Arri in Munich. I'm shooting 3-perf, and there just aren't the number of 3-perf cameras we need here. My MK V-AR operator is coming in, as is his AC, otherwise all camera crew are local. With three Arricam LTs, a 235, a 435 and a 4-perf 435, that's a fair amount of crew. We'll be adding additional cameras for some sequences.

The lighting is all local, although Ossie my gaffer is joining us from the UK, and some of the lights have had to be ordered specifically for this shoot – but it's the smaller stuff like the Rosco Lite Pads or the 800w Joker bugs. The big kit, such as the Arri Max lights, is all here.

I've recce'd a seemingly endless list of locations and three studios too. We hit the ground running, with the main unit shooting a nightclub sequence that involved a lot of pre-lighting and rigging. We only have access to the club from when they close at 3am until 7pm, just before they open again. We have to remove anything that might prevent the club from operating normally. Michael, our production designer, is doing a great job of dealing with this, while also supervising three stage sets.

Our action unit starts in a kitchen set with a great fight sequence. Ossie and I are pre-lighting and shooting in the club and then going to the stage to offer 2nd unit DP, Igor Meglic, some moral support.

Rushes are very slow. We're getting selected takes from the A camera printed on Kodak Vision Premier – a shock for me, as it's been years since I saw film rushes. They then do DVCam for the Avid and a bunch of DVDs for people who need them. We're five days in and I just got my second day's DVD rushes. The prints from day one finally turned up yesterday. I think there'll be a lab change soon.

It's err... interesting when your director is such an experienced DP – Andrzej's cinematography credits include *The Verdict*, *Terms of Endearment*, *Lethal Weapon 4* and *Thirteen Days*. It leads to a few discussions – but Andrzej says he doesn't discuss, he shouts!

## Police involvement

Next day we were shooting again in a very high tech police station. It's odd how you get images in your head of what places look like, and to me police stations are run down and dark, but not this one! Michael has done an amazing job of converting the vacant 24th floor of an office building into a busy police station. The views across Bangkok are spectacular, and of course everyone is worried that all the windows blow out to plain white on the video assist. I'm frantically checking my Fuji exposure charts and am confident that at a maximum brightest reading of +5.5 stops above gray we'll be able to get the windows back in DI.

It'll mean a bit of windowing, effectively keying into the burned-out whites, but of course the beauty of film is that the detail is there to pull back. The Fuji charts show the density still straight-lining at +6 stops, so I'm not worried. OK, I couldn't type that with a straight face: of course I'm worried!

We've picked one scene to TK twice, once exposed for the interior scene and once for the exterior scene. This should reassure everyone. I've said that I'll have my bags packed ready just in case... It's almost holding in my digital still, using highlight recovery in Lightroom, so I'm not really worried – well, not a lot :-)

It's time's like these that I love digital(!). With this shot I'd simply have been fucked, and I wouldn't be worrying about how much we could pull back! I'd know exactly where I was – on a plane back home.

I'm sending the new lab – yes, we did change – jpgs of main scenes, and hope that they can match them. It adds another hour or so to my day, but who needs sleep? Yesterday was 05:30 depart from hotel and get back at midnight.

During the following week, we shot six studio sets and one major location. We had seven locations lit or lighting at the same time a few days ago; we ran out of cable, we ran out of crew, we ran out of lights...

For the next three days we're in the harbor, and the harbormaster's office (we blow up the office tomorrow night). I was looking forward to that and, true enough, it was fun. The two Arri 3s we brought in for additional coverage were a bit unstable at 100fps, but we can stabilize that later. I love the footage we shot around here, very mixed color lighting – everything from tubes with extra green to tungsten with chrome orange.

We're gradually sorting out our dailies transfers. What people were describing as jitter and unstable transfers were actually artefacts caused by excessive compression. That should be easily fixed. As I mentioned, after each day's shoot I'm importing stills from my Canon 350D into Adobe Lightroom and generating jpegs for the TK guys. But I'm having to feed them through Xnview on the way to get them gamma-matched to Mac laptops. I'm using Lightroom because my copy of Speedgrade has stopped working with Canon RAW files. It doesn't have to be that accurate anyway – it's just a rough guide.

Apparently we're getting an updated schedule today, one which will have more days off!

Kristen Kreuk and Chris Klein are really going for the stunts and getting thrown around. Kristen shows us new bruises and scrapes every day, and having watched the action unit's dailies, I think they should be punished for inflicting so much misery on her. She never complains, although she's working longer hours than any of the crew and getting beaten up. She just grins and gets on with it. I guess being Superboy's girlfriend...

Four weeks in, and we've done a complete reschedule of the last five weeks. This is for a variety of reasons: we've lost some locations, found better ones; Moon Bloodgood has been offered the lead in T4, so we are altering the schedule to free her up early to be able to do that. It's a huge break for her.

Gradually settling down now. Main unit is shooting mainly with one camera in the AR rig, with a second camera available for extra coverage. We also have a 4-perf camera for FX work, although this camera floats between units. The action unit now has three cameras and an additional crew of operator and AC from Hong Kong who specialize in fight films. We've also shipped in Shaun Mone, our best boy on *Mutant Chronicles*, to help out with the action unit. The dailies seem to be looking more and more like my reference shots.

I finally sat down and watched all the film rushes – selected takes from A camera printed on Vision Premier. Ah, well – they'll never look like that for anyone else! They're lined up on my grayscales and then printed without alteration from there. I love the look of them: the highlights are gorgeous, and while the blacks are great, there are a few places where in the DI I'll tweak a little back into the very dark greys.

The AR is setting the style of the picture. Andrzej has always liked Steadicam, but this is way beyond that! It's my second film with an AR (the first was *Dark Country*), and I can't imagine shooting without it. Of course, it means that Chris McGuire is wearing it almost without a break – but it helps him work off the beers! We're in rundown slum areas now and it's long and dirty days. It looks like I'll be doing three weeks straight without a break with my gaffer Ossie Jung because we need to light when everyone is off.

Three weeks left and we we're seriously screwed. Last week the monsoon hit early: "it's never this early or heavy". Welcome to global warming. Action unit is really struggling; the rain seems to be on a timer, starts at 7pm, ends around 3am, with a couple of breaks. This pretty much coincides with the action unit's schedule! They're meant to finish around 5:30am, but are pushing past that to try and catch up. This means a lot of work in DI trying to match dawn to look like night.

We've experienced constant schedule changes due to the weather and then further location changes after a survey found that at one potential location the ground wasn't stable enough to take the construction cranes that we need for the wire rigs for the fight sequences.

I've seen some cut sequences now and Derek is doing an amazing job of keeping up pace and flow. The wonderfully detailed Excel spreadsheet of which stocks we were going to use on which day and for which scenes is now history. It's changed too much. "I'm loading the Eterna 400 because it's a flashback"; "no! it's a Bison flashback, that's Reala 500D!"; "what scene is this?"; "dunno, it's not in my script"; "oh bugger! it's a pink page, err, make it Vivid 160 and enhancer... no, pull the enhancer it's too dark." Conversations like this are constant. I'm off today and it's GP day! hope I don't fall asleep during it again. There are just three weeks left till the end of principal photography...



## Geoff Boyle

Reel Show cinematography editor Geoff Boyle's recent feature films as director of photography include *The Mutant Chronicles*, *Dark Country* and, currently, *Street Fighter 2*. He received his first camera, a Brownie 127, when he was eight. From then on the future was clear. After art school in the late 60s, he worked as a stills assistant. One day he was asked if he knew anyone who could film a concert. Of course he did! He moved into film and shot documentaries for TV, 10 years or so of 20/20 for ABC and a lot of music videos. In 1985 he shot a 'making of' about the Pirelli calendar. Terence Donovan liked the way he lit and asked him if he shot commercials. From 1990 to 2005, he has shot almost entirely commercials, with occasional sidetrips into drama, a short he shot – *About A Girl* – winning a BAFTA in 2001. He also shot special effects on *Enemy at the Gates*, won the SMPTE Eastman Gold medal in 2000 and was made a fellow of the BKSTS that year. He started the cinematography mailing list (CML) in 1996 with 60 members. It now has over 3,000 members in 148 countries and is acknowledged as the pre-eminent internet site for cinematography.