With versatile landscapes, experienced film crews and incentivized tax breaks, the only limit to filming in the U.S. Virgin Islands is your imagination. Enjoy up to a 29% tax rebate and up to a 17% transferable tax credit when you film in the USVI. For more opportunities in St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas, call 340.775.1444 ext. 2243.

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**ON THE COVER**

“One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.”
-HENRY MILLER
Traveling for the summer? We are fortunate to count members of the AFCI (Association of Film Commissioners International) among our friends. They open doors and support our role of world ambassadors. We are especially grateful for their continued partnership in the success of the LMGI Awards. Long-time fans of their Beyond Cinema magazine, we were flattered to note that their “Beyond Your Horizon” image has been including our popular “Martini Shot” trademark latitude and longitude coordinates. Great minds think alike!

In “Carpe Tahitian Diem,” location manager Edward Mazurek recaps the rewards of stepping up and engaging our location community as he chronicles his efforts to work with the Tahitian Film Commission to encourage more filming in paradise. Additionally, the ghost city of Belchite hosted location manager Bob Craft, who relates his visit to these historic, haunted ruins in the Zaragoza Region of Eastern Spain.

Please contact our Regional/International Committee at regional-international@locationmanagers.org to make sure you are included on the list that goes to inquiring Fam Tour coordinators. Any interested members are encouraged to write three sentences explaining why you should be included on these adventures.

In our cover story, “Out of Africa: The Dark Tower Odyssey,” reporter Nancy Mills takes us on a journey to South Africa with location manager Deon du Preez. Du Preez provides a front-row seat to the perils and majesty of scouting the continent while bringing Stephen King’s decades-in-the-making epic fantasy to the silver screen.

In our featured columns, “In My City” Lithuanian location pro Jonas Spokas gives us his private tour of Vilnius, complete with a UNESCO World Heritage old town. Location pro Peter McClafferty takes us behind the scenes of the print world in “Career Focus.” “In the News” details LMGI members exploring both the Bluegrass State of Kentucky and Busan, Korea. We celebrated with our business members, the California Film Commission and FLICS (Film Liaisons in California Statewide) at the California Trade Show and our 2017 Board of Directors is now seated.

Articles and photography submissions by members are always encouraged. As you travel the world, enjoy the long days of summer, and remember that your ideas, your stories … are what keeps us connected and our community vibrant and strong.

Always a pleasure, never too busy,
Ken Haber, Lori Balton and Stevie Nelson

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”

—MARK TWAIN
Dear Members,

I am happy to welcome our new Board of Directors for the 2017-2018 term. Mike Fantasia, Rebecca “Puck” Stair, Dorion Thomas, Wes Hagan, Eric Klosterman and newcomers Alison Taylor, Mac Gordon and Matt Chamberlin have been elected to new two-year terms. They join JJ Levine, Kokayi Ampah, Phill Kane and Matt Palmer, all in their second year on the Board. Continuing business members on the Board, Melissa DeMonaco and Mario Ramirez, are joined by newly elected Dan Taylor of Inland Empire Film Permits. Congratulations to everyone and thanks to all who put their names forward in nomination.

Special kudos to departing Board members Jimmy Ayoub, Sinclair Anderson, Rick Schuler and Bob Decker for their service.

I look forward to working together with all of you as we guide the continued growth and relevance of the Guild in the coming years. Remember, Board meetings are open to members. We encourage you all to show up and stay engaged.

The Board of Directors will have an organizational meeting to determine who will serve as Officers of the Guild for this term, together with a vision meeting to map out a strategy for setting and achieving the goals of the Guild for the next 3-5 years.

We hope to provide even greater value to our members through our new, improved website. Administrative Director Kiki Akinrele is adding more timely content. The website provides the opportunity for members to network with each other through expanded use of the forum and e-list functions in our Memberclicks system.

The Guild is planning events in Atlanta, Toronto and Vancouver for this fall. We encourage our members around the world to network with each other, plan local events and let the rest of the Guild know what is happening in your neck of the woods that we might all participate in a global conversation. Together, we can all promote excellence on location worldwide.

Thanks to everyone who has shared your thoughts and images, both here in the LMGI Compass and on social media. Please remember to “like” us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

I hope you all have a great, productive summer.

Eric Klosterman,
President
Edward Mazurek
Chicago native Edward Mazurek began delivering newspapers at age 11 and has been employed ever since, conquering such professions as golf caddy, landscape, snow removal, dishwasher, prep cook, bus boy, line cook, reguard, dishes and more. He has never looked back. He is currently scouting in New York. He has never looked back. He is currently scouting on projects in New York.

A frequent contributor to the LMGI Compass, Stair is proud that distant members can play an active role in the Guild. A location scout & manager for film and television for about a decade, her notable projects include No Country for Old Men, 3:10 to Yuma, John Carter, Terminator Salvation and We’re the Millers. A current member of the Board of Directors of Women in Film, she enjoys the challenges of filming in rural and urban locations alike, and is currently honored to serve on the Executive Board of IATSE Local 480. When not filming, she, for some insane reason, runs triathlons.

Rebecca “Puck” Stair
A former English teacher, Rebecca “Puck” Stair is on the LMGI Board and co-chairs the Regional/International Committee. A frequent contributor to the LMGI Compass, Stair is proud that distant members can play an active role in the Guild. A location scout & manager for film and television for about a decade, her notable projects include No Country for Old Men, 3:10 to Yuma, John Carter, Terminator Salvation and We’re the Millers. A current member of the Board of Directors of Women in Film, she enjoys the challenges of filming in rural and urban locations alike, and is currently honored to serve on the Executive Board of IATSE Local 480. When not filming, she, for some insane reason, runs triathlons.

Our Valley Glen (L.A.) Home Location
A favorite of Location Managers, Production Designers and Directors of Photography since 2003.
Hooray for Hollywood: LMGI at California Conference

The LMGI joined location professionals, producers, directors and filmmakers from around the state who attended the Film in California Conference, hosted by the California Film Commission and the FLICS. "Film Liaisons in California Commission and the FLICS who attended the Film Conference in Studio City. Film May 20, at CBS Studio Center in Studio City. Film Liaisons in California Commission and the FLICS who attended the Film Conference in California," President Eric Klosterman, table was helmed by LMGI at informational booths. The commissions and vendors displayed their resources and services to the attendees. The conference featured a variety of speakers and topics related to the film and television industry. It was an opportunity for filmmakers and location managers to network and learn about the latest trends and developments in the industry. The LMGI joined location professionals, producers, directors and filmmakers from around the state who attended the Film in California Conference, hosted by the California Film Commission and the FLICS. "Film Liaisons in California Commission and the FLICS who attended the Film Conference in Studio City. Film May 20, at CBS Studio Center in Studio City. Film Liaisons in California Commission and the FLICS who attended the Film Conference in California," President Eric Klosterman, table was helmed by LMGI at informational booths. The commissions and vendors displayed their resources and services to the attendees. The conference featured a variety of speakers and topics related to the film and television industry. It was an opportunity for filmmakers and location managers to network and learn about the latest trends and developments in the industry.

The Results Are in: LMGI Election

by Kiki Akinrele

The LMGI 2017-2018 Board of Directors is comprised of both fresh and familiar faces. It has been an exciting year, in which the preceding Board worked tirelessly with committee volunteers to increase membership and promote the interests of location professionals worldwide.

We extend our appreciation to the preceding Board for its efforts and give special thanks as we bid farewell to those leaving us: Rick Schulter, Jimmy Ayoub, Bob Decker and Sinclair Anderson.

Moving forward, the new Board will get straight to work by attending a Vision Session to re-focus LMGI’s goals and direction. We welcome your input. Email me at kiki@locationmanagers.org with your thoughts and comments.

Thank you for taking the time to vote. Your new Board, consists of five reelected members (Eric Klosterman, Mike Fantasia, Rebecca “Puck” Stair, Wes Hagan and Doron Thomas); three returning members (J.J. Levine, Matt Palmer and Phill Kane); three new members (Alison Taylor, Mac Gordon and Matt Chamberlin); two reelected business members (Melissa DeMonaco and Mario Ramirez); and one new business member (Dan Taylor).

Meet Our Newest Board Members

Alison Taylor

A Wrinkle in Time, Straight Outta Compton, Amistad, Training Day, The Soloist, Alias, Southland has worked in location management for 22 years. She joined the LMGI in 2014 and is a proud member. She is excited to bring fresh ideas from a different perspective, enthusiasm, experience and commitment.

Mac Gordon

The X-Files, Monk, The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, The Soloist has been in locations for 25 years and feels ready to put some of his talents to use for the greater good of his locations brothers and sisters. Mac has extensive experience working in the Los Angeles and Atlanta location markets. He has supported the LMGI since its inception and is delighted with how we expanded from a national to international organization.

The Soloist, Alias, Southland has worked in location management for 22 years. She joined the LMGI in 2014 and is a proud member. She is excited to bring fresh ideas from a different perspective, enthusiasm, experience and commitment.

Kentucky Enters the Incentives Race

by Rebecca “Puck” Stair and Nancy Haecker

Kentucky is actively marketing itself for filming. Following a strong presence at the AFCI trade show this spring, the state attended the LMGI/Utah Sundance panel in Park City this January. After subsequently reaching out to the LMGI Regional & International Committee, the Lexington Tourism Office decided to host its first Fam Tour in May, and invited members John Hutchinson, Ann Lukacs, Nancy Haecker and Rebecca “Puck” Stair.

The state sports locations both unique and versatile, like miles of rolling bluegrass hills dotted with elaborate horse barns and bordered by quintessential white fences and classic old-world distilleries. “Lexington limestone” naturally filters the groundwater, creating both the bourbon and the bluegrass, plus the largest flinty cave system in the world.

Business member Dan Taylor is the facilitator/liaison for the San Bernardino County Film Office and President of the Inland Empire Film Services. He has over 16 years in film permitting and location assistance (assisting over 8,000 motion and still productions with permitting) and will contribute his vast film experience and networking skills in support of the LMGI.

The four toured Lexington and its surroundings, some of America’s top scenic roads, a cavernous underground mine complete with truck access and electricity, and of course, world-class equine athletes. Versatile locations include abundant small-town Americas, more waterways than any other state, and hurting markets. He has supported the LMGI since its inception and is delighted with how we expanded from a national to international organization.

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Busan: Ready for Prime Time
by Kent Matsuoka

Following the popularity of locally produced Train to Busan, and their positive experiences hosting Marvel’s Black Panther earlier this year, the Busan Film Commission wanted a chance to prove that they are ready for prime time. LMGI members Becky Brake, Scott Logan, Kent Matsuoka and Scott Trimble answered the call and accepted their invitation by Kent Matsuoka on a Fam Tour to see what Busan had to offer. Joined by Seoul-based location manager Seon Kwon Hwang, the location managers gained firsthand knowledge into the logistics required of the locations that they visited. With a national 25 percent incentive, a conveniently located soundstage, basic grip/electric packages, available post facilities and a western-experienced crew a short train ride away in Seoul, Busan already looks pretty attractive on paper. In addition, Busan offers an enthusiastic commission staff, a film-friendly local government, diverse locations from a modern Asian metropolis to gritty working-class neighborhoods, beautiful beaches and seaside communities, BEXCO Convention Center, and the old dock areas of Yeongdo. The recent examples of South Korea and Busan in particular’s ability to accommodate the logistically challenging needs of Black Panther, Avengers: Age of Ultron and Sense8 have shown that they are receptive to big-budget, western-filming needs, and proves to be a viable option to its more restrictive neighbors in East Asia.

For rates and availability please call Angela at (805)579-8000 x4165
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to my education as time brought was as important the exposure to the world it firmly believed that travel and safari in Kenya. My parents the enviable luxury of having In eight years abroad, I had to Short Hills, New Jersey. 

Hong Kong to Singapore, and Far East Operations for APL. container ship operations. In Marine, was a Vice President My father, a retired captain in Peter McClafferty —a big deal back in the day. 

I am an only child, born in Manhattan and raised in New Jersey until the age of 5. My mother was a former model and swimmer who went to the 1952 Helsinki Olympics as an alternate. She appeared in Billy Rose’s Aquacade —a big deal back in the day.

My father, a retired captain in the United States Merchant Marine, was a Vice President at American President Lines (APL), responsible for container ship operations. In 1968, he was transferred to Yokohama, Japan, to head Far East Operations for APL. For the next eight years, we lived as expats, moving from Hong Kong to Singapore, and eventually, to Tokyo. Shortly after turning 13, we returned to Short Hills, New Jersey. In eight years abroad, I had the enviable luxury of having visited every country in Asia and Europe. I even went on safari in Kenya. My parents firmly believed that travel and the exposure to the world it brought was as important to my education as time in school. I never realized how fortunate I was for their forward-thinking until much later in life.

The summer before I graduated from USC with a double major in Japanese and international relations, I worked as an interpreter for the 1984 Olympics in “media transportation”—ensuring the international press got to each sporting venue in time for every event. My first real job out of college was for the Japanese Business Association, studying and reporting on the effect of California’s unitary tax on Japanese investment in the state. Yes, it was as dreary as it sounds.

A lifelong competitive swimmer after college, I took a second job coaching a master’s swim team. A chance exchange with one of the swimmers landed me an interview at Elite Model Management. With NO background in the agency or modeling business, I entered the interview armed with only brush youth and chutzpah. I was offered a job as an agent. Much to my mother’s dismay—I accepted the job—thus shattering her dream of her son becoming the future Ambassador to Japan. If you told me I would be a location scout/manager 20 years later, I would have laughed. As Vice President of Elite Model Management, my days were consumed with managing the careers of beautiful, young supermodels like Kathy Ireland, Tyra Banks and Cameron Diaz. To quote Sheila E., “I lived the glamorous life.” I spent almost every hour of my day connecting models with the top photographers of the day. When I wasn’t behind my desk with a phone to my ear booking models, I was out partying until dawn.

One of the major reasons fashion clients come to Los Angeles is to shoot on location. When I was an agent, sending a model out on location was never easy. In a “pre-GPS” world where the Thomas Guide was equal parts Bible and Google Maps, a good portion of my day was spent poring over map grids figuring out how to get my clients to their booking. To me, the location was an abstract—a place I had to get my client to so that she could do her job and get paid. In my mind, it was never easy to find. ALWAYS remote and always a challenge to get to. If I had a dollar for every model that got lost going to El Mirage Dry Lake... it never really occurred to me that someone had gone out and actually FOUND the “location.”

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I absolutely loved my time at Elite. Working for the top model agency in the world, I learned how to navigate the many nuances aspects of the fashion and photography business. I developed contacts and relationships in the industry in the United States and internationally that I still maintain today. I had a client coming to Los Angeles to shoot a men’s fashion catalog and needed an LA producer. At the time, I knew of only one producer who handled 90 percent of all fashion photography production. Her name was Yasuko Austin. Much of her success was a result of her extensive knowledge of locations in Southern California—she ran a very successful location service. I gave the agent Yasuko’s name and never heard anything further until over a decade later.

After 13 amazing years at Elite, I was burnt out and left the fabulous world of modeling with the intent to develop an online company dedicated to high-end soaps, bath oils and candles. But that is another story. I ended up taking a year off to travel through South America.

Upon my return to LA, a friend who I had helped launch an agency representing male models called to ask if I would cover his agency while he went on holiday, I agreed. One of the first calls I answered was from Yasuko Austin, the producer I had referred so many years ago. She was doing a job for the same menswear account I had connected her with. Over the years, her business had expanded considerably and she asked me to come in and interview for a job as a photo agent. After a year of no income, I was ready to work again so when she offered me a job, I accepted.

The job of photo agent was very different from model agent. The pace at the model agency was fast, fast, fast. At Elite, a fashion model’s career could peak and be over by her early 20s, so we were always looking for the next “new face.” A model could become a superstar in a season. In terms of a photographer’s career, it could take years to achieve similar success. As an artist, a photographer is constantly evolving and developing his skill and vision. Once their portfolio was together, it often took months of back-and-forth with agency art buyers in order for a photographer to even get in the door, much less land an account. Once I adjusted to the pace, I gradually began to gain insight into the creative thought process that a photographer goes through to achieve their picture—a most valuable lesson and key to understanding and working with the creative mind. Yasuko was the first producer who dealt exclusively with fashion photographers and had established herself as the “go-to” producer for fashion shoots. In the realm of fashion photography, the producer is often a one-person operation responsible for coordinating all aspects of a shoot. In Los Angeles, where people come from around the world take advantage of our spectacular landscapes, one of the most important responsibilities of the producer is to scout, secure and permit the location. They often handle all location logistics: parking, motor homes, port-a-potties, neighbors, directional signage, cleanup and wrap. In addition, the producer is often tasked with hiring catering, hair, makeup and sometimes, casting talent and arranging accommodations, as well as getting everyone to location. Given that a print budget is considerably smaller than a commercial or feature, the producer needs to be resourceful and on top of their game. And she was. Yasuko was a great mentor to me and my time working for her laid the foundation for my future.

After a few years, I decided to go out on my own. For my entire young adult life, I had had a job in a company office environment—the prospect of becoming a sole proprietor was daunting. The week after I left, I was contacted by a client who had encouraged me to go off on my own to produce an “easy” shoot. Three days on the west side—in Santa Monica and Venice. What could go wrong? Sparing the boring details: everything—from two company moves a day, to motor homes breaking down and parking snafus (who knew you could post “no parking” signs?!) to the police being called after a grip truck driver refused to move and a scuffle broke out. 

Location fashion shoot for Bergdorf Goodman by photographers Sofia Sanchez & Mauro Mongiello

The Model of Professionalism: Print Location Pro Peter McClafferty
out with a merchant. Every day when I left the set—I cried. Fresh out the door on my own, I was admittedly over my head. Thankfully, my client was 110 percent supportive and when we wrapped, made a point of thanking me for finding such great locations. Thus encouraged, I was off and running!

That first job was baptism by fire; however, I learned from my mistakes and slowly began to develop a strong, loyal client base. Through word of mouth, my business began to build momentum and take off. When I first started out, I promised myself that on any day I was not booked to work, I would go out and scout something new. Out of that commitment, I discovered many places and met countless amazing people. Professionally, I have had the good fortune to have worked with most of the world’s top photographers, ranging from Patrick Demarchelier and Dennis Hopper to Bryan Adams and Tierney Gearon. My work has taken me to a number of states in the US and overseas to the Bahamas, Poland, Sweden and Germany. In 2008, I was honored to win a COLA Award for my work on a project I scouted and produced for British Harper’s Bazaar. Five years later, I was honored again by COLA for a project that re-created the locations of 10 Hitchcock classics. It gave me great joy to thank the ad agency—the same agency that hired me on my first solo shoot years 12 years earlier!

Over the course of my career in locations, I have had the great fortune to meet many incredible peers. Whether speaking with a commercial scout or a location manager with a résumé of blockbusters to their credit, I am always struck by the fact that ours is a very sharing community. The professional support extended to up-and-coming people in our métier is remarkable and the free exchange of information about locations, histories, bureaucracies and experiences is unique to any business I have encountered. As I go about my day at every turn and corner, I find myself on the lookout for great locations for my clients. Forty years after my parents compelled me to discover the world, I’m sure they would be proud to see their effort was not in vain.

Young Peter with his parents in India in front of the Taj Mahal. 

Top Ten Abandoned Locations:

1. Hashima Island, Nagasaki Japan
2. I.M. Cooling Tower, Old Power Station, Charleroi, Belgium
3. Kolmanskop, Namibia
4. Pripyat, Ukraine
5. Michigan Central Station, Detroit, MI, US
6. Ross Island, South Andaman, India
8. Craco, Italy
9. Gouqi Island, Hangzhou Bay, China
10. Springhouse, bourbon distillery, Frankfort, KY, US

Find links at LocationManagers.org. Add your favorites to the discussion board, as well as our Facebook page.
Stevie: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN LOCATIONS? HOW DID YOU START & WHAT DO YOU PRIMARILY WORK ON?

Jonas Spokas: I have been a location manager for almost five years. I was born in the town of Alytus, which is 100 km south from Vilnius. After high school, I moved to Vilnius to study at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, and have lived here since then. Vilnius is actually the only place where you can study filmmaking in Lithuania. I got a job on the Norwegian feature Iskyss and I got a paid intern position. I studied film production at the Academy and produced student short films. I was lucky enough to work on a few of the biggest international co-productions of that time, so I was able to quickly gather the basic experience of what filming on location is about.

In 2010, I spent three months in New York on an internship for the Jarrett Creative Group. We were doing a show called Celebrity Ghost Stories (season two). I was given some really basic level tasks, and I remember that I had to go to the New York Mayor’s film office to pick up film permits. I had a chance to see how things work in the US. It was a great experience. I didn’t have a chance to travel outside New York, even though I really wanted to! One of my dreams is to come back to the US. I’d love to work on a film production there.

My first PA job was on the German TV miniseries Generation War. It was two months of filming huge battle scenes, tanks, trenches, explosions, etc. It was my first experience working on a big production and it was spectacular! What impressed me most was how accurate and detailed all the planning and execution of filming was. I remember in January, I was sticking wooden sticks with tennis balls on them in one of our battlefield locations. Six weeks later, when we shot the scenes, the explosions happened in exactly the same positions and everybody knew exactly what, where, when and how it would all happen! I actually did some basic location scouting on Generation War. I had a small Rover 200 and I assisted the location manager scouting wintry forests and forest clearings. I got stuck in the deep snow at least four or five times! It was a really fun task and at that moment, I was honestly looking only to the beauty of the location and didn’t really think about the accessibility of it and other aspects that matter when you need to bring the crew there and shoot the scenes.

Stevie: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE PRIMARY DRAW FOR FILMING IN & AROUND VILNIUS? WHAT KIND OF “LOOKS” ARE THERE?

JS: Vilnius is a UNESCO World Heritage-listed old town, which is unique. It is quite big with a lot of interesting places. The city had a dramatic history with many different armies passing through over the centuries, many different cultures leaving a mark, and you can really feel that variety here. The old town and all its secret alleys are generally the first thing to attract filming. And just a few minutes away, there’s Soviet architecture and modern buildings. So you can really get a lot of completely different looks just around the corner.

Stevie: WHAT TYPES OF PRODUCTIONS FILM IN VILNIUS?

JS: There’s quite a lot of filming happening in Vilnius. TV commercials are active all year round. We do a lot of production service for many major worldwide brands, as well as feature films. Over the years, there have been a lot of productions from Hollywood studios, as well as major European studios and broadcasters. Vilnius is a film-friendly city and a very convenient place to film, so there are a lot of productions that maybe don’t have the biggest budgets, but are really looking for some production value. Vilnius is relatively small, so when your schedule and budget are tight, the city becomes a great resource. I remember in 2013, for the ABC TV series The Assets, we shot scenes that took place in rural Russia, the streets of Washington, D.C., Moscow interiors and some scenes in Mexico. All of that on the same shooting day, within no more than 20 miles!

Of course, there are big productions as well. In 2015, we did BBC’s War & Peace. We also did Elizabeth I and Edward Zwick’s Defiance. One of my first projects—Generation War—
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was at that time, the largest German TV production shot outside Germany. And then there is the whole local film production. There are at least two or three Lithuanian films shot in Vilnius every year—from really big films to some very low-budget independent projects.

Stevie: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES TO FILMING IN, SPECIFICALLY, AROUND VILNIUS?

JS: Vilnius is relatively small and yet it is a very busy city, so most of the challenges come from that. You need to be well prepared when you plan to close a street, especially in the old town, where sometimes it is difficult to find an alternative route. We work hard to maintain a professional reputation with our crews because if one film crew does something wrong, the consequences belong to all the industry. So we work a lot to communicate with the city municipality and the public at our major locations.

Stevie: WHAT ARE A LOCATION MANAGER’S FAVORITE “LOOKS” OR LOCATIONS IN VILNIUS? WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL FAVORITES & WHY?

JS: There are several places that I really like that are simply cinematic—they just look good on the screen. I can’t remember any director visiting these locations and not liking them. One example is the staircase of Lithuanian Writers Union building—a classical interior. The long, dark staircase is especially beautiful when lit through the expansive windows. The building showcases some of the most beautiful and impressive interiors of neo-baroque style in Lithuania. Many Lithuanian projects were shot here. Recent international projects include The Assets and War & Peace, as well as Jack the Ripper, a movie we shot last year for German television Sat. 1. This location also hosted the National Geographic TV movies Pope Vs Hitler and What Would Teddy Do?

Another favorite location is VRM Palace (Vidaus reikalu ministerija—Ministry of Inner Affairs), an example of a very specific Soviet style of architecture. The massive, brutalistic interior will make you feel insignificant. It has so many angles and ways to use light, it looks completely different every time. I really love this location and the director of the BBC Two movie The Eichmann Show also loves it—the location is even featured in one of the movie’s posters!

The old Vilnius sports palace is another location of that kind: massive, cold, strict and very cinematic.

Stevie: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN YOUR JOB?

JS: I think the very nature of a location manager’s work is already a challenge! There are so many things that you have to think about. You can never go into a shoot thinking that everything is ready and there will be no worries—there is always a possibility that something will go wrong and interfere with the filming. So I really take this job as a challenge and always try to check, double-check and triple-check to make sure everything is ready. And I always have “Plan B” as all location managers know, there are the most crazy scenarios that can happen.

I also find it challenging to film in abandoned and derelict places. There’s quite a lot of abandoned heritage left from former Soviet times and we tend to use it for filming quite often. These locations require a lot of work and care because we need to know exactly what the scope of our work is and all of the various safety concerns. I always try to take care of safety issues when we work, for example, in an old factory. We only work in the area we have to shoot and other parts of the building or territory are strictly prohibited. When the crew starts working, people are really focused on what they have to do and sometimes they simply forget to look around or think about their safety. So my goal is to make sure I always know what everybody is doing. We do get basic safety training and I also always check with the owners regarding any safety concerns. My rule is to get that information to the crew before the tech recce of the location, so I can be sure we know what is allowed and what is not. This also applies when we work in train stations, airfields, working factories, etc. Our department needs to take responsibility for the whole crew and not only control them, but also foresee potential problems.

Stevie: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST MEMORABLE FILMING EXPERIENCES?

JS: I really love working with different crews and different directors from all around the world. This is what makes every production memorable for me. It is really interesting to see how every director, DP and production designer can have a completely different approach to the same location. I must mention the Rumšiškės open-air museum of history as well. Rumšiškės is a “living history” museum which presents the mode of life, work and traditions of peasants and townspeople of all Lithuanian ethnographic areas. There are fragments of the villages, authentic farms, century-old buildings with flower gardens, orchards and vegetable gardens, with crosses and wooden-roofed poles, technical facilities—mills, forges, a fulling-mill and oil-mill lining along a 7 km circular route, meandering between forests, meadows and hills. In the center of the museum, there is a fragment of a township with its typical buildings where pots are shaped, amber and wood works are done and the weaving process of linen is presented. It offers so much realism to any production—sometimes we even joke here that the production is not properly done if you don’t shoot in Rumšiškės. We shot a lot of War & Peace there.

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It also really helps me to see how many different layers one location can have—you just need to have a different thought about it, a different feel.

However, my favorite filming experiences are when before the filming starts, it looks almost impossible to accomplish. On *War & Peace*, we had many challenging days, but one was particularly tough. On that day, we had two units scheduled to shoot at five different locations. Both started separately, then joined for a few big scenes and then separated again. For the snow scene, we had to do summer immediately followed by winter. And all of this happened in the very center of Vilnius Old Town during a very bright and sunny Saturday! It included everything—a lot of extras, horses, carriages, snow machines, traffic control, you name it! It all happened very well and I really felt great support not only from the city municipality, but from the people as well. Everybody was positive about the big activities happening around their favorite old town places.

Another memorable experience is last year’s production of *Pope Vs Hitler*, a docudrama for the National Geographic channel. It was a really intense production; we had 34 locations in just 10 days of filming. It was a big challenge not only logistically and organizationally, but creatively as well. We managed to do a great-looking show and I’m really proud of it.

**Stevie:** DOES LITHUANIA OFFER ANY INCENTIVES TO HOLLYWOOD FILMMAKERS?

**JS:** Yes it does. There’s a 20 percent tax break from the local spending. The program is supported by the state and it works through the private-business sector. There are some qualification requirements. The project needs to fit cultural criteria, there must be at least three shooting days in Lithuania and all the local spending needs to be audited and approved as proper local spending. If these criteria are met, the local service provider then gets the financial support from the local business. The local business then meets, the local service provider then gets the financial support from the profit. The financial support from this tax-break scheme usually arrives sometime after the project is finished, so the producers need to balance the cash flow properly. Unless, of course, you have a really long project, then there is an opportunity to use it several times during the project.

**Stevie:** WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT THE JOB?

**JS:** I love that it’s always different. There’s not a single project that is the same as the one before. I love it because it’s the best job possible! I get to meet so many creative people. Every shoot is a different and unique story. I really do what I like and what is really important is that I feel that I can add a certain value to a project I can help. It’s a great feeling to be a part of a creative project because when you start it, you can never tell the outcome. I’d say this is what I love about it the most.

**Stevie:** WHAT MAKE YOU DECIDE TO JOIN THE LMGI & HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

**JS:** I just became a member this year. I joined the LMGI because I believe it will help me to become a better location manager and learn from the best in this job from around the world. Lithuania is still a small part of the international film industry and I believe that joining an international community is a step forward for all the Lithuanian film industry.
MUST-SEE PLACE:

Vilnius Old Town is one of the largest surviving medieval towns in Northern Europe with an area of 887 acres. It encompasses 74 quarters, with 70 streets and lanes numbering 1,487 buildings. The oldest part of the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, it has grown over the course of centuries. Some of Europe’s greatest architectural styles—gothic, renaissance, baroque and neoclassical—stand side by side and complement each other.

FAVORITE SHOP:

Any coffee shop in the old town. It’s really nice to get a cup of fresh coffee early in the morning, for example, when you need to start at 6 a.m. The old town is still asleep and the streets look so idyllic.

FAVORITE RESTAURANT:

There’s just too many of them. The old town is full of high-quality restaurants where you can enjoy food and drinks. The Kitchen and Bistro 18 might be my favorites, but if you’re in Vilnius for several days, I would strongly recommend trying more restaurants!

BEST DAY TRIP:

Trakai/Uzutrakis (in summer). Built in the 14th century, Trakai Island Castle in Lake Galvé is one of the iconic Lithuanian sites and tourist attractions. Uzutrakis Manor is in Trakai Historical National Park, on the shore of Lake Galvé. The famous European landscape architect and botanist E.F. Andre created the original Uzutrakis park in a centennial forest with an interconnected pond system—its beauty is visible from the mansion’s terrace. The newly restored Uzutrakis mansion is open to visitors and hosts chamber music evenings with performances of well-known Lithuanian and foreign artists. You can take a train from Vilnius to Trakai, then rent a small boat and just have a nice day on the lake floating around the castle and the mansion.

FAVORITE NEIGHBORHOOD:

If not the old town, then it must be Uzupis. It is often called “The little Montmartre”—the place used to be full of artists and bohemians. Now it’s getting more gentrified, but the old feeling hasn’t been lost. Actually, Uzupis is a self-proclaimed “republic” and it even has its own constitution and it begins with the words: “Everyone has the right to live by the River Vilnelé, and the River Vilnelé has the right to flow by everyone.”

BEST BAR/CLUB:

Definitely Tamsta. It’s super-cozy, it has great artists and shows, the location is great and the staff is just amazing! I also must mention Legendos—the place that not only has great concerts but is also one of the favorite locations for filming in Vilnius.

BEST VANTAGE POINT/SCENIC VIEW:

There are so many points where you can see the amazing scenic views of our beloved old town, but if you really want to see all (I literally mean “all”) of Vilnius, you must go to the Vilnius TV Tower, take the elevator to the 19th floor, grab a cup of coffee or a glass of beer, and enjoy the view. The restaurant is constantly moving in a circle, so in about 15 or 20 minutes, you can see a 360-degree panorama of the city. If the weather is good, you can see as far as 50 km and the views are breathtaking!
Finding locations can sometimes prove dangerous—climbing mountains, crawling over rocks, entering destroyed buildings. Seldom does it involve encounters with AK-47s or hippopotamuses—unless your name is Deon du Preez, LMGI. A seasoned location manager based in Cape Town, South Africa, Du Preez has experienced just about every scary incident possible while scouting the African continent. However, the six-foot-tall warrior seldom gets scared for one simple reason. He comes into any situation super-prepared.

“You have to make sure you do your homework,” Du Preez, 48, says. “When I took (producer) Kevin De La Noy from Warner Bros. all over Africa scouting locations, at one point we had AK-47-holding ‘soldiers’ surrounding us. I disarmed them with a big smile and a piece of paper with an official stamp on it—in fact, with as big a variety of stamps as possible. It’s amazing what a massive smile and some stamped official-looking documents can do. It also helps to have a local fixer. Language is always a barrier in Africa, with all the dialects. It’s also best to hire someone local who’s connected because there’s a lot of corruption, politics and local government changes. You’ve got to work with the right people. It all comes down to relationships.”

Recounting his experiences traveling with Du Preez while scouting for The Legend of Tarzan, De La Noy says, “My brief was to go and scout and report back on the viability of The Heart of Darkness, the Belly of Africa—to scout countries that all seemed to have in common one of two things. Within the past five years, they either had a civil war or Ebola! This scout was to work out where we would film the African jungle magnificent, the huge virgin-planet world into which Tarzan could be positioned. Because I’d shot in Mozambique, Swaziland and Sierra Leone on Blood Diamond, the idea of taking in units to these difficult locations was deemed viable under production-controlled conditions.

“Deon set up the scout and accompanied me through Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda. We walked through a jungle over the border into the Democratic Republic of the Congo to obtain vast vista shots, and ultimately, we forged relationships with the President of Gabon such that over a year later, WB was the first major studio to go and film there. Deon was excellent. And, being an ex-location manager with five African films under my belt, I was a demanding traveling companion. We were in countries with no cellphone signal and, at times, little semblance of law and order. I would unreservedly use him again on my next film in Africa. To work there you need a highly specialized skill-set, and he has it. He is a solid, trustworthy individual you would want on your team.”

During his 22-year career, Du Preez has worked as a location manager on several dozen movies and series, including The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency, Homeland, The
South Africa's highly varied scenery was a big draw for the producers, Deon says. "I wanted it to be spectacular." His first instinct was to bring the creative team to "as many different and diverse locations as possible. I showed them some of the most spectacularly scenic places in South Africa: Byde River Canyon in Mpuumalanga and the Cederberg Mountains Nature Reserve, with its dramatic otherworldly rock formations and sand rock art. Byde River Canyon assisted in telling the story of Jake and The Gunslinger’s journey and transition from one region to the next. It’s the second biggest canyon in Africa. It’s a full green canyon with a river system and lake at the bottom. It’s unbelievable. You go from the lush green landscapes of the canyon to the Cederberg Mountains, which are completely dry and arid with weird red rock formations that are all mangled and twisted. It’s the most unbelievable view."

Another featured location is the Tankwa Karoo. "It’s a completely arid, flat moonscape," Du Preez says. "An area we shot at had a lava outburst in the region, so there were these black pebbles and weird outcrops of lava. It was complete nothingness."

Ultimately, Du Preez and his team cleared and prepped between 25 and 30 locations. Once in a while, the challenges became overwhelming. "There were a few occasions where I got despondent," he admits. "The director was very particular about what he wanted, so when we couldn’t find it, we kept on going until we did. We would do otherworldly landscapes. There had to be a slight edginess. You’d look at it, and it would be slightly off. That’s where the design came in quite nicely."

Adds Eatock, "The premise for ‘slightly off’ was to have normal environments and then suddenly a quick movement of ‘what was that’ in people, costume, faces, looks, etc. It’s a full moon feeling. Something isn’t right. Working with the design team, Deon sought out locations with character, weird dimensions, unfinished architecture—nothing you can put your finger on but unsettling. It worked.

One of Du Preez’s biggest challenges was finding locations appropriate for the secret valley where a village was situated. "At the beginning when we were looking for that damn valley, I was very discouraged. The valley had to be hidden and secret to assist in telling the story of a civilization that managed to survive undiscovered and off the grid for quite some time. A small village (the Manni Village) would be nestled in this hidden valley. The idea was that when The Gunslinger and Jake round a corner, the village and valley would all be revealed in one spectacular shot. "There was a catch. We had to build the entire village from scratch and erect animal pens, plant actual crops, etc., as well as film and service the location. But we had to be near an area where we could establish our logistical base." After many weeks of scouting with little success, Du Preez resorted to Google Earth. "I went snooping onto farms within various mountainous regions," he says. "After a few attempts, I spotted a small valley on the edge of a wine estate in the Worcester region, about an hour’s drive from Cape Town. I headed out there and managed to persuade the owner to allow us to scout the valley, which turned out to be a winner. We could swing a camera almost a full 360 degrees, being surrounded by mountains, without seeing anything related to modern civilization."

Du Preez and his crew spent almost six months on this location, from prep to wrap. "We put logistics in place in advance of any official prep," he says. "We built access roads and parking areas on the verge of the intended set area, pipe water nearer to the site, etc. Although it was on private property, we still have national environmental legislation to comply with, which makes it tricky. It’s an ongoing process ensuring that almost 200-plus crew and contractors are all aware of these restrictions and abide by the regulations on a daily basis. Once we completed filming and removed all set infrastructure, we also had to complete a land rehabilitation process. In the end, it worked well and looked great. Our art department and construction teams built the most spectacular little village, which we then burned down."

To keep people on their toes, Du Preez made sure everyone was reminded about the rules. "We had to keep good relationships with the owner," he says. "Every morning he’d have from 200 to 700 people driving past his homestead’s window to get to the
valley and village set. We had to maintain that relationship. We had to be precise and thorough, so we wrote notes on the call sheet."

Explaining in detail, he says, "Cape Town City is mostly surrounded by various nature reserves, national parks and marine reserves. As such, we have a massive amount of rules and regulations to comply with almost every time we step off a road. In addition to that, we are a high fire-risk region, and even the smallest fire could have a devastating effect on the environment. To ensure that all crew were well aware of all the rules, I drafted a Location Memo listing them, as well as anything else pertaining to that specific location. This was distributed in the prep phase to all crew and contractors. During the shoot, this Location Memo was added to the call sheet. The crew mostly complies. It's usually contractors and casual staff who would break the rules. No matter how small the infringement might seem, it could have major repercussions. Du Preez gives an example. "If the catering crew hid their litter in the bush in a reserve at wrap, that could result in all future permits for that project being pulled, as well as a hefty fine. So we cannot assume that all crew will comply. It makes our days longer as we have to double- and triple-check the set during filming and at wrap."

"Deon respects his locations as if they were his own," Potgieter adds. "He will never break contracted parameters. I always feel Deon can facilitate anything the art department throws at him." The key to it all is Du Preez's persistence and sense of responsibility. "We had a long, intense search, with six or seven scouts traveling, block by block, grid by grid. We knew the area, but it was a matter of finding fresh locations. With landscapes, we know what we can get. But to get a very specific location, you might have to go down a valley, cross a river, cut over a mountain ridge to a secret valley. To tell a story as required, it becomes a long, intensive search. He always went the extra mile. "We shot in government nature reserves that are very restricted," he says. "Idris' name made it easier to get support."

Because landscapes are so important to The Dark Tower, Du Preez often needed to get clearance for drones. "Drones are always an issue," he says. "Most of the time we managed to get permission. We wanted to show as much of the landscapes as possible. We were selling the wide, sweeping vistas." Du Preez is not accustomed to hearing the word NO. "I generally get what I want except when it comes to national parks," he says, "but I know what to expect. Because I have enough experience, they generally trust my judgment and feedback. We had to file in a few environmentally sensitive reserves with strict regulations. In one instance, we couldn't shoot with a drone at this beautiful canyon (Blyde River Canyon), so we put a crane on the edge and swung it out over the drop. Our lead characters were positioned in the gorge below and followed the exact path which the park ranger had carefully marked out in advance, avoiding damage to the sensitive flora. You win some, you lose some. It still looked amazing."

Du Preez was fortunate that the film was not dependent on shooting in the highly restrictive national parks. "Fortunately, there are many regional parks, but they could be just as problematic," he says, "so we had to give up on some ideas. In the Cederberg Mountains, we weren't permitted to use a helicopter, but the parks management compromised, and we could use a drone."

Du Preez insisted that he never felt in danger on The Dark Tower. Then he remembered the wildlife. "The Blyde River was inhabited by hippos and crocodiles, with leopards in the mountain above the river," he says. "Every day before crew arrived on set we had a team of rangers with rifles sweeping the set areas and perimeter. Snake experts swept the same areas because some of Africa's most poisonous snakes and scorpions live in the forest along the river's edge. Some of the crew were breaking out because there are some of the most dangerous animals in the world. The hippos scared the **** out of me. Each year they are responsible for the most attacks and deaths on humans. They will wander around exactly where they want to and if you find yourself between a hippo and the water, you may have over 1.5 tons of hippo coming at you at the speed of a freight train. The risk and effort were definitely worth it, as the canyon is truly one of the most spectacular locations in SA."

Eatock was particularly taken with the Cederberg Mountains, which are home to an ancient landscape where the Bushmen once lived. "South Africa holds many an ancient site," she says,
"and rock paintings with evidence of Bushmen habitation are part of our history. The geology of this region is so very different to anything you can see anywhere else in the world. The uniqueness and sheer vastness provided the connective tissue of traveling through worlds, wastelands and environments to make the journey of The Gunslinger a real one for audiences."

"The Cederberg Mountains Reserve has been used in some movies over the years but not often in big features," Du Preez adds. "It’s difficult to take vehicles in as one has to remain on single-track roads and set up logistical support in very small parking areas. We can only get so close. Because it’s a nature reserve, there are restrictions. We parked the trucks and walked everything in. The actors hiked in, climbing over rocks to get to the spot we wanted. Idris loved it. Everyone was up for it, so we got on with it."

Du Preez’s approach is 100 percent hands-on, whether he’s re-searching, prepping or lugging equipment. "You get in the car and you drive and you go look for it," he says. "You’ve got an idea of what the landscape looks like, so you know where to start. You go up and down every dirt track and check out every proper-ty, even those with signage that says, ‘KEEP OUT TRESPASSERS WILL BE SHOT!’ You may be frustrated, but you’ve got to keep going." This dogged quality is what got Du Preez into location work. "I’ve always loved cinema and the outdoors and wanted to travel," he says about his early life. "My older brother was a loca-tion scout, and after hanging out on sets with him, I got hooked. I gave up my 9-to-5 job, got a truck and camera and started knock-ing on doors saying, ‘I’m a location scout.’ I initially worked for nothing. People saw that I was going to keep bugging them. I was ruthless. I went after it 100 percent. I had no fallback plan.

"There was not a lot of filming in the mid-’90s—mostly commer-cials and European movies that went straight to video. Later it got easier." And he got better at it. "The people I work with I’ve known for a long time," he says. "I always tell those I train up that it’s about relationships and trust. I get two weeks and some Europeans others might not. It makes it easier if I say, ‘This is how it will be run,’ and it will actually be run that way. That’s why we’re able to come back to the same place."

Line producer Eatoch adds, "A lot of South Africa’s ancient land-scapes are understandably governed by strict access and activi-ties. Finding a farm or estate that contained this type of land-scape in a private capacity under the strict supervision of ECO (environmental and conservation requirements) officers was paramount. Deon and his colleagues scouted extensively, knock-ing on every door, driving, walking or biking onto private land to make contact with land owners. The farm we found for the Mami Village had ancient rock paintings of historic significance. We lucked out. The owners let us in."

Eatoch, who worked with Du Preez on the TV series Strike Back and Dominion, stresses his supportive side. "Deon is gentle but straightforward—no mincing of words, no ‘ifs’ or ‘maybes.’ He hates wasting anyone’s time. What makes him unique is that whilst you always feel he will stop at nothing to get a location we need, he is 100 percent committed to playing fair, respect-ing all locations. He also has a passion for ECO compliance. The politics of that balancing act is hardly ever put onto production."

Du Preez is solidifying his role as elder statesman of the South African location community. He recently spent 10 weeks tak-ing a health and safety course through the University of Cape Town. He says, "Health and safety have become part of our day-to-day job, and anything I can do to help make productions run smoother and make my job easier, I will. A couple of senior loca-tion guys get together every few weeks and have a catch-up chat. We share information, focus on doing things the right way and discuss ways of adapting to changes or new regulations."

This does not mean that Du Preez is stepping away from hands-on location work. It anything, he is widening his geographical range. He now considers most of Southern Africa his territory. "I go all over the place," he says. "Botswana, Namibia, Mozam-bique, parts of Kenya, Congo—all over Africa.

"I met my wife in Botswana when we were both working on The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency. (They have an 8-year-old daughter and live in Cape Town.) She was an accommodation coordinator. She knows location work is my passion and is very understanding. I’m comfortable enough to work anywhere, although it can be tough being away from my family for long periods at a time. As more and more projects shoot in Cape Town, Du Preez may be able to stay home for longer stretch-es. Giving a shout-out to the city, he says, “A lot of people don’t realize that Cape Town can stand in for the UK and various USA scepes. We have a cheap San Diego, a cheap LA, a cheap New York. That’s what we do. We can do landscapes for the American West, Afghanistan, Russia, Poland, Euro-pean countries. Over the last two centuries, we’ve become very diverse in landscapes and architecture. It’s nice to know all the big studios coming to South Africa. To keep growing we’ve got to train more people coming up through the ranks. The more of the country we can show, the better. Word gets around and people come." However, higher demand can mean cutting corners. "A lot of youngsters coming in pick up the phone and call a location agent (to help find locations),” Du Preez says. "Everyone wants to shoot in Cape Town because of what it of-fers as a city. It’s a First World city in a beautiful environment. People feel comfortable here, and there’s so much to do for crew in their time off! As a result, some areas in Cape Town can be overshot. You can only cheat so much, and there are only so many weekends."

He, of course, is in there fighting for his own projects. After completing The Dark Tower, he served as location manager, South Africa, for the new version of Tomb Raider, starring Alicia Vikander as Lara Croft.

"I think that besides the favorable exchange rate and rebates, one of the main reasons why they chose to film in South Africa was that we have incredibly beautiful and diverse landscapes. We offer on offer within a radius of 34 miles from the city center of Cape Town," Du Preez says. "We scouted all over South Africa as we wanted to show off the best of what we have. However, we man-aged to locate pretty much anywhere I wanted to go. To get into private property in the Western Cape re-gion, with the exception of some spectacular locations along the coast of the Southern Cape and inland and in the Kwa Zulu Natal region. Without giving away too much, the biggest require-ments were on jungle and tropical island locations in true Lara Croft style. When we started the project, 70 percent was going to be shot here and 30 percent in the UK, but we ended up shooting over 90 percent here."

Next up for Du Preez is The Warrior, a 10-episode Cinemax series inspired by an idea from the late Bruce Lee, to shoot in Cape Town. Cinemax describes it as "a gritty, action-packed crime-drama set during the brutal Tong Wars of San Francisco’s Chinatown in the second half of the 19th century."

Interesting as that might be, The Warrior is unlikely to present the enormous challenges of The Dark Tower: "The Dark Tower legacy comes with huge responsibility," Eatoch concludes. "We are talking about the love of child of Stephen King developed and written over 25 years of his career! The fan base of The Dark Tow-er literary works is massive and demanding. To bring Mr. King’s legacy to life, we knew was going to be like nothing we ever had to produce before in terms of locations. We had to offer the most

"The Dark Tower provided the location department with theulti-mate challenge—which was to not be restricted! Go crazy! Open all the doors you can! Be as out the box as you like! A challenge indeed, but who wouldn’t want that challenge?"
It was the sixth night of the Fam Tour and it felt like rain. Clouds rolled overhead as seven LMGI location managers, one journalist and two Tahiti Tourisme organizers finished a fresh seafood feast on the patio of the Maikai Marina Yacht Club overlooking the ocean. We were on the island of Bora Bora, as travel agents will sell you, the most beautiful place on earth. Arguably, they’re right. It’s a tropical dream ... a screensaver ... a cliché ... le paradis avec un accent français...
Many old enough remember and lament the loss of old Hawaii before developers, condos, hotels and big money arrived, forever changing the unique culture of the islands. Well, Tahiti remains that proud underdeveloped treasure. Yes, there are the few high-end resorts. But for the majority of the islands and its inhabitants, Tahiti endures as an untouched paradise. Filming with its come, work, spend money and leave business plan, fits well with Tahiti’s protective nature.

As our aqua transport pulsed through pitch-black waters, I realized my invitation to the others at dinner for a whiskey nightcap was pointless. The catamarans were far separated and hidden in the dark. There was no way to get from one to another. It seemed lucky we’d find our own boat let alone see the others. Besides, we were tired. Even on a utopian island, daylong trek schedules, insomniac camera clicks, and meet & greet dinners will wear one down. When each day ends, horse-trading battery chargers for mosquito repellant, you know you’re spent. Throw in dinner and you’ve got a sleepy crew, content to retire early.

Once aboard, realizing it was only 9:30 pm, traveler’s guilt overtook us. Hell—we were on a big, pimpin’ yacht in the South Pacific. When would THIS ever happen again? Certainly, we could fit in just one drink before bed. We divvied the plastic cups and settled on the back deck to relax and sip. For a while we chatted about potential film locations we’d seen that day then eased into comfortable and complete silence—barely hearing the warm waves gently whispering past.

Suddenly, water splashing. We looked at each other, puzzled, alarmed. The splashing was at our boat. It became loud. Violently and deserted road, camera bag and fast-food wrappers on the passenger seat. Driving and scouting, driving and scouting … endlessly.

Tahiti, the islands of Tahiti, or, properly, the Overseas Collectivity of the French Republic of Polynesia, consists of 118 geographically dispersed islands and atolls stretching over more than 1,200 miles in the South Pacific Ocean. Its territory is the collection of the Society Islands, the Tuamotus, and the Gambier Islands. It is the largest geographical area of French Polynesia. The islands of Tahiti are the territory’s capital and largest islands. The islands of Tahiti, or Tahiti, is a territory of the French Republic located in the South Pacific Ocean. Tahiti is a part of the French Polynesian administrative region of Tahiti and a Pacific island nation in French Polynesia. Tahiti is the largest island in French Polynesia, with a land area of 1,045 square kilometers (403 square miles) and a population of 99,306 as of 2019. Tahiti is the largest island in French Polynesia, with a land area of 1,045 square kilometers (403 square miles) and a population of 99,306 as of 2019. The island is located in the Society Islands, one of the groups that make up French Polynesia.

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November 2018: All location professionals know there are varying degrees to which we participate in our collective. Hopefully, most of you regularly flock to the LMGI, some of you go to location meetings, award shows, location trade shows and holiday parties. Some keep in touch through various online chatrooms and professional invite-only email exchanges. We stay informed with film commissions. We try to stay involved. We should.

But we weren’t sleeping on the island that night—after the meal our group would split up, board inflatable dinghies and transport our boats—drifting hotels for the evening—anchored far offshore in the bay. I was sharing my four-cabin sailboat with location managers Karen Swenson, Scott Tramblé, and London-based Location Guide editor Thomas Dreehers. There was also a captain, who, for reasons never explained, parked our boat hundreds of meters away from our companions.

Arriving at the event, the first note was a reception line of well-dressed visitors, each sipping a tray of wine, champagne, beer and d’oeuvres; but few attendees. It was early—and it was Tuesday night. Twenty location professionals mingled in the large back yard speaking with Tahiti Tourism, and French government officials. I recognized some friendly faces. There should be more of my colleagues here, I thought. The party was set to accommodate many. I should be waiting in line at the buffet serving flawless French cuisine and fresh Tahitian-style seafood. I wondered if the invitation had widely circulated. I was too busy to see it, like I had. No matter … why yes, I would like more champagne, thank you very much. The Consul General of France in Los Angeles and Mrs. Durexus Usai, Tahiti Tourism North American (TTNA), and Transit Sat Nui, requested the pleasure of your company at a cocktail reception … meet with professionals who will share the ins-and-outs of successful location filming in the Islands of Tahiti and learn about … locations, incentives, and resources. At the Residence de France, Beverly Hills. Wine, champagne and savories will be served.

Cocktail reception? Savories? The French Consulate’s mansion in Beverly Hills, yes. I will RAVE! Why not? It’s on my way home. And because I’m not a grip, I always keep a sport coat in the car. Like bolt cutters, an indispensable tool in a location manager’s kit you never know when you need to close a deal with someone tougher than you.

In short order, found myself chatting with Jonathan Reap, Managing Director of Tahiti Tourism North America, one of our hosts. He was fun—a sharp-witted, kinetic, tireless advocate for all things Tahitian. He’d partially grown up on the islands. He had worked for TTNA for 12 years, and had encyclopedic knowledge of all things Tahitian. He knew the name of every major

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But the success didn’t end there. Besides *Couples Retreat* in quick succession Tahiti hosted *The Hangover* season six, IMAX: *The Ultimate Wave Tahiti*, and an episode of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. All four projects aired or were released by August 2011. Fan's numbers go so far as the statistic spread amongst the Island of Tahiti where tourism is the number one driving force.

**2011 September individual bookings up 600%**

**November bookings up 800%**

**December bookings up 1000%**

**Total year bookings up more than 25%**

The islands of Tahiti accommodate roughly the same number of tourists a year that Hawaii has in a week. And there are more hotel rooms at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas than there are in all the shops of Tahiti! These increases are monumental and impossible to overstate for the national economy.

There are many things I like about our profession. On a macro-level the relationships you nurture as a crew member, the satisfaction in being part of a creative endeavor, and knowing a show wouldn’t look the same if it wasn’t for you—all exceptional vocational arts. On a macro-level saturating the economy of a country, as Jonathan Reap recounted at the French Consulate in Beverly Hills, was something more than I’d ever considered. Something extraordinary I presided in that moment to contribute time and effort helping Tahiti market itself as a location.

**July 2016**: In fits and starts, Tahiti Tourism of North America executives Call Langley, Jeffrey Crochet and I, under the supervision of director Jonathan Reap, crafted a marketing plan culminating with their first location Fam Tour. The path was obvious: gather and categorize all film-related resources in Tahiti; list of government ministries and personnel applicable to production; partner with airlines, hotels, ground and water transport companies to aid with both Fam Tour and future productions; decide which sites to visit.

We weren’t reinventing the wheel. One doesn’t know better than the many LMGI business member film commissions for gold-standard guidance when promoting a location. They’ve been doing it for years. Ideally, when reduced to basics, the best location for an artist is one with the necessary film crew, support and crew promotion to maximize its potential.

But Tahiti has excellent production personnel that have been working on the islands for decades. But unless you have someplace interesting to shoot and the ability to feed and house the crew promotion is a virtual non-entity.

Deciding which specific locations to promote within the islands became a consideration. As the crew had thought, the islands of Tahiti come in quick succession Tahiti hosted *The Hangover* season six, IMAX: *The Ultimate Wave Tahiti*, and an episode of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. All four projects aired or were released by August 2011. Fan’s numbers go so far as the statistic spread amongst the Island of Tahiti where tourism is the number one driving force.

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Although the exact numbers are proprietary, Tahiti Tourism budgeted between $25K to $35K for the tour, plus an additional $3K for airline travel (business class for the international segments). The actuals were within budget. These amounts would not be possible without the generous discounts provided by hotel, transport and tour companies, in partnership with Tahiti Tourism. Caut estimated if one were to re-book the tour at market rate, it would be north of $92K.

The Fam Tour was scheduled for October 13-20, 2016. A 20-person preliminary list was generated based on international location scouts and managers. We planned on final attendance of eight location pros and two Tahiti Tourism managers. The challenge trying to assemble top location managers and scouts is that they are often working, committed to projects and unable to take time off. Another challenge is assembling a compatible group. The crew gathered for Fam Tour Tahiti 2016 was exceptional in every way. Journalist Thomas Deehan, LMIR location managers Chris Baugh, Golden Swenson, Eric Hooge, Catherine Kagan, Scott Trimble, and the master emeritus of the unit, with a career spanning five decades, Dow Griffith. Every member of the group had previously attended international Fam Tours except for me. It all went well, ‘tis the liaison between the film location world and the tourism world.

October 2016: We met at the LAX Tom Bradley International Terminal for the red-eye flight to Papeete, Tahiti. Dow had landed from his home in Seattle and Thomas from London. The rest of us were Los Angeles-based. The direct flight, just under eight hours, is about two hours longer than a flight to Hawaii. With a 5 a.m. arrival combined with the two-hour time difference, we began what was a 72-hour blitz at the Intercontinental Moorea Resort, the only hotel at the volcanic black sand beach on the main island. Most of us shut down for a few hours of sleep. Scott Trimble scaled the nearby cliffs for perfect scouting photos.

Over the next two days spent on the main island, we were transported by the lovely Mrs. Popo and her group of “Happy Popo Taxi.” Have you ever bugged a narrow cliff-side road in a mini-van with bench seats undaunted to the vehicle floor, sliding haphazardly back-and-forth with every stop and turn? We did.

Many old enough remember and lament the loss of “old Hawaii” before developers, condos, hotels and big money arrived, forever changing the islands’ unique culture. Well, the islands of Tahiti remain that proud undeveloped region. Yes, there are the few high-end resorts. But for the majority of the islands and their inhabitants, Tahiti endures as an untouched paradise. Film locations in Tahiti were a perfect fit with Tahiti’s protective nature. The greater part of Tahiti’s tourism is the cruise ship and the over-the-water expense of the Intercontinental Moorea Resort and the Hilton Moorea Lagoon Resort. Moorea is more rural and quiet than Tahiti. We traversed up winding lanes to the popular Biedermeier Overlook, with a majestic mountaintop view of the north side of the island, including Cook’s Bay and Opunohu Bay. On our descent, we toured the rolling hills of a pineapple plantation.

This perfect day ended with a six-course dinner at our hotel, Sofitel Moorea Ia Ora Beach Resort. We were joined by the hotel’s general manager, the executive chef, and the US State Department Consular to French Polynesia, Christopher Kozely. He was especially affable, a warm and oversized personality, he recounted numerous stories hosting Hollywood projects. He believed our mission to increase filming, and to that end, he was at our service. Our group received dozens of business cards on this Fam Tour. Consular Kozely was the one I would laminate.

The following days involved inter-island flights to Raiatea Island to traverse the tropical Fa’aor River, splitting a jungle so dense I thought we were reenacting a scene from Apocalypse Now. Then aboard the catamarans for a three-day sail to Tahaa and Bora Bora islands. The catamaran voyage might be considered the highlight of the Fam Tour. The days were always a steady 82°F with a warm breeze. No matter how short the sail, we were also treated to perfect photo angles of mountains and islands unseen from land.

Le Tahaa Island Resort, accessible only by boat on its own private motu (small island), stood out amongst the five-star heavyweight destinations. Completely contained and the definition of French Polynesian elegance, even at full capacity, you could walk the kohi tikoritile property and feel as if you were the only one there.

At dawn, our tiny armada of boats headed toward Bora Bora. Very few get to observe the dramatic approach by sea as most fly into the island, so up-at-dawn we all were, standing sentry on deck, coiled in hand. Bora Bora does not disappoint. Its jagged peaks and aqua-blue lagoon look cartoonishly perfect, as if colorfully painted at the drafting table of a Disney designer. There is nothing new I can write about its beauty that hasn’t been written before. The first Bora Bora hotel opened in 1961, and I guarantee its landscapes have been the hallmark of Hollywood postcards ever since. We hiked, sailed, drove and helicoptered around for two days. We lounged on a private motu whose eclectic owner had odd, life-sized statues sunk to the ocean floor to freak out approaching scuba divers. We dined on the glass dock at the St. Regis Resort and watched sharks circling below us as we munched on their heavymetals.
a diverse itinerary. And second, we built time into each day for rest and relaxing alone periods. Neither should be underestimated.

It is easy to fall in love with a paradise like Tahiti. But there are countless beautiful places on earth to film a movie. Sometimes location professionals need to be guided to the right place, to a new place, so they can see for themselves that THIS is the exact place to be. Moreover, it takes individuals committed to participating in our collective—professionals willing to hop in a van, board a boat, or stuff into an airline seat and participate in growing our craft and expanding our communal knowledge.

During the last Tahiti Fam Tour dinner, we all made speeches thanking our generous hosts. Then Dow Griffith stood to toast. He similarly thanked our hosts, but then spoke movingly about how important it was for groups of location professionals to gather together, share experiences, frustrations, labors and victories. That as a group, we are smarter and better at our craft than as individuals. And that often, from this group, we find encouragement and guidance.

So as Dow stood wet and naked on our boat three evenings earlier during his quest for Irish whiskey, we all encouraged him to grab a towel. Then we shared a drink and laughed and talked for another hour until it was too late. I remember all of us checking with Dow before he returned into the ocean for the long swim back to his catamaran. You’re sure you’re okay, right? You can make this, right? Yes, yes, yes—he insisted, he was fine. Okay.

As I climbed to my cabin below deck, I heard Dow splashing off into the darkness. Then Golden Swenson shouting, “Dow! You’re swimming the wrong way! Your boat’s over there!”

…encouragement and guidance…

The islands of Tahiti are much closer than many think, just an eight-hour nonstop flight from Los Angeles with daily departures on Air Tahiti Nui. Tahiti is a perfect backdrop for filming.
A few months ago, I was invited with a group of location managers by the Aragon Film Commission and the Huesca Film Office (LMGI business member) to tour Aragon, Spain. Aragon is an autonomous community (similar to a state in the United States) composed of three provinces: Zaragoza, Huesca and Teruel. Aragon is a large area (18,424 sq. miles) in northeastern Spain that stretches north from the mountains of Teruel to the Pyrenees Mountains along the border of France. Over the course of seven days, our wonderful hosts showed us as much as time and distance allowed. Aragon is a location manager’s paradise with medieval towns, castles, churches, monasteries and natural parks, featuring mountains, cliffs, deserts and lakes.
The highlight of the tour was the ghost city of Belchite. Juan Galindo of the Belchite Tourism Office was our guide. He was accompanied by Carmelo Pérez, the Mayor of Belchite. Together, they shared the history and haunting imagery of this magical location.

Belchite is a town of narrow streets and medieval architecture that was destroyed during the Spanish Civil War. Between August and September 1937, there was a terrible battle with forces fighting street-by-street and house-to-house. The Republicans won the Battle of Belchite but were not able to hold it long. By March 1938, Franco’s rebel forces retook the town.

There is an uncanny feeling you get visiting a place where people have fought and died. As you walk the dirt streets of this destroyed town, the reality of what went on here somehow speaks to you. In 1936, Belchite was a thriving town with 3,800 inhabitants. It’s 1,200 buildings, including three churches, two convents, a monastery, seminary, a hospital, huge homes and a busy central square. Today, the streets are a maze of rubble. There is no backlot anywhere that has the same evocative feeling as an actual war zone.

When Franco’s fascists first arrived in 1936, the killing began. More than 200 people were executed, including the socialist mayor and anyone suspected of being a leftist. People were taken from their homes and shot by firing squads in the town square. Bodies of the dead were dumped in a nearby well. It wasn’t until the Republic tried to retake the town in September 1937 that the Battle of Belchite began. The town was under siege with no way in or out. After 12 days of vicious fighting, more than 3,000 people, both soldiers and civilians, died or were wounded. Being trapped, with no way to bury the dead, the bodies were piled up in front of the hospital and succumbed to the brutal August heat. The hospital is now a pile of rubble but the memory of what happened there still lingers. Eventually, the bodies were taken to the central square and burned en masse. A simple metal cross, the Cross of the Fallen, made by POWs in 1940, now marks this tragic spot. In March 1938, the city again fell into the hands of Franco’s army. Both reprisals were followed by terror and death. Retaliation continued in a systematic and institutionalized way after 1938.

Like other medieval towns, Belchite was a walled city, but the “walls” consisted of small and large houses squeezed together side by side. There were three entrance gates but only two remain. As in other medieval towns, Belchite had one main road that ran the length of the town, High Street. Most of the population lived in houses on narrow streets that connected to High Street. Belchite’s narrow streets forced the combatants to forego using heavy equipment and engage in house-to-house combat. Civilians were forced into their cellars, hoping to survive.

Both the German and Italian air force fought on the side of the fascists and Belchite was subjected to aerial bombardment, which left many of the medieval buildings in ruins. However, the remains of a couple of large churches are still standing. Even though severely damaged, the Church of St. Augustine, built in the 18th century, continued to hold services until 1964. A stark reminder of the war is an unexploded bomb that remains imbedded in the second story of the church.

Once the frontline moved beyond Belchite, residents returned to find the town destroyed. At first, the inhabitants were promised that the town would be rebuilt but General Francisco Franco received propaganda value from the destruction. Rather than allowing the citizens to rebuild, he ordered a new Belchite town to be built alongside the old one, using POWs as forced labor leaving “old” Belchite untouched as a “living memorial” to the dead. The old town was officially abandoned in 1964. There are people still living who have the keys to what remains of their old houses.

Belchite welcomes filming. It requires ongoing restoration of the ruins to keep them from total collapse into rubble. Filming fees greatly assist in the restoration efforts. Over the years, several projects have filmed there. Most recently, a commercial for Mobile Strike—Heavy Artillery, featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger and the feature films, Terry Gilliam’s The Adventures of Baron Munchausen and Guillermo del Toro’s Pan’s Labyrinth. Last June, the feature, Agustí Villaronga’s Uncertain Glory (based on a bestselling novel about the civil war), was filmed in Belchite.

Such a strange legacy—this city of ghosts now adds haunting authenticity to war movies. It has found a new life on the silver screen and as a tourist destination.
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From left to right: Juan Galindo/Belchite Tourism Office, Carmelo Perez/Mayor of Belchite, Bob Craft/LMGI, Teresa Maria Azcona Alejandre/Aragon Film Commission and Joe Abel/LMGI. Photo courtesy of Bob Craft/LMGI.
MARTINI SHOT
33° 4’ 72” S / 71° 61’ 27” W

Valparaiso, Chile
Photo by Ariel Leon Isacovitch

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