

# COMPASS

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The Official Magazine of the Location Managers Guild International

# COMPASS



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-HENRY MILLER

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Photo by Ilze Kitshoff

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# FROM THE EDITORS' DESK



Traveling for the summer? We are fortunate to count members of the AFCA (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!

*"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

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](mailto: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

A collage of images representing various film locations in Riverside County. The collage includes: Mission Inn (a large, ornate building), Coachella Valley (wind turbines), Palm Springs (a modern building with a pool), Wine Country (a vineyard with a hot air balloon), and Salton Sea (a beach with seagulls). The text "MISSION INN", "COACHELLA VALLEY", "PALM SPRINGS", "WINE COUNTRY", and "SALTON SEA" is overlaid on the images. The word "FILM" is written in large, bold letters across the center, and "RIVERSIDE COUNTY" is written in large, bold letters below it. In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for the Riverside County Film Commission (RCFC) featuring a director's chair and a film reel. In the bottom right corner, the text "Riverside County Film Commission" is written in bold, followed by the email address "Info@FilmRiversideCounty.com" and the website "www.FilmRiversideCounty.com".

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



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



## COMPASS

Official Magazine of  
Location Professionals  
Promoting Excellence  
on Location Worldwide

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# CONTRIBUTORS



## Kiki Akinrele

Kiki is the Administrative Director for the LMGI and the Creative Director of KLF Concepts, Inc., specializing in business development and design. She has worked with companies in various fields, spanning property development, fashion (wholesale, design and production), medical aesthetics and more.

Wondering how to pronounce her last name? Her answer: "Remember, I can relate when saying Akinrele." A phrase she uses to help people remember her name and a skill (relating) that evolved from a multicultural background. Kiki has lived in Africa, Europe and the United States. In the process, she learned French and Spanish and earned an AA in fashion design from Los Angeles Trade Tech and a BA in business economics, minoring in information systems from the University of Brussels (Vrij Universiteit Brussel—Vesalius College).



## Bob Craft

Bob Craft is a Los Angeles transplant with over 25 years of experience as a manager and scout. Bob fell in love with film in college, went to graduate film school at NYU and got his first job as a PA on *The Warriors*, shooting three months in the subways of New York. He has never looked back. He is currently scouting on an Alexander Payne feature film.



## Nancy Haecker

Nancy Haecker, former President of the Location Managers Guild International, has won numerous awards for her work as a location professional. Her experience covers the spectrum of production from blockbuster and indie films to episodic television, print and commercial work. She attended the prestigious New House School at Syracuse University and received a fine arts degree from the University of Arizona. Some of her credits include *Bloodline*, *The Revenant*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Agent Carter*, *Wild*, *House* and *Into the Wild*, just to name a few.



## Kent Matsuoka

Kent Matsuoka is a location scout and manager who has been honored with the California on Location Award (COLA) for Commercial Location Professional of the Year in 2010, a COLA nomination in 2013 and a nomination for the inaugural LMGI Award in 2014. A former Board member of the LMGI, he's still active with the Guild, keeping the LMGI Facebook page current with stories about the perils and pleasures of working on location when not too busy participating in Fam Tours.



## Edward Mazurek

Chicago native Edward Mazurek began delivering newspapers at age 11 and has been employed ever since, conquering such professions as golf caddy, landscaper, snow removal, dishwasher, prep cook, bus boy, line cook, lifeguard, Solo Cup company factory worker, receptionist, pet store stock boy, door-to-door sales, phone sales, security guard, UCLA Emergency Room aid, small-business owner and editorial assistant at Condé Nast. These work experiences made him the location manager he is today.

Edward Mazurek's many credits include the feature films *The Circle*, *Ali* and the TV series *Counterpart*, *Mary + Jane*, *The Comeback*, *Silicon Valley*, *Faking It*, *Body of Proof*, *Greek*, *Friends with Benefits*, *South of Nowhere* and *Arrested Development*.



## Nancy Mills

Nancy Mills is a freelance entertainment writer whose work has appeared in dozens of magazines and newspapers around the world, including *USA Today*, *USA Weekend* magazine, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Us Weekly*, *People*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *The Costco Connection*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Daily News*, *The Guardian*, *International Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times Syndicate*. Over the years, she has visited hundreds of TV and film locations in such far-flung spots as China, India, Italy, France, Germany, England, Mexico, Australia and Fiji. She is a graduate of Cornell University.



## 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 proof 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 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.



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# IN THE NEWS

## 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 Statewide) on Saturday, May 20, at CBS Studio Center in Studio City. Film commissions and vendors from up and down California spotlighted their regions and what they had to offer at informational booths. The table was helmed by LMGI President Eric Klosterman, Robin Citrin, LMGI and Karen Bryden, as well as Nicole Young and Kendra Holmes



Table manned by Robin Citrin and President Eric Klosterman. Photo by Mark Gandee

of SCV Locations/LMGI business member.

Well-attended panels focused on a variety of topics, including the making of the popular NBC TV series *This Is Us*. Location manager Duffy Taylor, LMGI teared up talking about how great it was to work on such an emotionally charged show and the challenges of finding locations to match Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, New Jersey and New York across various time periods. Other panels included discussions of financing for independent films, sustainability, and content production and distribution in a transformative digital age.

Executive producer Betsy Beers (*Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, *The Catch*, *Still Star-Crossed* and *For the People*) received the Golden Slate Award for her commitment to diversity and generating jobs. Betsy reeled off an impressive list of the shows and iconic locations filmed around the state that inspired her to move to California.

## 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 Schuler, 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](mailto: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 Dorion Thomas); three returning members (JJ 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*, *MacGyver*)

has been in locations for 25-plus 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 an international organization.



**Matt Chamberlin**  
(*Modern Family*, *Sully*) has been a member of the LMGI since

2007 and a member of the locations community since 1996. He brings with him the experience of working the Los Angeles, New York and Atlanta location markets, expertise

in negotiations, staffing, health insurance, pension plans, vendor needs and advancement opportunities. While on the Board, Matt will work to help continue expanding the LMGI brand worldwide.



**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.

## 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



Calumet Farms is what Kentucky is known for: horses and rolling hills. Photo by Ann Lukacs/LMGI



Winchester, Kentucky. Photo by Ann Lukacs/LMGI

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-wood distilleries. "Lexington limestone" naturally filters the groundwater, creating both the bourbon and the bluegrass, plus the largest filmable cave system in the world.



Distillery. Photo by John Hutchinson/LMGI

19th-century farms and communities, landscapes similar to New Zealand and Oregon, and factories like Toyota, Jif (yes, the peanut butter), Fruit of the Loom, General Electric and of course, Louisville Slugger. Ample restaurants, bars, back alleys, parks, diverse neighborhoods and the University of Kentucky provide locations that all productions

seek. Downtown buildings are diverse—both historic and contemporary—and include plenty of the usual suspects: diner dives, hipster cafes, Irish bars, a jail, a hospital, a school to use for filming.

Kentucky has firmly entered the American incentives market. In May 2015, the state launched a competitive film incentive, and has steadily increased its share of US-based filming. The Kentucky Film Incentive is smart: a refundable tax credit of 30 percent of all expenditures, including nonresident crew, and 35 percent for local crew and filming in "enhanced incentive" counties, which

With this first Fam Tour, Kentucky is making all the right moves. The VisitLex staff proved themselves responsive and creative, good listeners and nimble—in other words, fully ready to host production.



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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



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,



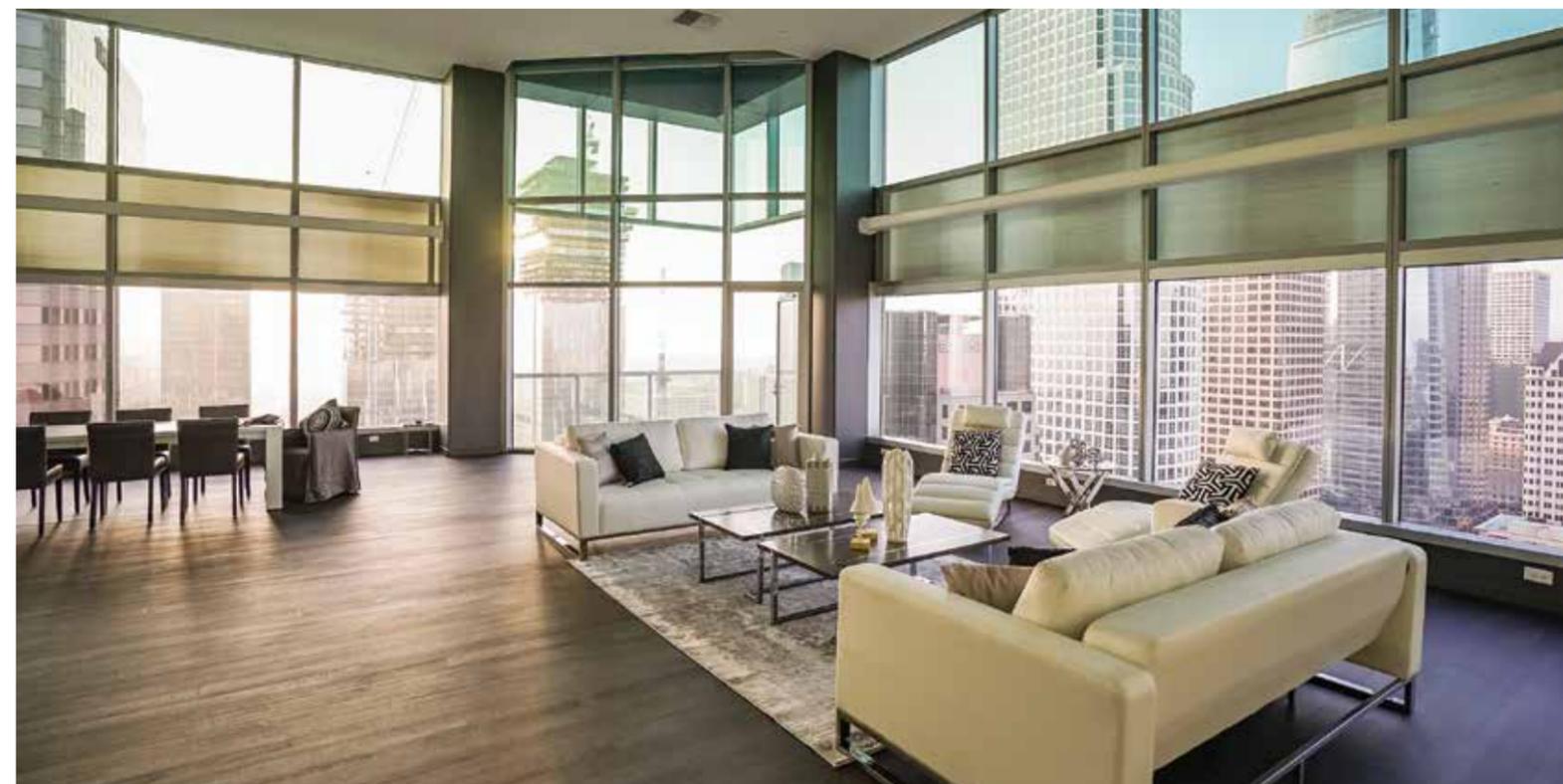
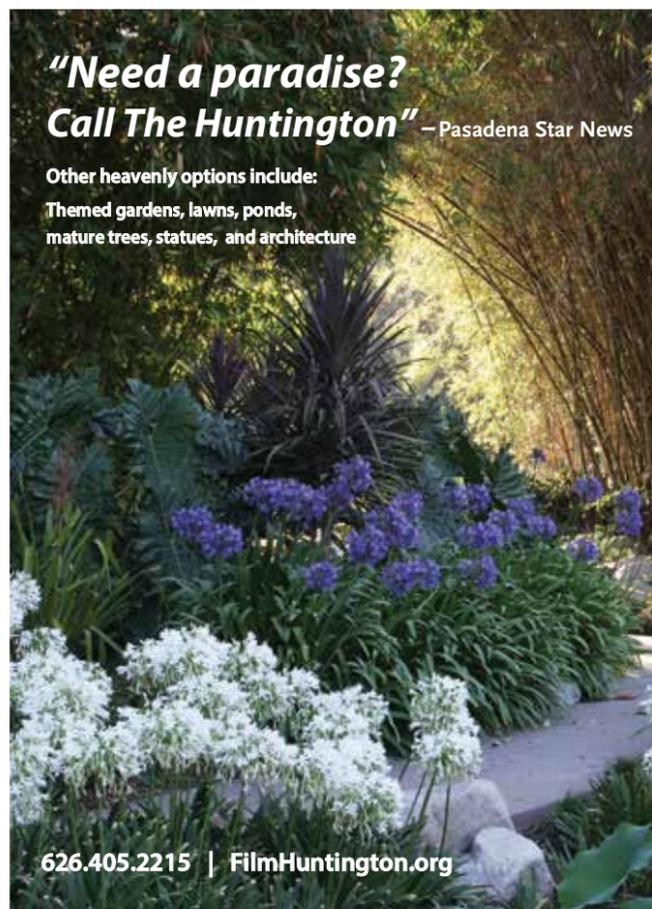
Photo by Park Jung Hoon

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.

an abandoned shipyard, and a variety of roads, train stations and bridges that can be controlled for filming.

Some highlights include the Gwangan Diamond Bridge, featured in the *Black Panther* trailer, the neighborhood surround the



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# CAREER FOCUS

## The Model of Professionalism: Print Location Pro Peter McClafferty

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.

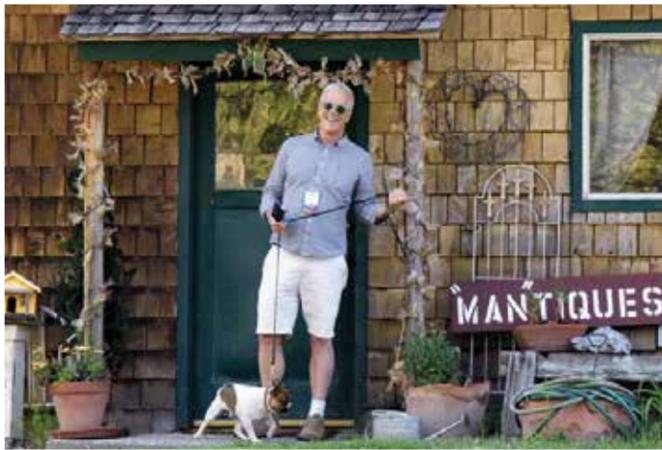


Photo by Lori Balton/LMGI

Peter McClafferty. All photos courtesy of Peter McClafferty

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 to cover each 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 brash 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."

I absolutely loved my time at Elite. Working for the top model agency in the world, I learned how to navigate the many nuanced 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.

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?—I didn't), to the police being called after a grip truck driver refused to move and a scuffle broke



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

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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



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

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.

## LOC PRO TOP TEN

### 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
7. Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia, PA, US
8. Craco, Italy
9. Gouqi Island, Hangzhou Bay, China
10. Springhouse, bourbon distillery, Frankfort, KY, US

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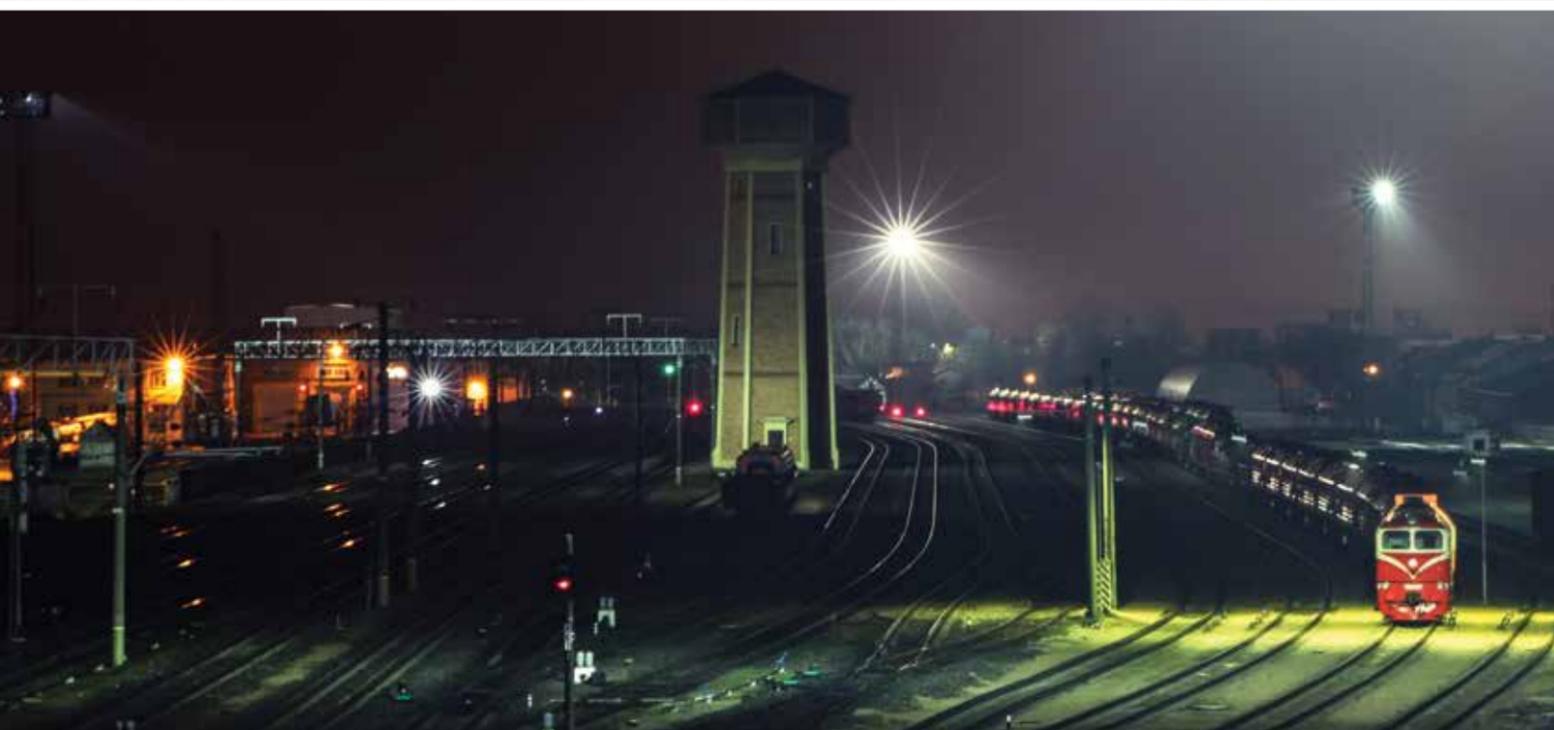




## IN MY CITY: **VILNIUS**

Q&A with Jonas Spokas

54° 41' 14" N / 25° 16' 47" E



All photos courtesy of Jonas Spokas/LMGI

### Co-editor **Stevie Nelson** gets a tour of Vilnius from member **Jonas Spokas**

**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 *Iskys* 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 wintery 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*—



was at that time, the biggest 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 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 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?*

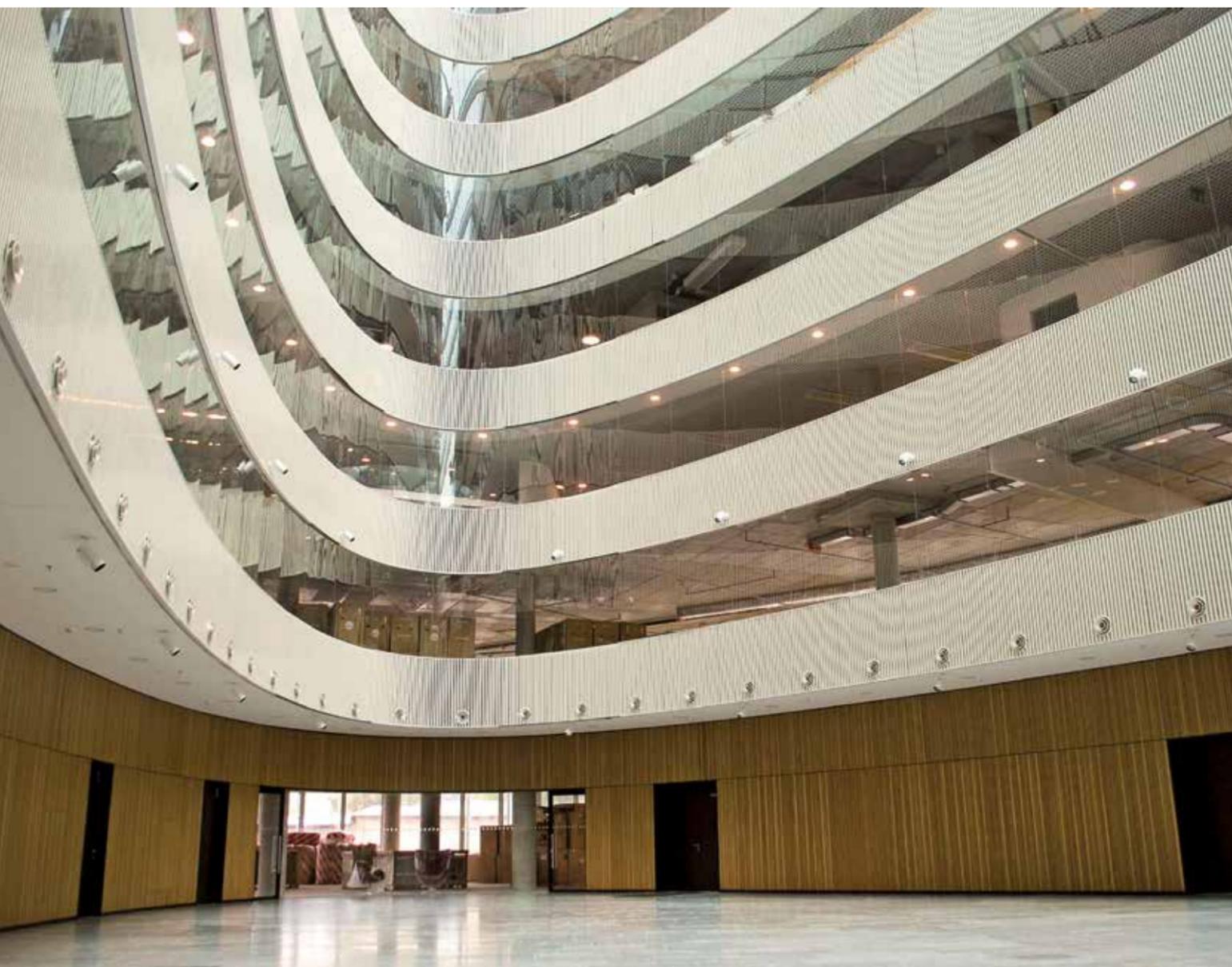
Another favorite location is VRM Palace (Vidaus reikalų ministerija—Ministry of Inner Affairs), an example of a very specific Soviet style of architecture. The massive, brutalistic interior will make you feel insignificant. It has so many angles and ways to use light, it looks completely different every 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.

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.

**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.



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 big 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 later can use the benefit of reduced taxes 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 ARE YOUR TOOLS OF THE TRADE?

**JS:** I could not do my job without my laptop! My Mac holds all my information, pictures, location contracts and much more. I don't use any specific software, but I love the speed, simplicity and intuitiveness of Mac. I do the paperwork using Word, do my location breakdowns and budgets using Numbers, and I use Keynote for all that's visual: location proposals, location maps, posters, schemes, etc. I'm really a fan of breakdowns, to-do lists, budgets, timetables and

stuff like that. So I "translate" all my projects into Excel sheets. Everything is in the tables, so I can know exactly the situation with every location of the project, what is done and what is still to be done. One can never be sure that everything is covered and ready, but breaking everything down in tables helps me to foresee if anything's missing and what might still become an issue.

What is also very important to me is the calendar. It is always synced between my laptop and my iPhone, so all the information is always with me. Most of the time, I work with several projects that are in different stages of pre-production, so it's very important to not forget anything! Of course, my iPhone does so many things and sometimes it replaces the camera.

My favourite camera is Nikon, but that is probably because I bought a Nikon when I started doing this work. I still have Nikon D3200 with a Nikkor 24mm-120mm lens and it always does the job. I like that D3200 is quite big and heavy, so it doesn't shake so much even when you're in a hurry. The lens is bright so it actually takes some good quality pictures in a poorly lit situation—I love that!

I have a 2006 Ford Focus TDCI and I love it foremost because of its fuel economy. It does 31 miles per gallon, which allows me to travel a bit more when looking for locations. It's also comfortable, which is very important when you need to spend a lot of time driving. I would love to have two cars—the Ford is great for city and long trips, but a 4X4 for muddy fields would be great!

**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 MADE 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.

## Jonas' Private Tour

### 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 neo-classical—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



Vilnius Old Town Cafe

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 Vilnelė, and the River Vilnelė has the right to flow by everyone."

### BEST BAR/CLUB:

It must be 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 PLACE TO HEAR MUSIC:

Definitely Loftas. Founded by a music fanatic and great musician himself, Victor Diawara, the place is constantly offering many great shows and is always ready to surprise you. Loftas offers music from blues and jazz to hip-hop. But what's best about Loftas is that the shows and the musicians are top notch! Vilnius' music stage would be very different without this place!

### 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!



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# Out of Africa

*The Dark Tower Odyssey*

by Nancy Mills

**F**inding 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 magnificence, 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*

Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc./Izzy Kitchhoff



Photo courtesy of Deon du Preez/LMGI

*Legend of Tarzan* and *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter*. He just wrapped *Tomb Raider*. He did the initial research scout in Ghana and South Africa for *Blood Diamond*, but didn't film it.

"I've been shot at, but fortunately, never been hit," he says, "but in the last few years, I've snapped an ankle, and both my knees have gone." Such minor disabilities did not slow him down while searching for locations on his latest film, *The Dark Tower*, directed by Nikolaj Arcel. It's based on Stephen King's eight-volume series about a mythical structure called the Dark Tower. The story is set partly in present-day New York and partly in parallel universes.

The dark fantasy/sci-fi/horror/Western has been in the works for more than 30 years, ever since King introduced this world in *The Gunslinger*, the first in the series, in 1982. Filmmakers J.J. Abrams and Ron Howard took a crack at it. Javier Bardem, Russell Crowe, Viggo Mortensen and Aaron Paul were at one time or another named as possible stars. However, the project languished at several studios. Finally, Sony Pictures put it into production on a reported \$60 million budget. The film opened with Idris Elba as Roland Deschain, *The Gunslinger*, who is locked in an eternal battle with Matthew McConaughey as the Man in Black. The *Gunslinger* is determined to prevent the Man in Black from toppling the Dark Tower, which holds the universe together.

Although King was not involved in the production, Du Preez was very familiar with his books. He is also a fan of American Westerns, both books and movies, and spaghetti Westerns starring Clint Eastwood. "I knew I could do *The Dark Tower* from the word 'Go,'" he says. "I thought totally out of the box because it's supposed to be unworldly. South African landscapes are so contradictory and contrasting that people think it's CGI."

"The biggest challenge was doing the great locations justice," says supervising art director Guy Potgieter, who has previously worked with Du Preez. "There was no rock unturned to find and secure some of the locations. Deon had the difficult task of presenting options of a parallel world that looks somewhat like Earth but is more dramatic and has an uneasy edge to it. That's a very broad brief to execute. He scoured the entire country for months to find great locations, many of which had never heard of Stephen King or seen anything remotely like a large film crew with all the bells and whistles. We discussed the look, feel and

art application. Once the process was honed and the designer and director had chosen a location, Deon would always be on hand to help with assisting the logistics."

Du Preez spent seven months on the project, including three months of actual filming. He estimates that 70 percent-80 percent of the film was shot in South Africa, much of it in Cape Town Province. A small part filmed in New York, where a chunk of the story takes place. "It was a tug of war," Du Preez says. "The producers wanted to do a little more here, but there was no getting around doing some of it in the States. We had to have some recognizable New York cityscapes."

South Africa's highly varied scenery was a big draw for the production team. So was Du Preez himself, who has a relentless work ethic and deep knowledge of what his country has to offer. "Deon is considered one of the 'founding fathers' of what used to be a fledgling industry here in SA," says *The Dark Tower's* SA line producer Cheryl Eatock, who has known him for 20 years. "Everything about Deon is 'can do.' So far away from Hollywood, South Africa has had to be competitive, efficient and able to deliver to the standards that the mainstream movie industry demands. Location managers like Deon paved the way. He has a unique way of steering a creative vision without being irksome. He quickly becomes a wingman to the director, designer and DP."

"People know I can get into some locations and work locations that others might find difficult," Deon acknowledges. His goal on *The Dark Tower* was straightforward. "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: Blyde River Canyon in Mpumalanga and the Cederberg Mountains Nature Reserve, with its dramatic otherworldly rock formations and San rock art. Blyde 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 had to show 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 unnerving. 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

Blyde River Canyon

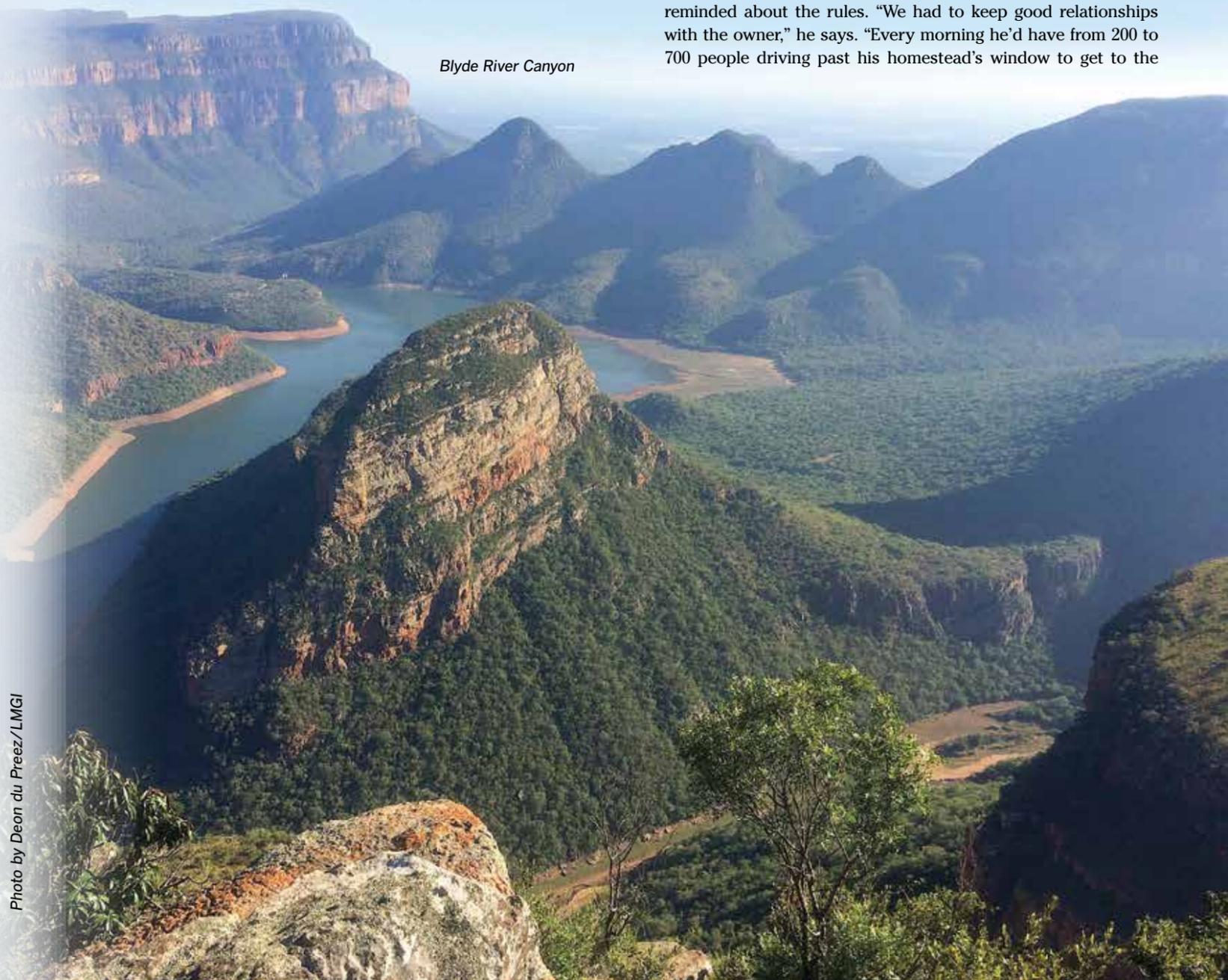


Photo by Deon du Preez/LMGI

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,” he remembers, “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 landscape, 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.”

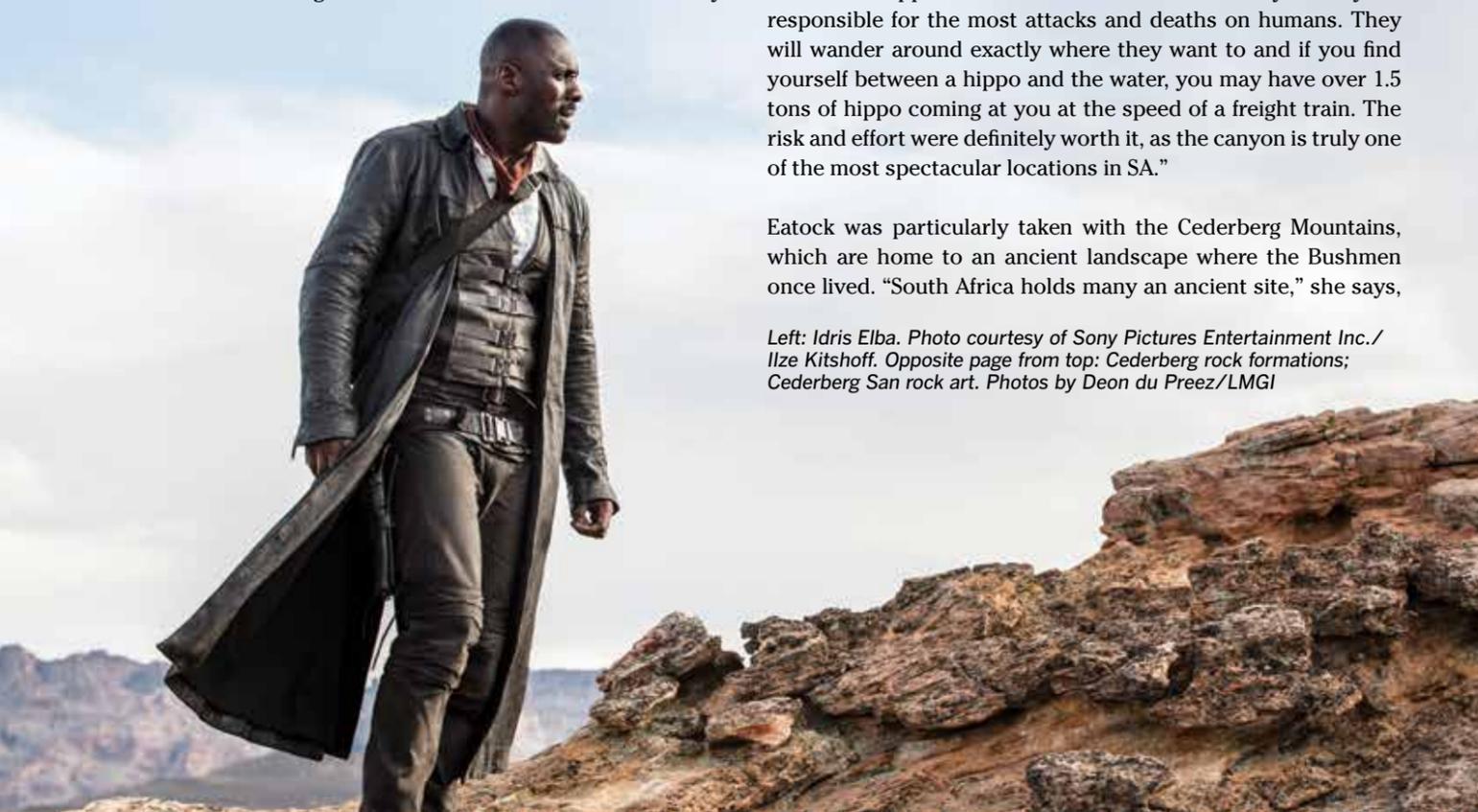
Because landscapes are so important to *The Dark Tower*, Du Preez often needed to get clearance for drones. “Drones are always an issue,” he says. “Most of the time we managed to get permission. We wanted to show as much of the landscapes as possible. We were selling the wide, sweeping vistas.” Du Preez 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 film 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 freaking out because these 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,

*Left: Idris Elba. Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc./ Ilze Kitshoff. Opposite page from top: Cederberg rock formations; Cederberg San rock art. Photos by Deon du Preez/LMGI*



“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 researching, 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 property, 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 location 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 knocking 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 commercials 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 into private properties 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 Eatock adds, “A lot of South Africa’s ancient landscapes are understandably governed by strict access and activities. Finding a farm or estate that contained this type of landscape in a private capacity under the strict supervision of ECO (environmental and conservation requirements) officers was paramount. Deon and his colleagues scouted extensively, knocking on every door, driving, walking or hiking onto private land to make contact with land owners. The farm we found for the Manni Village had ancient rock paintings of historic significance. We lucked out. The owners let us in.”

Eatock, 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, respecting 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 taking 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 location 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. If 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, Mozambique, 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 accommodations 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 stretches. 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 scapes. 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, European countries. Over the last two centuries, we’ve become very diverse in landscapes and architecture. It’s nice to get 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 offers 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 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 managed to contain the locations to mostly the Western Cape region, 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 requirements were dense 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,” Eatock concludes. “We are talking about the love child of Stephen King developed and written over 25 years of his career! The fan base of *The Dark Tower* 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



Above: Matthew McConaughey. Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc./Ilze Kitshoff. Opposite page: Tankwa Lava Pebble Road. Photo by Deon du Preez/LMGI

interesting, left field, breathtaking locations with every camera move we had.

“*The Dark Tower* provided the location department with the ultimate 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?”

## THE DARK TOWER SOUTH AFRICAN LOCATION TEAM:

### **Location Manager:**

Deon du Preez, LMGI

### **Assistant Location Manager:**

Dino Denton

### **On Set Location Manager:**

Jean Roux

### **Location Scout:**

Ian Davidson

### **Location Assistants:**

Jacques Stemmet, Loyiso Qonongo

Lourens Potgieter, Gary Davids

# Carpe Tahitian Diem:

Creating an Opportunity in Paradise

17° 32' 41" S/149° 49' 46" W

by Edward Mazurek

OCTOBER 2016

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 francais...

Moorea. Photo by Dow Griffith/LMGI

*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 protective nature.*

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

As our aqua transport putted 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, day-long trek schedules, innumerable camera clicks, and meet & greet dinners will wear one down. When each day ends, horse-trading battery chargers for mosquito repellent, you know you're spent. Throw in wine with 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. Violent. Right at stern where we were sitting. It sounded like a very VERY large fish. Then, reaching up from the inky Pacific, a pair of hands on the ship's ladder, a head, a torso—location manager Dow Griffith—ninja-climbing onto the deck, completely naked, an oversized grin on his face, "There's no whiskey on my boat so I thought I'd swim by and have some of yours. It's really dark out there. I got lost..."

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.

How did we get here? Who planned this? More importantly, despite the obvious goal of photographing unique film locations, why was there a naked location professional standing on my boat, semi-blind from saltwater, demanding whiskey?

**November 2013:** All location professionals know there are varying degrees to which we participate in our collective. Hopefully, most of you reading this belong to the LMGI. Some of you go to union 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.

I've great admiration for those location veterans with 20- or 30-plus years of experience—skill and craftsmanship so ingrained, they are sometimes unaware of their proficiency. Often, they are the ones who seem to disproportionately contribute generously to our collective. They lead by example and you know their names.

Yet some lone rangers have never been to a professional location event in their careers. I imagine them driving a very lonely and deserted road, camera bag and fast-food wrappers on the passenger seat. Driving and scouting, driving and scouting ... endlessly.

But I suspect, for the majority of the location community, our participation efforts fall someplace in the middle. I am no different—missing the odd union meeting but never the holiday party. I keep membership in various organizations fresh and regularly exchange thoughts and ideas with colleagues. Often the grind of work and long hours prevents participation. I can barely energize to go out socially when working a difficult show. But in one instance, I made an exception, and it made all the difference.

While working season one of HBO's *Silicon Valley*, LMGI member Marie Healy dropped an invitation into my box: The Consul General of France in Los Angeles and Mrs. Dourene Cruau, Tahiti Tourisme North America (TTNA), and Transit Sat Nui, request 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 RSVP. 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 fancier than you.

Arriving at the event, the first note was a reception line of well-dressed waiters, each holding a tray: wine, champagne, hors d'oeuvres; but few attendees. It was early—and it was Tuesday night. Twenty location professionals mingled in the large backyard speaking with Tahiti Tourisme 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 been widely distributed. Or had people been too busy to see it, like I had. No matter ... why yes, I would like more champagne, thank you very much.

In short order, I found myself chatting with Jonathan Reap, Managing Director of Tahiti Tourisme 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, had worked for TTNA for 12 years, and had encyclopedic knowledge of French Polynesia. He knew the name of every major

Taha'a. Photo by Dow Griffith/LMGI

Tahiti hotel general manager as if he'd spoken to them yesterday. And he probably had. Focused in conversation, his eyes wandered only for milliseconds, I assumed, to check his staff engaging other guests.

I told Jonathan I'd been to Tahiti recently. Pursuing a romance that would ultimately disintegrate, I'd visited Tahiti, Moorea and Bora Bora. And like many who visit, I fell in love with the picture-postcard views and warm South Pacific waters. I narrated in detail my most conventional tourist activities, unaware how common this must have sounded. Then I asked him about filming in Tahiti.

A few years previous, Jonathan had aided the Universal Pictures' Vince Vaughn comedy vehicle *Couples Retreat* in Bora Bora. They shot a major part of the feature at the St. Regis, a new five-star resort and, arguably, the most luxurious on the island. Contacted in 2008 by producer Guy Riedel, Jonathan was initially indifferent. "I had no idea what they wanted, where they hoped to be or what the story was about, so helping them wasn't easy. They had visited multiple countries and multiple island resorts already." But Mr. Riedel persisted, and within months, Jonathan was leading scouting trips in Tahiti with the film's producers, director Peter Billingsley, UPM Udi Nelevi, production designer Shepherd Frankel and producer/star Vince Vaughn.

Once a location was top-listed, to seal the deal, Jonathan arranged a meeting between the film's producers and the President of French Polynesia, Gaston Tong Sang; no small feat as Jonathan deftly worked contacts and connections. It so happened the President was friendly with the owner of the St. Regis. A call was made and an agreement inked. With daily direct flights between Papeete, the capital, and Los Angeles only eight hours away, Tahiti seemed the perfect choice. Easy.

However, the production of *Couples Retreat* was anything but. 300 cast and crew shut down a new resort built to accommodate half that amount. Equipment needed to be shipped in, serviced and stored. Crew needed to be transported, fed and housed. Moreover, Jonathan recalled, the culture clash between the Hollywood on-set "we need everything yesterday—hurry!" and the Tahitian "Relax... We'll get to it eventually..." was a strain on the hotel's management. The shoot lasted 35 days. In the end, as we all know, the work was completed and the filmmakers and hotel management left content and happy.

We've all witnessed this story firsthand: location owner melting down, crying, shouting, panicking during the shoot. Then when the film is released, location owner proudly hanging auto-graphed photos of film's stars on every blank wall, handing out DVDs to anyone and everyone, boasting on social media, "Hey! That's my \_\_\_ in that movie!"

Today, the St. Regis Bora Bora runs *Couples Retreat* on a dedicated continuous-looped television station, 24/7. Pictures of the movie and on-set production line hotel hallways. Guests ask about it constantly. Everyone is happy. And everyone being happy is good business for a hotel charging \$1,800 per night.

But the success didn't end there. Besides *Couples Retreat*, in quick succession Tahiti hosted *The Bachelorette* 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. I'm a numbers guy, so here are the statistics, spread amongst the Island of Tahiti where tourism is the number one driving economic engine:

2011 September individual bookings up 300+  
October bookings up 400+  
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 islands 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 micro-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 gifts. On a macro-level: increasing 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 resolved in that moment to contribute time and effort helping Tahiti market itself as a film location.

**July 2016:** In fits and starts, Tahiti Tourisme of North America executives Cait 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; and decide which sites to visit.

We weren't reinventing the wheel. One needn't look further 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 bet to attract filming is choice and stability. Of course, financial incentives help. And 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 fruitless endeavor.

Deciding which specific locations to promote within the islands became a trickier matter than I had thought. Our "wish list" of sites could have filled a two-week trek. Pruning and prioritizing became a necessity to scale the trip into seven full-tour days. There are 118 islands and atolls. Most are remote, uninhabited and mosquito-infested. Many, like Rangiroa, one of the largest atolls in the world, have a few significant hotels, a small airport, but little to support a full feature film crew. However, with

*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, with their own unique eyes, 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.*

crystal-clear waters and the only vineyard in French Polynesia, a unique possibility for a smaller crew or nonscripted show. For Discovery Channel's massive hit series *Shark Week*, it was the perfect place, but not a Fam Tour stop.

Once the islands were chosen, another issue became obvious—understood by my Tahiti partners in the LA office but puzzled over by Tahiti Tourisme's headquarters in Papeete. They were used to hosting Fam Tours for travel agents—dozens per year, bringing groups to top-ranked hotels and sought-after attractions. Those are nice if your job is selling honeymoon packages. But Fam Tour location pros want urban alleys, abandoned hotels and gritty marine docks. There's an abandoned military base? A sewage treatment facility? A closed hospital? A ghost ship run aground? Let's go. The old fisherman's dive bar on the seedy side of Papeete is perhaps more valuable than the exclusive Polynesian Club at the Four Seasons.

The Fam Tour was supervised by Tahiti Tourisme Communications Manager Cait Langley, with myself in support. We met regularly to build the tour. Cait was skilled running travel agent expeditions; no easy task and exactly the experience needed. She also shouldered the enormous responsibility of lining up and booking all the partners and vendors who would support the trip. Over 26 entities were needed to fill our envisioned itinerary. They would need to be pitched on the project and explained the purpose of the tour—then contracted and booked. For every vendor retained, there were many unable to participate for a variety of reasons.

Imagine prepping and leading a 24-hour-a-day tech scout for nine days in a row. That's what running a Fam Tour is like. At any given point, we were wrangling hotel check-ins, taxis, airline tickets and meals all delivered without delay. Each day's itinerary involved five to eight scheduled activities, all needing connecting transport. A delayed shuttle van or a miss-booked hotel room could throw off an entire day.

Although the exact numbers are proprietary, Tahiti Tourisme budgeted between \$25K to \$35K for the tour, plus an additional \$20K 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 Tourisme. Cait estimated if one were to rebook the tour at market rate, it would be north of \$92K.

The Fam Tour was scheduled for October 12-20, 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 Tourisme managers. The challenge trying to assemble top location managers and scouts is 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, LMGI 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. If all went well, I'd be 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 am arrival combined with the two-hour time difference, we began with an early check-in at the Tahiti Pearl Beach 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 Taxis." Have you ever hugged a narrow cliff-side road in a minivan with bench seats unfastened 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 underdeveloped treasure. Yes, there are the few high-end resorts. But for the majority of the islands and their 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. The greater part of the local population lives modestly, buttressed by government-sponsored healthcare, education and social programs. Extended Tahitian families form the unbreakable bedrock of their society. And my unscientific opinion is that Tahitians lead happier lives than you or me. Even if their minivans have slippery deathtrap seats, or the repair for a leaky roof is a blue tarp or the odd piece of corrugated metal.

Interestingly, the first place our Fam Tour stopped was a feature film set. The French period movie *Gauguin*, directed by Edouard Deluc, had been filming in Tahiti for almost two months. We were invited by Manu de Schoenburg, who along with Stephanie & Tim McKenna and others, made up a Tahiti-based group of professionals handling scouting & management, on-island casting, production office support and other production "fixer" tasks. They re-created a 19th-century trading port set on the waterfront, complete with ships, period costumes and livestock. Though smaller than a typical American studio feature film, it affirmed the notion this was all possible. Filming any of the thousand virgin locations in Tahiti was just a matter of logistics.

From there, a two-day succession of tropical valleys, waterfalls, botanical orchards, water gardens, enormous caves and grottos included many stops to corral photographs. Eight photographers with a different eye and multiple cameras takes time to set. Judging by the number of images taken, I knew there would soon be an impressive film location library on the Tahiti Tourisme website.

Then, of course, there were the meals. It would be impossible and redundant to describe each one in this article, but suffice

to say, most of the food consumed was either swimming, clucking or growing the day before. The fruit was especially notable—sweet, simple, tart and usually from small family farms—often from roadside stands. The flavors remain unforgettable. It was during those first few days sitting around a dining table when I knew we had lucked out. Everyone on this Fam Tour was adventurous, thoughtful, smart and happy to be aboard. Each had their own unique background and path into the career they now enjoyed. And we were all becoming fast friends.

Cait and I developed a shorthand while managing the tour. She would frequently call ahead to make sure the next stop on the itinerary was set and ready to go, and I would keep the group together and engaged. Keeping "on plan" turned out to be an easy job. I recall only one instance, while on a cultural tour of ancient ceremonial grounds, when we were swarmed by a thick cloud of ravenous mosquitoes and had to ditch out lest we suffer death by a thousand bites. The rest of the tour moved perfectly, a great relief for Cait and I.

On the third morning, we boarded the Aremiti Ferry for the 50-minute cruise to the island of Moorea. We toured the expansive properties of the Intercontinental Moorea Resort and the Hilton Moorea Lagoon Resort. Moorea is much more rural and quiet than Tahiti. We traversed up winding lanes to the popular Belvedere 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 was completed with a six-course dinner at our hotel, Sofitel Moorea la 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 in 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'aora 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 Taha'a 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 and a clear view to the ocean's bottom. We also were treated to perfect photo angles of mountains and islands unseen from land.

Le Taha'a 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 tiki torch lit 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, coffee 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 imagineer. 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 Hallmark postcards ever since. We hiked, sailed, drove and helicoptered around for two days. We lunched 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 recently departed neighbors.

At this point in the Fam Tour, dinner conversation changed from "Tahiti would be great if I ever scout a tropical island location" to "What can we do to convince filmmakers to film here. Now. Like, next month..." This, by any measurement, is what one wants when hosting a Fam Tour. Many of my fellow travelers mentioned to me privately this had been the best Fam Tour they'd been on. This was mostly due to Tahiti itself, and the luck we'd had assembling a group of agreeable personalities. But a big part of the success included two major details: first, Cait and Tahiti Tourisme had authored

*Below, left to right: Scott Trimble, Thomas Deehan, Eric Hooge, Golden Swenson, Jonathan Reap (Tahiti Tourisme), Cait Langley (Tahiti Tourisme), Dow Griffith, Cat Kagan, Edward Mazurek, Chris Baugh*



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.



Tahiti Tourisme United States is the local liaison for filming projects in North America and works closely with Tahiti's film commission, Tahiti's government and local industry professionals.

For more information, please visit <http://www.tahiti-tourisme.com/media/filmingintahiti/> or call Tahiti Tourisme US, Communications Manager Cait Langley 310.414.8484 [clangley@tahiti-tourisme.com](mailto:clangley@tahiti-tourisme.com)

For international flights, call Air Tahiti Nui at 310.662.1860

For shipping and logistics, call Transit Sat Nui, General Manager Bud Gilroy +(689) 40 42 55 61

For Tahiti Studio: <http://www.filmin-tahiti.com/>

The LMGI provides guidelines and advice for hosting Fam Tours as well as a list of those members interested in attending tours. Visit our website at [locationmanagers.org](http://locationmanagers.org)



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DAY / NIGHT

There are many sides to *The Islands of Tahiti*.

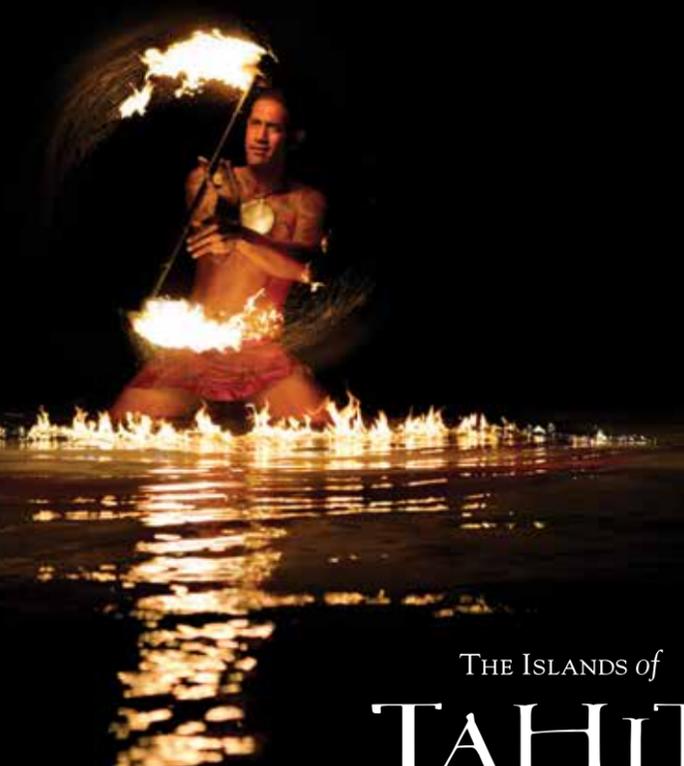
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THE ISLANDS of  
**TAHITI**

# Chasing Ghosts:

Belchite, Spain

41° 18' 12" N / 0° 44' 27" W

by Bob Craft

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.

Belchite, Spain. Photo by Simón Aranda

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.

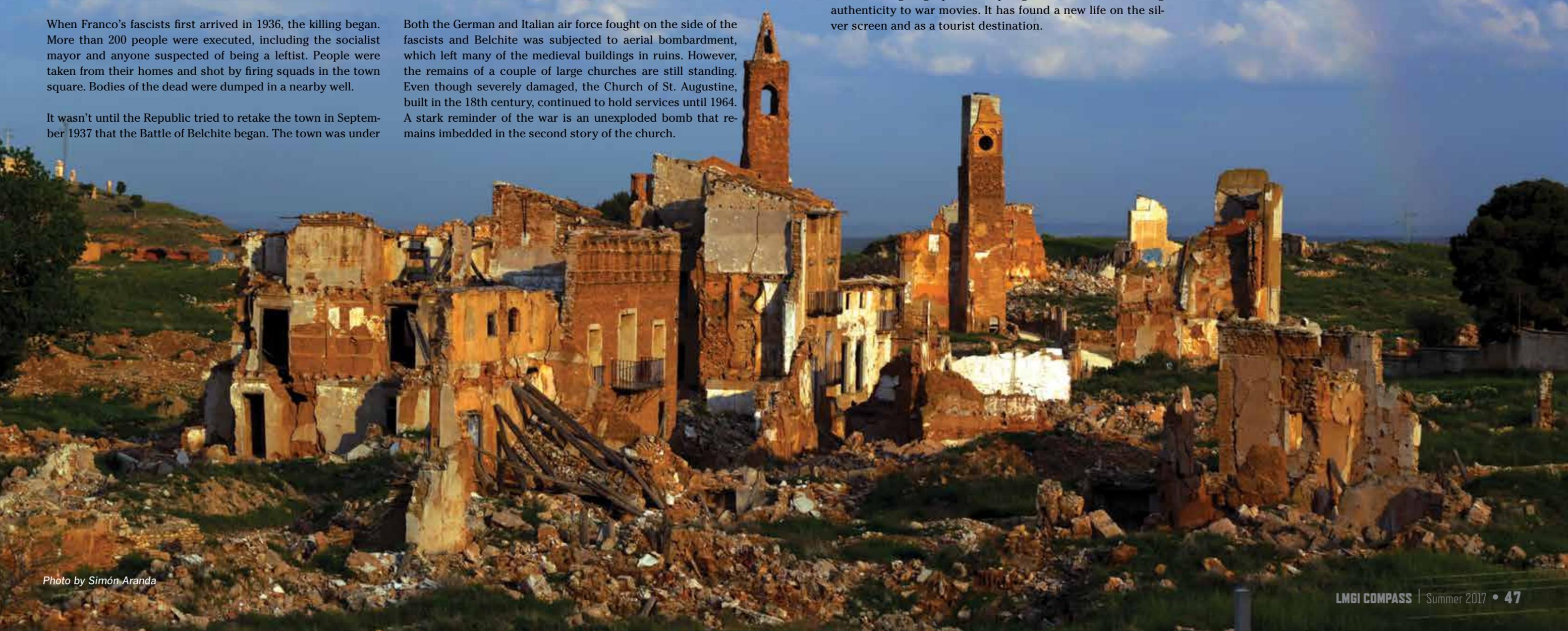




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Michael Meehan  
Beth Melnick  
Matt Messina  
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Barbara Miller  
Maida Morgan  
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Nick Morley  
Jeff Morris  
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\* Robert Murdoch  
France Myung Fagin  
Rik Nagel  
Alison Naifeh  
Lucas Nalepinski  
Galidan Nauber  
Jill Naumann  
Stevie Nelson  
Stuart Neumann  
Jason Nolan  
Sophia Ochoa  
JP O'Connor  
Kyle "Snappy" Oliver  
Brian O'Neill  
David O'Reilly

Marie - Jeanne "Shani" Orona  
Peter Orth  
Alexander Oyarbide  
Rino Pace  
Debbie Page  
Matt Palmer  
John Panzarella  
David Park  
Marino Pascal  
Jeremy Peek  
Evan Peller  
Dennis Penney  
Michael Percival  
Brittany Petros  
Ellen Pfirmann  
JJ Pill  
Janice Polley  
Scott Poole  
Peggy Pridemore  
Jen Prince  
Matt Prisk  
Neal Proskansky  
Zachary Quemore  
Ron Quigley  
John Rakich  
Jonathan Ramos  
Mick Ratman  
Osceola Refetoff  
Will Regan  
Errol Reichow  
Steve Rhea  
Patrick Riley  
Tony Rimwah  
Matthew Riutta  
Jesse Rivard  
John Rizzi  
Adam Robinson  
Eduardo Rodrialvarez  
Joel E. Rodriguez D.  
Daniel Rosenthal  
Walter Roshetski  
Lisa Rothmuller  
Kei Rowan -Young  
David Rumble  
Ian Rutherford  
Will Ruvalcaba  
Paulina Salazar  
Tony Salome  
Peter Sands  
Jason Savage  
Ryan Schaeztle  
Bear Schmidt  
Paul Schreiber  
Rick Schuler  
Florian Schura  
Carole Segal  
Mike Shanahan  
Ned Shapiro  
John Shelde  
Michael Sibley  
Ivan Siebel  
Bonnie Sills  
Joel Sinderman  
\* Jonathan Slator  
Aidan Sleeper  
Brad Smith  
David Smith  
Michael Smith  
Sharon Smith - Herring  
Laura Sode - Matteson  
Leah Sokolowsky  
Michael Soleau  
Randy Spangler  
Jonas Spokas  
Philip Spurvey  
Chelsea Squyres

Rebecca "Puck" Stair  
Patti Stammer  
Eric Stangeland  
Rowan Stanland  
Michele St - Arnaud  
Robert Sterrett III  
Matthew Storm  
Kelly Stuart  
Robert Swartwood Jr.  
Golden Swenson  
Rachael Tartell  
Beth Tate  
Jack Tate  
Alison A. Taylor  
Duffy Taylor  
\* Aurelia Thomas  
Dorion Thomas  
Leslie Thorson  
Kai Thorup  
Sam Tischler  
Paul Tomlinson  
William Toscano  
Alex Tridimas  
Scott Trimble  
Jim Triplett  
Tano Tropia  
Andrew Ullman  
Smadar Vaknin  
Ashley Valdez  
Craig W. Van Gundy  
Yorgos Varagoulis  
Dodd Vickers  
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Sonia Villeras  
Lary Vinocur  
Veronique Vowell  
Gina Vreeland  
Kristan Wagner  
Deborah Wakshull  
Lee Wall  
Robert Weddle  
Stephen Weissberger  
Dan Welch  
Michael Wesley  
Byll Williams  
Danny Wilson  
Paul Wilson  
Shelly D. Wilson  
Kari Wilton  
Joe Wolek  
Chester Wong  
Nancy Wong  
Tommy Woodard  
Michael Woodruff  
James "Jimi" Woods  
Kirk Worley  
Steve Yeager  
Theresa A. Young  
Louis Zuppari

## INDUSTRY PARTNERS

\* New members

Stephen Blake/director  
Mark Indig/photographer  
Richard Prince/UPM  
DGC BC  
DGC Ontario

# MARTINI SHOT

33° 4' 72" S / 71° 61' 27" W

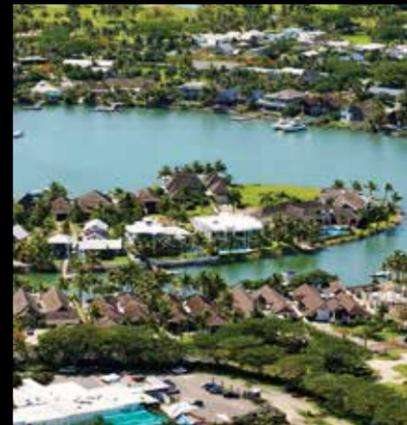
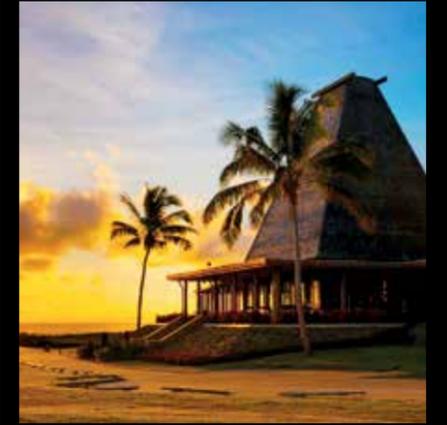


Valparaiso, Chile

Photo by Ariel Leon Isacovitch

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