

10 Questions with the Masters: Technology Forum

world have always wondered if their levels of experience, education, and technological capabilities are up to par with some of mainstream's professional film makers. For the most part, the unfortunate answer is a resounding negative. But, for some fan film producers that are willing to invest deeply into their fan film project, the results become more positive. In some cases, it can be indeterminate whether the fan film is not really a professional quality production or a fan film. Fan Films Quarterly contacted some of the best fan film producers in the United States and gained their expertise...a tutorial, if you would. These producers, who have used their fan films as calling cards for their professionalism and capabilities on and off screen, now share their wealth of knowledge for the other 90% of fan film creators who may be more limited. So, sit back and get ready, because we're about to learn you up real good!!!!



Green Screen use on the set of Pitching Lucas.

Fan Films Quarterly (FFQ): **Thank you all for joining us today. We appreciate you taking the time to educate the fan film populace on your techniques and current capabilities in a technological sense.**

Anthony Fletcher (AF)(Catwoman: Nine Lives): Thanks for inviting me to be a part of the piece.

FFQ: **When you prepare for a film project, are there certain pieces of equipment that you automatically want on your set to heighten the level of quality?**

Hank Braxtan (HB)(Return of the Ghostbusters): Well obviously the first choice here is

10 Questions with the Masters



Hank Braxtan and crew on the set of Return of the Ghostbusters (above). Johnny Wu, the Director for A Joker's Card, stands in front of his green screen (below).

your camera. In fact, I'm sure most fan films are centered around this piece of equipment.

AF: Just because you have a camera does not mean you know how to use it.

Johnny Wu (JW)(A Joker's Card): What we usually do is see what is the format we plan to shoot the movie on, HD, Digital Video, or HDV.

Shane Felux (SF)(Star Wars: Revelations): You can have the best gear money can buy, but without talented artist on your production it really will not matter.

HB: Either that, or someone has a

cool Stormtrooper Costume.

AF: You could have the greatest costume, and the greatest actors in the world, but if you don't shoot it right, it won't matter.

FFQ: Well, we are off to a great start. Keeping with camera, what type of camera do you use for filming & why did you select this particular model?

SF: I first shot with the Canon XL1S. It's all I could afford at the time. I liked it had exchangeable lens, came with XLR connections for pro sound, and I thought it looked like a camera.

"There is no real reason if PC or MAC is better than the other. It is more about what we have been... comfortable with."

*-Johnny Wu
Director
A Joker's Card*



10 Questions with the Masters

JW: I use Digital Video 3CCD cameras: Canon, Sony, and Panasonic.

HB: For **Return of the Ghostbusters**, we used a Canon XL2. In my opinion, it's the best MiniDV camera on the market.

AF: Like most, I use Digital. It's just economical and practical. In particular, the Cannon XL2, which I shot **Nine Lives** on.

Dan Poole (DP)(Green Goblin's Last Stand): I own the Sony VX2000. At the time it was purchased I liked it over the other models for several reasons and still think it holds up very well.

FFQ: During post-production, what is your computer of choice?

SF: For production I built my own PC from the ground up. I am a PC user.

HB: I really like a lot of the features the MACs have. However, I have to give the edge to PCs here.

JW: We all use PC computers.

DP: I have gone from a PowerMAC to an iMAC to a Powerbook to a MACbook Pro.

AF: MAC, of course.

JW: Why? There is no real reason if PC or MAC is better than the other. It is more about what we



Dan Poole, who directed and played the role of Spider man in Green Goblin's Last Stand, directs his other actor (above). On the set of ABM Digifilm's Catwoman: Nine Lives (below).

have been... comfortable with.

AF: (MAC) is a very user friendly computer with tons of software for filmmakers.

FFQ: What editing software do you use?

SF: I am an Adobe fan.

JW: Adobe Premiere Pro 2.0, After Effects 7 Pro, Photoshop CS2....

HB: People need to stop arguing about which is better between MAC and PC. They're both computers, so they're both going to let you down when you need them most.

JW: ...Maya 8, Fusion 5.02, Particle Illusion...



10 Questions with the Masters

DP: For my money and experience, nothing beats Final Cut Pro.

HB: Some people prefer Final Cut Pro, while others choose Avid.

AF: FCP and Avid. People have to know how to use it.

JW: ...Sound Forge 8, Sony Vegas...

HB: I'm one of the rare film makers that prefers Sony Vegas.

FFQ: Quite a range of choices. What special tools & techniques have you used to make your films successful?

SF: I used whatever works. From CG, practicals, green screen, live locations, hand made dollies, whatever. If it works, looks good, and gets the job done, I don't care what you use.

JW: Right now we are using exclusively RedGiant's new Magic Bullet's Colorista for our films.

HB: I've used everything available at my level of income! Dollies, Glidecams, Jib Arms...

AF: My must haves are Jibs, track



Director Shane Felux (above). Johnny Wu used tennis balls as markers for wings on his original film "The Rapture" (below).

systems, and tons of lights.

HB: If you can afford any piece of equipment, the one with the best return is going to be a good Jib Arm.

DP: I have always felt that the number one tool in doing a super hero fan film is a mini-trampoline.

HB: Martial Arts, stunts, and even...a tripod!



CLIFFORD HOEFT

Promoting Independent Film.

10 Questions with the Masters



Return of the Ghostbusters filmed on location at the Colorado State Capital Building.

DP: From big jumps to throwing bad guys far, (mini-trampolines) give the extra element needed.

FFQ: Bouncing along... In all of the technology you have used listed above, what underlying pros and cons have you seen with what you use?

HB: I bought a \$300 Jib thinking I could save some money, but it was a complete waste. That money would have been better spent on sand bags.

AF: I would of liked to use two cameras instead of a single camera.

JW: For basic sequences, we use one to two cameras.

AF: (Two Cameras) saves on set-ups.

JW: For fight sequences, we usually use more than four cameras.

SF: Always plan as much as possible, and don't say "We will fix it in post". That means you didn't do it right.

FFQ: Have you used your own equipment that you bought, or do you have a source of filming supplies that you use?

SF: I used my camera I bought on eBay. I had to sell it back on eBay

to try to offset my debt for making **Revelations**. I only got half of what it cost me.

HB: Don't get one of those crappy DV Jib Arms you see on eBay, either.

SF: My crew brings their own equipment which we use.

JW: I use my own Non Linear Editing systems and packages I spent money on, and also rented cameras, and borrowed friends' lighting gear.

AF: I do rent when needed.

HB: I recommend enrolling in film school and using their equipment.

DP: Before I owned my own gear, I borrowed everything from everywhere; friends, family, work, school, friends' schools.

HB: Another option is to find an equipment rental house, and get a job there.

FFQ: Does the cost factor weight heavily on your decisions for what equipment you wish to purchase for a project?

DP: Is that a rhetorical question?