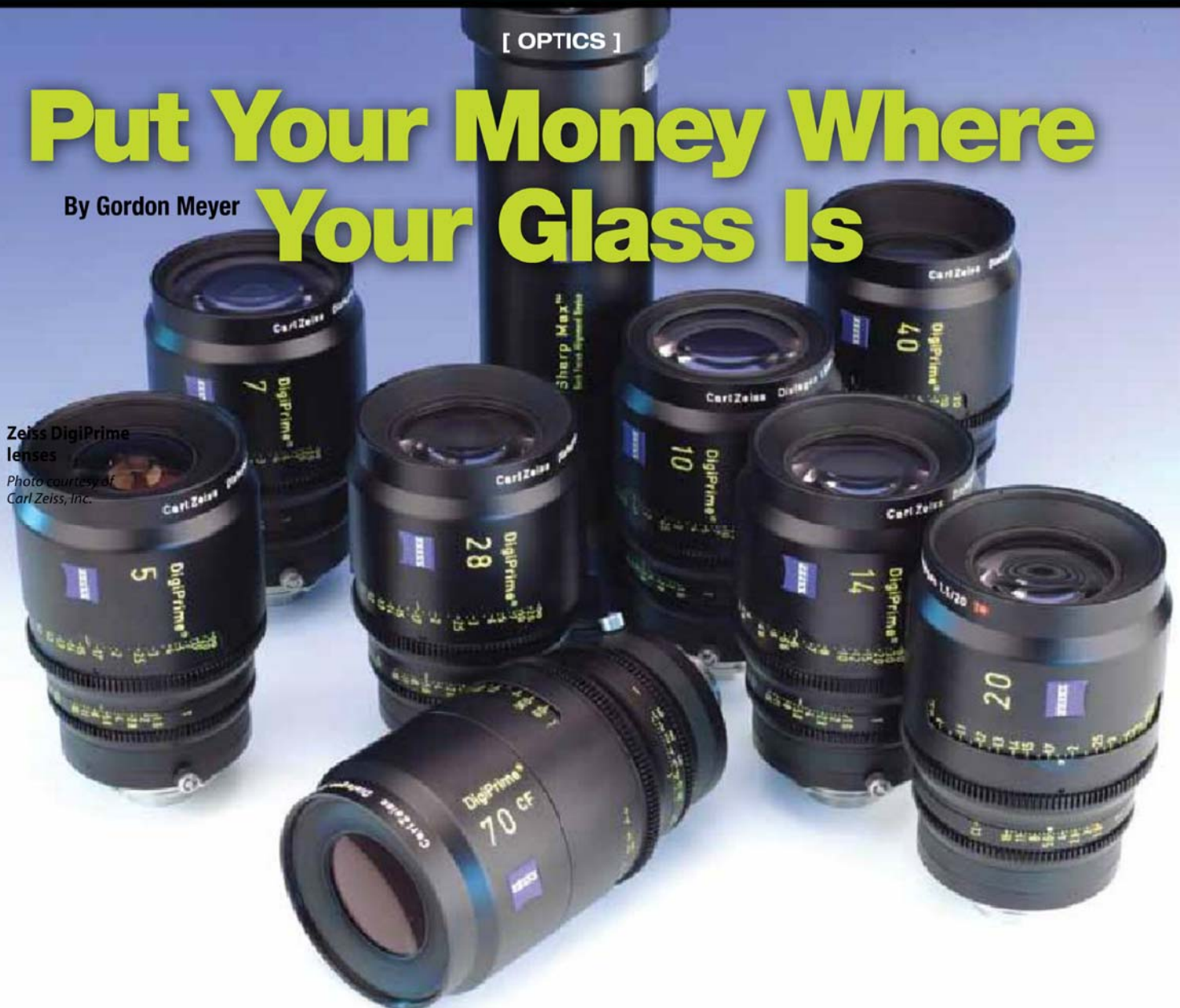


Put Your Money Where Your Glass Is

By Gordon Meyer

Zeiss DigiPrime lenses

Photo courtesy of Carl Zeiss, Inc.



To the uninitiated, the mere thought that a single camera lens can cost more than a luxury car is one of the great mysteries of the western world. What most people don't realize is that a camera lens is actually a complex and sophisticated system that integrates several precisely shaped pieces of ultra-high-quality glass. Lenses affect things like color, depth of field and how accurately the shape of what's being shot is captured. And when it comes to capturing the kind of image directors and cinematographers want, having the wrong lens in place can waste hundreds of thousands — if not millions — of dollars, while the right lens can actually make seemingly impossible shots possible.

Stephen F. Andrich has been shooting professionally for over 20 years as a DP, second unit cinematographer and camera operator on film projects like *Jerry Maguire*, *The Longest Yard*, *Grown Ups* and *Just Go with It*. Much of

his work involves shooting sporting events for feature films and clients like NFL Films. Zoom lenses that stood out for Andrich are from the **Angenieux** Optimo line. One is the Optimo 15-40, which he uses for **Steadicam** work. "It has great optics," says Andrich. "It's also light, compact and very fast." Another zoom the DP uses is the Optimo 28-76. "This one is also great for Steadicam use. It's great with both digital and film cameras." Andrich also likes the way its PL mount lets him use the Optimo with a wide variety of camera bodies. "They're two big workhorses that we use a lot," he says. "The other one we use a lot is the 12:1 Optimo, which is a 24-290mm lens and another great piece of glass." The appeal for this lens is how sharp it is when it's wide open and at the long ends. "There's not a lot of light loss at the full focal length of 290mm," he explains. "That's proven to be a very dependable lens as well."

For his most recent project, Andrich shot

second unit footage for the new Adam Sandler project called *Jack and Jill*, slated for release in late 2011. "We had three cameras working at a Lakers game using **Sony** F35 cameras, all set up with **Panavision** PL mounts," he recalls. "We also shot with the Optimo 24-290 lenses."

When it comes to primes, Andrich likes the **Zeiss** Super Speed and Panavision Primo lenses. "You basically use whatever you're trying to capture," says the DP. "For example, when shooting football for the NFL, I'll use a 14.5-480mm lens made by a company that's now out of business. They converted **Canon** 32:1 video zoom lenses into film lenses. They made a beautiful wide-angle product. You could shoot a close-up of a quarterback on the 40-yard line, follow the play, and then get a head-to-toe shot of the receiver making the catch in the end zone."

While the New York-based DP Jendra Jarnagin shoots mostly independent features,

The Cooke S4/i lenses

Photo courtesy of Cooke Optics Limited



she also gets in her share of episodic TV shows, documentaries, commercials and music videos, all of which require quite a bit of flexibility in her shooting style. Her most recent narrative project was the Web series "In Between Men," which was shot with a **RED ONE** camera. Jarnagin's first choice of lens would have been the **Cooke S4/i**, a "favorite" that she actually owns. She purchased the Cooke lens set to serve as a source of passive income as she rents it out to other DPs through **AbelCine**. For this shoot, the Cookes had already been rented out so she decided to use a **RED PRO PRIME** instead.

One reason why Jarnagin prefers to use her Cooke S4 lenses whenever possible is because they almost never flare. But when she's shooting something where a flare is desired, she wants that flare to have a certain look in both shape and coloring. "When the **RED PRO** flared, the shape and color of those flares, which looked like empty rather than solid circles, didn't look natural to me," Jarnagin explains. "From a technical standpoint, the Cooke lenses don't flare at all. You could have light sources in the image and there's very little flaring in that image. There's a coating on the Cooke lenses that handles flaring much, much better than a lot of other lenses. The organic optical quality of a lens varies from manufacturer to manufacturer, and it can be very subtle. While those differences are hard to describe, it comes down to the way they render the image. I really like the way the Cooke makes people look. I find the contrast of the lenses to be very pleasing and flattering and natural-looking in a way that I think is complementary to faces.

In addition to her Cooke S4s, Jarnagin regularly works with a number of other lenses, such as the older Zeiss Super Speed model. "Sometimes, because they're older, there's a less crisp look to them that actually works bet-

ter for some types of shoots," says the DP. "I recently shot a music video with a Zeiss Super Speed where, in this case, I was using lens flare on purpose. I loved the way the lens flares looked with the Zeiss Super Speed. The way this lens flared was really very beautiful. I really like the shape and colors of the flares."

Like Andrich, Jarnagin is a fan of the Angenieux Optimo zoom lenses. "Their short zooms are very handy and convenient because they're small," Jarnagin notes. "If you're doing Steadicam or handheld or you're in a small space where you don't want your lens to be very big, and you want the convenience of a zoom lens instead of a prime lens, those lenses are very good. But that's more of a practical consideration than a creative or esthetic one." Jarnagin has also used several Zeiss lenses, including the DigiPrime and DigiZoom lenses made for 2/3-inch cameras. "I'm a big fan of the 6-24mm DigiZoom, which I've used on several projects shooting on a Sony F23, and [I] really loved that look," she says. "While normally there are some tradeoffs in quality between zooms and primes, I did not feel there was any compromise at all in using the Zeiss DigiZoom.

Angenieux's Optimo 28-76 lens

Photo courtesy of Thales Angenieux



It felt just as good as a prime with the convenience of a zoom.

"Then there are the Zeiss Master Primes, which are very sharp and crisp," Jarnagin continues. "Sometimes you're shooting a story where that's the kind of look that you want, crisp and clean. Often you want to start with crispest-possible lens and then use a diffusion filter or other tool to flavor the image to taste. But you want to start with that sharp image versus using a lens that has an intrinsic characteristic to it. The Zeiss Master Primes and Ultra Primes give that very crisp, clean, sharp and neutral image."

The Master Primes are part of a family of lenses jointly developed by Zeiss and **ARRI**. Although ARRI is best known for its film and digital cameras, working for decades with A-list DPs gives their engineers a special insight into the needs and desires of cinematographers. They jointly developed a series of prime, macro and wide-angle lenses with Carl Zeiss and their new Alura line of zoom lenses with **Fujinon/FUJIFILM North America Corporation-Optical Devices Division**. Each of these lines is exclusive to ARRI.

According to Stephan Ukas-Bradley, ARRI's Burbank, Calif.-based product manager for their digital production line, ARRI developed these lenses to meet the specific needs of some of their DP client base. For example, when it comes to doing extreme close-ups, one of the issues cinematographers often had with macro lenses was their tendency to be visibly darker and softer in corners. ARRI's Zeiss Master Macro 100 claims even illumination and high resolution across an entire Super 35mm frame. The 100mm telephoto lens is fully color matched with the other Zeiss-built primes in ARRI's arsenal, including their Master Prime, Ultra Prime and Master Diopter.

"One of the things that DPs like about these lenses is the way they've been designed to protect them from reflected light, which can often be a problem when lighting a subject close to the lens itself," says Ukas-Bradley. This is achieved through a combination of antireflection coatings on the glass itself, specially painted lens rims, light traps, and setting the front element of the lens back within the lens housing. Going from one extreme to another, Ukas-Bradley says that ARRI's Zeiss Ultra Prime T2.8/8R wide-angle lens' rectilinear design enables it to deliver an extremely wide angle of view without any of the commonly associated fisheye distortions. "Also, because of its enormous depth of field and straight-image geometry, the Prime 8R can be very useful in shooting miniatures," he states.

Ukas-Bradley is especially proud of ARRI/FUJII's new Alura zoom lenses, which he says deliver exceptional image quality and more latitude than the competition. "Fujinon built an 18-85mm zoom for us that is a stop faster than a comparable Optimo zoom," he explains. "Although our prime lenses are made by Zeiss, Fujinon is successful in manufacturing high-quality zoom lenses at a price point that enables us to be very competitive." The PL-mounted Alura is optimized for use with ARRI's line of ALEXA digital-cinema cameras and the 2K 16:9 format and has a maximum open aperture of T2.6.



**ARRI/FUJINON
Alura Zooms**

Photo courtesy of ARRI Inc.

CONTACTS

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Division: www.fujinon.com

Panavision: www.panavision.com

RED: www.red.com

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