

ASC Digital Discussion at AFM

Contributed by James Thompson

Some of the leading Directors of Photography gathered recently for an in-depth look at film and digital filmmaking at a recent American Film Market (AFM) session in Santa Monica, Calif. The session was titled "Film or Digital...That's the Question, Beautiful Images on a Shoestring Budget." The attending DPs discussed the pros and cons of each medium...

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They commiserated that producers are leaning on them to cut costs. They also all seemed to agree that shooting digitally doesn't necessarily mean they will save money and that the choice of shooting digital or film should be made after learning more about the director's vision for telling the story. "You don't let the camera tell you what to do; you let the project tell you what to do," said Michael Negrin, ASC.

DP Rodney Taylor, ASC said he always looks for a good script that he wants to work on and makes that a priority over budget. Then he works with the director on the correct medium in which to shoot. He went on to say that there are other ways to cut cost in low-budget filmmaking. An experienced DP can call on the many contacts he has made over the years for favors that will limit cost and add production value.

While most attending DPs said they have used digital cameras, they all seemed to agree that film is still the preferred choice and offers more latitude than digital filmmaking. DP Nancy Schreiber, ASC, said she shot features using Super 16, 35mm, and digital cameras such as the RED and Panavision Genesis. "The digital films I have shot have progressed during the years," said Schreiber. "There are a lot of choices."

There was a consensus that digital photography is improving but still needs to be studied, tested and better understood. "If we did not go through the birthing of this new technology, we would go nowhere," said DP Johnny Jensen, ASC. "We're moving ahead; we're pushing, we're learning."