

HIGHDEF.org

Holiday Issue 1999

IN THIS ISSUE

Marc Pingry:

Great art requires risk.

Stuart Calcote:

A plunge into HDTV.



An Icy Adventure...

Tom Bishop captures unique stories in Alaska.

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Contents

HighDef.Org

Holiday Issue 1999



10 An Icy Adventure

Tom Bishop travels to Alaska to document three unique stories in the Arctic North. The article highlights the World Ice Sculpting Competition, The Bird Lady of Homer, and the hot new sport called waterfall climbing.

By Laura Nielson



13 Great Art Requires Risk

Marc Pingry shares his harrowing experiences shooting HighDef in Pennsylvania and Seattle and offers critical advice for new HD shooters.

By Laura Nielson



16 A Plunge into HDTV

Producer/Director Stuarde Calcote produces his first HDTV documentary called, *A Day in the Life of the Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk*. Calcote also discusses his career and leap into the HD world.

By Amber Black

6-8 Production News

HDTV – The film format of the New Millennium

18 News: MSGTV Sharpens Its Image

Cablevision's MSG Network is the first regular provider of sports coverage in High Definition. Madison Square Gardens is a hit with its new HDTV image.

Editor's Statement

The public response to our ground-breaking magazine, HighDef.Org has been overwhelming. I wish to personally thank you, our readers, for your outpouring of support. In return the staff and I are committed to continue bringing you High Definition news from around the world.

In this issue you will enjoy reading the adventures and stories of two HD cameramen: Marc Pingry and Tom Bishop. Stuarde Calcote, producer/director also offers his enlightening and helpful experiences.

Your suggestions and HD press releases are appreciated. Please keep them coming. You may e-mail them directly to me at Laura@apsnw.com or send them to: Laura Nielson, Editor of HighDef.Org, 2247 Fifteenth Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119.

May all your shoots be in HighDef,

Laura Nielson
Editor

HIGHDEF.ORG

Volume 1, Issue 2

A Publication of
AMERICAN PRESS SERVICES

Office: 2247 Fifteenth Avenue West
Seattle, WA 98119

(206)282-1776 FAX: (206)282-3535
e-mail: Laura@apsnw.com

Publisher: American Press Services

Editor: Laura Nielson

Assistant Editor: Amber Black

Design/Layout: Gina Griffin Hanzsek

Contributing Writer: Peter Sara

Photos: HighDef shots

Display Advertising: Call Dan Achatz at HighDef.Org –1-888-282-1776 for a current rate card. Deadline for advertising confirmations and mechanicals is 15 days prior to publication date.

Distribution: HighDef.Org is distributed to professionals in all areas of video and film production nationally.

Cover photo: HD image from KING TV's *Entertainment Tonight*.



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HDTV - The Film Format of the New Millennium

And by the way it's cheaper!

By Peter Sara

Across the United States, TV stations as we know them today will have ceased to exist by the year 2006. One by one they will sign off, shut down, go to black. Sound like science fiction? Few production personnel in television are aware of the fact: the entire industry is changing rapidly forever! By mandate of the FCC, all US TV stations must be capable of transmitting a digital signal within four years. All TV transmitters currently broadcasting via analogue trans-

mission will sign off. Canada will follow this lead.

For those in the production business wishing to be employed in the future it would be wise to learn something about this new technology. The arrival and impact of non-linear editing is a fine example of how technology can bring sweeping change over the course of very few years. Who today is still editing on flatbeds?

Those who think HDTV is nothing more than another

tape format, like DigiBeta, should think again. DTV transmission isn't necessarily HDTV but rather a pathway for the transmission of High Definition signals. Fact is, some say the only other event in the history of broadcasting having greater significance than High Definition, was the introduction of color TV in the early sixties. HD picture's quality must be seen to fully appreciate the new and vast potential it heralds.

Recently, Doug Franks and colleagues at IATSEE coordinated a High Definition video seminar held at BC Tel Facilities in Burnaby. The purpose was to bring together industry experts with people interested in learning more about High Definition. The centerpiece to the event was HD screenings projected from a High Definition projector provided by Michael Leader, along with various film segments projected from a 35mm projector specially installed for the occasion. This enabled the audience to examine the look and quality of both electronic and film processes. Audience reaction was surprisingly positive. Overall, the seminar provided an excellent opportunity for industry professionals to witness firsthand results and to hear directly from colleagues the problems, concerns and benefits experienced by this rapidly expanding new technology.

One of the guest speakers was Pierre de Lespinois, who, along with David Forest, Neil Dunn and Richard Jackson, produced "The Secret Lives of Jules Verne" for TV. They completed 22 episodes within a budget of \$50 million. This presentation was recorded on a High Definition video camera provided by Matrix Video.

This program is now being post produced at Video Publishing Group (Vancouver) and American Production Services in Seattle. Once completed, this program will be available to industry personnel to view at Video Publishing Group High Definition screening facilities.

Continued on page 8...





DIGITAL CINEMATOGRAPHY OPENS NEW PRODUCTION OPPORTUNITIES

Digital Electronic Cinematography has a great deal to offer the independent film producer. The extraordinary strides of recent years in electronic imaging now allow superb images to be captured on compact digital cassettes. Sony's novel EBR Transfer System will transfer these digital images and sound directly to 35mm film, producing a high quality release print.

The DVW-790WS camcorder produces widescreen images of extraordinary clarity. When transferred to 35mm film, the results often exceed those of an equivalent Super 16mm origination that is enlarged to a 35mm film release print. And now, Sony has raised the standard by introducing the world's first digital High Definition television camcorder – the HDW-700A. When this tape is transferred to film its quality ranks with that of a direct 35mm film origination.

For the important and extensive low-budget independent sector, the miracle of digital camcorders can bring very cost-effective solutions to cinematography. Sony's DSR-PD100A and DSR-200A DVCAM Camcorders will produce a film transfer that ranks with the best 16mm origination that is enlarged to a 35mm release print. The professional DVCAM family also offers 1/2 and 2/3 inch camcorders that can produce even higher quality.

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When they compared 35mm and HD side-by-side, they realized that for the first time, 35mm had serious competition.

Continued from page 6

At first, Pierre De Lespinois was committed to shooting his Jules Verne series in 35mm, after all he owns three 35mm cameras. However, when the producers heard about High Definition and the FCC commitment to HighDef, they called Sony and tested their cameras. Wow, were they surprised! HighDef rivaled film. When they compared 35mm and HD side-by-side, they realized that for the first time, 35mm had serious competition. Pierre looked at the numbers and decided to shoot on High Definition instead of film.

Pierre said, "I wanted an entire film crew, not a video crew." They had union concerns, which were eventually solved. Once again, cameras were tested especially for green screen compositing and finally they purchased four HDW Sony HighDef cameras.

Naturally the crew had significant concerns, but he asked them "to think of this as simply another camera...not video." We treated the cameras as 35mm and shot like 35mm. After the first week the crew forgot that it was a video camera, and over the course of eight months, shooting in rain, a hot summer, high humidity and smoke the cameras never went down with the exception of a broken screw which was fixed in 30 minutes!"

Pierre continues, "One of the weaknesses we found were the lenses. We realized the lenses were totally different from shooting film with respect to video. This bothered me most, but I found Optix in England who could do the job. Their

lenses were film friendly. We worked closely with all manufacturers and steadicam people to enable modifications for HighDef viewing. The end result was, we saved \$7 million on this budget over film!

The HD camera shoots 40 minutes per tape, with each tape costing approximately \$70. In comparison, 400 feet of 35mm film provides 4 minutes of footage and costs approximately \$400 including both stock and processing. This works out to approximately \$1 per foot of film. We shot over 620 hours of HD footage, the equivalent of 3,500,000 feet of film. The film stock alone would have cost \$3.6 million, but instead, we spent only \$64,000 on HD tape. Further, if we shot film and wanted High Definition tape for masters editing, the HighDef film to tape transfers would have been added to the above overall film costs. All of these steps were eliminated.

The HD camera has built-in color correction. With a portable HighDef monitor on the set, we could view the scenes

The HD camera has built-in color correction. With a portable HighDef monitor on the set, we could view the scenes and adjust the look immediately. We did not have to wait until the next day to determine if the negative was good.

and adjust the look immediately. We did not have to wait until the next day to determine if the negative was good. What you see is what you get. I didn't have to go through a HighDef scanner such as a Spirit. I didn't have to find the negative and color correct the tape. I didn't have to put it on XL Bite to bring it back to import it. I was able to take the HighDef tape and feed it into the appropriate (effects) machine, such as a Flame, Onmix, or a Fire, or via a 3D software on an NT based computer, or into Adobe PhotoShop or a Matador. It was that quick.

For editing, we would down convert to very low resolution such as digital Betacam and input straight into our non-linear edit system, do our cuts, and once we identified our shots, do our compositing. We did a lot of green screen shooting. We spent \$200,000 per episode, but we would have spent \$2 million per episode with film to do the special effects. That's a huge savings! The money we saved on stock allowed me to purchase more post production equipment. This money was put back into the productions. In the morning they would start editing. At the end of the day I could go upstairs and see what I had shot and edited!

HighDef doesn't handle the highlights as well and its limited to 100 units, but brings out more details in the blacks. You must expose for the brightest scenes, but it reaches into the black areas better than film. However, the latitude really struck me. Most film stocks have latitude of about 8. HighDef has the same latitude as film."

Pierre says, "Today in the U.S. the broadcast industry now has about 70 percent coverage with HD, but I know that market will double, triple and quadruple around the world. HD will be the format. So, I've evergreened (ensured long life for) my product and was able to shoot it cheaper and it is comparable to 35mm film. I would do it again." ♦

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An Icy Adventure

By Laura Nielson

Cameraman Tom Bishop flew to Alaska with KING TV's *Evening Magazine* to capture three stories on HDTV. It was *Evening's* premiere showpiece on HD. First Tom filmed the annual World Ice Sculpting Competition in Fairbanks Alaska, then the Bird Lady of Homer Alaska, and lastly a frozen waterfall in Valdez being attacked by a veteran ice-climbing team.

The five and a half day Ice Sculpting contest attracted nineteen, four man teams from all over the world. Each art team was given a dozen 4,000 pound ice blocks that were four feet by four feet by eight feet long. These blocks of ice are nicknamed arctic diamonds because of their clarity and ability to reflect colored lights. It is even said that one can read a newspaper through these arctic gems. Each group of sculptors energetically chisels and saws the ice with heavy power tools and household appliances with the hope of creating a massive masterpiece worthy of winning first place. The blocks of ice come from a retired quarry now called O'Grady's pond situated on the Fairbanks Fair Grounds, site of the ice exhibition. It requires the services of a forklift to extract each gigantic ice mass from the quarry and deliver it to a competing team.

This HD filming expedition happened in March. Tom was hopeful that the weather would cooperate for his first HD shoot. "I got the HD camera the afternoon we left. I had never even seen a high definition camera before this." Fortunately Gary Harper, another cameraman at KING TV had shot some HD footage. He offered to give Tom an abbreviated lesson, overview of the menu, and assistance in properly setting up the camera. Tom made sure his Betacam rain cover fit the camera, figured out his wireless microphone receiver, and zoomed out the door speeding all the way to the airport. Settled in for the four-hour flight to Anchorage, Tom began reading the HDCAM operating manual. His eyes widened as

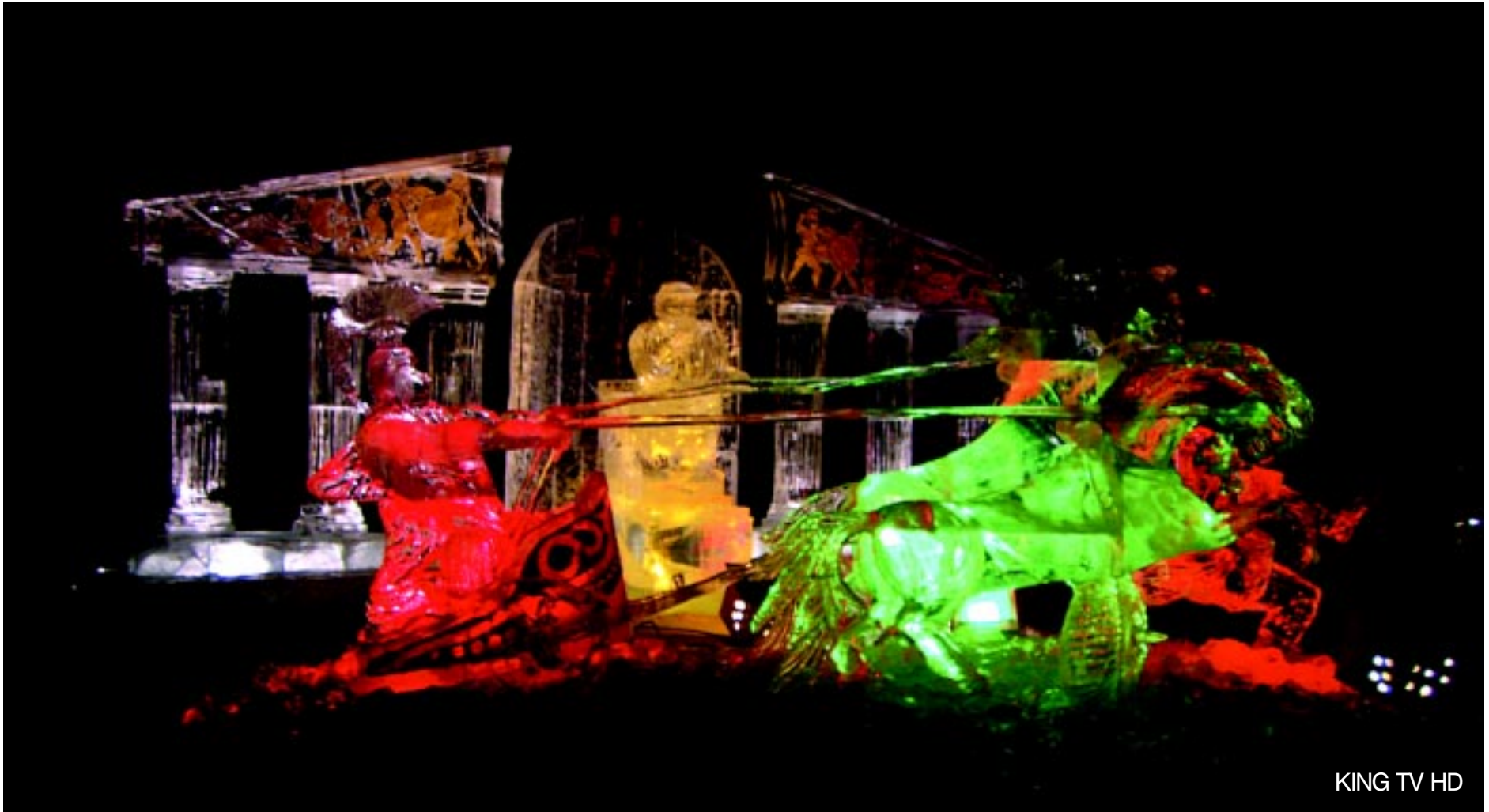
he read, "HDCAM operable in weather plus 30 to 104 degrees Fahrenheit. Just then the pilot came over the speaker and announced, "it is minus 23 degrees in Fairbanks today." Tom's eyes practically popped out of their sockets in panic. He knew that he had used a Betacam in 17 below without problems but... he didn't know what would happen with an unknown quantity, the HDCAM. It was new technology. Was it critical? Tom wasn't going to take any chances. As soon as the plane landed he headed for a store and purchased an emergency blanket, a foil thermal blanket. He wrapped and taped the camera with the blanket like a tailor fitting a suit to a model. He even designed it to contain the air. Then he shot the ice sculpting footage with his rain cover over the top to keep in as much heat in as possible. "The thing that was great about the HighDef equipment was that the batteries lasted really well. I would put in a forty-minute tape and let the camera run the entire time. I mean the entire time. Each battery lasted the whole 40 minutes." It was minus 23 degrees and Tom was worried about the possibility of the tape breaking. The headphone cords could flash freeze, become brittle, and snap like a dried twig. Tom wisely just turned the camera on and left it running. As the artists chipped away long into the night creating towering statues, Tom and his faithful HDCAM documented the unique glacial gallery of art.

"Shooting in HighDef changed how I went about shooting." Tom offered. "What artists were doing on their ice sculptures was picturesque but around the area there were cables and plastic pieces hanging down. Besides the general area surrounding the action was industrial looking. So I had to do selective shooting. I always pay attention to background anyway, but with HD you have to even more because every detail is crystal clear on HD and one oversight can spoil the



image you want to focus on."

With a limited stay in Alaska, Tom didn't have the luxury of shooting the entire five and a half-day Ice Sculpting Contest non-stop. After two days in Fairbanks the two-person team, he and producer/writer Joan Kinsey flew down to Homer to capture Jean, the Bird Lady, on HD. To Tom it was warm, a roaring plus 26 degrees, compared to the minus 17



KING TV HD

degrees of Fairbanks. "I kept the space blanket jacket on the HDCAM in Homer knowing that I was returning to Fairbanks the next day. It would have been a hassle to take it off and redesign and tape it all over again. However, I didn't use the rain cover which is easy to remove and reuse when the occasion demands."

Jean became the Bird Lady the day she felt sorry for eagles scavenging for food in her backyard. She threw them a few fish scraps and feeling a surge of adrenaline embarked upon a new avocation. Twenty years later, her charitable efforts are historically honored in Homer and even recognized by The Alaska's Fish and Wildlife Department as an act of

service worthy of their stamp of approval. Her self-imposed mission in life to keep the eagles alive in the winter is not for the faint hearted. Jean never misses a day, regardless of the wind chill factor, snow fall or being sick. Since Jean started her project the eagle population has flourished. Each winter she feeds them with codfish heads donated by the local fish-

Continued on next page...

ing companies who are eager to see their fish waste products recycled. Without Jean's charitable efforts, a lot of the eagles wouldn't survive.

When Tom and Joan pulled up in front of Jean's house, they were slightly afraid to get out of the car. Literally two hundred birds swooped down and hovered around their car. It was reminiscent of Hitchcock's horror film, "The Birds." Nevertheless, undaunted, Tom moved into high gear capturing the eagles, immortalizing them on HD. Jean, the Bird Lady, interrupted Tom's filming exclaiming, "Here comes a snow storm." Within seconds the wind picked up. The snow began to fall in torrents and the wind blew it sideways into the lens. To Tom the lens shade seemed inferior. It wasn't sufficient to shield the hazardous weather conditions from the desired footage. It was almost impossible for Tom to keep the lens dry despite his feverish attempts to shammy down the lens at frequent intervals. Tom lamented, "But even after all my effort, I missed one snowflake and in HighDef this speck of water looked like dust on the lens." I have to admit I searched in vain for this so called dust speck. All I saw was incredible shots of snow falling from the sky so real that they felt as if they were in the snow storm. His co-workers added their opinions, "It just looks real. Best footage imaginable!"

"Jean the Bird Lady had a gold pickup truck completely rusted inside and out. To say it looked beat-up is an understatement." Tom commented. "In most formats the truck's appearance would have registered as quaint...not so in HighDef which can be harshly revealing." In HD Tom's footage shows the reality of the garbage dump truck filled with bloody cod-fish heads.

After filming a competition and a charitable act, Tom flew off to Valdez to capture a hot new sport, frozen waterfall climbing. "One of the toughest things in a 4 x 3 world is that you can be on a 10,000 foot cliff and even if a car is in the frame below you still don't get the perspective. But in the 16 x 9 ratio you do. It makes all the difference in the world to capture reality." Tom exclaimed. With more real estate in each frame, a home viewer can see that the climbers were really up high. Tom actually climbed with the veteran climbers using his own harness system. The "can do guy" was willing to do anything in order to obtain the best possible footage. He



rigged up a pulley system to hoist the HDCAM up to each position for filming. I wondered if Tom's daring do personality stemmed from his years as a high wire circus performer in his twenties. "I was really nervous needless to say. The camera was worth over \$100,000 and here I am hanging off of a frozen waterfall. If I dropped it, I would have just bought myself a very expensive broken toy!" Whenever Tom filmed for Seattle's KING TV *Evening Magazine* he would use a Hi-8 or little lipstick cam to ensure a POV story perspective. But with HDCAM he didn't have such an option.

When I viewed the show I felt as though I was right there in Valdez, Alaska watching the climbers in person, the artists sculpt in Fairbanks, and the Bird lady feed the eagles in Homer. What a testimony to HDCAM. "Although the mixed weather conditions created a challenge from the cloudy gray skies to torrents of snow, the colors and contrast ratio were better than any other camera I had used." Tom enthused. "The imperfect weather still registered as the real beauty was

revealed, rather than appearing like a mistake, underexposed or overexposed. In HDCAM the blacks are really black and every color is sharp. The ice sculptures were almost better than reality on HDCAM where the fine detail is even clearer. It was as if you cleaned your glasses. They are drop dead gorgeous in HD. I can't wait to do more HD projects."

Tom's first day back in Seattle he had to shoot with his Betacam. "I remember turning it on to see if everything was okay and I thought someone must have left the telephoto on. I checked. No. I thought well, maybe the doubler is on. No, it wasn't. I felt like I had blinders on. After working with HD it was frustrating. I was used to the 16 x 9 format now and I liked the opportunities for framing and composition. I knew that I couldn't wait to get my hands on an HDCAM again."

Tom's thermal HD cover invention and other precautions paid off. The Alaskan footage is spectacular and received rave reviews from *Evening Magazine's* thousands of viewers. ♦

For more information contact: Tom Bishop, bishop@kingtv.com

Great Art Requires Risk

By Laura Nielson

Within two months cameraman Marc Pingry escaped near death in a helicopter accident while shooting HD footage over Youghiogheny River in Pennsylvania and almost drowned in the Montlake Cut waters in Seattle while filming a crew rowing through suddenly tumultuous waters... which makes me think that cats aren't the only ones with nine lives. So far, Marc, the cameraman, has three!

It all began when KTCS planned a HighDef show called *Over Washington* that demanded all aerial photography. "Can you shoot out of a helicopter?" They asked Marc. "Sure thing." He replied not wanting to miss a job opportunity even though he had never done it before! Twenty hours of helicopter training later, he was confident that he had earned his wings. *Over Washington* started an avalanche of job opportunities shooting in HighDef from helicopters. First it was *Over British Columbia*, part of KTCS's attempt to win over the Canadian audience. Then it was Gary McCartie's millennial masterpiece, *Over Canada*. All were tremendously successful shoots.

But it was the hazardous helicopter flight down the Youghiogheny River in Pennsylvania that tested Marc's nine lives. He and his pilot were flying about fifty feet over the river when they heard a loud boom and hit some wires. Marc was hanging out of the helicopter filming in HD with a console precariously balanced on his lap. The jolt was so severe; he grabbed his equipment for security and yelled, "What's happening?" "Hang on, hang on." The pilot screamed without explanation. As if in the movies, time reverted to slow motion. Marc looked at Joey the pilot, glanced over to the shore and thought, "Joey, you can land this helicopter." Interrupting his reverie, Joey yelled, "Hold on we're going down." The water was icy cold. It was now six o'clock in the morning and Marc was trained to believe that a helicopter would roll over in the water so that the passengers could exit without

being chopped off by the rotating blades. Marc felt trapped just as Joey called out, "We aren't flipping over we're sinking." Joey popped the floats and they began riding down river towards the white water rapids. Joey yelled, "This copter was made for flying not boating." Just then the \$350,000 HD camera that Marc was hanging onto for dear life smashed and wedged into jagged protruding rock cliffs stopping the helicopter just above the treacherous rapids. Joey deflated the floats on one side of the helicopter and Cliff, the engineer, accomplished the work on the other side. Joey dove into the frigid river in an effort to obtain help. The swift, swirling current seemed to swallow him up. Marc yelled frantically to his buddy. Marc's head bobbed up through the treacherous tide. "I'm okay." He faintly croaked. Finally his figure ascended the bank on the other side. The water dripping from his shivering body and soaked clothes hardened instantly creating the image of an abominable snowman. Marc and Cliff watched him disappear deep into the woods.

In the meantime Marc who was drenched in water himself, from the fractured glass helicopter bubble which had crashed on contact, managed to pry himself out of the helicopter climbing on top to survive. Cliff joined him. Suddenly, Marc heard a buzzing overhead. It was the Maryland State Police Department coming to rescue them in a helicopter. It was the MSPD's first helicopter rescue attempt. Marc gallantly let the engineer go first thinking, "If they make a mistake it will be on Cliff." Cliff grabbed the basket, but as the MSPD tried to winch him up they dunked him into the rushing river rapids so completely it resembled a baptism by immersion. As they retrieved him from the water, the basket banged into the tail boom and started to spin like a wild, whirling carnival ride. By now, Marc's hands were numb. He could barely reach for the rope, his lifeline to safety. Intense rotor wash show-

Continued on next page...



During the ten years that I've been shooting HD, whether I was flying at 120 knots or shooting in temperatures that were minus zero degrees or colder I've never had a problem with my Sony HD cameras.

– Marc Pingry

ered him with a downward force from the hovering helicopter. The best Marc could manage was jumping on the outside of the basket with one leg hooked over the edge to brace himself. The operator hesitated long enough to call headquarters. "Hopi, he's in the basket but it is in an unorthodox matter, what should we do?" "Hell, just pull him up." Shouted the agent on the other end. One second more and Marc would have lost his grip slipping into the ominous water. He had just used up one of his nine lives.

One month later Marc was shooting a test with an HD camcorder at Seattle's Montlake Cut. The small powerboat he was using as his shooting platform suddenly hit tumultuous waters. The crew coach and others panicked as the slapping waves shoveled gallons of water into the inadequately sized boat. Marc was shooting with the original HDW-700 camera. Once the boat capsized and Marc was sinking under the weight of the HDW-700, this thought passed through his mind at lightning speed, "I just lost an HD500, I can't ruin another! This would be worse." Suddenly he had a surge of adrenaline catapulting him to super human strength. He plunged his arms upward thrusting the camera through the swallowing and suffocating waters. One of the rowers grabbed the camera freeing Marc to save himself. However, when Marc's hands grappled for a lifeline they landed on the \$50,000 hand made crew boat. The oarsman who had just rescued the camera hit Marc with his oar to push him away. He would save the camera but not Marc whose weight was threatening his precious sport craft.

Marc managed to save himself by swimming to safety. Nevertheless, he feared the worst. The damage to the HDW-700 had already been done. It had been submerged under water for at least twenty seconds. The Japanese technicians that had designed and built the camera were on shore watching. No sooner had the oarsman rowed the camera to shore then the creators seized it running all the way back to their hotel.

After taking a shower to warm up, by this time Marc had hypothermia, he knocked on Sony's hotel room. What he saw will forever remain in his mind. The camera was completely taken apart and separated into hundreds of little pieces on the bed. With the precision of an emergency hospital team of doctors trying to keep a human being alive, five

men operated on the intricate camera parts with five hair dryers. Intermittently they would blow with their mouths trying to resurrect a priceless HDW-700, which was scheduled to premiere two days later at NAB in Las Vegas. This was to be the first presentation of an HDW-700 anywhere in the world.

"As I was looking at it I was thinking that there was no way that this was going to be okay. I apologized all over the place. I felt terrible. Then one of the Japanese man said to me, 'Marc, don't feel bad, this only metal and little pieces of inanimate objects. You alive, that's what matters. Don't worry about camera. You fortunate guy, you okay.'" But Marc walked away with a heavy heart.

Two days later Marc attended NAB with his wife. He tried to avoid the Sony booth. He doubted that they had been able to salvage the HDW-700. Fortunately his wife advised him, "You've got to go say hi to those guys. You've got to save face with them. It is very important to the Japanese." As they approached the booth and Marc spotted the large HD signs he was reluctant. Suddenly, one of the Sony engineers spotted Marc, quickly removed the HDW-700 off of the podium and rushed through the crowd to greet him. "Oh, Marc-san, look through view finder. It works!" Marc queried incredulously, "Is this the 2001?" "Hai. 2001, it works." What miracle workers they were. They had salvaged a one of a kind camera and the tape, which showed Marc sinking into the waters at Montlake Cut. Luckily the fuse on the camera died as the back of the camera hit the harsh waters. This timely event actually saved the camera.

From Chihuly Over Venice, to Over Philadelphia, to Over California, to Over Canada, Great Ranches of the West, Exxon Valdez Hearings, Funny Business with George Miller, Masters of Space, NHK Crafts/Culcimer Make, and literally hundreds of other credits, plus Emmys and a shelf full of awards; it is clear that great art requires risk. And nobody knows this better than Marc Pingry, the pioneer HD cameraman with nine lives. ♦

For more information contact: Marc Pingry Productions, Inc. 206-522-4009 mpingry@earthlink.net

"The only adjustment I ever had to make in shooting HD was with the aspect ratio. You are in a situation to have a lot of room on the side to play with it but you know that a broadcast is going to down convert it and so you have to be conscious of the fact that somebody is going to take your full 16 x 9 image and shrink it to a 4 x 3 and cut off the sides. But you also know that it is going to be broadcast in HighDef somewhere, so you have to be conscious of the image of your full 16 x 9 HighDef image. A lot of guys have trouble realizing this and when their show is cut down they are disappointed. You have to develop a style that fits both aspect ratios."

— Marc Pingry



HD

Marc Pingry, preparing his camera for a shoot.

A Plunge into HDTV

By Amber Black

When NHK asked Producer/Director Stuart Calcote to produce his first HDTV documentary in 1993, his immediate reaction was to decline.

"The HDTV production equipment was just too bulky and heavy," remembers Calcote. "I was worried that we wouldn't be able to maneuver in the field."

Back then (an eternity in the development of HD technology), Sony had just introduced the first portable HD camera - the HDC-500, weighing 20 pounds without the lens. If you actually wanted to record the pictures, it would have to be hooked up to a Panasonic Uni-Hi deck weighing in at around 50 pounds. Then you would need a CCU, monitor, remote control unit, at least 25 feet of cable, and batteries - lots of batteries.

Despite the cumbersome nature of the so-called "portable equipment," HDTV was, at last, mobile enough to be taken beyond the confines of the studio. NHK, the developer of HDTV, wanted to see just how far beyond the studio it could go. They asked Calcote, who was working for NHK in Tokyo at the time, to take the leap into HDTV.

"I didn't see it as a leap forward," said Calcote. "I remember making the NTSC transition to camcorders in the '80s. We had finally broken free of the umbilical cord to the VCR. The idea of taking a step backwards to even heavier and bulkier HDTV equipment wasn't particularly appealing."

On the other hand, the opportunity to produce a kind of documentary which had never been done before did appeal to Calcote. "They said I could choose any topic, as long as it pushed the limits of the equipment. Essentially, I think they offered me enough rope to hang myself."

Calcote characterizes himself as a risk-taker. He left the United States at the pinnacle of his American broadcast career in 1992 to accept the position of Director of International Programs with NHK in Tokyo - the first and only senior staff

position offered to a foreign national (non-Japanese) in NHK's 75-year history. For NHK, getting Calcote on board was a unique opportunity. He grew up in Japan, speaks Japanese fluently and instinctively understands the subtleties of both cultures.

Calcote began his career in broadcasting as a radio announcer at the age of 19. He made the transition from radio to television in Washington, DC after serving three years in

"After working in the 16 x 9 wide screen format, I doubt that I could ever return to what I now call 'square TV'..."

— Stuart Calcote

the Army. Since then, he achieved a distinguished career in American broadcast television with NBC and United Artists Productions. He has been honored domestically and internationally with dozens of film and television awards including 28 Emmys. His accomplishments include the production and direction of a wide variety of productions including documentaries, news, sports, magazines, entertainment, variety, music and commercials.

The result of Calcote's 1993 plunge into HDTV with NHK was *The Strongest Link* - the first hard-news type field documentary ever produced in HDTV. The graphic and some what wrenching documentary about the Houston Emergency Medical Service captured the Grand Award for Best Film & Video of 1995 at the Houston Film Festival. It went on to win the Gold Medal for Best Documentary at the New York Film

Festival and the Best Edited Program at the IBC Wide-Screen Festival in Amsterdam. The Hi-Vision (HDTV) Association in Tokyo awarded Calcote the Chairman's Award for groundbreaking production techniques.

Calcote was hooked. "After working in the 16 x 9 wide screen format, I doubt that I could ever return to what I now call 'square TV'. Whatever the limitations of the HD equipment were then, the results made up for them."

Calcote went on to produce three more HDTV documentaries for NHK (*Wish of a Lifetime*, *The Hi-Vision Anniversary Special*, and *Elvis and the Sacred South*.) In 1997, Calcote left NHK to form his own HDTV production company in Hollywood, Electronic Pictures Corporation. Recently, Electronic Pictures completed its first joint production with NHK, *A Day in the Life of the Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk*.

Shot entirely on board the 270 foot Coast Guard Cutter *Mohawk*, *A Day in the Life* documents the lives of the *Mohawk's* 100 member crew as they patrol the waters of Southern Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean Sea looking for drug smugglers and illegal migrants.

A Day in the Life was Calcote's first HDTV documentary using Sony's new HDW-700 camcorder. Since the Coast Guard would only allow a crew of three on board the *Mohawk*, the size, reliability and mobility of the production equipment was a crucial factor.

"We couldn't have done this program with the older equipment," said Calcote. "The HDCAM gave us the mobility we needed. We were on board the *Mohawk* for two weeks without a backup camera, so I was somewhat concerned about how the HDCAM would hold up. We shot in a variety of difficult conditions, including aboard a small water-craft that took on a lot of saltwater spray. The HDCAM worked flawlessly and produced incredible pictures."

A Day in the Life was shot by Marc Pingry, another HDTV veteran. "We shot over 50 hours of tape," Pingry recalls. "There

was something happening every minute, so it was hard to put the camera down."

The documentary also includes original animation of the Mohawk created by Derek Ledbetter of Cinema Research Corporation in Hollywood. Ledbetter spent four weeks digitally recreating the Mohawk to exact scale using blueprints supplied by the Coast Guard.

"The animated model is accurate in every detail," said Ledbetter. "Stuart needed the animation to show a perspective of the Mohawk that couldn't be seen with the camera."

Offline editing was done on an Avid Film Composer. "It took nine 9-GB hard drives to hold all of the digitized video," said Calcote who also edited the piece. "We spent over a month cutting and pasting until we got it down to 50 minutes. Of course, we had eliminated a lot of good footage; but, I think we managed to capture the essence of being aboard the Mohawk."

A Day in the Life was narrated by Jim Cissel and original music was composed by Ramon Balcazar. The program was compiled online at HD Vision in Dallas.

"The project worked out well. All the elements came together perfectly. We had the right people and the right equipment and I think we produced a great show," said Calcote. ♦

For more information about the Mohawk and A Day in the Life of the Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk, visit the Electronic Pictures Corporation's website at: <http://www.hdpictures.com>

Domestically, NHK is comprised of two terrestrial television networks, two home-direct satellite networks, two AM radio networks, one FM radio network and Radio Japan, Japan's short-wave overseas service.

NHK is the developer of HDTV and provides more than two-thirds of the 119 hours of HDTV programs now broadcast each week in Japan. <http://www.nhk.or.jp/index-e.html>



MSGTV Sharpens Its Image

By Amber Black

Cablevision's MSG Network is the first regular provider of sports coverage in High Definition Television (HDTV). The HDTV format was unveiled at Madison Square Garden last year. The MSG Network telecasts home New York Rangers and Knicks games with the new technology. HDTV telecasts of New York Yankees games on MSG and New York Mets games on FOX Sports New York (FSNY) are scheduled for the 1999 season.

"Rangers games in HDTV are historic telecasts and are a perfect fit with Cablevision's overall HDTV strategy," said James Dolan, President and CEO, Cablevision Systems Corporation. "We are moving aggressively to deliver the technology to consumers by producing compelling HDTV content, supporting marketing and sales of equipment at The Wiz, and utilizing our broadband network to transmit the signal to home."

"With the institution of state-of-the-art technology like HDTV, MSG will continue its tradition of providing the most innovative and creative telecasts. This is a tremendous opportunity to dramatically change the way that people watch television, sports in particular," said Joseph M. Cohen, Executive Vice President of Madison Square Garden.

"Content, bandwidth and state-of-the-art electronics—that's a winning combination that will make HDTV the most promising development in television technology since the move from black and white to color TV," said Wilt Hildenbrand, Senior Vice President, Engineering and Technology, Cablevision Systems Corporation.

HDTV sets will also be placed in the lobby of Madison Square Garden and in the Garden's Play-by-Play Restaurant and Club Bar and Grill in addition to many luxury suites. The Wiz will host future HDTV demonstrations of Rangers and other games at various Wiz stores throughout the metropolitan area.

As announced earlier by Radio City Music Hall, part of the plan to restore Radio City in 1999 includes state-of-the-art studios with HDTV capability. Scheduled to launch in 1999, Radio City Television will bring signature events from Radio City Music Hall and Madison Square Garden to television through a branded subscription series with a variety of packages, including a year-long "Season Ticket."

MSG Network will be using 1080i technology, the highest quality of picture available in the new ATSC (Advanced Technology Systems Committee) standards. The 1080i format dictates that there are 1080 horizontal scan lines interlaced. MSG will also provide a standard broadcast on its normal channel that will be a down-converted signal from the high definition cameras.

"Fans at home will now be able to view games on television as if they were sitting in the stands," said Mike McCarthy, Senior Vice President and Executive Producer of Madison Square Garden Networks. "The clarity and range of the wide screen will provide picture clarity four times as good as that of standard broadcast television."

MSG Network hired Sony Electronics for the system integration of two edit rooms and master control.

MSG Network uses their broadcast cameras, switcher and tape machines. The Network uses National Mobile



Television's (NMT) first high definition truck, which was custom built for this project. The fifty-three foot double expando truck is fully high definition 1080i state-of-the-art.

MSG Network is part of Madison Square Garden Limited Partnership, Cablevision Systems Corporation owns a controlling interest in the MSG L.P. which also include FOX Sports New York (FSNY), the New York Knicks (NBA), the New York Rangers (NHL), The New York Liberty (WNBA), and the Madison Square Garden arena complex, located in the heart of the New York metropolitan area. Cablevision Systems Corporation is one of the nation's leading telecommunications and entertainment companies, and one of the largest operators of cable television systems in the United States. ♦



HD



HD

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— Wilt Hildenbrand, Senior Vice President, Engineering and Technology, Cablevision Systems Corporation.

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