

EVERYTHING IS STILL AFAR

BY PASCAL SAMAMA

THE ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT DIRECTORS IS CELEBRATING ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY . COMPOSED WITH MAC GEEKS, IT ORGANIZES TRAININGS, CREATE AND ADAPT SOFTWARES THAT BECAME A REFERENCE.

The directors and actors are well known from all, but how many film fans, know what the assistant directors do on a film set ? They are often considered, by mistake as directors-to-be . But their role is at the same time crucial and uncomfortable, because they are act as a buffer between the production and the directors. Their job is divided in three steps.

Before the shoot, the script is analyzed to elaborate a shooting schedule, that will be the reference for all the film collaborators. This step, that last as long as the shooting it self, is capital, because any imprecision or omission will have financial & artistic consequences.

The second step is the preparation : location scouting, casting & coordination of the crews : art department, props, camera & sound, stunts, special effects... It is only after theses phases that the shoot starts...

Every shoot day, the assistant director establishes a work chart that defines the daily tasks. Despite this work load, this profession is, not well known, in France. As a proof, their names appear only at the end of the film credits, while in the United States, the "Assistant Directors" are credited at the top.

Ten years ago, the AFAR (French Association of Assistant Directors) was created to defend and promote the profession. Today, it is presided by Nicolas Guy, alongside Jean-François Blime and Pascal Salafa. Nicolas, who collaborated on "*The Corsican File*", "*Danny the Dog*" and more recently : "*Welcome to the Sticks*"; explains : "*It is a job in full and not just a transition . We are at the same time architects and construction managers*"

FROM APPLEWORKS TO EP SCHEDULING

To manage these informations, update them, distribute them, the assistant directors have, for a long time, used paper documents, by creating macro commands using Excel .

"At that time, the production secretaries, had to type everyday, call sheets on typewriters", recalls Leslie Tabuteau, vice-president of AFAR.

She has put her Mac Computers to the task, to develop, tools that she had used on feature films projects ("*Run for your life, Lola*", "*My nights are more beautiful than your Days*") or the tv series in which she works on ("*Julie Lescaut*", "*Sauveur Giordano*"...)

As from 1980, with her first Macintosh, an Apple IIc, she develops an assistant director's database using AppleWorks. As soon as the Macintosh SE 30 was released, she works on a new one, using 4D. Then she discovers Movie Magic Scheduling, an american tool, dedicated to creating shooting schedules. In order to share it with her colleagues, she decides to translate it in English using ResEdit, then proposes it as a download on the Afar website with a users guide that she develops as well. Her initiatives have so much

echo, that she becomes the official contact of the software editor for France and start working with Moviesoft, the european distributor, on the translation of EP Scheduling, the future version that will be compatible with OS X.

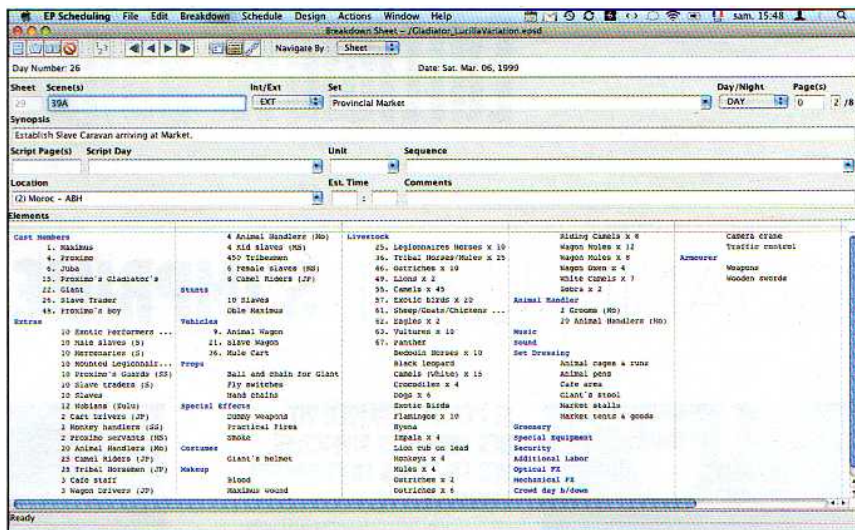
“ The industry will finally be able to update the OS of their Mac, because this incompatibility with OS X have forced everybody to stay on Classic. ”

Her reputation has spread on film sets and, regularly, colleagues & friends call her for help. But on top of this friendly support, she has created, through the AFAR, a six-weeks training program, approved by industry professionnals.

These trainings are delivered by the Cifap, a training organization for audiovisual content, information & communication technologies with the support of Afar and Moviesoft.

“At the Afar, we consider that the trainings have to be delivered by the film professionals who use these tools on a daily basis. The objective is not to say “Press Command-This“ or “Press Command-That“ but to transfer a real knowledge of the tool, to be thinking as an assistant-director.”

The trainees will learn their job with first class professionals such as Leslie, but also Nicolas Guy, David Campi-Lemaire (*Immortal, Brotherhood of the Wolf...*), Pascal Salafa (*Da Vinci Code, Blueberry...*) and Ali Cherkaoui (*The devil wears Prada, Munich...*). In 10 years, the Afar, has been able to re-establish a prestige for a profession, of which the members, if they are autodidacts, are all sharp professionals and demanding. *“Our mission is, before anything else, to do our best to offer the director with the technical & human means at the right time and in the right place, with maximum coherence, in order for him to tell the story as he envision it”, says Nicolas Guy. When you go to the Theater, to watch a french film, watch the film credits until the end and think of these assistant directors whom without, the dream would be less real.*



Cast Numbers	Extras	Livestock	Other Resources
1. MALIUS	10 ENTOIC PERFORMERS ...	45. Legionnaires Horses x 10	riding camels x 4
4. PROKIMO	10 MALE SLAVES (S)	46. Tribal Horses/Mules x 20	Wagon holes x 11
9. JUBA	10 MISTRENTARIES (S)	47. GUERRIERS x 10	Wagon Mules x 8
10. PROKIMO'S GLADIATOR'S	10 ROMANS (S)	48. SLAVES x 10	Wagon Gears x 4
11. GLADI	10 PROKIMO'S GUARDS (S)	49. SLAVES x 2	WHITE CAPSULES x 7
20. Slave Trainer	10 Slave Trainers (S)	50. Camels x 4	Seeds x 2
40. PROKIMO'S BOY	10 Slave Trainers (S)	51. ENTOIC SLAVES x 10	Animal Handlers
	10. Animal Handler (MO)	52. Eagles x 2	2 Grooms (MO)
	21. Slave Wagon	53. Warriors x 10	20 Animal Handlers (MO)
	36. Male Cart	57. Vasther	Music
	37. Animal Wagon	58. Black Leopard	Sound
	38. Camel Riders (JP)	59. Camels (White) x 15	Set Dressing
	39. Slave Trainers (JP)	60. Camel Riders (JP)	Animal cages & runs
	40. Slave Trainers (JP)	61. Camel Riders (JP)	Animal pens
	41. Slave Trainers (JP)	62. Camel Riders (JP)	Cafe area
	42. Slave Trainers (JP)	63. Camel Riders (JP)	GLADIATOR'S STOOL
	43. Slave Trainers (JP)	64. Camel Riders (JP)	Market stalls
	44. Slave Trainers (JP)	65. Camel Riders (JP)	Market tents & goods
	45. Slave Trainers (JP)	66. Camel Riders (JP)	Granary
	46. Slave Trainers (JP)	67. Camel Riders (JP)	Special equipment
	47. Slave Trainers (JP)	68. Camel Riders (JP)	Security
	48. Slave Trainers (JP)	69. Camel Riders (JP)	Additional labor
	49. Slave Trainers (JP)	70. Camel Riders (JP)	Optical FX
	50. Slave Trainers (JP)	71. Camel Riders (JP)	Professional FX
	51. Slave Trainers (JP)	72. Camel Riders (JP)	Crowd day 1/Scene

An input Breakdown Page, made using “EP Scheduling“ for a scene of GLADIATOR that required 3000 Extras...



MANAGING THOUSANDS OF EXTRAS, WITH FILEMAKER PRO

You probably don't know his name, Ali Cherkaoui, but the big budget film directors who shot in Morocco do not forget him, from the moment the cherifian kingdom has become the largest open air cinema studio of Africa. For the shooting of "*Black Hawk Down*", he has spent sleepless nights on his Mac creating, using FileMaker Pro, a database system that has allowed him to manage some 2000 extras. On top of the Film Preparation and the Shoot., he has spent, hundreds of hours of work, to develop a tool dedicated to manage the schedule, the costumes, the props, the payroll and the contracts, generating bar codes and printing a plastic card for each background artist (see picture below) . This system has been improved on big shoots such as *Kundun*, *Gladiator*, *The Mummy*. His next step, make these informations, accessible on an iPhone. "I am pretty sure that there are thousands of things to do with Apple's phone"

www.alitronics.com



Ali Cherkaoui (à droite) avec Night Shyamalan
(*Sixième sens, Incassable...*) sur le tournage de
son dernier film à Paris (*The Happening*).

Ali Cherkaoui (on the right) with Night Shyamalan (*Sixth Sense, Unbreakable...*)
on the film set of his last film in Paris (*The Happening*)



WEBSITES

www.afar-cinema.com

www.cifap.com

INFORMATIONS

The Assistant Director, Jean-Philippe Blime, Dixit Esra Editions

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