

Telltale Tics

American Cinematographer, Jul 2010 by Oppenheimer, Jean

When the Fox television series *Lie to Me* was renewed for its latest season, the show's second, the network asked the creative team to make some changes. A switch from film to digital capture was mandated, and director of photography Sidney Sidell was brought aboard to share the workload with Joe Gallagher, who had worked on the first season.

Season one had established a monochromatic look. The camera favored wide-angle lenses and was almost always handheld; dollies were seldom used and Steadicam was virtually banned. For the second season, more stylized visuals were the goal. The first installments of the recent BBC miniseries *Waiiander* (shot by Anthony Dod Mantle, BSC, DFF) became a reference for composition and use of color, and, accordingly, *Lie to Me*'s team replaced white with color and handheld with dollies and Steadicam. Longer lenses were also employed, and to introduce more of a naturallight feel, windows were installed where walls had previously stood.

The series revolves around Dr. Cal Lightman (Tim Roth), a psychologist and "deception expert" who studies facial expressions and body language to determine whether a person is lying. His firm, The Lightman Group, frequently assists law-enforcement and government agencies. In a soundstage at Fox Studios, The Lightman Group offices occupy some 3,000 square feet. In addition to adding more windows in the set, the production has incorporated skylights along the offices' central hallway, the site of many walk-and-talks. "We placed 20Ks outside the windows and hung 12Ks above the skylights," reports Sidell, whose previous credits include the series *Life* and *Lyon's Den*.

Perhaps the biggest adjustment for the camera department was the switch to digital acquisition. After testing a number of cameras, Sidell lobbied for the Arri D-21. "It delivers a more filmlike image," he attests. "It has softer edges; it can hold detail in the whites; overexposure does not dip as quickly; and it has an optical viewfinder, which I much prefer to an electronic one because I like to light through the camera, and operators can get an accurate image for framing and focus.

"Arri has worked out all the kinks from the [D-20]," he continues. "The D-21 runs cooler, has an adjustable shutter and is capable of variable frame rates. Furthermore, I don't like using a digital-imaging technician, and I don't have to with this camera; [we used it with] an onboard digital

recorder that helps keep the camera self-contained." The Camera House in North Hollywood supplied the new camera package, which includes two D-21s, three zoom lenses for each camera - an Angenieux Optimo 24290mm, an Optimo 15-40mm and an Optimo 17-80mm - and a full set of Cooke S4 primes.

Gallagher, too, quickly became a fan of the D-21. "I'd use it again in a second," enthuses the cinematographer, whose previous credits include the series *Deadwood* and *John From Cincinnati*. But one wrinkle had to be ironed out. Gallagher explains, "The D-21 has a base sensitivity of 200 ASA, and lighting for that wasn't practical for us. We went to our colorist at Encore Hollywood, Pankaj Bajpai, who suggested applying a 400ASA LUT. We set our meters as if for 400 ASA and lit interior scenes accordingly, but the camera recorded at 200 ASA. For exteriors, Pankaj could apply either a 200-ASA LUT or the 400-ASA one.

"With the 400-ASA LUT, I used a touch more fill to keep the blacks rich," adds Gallagher. Both cinematographers regularly shoot with a 1A Schneider Black frost filter on the lens, "primarily to take the edge off of shooting digital," he adds. When filming women, both cinematographers occasionally employed a Mitchell A filter.

The switch to the D-21 also required an adjustment to the night look used in season one, which relied on the use of Heavy Amber gels. With digital capture, the warm orange became a more unflattering hue, so Gallagher and Sidell switched to Golden Amber, which the D21 renders as a warm hue similar to the first-season look.

A favorite lighting setup this season was in a huge warehouse, the meeting place of an underground fight club. "It was a massive space," Gallagher says of the location. Inside the warehouse, a circle of cars surrounded two combatants, with headlights and fog lights providing a key source that the crew augmented with Par 64s. Gallagher added color with the fill and background lighting. "First," he says, "my rigging gaffer, Tony Varoulo, placed a bunch of 4K Zip lights gelled with Storaro Yellow [Roscolux 2003] about every 10 feet around the perimeter of the warehouse. We backed them into corners and put them directly in the shot, facing the camera. The stands were all blacked out, so it looks as if the lights are bolted to the walls. Storaro Yellow is great for backlighting the smoke we pumped in.

"We also placed 40 2K nooks gelled with Rosco Industrial Green on the floor, some of them shooting up through staircases," he continues. "There was all this wrought-iron and metal and industrial stuff lying around that we could shoot through, and it created wild, hard shadows everywhere."