

Trusting the D-21 on



LIE TO ME stars Tim Roth as Dr. Cal Lightman, a lie detection specialist who determines the truth by interpreting body language and psychology. To depict these small tics and “microexpressions,” the show takes advantage of the ARRIFLEX D-21’s full sensor and shallow depth of field for these extreme close-ups. The series is photographed by Sidney Sidell and Joseph Gallagher, with each Director of Photography shooting alternating episodes on cameras equipped by The Camera House.

LIE TO ME



When Sidell was brought onto the project for the show's second season, he immediately

began doing tests with different camera systems including the Sony F-35, F-23 and RED. "What sold me on the D-21 was the color and latitude," Sidell explains. "I saw more information from the D-21. The F-35 clipped at a certain point in the high range. Then you'd look at the D-21, it actually would just spike up higher and there was no cut off. It went as far as it could go, and then came back down. With the F-35, there's an actual cut off point in the high end."

Sidell's DP credits include the crime dramas *LIFE* and *WANTED*. He previously worked as a camera assistant and camera operator early in his career. "I'm a huge fan of the optical viewfinder on the D-21. It's easier on the eyes, it shows truer color and contrast rendition. I can actually light through the viewfinder and the over scan in the eyepiece is great. You get a full frame with ground glass markings. On the F-35 or the Genesis, the frame line is the eye piece viewing area, so the operators don't have a chance to see if something is entering the frame," he notes.

LIE TO ME shoots with two to three cameras at a time and on Sidell's set, the DP chooses to work without a Digital Imaging Technician (DIT). "Coming from a film background, I was really drawn to the D-21 because I didn't feel that I needed to have an on-set DIT. I have the creative freedom to take a film approach to working in a digital environment and have control of the image. It became a no-brainer to use this camera system," he says.

The show's multi-racial cast presents a spectrum of skin tones, often with actors of contrasting tones in scenes together. Sidell's

deft visual style allows this diversity to be showcased – an ability that he partly credits to the D-21's handling of skin tones and the lenses that are used. "I have found that the flesh tones are much more pleasing on the D-21 compared to other cameras. They feel really beautiful to me. They are softer and have a much closer look to film. The other cameras truly have more of a video feel. We light different actors and different skin tones in different ways, but I don't have a problem where one person 'jumps out' and the other person disappears, or one person is lit too harshly, the other not. The D-21 isn't particular to one or the other, it actually picks out those proper skin tones," explains Sidell.

Besides the D-21's versatility in rendering skin tones, the cinematographer has been impressed with its capability in shooting night scenes and dealing with under exposure. "My gaffer and I have been very surprised with this system. We know it has an ASA 200 rating, but I go back and forth from 200 to 400 ASA all the time based on how I want to control the overall lighting balance and depth of field. We did some night work in our first episode shooting with the D-21 and I lit the front of a building two and half stops under key. I rated it at 400. I looked at dailies and the building was almost too bright at two-and-a-half stops under. I realized I can light much more under than I expected and have the confidence to know that I still have plenty of latitude in the under exposure. I've been doing some of the night scenes now where the key is two stops or two-and-half-stops under exposed and it looks amazing. The grain was still fine – it held the color and information in the shadows. The blacks held and it was pretty amazing."

Now in its third season, *LIE TO ME* airs in over 40 countries around the world.

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Sidney Sidell

