

# DEREK ROGERS

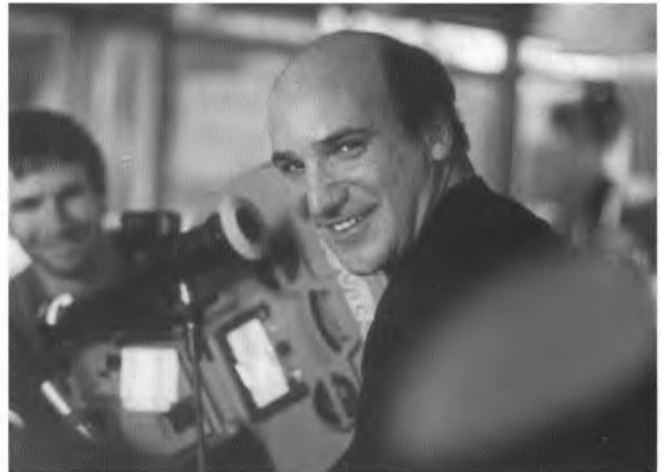
## Shooting with Sight and Soul

To an outside observer, the key to being a cinematographer or director of photography is having excellent technical expertise. You might expect the person making the shots on a film to approach the task from a highly technical perspective. For cinematographer Derek Rogers, the emotional link he has to the material is more often than not the most important aspect of his craft.

"I react emotionally to the material I shoot," explains a passionate Rogers. He admits the subject matter often deeply moves him as it did during a shoot on the British TV production, *What Katy Did*. "I actually cried during some of the scenes I shot." The emotional connection to the projects he works on may explain why Rogers (who describes his shooting style as "visual" and "dynamic") has been so busy over the past two years. He has shot 10 feature films and TV movies along with several short films and commercials. The work began rolling in after Rogers shot the now cult favourite *Cube* for Canadian Film Centre grad Vincenzo Natali. The two had previously worked together on Natali's short *Elevated* in 1997. Rogers' work on *Cube* earned him the Canadian Society of Cinematography Award for Best Theatrical Feature in 1999. "Vincenzo and I really clicked when we did *Elevated* and we're great friends now." The two hope to collaborate on another project in the near future.

Rogers has also developed successful working relationships with several other directors. Most recently, he was director of photography on Allan Moyle's *New Waterford Girl* and the MTV teen-comedy flick, *Jailbait*. Collaborating with directors on the creative elements of a project is something Rogers enjoys immensely. "I try to get inside of a director's head. I take their vision or something from their creativity and try to extend it." He points to *New Waterford Girl* as an example of this sort of creative collaboration. The look Rogers created for the film, which recently received a great response at the Sundance festival, was inspired by a location video that Moyle did prior to the shoot. Rogers was taken by the bleak Cape Breton landscape which was dotted with dozens of brightly coloured houses. From that video, Rogers decided to shoot most of the film during overcast days. On Moyle's *Jailbait*, Rogers shot with wide-angle lenses to give the teen comedy a "goofy look." When he worked on Bill Robertson's (*The Events* *Leading Up to My Death*) yet-to-be-released *Apartment Hunting*, scenes were lit to correspond to a character's emotions. To Rogers, being a cinematographer relies on two things: "It's all about how you frame and how you light."

Surprisingly, Rogers got into cinematography by chance. While studying film at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto he was asked by documentary filmmaker Andrienne Amato to shoot her film *Forgotten Mother* in Zimbabwe. This was not only the beginning of a personal relationship with Andrienne—the couple are now married—but also launched his relationship



with filmmaking. Initially, he shot several documentaries on film and video. Rogers also was behind the camera on 28 live-action short films, several of which were made at the Canadian Film Centre. Even in the past two years he has squeezed in shorts, including the recent Genie Award-winner, Chris Deacon's *Moving Day*. He admits to thriving on a variety of projects that have covered several genres including period dramas, horror, comedy and science fiction. "I'm selective in what I take but I try to mix it up a lot. I'm open to trying different things."

Trying something different was certainly true when he linked up with director Yan Cui on the feature *Yellow Wedding*. The film was shot in Hong Kong and Rogers recalls that three languages were used on the set. To help him work with the predominantly non-English-speaking crew, he was given a laser pointer. He found a point to a light or cable got things done quickly. Generally, the whole shooting process was much quicker compared to North American standards, but working quickly is something Rogers has become accustomed to. He has never worked on a film with a shooting schedule over 24 days.

Unlike some of his counterparts, Rogers is excited about the emergence of digital technology over the past few years. "I think digital video is amazing." He predicts the role of a cinematographer will expand as the use of digital technology in film grows. "In the future, I expect a director of photography will also become a director of digital effects." Based on his experience working with digital effects, Rogers has found great effects require strong original footage as well. "The best digital effects have excellent real-life elements." Considering the emotional link he has with the material he shoots, it would be safe to say Derek Rogers will never let the digital world overwhelm real life.