



Shot in 29 days for \$20 million, *Hustlers* racked up more than \$150 million at the box office. “It was the biggest film I’d worked on at that point and also the most successful in realizing what we were trying to do,” says cinematographer Todd Banhazl. Conversations with writer-director Lorene Scafaria started with questions about power — “the film’s DNA,” Banhazl notes — and how to photograph the women when they have it and when they lose it.

language is evident in the first shot, a three-minute, handheld, single take that follows Destiny from dressing room to stage to audience floor. “It sets up that you’re going to be emotionally aligned with these characters,” says cinematographer Todd Banhazl. He adds that the *Goodfellas* echo was no accident, as gangster films and sports movies were important references for tropes of photographing power. The opening shot also introduces Banhazl’s lighting strategy, differentiating female-only environments — like the dressing room, lit with fluorescents like a locker room — from those designed for men, like the club stage, where women drip with color.

Color, in fact, has its own narrative arc. As Banhazl explains, “The color story isn’t about sex — it’s about



capitalism.” Under the club’s pulsating red and pink lights, women have primal power over their ogling clients. That palette contrasts with that of Wall Street, a workplace in white, silver and cigar brown. As the women’s earnings increase, they trade their neon world for the palette of finance, moving into spacious, white Manhattan apartments with floor-to-ceiling glass. Finally, at the police station, color vanishes completely, replaced by gray concrete.

Shooting on large-format Panavision Millennium DXL2s at 2.39:1, the filmmakers fully exploited

the resolution options. Their base was 8K, but they also shot 7K, 6K, 5K and 4K “depending on the emotional needs of a given scene,” Banhazl says. When Destiny and Ramona are queens of their empire, for example, they were captured at 8K with super-wide prime lenses from low angles. “We called it the ‘50-Foot Woman’ look — really powerful,” says the cinematographer. By contrast, when Destiny is interrogated by the FBI, the slow zoom into her face was shot at 4K with Panavision’s spherical Primo SLZ11 24-275mm (T2.8).

“For us, the difference between 8K and lower resolutions was about



Cinematographer Todd Banhazl (center, holding "Delaney the Camera Reindeer") is flanked by B-camera operator Jennie Jeddry (left) and A-camera operator Stew Cantrell on the *Hustlers* set.

field of view and depth — how deep the frame would feel, how present the background environments would be, and the [degree of] three dimensionality in the human face," says the cinematographer. "At 8K, the world in the frame is huge, as are the impact and depth of a face, whereas in 4K and 5K, the frame becomes flatter and more oppressive, and faces become less deep and less dynamic.

The spherical Primo SLZ11 24-275mm was deployed for energetic dolly zooms as well. For primes, "we ended up staying entirely with [T1.4] Panaspeeds," Banhazl says. "[Panavision senior vice president of optical engineering and ASC associate] Dan Sasaki [modified] them to match closer to the H Series. We wanted something big and poppy and contrasty, but also with imperfection and humanity. The H Series had the softness of blacks we wanted and were more forgiving on faces, but the Panaspeeds had the rich contrast we wanted, so we found a balance between the two."

The DXL2's native 1,600 ISO helped get the deep focus Banhazl wanted. "If I'd had the time and money, I'd have done the whole movie at a T5.6," he says. "Environments are so important in this movie."

With his eye on the schedule, Banhazl's battle plan was to light

spaces, not shots. For the strip-club lighting, the production employed theatrical mover lights programmed to run multi-minute sequences. "We created a couple different club-floor and stage sequences for 2007 and 2011. We could shoot 360 degrees almost like a documentary, and all these amazing 'accidents' started happening: backlights washing over characters, [light] bouncing off the ground reflecting in skin, areas that look too dark or too bright. It has this alive, dangerous quality."

Banhazl says one of his most satisfying moments came towards the end. Crew and cast were exhausted but faced the movie's biggest scene: [musician] Usher's arrival at the strip club. "It's at the height of financial excess, before the crash," says Banhazl, "so we wanted it to look like a 2007 Hype Williams music video." They switched to E Series anamorphic lenses (the only use of anamorphic in the film) and ramped up the green lasers. "Part of the joy of *Hustlers* is watching these amazing actors shine," he enthuses. "That scene is unapologetically joyful. You get to watch Usher reunite with JLo — these pillars of mid-2000s pop culture. We were at the monitor, and as tired as we were, we felt that at least for that moment, we'd won."

— Patricia Thomson

The Lighthouse

Cinematographer:

Jarin Blaschke

Director: Robert Eggers

For the late 19th-century supernatural two-hander *The Lighthouse*, his second feature with writer-director Robert Eggers, cinematographer Jarin Blaschke shot black-and-white 35mm negative (Eastman Double-X) and used vintage Baltar lenses with custom filtration to create a look in keeping with the period. Set on a remote island off the New England coast, the story follows two lighthouse keepers (played by Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson) who engage in a battle of wills during a seemingly endless storm. Blaschke won this year's ASC Spotlight Award for his work on the production.

American Cinematographer:

Why was shooting black-and-white important to this story?

Jarin Blaschke: When Rob first teased the idea for the film, all I knew was that it was going to be two men, a tight space, a tight aspect ratio, madness and 'black-and-white with a cherry on top.' I took that to mean he wanted to ... transport the audience to another world. Black-and-white is good for that; it's instantly abstract.

What motivated the choice of vintage Bausch & Lomb Baltar lenses?

Blaschke: I wanted the lenses to have some say in how we experience the period and the light. Panavision introduced [a few options, including] the Baltars, [which were] designed in the 1930s. They pass a lot of blue and ultraviolet light, which was great for our orthochromatic look. They were the most glowing, beautiful portrait lenses I'd ever seen. Their smoothing character could balance out the micro-contrast of the Double-X and the orthochromatic filter.

Tell us about that custom filter.

Blaschke: At first I tried to achieve the ortho look through conventional color correction and black-and-white filters. The CC filters