

## Andrew Wheeler

**Home:** Los Angeles

**Education:** University of the Arts, American Film Institute

**Favorite film:** *The Natural*

**Coolest gear recently used:** Panavision Panaflasher 2, Scorpiolens 2x Anamorphics, Sony A7Rii

**Latest DP gig:** *Poor Boy* directed by Robert Scott Wildes and a TV show called *Tim And Eric's Bedtime Stories*, directed by Tim Heidecker and Eric Wareheim

**Union love:** The health insurance, benefits and pension are invaluable. And in the most immediate sense, joining the union made me eligible for jobs I was getting called about but unable to take previously.



Winter Light / Courtesy of Andrew Wheeler

Once he gave up on baseball as a career, Andrew Wheeler pursued a life in film, encouraged by Dr. Judith Hulick, his high school TV production teacher. He went to school for film and worked extensively in grip and electric before moving to the camera department and enrolling at the American Film Institute.

There, Wheeler was mentored by Stephen Lighthill, ASC, who says his protégé is “diplomatic, serious and innovative... a serious cinematographer who creates great-looking, story-appropriate images.”

Wheeler’s early G&E work continues to pay off for the Pittsburgh-raised DP. “That experience has helped the most in low-budget situations,” he explains. “Knowing how to do the job that typically takes the most amount of time – lighting – is helpful in maximizing time for you and the director. It also helps provide proper time assessments for the 1st AD and helps you gauge potential scheduling issues in prep. I think G&E experience can really keep you from digging a hole you can’t get out of.”

This diversity of experience is often lacking in digital-age operators, he laments. “I feel like many young cinematographers today seem rather limited in their approaches and lack versatility. They benefit from the prevalent acceptance of a flat and de-saturated look that most cameras put out. It’s currently a popular style, and sometimes it’s appropriate to the material, but if I see it from someone over and over again, I don’t necessarily trust their abilities.”

Wheeler recently wrapped *Poor Boy* with Robert Scott Wildes. “It’s the first feature I have shot where I feel like my voice is present in the film through the cinematography,” he says. “It’s a unique film with lots of style and mixed formats as well. I gave 110 percent to that film.”

His influences include masters like Caleb Deschanel, ASC (*The Natural*); Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC, CBE and Gordon Willis, ASC. But Wheeler has three less-obvious sources of inspiration.

“A painting in The Philadelphia Museum of Art called *The Moorish Chief* by Eduard Charlemont was an early influence and was one of the first things to make me really notice and think about light,” he offers. (Linguist/cognitive scientist) Noam Chomsky and (political activist/historian) Howard Zinn also provide motivation. “They have helped me focus the lens through which I view the world. It’s a part of the perspective – knowingly or not – that I inevitably bring to any given narrative. We have a real responsibility with our craft, given how influential it can be. ☘