

SHARP SHOOTERS

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Genre Bender

Name: Franc Biffone

Age: 42

Residence: Grew up in Brisbane but now live in Sydney.

Occupation: DOP, Steadicam operator, camera operator and stills photographer. I was a keen stills photographer from a young age and studied photography at school and have continued to do photography, working on occasions when clients request stills - for me it's all part of what I love doing.

The only thing that dictates whether that toy is a stills camera, a RED camera or a 35mm film camera is the client's brief and budget. For me it's important to know all camera formats.



Current assignments: I'm currently in pre-production on a feature film. I've been approached about another documentary. I'm heading back overseas this week to

shoot, this time in New Caledonia. The TVCs are starting to pick up again. Then I will be given the keys to the kitchen when I get back home.

Have you been busy?

I've been reasonably busy because I have a wide variety of clients. So, for example, as the TVCs slow down, I'm able to pick up a documentary, drama or attend meetings for future work. I'm a committee member of the Australian Cinematographers Society and we get together at least twice a month — plus we organise training nights for new gear and technology. We promote excellence through awards, judged by our peers and award accreditation for those who have reached the heights of the craft. We have just celebrated our 50th anniversary in Australia with cinematographers from around the world.

Shooting where? Locally, I work out of Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. In the last 12 months I have also shot in Kazakhstan, Japan, Korea, Brunei, Malaysia, Pacific Islands, Thailand and Italy.

What's it like shooting movies for Bollywood? Most of the Bollywood films I have worked on have been scenes that



I've shot in Australia, as they give their films an international storyline. The Indian crews I have worked with have been amazingly skilled and talented. Let's face it — there's only 20 million people in Australia, whereas in India 20 million people go to the cinema every day. This means their crews are constantly working, and the Indian focus pullers I have worked with have never missed focus.

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Do you specialise in a specific genre?

I've been lucky enough in my career to have worked on everything from international feature films, television drama series, documentaries, TVCs, music clips as well as stills for international magazines.

What's your favourite genre?

The next film I'm working on - which I'm absolutely loving designing the look, the camera moves and lighting for — is a fantasy thriller feature film and so far I haven't been given any limitations. So this is my favourite genre.



How do you handle shooting music videos and short films on a low budget with high client expectations?

With music videos and short films, I can be visually daring and experimental and, for example, shoot on film stock that is over five years old and push the limits way beyond 'specifications' — and have an end result which I would never have been allowed to try on a TVC with a rigid brief.

Is the amount of gear you have to carry around a hassle?

Can a kid ever have too many toys — never! The worst part about it is convincing the producer to supplement the income of some customs officials in some unnamed countries.

What was your first shooting job?

When I was at school I did a surfing caveman film with my mates, which I shot on Super 8 Video.

Most recent, interesting assignments?

I'm really excited about doing pre-production, lighting, design and planning camera moves on my next feature film. I love the cultural experience of shooting anywhere overseas. Aesthetically, I love shooting under different lighting conditions with the soft daylight light in Europe and haze in some parts of Asia as the sun sets. I really enjoy the life I have, so if I'm working, shooting amazing pictures and spending time with great people, I'm happy.

How do you enjoy working with crews of other nationalities?

I really have an interest in other people's cultures and I'm a very open minded, inquisitive and easy-going person. I'm open to learning new ways of working within local established systems and then challenging them as well as passing on my own knowledge, which is sometimes challenged in return. It's a constant learning developing process from which everyone expands.

What kit are you using at the moment?

Everything from 35mm film gear to HD cameras and on any occasion I still love the opportunity to pull out a Super 8 camera.

Other gear you have access to?

I have access to anything that's available, limited only by the favours I can ask and the producer's budget.

Kit "wish list"?

I have my own light metres and a small kit of lights and my wish list is unlimited as I just hire everything else that I need and forward the bill.

What piece of gear do you wish someone might make?

I'm lucky enough to know some great grips that have their own machine workshops that will make up anything I need for a specific job.



I also have a great mate that makes his own carbon fibre underwater housings with fantastic clear lens ports and another mate who is a set builder that can make anything you imagine out of timber.

Best thing about your job?

I haven't had a 'real' job since leaving school. I've always been in the freelance film and TV industry and I love the spontaneity of it. I love getting paid well for doing my hobby. Its important for me to know that what I do has an impact on people's lives for the better, be it through entertainment - films, education, documentaries or presenting new products in TVCs. I don't do cigarette commercials.



Worst thing about your job? Having to leave my kids at home when I go away.

Dullest assignments and why? If it involves a camera, it's not dull.

What country would you most like to shoot in? France/Europe. I would love to take my family to live and work there for a while. Living in Australia and travelling so much for work has given me an appreciation of the diversity in the world and I want to share the experience with my kids.

Favourite food?

Love Japanese food and I try most local vegetarian foods when I travel. I don't eat anything that originally had fur or feathers on it.

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