

# fade to black » Sergei Franklin

by Michael Goldman



BACK IN NEW YORK, FRESH FROM a journey to Kazakhstan, veteran cinematographer/Steadicam operator Sergei Franklin offered his perspective on the changes roiling his profession. A lover of digital acquisition technologies—particularly the Red Digital Cinema Red One camera, which he says balances perfectly for Steadicam

work—Franklin spent his Kazakhstan visit shooting Super 16 film for a stylized art film for museums and art galleries called *White on White*, directed by artist Eve Sussman. Franklin launched the DP part of his career in 2005 working with Sussman on a well-known art piece called *The Rape of the Sabine Woman* that continues to be presented in galleries and museums across the world. He shot *White on White* on film to give Sussman a particular grainy texture she preferred for the piece, but he is convinced that his Red One camera and similar technologies are going to be a boon for productions that have him tromping off to faraway lands such as Kazakhstan.

"I've done a lot of foreign productions, and now that we are becoming global, there are people across the world shooting Red," Franklin says. "In a remote place like Kazakhstan, where there are no film labs, it might have been better to have a digital camera and not have to try to ship film to a lab far away. In this case, it didn't fit [what Sussman wanted to do], but in general, I think digital cameras are opening up foreign locations to shoot things at a very high quality. There are lots of new possibilities out there."

Indeed, Franklin is a big aficionado of aggressively investigating new technologies, markets, and workflows. Based in New York, most of his work is in features, music videos, and commercials, but he has found art films to be an interesting addition to his repertoire, providing a different perspective and challenge.

"Eve is from the art world, and I'm from the film world, but we've found a way to work together," he says. "She makes video art with film crews and excellent production values that are shown in galleries and museums. Her work often starts with a painting that she develops into a story line, without a script. She creates a setting and lets the actors go. It's like working on a fiction piece and a documentary at the same time."

Meanwhile, as someone who works in so many different markets, Franklin is a subscriber to the idea that digital acquisition, particularly Red, is a democratizing element in the new industry paradigm.

"I purchased my Red a little over a year ago," he says. "Now there are Hollywood movies shot entirely with it. I like it better than any camera I've worked with, and I've been a Steadicam operator for 17 years. The Red camera is more compact than a 35mm film camera. [There's] no magazine hanging on the back, and going through doorways is easier. And the image gets close to film because you are working with a raw image and manipulating it in post. That makes it very easy for a film person to work with it, and yet, they can do things they couldn't do with a film camera, like sticking it on a dashboard or behind a bar where other cameras can't go easily.

"Another advantage of the Red and other file-based cameras is instant playback. After a long Steadicam shot with many focus pulls, you can confirm the shot on a computer in full resolution and go home without worrying about surprises in the dailies screening the next day. Small productions may use it to save money, while large productions use it because they like what it gives them. It's amazing for an [individual] cameraman to be able to afford a camera like this." **mm**



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