

## Jeff Kirkendall's Thoughts For The Month Column

### Thoughts, Opinions, Reviews, Commentary & More!

Hello and Welcome! My name is Jeff Kirkendall and I'm an independent filmmaker and actor from the Upstate New York area. This is the section of the Very Scary Productions website where I write about topics related to independent filmmaking, digital video production, acting, movies in general, horror movies in particular, my own indie movies, as well as anything and everything related or in between.

I decided to create this commentary page because I find that I often come across things that either interest me, excite me, intrigue me, or maybe just bug me. Any topic related to movies and cinema is fair game, from the most mainstream to the most controversial. For example I'll often read about movie projects that I have a strong interest in or opinion on, for one reason or another. This page gives me a forum to discuss these things. It's all about discussion and furthering understanding of our pop culture. Anyone who has feedback concerning what I have to say here, feel free to contact me (see the contact link at <http://www.veryscaryproductions.com/>).

I'd also like to point out that the following is just my opinion, and everyone is free to agree or disagree with what I have to say. Enjoy, and to all the Indies out there: Keep on Filming!

SUBJECT: Digital Video: Salvation for the Independent Filmmaker - October 2002

Recently I did an interview for a documentary titled ***Every Pixel Tells A Story: How One Community Joined The Digital Filmmaking Revolution***. This production from writer Peter Hanson looks at how independent filmmakers are using the digital video format for their movies. *Every Pixel* features several filmmakers each talking about the different aspects of DV. My interview on the subject inspired me to discuss the topic in this column.

Without getting into a dull discussion of the technical advantages of this exciting (and still relatively new) format, suffice it to say that the picture quality of DV far surpasses the older consumer video formats such as VHS, 8mm and S-VHS. Shooting on Mini-DV or Digital 8 (the prevalent consumer digital formats) allows for the capture of a crisp and sharp picture which can equal or even surpass the quality of film. In the past there was what I would call a great divide between the quality of any video shot using consumer formats, and anything shot using professional equipment (either video or film). Basically what this meant was that everyday people could only produce videos that looked like home movies. Professional quality was not possible unless you had access to very high-priced equipment and knew how to use it. (I experienced this firsthand when I began making movies using consumer equipment and would employ every trick in the book, such as over-lighting night scenes and having the camera microphone right in people's faces, to at least try to get closer to professional quality.) Now with DV, everyone has access to quality equipment at a reasonable price.

The real benefit of this technology is that it is helping to democratize moviemaking. People who a few years ago might never have attempted to make a movie - because they didn't believe they could produce anything with any real quality - are now finding

that they can indeed produce something worth watching. In my opinion, moviemaking should be as democratic as everything else in our society. Viewers should have limitless choices in what they watch (or listen to) today. This is not to say I have anything against mainstream movies. On the contrary, I'm a huge fan of Hollywood who goes to the movies once a week on average. I just believe that the individual with limited resources should have the same chance at making a movie and getting it seen as the huge company with unlimited resources.

It could be argued the downside to all this is that now people with no skill will be producing a lot of garbage not worth watching. This is true in the sense that making movies on video (or any format for that matter) does require at minimum some understanding of the equipment and hopefully some artistic sensibility as well. In my own endeavors I have learned that factors such as good lighting and carefully recorded sound are essential no matter what format you're shooting on. (In the field of horror movies, night lighting can be especially tricky and difficult.) Good writing and storytelling ability is always important also. The new technology will undoubtedly lead to a lot of digital crap being produced by unskilled individuals. This is inevitable; however it will probably parallel the world of big budget movies, where many great films are made along with an equal number of clunkers. As with anything else, talent will (or should at least) rise to prominence. Digital video simply allows anyone interested to play the game. How each person rises to the challenge will be up to them.