

New England's recent growth in film production continues its steady expansion. The region appears to be priming itself to be even more user-friendly to the industry. The commonality of tax incentives has now forced a competitive environment, prodding legislators to react at what is happening in neighboring states. The question raised is what will be the new threshold that qualifies filmmakers and producers for the tax credits. This is one battle that may pit one New England state against another and does have ramifications still to be felt.

While the political winds blow, those who have worked steadily in the business and laid the foundation for what has been a renaissance in regional production, continue to set new standards; raising the bar on what is expected from all who play in this field.

One individual who has helped set these standards of what we have come to expect in the production realm is Curt Worden of the Providence, RI-based Tango Pix.

While he may not admit to it himself, Curt is one of the region's leaders in the entertainment industry. It's no small wonder then that his facility has been selected to undertake the post-production for the popular Showtime series *The Brotherhood*. According to his official company biography, Curt has been in the business since the Age of Aquarius.

Curt Worden spent many of those formative years honing his craft as a director of photography. During his tenure as a broadcast Director of Photography (DP), he was part of the first wave of journalists sent to critical situations of armed conflict, including the Panama invasion, the civil war in Liberia and Desert Storm. Curt was in constant demand for his skill at capturing historical events, as well as the human condition, with uncommon sensitivity and creativity. This unique gift for storytelling through the lens of a camera earned him a distinguished reputation in the industry and two national Emmy Awards.

Curt's talents exceed his skills behind the eyepiece of the camera. Today, he is sought after as both a director and executive producer for his ability to create, conceptualize and execute many types of production projects. Some of his credits include: *Ed Bradley On Assignment: Town Under Siege*, a CBS documentary, *Tutu And Franklin: A Journey Towards Peace*, a two-hour documentary for PBS, *Revenge Of The Whale*, a dramatic, two-hour special produced with NBC, based on the best-selling book *In The Heart of the Sea* by Nathaniel Philbrick; *A Show Of Force*, a New York Times Television documentary that aired on The Learning Channel. Curt also directed and executive produced programming for the Travel Channel, Discovery Health and a 13-part, half-hour series for the Lifetime Network.

When we spoke recently, Curt was in the middle of production on a new work on famed Beat Generation artist, Jack Kerouac.

GTM: Tell us a bit about yourself? What is your background? How did you get started in the business?

CURT WORDEN: I was influenced early on by my father who purchased an 8mm movie camera and projector for our home. He used the camera for documenting family events before we had a television. Bringing out the projector to screen the home movies made an impression on me. So my first exposure allowed me to see the whole process - I was hooked.

GTM: You worked as a broadcast Director of Photography; when, how where did that happen? Were you a stringer or did you work for one network exclusively?

CW: My first real job shooting for broadcast was in the Providence local news market. I was a staff news cameraman from Channel 6 and 12 for 9 years shooting 16mm film of days events in the area. It was a good experience and it enabled me to run thousands of hours of film through a camera with my eye to the viewfinder. After that I was hired by ABC News and moved to NYC. There I was exposed to national stories and began my world travel documenting major issues and events.

GTM: What was it like covering stories like the Panama Invasion and Desert Storm?

CW: I found myself working in hostile environments frequently. The Panama invasion and Desert Storm were large military deployments. I was part of the media pack that was dispatched to

cover those conflicts. The safety issues and concerns were always present but most of the time our movements were planned and supported by experienced journalists and network influence. In other conflicts it was more unpredictable and dangerous, like the Liberia Civil War, Somalia Invasion, Shining Path in Peru and covering drug stories in Columbia. These are the conflicts where emotions run high, children carry guns and you tend to travel alone or in small production teams. Working in many parts of the world on many projects has made an impact on me. I've gained a perspective in my life that makes me appreciate my good fortune and reminds me to make the most out of every minute because indeed life is so fragile.

GTM: You've won two national Emmy Awards. What were they for and how did you feel when you won them?

CW: I've never been motivated by awards. My reward has always been the satisfaction of sharing experiences with an audience - telling stories on film. It is nice to have your work acknowledged and appreciated, but it is never a factor when I'm actually doing the work. The first Emmy award was one for a series of programs I did with Ted Koppel during the Clinton administration. We were given amazing access to the President, traveled on Air Force One overseas to Brussels, Prague, Kiev and Moscow during a NATO Summit tour. We produce a series of five shows that really gave insight to America's international relationships at that time. It was the access to President Clinton and other Heads of State that enabled the program to be so good. The second Emmy was won for a series of reports called the "100 Day War" which was shot during the first Gulf War. I worked with correspondent Forrest Sawyer, and a great sound recordist, Adam Mosston. We were able to go into Kuwait before the allies ground war reached the city and met up with the Kuwaiti resistance to tell the story while the Iraqis were still occupying the neighborhoods of the city. Shortly thereafter the Iraqis retreated and the allies rolled in to liberate Kuwait. I had been in the Middle East for three months at that point and I knew it was time to go home. The Emmy applications were submitted by the Network I worked for and I was honored to receive the award.

GTM: Tell us about some of the more noted work that you've undertaken that you are most proud to have worked on?

CW: I often get asked "What was your favorite project?" It is very hard to answer because of the diversity of subjects and the personal reward can be felt in many ways. For example, it is very exciting and personally stimulating to travel to places in the world such as, Indonesia, that are culturally different and highly stimulating. The experience of being there, meeting the people, enjoying the food and seeing life from a different perspective is highly emotional and has had a profound influence on my life. But it is equally rewarding to produce a film on Autism that has the potential of helping a family that wants information and needs to know that they are not alone in their situation. I'm a storyteller and I'm happiest when I've helped to bring a story to an audience, producing a meaningful experience for them.

GTM: You have been noted for your ability to "create, conceptualize and execute many types of production project." How have you honed your craft and established this reputation?

CW: My work is fundamentally understanding people and knowing how to connect with them as an audience. Today more, than ever, the audience is diverse with many sources of media experiences to engage in. Producing for a target audience is fundamental but often secondary because many "creative" people want to satisfy themselves first. I understand this and have done it myself, but when there is a purpose behind the project the audience comes first. As for executing a project, it is about the skills of the people who work on it. Anyone who thinks they can do it alone should reconsider. There is great reward in collaboration when producing film projects. Great ideas that contribute to the success can come from anyone at anytime - you just have to be willing to listen. Reputation is an interesting concept; there is an old saying in this business I use - "You're only as good as your last story".

GTM: When and how did "Tango Pix" come about and where did the name come from?

CW: Tango Pix was incorporated two years ago and was started from the vision of a handful of professionals who have worked together for a long time. Our senior staff has a common desire



Jaenna Juleson with Director Curt Worden & Producer Gloria Bailen, map out the next segment of filming on the set of American Quilter.

to do effective work and to provide a service that allows them to use the skills and creativity they enjoy. Naming a company can be difficult. We brainstormed through over one hundred names and finally settled on Tango Pix. We thought it had energy, implied partnership, was easy to remember, and I guess it was somewhat intriguing.

GTM: What are some of the projects your company has undertaken? How would you assess its growth?

CW: The production team at Tango Pix has highly honed skill sets. We have great tools and know how to use them. These assets are applied to a wide variety of projects. We produce stories for corporate sales and marketing divisions and for audiences who go to the movie theater for an entertainment experience. Large corporate clients such as AIG, Hasbro, and APC demand the most technologically creative vision. They want us to help them compete in their markets and we do. On the entertainment side we continue to produce television shows and series as well as feature length documentaries and movies. With the demand for motion media content the growth has been impressive - but there is still so much more to do. We're doing more and more with the internet because that's where people are viewing. It's not just about creating great content - it has to be packaged correctly for the medium and distributed.

GTM: You are currently working with the crew for Showtime's of The Brotherhood. What specifically are you doing and how has that impacted on Tango Pix?

CW: The Showtime *Brotherhood* relationship has been tremendous. First they are all great people with a high degree of creativity. They embraced the opportunity to do their post production work closer to their production location and turned to us when they found that we could accommodate their needs. Tango Pix has twelve editing suites and *Brotherhood* is using five of them for posting season two over a 6 month period. It has impacted Tango Pix in a very positive way though the natural buzz a program series of this nature generates. It has also allowed us to grow, hire additional people and give back to the Rhode Island community.

GTM: What are your criteria in evaluation as to whether a film is successful?

CW: There are several ways to evaluate success. Generally speaking a film needs to make some creative contribution that is not determined by ratings or box office - it is a more personal reward. From business perspective, investors need to see a return and the creative people need to be compensated for their effort. In corporate filmmaking, results as they relate to intended goals will indicate success. Personally, my greatest rewards are emotional.

GTM: With the recent addition of tax incentives across the county—currently 39 states have created such packages—what do you think that means for the industry and how has it impacted this region?

CW: There is controversy surrounding the tax credit concept in every state especially with government budget deficits. My bias perspective fully supports tax credit incentives because I see first hand how production money is spent in the communities and how many people and their families benefit from the jobs that are created. If the incentives did not work, then why would 39 states embrace them? With these financial incen-

tives available (in various levels) throughout the country, in Rhode Island we must focus our attention on infrastructure, crewing and a marketing campaigns to be sure potential producers understand to value that is here.

GTM: Aside from wearing the hat of an executive with your company, what are you working on at the moment as an artist? Can you tell us a bit about the Kerouac project? How did it come about and where did you get the financing?

CW: In January, 2007, we decided to embrace independent film development in a more robust way. Producer Gloria Bailen and Director of Development, Jim Sampas lead this effort. There are many projects in various stages of development. We recently completed a documentary *Healing Autism* which is currently in distribution. In June we shot a feature length documentary entitled *One Fast Move or I'm Gone: Kerouac's Big Sur* with shooting in New York City, San Francisco and Big Sur. As Director, it is a wonderful creative experience especially working with the talented crew we assembled. As a business person I have to make decisions that will protect investor interests through budgeting, crafting and marketing the project to attract audiences. The film is financed through Makedia Worldwide and other private investment. We also have feature film options on other Kerouac titles including *Big Sur*.

GTM: Tango Pix is blessed with many exceptional interns and I know there is a strong supportive bond within your office for them. What advice do you give to these young people about whether or not they should work in this industry once they finish their internships?

CW: We have a strong internship program and we work with all the area educational institutions to support the learning process in this industry. Our interns have an exceptional learning experience because our staff embraces the "hands-on" approach. The responsibility to engage an intern is very serious. We are exposing and teaching them to a real world experience in a highly competitive industry. With their academic work an internship gives them significant edge as they work towards a career. I do not advise individuals as to their compatibility with the film and video industry. They need to make that decision and my opinion could be wrong. My best advice to anyone is to find your passion, identify your strongest skills and seek all the experience you can. Don't look back.

To learn more about Tango Pix, go to the company website: www.tangopix.com.

George T. Marshall is the Producing Director of the Rhode Island-based Flickers Arts Collaborative, the creators of the annual Rhode Island International Film Festival for which he also serves as Executive Director. He teaches documentary film and speech communications at Roger Williams University. He is a director, writer, producer of commercials and industrials for numerous business clients in the region. Currently he is writing a chapter on teaching digital documentary filmmaking for a new college text book entitled *Teaching with Multimedia: Pedagogy in the Blogosphere*. He can be reached at flicksart@aol.com.

Would you like to get NEED electronically?

Subscribe for just \$20/year
www.jacned.com