



Mahsun Kirmizigul, Jim Gucciardo (behind the camera), and crew working on the set of *Five Minarets in New York*.

Five Minarets in New York

Cinematographer Shoots New Indie in

Anamorphic 35mm

*Jim Gucciardo Talks about
the Digital Intermediate Process*

by Matthew J. Perlman

This is the first English language film from Turkish director Mahsun Kirmizigul, whose previous films *I Saw the Sun* (2009) and *The White Angel* (2007) both received international acclaim. *Five Minarets in New York* follows the story of a Turkish scholar's wife, as she is arrested by federal authorities in the US for a crime she did not commit. The film stars Gina Gershon, Danny Glover, and Robert Patrick, and is being produced by Boyut Films.



Mahsun Kirimzigul, Jim Gucciardo (behind the camera), and crew working on the set of *Five Minarets in New York*.

The cinematographer Jim Gucciardo is shooting in 35mm anamorphic color. His previous works include features such as *Indigo* (2008) and *Burning Land* (2003), as well as various commercials and a documentary for the Discovery Channel. He answered a few questions for *StudentFilmmakers Magazine* about this project.

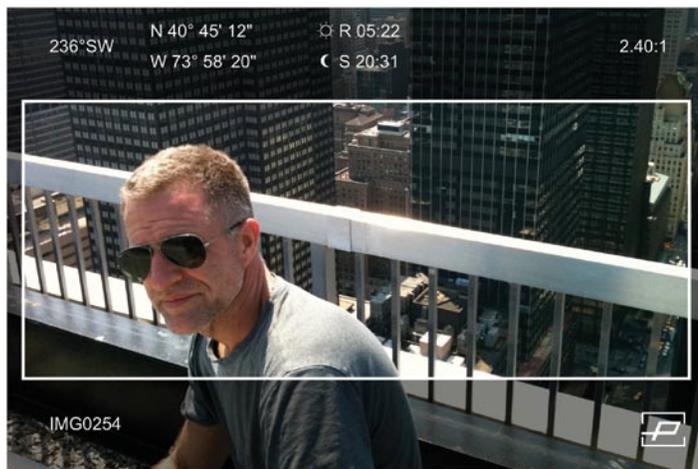
Let's talk about *Five Minarets in New York*. What cameras did you shoot with?

Jim Gucciardo: The camera package consisted of an Arricam LT as the main "A" camera body, 1- Arri 435 for high speed sequences, and 1-Arri 235 as an additional camera for handheld and special Steadicam situations. This project was shot in anamorphic 35mm using the Hawk Anamorphic V series lenses. We choose to work in anamorphic since this gives us a unique look but mostly because this offers us the highest resolution and highest quality image available.

Do you work predominately in 35mm? Is there a specific reason for this?

Jim Gucciardo: Yes, I work primarily in 35mm, because to this date this is still the gold standard of image acquisition. Although I find the digital world to be interesting, particularly in the world of post-production and distribution, I don't particularly like the look of it. Also, with the exception of the Panavision Genesis or the new Arri Alexa, I also don't think that equipment currently available is up to the standards of professional use and the workflow of many of some of the cameras out there is not very easy to work with.

Did shooting *Five Minarets* present any unique challenges during the production process?



Cinematographer Jim Gucciardo



One of the Arri cameras used to film scenes for *Five Minarets in New York*.

Director Kirimzigul works with actors on the set. Jim Gucciardo behind the camera.



Jim Gucciardo: The biggest challenge for me personally as the cinematographer of this film was working in anamorphic. Anamorphic lenses are a bit slower than normal lenses and also pulling focus on them can be a real challenge. I had to compensate often by increasing the amount of light on the set being photographed and by having and exceptionally good focus puller as part of my team.

Where in New York did you shoot?

Jim Gucciardo: We shot all over the NYC metropolitan area and in some

very nice locations. I think the biggest challenge of working in New York, is that it's New York City... New York City doesn't come to a halt just because you are shooting a movie, so dealing with the reality with a degree of patience is very challenging.

How about in Istanbul? What unique challenges were presented there?

Jim Gucciardo: Working in Istanbul is a great experience as well. I've been working here for many years and have a great crew that I've been through a lot with and rely on a great

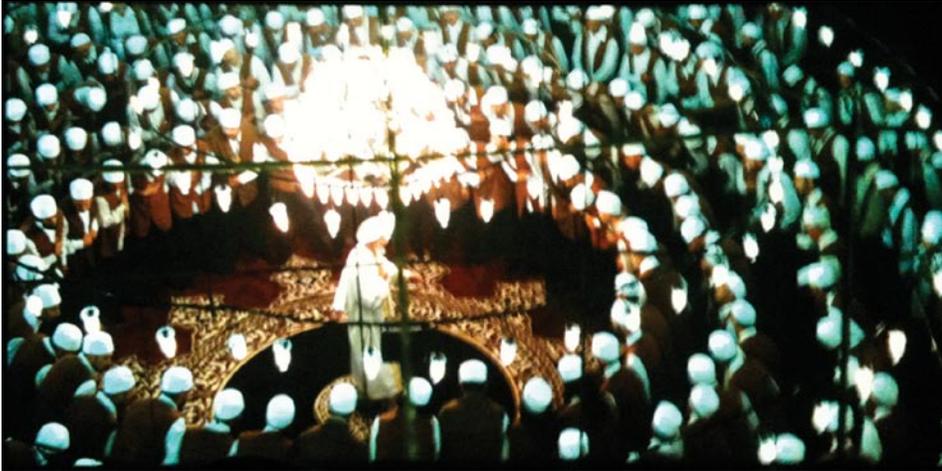
deal. I'd honestly shoot anywhere with them.

I wanted to ask you about your editing process. Do you use a digital intermediate for editing? What is the digitizing process like?

Jim Gucciardo: All the exposed film has been processed at Deluxe lab in New York City [the New York dailies were supervised by Thomas Centrone at Deluxe NYC] and Sinefekt Labs in Istanbul, Turkey. I have a very good relation with both of these facilities and think that that relation between the DP and the Lab is absolutely crucial.



Director Kirimzigul and DP Jim Gucciardo on the set of *Five Minarets in New York*.



Stills taken by Jim Gucciardo inside the DI suite of the movie being projected during the DI process.

Once the film is shot, it is transferred at a “flat transfer” or “one-light” meaning no corrections have been made and the most data information is available. This is then digitized and then sent to the editor to do his magic on it. Once the film is cut [this includes and CG components, composites, or title sequences], the EDL [or master edit list] is then sent to the lab to be matched up to the original in-camera negative. All the selected and used takes are then re-

scanned into a machine [in this case we are using LUSTRE] at 2K resolution and prepared for the final grading or Digital Intermediate [DI] process.

The final DI will be done at Sinefekt Istanbul with my dear colleague and Senior Colorist Dilek Sarman Er. Dilek and I have worked together for over a decade on hundreds of TV commercials and this will be our second feature film together. She is basically my “other eye,”

during the filming process and oversees our dailies. Again, I will state that the relation between the DP and the colorist [in the old days it would be the negative timer] is absolutely crucial, and I rely on her input as much as I rely on my Focus Puller and Gaffer. The DI process is the modern equivalent to negative timing, except we are working in the digital format and have much more control over the color corrections. After full grading, the image is then printed out to a positive film stock to make the final release prints. I find that there is some difference in the grading when going back out to the analog format due to the inherent differences in positive stocks, but this is usually corrected after one or two tries at the master print. Again, working with very experienced people that I know and trust their abilities and tastes, makes all the difference in the world. I would like to stress here, that even with all the miraculous advances in modern technology in both the acquisition phase as well as the post-production phase, you can never replace good, talented and experienced people that are behind the image.



Jim Gucciardo