



American Society of Cinematographers
Historical Timeline
Compiled by David E. Williams

February, 1913 — The Cinema Camera Club of New York and the Static Camera Club of America in Hollywood are organized by their respective members. Each consists of cinematographers who sought to share ideas about advancing the art and craft of moviemaking. By 1916, the two organizations exchange membership reciprocity, but they both disband in February of 1918, after five years of struggle.

January 8, 1919 — The American Society of Cinematographers is chartered by the state of California. Founded by 15 members, it is dedicated to “*advancing the art through artistry and technological progress ... to help perpetuate what has become the most important medium the world has known.*” Members of the ASC subsequently play a seminal role in virtually every technological advance that has affects the art of telling stories with moving images. Philip E. Rosen is elected be the first president of the ASC.

June 20, 1920 — The first documented appearance of the “ASC” credential for a cinematographer in a theatrical film’s titles is the silent western *Sand*, produced by and starring William S. Hart and shot by Joe August, ASC.

November 1, 1920 — The first issue of *American Cinematographer* is published. Volume One, #1 consists of just four pages, reporting on news and assignments of ASC members. The newsletter is published twice monthly.

October 1, 1921 — *American Cinematographer* becomes a genuine magazine — boasting 16 pages — and is published every month since. Over the decades and under the guidance of several editors, *AC* grows into the leading professional cinematography publication of the world and earns multiple awards for excellence.

1922 — Guided by ASC members, Kodak introduced panchromatic film, which “sees” all of the colors of the rainbow, and recorded images’ subtly nuanced shades of gray, ranging from the darkest black to the purest white. *The Headless Horseman* is the first motion picture shot with the new negative. The cinematographer is Ned Van Buren, ASC.

1923 — An office building is being erected at the northeast corner of Ivar and Hollywood Streets in Hollywood, to be called the Guaranty Building. The ASC makes a down payment on four offices located on the 12th floor, while the building is being constructed. This will be its home until 1936.

1927 — Hal Mohr, ASC photographs *The Jazz Singer*. ASC members play an important role in making a rapid transition from silent films to “talkies” feasible. They consult with Kodak on

the characteristics of a new type of film that records an optical soundtrack on the edge of the film, and with Mole-Richardson on new lighting technology needed for the new film.

September 6, 1927 — The ASC welcomed 130 new members during a special initiation meeting held at the auditorium of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. The dinner was presided over by Society president Daniel B. Clark and vice presidents John Boyle, Victor Milner and Frank B. Goode. With this act, the ASC's membership increased by 300 percent. Reported Joseph Stillman in *AC* Sept. '27, "*The program closed with a wholehearted fraternizing of the new and old members, and the sentiment was general that the occasion constituted the most significant event in the history of motion photography, and that it marked the beginnings of great things for the cinematographic department of the industry.*"

May 16, 1929 — ASC members Karl Struss and Charlie Rosher together win the first Academy Award for Best Cinematography with their collaboration on *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*. The other three nominated films were *The Devil Dancer*, *The Magic Flame* and *Sadie Thompson* — all shot by George Barnes, ASC. Society members play a prominent role on a technology committee organized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

1935 — Ray Rennahan, ASC photographs *Becky Sharp*, the first full-length three-strip Technicolor movie. Several years later, Rennahan traveled to the United Kingdom, where he trained Jack Cardiff, BSC and other British cinematographers in the art and craft of shooting films in Technicolor.

1935 — Jackson J. Rose, ASC edits the first edition of the *The American Cinematographer Hand Book and Reference Guide*. Nine updated editions would be published by 1956.

1936 — The ASC is offered \$20,000 to vacate its quarters in the Guaranty Building. As the ASC membership continued to grow, this presented an opportune time to make a change. They accepted the offer and sought a new home for the ASC.

February 28, 1937 — After purchasing the property at 1782 N. Orange Dr. in Hollywood and making numerous repair and improvements, the ASC formally opened with its first meeting in its new quarters. The ASC Clubhouse was born.

1939 — Separate Academy Awards were awarded for color and black-and-white movies for the first time. Gregg Toland, ASC received an Oscar for his black-and-white camerawork on *Wuthering Heights*. Ernest Haller, ASC and Ray Rennahan, ASC shared an Oscar for the color film *Gone With the Wind*.

1940 — Linwood Dunn, ASC and Cecil Love are commissioned by the U.S. Army to invent an optical printer that can be used to produce military training films. The Acme-Dunn Optical Printer they design becomes an industry standard for creating visual effects, ushering in a new era. Dunn later receives an Academy Award for his efforts in 1981.

1940 – '50s — ASC members Arthur Edeson (*The Maltese Falcon*), John Alton (*T-Men*, *Raw Deal*), Nicholas Musuraca (*Cat People*, *Out of the Past*), Sidney Hickox (*The Big Sleep*), Charles Lawton Jr. (*The Lady from Shanghai*), John F. Seitz (*Double Indemnity*) and Burnett Guffey (*In a Lonely Place*) become the authors of what would later be described as *film noir* by French critics.

1950 — The ASC Student Film Award program was started to encourage young filmmakers in the perfection and recognition of their work. The first winner was Conrad L. Hall of University of Southern California. This inspired Hall to enter the field professionally, and he later became an esteemed member of the ASC and an Academy Award winner for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *American Beauty* and *Road to Perdition*.

1950 – '60s — ASC members Karl Freund (*I Love Lucy*), Walter Streng (*Margie*), Nick Musuraca (*December Bride*), Ray Rennahan (*The Virginian*), Bert Glennon and Lionel Lindon (*Bonanza*), George T. Clemens (*The Twilight Zone*) Howard Schwartz (*Batman*), Gerald Perry Finnerman (*Star Trek*) and Fred Koenekamp (*The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*) and are among the cinematographers who create cinematic looks for early TV programs and then usher in the color era.

1952 — *The Lion and the Horse* is the first motion picture produced on Eastman color negative film. Edwin B. DuPar, ASC was the cinematographer.

1956 - Robert Gottschalk and Richard Moore, ASC co-found Panavision and invent a series of more portable and flexible 35mm cameras and lenses by working in close collaboration with members of ASC. Moore left Panavision in 1964 to resume his career as a cinematographer.

1960 — The ASC publishes the first edition of the *American Cinematographer Manual*, a field guide to cinematographic tools and techniques. It is today in its 10th edition. In 2002, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences presented an Award of Commendation to the ASC for its ongoing publication of the *Manual*.

1960 — The ASC establishes a Research and Scientific Committee, headed by ASC associate member Walter Beyer. Under his leadership many recommendations for standards were established, which were accepted by the industry.

1977 — Haskell Wexler, ASC wins an Oscar for his riveting imagery in *Bound for Glory*, where he demonstrates the artistic possibilities for using the Steadicam image stabilization device invented by ASC associate member Garrett Brown.

1977 — *Star Wars*, directed by George Lucas, is a sensation at the boxoffice. Future ASC members John Dykstra, Richard Edlund and Dennis Muren play a key roles in creating artfully executed Oscar-winning visual effects. They go on to play major parts in creating visual effects technologies that mesh seamlessly with live-action cinematography.

1980 — Brianne Murphy becomes the first female cinematographer to be invited to join the ASC.

1982 — NHK and various consumer electronics companies in Japan design an analog, high-definition television system with a 15:9 aspect ratio, which they propose as a global standard. ASC members reject the proposal and call for a more forward-thinking advanced television system with digital transmission and letterboxed aspect ratios that preserve the artistic intentions of the filmmakers.

1984 — Richard Edlund, ASC pioneers the integration of photorealistic digital effects into the space-set thriller *2010* by using a powerful super computer to convert NASA still photos

of the planet Jupiter to motion images that could be seamlessly combined with live-action footage.

1987 — The brainchild of ASC members Michael D. Margulies and Woody Omens, the first ASC Awards for Outstanding Achievement ceremony is held. Honoring only theatrical releases that first year, the lone winner is Jordan Cronenweth, ASC for *Peggy Sue Got Married*. The following year, the program is opened up to recognize television work and its first Lifetime Achievement Award honoree, George Folsey, ASC. Today, the ASC Awards recognize exceptional work in feature films and television, as well as acknowledge cinematographers and other filmmakers — including directors, producers and actors — for their exemplary careers or contributions to the art and craft of filmmaking. The 33rd annual ASC Awards will take place on February 9, 2019 — also celebrating the ASC's centennial.

1987-'96 — The FCC organizes an Advisory Committee on an Advanced Television Systems (ACATS). Most members work for consumer electronics companies that have vested interests in the outcome. ASC assembles an advisory committee consisting of filmmakers and associate members from technology sectors of the industry. They convince the FCC to opt for a transition to an advanced digital transmission system which serves the best interests of the art form and public.

1989 — ASC participates in defining requirements for the 4K10-bit Cineon “digital film system” developed by Kodak, consisting of a motion picture film scanner, imaging software and a film recorder. The first application is the restoration of the Walt Disney classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, completed in 1993. This became a first step toward “digital cinema.”

1991 — Dennis Muren, ASC spearheads the visual effects industry's move from models and miniatures to computer-generated imagery (CGI) for the film *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, photographed by Adam Greenberg, ASC. Muren (along with Stan Winston, Gene Warren Jr., and Robert Skotak) earns an Academy Award for his efforts. Muren's advances in digital effects continue with the smash hit *Jurassic Park* (1993), earning himself another Oscar (with Stan Winston, Phil Tippett, and Michael Lantieri).

1997 — The ASC web site — www.theasc.com — was launched to digitally deliver a wide variety of news and educational content, including instructional and informative videos featuring ASC members, stories from *American Cinematographer*, podcasts and additional original content. Currently, an online database archive containing all 1,164 print issues of *AC* is being completed, making 100 years of content available globally.

1998 — John Lindley, ASC photographs the period drama *Pleasantville*, which was written and directed by Gary Ross. It was the first motion picture converted to digital format for timing and image manipulation in a digital intermediate (DI) suite.

2000 — Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC suggests a digital intermediate finish for *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* to Ethan and Joel Coen, who produced, wrote and directed the film. Deakins extended his role from preproduction through end of postproduction.

2001 — M. David Mullen, ASC shoots the independent dramatic feature *Jackpot* with a Sony CineAlta F900 24P HD camera. It is the first such digital production, and released theatrically on 35mm film.

2003 — ASC organizes its Motion Imaging Technology Council (initially known as the ASC Technology Committee), which includes Society members and associates and many of the industry's leading technology experts. The committee explores all aspects of filmmaking, from the design of new cameras, through the projection of images on cinema screens, and standards and practices for preservation.

2004 — Tami Reiker, ASC becomes the first woman to earn an ASC Award for Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography, for her camerawork in the stylish HBO series *Carnivàle*.

2006 — The period drama *Apocalypto*, primarily photographed by Dean Semler ASC, ASC with the Panavision Genesis camera, becomes the first digital-shot feature to be nominated for an ASC Award.

2008 — The American Society of Cinematographers Color Decision List (ASC CDL) is unveiled. It has become the de facto industry standard for cross-platform primary RGB color grading. In 2012, ASC members receive a Television Academy Emmy Engineering Award for the ASC CDL, which “enables primary color correction data to be passed from the shooting set to dailies and editorial post, as well as interchanged between different color correction systems and applications”; and “helps communicate scene-specific ‘looks’ throughout the production and postproduction pipeline in an iteratively modifiable fashion that can also form the basis or starting point for final color grading.” In 2014, the ASC CDL was recognized with the Hollywood Post Alliance Judges Award for Creativity and Innovation in Postproduction.

May 7, 2008 — A groundbreaking ceremony is held at the ASC Clubhouse, beginning a lengthy reconstruction and restoration effort. The Clubhouse is reopened in March of 2010 as an educational facility with the task of furthering the ASC's foundational mission to share information and experience and elevate the role of the cinematographer.

2009 — Photographed by Mauro Fiore, ASC with the Fusion Camera System (employing Sony HDC-F950 cameras) the 3-D sci-fi epic *Avatar*, directed by James Cameron, is the first digitally shot feature to win an Oscar for Best Cinematography.

2010 — The ASC begins its proactive collaboration with AMPAS on the development of the Academy Color Encoding System (ACES), an innovative open and transparent cross-platform color management system supporting dynamic range and color gamut greater than film. ACES receives a Television Academy Emmy Engineering Award in 2012 and a Scientific and Technical Award from AMPAS in 2015.

2014 — The Society begins the ASC Master Class education program. Here, ASC members and other professionals teach students from around the world on subjects including lighting, composition, angles, creating mood, postproduction techniques and many other aspects of visual storytelling.

2014 — The ASC invites its first member with no background in live action feature film, Pixar's Sharon Calahan, who had worked entirely in computer animation.

December 2, 2016 — The first ASC International Master Class session is held, in Toronto, Canada. Subsequent classes take place in Beijing, China; São Paulo, Brazil; and Bogotá, Colombia; among other locations.

March 1, 2017 — The ASC begins publishing a digital Chinese language edition of *American Cinematographer* magazine, and has plans to launch a Spanish edition.

August 9, 2017 — ASC member John Bailey is elected president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He is the first cinematographer to hold that esteemed position, and was honored with the ASC Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015.

January 23, 2018 — For her work in the indie period drama *Mudbound*, Rachel Morrison, ASC becomes the first woman to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Cinematography and is also honored with an ASC Award nomination. Her subsequent film, the superhero adventure *Black Panther*, is a global success.

August 28, 2018 — Ground is broken on the construction of the new ASC ARRI Educational Center. The contemporary building will be located behind the historic ASC Clubhouse and become home to the *American Cinematographer* staff and serve as a hub for the organization's ongoing efforts to educate the next generation of filmmakers on the art and craft of cinematography. It is planned to open in 2019.

January 8, 2019 — The 100th anniversary of the founding of the ASC is remembered with an event exclusive to Society members at the Clubhouse in Hollywood.

February 9, 2019 — The ASC will publically celebrate its centennial during the 33rd annual ASC Awards for Outstanding Achievement — complete with 1,600 guests, honorees and nominees.

August, 2019 — A special 100th anniversary edition of *American Cinematographer* magazine will be published.

November, 2019 — The 11th edition of the *American Cinematographer Manual* is to be published.