

RYAN PROUTY

DIGITAL IMAGING TECHNICIAN

BY DAVID GEFFNER
PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN PROUTY



A lunch hour spent talking to Local 600 DIT Ryan Prouty, at the February 2023 HPA Conference in Palm Desert, CA, is both an educational and technologically fun experience. Prouty, who has spent some 20 years in the motion picture and broadcast industry trenches as a digital imaging technician, broadcast studio camera operator, virtual reality cinematographer, documentary producer/director, and certified Phantom technician, is also, in his own words, “a proud ICG member” since 2013.

He’s also a man on a mission, as the two companies Prouty founded, COLORSPACE [colorspacevan.com] and CinemaScan [cinemascan.la], are intent on maximizing efficiency (and, as a result, safety) on film and TV sets. Standing outside HPA’s “Innovation Zone,” where a multitude of vendors has come to share its products with technological thought leaders from around the globe, Prouty demos COLORSPACE 1: a 4x4 Mercedes Sprinter van housing a 4K HDR color suite; a two-seat edit bay; and equipment for monitoring, ingesting, and coloring footage for productions on location. But, Prouty explains, COLORSPACE is much more than just leading-edge tech. The vehicle (COLORSPACE 1 was launched at CineGear 2019, with COLORSPACE 2 launched at HPA 2023) “gives directors the tools to see what they need to see in the moment,” Prouty tells us. “Previs, storyboards, dailies, live images et cetera. At the same time, the technology is invisible to the end user as it’s tucked behind a solid partitioned wall, preventing humming fans and blinking LED’s from taking away from the creative decision-making experience.”

As Prouty explains, COLORSPACE has a unique history. “It was discovered by Antoine Fuqua in 2020 for Netflix’s *The Guilty* as a solution for directing remotely during times of COVID,” he says. “Antoine ultimately preferred working out of COLORSPACE 100 percent of the time,” he adds, and has subsequently taken Prouty and COLORSPACE on to large-scale productions that include Amazon’s *The Terminal List* (shot by Armando Salas, ASC) and *Emancipation* (shot by Robert Richardson, ASC).

In addition to the two COLORSPACE vans, Prouty was at HPA launching his set-scanning service, CinemaScan, which he describes as a LIDAR set scanning service with three unique benefits to any production. “Number one is that it turns your location into a digital collaboration tool similar to Slack or Microsoft Teams,” Prouty details. “Using the art department as an example, we’re not talking about them having to send a blank email asking: ‘Hey, you know in the backyard by the fence and the barbecue? Should we have that propped to the left or the right?’ with a response that’s usually: ‘What are you talking about?’ Instead, they can send

a link to the actual location that we’ve scanned, and ask: ‘Do you want it here or here?’”

The second benefit of CinemaScan, Prouty continues, “is to take all of those decisions – visually made through our scan – in prep and communicate them with any department via a fly-through video, which is easily made through the same scanning equipment, nearly instantaneously, and is customizable to highlight any detail or perspective. Imagine a video that shows a crewmember exactly where his or her parking space is, where to access the shuttle to set, where to get breakfast, where the bathrooms are, where the appropriate staging is for their carts – I am a DIT, after all,” he smiles, “and exactly where the first shot of the day will occur.”

The fly-through videos Prouty shows me are not unlike what your favorite real-estate broker might send for a prospective house sale, but with much more detail. “We can make custom videos on an individual, a department, a crew-wide or even a shot level,” he adds. “The production office could include the link or QR code to the video on the call sheet, and now everyone on the crew gets a quick 45-second walk-through of the location before they’ve even parked their cars.”

Prouty says the goal for all productions should be to “turn on the camera, intelligently placed and pointing at the right thing, with all of the lighting and talent in place as quickly as possible. I know that will never be one or two minutes after call time – but it should not be three hours, as I’ve experienced too many times to count,” he says. “One of the biggest barriers to cutting down the start time to say, 45 minutes to an hour, is the crew not being familiar with the location.”

The third spoke in Prouty’s drive for efficiency comes from the meshing of CinemaScan’s two technologies – a point cloud LIDAR scan coupled with panoramic photography. “We can export the point cloud data into Unreal Engine 5,” he notes, “insert some meta-humans, and have a good understanding of what the finished product will look like. As a crewmember, very rarely did I understand that aspect of my day, so adding the data into Unreal Engine creates this tool that can discover the nuances of any given location and communicate more fully what’s happening on the day, all before a single pixel is captured by camera.”

From a cinematography standpoint, CinemaScan holds some intriguing potential. Prouty offers up the scenario where a DP is finishing a commercial in New York, “your producer is with the location in L.A., and your director may be in London,” he describes. “Using the LIDAR data and Unreal, they can all do scene blocking in the actual location, online, across the world and across time zones.

“I know from experience many DP’s and directors like to feel their craft in the moment,” Prouty’s quick to add, “and, of course, we never want to lose that creative spontaneity. But this tool allows creatives to block out their slam-dunk shots in advance, and get them in a quicker, more efficient timeframe, which allows time for more fine-tuning before the next setup.”

When asked about CinemaScan’s comparison to pre-viz, Prouty says, “the kind of previsualization the DP, director, and VFX super have been doing for years on action films was an initial inspiration. But this is quick and cheap previs for logistics to achieve the first shot of the day much more quickly, as opposed to a high-resolution previz that’s going to make its way into VFX at some point on the project. We scan at about 1500 square feet per hour, so this property I’m demoing now and is also on our website was done in a hair under two hours.”

Prouty says that his background as a DIT means he is forever balancing capability versus portability. “I want to be able to say ‘yes’ to everything that’s asked of me,” he shares. “But I also want to maintain the smallest possible footprint on set. When I’m hired on a job, I ask the basics: ‘Are there stairs? Are we on the beach? Is the roof location using three scissor lifts? It is? Yikes!’”

In simple terms, Prouty says that “the more educated I am as a crewmember about a location, the more intentional I can be about providing the DP with the right capabilities and having the most efficient footprint on set,” he continues. “The location on the demo I’m showing is a single-story family home, where the software has already measured the doorways to let me know there would be no problem bringing my 50-inch DIT cart. If the location was a four-story building with limited roof access, I’d know to probably be coming with just a Pelican case.”

As is often the way with Local 600’s innovative membership, Prouty says CinemaScan came out of a need to “scratch our own itch. I was on a location with the COLORSPACE van, and AD’s were too busy to provide us with any location data,” he concludes. “I figured if I made it so quick and easy all they had to do was point, we’d have better results. So, I came an hour early, flew my drone over the set, and imported those files/data into Polycam [a 3D scanning app for iPhone and Android]. I then went up to one of the AD’s with a 3D-rendered map and said, ‘Hey, I just need you to point to where we’re shooting today.’ It didn’t take too long to recognize its marketability aspect, and then the sparks started flying about how this type of technology could educate the crew and, in essence, give us the ability to answer our own questions.” 