

In another member profile for this month, Marcus Seeger caught up by email with Nick Tsamandanis, an Adelaide based Steadicam Operator. Read on to find out all about how Nick has established himself as a leading certified Steadicam operator. Nick also outlines some tips and tricks to master the art of 'flying'



Nick Preparing to perform a crane step off shot.

Can you tell us a little about how you got into Steadicam? Which unit do you currently use? What is it about "flying" that really gets you excited?

I got involved in Steadicam in 2004 as a way to enhance the production quality of my wedding films. Soon after I did a two day Flyer workshop in 2006 and I discovered that I had a real love for it and started doing freelance work and have just kept moving forward to the point that I am acquiring a Clipper: <http://www.steadicam.com/videoclipper312324.htm>

Currently I use the Steadicam Merlin (hand held) for weddings, and the Steadicam Pilot for corporate work. I sometimes use the Pilot at a reception if the venue is suitable. The thing I like about flying is the feeling of freedom, after being stuck with a tripod for 25 years I find it quite exhilarating to be able to capture smooth, graceful footage while in motion. I also like the challenge of a difficult shot.

I see from your web site, www.focalimageproductions.com.au that you are a certified Steadicam operator How did you get certified?

In January of 2008 I completed the five day intensive Steadicam workshop at The University of Melbourne. This workshop provides training to a high professional level in the use of Steadicam operation for use in feature film, documentary and television production. This is a fully accredited Steadicam operator's course and is conducted by Australia's leading Steadicam operators Luis Puli and Phil Balsdon.

What advice do you have for a shooter wishing to start out as a Steadicam operator?

Don't under estimate the learning curve. I see many people thinking they can buy a rig, practice a bit during the week to be ready for a shoot on the weekend. Wrong. Steadicam is a skill that takes ages to master. Even doing a workshop won't make you ready, the workshop basically exposes you to a set of skills that are required for proper operation, the practice sessions that come afterwards are what really count. It generally takes around three years of experience to get to the level that they shoot in feature films. For someone just getting into Steadicam Phil Balsdon's two day workshop is a must:

http://www.steady-onfilms.com.au/steadicam_workshops.html

The 1% movie trailer that you shot on Steadicam looks great – can you tell us about the shoot and also about the film and how it is progressing?

Thank you, the movie trailer was actually an entrant and top ten finalist in the MTV 180 project, so it's not an actual feature film. It was produced by a couple of guys involved in the film industry here in SA, Andrew Russo and Aaron Kajanto. It was shot with the Steadicam Merlin arm and vest rig and a Sony Z1. An interesting story is my friend and fellow AVPA member Gary Juleff was there to film this behind the scenes clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkTQotLnos4&feature=channel_page

I sent the link to Phil Balsdon, who liked it so much he posted the link to a few other Steadicam ops including *Garrett Brown*, who passed on his compliments! That was a great way to finish off the year!

Can you tell us a little about the SA AVPA branch?

The SA branch has a regular small crew that manage to attend the meeting every month, and we are trying to increase that number.

What is your current favourite camera and why?

I can't wait to do a Steadicam shoot with the RED, because it's a RED! For weddings anything with a Sony badge gets my vote.

What inspires you?

Tough call, I am inspired by seeing the results of many years of hard work and dedication, in any field.

Nick, thank you for your time.



Nick on an AV Jennings shoot with Paul Carter from Captivation.