

# Viewfinders for the Digital Age

THE VENERABLE DIRECTOR'S TOOL HAS BEEN SUPERCHARGED AS AN APP  
BY DAVID HEURING

➤ The director's viewfinder—a symbol of the craft and the vision of its practitioners—hearkens back to the time when filmmakers began to specialize and collaborate, necessitating a quick and clear method of communicating framing and lensing decisions.

A century or more ago, the earliest finders consisted of a tube or cone fitted with a matte in the shape of the film frame. Later, optics were added to render a rough idea of field of view and magnification given a certain focal length. Still later, the lens finder allowed filmmakers to view the shot with the actual shooting lens, giving them a more precise representation of what the camera would see.

Today, there's an app for that. Transformed almost beyond recognition, at its heart, the digital viewfinder still facilitates communication amongst filmmakers by showing rather than telling. Top-of-the-line digital finders offer a handheld guide to every format and frame line, any lens and any digital camera. They incorporate Google Earth, exhaustive data bases, and sophisticated sun path tools like Helios. And perhaps most revolutionary is the ability to immediately share the chosen frame or shot with every department, along with GPS and other metadata and notes. One click obviates the need for time-consuming back-and-forth about what will be in the frame.

The most commonly used digital finders are the Cadrage Director's Viewfinder, a relatively inexpensive and entry-level option, and the far more widely used and powerful Artemis Prime. Imminently, Artemis will be releasing a "Prime on steroids" tool, the Artemis Pro, which combines an iPad and a lens mount and dramatically expanded functionality. ♦

"When in prep, it's hard to be in the same country with your heads of department, let alone the same state or the same room. Artemis makes it feel like you are."

**Terry McDonough**  
Director: *Better Call Saul, Breaking Bad, Hell on Wheels, An Adventure in Space and Time*



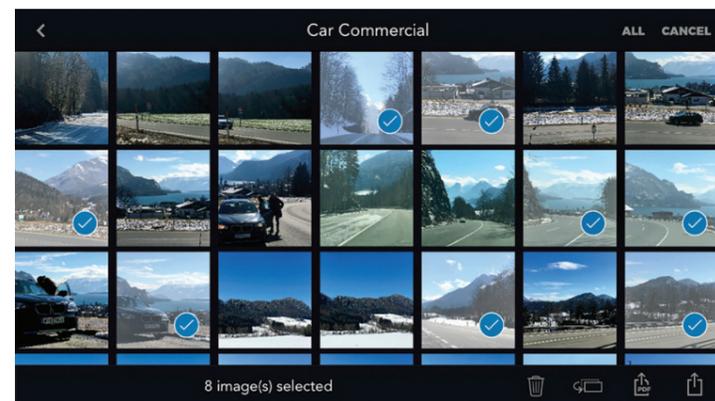
"I use both Artemis and Helios when scouting and find them both invaluable tools for prep. I take photos of the locations with Artemis to help shotlist as well. When shooting, Artemis is incredibly useful and can save a ton of time if used to set the next shot before the actors are cleared from the set. The grips, camera and ADs can see what the frame will be quickly and immediately."

**Mairzee Almas**  
Director: *iZombie, Guilt, 12 Monkeys, The Last Ship, Smallville*



◀ **Cadrage**

- About \$12.00
- iOS or Android
- Custom sensor size available
- Multiple frame rates per device
- Published by Distant Blue



◀ **Artemis**

- About \$30.00 for app, \$8,000 for Prime kit
- Works with iOS or Android
- Interchangeable PL and PV lens mount
- Exposure and LUT emulations
- Software-based pre-viz tools
- Virtual stand-in actors and props
- Broadcast picture to on-set monitors and devices
- With Schneider Optics adaptor, extended lens emulation
- See lens selection in wireframe or zoom view
- Designed by a cinematographer with 30 years of experience

## EVOLUTION OF THE VIEWFINDER

The viewfinder, which most people associate as that tool perpetually worn around a director's neck, has taken many forms over the years.

**1.** A vintage, Czech-made viewfinder that dates back before WWII. **2.** Another prewar viewfinder used by pioneering director Dorothy Arzner. **3.** A more sophisticated version of the viewfinder used by Curtis Hanson on the set of *8 Mile* (2002).

