

# ON THE JOB | ADs & UPMs

Assistant directors and UPMs, past and present, reflect on doing their jobs.



## Jeff Okabayashi

**1ST AD**  
 ▶ "I was a 2nd AD on *Armageddon*, and in one scene we were shooting underneath the NASA space shuttle while engineers installed the protective tiles to prevent it from burning up after re-entry. There are times with this job when I've literally pinched myself knowing no one else gets to see this."

## David Webb

**1ST AD**  
 ▶ "[For *Argo*] we locked down many blocks of downtown Istanbul, and had these massive traffic jams. We had thousands of extras to portray this city on the edge of anarchy. It was incredible to re-create this moment in history that was so iconic and yet so chaotic at the same time."



## Doug Torres

**1ST AD**  
 ▶ "[On *Delivery Man*] we had to maximize having 20,000 people inside Madison Square Garden [for a Knicks game], so I broke it all down with the announcer on the PA system. Each time I raised a finger he would tell the crowd how to react, so they became a character in the film."



## Xochi Blymyer

**1ST AD**  
 "I learned that the crew will totally support you [as a 1st AD] if you give them information and ask for their help. If you work as a team, when you don't know something you can always figure it out and get the job done."

## Kathleen McGill

**UPM**  
 ▶ [You make the movie twice.] "Once in preproduction, where the locations, budgets, casting, etc., get all the creative juices flowing, and then again for real, when the machine takes over and it's all about deal-making and staying on budget. Those are two distinct phases and I enjoy them both."



## Charles Washburn

**1ST AD**  
 ▶ "The crew and casting director [on *Star Trek*] called me 'Charlie Star Trek.' Working closely with all the extras was a big part of the job, even to the point of knowing who would be getting a 'bump' or 'double whammy,' which is what we called an added amount of time to an extra's base pay rate if he or she was given some pertinent story business."

## Arthur Jacobson

**1ST AD**  
 ▶ "In those days, the first assistant ran the show. He broke down the script, cross-plotted it, and with the various departments made the whole budget. Then, when you went on the stage, you directed everything but the actors. You picked the extras and directed them."



PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT) PHIL BRAY; NIKO TAVERNISE; BRIAN DAVIS; KRISTINE LARSEN; MARGIE REVENS

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT) COURTESY CHARLES WASHBURN; BRIAN DAVIS; DGA ARCHIVES (2); AMPAS



## Abby Singer

**UPM**  
 ▶ "Working in TV, we made many moves per day—from the backlot to the stage, or from one stage to another. I'd say to the guys, 'One more shot and then we're moving,' so when we moved, they were all prepared. The time saved could add up to a full hour of shooting for the director."



## Daisy Gerber

**1ST AD**  
 " (Now) there are so many talented women in the Guild. In my day, they waited till I graduated the training program before having another woman come in. They wanted to see if I would make a career. Obviously it all changed."



## Francisco "Chico" Day

**1ST AD**  
 ▶ "The perfect assistant takes care of every detail ... [and] knows the importance of keeping the cast, crew, and staff working together in perpetual harmony. ... He does not distract the director with budget worries or minor decisions, but leaves him free to concentrate on story, camera, and action."

THEN

NOW



# ON THE JOB | ADs & SMs

Associate directors and stage managers, past and present, reflect on doing their jobs.



**Arthur Lewis**  
STAGE MANAGER

“I liken my job to that of a wedding planner. It’s always someone’s biggest night, whether it’s Hollywood or country music. My job is to care as much about that night as they do, crews and performers alike, and guide them every step of the way.”



**Julie Gelfand**  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

“[On *Big Brother*] we had rehearsed getting the game set into position several times during the day, and everything worked perfectly. But when we were live, the electronics didn’t work. That meant instantly going to Plan B with the contestants using [manual] hand paddles to provide their answers. Live TV is all about being flexible.”

**Scott Berger**

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/NEWS

“Fidel Castro was in town to speak at the U.N. and Dan Rather introduced me as ‘the dictator of the set.’ He must have said it four or five times while I was yelling for photographers to get back and cameras to get into position. Castro looked at me and said, ‘He has a voice like Napoleon.’”



**Kathy Fortine**  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

“When I first saw an AD, I was like, ‘Wow! That person is juggling 30 balls in the air. I want to do that.’ [On *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*] I don’t land the plane. But I do have to make sure the landing gear is down, the lights are on, and the runway is clear.”



**Garry Hood**  
STAGE MANAGER

“I am the person who asked Frank Sinatra to get off the stage [at the 1991 Bush Inaugural Gala]. In front of millions of viewers and our new president, I walk up and say, ‘Mr. Sinatra, can you come with me?’ And he says, ‘What do you want, kid? Where are we going?’”



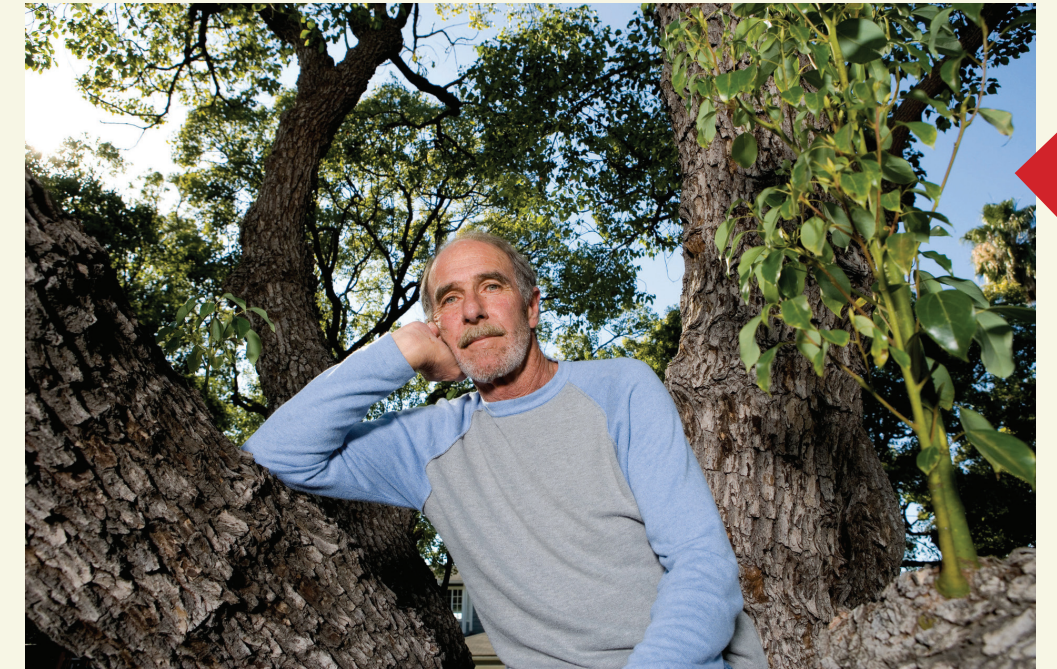
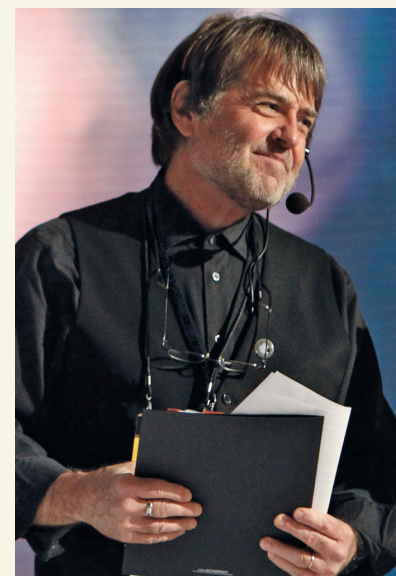
**Esperanza “Candy” Martinez**

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/NEWS

“The petty nonsense I had to go through [in the newsroom]. I said to myself I would not let anybody else go through it. At that time, I didn’t have anybody to look to for help, but over the years I became that person for anybody else who comes through here.”

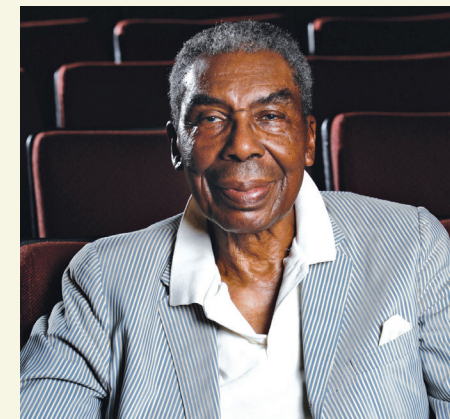
**Dency Nelson**  
STAGE MANAGER

“[At *The Obama Inaugural Celebration* in 2009] the president-elect walks through with his family, shakes my hand, and says, ‘Hey, we gotta have a picture with the crew.’ I say, ‘Sir, we would love that but I don’t think it would make your detail happy,’ and he nods and moves on.”



**Ken Stein**  
STAGE MANAGER

“A lead stage manager is like the 1st AD on a film. They’re the first hired, and get to bring in a lot of the other people. ... [On the Oscars] our value is that the presenters are comfortable with us because we’ve helped them get through other awards shows.”



**Jimmy Wall**  
STAGE MANAGER/NEWS

“One of the first African-American stage managers in television. Jimmy Wall received the Franklin J. Schaffner Award in 1994.”

“It was excellent,” Wall said, recalling how touched he was when *60 Minutes* veteran Charlie Rose introduced him during the ceremony. “I enjoyed my time with the Guild, and I am proud to be part of it.”

**Vincent DeDario**  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

“Associate directing sports is vastly different than news or entertainment. It’s a whole different ballgame. You have to have an organized mind, and always be aware of the situation and what you’re doing. I think my strengths were that I was very analytical and I would always double- and triple-check everything.”

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) MARCIE REVENS (2); RICHARD CARTWRIGHT/ABC; LELLA NAVIDI; BYRON GAMARRO

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) JENNIFER ALTMAN; BRIAN DAVIS; COURTESY VINCENT DIDARIO; MARK MAHANEY; COURTESY DENCY NELSON

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