

PETER ZEITLINGER - DOP of "Queen of the Desert" by Werner Herzog:

All the film was shot 90% on Illuminas, we also used the Angenieux Optimo zoom lenses and a Canon long lens. As I am just a user, not an expert in optics and optical physics, I judge just the character of the image. I don't like the technically clean undistortive reproduction of the world, such lenses are good only for VFX work to my opinion. We used the Illuminas also for VFX work even the producers wanted to convince us to use different lenses.

We worked with Illuminas to get a more natural not a technical look. Those are great sensitive lenses with a big personality when wide open. They are light weight which is important to me for handheld and gimbal work. Also robust and mechanically good which was important in the desert. I think the lenses are the right workhorses for my needs. The bokeh is very nice when wide open, which I tried to achieve by changing the shutter or using ND filters. With highlights they tend to create a very green flare, which is so clean in colour that you can decide which colour you choose in the grading process by keying in the post. We could key the flare and transform the colour if we needed to a different colour in order to match the colour composition and harmony of the image. Sometimes I turned it a bit towards blue, sometimes towards magenta. The flares were very important in the film "Queen of The Desert". Not that much as an esthetic effect but more as the poetic depiction of the sun as a character which is so important and merciless in the desert. I used the High Dynamic Range feature of the RED Dragon camera. Thus the particular flare of the Illumina lenses helped us to create those magnificent flares and glares around the sun. Usually I use Plugins for creating the right shapes of the flares. In this case the beauty of the Illumina lenses were the better and natural choice.

I don't do technical tests and hardly ever go on a lens projector. So my choice is rather emotional and the overall impression when seeing the picture in the cinema. Illumina's lenses are not as "round" in the focus as for example Cook lenses, but much lighter and smaller. I added sometimes a bit softness in the post with a second film layer which I blurred a bit and added 15 to 20% to the "sharp" image. I think the Illumina's have the right balance between a personality and character on the one hand and the technical merciless sharpness on the other hand without killing the actors face because of looking deep into the pores of the skin.