



Shooting *The Advocate*  
(Credit: Herb DeWaal)

# CREATIVE FLOW

**Selected filmography (as camera operator, unless otherwise stated)**

- Pachinko* (2022)
- Peter Pan and Wendy* (2022)
- Breathe* (2022)
- Surface* (2022)
- Bat Woman* (2021)
- The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020)
- Siren* (2018-2020)
- Altered Carbon* (2018)
- Power Rangers* (2017)

**What inspired you to become an underwater DP and camera operator? Did you always want to work in film?**

My first experience on a film set was doing extra work. When I saw what was going on behind the camera, I decided to attend film school. I ended up at Concordia University in Montreal where my main interest was cinematography. I had always loved being in the water and had my scuba diving certification, so it seemed logical to combine the passion I developed for working with the camera at school and my love of water.

**How and where did you learn the craft?**

After Montreal, I moved back to Vancouver and met underwater filmmaker Pauline Heaton from Watervisions, who gave me a start as an underwater camera assistant. I joined the union (ICG 669) and got camera assistant work in Vancouver's burgeoning film industry where I made great connections and got a thorough training in running a camera department.

**Who or what are your biggest inspirations or mentors?**

Robert McLachlan ASC CSC is one of the first people to give me bigger shooting opportunities on a show called *Millennium*, one of the Chris Carter series shooting in Vancouver along with *The X-Files*. I was assisting Rob and when the show had some underwater, he gave me the opportunity which helped take my underwater career to the next level. Pete Romano, and his company Hydroflex, have also been instrumental in my career and I'm so grateful for their support. I use Hydroflex almost exclusively and they are always available if I have any technical questions. I've also had amazing support from so many people in the Vancouver filmmaking community which inspires me every day.

**What would you single out as your big break?**

*Power Rangers* was really big in taking my career to a new level. I was already doing a lot of underwater, but *Power Rangers* really put my name out there as it was a big feature. Matthew Lloyd ASC shot it and Dean Israelite directed. They were both great to work with and really valued my input. When I

interviewed with Matt, I had no idea what the project was about, but as soon as he explained the underwater concept, and that it was a superhero remake, I was instantly intrigued and had a lot of ideas about how to go about it. It turned out really well and gave my team and I a great experience.

**What do you believe are the key qualities of a stellar underwater DP and camera operator?**

For me, it is being ready to help production with all aspects of the underwater elements and creating a team of proactive underwater specialists. Effective communication is a key component of any successful production, and I always want to make sure the underwater team is in the loop and always available. The art department and special effects team, for instance, often have the biggest tasks building sets that actors can access but that are still usable and safe for the water shots. Some have water experience, but a good underwater cinematographer will often be able to find ways to better achieve an underwater objective. Ultimately the most important thing is to support the director and cinematographer to ensure the underwater elements of a film are seamlessly, and beautifully, integrated into the overall vision.

**What is at the heart of a successful camera operator/DP relationship?**

Knowing who is boss and respecting the production team structure is very important to ensuring good outcomes. Equally important is mutual respect so that you feel comfortable sharing your expertise and contributing when appropriate. At its essence, the relationship must be one of mutual respect, having fun and enjoying the job.

**What role do you believe standout underwater camera operation plays in enhancing a production?**

Underwater is a specialty, so never assume that others know what to expect, which means it is important to be available and to anticipate problems or issues before they happen that are not part of the usual surface shooting scenarios. Everything from materials being used to make sets or conversations with stunt department regarding safety through to the government regulations that production must be aware of is on my radar.



Underwater cinematographer and operator, Braden Haggerty



Braden Haggerty beside a floating camera





Taking the plunge to shoot *Siren* series three  
(Credit: Aiden Zanini)



Capturing the view from below for *Altered Carbon* series two  
(Credit: Herb DeWaal)

**Which have been your favourite productions to work on? Which are you most proud of?**

*Siren* was a great experience. We did three seasons of a show with a mermaid theme, and we got so much water time and learnt so much. The lead actress, Eline Powell, was amazing under water which made my job so easy. It was also interesting for me as I had to deal with a lot of complicated moves and design scaffolding that would work with VFX. I worked closely with the rigging grips to mimic ships, airplanes, and rock faces and then work out the best shooting order. It was a lot of fun, a lot of work, and an amazing experience.

**What is one of your most treasured memories while on a shoot?**

*Pachinko* was really special to film. We shot a little girl underwater and it was so beautiful. Florian Hoffmeister BSC was the DOP and he was so open to work with. He gave me a lot of room to interpret how I would like to shoot the sequence. The set was stunning. The art dept worked really hard to recreate the Korean sea bed and they did not disappoint. Costumes created this timely outfit for the actress. My free diver friend Roberta Cenedese, who teaches actors to work underwater, did amazing work with the young lead and her stunt double. When you put it all together with the Sony Venice camera, Panavision G Series Anamorphic Lenses, and a great crew, you can't not have a good day.

**Which production has been your biggest challenge?**

*Kraken Tentacles of the Deep* which was a smaller budget project in 2005. We had to shoot giant squid attacking scuba divers, divers searching for treasures in a sunken ship, divers attacking other divers, and so on. There were a lot of moving parts, but the most complicated was designing the open ocean shooting parts. Big shows would have shot in a controlled tank with a full crew over a two-week period, but we shot on a wreck 60-80 feet deep in the open ocean with a six-person crew, including stunts. Only occupational divers can be on scuba below 15 feet, so I rotated the dive crew in and out of stunt doubling spots depending on what we were shooting at that day. The most important thing on this shoot was making sure on each dive we accomplished every shot we had planned. Time was limited and keeping six plus divers in sync was critical. The production did not want to bring the director with us as it was sort of 2nd unit, but I insisted he come so he could make quick decisions about whether we

were achieving what he needed. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. I sent him an image through a cable from the camera and he was able to direct us all through an underwater speaker from the surface. I'm still amazed at what we were able to accomplish.

**What is your must-have piece of kit and why?**

Aside from my tool kit, my favourite piece of equipment is my 30-foot regulator hose. On *Siren* there were a lot of shots chasing mermaids around. Wearing a BCD that holds your air tank creates a lot of drag so I traded it in for my long hose, making swimming with the camera much easier and more fluid. If you ask the underwater grips, who now must wrangle my long hose, I'm sure they wish I'd go back to my BCD!

**How do you keep up with the latest technology? What new innovations have you been impressed by?**

For me, I stick with the tried and true and use the same housing for most of my work. Digital has sped up the process. Not having to bring the housing up every four minutes has saved hours of time. Large format shooting has been fun, and I look forward to exploring this some more. Also, the LED lighting underwater has been great to work with. There are more options than there used to be.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

It's always the people first. I am fortunate to have such great crew that I work with. I also love the organising side of things and making sure everything is set up properly and ready to go. The technical and logistical aspects of working out shots and sequencing the day is a fun challenge.

**What are the key safety considerations that need to be considered during an underwater shoot?**

The biggest safety consideration is the ability of the actors. Ideally, we get them in the water well ahead of time to assess their comfort and skill level. This will directly influence many aspects of a shoot such as tank depth,

water temperature, shot timing, and camera locations, for example. Electricity is also a huge safety consideration, and we are obsessed with making sure that anything that isn't grounded doesn't get anywhere near the tank.

**What obstacles do you face in your career and how do you overcome them?**

I think my biggest obstacle right now is that I don't have legal work status outside of Canada. I would love to be able to work more easily in the United States, for

example, but right now I don't have the necessary visa, but I'm still working on that.

**What are the biggest recent changes you have seen in the world of underwater camera operation or filmmaking?**

I think that would just be how much underwater there is out there. There seems to be a lot more projects with water in them lately.

**What advice would you give aspiring underwater filmmakers?**

Be patient. It takes time. Figure out what type of filmmaking you want to be a part of. Is it documentary or narrative? Those can be very different careers paths. For me, it was a narrative film path. I also learned how to run a camera department, the ins and outs of cameras and filters, and other technical detail. Be teachable every time you are on set, and you will learn regardless of your role. Sometimes it feels like it will take forever to get to the actual position you want - it's all a journey and many valuable lessons will be learnt along the way. These will only make you stronger and better once you get there.

**Florian Hoffmeister BSC says:**

"To shoot under water is one thing, to shoot with children another, and to make a built pool feel like the deep Korean Sea the final challenge. Braden managed all three simultaneously. With her great sense of collaboration and with a lot of grace, considering the constraints of the single shooting day we had for all this. And at the end everybody not only walked away with a sense of achievement, but was trying to find excuses just to do it all over again."

**Matt Lloyd ASC says:**

"It is extremely rare, in my experience, to come across a crew member who is both artist and master craftsman. Braden is both. Our film had some incredibly complex water scenes and Braden designed and executed them to perfection. It was a wonderful collaboration I'll always remember."

**Director Robert A Duncan DGA DGC says:**

"My first directing assignment was on a network television series in 2006 and Braden was our underwater cinematographer. From our first meeting I left with full confidence in safety, achievability, and a strong plan of attack for shooting. Braden had suggested great artistic visuals above and beyond what was initially storyboarded to collaboratively help enhance the storytelling.

On set with Braden is a safe, tranquil, creative environment. There is always a structure in shooting order to start the day and as things progress Braden's experience and keen eye has the ability to adjust and make little moments magical.

Over the years we have shot many pilots, series, commercials, 2nd units and feature films together using the latest in technology and the trusty old school methods - her communication skills are second to none. Working with Braden feels like an extension of my imagination." ■

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**CINEMATOGRAPHER MATT LLOYD ASC**