CB: Can you present yourself? How is your team composed?

BP: What I do is previsualization, I work in the preproduction department for companies that form new films, my team structure is typically a previsualization supervisor like myself, there would be a previsualization lead that would be like my senior artist (who would be my right hand man kind of guy). And then there is usually a team of anywhere between 4 to 8 artists that works underneath me, that normally would be composed of a modeler, who builds 3D models, there would probably be a character animator and the rest would be generalists, people who kind of specialize in all kinds of 3D or CG technologies. So they can do some animations, some modeling, some texturing, some lighting and rendering and that kind of things. So usually a team will be anywhere between 4 to 8 artists, the lead and the supervisor.

CB: How is your team related to the cinematographer?

BP: A lot depends in preproduction about whether or not the cinematographer is been hired yet. In preproduction we are on so early before the film shoots that there are times when there are no cinematographers present. Other times there has been, and that is very great when there is. And if he is then I’ll ask a bunch of questions like
what kind of lens package does he plan to use when shooting the film, what type of cameras, projective aspect ratio whether is going to be 1.85, 2.39 or whether or not is going to shoot anamorphic or not… I just want to get his basic camera package down so I can replicate it in 3D.

CB: Do you think previsualization gives to the cinematographer aesthetical ideas?

BP: If he is early enough on to participate I think it does. But a lot depends on the cinematographer if he is a bit more traditional he has a tendency probably not to participate that much. But he is more a next generation cinematographer, somebody that is very familiar with the virtual production process, or is working with virtual cinematography then yes, they have the tendency to come in for a visit and sit down with us and chat. And we will try to get an idea of what it is that they want to accomplish so we are not stepping in anybody’s toes.

CB: Sometimes happens in some previsualization companies that the artists has to make decisions that maybe they don’t have the knowledge to make?

BP: That can certainly happen, specially if the previs team or the previs supervisor and artists and junior, are not very experienced with cinematography, they can create shots or situations with their virtual cameras that the director falls in love with but aren’t very achievable in real life and that could be problematic.

CB: In the last 5 years the same movies were awarded for their cinematography and their special effects, what do you think about that?

BP: I think it is kind of inevitable; there is a little bit of a collision between image creation and the director of photography. On one hand you have a whole set of skills working with real world cameras to produce imagery and then you have another whole set of skills and disciplines doing the exact same things but in the computer. So there is two different groups of people that control those different techniques and tools, so it is bound to have some overlap. And it is no surprising to me
at all that movies for high visual effects and movies with great cinematography are coming together.

CB: So do you think now the construction of the image is more collaborative?

BP: I have always stated that film making is a collaborative art form and it is very true that there is more than one person at anyone time working on a shot. There is people that are lighting, there is people that are doing the camera work and there is people who are creating visual effects... and it all comes together to form up the shot. However, there need to be a certain amount of continuity and consistency across these processes, which right now we don’t have very well. So the thought is that that person should be the cinematographer controlling that process, whether he is a traditional practical cinematographer or one who is skilled in virtual cinematography. Ultimately that person should be guiding the director through that creative process and working with the cinematographer and production designer obviously.

CB: Which are the main responsibilities of the production designer?

BP: The production designer is the main man in charge of the art departments, the virtual art department, the regular art department. He basically defines the look of those objects that are being photographed. So he doesn’t set the atmosphere, tonality and the lighting of a shot, but he and his art directors are key for creating the look and feel and style of the film, of it’s components, the sets, the costumes, the characters, all the concept work, it is all handled by the production designer and his team of art directors.

CB: And of the Visual Effects Supervisor?

BP: The visual effects supervisor he is a kind of a technical genius type of guy. He is there to ensure that there is a solid integration between practical photography and what is going to be integrated into those plates through visual effects. So he will make sure that green screens are properly placed and will make sure that all the technical requirements are achieved to create the
shot that is intended. And that might be some type of creature integration, could be some type of digital matte-extension, could be any number of virtual things that need to be included. So, the visual effect supervisor makes sure that that happens correctly so they are not wasting time.

CB: So his role is very technical.

BP: Yes, very technical.

CB: So there is no one person usually that has the overall control of the aesthetic part of the image?

BP: Traditionally the cinematography was that person, it was his responsibility to make sure that the director’s visual narrative was established. The cinematographer provides the visual narrative and he is also interpreting the director’s vision. The idea is, from the medium of photography, and lighting and atmosphere, and tonality, palette, contrast, all those things, the cinematographer will deploy to achieve a certain look and enhance the story with. So, what is happening now is with all the advent of virtual integration in production, special effects and creatures, the cinematographer has to become more familiarized with these processes. And some are, some aren’t. So the cinematographer doesn’t really have the digital or virtual experience like a visual effect supervisor. So we are kind of hoping a merging of a cinematographer and visual effects guy, and that is kind of GCI is all about, providing education on traditional cinematography and all of the technical virtual elements that make up all the different things you need to create shots today. They are heavy visual effects orientated.

CB: And not only technically, not only know how to use that tools, also know them to use them creatively.

BP: The thing you need to realize is a very few people that follow the movie all the way trough, except for the director. Even producers at some point will step away. Probably the one discipline that rides trough the most is the editor, throughout the whole process. But cinematographers are not known for being throughout all the faces of production that much. Not so much in preproduction, very heavily involved of course in
production and only marginally involved in post doing color correction and that kind of things. So there is no one person same as director that kind of rides the whole thing guiding and providing continuity across the entire image creation process.

CB: Do you think it is necessary?

BP: As movies become more and more advanced, yes, I think it would be helpful. I don’t know if that person could exist if it can be someone so smart and so capable but there are probably a few that could hit the list being able to do it...

CB: Do you think a better communication is necessary?

BP: We can say that a lot of the communication problem is right now made worst by the lack of collaborative tools, and that is being worked on as we speak. There is a lot of new technologies that are coming out which would help people communicate better, collaborate better across the cloud and across these digital devices, that right now are just kind of primitive. But it wont be long and we would be able to pick our cell phone or pick up your Ipad or tablet and be able to look at everything we could possibly need for a shot and communicate with your people right there and you can be around the world. So, it is already capable doing that but there would be more soon.