

In larger than life Hollywood, one aspect of the movie world – lighting equipment – is destined to become smaller in future according to a respected cinematographer

BE CREATIVE AND THINK SMALL

by Richard Humphries

On the fashionable boulevards around Hollywood the distinctly unsettling greeting 'Hi, Sexy' is guaranteed to provoke a warm response.

For it is the catchphrase – used with total disregard for gender – of the remarkable George Spiro Dible, whose TV and film work has been appreciated by millions around the world, probably without them realising it.

Even in 'Tinseltown' itself, where everyone is an individual, 'Dible' is a unique character. A dedicated family man, he is known and loved by all. He is the only cameraman in the USA to be retained under contract by a major studio, in this case Warner Brothers.

With four 'Emmys' and six nominations to his credit (plus a clutch of other awards), he is currently President of the Camera Guild and also of the American Society of Lighting Designers.



'Head of the Class', starring Scots comedian Billy Connolly

Dible's role is now that of supervision cinematographer for Warner Brothers. In short, he produces the studio's pilot programmes and sets their style, ready for others to copy when they go into series production.

One of his notable successes, seen across the western world, is the pilot for the

series 'Head of the Class', in which Scots comedian Billy Connolly has recently assumed the starring role.

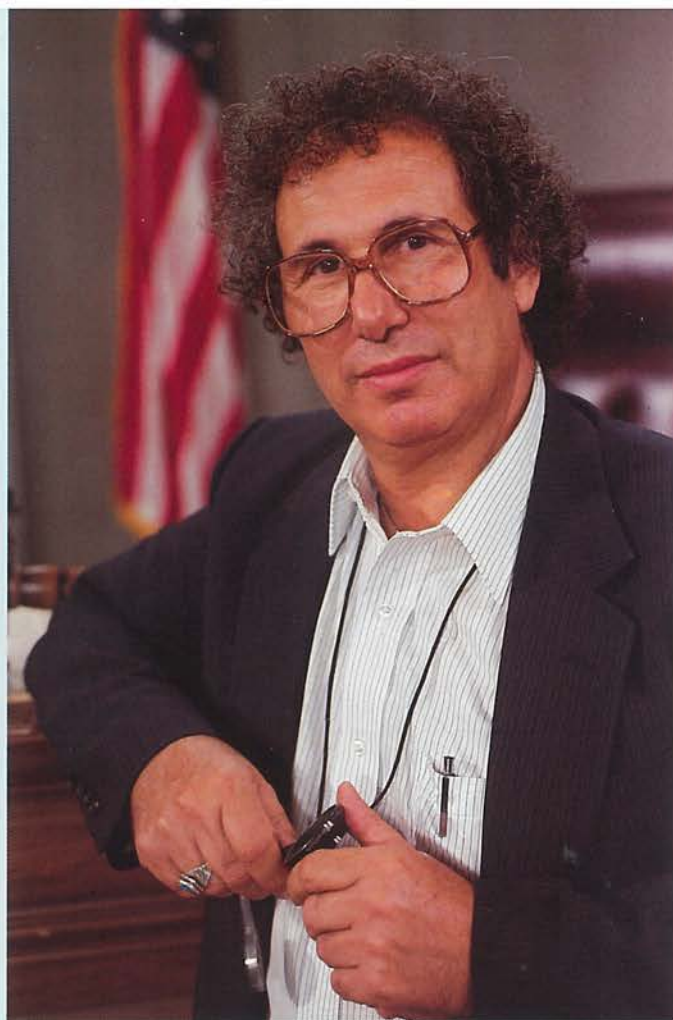
Add to that such TV series as 'High Chaparral', 'Night Court', 'Growing Pains', 'The Ten of Us', 'The Molly Maguires', 'Barney Miller', 'Buffalo Bill' and films such as Barbra Streisand's 'On A Clear Day' (as gaffer), and he is firmly placed on the entertainments map.

Dible has his own, very clear ideas of where television and movie lighting is now, and where it ought to be going. But what of the man himself?

His background is cosmopolitan to say the least. Born nearly 54 years ago in Jerusalem to a Greek father and a Lebanese mother, he was educated at a Catholic school run by Franciscan monks during the days when the Holy Land was a British protectorate. He speaks Arabic and French fluently and English enthusiastically, with more than a hint still of his Middle East origins.

He said, 'All my life – even when I was eight years old in Jerusalem – I wanted to be in the movie business. I used to cut out cartoons and project them. I wanted to be a director, but things did not work out that way.'

He graduated from the Pasadena Playhouse (which spawned such notable talent as Dustin Hoffman), having arrived in the United States at



George Spiro Dible

the age of 18, and began learning about life the hard way.

'When I arrived in this country it was nothing but hard work,' he said. 'I was like a little kid going into a candy store. You cannot have that candy until you have the money to pay for it.'

'I had a lot of study, working part-time and going to school... working up to 18 hours a day. Little by little it allowed me to move up. My mind was always on cinematography.'

'But it was very difficult to break into films. When I finished college I went to a wonderful actor called Danny Thomas and said 'How do I get into the business?'

'He said, 'Well, you need five years experience first.' It was Catch 22. How do you get the experience if no-one will give you a job? So you go and do all kinds of jobs – documentaries, commercials, corporate... by doing that I trained myself. I learned the hard way.'

His big break came with the film 'Don't Look Back – Sachel Page' about the black baseball player of that name. When the entire production crew was fired, Dible was on hand to take over as cameraman. Then the producer had a

heart attack and decided 'Let Dible direct it'. And from there, as the film says, he didn't look back.

At that point, the film industry was about to be eclipsed by television, although too few realised it at the time.

He explained, 'When I arrived in the States it was very sad. Television had come along but the major studios refused to accept it. They said it was a fad and would soon be gone. I have always been open



Technical briefing on the set of 'Night Court'

to new technology but a lot of people in that period would not touch television.'

Fortunately for him, Dible fell on his feet, professionally speaking. One of the TV shows handed to him was