



# Bones

## High quality images on a tight TV schedule

*Bones* is a police procedural television series with two seemingly incompatible characters at its heart. Emily Deschanel plays a brilliant forensic anthropologist whose empirical, literal worldview clashes with that of her volatile, instinctive partner, a cocky FBI special agent played by David Boreanaz. Despite the friction, the team solves crimes using science and savvy.

Cinematographer Gordon Lonsdale, ASC has photographed more than 40 episodes over the past three seasons. For most episodes, he and his crew spend four or five days on sets at 20th Century Fox, and three days on practical locations.

The main forensic lab is a built set that takes up all of Stage 6 at Fox. It's a combination of high-tech stainless steel lab equipment and overhead lighting grids, surrounded by the crumbling brick walls of the fictional Jeffersonian Institute. For general ambience, Lonsdale has a 20K HMI positioned outside each of the 11 surrounding windows that he can raise, lower or pan depending on time of day and the mood required for the scene at hand. He uses Kino Flos and Litepanels LEDs for closer work.

On the set, three cameras are usually ready. He often uses a single camera for the master, and two cameras for closer coverage, when possible. For some scenes that involve as many as seven main cast members around the forensic table, he might use all three, with the third on a Steadicam rig. The emphasis is on getting high-quality images quickly on a tight television schedule.

"Once I see what the director's vision is, and what the coverage will be, I can light my master to facilitate getting right into the coverage," says Lonsdale. "That saves time and keeps things fresh. If there are two actors and we're doing overs, I'll do the shots simultaneously so the actors don't have to repeat."

Lonsdale shoots the entire show on KODAK VISION2 HD Color Scan Film 5299, which is designed for television.

"I've found that the 5299 film allows me to get beautiful pictures while working efficiently under any conditions," says Lonsdale. "The latitude from black to white and the detail I can hold in highlights is amazing."

### Respect for film

Lonsdale currently rates the stock at an E.I. of 640, and often pushes the film to a rating of E.I. 1,600. Dailies are made at Level 3, where colorist Rick Smith transfers the film to 1080p on a Spirit DataCine. Final color correction is handled at RIOT in Santa Monica, California.

"The 5299 allows me to get many shots I wouldn't be able to get otherwise," says Lonsdale. "We recently did a show where the actors were searching for blood using black light flashlights. I was able to bring everything down to a level that made the black light visible, shooting at a stop of 1.3 with fast Master Prime lenses."

Lonsdale adds realism to walk-and-talk exteriors by letting actors pass through deep shade and streaks of bright sunlight. "I can let it go a stop overexposed when they're in the sun and a stop under in the shade," he says. "It's just amazing how well the stock works. We recently 'rode the stop' on a shot that began outside at a stop of 16, and ended in a car dealership office where we needed a stop of 2.8. So I really have a lot of respect for what the film can do."

"We think of our show as a little feature," he says. "We realize that viewers are seeing the show on bigger and better screens, and we're confident that it looks great."

1 (L-R) Actors T.J. Thyne, Tamara Taylor, David Boreanaz, Emily Deschanel, John Francis Daley, and Michaela Conlin from *Bones*. Photo ©2008 Twentieth Century Fox. All rights reserved.