

Important Jobs That Happen Behind The Camera: The Story Of Vanessa Alexis

A Camera Operator helps the Director of Photography, and the Director setup the scenes and frame each shot. The Location Manager takes scripts and finds the locations that are similar to what the Director wants. The camera operator and the location manager both work with the Director. Also, they both need to look at film scripts to see what needs and will be on screen. In addition, both the camera operator and location manager bring their own perspectives into the films they work on (see YouTube link below).

For example, Vanessa Alexis is a Grip. This is a film technician job. Alexis always wanted to write and direct films. This was her dream. She grew up between Canarsie, Brooklyn and Pout-au-Prince, Haiti. Alexis earned a film degree from Hunter College. She then worked for some time with a movie equipment rental company in her home town. Then she enrolled in a training to learn about being a Grip. This was great for her because she met a wonderful mentor in the process, he was her instructor (see NYT link below).

Her experience as a Black Female Grip was both good and bad. For example, some of the crew guys were nice and would help her out. Others were disrespectful and not supportive of her culture. Specifically, “a fellow grip asked if the new cornrows in her hair meant she had joined the fellow Crips or the Bloods” (see NYT link below). This did not stop Vanessa from succeeding in being a film technician grip. She even experienced people on set asking her to “fetch food” (NYT link below). This did not stop her. She kept going. Vanessa mentioned, “a lot of times there is still racism, I am not going to lie, sexism also happens” (NYT link below).

According to her filmography, she worked on a few major productions, including, “*Noah*” and “*BlackKlansman*”. Vanessa also started her own production company, *Sweet Alexis Productions*. This was a huge accomplishment. She went from having uncomfortable experiences on set to writing scripts and being her own boss.

The film technician role I’m most interested in is Screenwriting. Because it is amazing how you can write what goes on a screen. There is a lot of power in screenwriting.

Websites cited:

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