

TIM PALMER

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

British Cinematographer

Robin Hood

DP Tim Palmer



The original "hoody" is back in BBC's new hit series *Robin Hood*, brought to you in glorious high definition (despite tape thefts in Budapest) by a couple of Panasonic VariCams, and a handful of directors and DPs including Tim Palmer, Graham Frake and Paul Bond.

The first two episodes were directed by John McKay with Tim Palmer as DP, the pair having worked together before on other big BBC series including *Life on Mars* and *Canterbury Tales*. So, why use VariCam?

"The big advantage was the slo-mo facility," answers Palmer, "but we also felt it had a better look than the Sony (HD camera). The film gamma curve in its CineGamma software seems to have a more natural filmic look."

Robin Hood was shot as winter turned to spring in locations near Budapest, Hungary. "I was brought in four weeks ahead of time," says Palmer. "That got extended to six weeks because of actor-availability which was fortunate because Budapest had an unexpectedly long winter - if we'd begun filming on time, there would have been over two feet of snow on the ground. We had these great tall trees in the forest and there were no leaves to block the light (that became an issue for successive blocks of shooting).

"This was going to be a single-camera shoot with an occasional second when we started but it was long before two-camera shoots became the norm almost every day over the four weeks we had. I operated the B camera as much as I could but, this being HD, I had to keep a close eye on the monitor. With depth-of-field, the fall off from sharp to soft is greater. When video is edgy, it's definitely soft and the operator can't see it because of the terrible black-and-white monitor.

"Sparks (a Hungarian camera/lighting company) provided the lighting and were very good. All the equipment was brand new and there were no loose clamps or dodgy barn doors. I worked with their top gaffer, Jozsef Szucsik, who was great.

Inevitably, *Robin Hood* features a lot of candlelight and firelight which Palmer has his own way of handling. "I like to keep the colour a stop down and then light it in," he says. "I have my own special little lights mounted on strips of plywood with wire and tracing paper over the top. I call them my wagon trains. They're small, thin, long and easy to hide."

**Director
DP**

**John McKay
Tim Palmer**