

SET DIARY

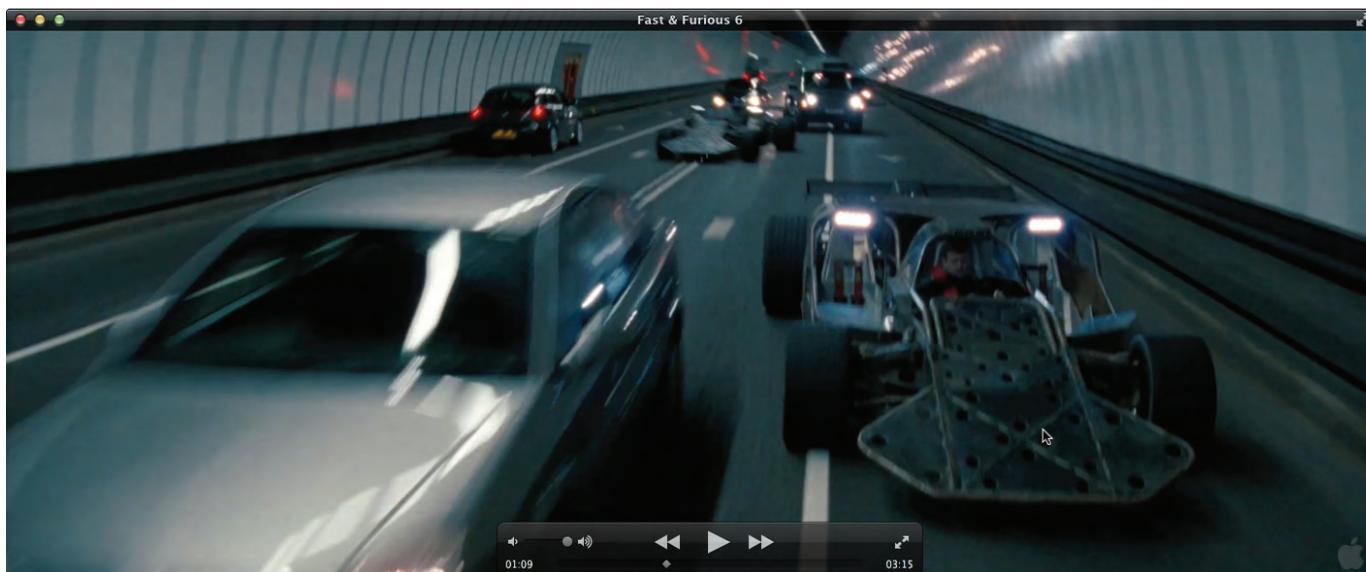
2ND UNIT DP IGOR MEGLIC, ZFS ON
FAST & FURIOUS 6

by **IGOR MEGLIC, ZFS** photos courtesy of **IGOR MEGLIC**



Fast & Furious 6





Mention the words “second unit” to any seasoned action director, and he or she is likely to point you to Igor Meglic, ZFS, who has been responsible for some of the most incredible “blending” of kinetic cinema on screen.

This Slovenian native’s awesome résumé includes recent classics like *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Vantage Point*, *Salt*, *Takers*, *Resident Evil 2, 3* and *4*, *Fast Five*, *Contraband*, *Men in Black 3*, *The Last Stand*, the upcoming *World War Z*, and *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. His most recent project, *Fast & Furious 6*, which Universal Pictures opened last month, included 80 people in the camera, grip, and electric departments (part of a 300-person second unit crew), and was spread over 80 days of shooting. This set diary only hints at the true complexity Meglic faces as a second unit cinematographer, as well as the adrenaline highs he and his team get every time the cameras roll.



Preproduction Scout

June 18 - 21

I always knew this was going to be an interesting and challenging shoot – with more than a few surreal moments. But I didn’t think it would start with preproduction. We had only four days to scout Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow and the Canary Islands. It was me, 2nd unit director Spiro Razatos, stunt coordinator Andy Gill, 1st AD Dominic Fysh, UPM Russell Lodge, and VFX Supervisor David Vickery.

With no direct flights from the UK to the Canary Islands, we had to book a flying service, which was more like a party bus. It was filled with drunken vacationers, big guys with tattoos, pensioners, and couples with crying babies (next to whom I was seated). Taking pity on me, the flight attendant moved me to a free seat a couple of rows away, where some elderly ladies asked all about the movies I’d worked on. They hadn’t seen any of them but promised they would see *Fast 6*!

When we finally got to the Canaries, reality set in: there was nothing exciting for the opening race, until Russell remembered a location from another movie he’d seen called *Tano Road* – a fantastic road carved out of a sheer cliff. When I went up in a helicopter with Spiro to get images to show director Justin Lin, we knew what kind of a dangerous challenge this spot could be.

Day 1

July 30

I’ve been working closely with cinematographer Steve Windon, ACS to make crucial and necessary decisions. For Steve it’s a review of choices: he needs to know exactly what we’ve set up and what we will shoot, so that he can match his work on green screen. It’s the real key to effectively “blending” first and second unit work on-screen.

The abandoned runway sequence we are about to shoot, at Bentwaters Air Force Base about 100 miles northeast of London, is a perfect example. The Antonov (An-124), a huge Russian-made cargo plane, is picking up the bad guys. But the good guys mess up their plans, and it all ends in a plane crash and explosion. It’s a huge sequence, and that’s when the first-day butterflies hit: If we mess up, the work of many people goes down the drain.

Pre-light is the first reality check. How would all the lighting we designed on paper translate to film? There’s just no room for errors on a mile-long runway. The biggest challenge was how to make the mock-up fuselage and landing gear, which were being towed by the truck at 30 miles per hour, look like they’re going 120 miles per hour. The machinery had as many as six cars around it, two lighting trucks going along, two camera cars – and many other challenges. Where would they all fit? Where could they be placed in relation to the plane, which didn’t exist? How could I create shadows when there was no actual plane to cast them? How to not cast shadows from the camera car that was driving in front of the runway landing lights?



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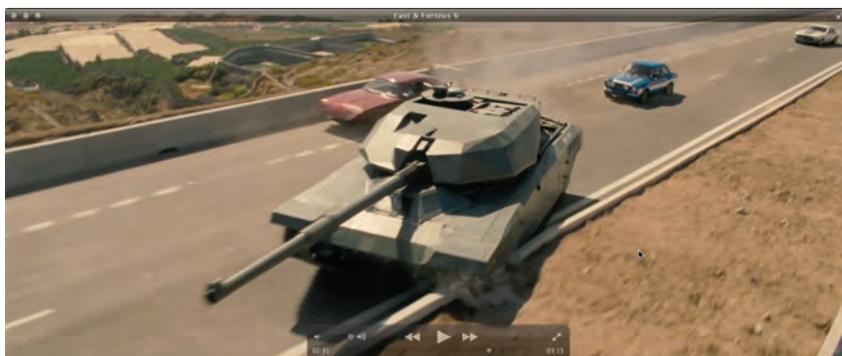


Glasgow, Scotland

August 28 – September 12

We have been incredibly lucky with the U.K. weather so far, having only lost a half--a-day of shooting in the last four weeks. Our move to Glasgow (subbing for London) has been equally fortuitous, weather-wise, even though it seems every day we have off it's been pouring rain!

These scenes are all about the good guys chasing the bad guys with some major stunts and car work. Of course, it looks like great fun on the screen, but it's very intense, dangerous work, and prep is everything. Fortunately, the devices that can control the cars, and even get under and turn them sideways, are amazing, and help with safety.



Freeway/Tank Sequence, Tenerife, Canary Islands

September 13 – October 27

We had three working tanks – one full-weight 60 tons, one medium-weight 20 tons, and a lightweight one that special effects built on a top of the truck that weighed “only” six tons. The location was an unfinished freeway, so we were able to build a fake top of the bridge at one end of it, allowing us to crash and flip the tank and send a car off it.



What was really cool, and took a lot of logistics, was setting up the first shot. Here, one of these 60-ton tanks drove over a bridge, at a speed that made the bridge waver. I swear, I knew we'd taken extra precautions. In order to get a permit to shoot there, Locations would've gotten documents on all the bridges – the capacity and more – but this was a serious monster. We were standing on the bridge as the tank was moving to our location, and it literally felt like a rolling earthquake.

Tano Road, Canary Islands

October 22nd and 23rd

I don't know what view was more awesome. : Mine from the ground, Maurice McGuire's shots from Alan Padelford's modified Cadillac Escalade, which was chasing the cars racing down a two-lane road with the 26-foot Edge Arm mounted on it, the camera flying over the precipice carved into a 1,000-foot cliff, or what pilot Fred North, aerial DP Steve Koster and second unit director Spiro Razatos captured with Pictorvision's Eclipse from the air.

The stunt drivers were driving a Nissan GTR and a Dodge Challenger at speeds reaching up to 100 miles an hour. And there is barely enough space for the cars to be side- by- side. There is the tunnel in the middle of it all, and we had to light the cars and the tunnel with battery-operated Jokers 800. The footage turned out amazing.

“We were standing on the bridge as the tank was moving to our location, and it literally felt like a rolling earthquake.”

London, England

November 5th

For only the third time – ever – a movie company was allowed to close down Piccadilly Circus for one night. It was previously done for *Harry Potter* and, I believe, *28 Days Later*. The stunts we were shooting – chasing and drifting our hero cars around the Circus – were dramatic, but the crowd may have been even more impressive. Production had to control thousands of on-lookers – people standing behind some 3,000 feet of crowd-control fences – trying to get in. There were also hundreds of extras and security people (dressed normally) milling around to hide the fences.

I stood on the top of the stairs of the fountain, under the statue of the Greek god of love, Anteros, and confessed to feeling overwhelmed. For those who have been there, or ever contemplated shooting there, you can understand that I simply could not believe we had closed down Piccadilly Circus.

Abandoned Runway (Again)

Oct. 30 – Nov 3 and Nov. 18th

These last few days offered a different kind of challenge, where we had to emulate the explosions we needed, but not on a working runway where production had shot.

We had to replicate a crash of the one of the biggest airplanes. Special effects created a traveling rig that had explosions in it and would continue burning as it went down the runway. Because traveling fire doesn't produce much lighting, we had to add a lot.

We had to match our regular lighting scheme from our previous runway location (Bentwaters) with practical amber and blue runway lights. We also had landing lights (in pairs of wide stub nose par-cans) and ARRI T24s evenly spaced every 120 feet.

For the fire effect, we usually think of emulating fire from a fireplace or campfire, which means a few lights on a dimmer with some gel, and that's it. This scene required five 120-foot Condors on each side, about 100 feet apart. On each Condor we had two full Dinos, which meant 20 full Dinos in total gelled with different kinds of ambers and run through the dimmers and lighting control board. And a couple of trucks with two Dinos each following the burning traveling rig.

We started with the fire effect lights off. As the Antonov came through and exploded, the lights that were in line with the rig came on. As the plane careened down the runway, the lights would fade out on the backside. The effect looked huge even from the helicopter, which was shooting at the same time.



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Day 81

Nov 19th

After six or seven months on a movie, in different countries on different continents, and endless changing of hotels and airports, I just wanted to go home. We finished at 4 a.m. and I went straight to the Airport Hilton at Heathrow so I didn't have to deal with London traffic in the morning. I went to sleep for three hours, and by 10 a.m. I was on my way home to my wife and kids. The last thing I really wanted to think about was the next adventure. But *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* was only months away. 🍷