

# Member Profile/**Sarah Moffat**



**Sarah Moffat is a cinematographer, director of photography and documentary filmmaker specializing in underwater, travel and adventure film. With over 15 years' professional experience, Sarah has worked in an array of diverse situations, from large movie sets, to live broadcast events, to remote and extreme locations. Her unique abilities include trekking anywhere with gear and rock climbing with a camera.**



**You're on your third year as a WIFT-T member. Which aspects of membership do you find most beneficial?**

The networking! The community! The WIFT love! I've had paid work come directly out of relationships made through WIFT networking. I've also learned more about other areas of the industry, such as producing, budgeting, funding and digital media, and I've continued to expand personally because of the education that WIFT provides.

**In 2009, you moderated a WIFT-T panel called Women Behind The Lens. What were some of the highlights of the experience?**

That was very exciting! I was so grateful for that opportunity as it allowed me to find the voice I had been seeking in others for some time. The voice was my own, and I just needed the space to allow it to grow and be heard. The panel was comprised of women I look to for knowledge and support: Joan Hutton csc, President of the CSC and the first woman in Canada to be granted "csc" accreditation; Zoe Dirse csc, an amazing and spirited cinematographer and teacher at Sheridan; and Kim Derko csc, another fantastic female DP who has also faced challenges trying to do her job because of her gender. We had a fabulous talk about those challenges and how these experts overcame them, and we also spoke to the future of education—breaking down the stereotype barriers in schools and setting a new standard. My message was to "change the conversation"—de-genderize the roll so that women have a fairer shot at getting hired on larger-budget jobs, and are included in filmmakers' minds when thinking of their next DP. Change the conversation from camera man to camera person, and hopefully the greater subconscious will change too, creating more opportunity for female camera people.

**The gender divide in this field is particularly staggering. In 2010, a study of the top 250 grossing films in the US found that women accounted for only two percent**

**of their cinematographers<sup>1</sup>. Why do you think so few women are represented?**

It is systemic, and it also takes a long time to truly master the craft and be recognized by the industry—10 years is the average, so this is a challenge for women who decide to have children. But trust is the biggest challenge. On larger-budget jobs, hiring a female DP is a risk for producers, and there's even more conflict when the producer is also a woman. Why? Because a female producer is in the hot seat already, and if she hires a woman DP and it doesn't go well, she may lose her job. There is an invisible pressure there because you're a woman. However, there are new factors coming into play, and one is technology. With changes in cameras and formats, there are more women making documentaries now than ever before. They are often self-taught and aren't interested in accessing big-budget feature films, so they go undetected. But they are there. One way I feel we can grow stronger is by coming together to be accounted for and sound a bigger voice. To show that we exist, we are skilled, and we can do the job as good as anyone else.

**What advice would you give to an emerging female pursuing a career in the field?**

Go for it. If this is what you really want to do, then don't let anything stop you. Find a way to shoot, build a reel, network and keep on learning. Be patient, yet persistent. Stick to your dreams, because no one can change what you dream up for your life, only you, so think big.

**What's next for you?**

A natural history doc about Sable Island over the course of a year. I'm also developing a business plan for a production company that will access funding to work with non-profits, helping organizations create a visual voice while generating income for the service provider. I call it Balanced Media.

<sup>1</sup>Lauzen, Martha M. "The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top 250 Films of 2010." (2011). | |