



10 Cinematographers to Watch

BY VARIETY STAFF

Radium Cheung

We have no association with Apple," d.p. Cheung wryly notes as he describes Sean Baker's "Tangerine," a Sundance critical hit that has inevitably become known as "the movie that was shot on an iPhone" — a catchy designation that hardly begins to account for the film's distinct widescreen look.

"I'm sure it's been done, but I'm personally not aware of too many movies that have been shot with one wide-angle anamorphic lens," Cheung says. "You can't change lenses with a phone. You're stuck. But somehow, it worked for us."

As a result of the lens, even actor closeups were teeming with background detail, fittingly enough for a movie so richly invested in an underseen, sun-scorched cross-section of L.A. Using a lightweight phone camera not only helped from a budgetary standpoint, but also allowed Cheung to work as nimbly as possible, keeping up with actors who were almost perpetually in motion.

"It really enabled us to capture a lot of moments that probably would have been lost if we had a normal-sized crew with bigger cameras," he says.

Born in Canton, China, and based in New York, the 38-year-old Cheung says his longtime "filmic mindset" has allowed him to wear any number of hats (as an actor, editor and gaffer). These days, he's focused primarily on lensing and producing (both of which he did on "Tangerine" and Baker's previous "Starlet"): "When I'm working on a project that actually speaks to me, it becomes a lot more personal."

— Justin Chang

Image: Courtesy of Radium Cheung