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British Cinematographer⁰³⁷

Covering International Cinematography



CAPTIVATING

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SPECIAL FEATURE - PLUS CAMERIMAGE 2009 DIARY

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SHOOT THE FUTURE - MARK PATTEN ON THE CANON 7D

MEET THE NEW WAVE - ALESSANDRA SCHERILLO
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Meet the New Wave

We've identified a new wave of cinematographers who... have a decent slew of productions under their belts... are not upstarts, but not quite of "a certain age" either... are not yet members of the BSC... but who have the potential to become the next Alwin, David, Ernest or Chris.

Alessandra Scherillo



Scherillo: says the best thing about being a DP is being able to light

Filmography (so far): After ten years in commercials working on campaigns for Stella Artois, Samsung, Nintendo, Nike, Guinness, Campari and Porsche (to mention just a few), Alessandra is prepping her first film, an adaptation of a Chekov novel to be shot in Beijing. **When did you discover you wanted to be a cinematographer?**

One of my tutors at college, where I was on a postgraduate film course thinking about becoming an editor, loved my stills and encouraged me to take it further. He was a wonderful teacher and an inspiration. I was also lucky enough to win a bursary. **Where did you train?** The old fashion way, working up through the grades: runner, loader, focus puller, operator, and then I went to the National Film & Television School to put the whole thing together. The best way in my opinion is from the bottom of the ladder up.

What are your favourite films? *The Leopard* (DP Guiseppe Rotunno, dir Luchino Visconti) – the way the oppressive heat and dust is represented in that film with the use of light, and better, the almost absence of it, is just spectacular. *8 1/2* (DP Gianni Di Venanzo, dir Federico Fellini) – I was only twelve when I saw this and I knew, even then, that was an important piece of work. The energy from it was incredible. *A Matter Of Life And Death* (DP Jack Cardiff BSC, dirs Powell and Pressburger) – I discovered Powell and Pressburger during my postgraduate film course and wondered why I never seen anything by them before. The use of colour is just wonderful, and the choreography of the shots is revolutionary especially for the time. *The Passenger* (DP Luciano Tovoli, dir Michelangelo Antonioni) – mesmerising almost hypnotic in its stillness at times, and one of Jack Nicholson's best performances. *Battle Of Algiers* (DP Marcello Gatti, dir Gillo Pontecorvo) – Antonioni's scriptwriter and life long collaborator, Pontecorvo, made only one film as a director, but what a complete, poignant and delicate masterpiece that one film was. **What's the best advice you were ever given?** "Always give at least two reason why you want to do something, or need to do something, never be dogmatic. It is

your job to be clear!" from director/DP John Burrows, one of my mentors and now great friend. **Who are your DP/industry heroes?** Jack Cardiff BSC – his work with Powell and Pressburger stands out even now. Piotr Sobocinski – unfortunately we lost him too early, but the style he brought to the *Three Colours* trilogy was so new, fresh and a great introduction to the aesthetics of an eastern European visual mind. Dante Spinotti's lighting in *L.A. Confidential* – I have never seen such work, elegant and not shouty. His light felt like silk. **What's the worst knock-back/rejection you ever had?** At the very beginning of my career, when one still needed a union ticket to work, I was asked to load on a Monty Python film. Unfortunately, the ticket didn't arrive until three weeks after the beginning of principal photography, so I had to turn the job down. I was devastated. **What have been your best and worst moments on**

set? Best – while shooting with Al Pacino, him saying "Shoot, baby, shoot!" Just great. **Worst** – being stuck in the middle of the Ethiopian savannah, part of a crew of four, with a sound recordist gravely ill, waiting in vain for a plane to pick us up. Unknown to us the plane had crashed just hours before, killing the first American diplomat to visit this Marxist country and creating an international incident. We had to wait a long time!

Away from work, what are your greatest passions? My husband. **What one piece of kit could you not live without?** My beloved grey scale, which has been with me since film school. **Which production are you most proud of to date?** A 35-day job I did for Lotus in Malaysia, Dubai and Vietnam. Just wonderful, and full of toys to play with – like planes, trains and automobiles. **What's weirdest place you've ever shot in?** From a plane in Vietnam with four secret service military personnel all literally looking over our shoulders. **What's the hardest shot/thing you've had to light/frame?** The entire Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) at night. The director wanted a 190-degree shot, all in one take. We had to get approval from Air Traffic Control because we had so many powerful lights. **Tell us your hidden talent/party trick?** I make great cakes. **In the entire history of filmmaking, which film would you love to have shot?**



The Battle Of Algiers. It's a seminal work. **What's your greatest extravagance?** Good tailoring. **What's the best thing about being a DP?** To be able to light. **What's the worst thing about being a DP?** Not having the freedom to light. **What three adjectives best describe you and your approach to cinematography?** Humour, fun and good manners. **If you weren't a DP, what job would you be doing now?** Absolutely no idea. **What are your aspirations for the future?** More of the same please.

