



Carn

A TV PRODUCTION ON 35MM

Director Renzo Martinelli is not attracted by simple plots. The script for his feature *Sarhsará (The Waterbaby)* was supervised by Nadine Gordimer, Nobel Prize winner for literature, and won the Tokyo Children's Film Festival. His film *Porzus* was presented at the Venice Film Festival. *Vajont*, on which he collaborated with David Scuola in 2002, was also a winner. *Five Moons Plaza* made a great impact on audiences.

Carnera: the Walking Mountain is another intense story from the director/screenwriter. The epic drama, with its \$7.6 million budget, began shooting in Carnera's birth centenary year. It tells the story of the Friulian boxer's legendary rise to success and recounts the key events in his life, from his childhood to the moment when he lost his title in 1934.

Andrea Iaia, who plays Carnera, was discovered by accident. "It wasn't easy to find a man who was taller than six feet, capable of speaking good English, could box and act," muses Martinelli.

The images were lensed by master cinematographer Saverio Guarna. In the last few years he has put his mark on such significant works as: *Le rose del deserto (The Roses of the Desert)* directed by Mario Monicelli, *Tu devi essere il lupo (You Must be the Wolf)* directed by Vittorio Moroni, *Controvento (Against the Wind)* directed by Peter Del Monte and *Il corpo dell'anima (Body of the Soul)* directed by Salvatore Piscicelli. His television work has included *La buona battaglia - Don Pietro Pappagallo, Il figlio della Luna (In the Shadow of the Moon)* and *Assunta Spina (The Last Diva)*.

InCamera met Saverio Guarna to ask him about his collaboration with Renzo Martinelli and his lighting approach to *Carnera: the Walking Mountain*.

Primo Carnera was the first Italian to win the world heavyweight boxing title. The eldest son of a stonecutter, he was born in 1906 in the small town of Sequals in Italy's Friuli-Venezia Giulia region. He made the long journey to France to seek his fortune when he was just 18-years of age. But he was unlike other emigrants. He was a towering giant, measuring 6 ft 8½ and weighing 265 lbs.

Carnera found work as a travelling circus strong man, but he was eventually 'discovered' by a French boxing promoter. His professional boxing career began in Paris in 1928 and he had a string of knock-out victories in the ensuing two years. He moved to the United States in 1930 where his success continued but, unknown to Carnera, many bouts were 'fixed' by his manager and by criminals. In 1933 he knocked out Jack Sharkey in New York City and became world heavyweight boxing champion, only to lose his title the following year to Max Baer.

Carnera was a boxer, an icon, a showman, a lover of lyrics and poetry, a comic book hero and an actor with 20 features under his belt. One of his most notable films was *The Prizefighter and the Lady* released in 1933.

Q When did you first meet Renzo Martinelli?

A I met him several years ago in connection with a proposed collaboration. The project didn't materialise, but fortunately a series of circumstances brought us together again.

Q Shooting television fiction in 35mm is an impressive option.

Why did the director make this choice?

A The need to screen the film in theatres dictated the choice of 35mm.

In fact, our approach to the film was completely cinematographic, beginning with the panoramic format. Image quality is important for Renzo; he shoots all his films on 35mm – even for television. What's more, he has two ARRI 35s of his own which are equipped with a considerable number of lenses.

Q What lighting style did you envisage and how did you plan the technical aspects?

A The story is set between the two world wars. The scenes alternate

between the poverty-ridden environments of Friuli and France in the early 1920s, and the splendour of the great English hotels with the ocean as their backdrop. It was important to narrate the disparities between them within the photographic ambience. In short, I made every effort to emphasise the diverse emotions of the various phases of Primo Carnera's life with the lighting. But the principal challenge was to create contrasting images rich in shadow, whilst maintaining a soft light on the actors' faces.

Q Did you define the photographic ambience of the film during the shoot or in post-production?

A 1,200 digital shots were created for the film and even more are being added to the television version. The final product will inevitably be in Digital Intermediate. I'll work on an already tightly-directed basis in the colour correction phase. In that way, the digital correction will give major substance to the existing photographic ambience which was defined during the shooting phase.

Q Which tools did you use to produce the images?

A In the last few years I've discovered the value of using a digital camera on set. It allows me to communicate visually with the laboratory and to indicate the photographic style more precisely, for example the correct execution of dailies. With this in mind, I'll be using the KODAK Look Manager System (KLMS).

Q How did you decide to use the KODAK VISION2 200T and 500T film stocks?

A The surprising factor about this new generation of Kodak film stocks is their complete inter-changeability. I had no problem using either in the various settings or in the even more varied lighting situations. They have exceptional exposure latitude.

era

Q

What type of collaboration did you establish on set with Renzo Martinelli?

A

As a director he is quite technical and is always behind the camera. He knows the lenses and is competent and demanding about photography. We only spent the minimum amount of time talking about the project. During the first days on set he watched me working, but he didn't intervene. I passed the test and, from that moment on, we collaborated in complete agreement.

Q

Were any sequences particularly emotion

A

In one bout, Carnera knocks out an adversary (Ernie Schaaf) who later dies. The TKO scenes and Carnera's subsequent reactions are quite strong sequences and Renzo communicated them in an intense and involved manner. Andrea Iaia, the actor playing Primo Carnera, was perfectly cast. Even as crew members, we experienced quite a lot of emotion during filming.

Q

What level of service did you receive from Cinecittà Studios?

A

Cinecittà Studios are managed by competent technicians who make themselves available. They are optimal collaborators and partners in the post-production phase and I have an extremely positive opinion of their team.

Q

Who do you particularly wish to thank for their special contributions to this film?

A

Great thanks go to the gaffer Otello Diodato, the key grip Piero Fabbri and assistant camera operator Andrea Beck Peccoz. These professionals gave me a great hand. My appreciation also goes to the laboratory manager Pasquale Cuzzuppoli and his technicians. They were very valuable collaborators.

Carnera: the Walking Mountain was shot in English. Worldwide distribution is planned for the film, which is currently being screened in theatres in Italy. In early 2008 it will be screened on the Italian television station Canale 5 as a two-part biopic. It is produced by Mediaset-RTI/Martinelli Film Company International in association with Giuseppe Marra Communications (GMC) and is distributed by Medusa Distribuzione.

1 Actor Andrea Iaia who plays the boxer Primo Carnera.

2 (L-R) DP Saverio Guarna and Director Renzo Martinelli

