

# The dramatic visualisation of **Il Capo dei capi**

With nearly eight million viewers, the \$20 million miniseries *Il Capo dei capi* is one of Italy's most popular television dramas. Inspired by Giuseppe D'Avanzo's and Attilio Bolzoni's investigative book about Totò Riina, the six episodes follow the mafioso's turbulent life from his teenage years to his rise through the Cosa Nostra and subsequent arrest. The drama features 3,500 extras.

*Il Capo dei capi* was co-directed by Rome-based Alexis Sweet and Enzo Monteleone, and lensed by Daniele Nannuzzi, AIC (*Raul*, *Giovane Toscanini II*, *Senso 45*) and Federico 'Chicco' Masiero (*La Cura del gorilla*, *Crociati*, *I Giardini dell'Eden*). *InCamera* talked firstly to Daniele, then to Federico.



**Q** Daniele, how would you describe your visual approach in your earlier collaborations with Enzo Monteleone?

**A** I collaborated with Enzo Monteleone on the award-winning *El Alamein* and the television drama *Il Tunnel della libertà* and the approach has always been the same: to make cinema. Boundaries between cinematographic photography and photography for television don't exist for me. Drama needs very clear ideas and the ability to stay the course without getting caught in the rush. Unfortunately, expressive possibilities in television drama far exceed those in films but, despite the budgets and timeframes that television production imposes, I don't compromise.

**Q** How did you light this production?

**A** When I read the script I understood that realism was the key; useless aesthetics would have risked making a myth out of the real character of Totò Riina. On daylight interiors I used

large shafts of light streaming in from the windows and very little additional interior lighting. I wanted to feel the intense light and shade of the Sicilian sun from the inside. It wasn't easy using external light sources in a real-life situation so I used a nearby balcony and, occasionally, a crane.

**Q** How did you and Masiero manage to create one photographic atmosphere, despite working separately in different environments and with different casts?

**A** At the outset each director took three episodes and divided the whole film so that each episode contained scenes from both units. Masiero and I met two weeks before the shoot and weren't told which scenes we would be shooting until the day before production began. We decided to let the environment and settings provide us with inspiration – and it worked. Masiero and I hardly saw each other as our timetables and locations were very different, but we speak the same 'language' so everything went smoothly.

**Q** What was your main expressive photographic contribution to this production and what solutions did you adopt?

**A** In my opinion it's the emotional scene in the funeral parlour when Borsellino visits Judge Falcone's coffin. It begins with vertical framing and was shot high above the circular courtyard of an ancient Catanian building. Borsellino enters and you only realise you're looking at a building when the camera pans upwards. The scene continues in a huge lounge which is half-lit and only brightened by shafts of light penetrating through three large half-closed windows. The ceiling is lit by the reflection of the light hitting the black-and-white frescoed floor: the focal point where a succession of coffins are cut by the shafts of light. I put three giant crystal chandeliers on dimmers and switched on the light bulbs. The effect was truly moving.

**Q** Great care has obviously gone into post-production. In your opinion, what is the secret of maintaining the filmmakers' vision until the screening?

**A** Everything has to be checked and nothing can be left to chance. As Masiero was busy with another film immediately afterwards, I spent the six weeks of post-production colour correcting the entire film, checking every scene, cut after cut, to enhance the photographic tone and create a chronological escalation from 1943 to 1991. It was the only way to portray on the screen what had been shot. Perhaps the secret of the amalgamation is related. If we had worked separately, the result might have been different.

**Q** Lastly, Daniele, how satisfied are you with the service at Augustus Colour?

**A** I am very demanding, but I've always been pleased with the service at Augustus. It's like being at home; they treat me very well and satisfy all my requests. Sometimes they work into the early hours until the result is perfect. Marco Giliberti is my favourite colourist. He is a man of few words but has extraordinary sensitivity and taste. I really like to involve my collaborators in post-production



so if Marco works a bit harder with me, I know he'll be happy with the outcome. Vittorio Bonini, Maurizio Jacoella and Gianni Mazzei are three of the technicians who made such a result possible.

**Q** **Now, Federico, we know that you have worked with director Alexis Sweet on many other occasions, particularly on commercials. How would you describe your latest collaboration?**

**A** When I read the script I realised that this project would attract a great deal of interest - not only because of the subject matter, but also the way it was written and the excellent cast. Alexis and I developed a relationship of complete trust and esteem, which encouraged us to carry out work to the best of our abilities and develop ideas to enrich our work.

**Q** **Technically speaking, what type of images did you create on *Il Capo dei capi*?**

**A** This has been a production of immense stylistic research on which I received great support from the excellent set and costume designers. Alexis coordinated the important decisions and provided a truly important collaborative presence throughout the shoot. We created a breathtaking portrayal without big special effects, using a classic approach much closer to the cinematographic world than that of television. We opted for 16mm and selected KODAK VISION2 200T 7217 and KODAK VISION2 500T 7218, supported by several new generation lenses normally used on 35mm cameras, even in the most extreme situations such as the strongly contrasting Sicilian light.

**Q** **Which camera movements did you choose to accompany the images?**

**A** As previously mentioned, the camera movements and framing were determined by that spirit of shooting which is more akin to the cinematographic

world than television. The result is breathtaking scenes and an emphasis on the acting that gave great freedom of expression to the cast.

**Q** **What framing was particularly significant to your work?**

**A** There are many emotionally enthralling scenes; the primary focus is the mafia murders which evoke a very dark aspect of Italy. The scene of the attack on Judge Falcone is extremely moving. Alexis carried out the framing and did so without falling into the trap of superficiality that other television dramas have unfortunately encountered. There were some critical moments due to the operational difficulties of working with parallel units. The situation influenced the acting and time frames, as we sometimes had to shoot the same actors in different eras and different locations on the one day. But it has been an excellent working experience. The result on the screen has been truly rewarding and the immense public testimony demonstrates the highest production values.

*Il Capo dei capi* was produced by Taodue Film.