

Fabio Zamarion films Tornatore's *La Sconosciuta*

most thoroughly prepared director I've ever met. He's intimately familiar with every side of the film, from sound to photography to editing. He's incredibly competent when it comes to photography. Giuseppe was, and still is, a photographer. Photography is the key to his way of seeing, and the key to his films."

"We screened a few 1940s RKO films – especially *The Leopard Man* with its expressionistic use of light and shadow – to help us create the right atmosphere. We tried to create cold, almost monochromatic lighting for this unnamed city in northern Italy that – in a sense – was itself a leading character in the film."

"This was the first feature on which I had to work so intuitively. Intuitive in the sense that, although the specific choices always came from Giuseppe, my role was not simply to deliver them. Instead, I had to be flexible, even trying to find valid alternatives to his suggestions. An enormously stimulating challenge, and one that helped me to grow into my role."

"Giuseppe's unusual approach intrigued me. For example, we never used video assists when shooting *La Sconosciuta*. We didn't review the images on the set. It was shooting in an old-fashioned way –

yet in a modern manner! He wanted to get the best possible performances from the actors without them being influenced by seeing earlier performances."

"Giuseppe also chose this method of working to reduce substantially time spent on the sets. Contrary to what one

might think, reviewing immediately after shooting is needlessly time consuming. Why? Because everyone on the set will want to give opinions. Opinions based on unfinished material; based on unedited images. A largely pointless exercise."

"We handled the light elegantly, because the story, the actors, and the editing were more important than the light. Of course, we had to create the right atmosphere – the right mood. But, in a sense, the story required the control of the atmosphere by using light."

Film director Giuseppe Tornatore described his latest film *La Sconosciuta* (*The Stranger*). "It's a mystery with horror overtones. An Eastern European woman is the heroine. We filmed in Trieste – a city I love. A city that's not quite Italian, but not 'un-Italian' either. A beautifully lit city."

Actually, leading Italian DP Fabio Zamarion created *La Sconosciuta*'s extraordinary lighting. After a solid grounding as a top-ranking camera operator working for Vittorio Storaro, ASC, AIC, and other great DPs, Fabio progressed to lighting major films himself. Films like Emanuele Crialeses's *Respiro* and David Grieco's *Evilenko*.

But *La Sconosciuta* was Fabio's first collaboration with Tornatore. How did this opportunity arise? Fabio explained "Laura Fattori, the film's producer, told me Giuseppe Tornatore wanted to meet me. He'd seen my work and wanted me to shoot his new film. We had a long, wide-ranging discussion during which we talked a little about everything, and Giuseppe told me a lot about himself and how he works."

"Giuseppe wrote the story and the screenplay. Broadly, it's a *film noir*, with a solid story. We shot all the exteriors in Trieste and the interiors at the Papigno studios in Terni. Now I can say that I've worked with a director in the broadest sense of the term. A professional who knows exactly what he's doing, knows what he wants, and who isn't satisfied until he achieves it. Essentially, Giuseppe is in a creative competition with himself. So he's never content with anything he has predetermined in the screenplay

phase. Instead, he's stimulated by the presence of everyone working around him. And, in return, making a film with him stimulates everyone involved. For me, it was unquestionably a 'professional marriage'. He's the director everyone hopes to work with, at least once, because in professional terms, working with someone



Below: Director Tornatore (centre with hat) Fabio Zamarion (front right) with members of the technical crew.

Opposite: (main picture) Director Giuseppe Tornatore. In front of clapper board - Principal actress Ksenia Rappoport

like this forces one to outdo oneself. You're compelled to keep up with him. On the set, you can't stop. Filming is a non-stop work-in-progress, launched by him, that automatically carries along everyone around him. He's a true cinematic genius, and to be a worthwhile colleague one has to make an extraordinary effort."

"He's thoroughly prepared in every possible way. From framing each individual shot to the visual style of the film in the broadest sense. Quite simply, when it comes to the camera, he's the

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"In general, all of my films are photographically different from one another, because they focus only on the story and on interpreting the director's vision. My working philosophy is that while the film is part of the structure, it is the film's lighting that creates the structure. After the first screening of *Respiro*, director Emanuele Crialesse said "That's exactly what I wanted! That's the finest praise a cinematographer can receive for his work!"

"To uphold the highest possible standards I use tried and trusted professional choices – in both human and purely technical terms. On the human side, I've used the same colleagues and collaborators for many years. For example, Roberto Luzi, my lead cameraman, who is an outstanding operator. As for the creative hardware, I used ARRIflex cameras with Ultra-Prime lenses, because the film needed separation with strong contrasts. For separation and transparency from my choice of film, I used – as I usually do – KODAK VISION2 500T and 250D films. They are extraordinarily good tools."

"Whenever possible I work with the Cinecittà Lab. They are a good organization technically and I have

for Giuseppe. Our shooting technique – pared-down and linear – was different from his earlier films. Obviously, the strong, distinct stylistic character of his work is still there. But for me its essential quality is a perfect balance between production design, costumes, and photography. A balance that's obvious in every frame of his films."

"We didn't use Digital Intermediates in post-production. I much prefer the traditional route. Why? Because I'm convinced the Digital Intermediate route removes part of the signal – a sizeable strip of the negative. Others might argue that digital methods let you expand your images at will. But, in fact, as soon as you compress your signal, damage is done. Conversely a chemical signal contains so much information – it's so vast, so flexible, and so transparent. Those are qualities that no digital medium can provide. And because I come from a television background, and because I've used TV cameras extensively, it would be difficult for me to give up making traditional films. That is, using negatives, interpositives and internegatives to do everything to the highest level."



excellent relations with them. My lead technician, Stefano Santini, has been with me since I first came to Cinecittà. Filmmaking often involves working in unpredictable conditions. So having at least a few stable points of reference is a great help – and a confidence booster."

"In comparison with Giuseppe's earlier films, we used camera movements sparingly. The story didn't need them. Instead we searched for expressive simplicity – almost a return to basics. So in some ways, this film was a renewal

"Filming *La Sconosciuta* was 16 weeks of bliss. When you're doing your best possible work for a director who, every day, gets excited about what you have produced, you can't honestly wish for anything more. So I'm happy; and I hope this complex film will have the success it deserves. So if it's a hit, that will mean there are people who are starting to pay attention to a different type of cinema – one with true content." ■