

# Crystallising Crystal Eyes

Luca Coassin, the talented young Italian cinematographer, was born in 1967 and studied at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Experimental Film Centre) in Rome with the outstanding master Giuseppe Rotunno ASC, AIC. After first establishing himself as an exceptional Steadicam operator, Coassin turned to cinematography. His first feature-length film, **Tutta la conoscenza del mondo (All the knowledge in the world)**, was directed by Eros Puglielli and released in 2000.

After a period working on documentaries, short films and other features, Coassin and Puglielli have once again joined forces on the thriller **Occhi di cristallo (Crystal Eyes)**, an international co-production based on the novel by Luca Di Fulvio. *InCamera* met with Coassin to discuss their latest collaboration.

*How did your working relationship with Eros Puglielli begin and how did your collaboration on this project develop?*

"I was a Steadicam Operator for Eros in 1997, prior to working as Director of Photography for him on **Tutta la conoscenza del mondo**, his first feature shot on film. It was shown in the Forum section of the 2001 Berlin Film Festival."

"Luigi Lo Cascio, the lead actor and I were the first people Eros approached on his new film **Occhi di Cristallo**. It meant that I was able to discuss prints, lenses, formats and so on from the very beginning, even before addressing issues such as locations, production design, cast, etc. It was a great motivation for me to be able to give top priority to researching in depth the images I wanted to create. We established a space where we could work together, which was free from distractions and outside influences; one that would allow us to start from the very first minutes of preparatory work and continue all the way through to the first inter-negative print, without compromising our creative vision of the film in terms of images and photographic atmosphere."

*Which references in terms of images and other aspects did you use and what inspired you in the creation of this genre film?*

"I realised after studying various films that, although the scenario and the novel on which it's based have specific genre references, I was dealing in the first instance with a production headed by an author. It didn't mean distancing myself from the images

evoked by the text, but rather paying particularly close attention to Eros's wishes. This meant eliminating all the information that might give the film any specific and easily identifiable references to historical places or times."

*What photographic atmosphere did you have in mind for Occhi di Cristallo and how did you create it technically?*

"I wanted to preserve the characteristics of a genre film, which in this case is a thriller, but I wasn't aiming for a glamorous or fashionable look. Instead, I concentrated on neutral tones and sharp, clean images that, even in long shots, would give the audience a dusty feeling. In order to preserve the realism in certain particularly crucial scenes, I developed more saturated colours and, at the same time, reduced the film's overall chroma. In addition, I used contrast, light and shadow in a sequence involving a very bad dream, like the primary visual recollections when you wake up from a nightmare, to convey what was happening internally to the characters. In this way, Eros and I constructed a personal visual story arc. We even worked on conveying, through the shots and their framing, the olfactory sensations suggested by the story. We wanted the audience not just to see the film, but also to feel it in a way that extends beyond the intrinsic limits of a visual medium."

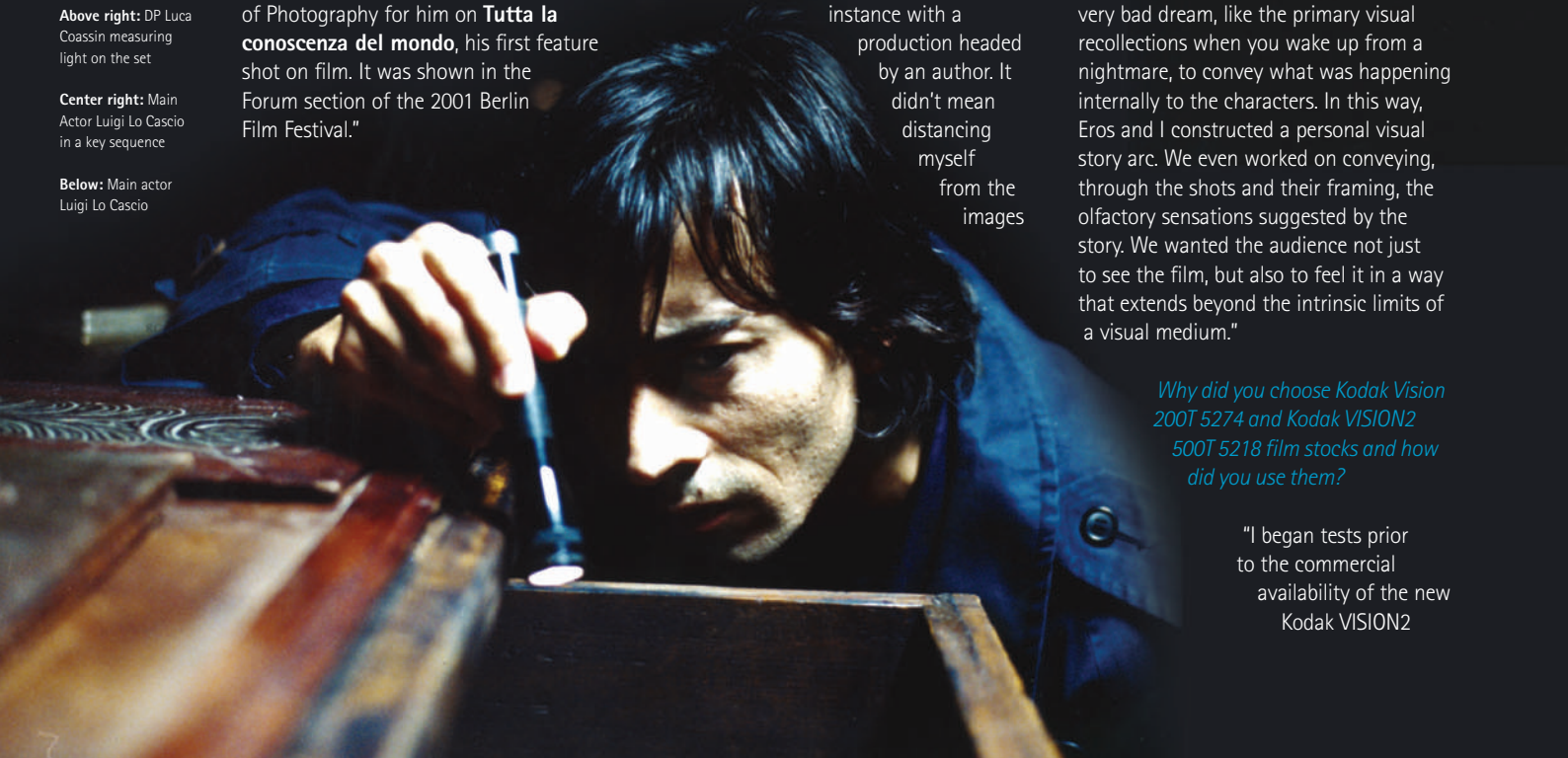
*Why did you choose Kodak Vision 200T 5274 and Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 film stocks and how did you use them?*

"I began tests prior to the commercial availability of the new Kodak VISION2

**Above right:** DP Luca Coassin measuring light on the set

**Center right:** Main Actor Luigi Lo Cascio in a key sequence

**Below:** Main actor Luigi Lo Cascio



stock and found that the combination of Kodak Vision 200T 5274 with NR treatment for the final prints gave me the exact chromatic information I was seeking - dense blacks and improved highlight detail. However, I also needed a faster film that would let me work with the cameras' shutters. When Kodak introduced the new generation of VISION2 films that are even more versatile, I chose Kodak VISION2 5218. It let me work more quickly than 5274 during both the day and at night with 22° and 11° shutter apertures, without any noticeable difference in the

with variable shutters that allowed me to alter the shutter exposure angle. But unlike other productions, I used this technique not only on the most dynamic scenes, but also for the more static ones such as ordinary close-ups, as well as an extreme close-up of the blink of an eye. And I also used it continuously, scene after scene, to get into and out of each shot. With the combination of two cameras, shutter adjustments and intermittent visuals created by calculated placement of lights, we constructed a parallel track of visual pulsations. The result was a more or less harmonic interaction between the emotional aspects of the film and the audience's perception."

*Eros Puglielli is a very creative director who always looks for original solutions. What was the chemistry like between you?*



substrate or the grain. The exposure of both emulsions was always correct, even though the set lighting I used with them was often extreme."

*What other creative parameters did you use for the film's visual style?*

"Unlike **Tutta la conoscenza del mondo**, which revolved around the dense and misshapen images of a grotesque comedy, with **Occhi di Cristallo** we were dealing with the essential and extreme images of a classic film noir. We used a restrained approach based on the concept of 'frequency of perception' and, to get the effect we wanted, we used cameras

"We rediscovered our genuine shared passion for this kind of film work and for being on set; our tireless work on the images was a mutual renewal of our experience as a team. During the preparatory period, it took the form of in-depth research on the visual style, which later turned into an exciting search for creative solutions that were often revised or reworked on set under stringent time constraints.

"And as far as chemistry is concerned, sometimes when we work together, Eros cooks tasty pasta dishes like bucatini all'amatriciana, while I contribute a bottle of good Friulian wine. It's usually a perfect combination!" ■



## Crew List

**Director**  
**Director of Photography**  
**Camera Operator**  
**1st Camera Focus-Puller**  
**1st Camera Clapper - Loader**  
**2nd unit Director of Photography**  
**2nd Camera Focus-Puller**  
**2nd Camera Clapper - Loader**  
**Grader (Cinecittà)**

Eros Puglielli  
 Luca Coassin  
 Carlo Passari  
 Andrea Doria  
 Gianluca Bombardone  
 Anton Bakarsky  
 Georgi Dimitrov  
 Nenad Boroevich  
 Stefano Santini

**Occhi di Cristallo** will be released in January 2005 by RAI 01 Distribution. A Cattleya, Rai Cinema & Alquimia Co-Production