

- 1 Main actor Nicolas Vaporidis
- 2 actress Carolina Crescentini
- 3 (L-R) director Fausto Brizzi, DP Marcello Crescenzi and actress Serena Autieri
- 4 DP Marcello Crescenzi shooting behind the camera



The roles and goals of

# Notte prima degli

Just a year after his spectacular Italian box office success with the award-winning comedy *Notte prima degli esami* (*The Night Before Finals*), director Fausto Brizzi has found the inspiration to shoot another comedy feature about the coming of age of a group of high school teenagers. As author of the screenplay, he points out that *Notte prima degli esami - Oggi* is not a continuation of the first film. "It is an experiment in which we have taken the protagonists from the earlier feature, which was set in the summer of 1989, and transported them to the summer of 2006 when Italy won the World Cup."

Marcello Montarsi, AIC (*The Last Kiss, Remember Me My Love, Santa Maradona*), the experienced and sensitive director of photography who lensed *Notte prima degli esami*, has collaborated with Brizzi once again on *Notte prima degli esami - Oggi*. *InCamera* asked him about his lighting style and cinematographic choices on the new film.

Q

**How did you interpret your role as DP on this second collaboration with Fausto Brizzi?**

A

"*Notte prima degli esami - Oggi* is a brilliant comedy in which the main characters are a group of high school teenagers nearing graduation who are suddenly confronted with the prospect of adult life. My role was to heighten the story's entertaining atmosphere of joy, love and affection, which I achieved by choosing warm colours and a vivid look. I used a soft key, however, because I did not want to turn everything into hyper-realistic hues. Although the story is based in the summer, for practical reasons we had to shoot between October and December. Using an 81A Wratten filter in conjunction with artificial lights at 3200° and overexposing the background up to five stops enabled me to record summer looks even on days when there was clearly bad or threatening rain. I am glad I managed to warm up the long shadows of Roman autumns."

Q

**Which tools did you use to create your vision?**

A

"I used artificial light in conjunction with natural available light for both exterior and interior takes. Natural light is my constant reference and I aim for realistic imagery. Cooke S4 lenses were my optical choice because they satisfied my need for clarity and detail in highlights. They are simply the best lenses for capturing skin tones, a factor that's truly important to me. Similarly, I chose KODAK VISION2 stocks, specifically KODAK VISION2 50D, KODAK VISION2 250D and KODAK VISION2 500T. I used 250D for daylight interiors and exteriors and 500T at night. Sometimes I underexposed 500T by two to three T stops on exterior magic hour scenes so that I could grab all the natural available light, then I compensated afterwards in the lab. Occasionally I pushed the stock to achieve a harsh look for nocturnal images and I was particularly pleased with the overall result. It looks different, but is in keeping with the rest of the film and the sequences intercut finely. KODAK VISION2 50D was the ideal choice for

a vivid 3-dimensional look in a truly important daylight exterior sequence of a pool with dolphins."

Q

**Which front end lab did you choose and why?**

A

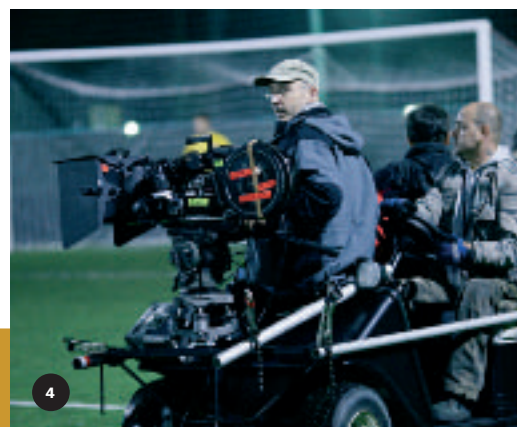
"I have worked with Technicolor in Rome before and they provide an excellent service. I was supported by the gifted grader Massimo Gubinelli, who helped me to achieve my 1:2.35 images without the need for DI. A tool that came in very handy in the lab, and saved us time and energy, was the brand new RADS colour correction device. We were easily able to make colour changes on the positive while watching the print on a large screen."

Q

**Why did you adopt 1:2.35 as the format ratio?**

A

"There was no question. It's the ratio for cinema – or for any story in my opinion – while 6x6 is the ratio for still photography. It's an ethical issue that I raise up with some classic references. As far as cinema is concerned, I always defend 1:2.35 because I truly



# esami – Oggi

believe it gives more to the medium and the audience.”

Q

**What film grammar did you use to tell this story?**

A

“Fausto and I discussed this topic in depth to determine the ideal images language to support the story and we eventually adopted a classic cinematography grammar with a slightly detached camera which, for most of the time, observed events without being intrusive. We shot 80% of the film through dolly sequences because we wanted fluid, graphic sequences without distracting the audience from the story. Throughout filming, we shot simultaneously with two ARRICAM LT cameras – and sometimes four – to capture the actors’ performances from different angles without losing the special on-set momentum. I usually stayed behind the camera because I think it’s an important piece of cinematography language but, having said that, I entirely trust my camera operator. When I am forced to shoot many takes each

day at a hard pace – and I shot a daily average of 25 scenes on *Notte prima degli esami – Oggi* – I usually light the next location while shooting the previous one and you simply can’t do that if you are behind the camera.”

Q

**What is your position on DI?**

A

“I believe that finalising a picture through DI workflow by using suites such as Da Vinci 2K or IQ is great. But there’s nothing wrong with the traditional chain. The difference always comes down to the people who operate the equipment. I like both processes, especially if I am supported by a gifted grader or colorist who can translate my vision properly. Several sequences in *Notte prima degli esami – Oggi* were worked through the DI flow and intercut at Proxima with the rest of the film in 4K to get the best quality and match the normal neg to print work. The initial title sequence was on the contrary worked at 2K.”

Q

**How would you summarise your experience of working with Fausto Brizzi, who was not only the director but also the author?**

A

“Fausto is an instinctual, talented, fresh and enthusiastic director. He really trusts the people he chooses to work with him and he gives them the opportunity to express themselves in their jobs. Throughout the shoot I was able to move the camera, define the lights and use all the tools in the ways I really wanted, so I am particularly pleased with the cinematography on the big screen. Besides, as author of the story, Fausto has a particular gift for detecting new trends and habits in our society. When you watch the film, you get the feeling of something very familiar in the images.”

Q

**What are the names of the important collaborators who helped ensure such a good outcome for this film?**

A

“As a starting point, Italian camera rental Arco2 was truly supportive in helping define my choices. Then I can’t forget the important contribution from my camera operator, Alessandro Bolognesi; chief electrician Valerio Gabelli; and chief grip Angelo Donadone.”

Q

**What does the making of *Notte prima degli esami – Oggi* mean to you?**

A

“Every day I worked with a smile on my face. It was a magical experience and there was a fantastic atmosphere on the shoot. Fausto used his skills to bring together a group of people who were totally dedicated to his story and I am sure that *Notte prima degli esami – Oggi* will soon become the audience’s story, not just his.”