

Giuseppe Rotunno, ASC, teaching cinematography

Giuseppe Rotunno, ASC, AIC, has headed the School of Cinematographic Photography at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome since 1988, when he was asked to implement a new way of learning. Many of his former students are now successfully working in the motion picture industry. Rotunno began his career as an apprentice in the still photo lab at Cinecitta in Rome when he was 17 years old. During the early days of his career as a cinematographer, he collaborated with Italy's neo-realistic film directors who redefined the art of filmmaking, including Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini and Vittorio De Sica. Rotunno has earned some 70 feature film credits. Rotunno received a British Academy Award and an Oscar nomination for **All That Jazz**. In 1999, he was the recipient of the American Society of Cinematographers International Achievement Award in recognition of his unique artistic achievements. Rotunno's body of work includes such memorable films as **On the Beach**, **Roma**, **Popeye**, **Five Days One Summer**, **Amarcord**, **Casanova**, **Rocco and His Brothers**, **The Leopard**, **Carnal Knowledge**, **Man of La Mancha**, **Regarding Henry** and **Sabrina**.



Above: (near L-R) Graziolina Rotunno and Giuseppe Rotunno AIC, ASC with (far R-L) El Italy Country Business Manager Carlo Giardini and his wife Augusta Giardini. Kodak supports SNC through product grants, training seminars, and student discounts.



Above: Giuseppe Rotunno receiving his ASC International Achievement Award from actress Liv Ullmann.



Left: Giuseppe Rotunno with his students. National School of Cinema, Rome.

AIC reflects on

The following conversation with Rotunno reflects on his philosophies as a teacher and his hopes for the next generation of cinematographers:

Q: How do you convey your experience to the next generation of cinematographers?

A: "My initial idea, when I launched this splendid adventure at the SNC (Scuola Nazionale di Cinema), was to provide more practical training than information. Previously, the program had been characterized by a critical approach to the topic of film, as opposed to a practical one, which quite frankly is better suited to journalistic training than to the profession of cinematography. I work with the students toward a continuously deepening understanding of photochemical processes, tools, and techniques that make it possible to fully express the creative vision for the story. I tell them that their ability to support the concept of the director may be determined by how quickly they are able to light scenes."

Q: What do you think is the most significant part of training for a field as complex as cinematography?

A: "Students must achieve an in-depth knowledge of both cinematographic tools and techniques. It's a magical craft, but also demanding. It requires great discipline and experience to express the vision required by the story in collaboration with the director."

Q: Is the art of cinematography an innate or learned skill?

A: "Essentially, it consists of creating successful images that are extremely faithful to the photographic demands of the subjects and the vision of the director. It's a symbiotic process. The cinematographer 'lives' the film, first by reading the screenplay and discussing it extensively with the director. That process is repeated on the set during production, and again in post-production. I believe cinematography is a lifelong learning experience."

Q: Can you give an example of how students learn the intricacies of filmmaking?

A: "Through continuous experimentation with all of the variables in the cinematographer's universe: film stocks, lights, lenses, laboratory processes, filters, cameras, and learning how to reach a particular goal by the shortest route. Our students work on projects that are grounded in perception with realistic lighting that is appropriate for the scenes they are shooting. We treat special effects as additional elements rather than solutions to shooting problems."

Q: How does technology affect cinematography?

A: "Technology is constantly evolving, however I always tell my students that it should always serve the story, and never the other way around." ■

