



The first feature film to combine ARRIRAW with on-board recording

FIGLI DELLE STELLE

FIGLI DELLE STELLE is an Italian comedy feature, directed and co-written by Lucio Pellegrini and shot by cinematographer Gian Enrico Bianchi. It was produced by Rita Rognoni and Beppe Caschetto for ITC Movie, Pupkin Production and Warner Bros. The shoot began on October 12th 2009 and lasted for seven weeks, incorporating locations from downtown Rome to a glacier 3,900 metres up in the Italian Alps, close to the border with Switzerland.



DoP Gian Enrico Bianchi with the D-21 on the Plateau-Rosa glacier at -20°C

The production was supplied with ARRIFLEX D-21 digital cameras, S.two OB-1 on-board recorders and ARRI Ultra Prime lenses by the Rome-based rental company D-Vision, which also provided technical and logistical support. Technicolor Rome supervised post-production and, in collaboration with both D-Vision and ARRI, created the best possible workflow to handle the raw, uncompressed data captured by the D-21 cameras with ARRIRAW technology.

"All of us were aware – and a bit scared – that this was the first feature film worldwide to be shot in ARRIRAW with on-board recording," says Pierpaolo Gualà, Managing Director of D-Vision. "As usual there was extremely limited time to establish and fully test a total workflow, which obliged all the people working around this exciting project to make adjustments as the shoot progressed to ensure that the production ran as smoothly as possible." Cinematographer Gian Enrico Bianchi notes that "in order to get prepared we made many different tests, supported by D-Vision and Technicolor Rome and – apart from a few hitches due to inexperience – we immediately had positive feelings."

Part of the function of the testing phase was to establish whether or not the D-21 was going to be able to deliver the high quality images that the production demanded. "During preproduction, after the tests, we happily discovered a quality response that was much better than any optimistic expectation, in comparison with any other digital camera," affirms Gianpaolo Giusti, Digital Services Operation Manager at Technicolor Rome. "The production consequently decided to go ahead and shoot in ARRIRAW. The result had been an extremely clean image, without noise and with a great exposure latitude. We made some tests on film and the result is excellent; the camera records an astonishing quantity of information."



Gianpaolo Giusti

technicolor



Bianchi was also extremely pleased with how the D-21 performed. "The image quality was very high and could not only reach a capacity of exposure similar to a 35mm negative, but also achieved a surprising plasticity and precision of detail in the shadows, and a colorimetry that was exactly the one we wanted for the film," says the cinematographer. "The D-21 has been surprisingly reliable performing in different situations; even when we used it in extreme conditions such as 3,900 metres up on the Plateau-Rosà glacier at -20° C it worked perfectly, allowing us to shoot beautiful images. The film has been shot completely handheld with Ultra Prime lenses, and the ergonomic shape of the camera helped a lot, together with the optical viewfinder and automatic shutter." Pierpaolo Gualà adds that "the optical viewfinder of the D-21 gave the operators a view of the scene identical to what they are used to with film cameras, which gave them more confidence and comfort."

The fact that Bianchi wanted a handheld look for the film meant that an on-board recording device was extremely important, as it allowed the D-21 to be operated untethered. Weighing in at less than 3kg, the OB-1 recorder from S.two was ideally suited to the task. "Obviously the need to shoot mainly on the shoulder and in extreme climatic conditions made the on-board recording system much appreciated," continues Gualà. "The OB-1 is compact in its dimensions and has the capacity to record up to 30 minutes of footage. In some situations we also used the DFR2K-AR recorder [also from S.two], which is extremely robust but less portable."

Technicolor Rome helped the production set up monitoring and image appraisal tools on set, working with the crew to ensure that an accurate representation of the captured image colorimetry was available to them throughout. "After a while I learnt how to expose in order to get the best out of the camera by following my instinct," says Bianchi. "Now I know that the D-21 can record far beyond the compressed raw file visible on the HD monitor on set."

With the project completed, Gualà comments that "FIGLI DELLE STELLE achieved the goal of finishing on schedule and also of being an excellent film. This success was the result of a fundamental collaboration between D-Vision, Technicolor, ARRI Italia and the experts at ARRI Munich, who supported the

production at every stage." Production Manager Attilio Moro adds that he "would like to thank ARRI for giving us the opportunity to shoot a feature film with this technology. We have been the first, in Italy, to shoot like this with the D-21 and I would say that it has been a great opportunity to test a new way to make movies with almost the same result as film in terms of quality, but with a lower budget."

Despite, or perhaps because of the extra effort required to try something for the first time and make it work, Bianchi found the job to be an extremely rewarding one. "Shooting a movie in the ARRIRAW format has been the biggest challenge I've ever had, and now that it's over I can definitely say it's been a fantastic adventure," says the cinematographer. "I'm looking forward to my next experience with the D-21, which I reckon is a revolutionary camera in many respects!"

Antonio Cazzaniga/Mark Hope-Jones

