

Gian Enrico Bianchi turned heads with *La Capa Gira*



300,000,000 lira might seem like a fortune unless you're Italian film director, Alessandro Piva. He had just arrived at a meeting with Director of Photography Gian Enrico Bianchi to talk about filming Alessandro's first major feature, *La Capa Gira* (The head turns). 300 million lira - around US\$150,000 - was the film's budget; a decidedly low budget. The meeting would not be easy.

Faced with such a low budget, many DPs would consider shooting on video. But not Gian Enrico. He had positive ideas about low-budget movies.

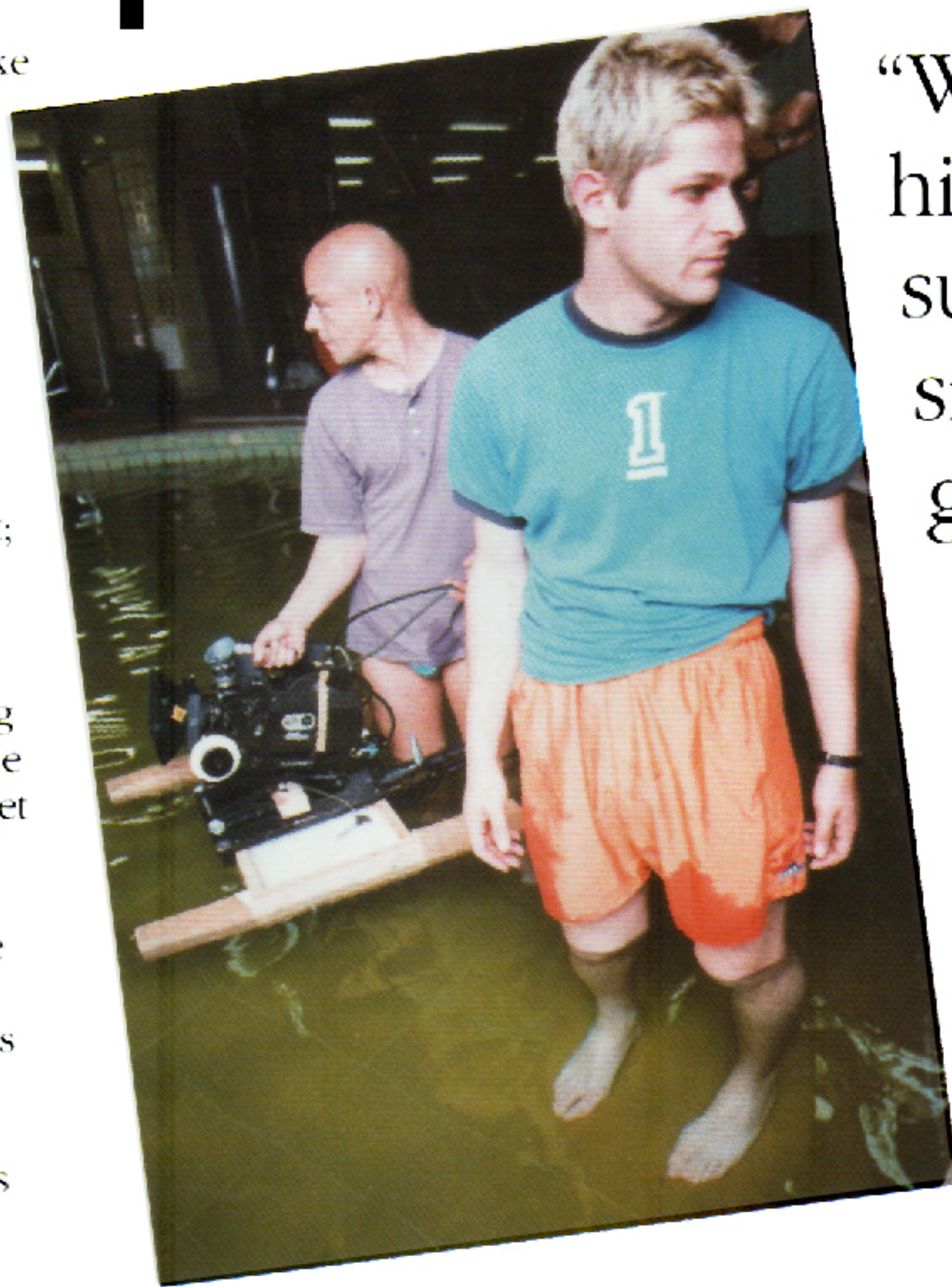
"The ideal choice is film, Super 16mm film," he said. "It's a simple choice. To get reasonable screen quality from video origination takes too much time and money at the video-to-film stage. Film gives superior quality from the start. This makes a big difference in budget terms. With film there are no crippling extra costs at the end of your production chain. With film, 'what you see is what you get.'"

Shot in Bari, southern Italy, the movie is about two small-time thugs who are after a lost drug shipment from Albania.

La Capa Gira contained many night exteriors and mixed-light interiors. But Gian Enrico had only around 4K of neon lighting equipment for the movie, so he relied heavily on Kodak Vision 250D 7246 and Vision 500T 7279 stocks.

"We wanted a grainy, high contrast image to suit the main location, a smoky, claustrophobic green-lit bar. So I chose the 250D for its ability to record warm tones and for its perfect handling of mixed-lighting, while the 500T was my key choice for night exteriors and low-lit interiors.

"Alessandro and I agreed we had to emphasise the ugly nature and



strong physical presence of the main characters, as well as the squalid atmosphere of the bar. We achieved the effect visually with unsettling close-ups of the unsavoury villains; we got the high-contrast look by overdeveloping the film, particularly with 500T shots, and by printing on 35mm for distribution.


"I told the lab I was underexposing the Vision 500T by one stop (1000 ASA), but I deliberately only underexposed by two-thirds (800 ASA) because I didn't want to lose the texture and integrity of the image.

"I made no correction for my green neon lights because I wanted to reproduce the dominant colour normally found in these bars. I also wanted the film to mirror the colourful variety of the city. In Bari, at night, you find a narrow street

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with a red gloomy atmosphere; another, close by, has a yellow glow - and so on. I wanted *La Capa Gira* to reflect these differences."

Gian Enrico's tiny crew was himself as operator, assisted only by a focus-puller and a grip. He used an ARRI SR2 modified for Super 16mm.

For the sake of realism, Director Alessandro Piva had the actors speaking in a strong local Bari dialect. A dialect so unusual that he felt it necessary to add some explanatory Italian subtitles, a potentially damaging move! But, on the contrary, audiences everywhere flocked to see *La Capa Gira*, making it an undreamed-of success at the box-office. The film won a Silver Ribbon and a Donatello's David, both for New Best Director, while Gian Enrico received a nomination for the Silver Ribbon for Best Cinematography. 

▲ DP Gian Enrico Bianchi (right)

Data File

La Capa Gira

Production Company
Producer

Kubla Khan
Umberto Massa
Valerio Bariletti
Alessandro Piva
Gian Enrico Bianchi

Director
Director of Photography

Gian Enrico Bianchi, at 29, is a young but experienced DP, who has been particularly inspired by Luca Bigazzi and Regis Blandeau. Apart from *La Capa Gira*, the highlights in his brief career include:

Estate Romana
Il fuoco di Napoli
Bye Bye One

Feature Film
Documentary
Documentary