

## **Impressions at 24 frames per second**

Written and Directed by Simone Bartesaghi

? 2005 All rights reserved

Shooting on film is a completely different story.

I'm not talking about the quality of the image, I'm talking about the odours, the sounds, the materials.

First of all there is the smell of the camera, steel and oil, like an old typewriter and it's damned heavy.

Most precise and fast then a clockwork, its heart beats at 24 frame per second and is full of rings and collars that drag the film through the body.

The other key element is the film. Did you know that the film as a soul? When the loader tries to handle it, it reacts like a snake and goes wherever it wants. When the magazine is positioned on the camera the film is still fighting. Why? Because it's sensitive!

Then, when it's threaded through the camera body, the film gets docile and malleable, it moves with incredible flexibility through the rings, exposing itself to the light 24 times a second before going back into the darkness with it's precious load.

As a larva changes into butterfly, so the film, from a chaotic and unshaped emulsion, is transformed into a perfect image destined to immortalize memories.

I think that there must be some sort of alchemic formula that changes the film in this way. I mean, like changing iron in gold.

I know, I know. It should be enough for me to read a good manual of photography to be informed about every single detail of emulsion, photons and reaction but I prefer my vision about the miracle that light changes chaos into order.

If it's not alchemic then why do we use the magic formula?

Now let me say something about the formula. To explain it I have, against my will, to talk about a particular character.

The first Assistant Director. His job is to break yo ur b... to make sure that everything is running on schedule.

He is so focused on his role that his vocabulary is reduced to two words: fast and faster.

He sets the rhythm for the sorcerer's apprentices, making sure that the potion is ready for the Great Wizard, the Director. The first call is for the sound, then the second AC, then the camera operator and then the slate is closed with the well-known sound.

Once the ingredients are ready the Great Wizard is able to exercise his magic.

Now in front of him there is a new, different world. There are characters, there are chairs, there are tables and walls but they are inanimate, without light, without soul.

Now is when the magic happens. The Great Wizard is so powerful that he doesn't need long formulas, just one word: ACTION.

In that moment our world steps aside in suspended animation. Immediately the other world comes alive full of sounds, smells, and memories.

Then when "CUT" is called our world prevails again with our frantic activities, our emotions and our stories. The characters dissolve, the walls, the tables and the chairs are still there but they are just getting in the way on a set that is always too small.

But their souls are not lost, they have been captured on the emulsion. The miracle has happened. The light draws their shapes on the film giving them immortality.

Maybe, the fantastic world of Cinema is just this. It is part of our never ending fight to give ourselves immortality, too.

But for those of us that live on this side of the lenses, there can be only the hope that our memories are not just "tears in the rain".