



With two completely unconventional Bollywood movies under his belt, Rajeev Ravi is today one of the most-wanted cinematographers in India. He started his career with Madhur Bhandarkar's *Chandni Bar*, went on to create magic in South Indian movies, and is now back with a bang with *Dev D*, a film critically acclaimed for its newness and crisp, cutting-edge camera work.

Rajeev Ravi breathes, eats and lives cinema 24 hours a day. He believes that the magic of cinema and cinematography stretches beyond pretty pictures. "It's narrating a story or idea visually," he says. "The images can be of any nature, pretty, dark, gloomy, gritty or raw; it's the vision which matters. The cinematographer has to get inside the mind and soul of the director and create the magical visuals that the director has imagined."

Rajeev has always been more inclined towards cinema itself than cinematography. He enjoys both the Realism and Pictorialism types of visuals. He keeps his work simple by using whatever light is available, then enhancing as per the situation. Very rarely does he opt for huge setups. For him, the most important aspect is the story – it defines his visual approach. In fact, he chooses to work on a film only if he feels excited about the story – the banner and other factors are secondary.

Rajeev feels very strongly about being well informed and educated about cameras, lighting, film, and the other tools. "To create great visual

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Rajeev Ravi, Director of Photography

India

effects," he says, "one can manipulate images, but to do so, one must know the rules to be able to break them." He is equally comfortable using both film and digital media. Digital media offers him the flexibility of instant replay and image manipulation, plus it is practical and easy to carry around while shooting.

Rajeev is also very comfortable working both indoors and outdoors. He thinks shooting outdoors is good fun, but the lighting arrangement needs more effort. He prefers operating the camera himself to check the rhythm and pace, and loves the dynamism of hand-held shots. He minimizes image manipulation and lighting amendments in the post-production and controls all factors while shooting on the original negative itself.

When selecting color negative films, he first examines the level of creativity expected, the availability of resources like light, the location, and finally the financial aspect. "I shot my last two films on Fujifilm stocks and was completely satisfied with the results of both the new generation ETERNA series positive and RDI stock," he states, "and I was quite pleased with the color range, saturation, rich blacks and consistency."

Soft-spoken man that he is, Rajeev Ravi is quite forthright when talking about success, "I believe a combination of hard work, willingness to sacrifice, and talent are the most critical factors for becoming a successful cameraman." ■