

# Women At Work

*In a business primarily thought of as technical (translation: "Men's work"), women, over the past decade, have been gaining ground. So, when asked to name up-and-coming editors, more and more agency producers and directors named women editors as ones to watch.*

*With editors such as Rita Sitnick and Gloria Pineyro, both in New York, paving the way, women editors have slowly been creeping into the mainstream, gaining popularity with top directors. Although these six represent only some of the growing number of talented women editors, the sheer choices alone are testament to their increasing visibility. Included here are Elisa Bonora of Red Car in Hollywood, Calif., Paula Martino of Crew Cuts in New York, Gayle Grant of Gayle Grant Editing in Manhattan Beach, Calif., Mary Alice Williams of Editing Concepts South in New York, Sheila Sweeney of Rye Films in Hollywood, Calif. and Gail Bartholomew of Avenue Edit in Chicago.*



## Elisa Bonora

HERE REALLY ISN'T any other way to say it. Elisa Bonora's career has followed a trajectory

that NASA would envy. In a relatively short time, she has risen to become one of the most respected and sought-after editors around. All the more impressive when you realize that she's only been in the United States for six months.

Beginning in her native Italy, followed by projects in South Africa and now based in the United States at Red Car in Hollywood, Calif., Bonora has consistently worked with an imposing array of top talent on innovative and award-winning commercials and feature films.

You know their names: Joe Pytka, of Pytka in Venice, Calif.; Larry Bridges of Red Car; Anthony Hoffman of Griner, Cuesta & Schrom in New York; Tom Higgins, of Dektor/Higgins in Los Angeles; feature director Peter Delmonte; Michael Chandler (oscar-nominated editor for *Amadeus* and *Mishima*), among them.

They know her work.

As Hoffman puts it, "Basically, she's one of the finest editors that I've worked with in Europe. And it's very much a collaboration that I'm hoping to continue in America."

Or as Bridges, with whom she shares editing responsibilities at Red Car, complains light-heartedly, "And now Joe Pytka's working with her almost all the time. I mean I don't have access to her anymore because she's cutting his work."

And the work she's done with directors of that caliber has earned a lot of awards. For example, a campaign she worked on with Hoffman for an Italian cellular phone service, won a Bronze Lion at Can-



**former student of Bertolucci's and current Pytka pick, editor Elisa Bonora is lighting up the editing suite. Not bad for six months in the States.**

nes. And, just last week that same campaign won five ANIPAs and other Italian national creative awards.

### La Collaboratore

Bonora's rise to prominence is

more than merely the result of her proficiency with a comprehensive range of state-of-the-art film, tape and video disk editing equipment.

ors who just take the job as part of an assignment. I think she brings a lot of creativity and a lot of, you know, spunk to the job."

In addition, one of her trademarks is an ability to engender trust, something an overprotective director gives only very reluctantly. Her directors trust her to protect and preserve their vision. So much so, that they trust her judgement enough to work with her *before* they go out and shoot.

The word universally used to describe her is "collaborator."

"All in all," Hoffman says, "it's very much a collaborative experience with her. She's very independent and has a point of view. And she's not shy to say it to anyone. Which is, I think, to an advantage once you start working with very good directors. Because they like to have the input of a good editor."

"I think most directors today, if there's any person that they can really trust, in the sense of actually giving away their footage, is the editor. Because in America, as you know, very often, the directors cut their own film. So if you can be involved with an editor who is somehow connected with your way of thinking, it's a great advantage because she or he knows what

According to Hoffman, "She's very visionary. And she's willing to go much further than a lot of edit-

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you're trying to obtain beforehand. And then when they cut, they know what you're going for. "And she's one of those."

Bonora says it's all part of a bigger philosophy.

"I think the essence of life is in finding a way to communicate and change yourself, to work with other people. I think it's the magic of life. Otherwise, what's life all about? It's in your heart to do your own thing.

I think it's the most pleasant thing, to find that you can communicate. You can connect with the change. That's great."

## Born To Edit

For Bonora, being a collaborator and editor has been a lifetime ambition since her first editing lesson at the prestigious and elite Albedo School in Milan (an astronomical term for the amount of light reflected by a planet or body), where she was one of 20 film

students selected from a rigorous national competition. The faculty was comprised of leading film professionals, including guest teachers such as director Bernardo Bertolucci.

"It's the soul of filmmaking," Bonora explains. "We can shoot objects only because they can reflect light."

"And within that context," Bonora adds, "the translation of 'collaboration' was the cutting

room."

The desire to be a great editor led her to the USC film school in 1985 for a year with the latest editing technology and hands-on coursework with leading feature film editors. Then she returned to Italy to apply her craft to a variety of projects, which included work on *Julia And Julia*, a feature film shot on high-definition videotape, and a film in South Africa.

Though she can edit film or tape

on anything from a flatbed to laser disk, she isn't really a fan of technology.

"I don't particularly like those machines. I think they're necessary, that's all," she says. "What I cut is what I cut. No matter what I use, if I'm stupid or smart, or average, whatever. It all comes from me, no matter what."

## The Yin Crowd

From the soul of filmmaking to the souls of filmmakers, Bonora understands and shares the psyche of the director. She boils it down to a single concept: maternal love. And it cuts across gender.

"When you're in an editing room, whether you're a man or a woman, you have to be maternal," she asserts. "Otherwise, you miss the point. You have to protect your director. You have to protect your footage. You have to love your footage like you would love a little kid. You have to love. Otherwise, if you don't fall in love, then what are you doing? There is no point. The director is already in love with it, so you have a love in common. And you have to make it sort of come through in the best way."

Bridges concurs, summing up the gender matter succinctly. "Sexual differences are blurred now because I don't think people want to accentuate the differences. I think they want to accentuate the commonality. But they [women] definitely bring this Yin thing. You get a lot of this from men too, so you can say great work spans the sexes."

The quality of her editing output launched her into a job at Red Car working with Larry Bridges, the editor behind one of her idols—Joe Pytko. According to Bridges it was a "littler more than serendipity."

"She found us," he says. "She knew what we were about by looking at our reels, which were circulating in Europe. And she identified with it and she did the homework to find out where we were. And she came in, it was one of those lucky things, she came in right when I needed a partner, a co-editor. And she came in and I said, 'Oh my God! This is the right person.' And bang! It was instant. She was almost hired on the spot."

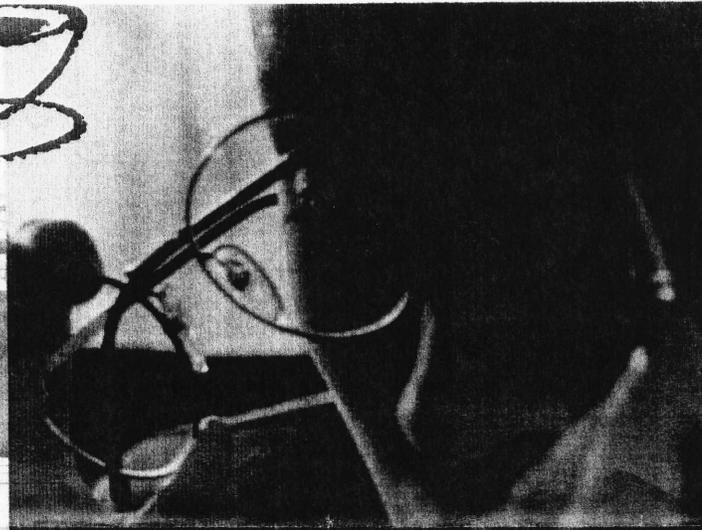
Describing the talents and cultural background she brings to the company, Bridges says, "Elisa knows stuff we don't know. She has a fresh, jazzy feeling to her work, as revealed in her work for Tom Higgins, for Lee Jeans. It reminds me of a kind of Be-Bop attitude."

"Elisa is succeeding at Red Car so well," he continues, "because she learned the club handshake, the secret to our methodology, if you will, instantly. Which is, that we don't just edit to make it look clean and beautiful and neat and well-made. We're tapping people's deep psychology of interest."

*The technology  
may change,  
but the  
craftsmanship  
is timeless.*

*Striking executions.*

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