



IMACCON NEWS #23



This month, on the Imago website, explore the remarkable journey of Dan Laustsen ASC DFF, a Danish cinematographer whose philosophy of light as primary storyteller has defined his distinctive craft.

From his unconventional beginnings, earning money as a dishwasher to buy his first still camera to becoming one of cinema's most visually accomplished directors of photography, Laustsen's path reveals a profound truth: light is the fundamental language of the image.

DAN LAUSTSEN DFF, ASC

Moving seamlessly between atmospheric thrillers and sweeping historical dramas, his work has been celebrated for its dramatic interplay between light and shadow, artistic precision, and unwavering commitment to the film.

Known for collaborations with Guillermo del Toro on *Frankenstein* and *The Shape of Water*, and with Chad Stahelski on the John Wick movies, Laustsen's voice as a cinematographer resonates with authenticity and relentless innovation.

Drawing on his experiences collaborating with visionary directors who share his commitment to craft, his sensibilities are shaped by a deep respect for collaboration and a refusal to repeat himself. Whether through his obsessive pre-production planning that paradoxically grants creative freedom, or his dramatic use of contrast and single-source lighting, he infuses each project with intentionality, technical mastery, and artistic integrity. Discover more about his journey and inspirations by reading the full article at [imago.org](https://www.imago.org).



NICE MEET ING YOU



Dan Laustsen is an internationally celebrated cinematographer whose impressive body of work spans thrillers, historical dramas, and fantasy epics. He is known for his commanding use of light and shadow, his collaborative spirit with visionary directors, and his refusal to compromise on vision. Dan has brought his distinctive perspective to films such as *Nightwatch* and *1864* with Ole Bornedal, *The Shape of Water* and *Frankenstein* with Guillermo del Toro, and the John Wick movies with Chad Stahelski.

With each project, Laustsen remains committed to pushing boundaries: **"You have to follow your heart. You have to follow what you think is important for you and for the story."**

THIS WEEK I'M HERE



Dan Laustsen continues to push the boundaries of his craft as he moves into the next chapter of his career. Having recently completed *Frankenstein* with Guillermo del Toro, a project that challenged him to solve new problems and think differently about light and space, he now embarks on *Highlander* with Chad Stahelski, returning to a collaborator with whom he's developed profound creative understanding. **"Each film pushes me further"**, he reflects.

As he moves forward, Laustsen remains oriented toward the future, committed to demanding more from himself and the films he works on. His unwavering focus remains unchanged: using light and shadow to reveal truth, always in service to the story.

MY FA VORI TES



Laustsen's inspirations run deep, rooted in the work of cinematographers who opened his eyes to what was possible through light and composition.

His most influential films include Gunnar Fischer's black and white cinematography for Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, a masterclass in the power of contrast; Vittorio Storaro's visionary work on *Apocalypse Now*, a film he loves for its technical audacity and emotional depth; and Sergey Urusevsky's handheld, infrared black and white *I Am Cuba*, impossibly beautiful and impossibly clever. **"What moves me most is how light and composition reveal something true about the human beings you're filming"**, he explains. These films didn't teach him techniques, they opened his eyes to what you could feel and express through visual language.

SOCIETIES NEWS



AIC, the Italian Society of Cinematographers proudly announces its new President, **Daniele Massaccesi**.

His appointment marks an important milestone in the history of the Association, which warmly welcomes a figure who brings together extensive experience, artistic sensitivity, and a contemporary vision of the cinematographer's role.

“To assume the role of President of AIC, the Italian Association of Cinematographers is for me a profound honor and a responsibility that I accept with the deepest respect. I do not consider it a personal recognition, but a mandate to serve our community and our history.



It is necessary to pay tribute to Luciano Tovoli, who has guided AIC with authority, moral integrity and an extraordinary artistic and cultural vision. His commitment has strengthened the identity and prestige of our Association. To him I express my deepest respect and heartfelt gratitude.

AIC is a cultural stronghold, a guardian of memory and a workshop of the future. Within it lives the thought, the vision and the sensitivity of those who have shaped the visual identity of Italian cinema.

We are living in an era of profound transformation. Technologies are redefining creative and production processes, and new tools are emerging, including artificial intelligence. In this scenario, the role of the Director of Photography remains an irreplaceable pillar: the one who gives visual form to the soul of a film. To protect and enhance this role will be a priority of my mandate.

We will work to strengthen professional protection, promote continuous education, support young cinematographers and foster responsible development of new visual languages. Our relationship with IMAGO places AIC within a global community, united by a universal language made of light and visual storytelling.

I promise commitment, attentiveness and loyalty to the principles that guide our Association.”

With gratitude,
Daniele Massaccesi, AIC President

SOCIETIES NEWS

On November 17th, 2025 in Rome, at Palazzo Valentini, the **AIC** received the **National Golden Hearts Award** at its first edition.

Luciano Tovoli, AIC, ASC accepted the award on behalf of the Association, which was honored for the value of its work and for its commitment to promoting our profession by placing people, respect, and a culture of sharing at the forefront.



At the **23rd edition** of the **RIFF Awards – Rome Independent Film Festival**, “**A True Story**”, directed by Mariano Lamberti, was presented on 22 November.

The film benefited from the collaboration of Vice President Antonio Grambone, AIC, who explained:

“This film was conceived to be shot entirely on a smartphone, an aesthetic and narrative choice that allows objective and subjective points of view to merge naturally. The simple act of passing the camera from the operator’s hands to the actor’s becomes a dramaturgical gesture, capable of generating a continuous and fluid visual dialogue between observer and observed.



In this context, the phone, specifically an iPhone 15, is not merely a technical tool, but a true character in the story: it enters and exits the scene, blends with the protagonists’ gazes, and becomes the medium through which reality is filtered, recorded, and reinterpreted. One of the actors, in fact, is driven by the compulsive need to document every moment of his existence, turning the camera into a natural extension of his gaze. This practice reflects a widespread tendency among contemporary youth, where personal experience is transformed into image, memory, and shared narrative.”

Antonio Grambone, AIC Vice President

SOCIETIES NEWS



ODCC 2025 - The ninth edition of the **Oslo Digital Cinema Conference** focused on Artificial Intelligence and the impact it may have on the motion picture business. Held at the Norwegian Film Institute, it gathered about 120 participants and offered 21 presentations by international experts.



Paul René Roestad FNF has arranged the event biannually since 2006, with a four-year pandemic hiatus. Proceedings opened with Ole Andreas Grøntvedt FNF, followed by Miga Bär, whose thesis was simple: “Ideally, as filmmakers, we want AI to do our laundry and dishes... We don’t want AI to make us unemployed, we want it to help us focus on creative tasks.”

Daniele Siragusano and **David Stump ASC BVK** investigated AI and machine-learning tools, with Daniele explaining: “**I don’t like calling it AI... this kind of software has no clue about anything, it’s just emulating stuff.**” Their demonstrations showed how pre-viz, rotoscoping and travelling mattes can be radically accelerated. **Jan Christian Frugård** stated, “**AI is never going to be worse than it is today, unfortunately,**” and speculated about allowing audiences multiple narrative paths.

Christian Wieberg-Nielsen warned that AI will “happily add details” and that some effects are still better planned practically. Saturday included Charles Poynton PhD on noise in cinema cameras, Marko Mladenovic SAS on shooting “Vreme Smrti,” and John-Erling Holmenes Fredriksen FNF on AI-based solutions and analogue choices such as shooting “Makta” on Super-16. Stephen Lighthill ASC reminded students: “You need to be the best informed person on the set!”

Lars Pettersson FSF concludes by recognising **Paul René Roestad FNF** and **Ole Andreas Grøntvedt FNF** for a memorable and skillfully executed conference.

READ FULL ARTICLE by [CLICKING HERE](#)

SOCIETIES NEWS



Estonian Society of Cinematographers
Eesti Filmioperaatorite Liit

ESC, the Estonian Society of Cinematographers completed an artistic research project called “Limits of Darkness”.

The project was supported by the [Estonian Ministry of Culture](#) artistic research grant, conducted by [Elen Lotman](#), who is also Tallinn University Baltic Film and Media School associate professor. It raised the question: how to show darkness in cinema? It is physically impossible to exhibit complete pure black, because film is always shown through light - whether it is a projector projecting light onto a white screen or a screen with light-emitting elements - the basis for showing film is always light, and black light does not physically exist. What to do if the operator needs to show total pitch blackness? In connection with a feature film in development, which takes place largely in a room without light sources, a creative need arise to experiment with artistic research methods on how it is possible to show maximum darkness in the film. This project aimed to test systematically how it is possible to show maximum darkness in the film, also taking into account that subtitles will affect the accommodation of the human eye.



The test aimed to experiment different possibilities of showing darkness in a situation where what is known in the film as "motivated light" (a light source perceived in the diegetic space, which justifies the use of light within the frame) does not exist. The test conducted within the project involved a number of different exposure and sensitivity combinations with light and subjective psychophysiological experiments with viewers.

[Elen Lotman, ESC President](#)

FILM RELEASES

HUMAN RACE



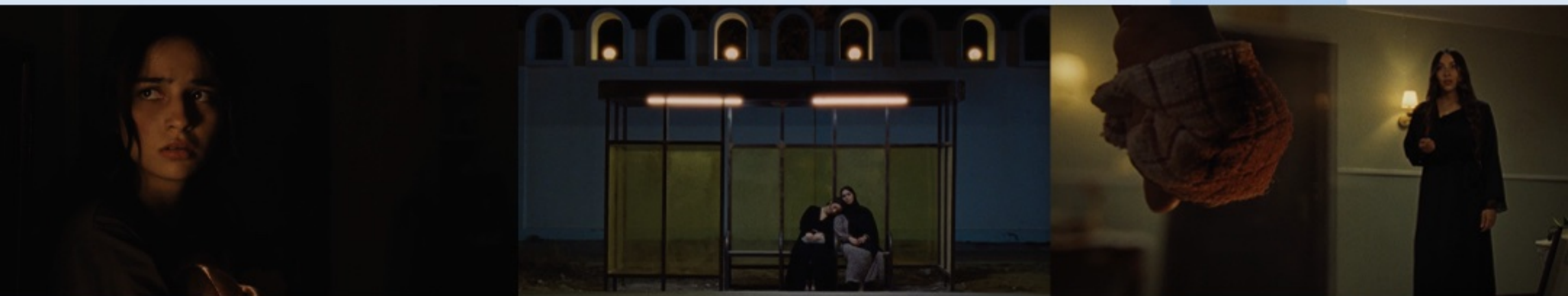
HUMAN RACE - Release: CPH:DOX 2025
Danish Theatrical release on October 30th 2025

The documentary film follows a famous professor and his team in trying to rewrite history by building a library of the complete genetic blueprint of the human race. With a topic this big, we wanted the visuals to have a sense of grand scale and importance to them. We opted for the Arri Alexa mini LF to give us this grand view of the world the professor moves in. We chose to pair the camera with Leica M 0.8 lenses. I felt that the look of Leica lenses was a perfect match for this film because they deliver ultra sharp detailed images together with a having a pleasing bokeh and fall off to them. I think that the sharpness of the Leica lenses complemented the same precision and urgency that the team of scientists had to deliver to achieve there goals in the film. The small form-factor of the M 0.8 lenses was also a perfect for all the handheld work on the film.

Benjamin Kirk, DFF

[WATCH THE TRAILER
CLICKING HERE](#)

THE VILE



THE VILE - **WINNER** of best horror film at Fantastic Fest 2025
Theatrical release in United Arab Emirates October 2025

The film follows a woman who is living a peaceful life as a wife and mother but this shatters when her husband brings home a second wife, unleashing mysterious dark forces into their household. We chose to shoot on Kodak 16mm film in all flavours, 50D, 250D, 200T and 500T. We felt that the look of 16mm film was a perfect fit for this story, The grain structure and the blooming and hue of the highlights on 16mm really helped giving a sense of unease and grittiness to the image. I coupled the Arri 416 with the Ultra Primes 16 because if wanted to have as sharp of an image as I could on 16mm. We also played with split diopters and zooms to emphasize certain moments visually by directing to focus of the image to certain areas.

Benjamin Kirk, DFF

[WATCH THE TRAILER
CLICKING HERE](#)

“INGEN KÆRE MOR”



“I believe the director chose me for my instincts when it comes to operating the hand-held camera. Our main goal was for the camera to continuously communicate the emotional subtext. We worked with a method we called “structured improvisation,” where certain elements could be planned, but much was left open to play out during the takes. We were very deliberate in ensuring that the camera didn’t “know” too much, in order to preserve authentic reactions within my framing and movement. This also meant that the lighting had to focus more on the space than on the actors, as they needed as much freedom as possible. As much as I enjoyed the authentic dance with the actors and the moving moments that could arise and surprise me, I secretly also enjoyed the moments when they sat still - because then I could also help tell the story dramatically through the light.”

Philip Peng Rosenthal, DFF

**WATCH THE TRAILER
CLICKING HERE**

SPONSORS NEWS



The HELM and ARRI announce strategic partnership to redefine live broadcast production

- Global collaboration establishes The HELM as ARRI’s first trusted Live Solution Partner
- Partnership brings world-class cinematic technology to live production workflows worldwide
- Joint initiatives accelerate innovation and provide turnkey global solutions for seamless integration and reduced risk

December 8, 2025; Munich – The HELM, a global expert in cinematic live broadcast and high-end production workflows, has entered a strategic partnership with ARRI, the renowned designer and manufacturer of professional motion picture camera systems. The agreement formalizes a long-standing relationship, cementing The HELM as ARRI’s first global Live Solution Partner and marking a significant milestone in the integration of ARRI’s groundbreaking multicam technology into live broadcast and production environments worldwide.

Under the new partnership, The HELM serves as ARRI’s global integration partner for live production, providing industry leading turnkey solutions, project delivery expertise, and technical leadership. This collaboration ensures that ARRI Live Solutions can be integrated and supplied for any project as a managed service, bringing cinema-quality images with full workflow support. It also accelerates the adoption of ARRI’s live broadcast solutions as an end-to-end service offering, supporting productions and content creators in integrating this leading technology across concert touring, live broadcasting, film and television, and corporate events.

MORE INFO at

www.the-helm.co

<https://www.arri.com/en>

IMAGO Former President

In Memoriam - NIGEL WALTERS BSC



In Memoriam – Nigel Walters BSC
(1941–2025)

It is with profound sadness that IMAGO marks the passing of our former President, colleague and friend, Nigel Walters BSC. A dedicated cinematographer and tireless supporter of our community, Nigel's influence on IMAGO was far-reaching.

"I am deeply saddened by Nigel's passing. It feels as though I have lost a close family member, as we shared so many years. Throughout our long collaboration within IMAGO, in various committees, conferences, festivals, and General Assemblies, we often found ourselves working closely, sharing responsibilities, engaging in discussions, and even acknowledging our differences.



Despite occasional disagreements, we were, above all, friends and partners in a cause we both cherished. His passing leaves an immense void in my life.

I want to express my heartfelt condolences to Lara and the entire family. I am profoundly grateful to have had the opportunity to meet Nigel, whose presence and unwavering commitment enriched my life in countless ways, both personally and professionally."

With sincere sympathy,
Luciano Tovali, IMAGO Founder



"Although most of our interactions were online during board meetings after I joined IMAGO in 2020, I had the pleasure of first meeting him in person in Cinecittà, Rome, for the IMAGO 30th anniversary, and later spending some wonderful time with him in Bitola for the 45th edition of the Manaki Brothers Festival, for which, as you know, he was a staunch supporter and ambassador, and where we also discovered our shared passion for rugby! May he rest in peace."

Mustapha Barat, IMAGO President



“The news of Nigel’s passing was received with great sorrow among his many friends worldwide. Not many people have the same extraordinary ability which Nigel had, to connect and to so warmly make close and lasting friendships with so many people, whatever nationality, language or culture, all around the World.

Close to his heart was to prepare the ground for cinematographers to work for each other, to aid and support each other, internationally.

Nigel Walters was for several significant years (2008 to 2015) the President of IMAGO, the International Federation of Cinematographers. Under his Presidency, IMAGO expanded significantly, it developed from a European Federation to being truly International, and IMAGO’s connecting network expanded greatly thanks to Nigel’s personal and diplomatic abilities. Today IMAGO has members on all continents and it was under Nigel’s presidency the words “The Spirit of IMAGO” really came to life. IMAGO honoured Nigel in 2015 by awarding him the prestigious IMAGO Honorary Membership Award.

But working voluntarily and internationally for cinematographers and colleagues was one thing. Wherever in the World we were, no matter how important meetings we were in, we were all immediately updated when the Welsh National Rugby Team scored. Wales was always an integrated and important part of Nigel’s life. As was of course also all of Great Britain, and Finland, the country of his wife.

As a person – with his empathy, sense of humour, curiosity and so many other qualities, Nigel was truly exceptional.

In our sorrow of having lost an important friend, our special thoughts goes to Nigel’s family, which meant so much to him, and to all his colleagues in the British Society of Cinematographers, where Nigel played a significant role for several years.

Nigel Walters will always be remembered by all his friends in IMAGO, with sincere warmth and with sincere and deep gratitude!”

Paul René Roestad FNF
Former President and former General Secretary of IMAGO



“My very first meeting with Nigel was also my very first meeting with IMAGO. It was the year 2011 and I had just been invited to become a member of ESC.

Shortly afterwards I was elected ESC president and tasked with organising IMAGO IAGA in Tallinn. I had booked a hotel for the delegates and was preparing for them to arrive the next day when suddenly I got a phone call from the hotel. Nigel had arrived one day too early.

I was surprised, but it was a joyful first meeting and I learned quickly that these things happened often with Nigel. Despite this little mishap, Tallinn IAGA in 2011 turned out to be historical.

Nigel was a leading voice in advocating for IMAGO to make the transition from European to a global federation of cinematographers. I am so happy that he lived to see the results of his work - IMAGO is now not only de jure global, but also de facto, after Ron Johanson ACS became the first non-European IMAGO co-president, followed by current president Mustapha Barat ABC and IAGA was organised in Brazil. And most importantly, we have a very active Latin American team currently carrying the IMAGO torch.

Nigel fought for global unity, but regional collaboration. He was the energetic force behind Balkan conference and he also pushed forward the idea of regional meetings elsewhere - there was also a Scandinavian-Baltic cinematographers meeting that took place in Helsinki and brought together cinematographers from close neighbouring countries that usually - for some unknown reason - don't meet very often.

I believe IMAGO should continue with the support of regional clustering, why not even create a Nigel Walters memorial fund for regional collaboration, that would allow member societies to apply for small support to organise events like the Balkan conference? I know there would be nothing that would make Nigel happier in looking at IMAGO evolving, than seeing regional conferences and meetings popping up everywhere in the world, bringing cinematographers together to share ideas, experiences and information, as they rarely meet each other without an incentive.

Nigel was also the person who pulled me into IMAGO, first as deputy Board Member and then pushed me forward, subsequently becoming Board Member and later co-President together with Ron Johansson, who also sadly passed away this year. It has been a shocking one and half years for IMAGO presidents - first Andreas, then Ron, then Nigel... Feels like the end of an era.

I can already imagine the three of them having fun on the other side, possibly having a beer, possibly travelling to different places in the yonder, but most definitely arguing about how to make heaven a better place for cinematographers....”

Elen Lotman, ESC

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM IMAGO!

Dear Colleagues, As 2025 comes to an end, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation for your support throughout the year.

Your involvement, ideas, and collaboration have helped IMAGO continue its work and remain an active, connected community. We truly appreciate the time and commitment each of you contributes.



We wish you a peaceful holiday season and a bright start to 2026.
Thank you for being part of IMAGO!