

On The Rise '12: 5 Cinematographers Lighting Up Screens In Recent Years



Luc Montpellier

Unlike most of the names on this list, **Luc Montpellier** has award nominations galore, and acclaimed screen credits going back a decade, so he's not quite a newcomer. But perhaps because he's rarely, if ever, worked outside his native Canada, he's yet to be a familiar name among cinephiles around the world, something that will hopefully change thanks to his superb work on **Sarah Polley's "Take This Waltz."**

Hailing from Sudbury, Ontario, Montpellier picked up his first cinematography credit on Toronto director **Daniel Wilson's** 1994 film, titled, uh, "**1994**," with a number of credits on shorts, TV and features following. Perhaps the most important came in 2001, with "**I Shout Love**," the short film that marked the directorial debut of Polley (then only 22), who [credited her collaboration](#) with Montepellier as helping her to come to grips with the visual side of filmmaking: "I was not that confident visually at the time, and Luc gave me a lot of confidence, and he was constantly kind of bringing out in me what I saw visually and translating it into real practical terms."

2003 proved to be something of a banner year for the cinematographer. He won a Gemini award (the Canadian version of the Emmys) for his work on TV movie "**Hemingway Vs. Callaghan**," and won international acclaim for **Guy Maddin's** astonishing-looking "**The Saddest Music In The World**," which, as the LA Times put it, "doesn't just re-create 1933 through costumes; it actually looks like a 1933 picture." And indeed it is, truly distinctive, stunning work which rightly should have launched him into the stratosphere.

It didn't quite, although he's rarely out of work, and when

Polley came to make her feature debut with "**Away From Her**," Montpellier was her only choice, and his haunting wintry images are almost as crucial to the film as **Julie Christie's** astonishing performance. Further features followed, including **Jamie Thraves'** underseen "**Cry Of The Owl**," and **Ruba Nadda's** "**Cairo Time**," which landed the director a spot on Kris Tapley's competitive [best shots of the year list](#) in 2010, and rightly so -- it was more great work from the DoP. He's also stacked up the TV credits, including the pilot to the successful show "**Flashpoint**."

But it's "Take This Waltz" that really shows what Montpellier's capable of. Polley's tale of infidelity over a sizzling Toronto summer has its flaws, but the photography is not one of them; sun-kissed, intimate and somehow evocative of the feeling of being head over heels in love, especially in the spectacular, scored-to-**The-Buggles** fairground scene, one of our favorite things on screen so far in 2012. If there's any justice in the world, it'll see Montpellier mentioned throughout the year when people talk about the best cinematography.

The DoP explained his work to the [Canadian Society of Cinematographers](#). Polley told him that she wanted a "hot, colourful, welcoming, beautiful rendering of Toronto and the people within it. She wanted this sexy passion to take over,

that every frame felt like it was dripping wet with sweat," and that the film was "like a bowl of fruit... The most successful cinematography, no matter how bold it is, becomes seamless. [You commit] implicitly to the world that you're creating. You don't start the film with these beautiful saturated colours and bowls of fruit and then divert from it. From frame one to the very last frame of the film, there's a commitment to the world that we've created."

Hopefully they've got more collaborations in the pipeline, but until then, Montpellier certainly isn't being idle -- he shot a feature entitled "**Happy Slapping**" entirely on an iPhone 4, and has reunited with Satta on "**Inescapable**," starring **Marisa Tomei, Joshua Jackson** and **Alexander Siddig**, which should start doing the festival rounds later in the year.