



The Roads of Italian Cinema

Letizia Airos Soria (June 02, 2009)



Open Roads: New Italian Cinema film festival begins at Lincoln Center in New York. We interviewed Antonio Monda, who along with Richard Peña (Film Society of Lincoln Center) curates the event.

Writer, film critic, and lecturer at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, for many years Antonio Monda has been vital in promoting Italian cinema in the U.S.

In its ninth year, Open Roads is still the largest event in the U.S. dedicated to Italian cinema. That's something to be proud of...

Yes, so far we have presented about 120 films, and many have gone on to wide distribution. This is the festival's biggest success. We continue to fill the auditoriums throughout the festival. We have succeeded in recent years in showcasing a variety of films in many genres.

Let's go back in time. Was it difficult to launch the festival?

Yes, because there had never been anything like it. NICE had not been around for very long. I congratulate the organizers because that festival is curated with great dedication, but it's still something separate. Open Roads has had a strong impact on American audiences and that's certainly because the [Film Society of Lincoln Center](#) [2] took the initiative.

Open Roads, I think, has three strengths that have allowed it to engage the American



public. First of all, there's the Film Society of Lincoln Center's commitment and Richard Peña's watchful eye. The second is that you have first-hand experience in recognizing the interests of the American audiences. The third is your direct relationship with young people since you are also a professor. Do you agree?

Certainly the Film Society is a very important institution and Richard is a consummate expert. But no



one ever really understands the public, especially the American public. For my part, I do interact with young people every day, so I know what they are looking for...

Is there a common thread that that connects the films you have chosen?

No. We have a very varied program such as the experimental film by Baricco, films by masters like Avati, and films by young people, as well as the documentary by Mimmo Calopresti, and animated films by Ursula Ferrari.

The basic idea is to not to dictate a specific theme but to show the many directions that Italian cinema is headed today.

We invite viewers to make their own connections. What links Lecture 21 to Giovanna's Father? Very little, if you don't want to draw from your own personal experiences.

How did you choose the films?

Only in terms of quality, with no specific criteria. We try not to accept work by the same filmmakers each year. The intention is to give everyone space and a voice, even if some do come back every year. Another aspect that we take into account is the filmmaker's way of portraying Italy today.

And how do you think Italy is depicted in Italian cinema today?

Italy looks to the past to understand the present. Look at Pupi Avati's film as well as Marco Bellocchio's latest work. What we see is a present that is full of anguish and uncertainty.

Has cinema become Italy's conscience now more than ever? At least compared to television ...

I don't want to give a lecture on politics. It definitely shows an Italy that is disoriented and anxious, and often people who are alone, very much alone.

So it's a good time for Italian cinema?

There are directors who have made many great films. These names come to mind: Garrone, Sorrentino, Saverio Costanzo, Crialesi and Virzi. And along with them, and I don't mean behind



them, there are many exciting catalysts. The great thing is that everyone is going in a different direction. There isn't one single line that everyone follows ...

What is one quality that distinguishes Italian cinema today?

It's the desire to show our uneasiness and apprehension without hypocrisy and in a direct way.

But why is it so difficult to bring Italian cinema abroad?

This is the case for any production in any language other than English. There's French cinema, but that also has a modest following. French cinema is supported by the government, which compared to ours, has some additional help. Even still, how many French films do you see around?

Will actors and directors also take part in the Open Roads program?

Marco Amenta, Donatella Finocchiaro, Silvio Orlando, Dino Gentili, Maria Sole Tognazzi, Filippo Timi, Ursula Ferrara, Teresa Marchesi, and Sandra Petraglia, Mimmo Calopresti are all expected to participate.

And Jovanotti?

Yes, he will present the film about Fabrizio De Andrè. It was generously loaned to us...it was a little gift...

Immediately following the festival, the research on distribution begins...

It's very important. The festival has always triggered a mechanism for distribution. There are at least two films every year, such as *The Last Kiss*, *Bread and Tulips*, *Caterina in the Big City*...

For a full schedule of screenings, film and tickets visit

<http://www.filmlinc.com/wrt/onsale/italian09/program.html> [3] At Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimo'fax (212) 995-4012



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A panel discussion with the
Protagonists of
OPEN ROADS:

Directors:

Marco Amenta (The Sicilian Girl)

Dino Gentili (I Am Alive)

Ursula Ferrara (Animated Passions)

Teresa Marchesi (Effedià: On My Awful Way)

Actors:

Donatella Finocchiaro (Brave Men)

Silvio Orlando (Giovanna's Father & The Germans' factory)

Filippo Timi (As God Commands)

Writers:

Ivan Cotroneo (The Man Who Loves)

Sandra Petraglia (A Perfect Day)

Moderated by

Antonio Monda (NYU)

Richard Peña (Film Society Lincoln Center)

Friday, June 5, 7:00pm

In cooperation with MIBAC (Italian Ministry of Culture), Cinecittà-Luce- Filmitalia, The Film Society of Lincoln Center-Italian Cultural Institute, The Alexander Bodini Foundation.

(Translated by Giulia Prestia)

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