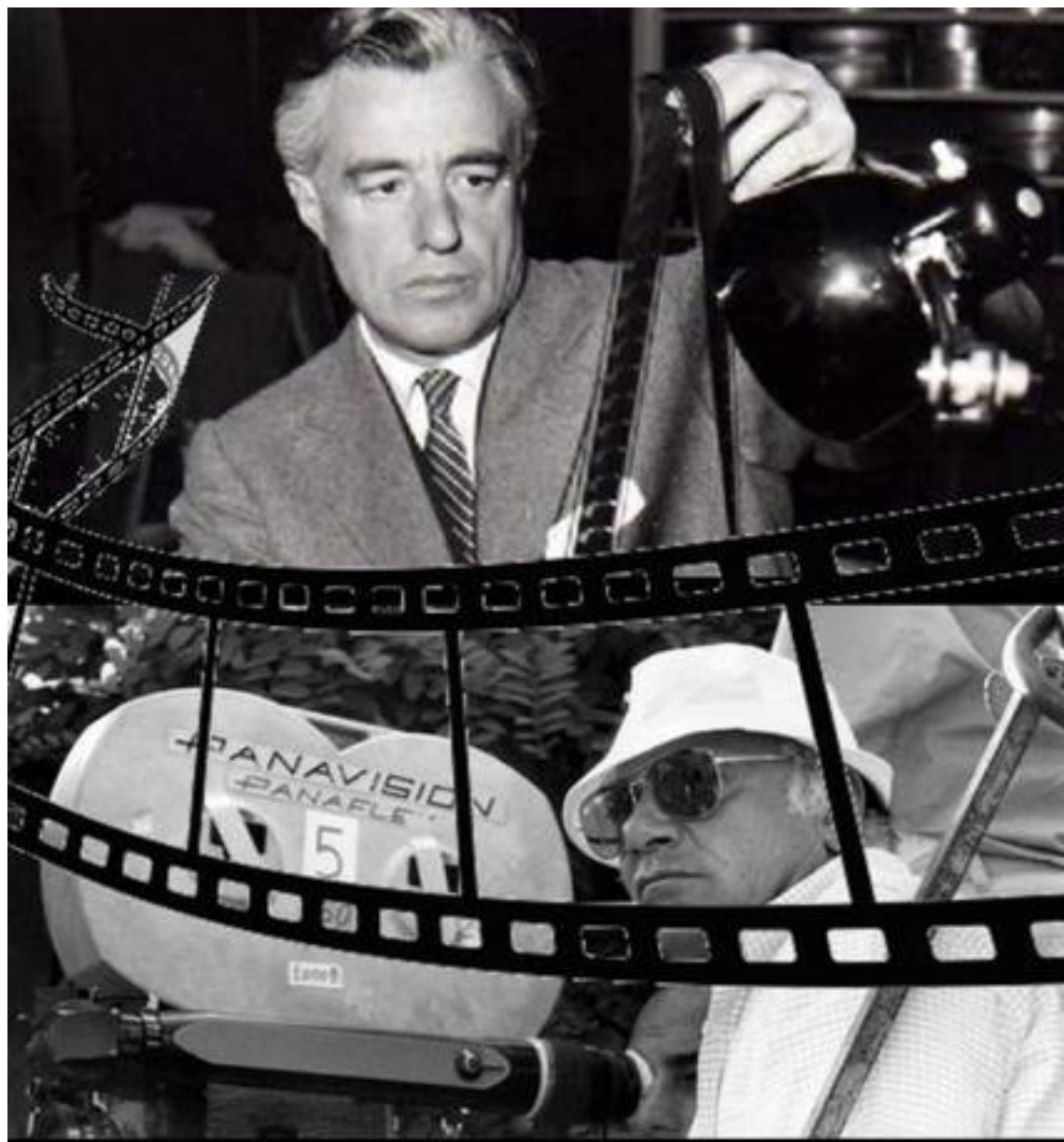


Neapolitan Cinema by Neapolitan Directors

Natasha Lardera (February 06, 2015)



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Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimo' inaugurated the 8th edition of 41 Parallelo, an initiative that is the American spin off of the Napoli Film Festival, with a double bill: the screenings of two of Francesco Rosi's greatest films, Salvatore Giuliano (1961) and Le Mani sulla Citta' (1963).

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"In the past editions we featured films by new Neapolitan directors and films about Naples. This year we decided to dedicate the festival to two great Neapolitan directors who are among the greatest of Italian cinema," Casa's director Stefano Albertini said. Along with writer and professor Antonio Monda, Albertini introduced Francesco Rosi and his cinema, reminding the audience that the filmmaker just died a few weeks ago. "He was one of the last giants of Italian cinema," Monda added.

How to describe Rosi and his work to an audience who is not that familiar with him and his work?

"I can do that by telling you an anecdote," Monda said, "I went to visit him on the set of Three Brothers (1981) and the way he screamed ACTION told everything about him. I had never heard anybody it scream it that way, with all that passion, turmoil and belief in his work. He was a master at his work as he learned the craft by the best of Italian cinema."

Rosi was an apprentice of Luchino Visconti and is known for his socially engaged investigative dramas. His films, especially those of the 1960s and 1970s, denounced certain situations and had political messages. Salvatore Giuliano, Berlin Silver Bear winner, tells a story of mafia. "Sicilian bandit Salvatore Giuliano's bullet-riddled corpse is found facedown in a courtyard in Castelvetro, a handgun and rifle by his side. Local and international press descend upon the scene, hoping to crack open the true story behind the death of this young man, who, at the age of twenty-seven, had already become Italy's most wanted criminal and celebrated hero. Filming in the exact locations and enlisting a cast of native Sicilians once impacted by the real Giuliano, director Francesco Rosi harnessed the facts and myths surrounding the true story of the bandit's death to create a startling exposé of Sicily and the tangled relations between its citizens, the Mafia, and government officials. A groundbreaking work of political filmmaking, Salvatore Giuliano established Rosi's reputation and assured his place in cinema history." (Criterion Collection).

With the second film that was screened, Le Mani sulla Citta' (Hands Over the City), Rosi won the 1963 Venice Golden Lion. The film is about real-estate developers and their political cronies in Naples. "This expose of the politically driven real-estate speculation that has devastated Naples's civilian landscape moves breathlessly from a cataclysmic building collapse to the backroom negotiations of civic leaders vying for power in a city council election, laying bare the inner workings of corruption with passion and outrage." (Criterion Collection)

These are just two of the great films by Rosi - "La sfida" ("The Challenge"), which delved into the intricacies of the Neapolitan mob; "Il Caso Mattei" ("The Mattei Affair"), an investigation of the still-mysterious death of powerful Italian manager Enrico Mattei that digs deep into capitalism and global economics; "Cristo si e' fermato a Eboli" ("Christ Stopped at Eboli") about the exile of anti-fascist intellectual Carlo Levi are just a few of them.



Upon hearing about Rosi's death, Martin Scorsese issued the following statement in remembrance: "Francesco Rosi was, without a doubt, one of the greatest filmmakers in the history of Italian cinema—really, when all is said and done, one of the greatest filmmakers we've ever had, period. Rosi's greatest films – 'Hands Over the City,' 'The Mattei Affair,' 'Lucky Luciano,' 'Christ Stopped at Eboli,' 'Three Brothers' and the incomparable 'Salvatore Giuliano' among them – are unlike anything else in cinema: complex historical investigations, as passionately devoted to uncovering painful truths as they are to celebrating the beauty and poetry of the people and the land Rosi loved with all his heart. There are so many passages in those pictures that have permanently marked me: the young husband sifting through the sand for his wife's ring in 'Three Brothers,' the collapse of the building in 'Hands Over the City,' the mother wailing over her son's body in 'Salvatore Giuliano'... So many more..."

An interesting fact: at the presentation Monda explained that during an interview with Rosi, he found out that the woman playing the mother crying over the body of Giuliano was a woman whose son has been killed by the mafia. "In a way Rosi pushed the envelope of Neo-Realism even further, using real life people in his films," Albertini concluded.

And as far as Neo-Realism is concerned, the program for the 12th will present two great films by the father of the movement itself: DeSica. *I bambini ci guardano* (the Children are Watching us) will be screened at 5 pm and *Matrimonio all'Italiana* (Marriage Italian Style) will start at 7 pm, following a discussion between Albertini and Monda.

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