



Promoting Italian Cinema on an International Level

Natasha Lardera (June 09, 2015)



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Interview with Carla Cattani Head of Contemporary Cinema Promotion at Istituto Luce Cinecittà – Filmitalia. If festivals of Italian Cinema like Open Roads, currently taking place at Lincoln Center, exist, it is thanks to institutions like Istituto Luce Cinecittà – Filmitalia. It was created to promote Italian cinema on an international level, and to increase the distribution of Italian films on the foreign market.

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the distribution of Italian films on the foreign market. Istituto Luce Cinecittà functions under the patronage of the Italian Ministry of Culture-Direction Cinema, and its activities include “the collaboration with all of the major International film festivals like Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto, Shanghai, Locarno, New York and London, the organization of the national selections, the presence of Italian films and artists in the various festivals, and providing its own expository and promotional space within all the major international film markets designed to provide support to the distributors and other Italian film industry professionals so as to increase and maintain the industry’s visibility and distribution abroad.”

During the Open Roads Festival, between a screening and an appointment with a distributor, we had the chance to meet with [Carla Cattani](#) [4], Head of Contemporary Cinema Promotion at Istituto Luce Cinecittà – Filmitalia.

Please tell us about the importance of festivals like Open Roads.

In addition to celebrated international festivals like Cannes, Berlin, Venice and Toronto, where Italian films are presented with films from other countries, it's important to create specific moments of visibility only for Italian cinema.

We at Istituto Luce – Cinecittà do that in territories that we call “strategic,” meaning those countries where it's important that our cinema finds distribution. Such countries are the United States, Japan, the UK, Korea and France. We create these “moments” hoping that what we offer is noticed by distributors and then bought and distributed in their country.

Why New York versus Los Angeles, the capital of American Cinema?



New York is the American city that is the closest to Europe so the companies that buy European cinema are all here. Los Angeles is the American City where cinema is made and sent out to the world, while New York is the city that welcomes cinema, in all its different shapes and forms.

How do American audiences see contemporary Italian cinema? Was there an increase of interest after the victory of *The Great Beauty* at last year's Academy Awards?

People's interest did not grow after the Oscar win. That victory was the culmination of a process that had been happening for a while. In the past three or four years, Italian films have won several important awards – the [Golden Lion](#) [5] in Berlin (Taviani), the Golden Lion in Venice ([Sacro Gra](#) [6] by Rosi), the second-place Grand Prix at Cannes ([The Wonders](#) [7] by Alice Rohrwacher in 2014, [Reality](#) [8] by Garrone in 2012, [Gomorra](#) [9] by Garrone in 2008).

So this growing interest and appreciation for Italian films has been going on for awhile. If you think about it at Cannes, this past May, there were five Italian films: three in competition and two in other sections. That's a huge number. Italy produces less than 100 films a year, and 5% were at Cannes.

That's amazing, and it means that Italian cinema is appreciated. It's able to speak to people and it has its own identity. Of course, the Oscar was important but let's look at it as a soccer game: the Oscar was a goal! Great, but still the game was also well-played. One player scored a goal, but the other players have done a great job too.

How are the films presented at Open Roads selected?

We are not the ones who pick and chose. In New York, it's the director of the Film Society at Lincoln Center. The director comes to Italy and watches 50 or 60 films and selects what is found appropriate. The choice is personal and diversified. This year, for example, a small, independent movie, like [Short Skin](#) [10] by Duccio Chiarini, was picked and it was an immediate success.

The film has already been bought by an American distributor. But they also picked great star-studded films, like Cristina Comencini's [Latin Lover](#) [11], which captures on camera the last performance of the great [Virna Lisi](#) [12]. We trust this person to know what the local audience wants to see, always keeping in mind that we have to fill up the cinema. In the fifteen years of Open Roads we moved, year after year, to bigger theaters. Even at lunch time, a time where people don't really go to the movies, we are able to fill up the space.

This year there was a strong presence of female directors. How much room is there for female directors in Italian cinema?

Five years ago, a colleague, Rossella Rinaldi, completed a research project and Italy was at the bottom, followed only by Greece, as per presence of female directors. Things have definitely changed. I mentioned Alice Rohrwacher winning at Cannes, but there are others like Laura Bispuri who won at Tribeca, as well as Hong Kong Film Fest, with *Sworn Virgin*. At Open Roads, we have Cristina Comencini, Francesca Archibugi, Eleonora Danco, but also the directors of the shorts of [9 X 10](#) [13] Novanta (Alina Marazzi, Sara Fgaier, Costanza Quatriglio, Paola Randi and the aforementioned Alice Rohrwacher). We have not done a new research project but it is obvious that things are changing.



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