

Ferzan Ozpetek: A Loose Cannon in New York

Benedetta Grasso (May 05, 2010)



At Rai Corporation Ferzan Ozpetek with his screenwriter Ivan Cotroneo and some of the cast, presented his latest movie "Mine Vaganti", Loose Cannons which received a Special Jury Mention at Tribeca Film Festival.

When a movie travels from a country to another its significance often goes beyond its plot and actors. Much like an immigrant moving to start a new life, it becomes the vessel of many representations and it tests the water to see how well and how fast it will be assimilated.

A country's National cinema is often portrayed by its auteurs, who capture the soul of the people contextualizing them in a very specific reality within the social and cultural frames. An auteur usually has an internal point of view, that of someone who grew up there but not always...

In the United States, for example, when in 2005 Korean director Ang Lee made the movie



"Brokeback mountain" or "Taking Woodstock" in 2009, many commented on the fact that these two very American stories were made by someone who wasn't born in the US; someone who came here young enough to assimilate but still has an objective, external eye, which helped him in perfectly capturing a nation at a certain moment in time. The two Ang Lee movies, in fact, feature cowboys, the deep and authentic "American" ideas and mentality, the background of Wyoming or in the second case the music and radical alternative culture that shaped a generation in Woodstock.

A similar thing has often been said when it comes to Turkish-Italian director [Ferzan Ozpetek](#) [2] who moved to Italy in the 1970s to attend the Sapienza University in Rome. While his first movies are strongly linked to his homeland his latest have featured all the most important Italian actors and writers and have embodied and portrayed Italy in its essence and its variety, with an authenticity and a passionate interest for searching for true characters, for showing various sides of the country he knows so well.

The emotional depth of Ferzan's stories is boundless to begin with and that is why Ozpetek has been very well received in different countries, but it's still fascinating to look at how this artist has reinforced his second national identity while progressively becoming identified as an Italian auteur, especially abroad. Among his most famous movies are *The Ignorant Fairies* (*Le fate ignoranti*, 2001), *Facing Windows* (*La finestra di fronte*, 2003), *Cuore sacro* (2005) *Saturno in Opposition* (*Saturno Contro* 2007).

Ozpetek has been honored with a retrospective at [MOMA](#) [3] last December, something that very few Italian and International artists have obtained.

Now his latest movie, *Loose Cannons* ([Mine Vaganti](#) [4]) has opened at the [Tribeca Film Festival](#) [5] and has been released both in Italy and the United States, produced by Fandango. (add cast)

Loose Cannons is a movie that revives the tradition of the Italian comedy (*Commedia all'Italiana*), a genre centered around comical misunderstandings, families coming together and a light-hearted mood and humor while often touching on important issues and tragic themes. While in other Ozpetek movies, for example, homosexuality is explored in a more dramatic way, here it comes out in a much more playful context; the movie is more of a celebration of life and of relationships rather than an argumentative denouncing piece, which actually allows the audience to be immersed in a deeper feeling, a warm understanding rather than a complex debate.

At the [RAI Corporation](#) [6] in New York, shortly after the screening of his movie at the Tribeca Film Festival, Ferzan Ozpetek and a delegation of his actresses and his screenwriter presented the movie in the United States. *Loose Cannons* is a story about the Cantone family in Lecce, that runs a pasta factory, the family business for generations. Tommaso lives a happy life in Rome with his lover Marco and decides to go back home to finally come out at a family dinner knowing that this will provoke his father and allow him not to get involved in the family business. His older brother Antonio is in fact the one who has been involved with the factory for the longest time. Tommaso's plan is changed by Antonio's sudden announcement: he reveals he's a homosexual as well. While several twists and relationship dramas occur, the family struggles to keep the news as hidden as possible from the people around them and the movie weaves together various funny and poignant characters as the multiple conflicts and plot points develop at a fast and humorous pace.

Ferzan Ozpetek declared that he was very impressed with the reception of the movie so far and proudly declared that this is one of his personal favorites among the ones he wrote and directed.

Interviewed by the journalist and President of the Dante Alighieri Foundation, Claudio Angelini, in an event organized in cooperation with RAI International and Acina, the cast and crew of *Loose Cannons* shared their thoughts on the movie.

Ozpetek explained that the movie began as something fun, a light-hearted project. "It was a project that allowed me to make some significant changes compared to the movies I made before. This story is not set in Rome like most of my others and doesn't draw its charm from the Roman contextualization but instead from Lecce, in Puglia. Ivan Cotroneo is a screenwriter I have never worked with before and it was a pleasant new collaboration. Also, it's obviously easy to focus on the



theme of homosexuality that pervades all my movies, but my view is that I want people to be able to look beyond that. People don't present themselves only through their sexuality and this movie aims at analyzing the relationship between parents and their offspring, the generation gap, the tense and chaotic relationships within a family, the emotions at stake"

Ozpetek continued on the topic: "Vincenzo (the father in the movie) sees his sons as a continuation of himself as his ideal right-hand men but his expectations need to embrace the actual reality. I think the relationship with our parents is crucial and important for all of our lives, no matter how independent we become or how old we are. When my movie was shown here at Tribeca and the audience reacted well and applauded I wished my parents were in that room too; I still try to live up to their expectations."

Ozpetek follows his movies from beginning to end and he said with a smile that he has to admit that this one has "something more". The screenwriter Ivan Cotroneo helped contextualize the movie within the genre: "Even the atmosphere on set or while we were writing and collaborating was that of a comedy. We laughed a lot and we focused on the positive message of the freedom of declaring one's choices within a family".

Working with Ozpetek was recalled by everyone in the cast as a great and enriching experience. Elena Sofia Ricci said that she had always dreamed of being asked by Ozpetek to act in one of his movies. "I told him I was ready to do anything. I wanted to try something different, to challenge myself in a role filled with complexity and poetry. He is a very special director. We would rehearse our scenes at the table and he would constantly ask us what we thought" Lunetta Savino, who already worked with Ozpetek on "Saturn in Opposition" said that her character Stefania was a multi-layered role, a mother with several inner troubles and conflicts, but that like many Southern women from a bourgeois class would always go a step too far to keep up appearances.

She underlined how Ferzan follows his character even in minor details such as the costume, the make-up and said that that attention makes it easier for the actors to play a part.

The other members of the cast are incredibly well-versed actors and famous "stars" of Italian cinema such as Riccardo Scamarcio, Nicole Grimaudo, Alessandro Preziosi, Ennio Fantastichi, Ilaria Occhini and Paola Minaccioni. The latter was present and she also underlined the emphasis on the comedic element put by Ozpetek in his latest endeavor.

Loose Cannons received a Special Jury Mention at the Tribeca Film Festival 2010 and the jury commented that the movie "expertly combining family drama and farce, 'Loose Cannons' tackles its subject matter with warmth, humor and grace. For making us laugh, cry and immediately want to book a trip to Southern Italy, we congratulate director Ferzan Ozpetek and his talented cast and collaborators on this special mention."

Overall Ozpetek was enthusiastic about the reaction of American audiences. "I was very happy to see that they would wait out for me after the screening with lots of things to ask me or say about the movie. It was great to see them laugh and cry when the movie delivered", said the director.

The importance of the Apulian setting is quite interesting. Lecce is a side of Italy we rarely see in movies. "You know how when you are in New York you always feel like you have already been there or that you are in a movie because we absorbed these images unconsciously from the movies? Well I hope Lecce has a similar effect on the Americans, making them go there fascinated by the city and the region around it"

It's always important when a movie makes the setting part of the story because its cultural significance is not limited to the silver screen. How many times has one walked around Rome and pretended to be in Roman Holidays?

Ozpetek also noted that maybe in the United States the audience laughs even more than in Italy "because they are probably more attentive but in the end the truth is that if a movie works it works in every country and life is much better when we laugh and look at it lightheartedly.



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[4] <http://www.minevaganti.net/>

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