

67th Venice Film Festival. The Golden Lion to Sofia Coppola. A Case of Conflict of Interests?

Alice Bonvicini (September 13, 2010)



Sofia Coppola, director of "Somewhere", is the first American woman to win the Golden Lion in the history of the Festival of Venice. Predictably, the President of the International jury and her ex-boyfriend Quentin Tarantino was accused of favoritism

The [67th Venice Film Festival](#) [2] is over but the controversy is still spreading like wildfire. On Saturday night, an emotional President of the International jury, [Quentin Tarantino](#) [3], [stressed the unanimous nature of the jury's picks](#) [4]. Few moments later he handed the Golden Lion to Sofia Coppola, fellow filmmaker and ex-girlfriend.

[First American \(and Italian-American\) woman](#) [5] to win the top prize in Venice, Coppola is the director of Somewhere, a Los Angeles-based comic drama about a burned-out actor (Stephen Dorff)



whose life of excesses is put into question by the unexpected visit of his 11-year-old daughter (Elle Fanning).

In this low-key film evocative of the spirit and ethos of her acclaimed 2003 "Lost In Translation" (hotels, alienation and fame seems to be a fruitful mix for Coppola) is hard not to see the biographical undertones. As a child she often lived in hotels while on location with her famous film director father, Francis Ford Coppola. "Thanks to my Dad for teaching me," [said Sofia](#) [6] accepting the award.

"This was a film that enchanted us from our first screening," [Tarantino remarked](#) [7], "yet from that first enchanting screening, it grew and grew and grew in both our hearts, in our analysis, in our minds, and in our affections. But on Sunday morning, from the columns of the Corriere della Sera, Italy's best-selling and most respected daily, veteran film critic [Paolo Mereghetti wrote](#) [8] "the presidency of Quentin Tarantino runs the risk of turning into the most obvious conflict of interest possible.

A long-time friend and a mentor (as well as executive producer of Tarantino's first movie hit, Reservoir Dogs) were also among the award winners. The choice of **Alex de la Iglesia** as best director and best screenwriter for *Balada triste de trompeta/A Sad Trumpet Ballad*, and the Special Lion "for an Overall Work" for Monte Hellman, whose *Road to Nowhere* screened in competition, contributed in galvanizing the accusations of favoritism against the jury head. "Somewhere and Road to Nowhere, not in my view but according to the press in general, were seen as charming and interesting but nothing more" [added Mereghetti](#) [9].

[Tarantino denied the accusations](#) [8] and defended the legitimacy of the jury's choices. He also spoke of an episode involving himself and Monte Hellman. "I remember talking to him [Hellman] in 1992 at the Sundance Film Festival, when I was there with my film *Reservoir Dogs*. I actually had a friend on the jury and he told me that a friend on the jury is your worst enemy as they would be too embarrassed to give you a prize. I wasn't going to let anything like that effect me." And in fact, on the closing night of The 67th Venice Film Festival at the Sala Grande del Palazzo Del Cinema, Sofia Coppola scooped the top prize.

This accusatory backlash by the Italian media follows Mr. Tarantino 2007 communication faux pas when at the [Cannes Film Festival](#) [10] he undiplomatically verbalized a dislike for contemporary Italian cinema. Tarantino, who often expressed admiration for Italian B-movies, recognizing the inspirational role in his creative career of the lurid, ultra-violent and exploitative Italian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, [had harsh words](#) [11] for the current cinematographic production. "The Italian films I've seen over the past few years all seem the same. All they talk about is boys growing up, girls growing up, couples in crisis and holidays for the mentally disabled." Just few days ago, however, probably in a late attempt to correct- to use [Pedro Almodovar's words](#) [12]- his "verbal incontinence", Tarantino affirmed to have been misquoted and added that Italian cinema [is synonymous with "passione."](#) [13] This minuet of opinions certainly did not help him gain local media sympathies.

Gabriele Salvatores, fellow juror in Venice, however, defended Tarantino and remarked [in an interview following the Award ceremony](#) [14] the irony of talking of conflict of interest in a country like Italy. Instead of writing about an empty gossip, the Oscar winner director said, this Festival should be an occasion to ponder on the reasons behind the lack of Italian winners. "This must be an opportunity to reflect on our cinema" Salvatores remarked, "we have two burdensome 'parents,' if we want to grow up we must bypass our forefathers, Italian Comedy and Neorealism".

Slightly overshadowed - or maybe from another perspective, helped- by the nepotism controversy, Sofia Coppola's Golden Lion winner *Somewhere* is scheduled for wide release December 22nd.



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Links

- [1] <http://ftp.iitaly.org/files/coppolatarantino1284415051jpeg>
- [2] <http://www.labiennale.org/en/cinema>
- [3] <http://www.tarantino.info>
- [4] [http://stressed the unanimous nature of the jury's picks](http://stressedtheunanimousnatureofthejuryspicks)
- [5] [http:// thecelebritycafe.com/feature/sofia-coppola-becomes-first-american-woman-win-golden-lion-prize-09-12-2010](http://thecelebritycafe.com/feature/sofia-coppola-becomes-first-american-woman-win-golden-lion-prize-09-12-2010)
- [6] <http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2010/09/03/venice-film-festival-sofia-coppola-on-somewhere/>
- [7] <http://www.altfg.com/blog/movie/sofia-coppola-golden-lion-quentin-tarantino>
- [8] http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/world/news/e3iafc531ef3af052c7ae3c5923ed92b6f6
- [9] <http://www.altfg.com/blog/movie/quentin-tarantino-accusations-favoritism-venice-2010-controversy/>
- [10] <http://www.festival-cannes.com>
- [11] <http://www.altfg.com/blog/directors/quentin-tarantino-vs-the-new-italian-cinema/>
- [12] <http://www.altfg.com/blog/directors/pedro-almodovar-receives-italian-commendation>
- [13] http://www.agi.it/spettacolo/notizie/201009011347-sper-rt10144-tarantino_cinema_italiano_e_sinonimo_di_passione
- [14] http://cinema-tv.corriere.it/cinema/speciali/2010/venezia-festival-cinema-2010/notizie/venezia-dibattito-sconfitta-cappelli_8f5ee4b6-befe-11df-8975-00144f02aabe.shtml