

Family Flaw, a Tribute to Nino Manfredi

N. L. (March 25, 2012)



On the day that would have been his 92nd birthday, Roberta Manfredi, daughter of one of the most beloved Italian actors of all times, Nino Manfredi, and Alberto Simone, film writer and director of one of the actor's last films, were at Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò for a special screening of *Un Difetto di Famiglia*, *Family Flaw*.

March 22, 2012 would have been the day of his 92nd birthday. The home of the Department of Italian Studies at New York University, [Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò](#) [2] celebrated the birthday of one of the legends of comedy Italian style and one of the most beloved Italian actors of all times, the legendary Nino Manfredi, with the screening of one of his last films. *Un Difetto di Famiglia*, *Family Flaw* (2002), written and directed by Italian director Alberto Simone, is a bittersweet comedy that had a limited theatrical release.

Starring Manfredi in the role of Francesco Gammarota and Lino Banfi in the part of Nicola Gammarota, the film touches many controversial issues, from homosexuality, to transsexuality and conceiving a child among friends.

The storyline in itself is pretty simple. Two brothers have drifted apart. The catalyst, one of the two, Francesco, the eldest, publicly came out causing a town scandal. He had to leave Casebianche in Puglia and move abroad. Nicola moved too, but simply to Northern Italy, where he has earned a fortune getting into the mozzarella business. On the day of their mother's funeral the two see each other after 40 years of silence and, because of their mother's last wish, they have to drive her back to her hometown where she wants to be buried.

On the way there the two have the time to fight, reminisce, talk things out, escape death, uncover life long secrets and reunite, without wasting any more precious time. It is all done with humor and a pinch of sadness that makes the audience feel for the two brothers without ever feeling pity for them.

There is a perfect harmony between the two actors whose bickering can be easily mistaken for real life quarreling among relatives, as what they do and say is so familiar to who has a sibling they love.

"The producers were interested in developing a story for these two specific actors," Alberto Simone, the director, said after the screening "so I had to come up with a story. The two are so different. We had Manfredi who had a classical background and Banfi who came from a more popular approach. I developed the story on this difference, it all came together after that."

Simone's wife, Roberta Manfredi, who happens to be Nino Manfredi's daughter as well, was also at the screening to talk about the film and her father. When Manfredi shot the film he had already undergone serious surgery and his memory was entirely shot so he had to act with an earpiece on so he could hear and repeat his lines. Here is where he showed his mastery of the acting craft as nobody, not one soul, could realize that; his timing and interpretation were simply effortless. "My father loved this character very much," Roberta said, "He was tired and not feeling well in real life but when he got on set he came to life, something switched in him and he was fine, he was at home."

And the audience, those who were familiar with his work, felt at home too, lighting up as soon as they saw him on the big screen and laughing out loud when Banfi joined him for some more bickering.

Born at Castro dei Volsci, in the province of Frosinone, in Lazio, Nino Manfredi studied law before going into acting in the theater company featuring also another legend of Italian cinema, Vittorio Gassman. Manfredi became one of the most prominent in the commedia all'italiana genre ("rather than a specific genre, the term indicates a period in which the Italian film industry was producing mainly brilliant comedies, with some common traits like satire of manners and a prevailing middle-class setting, often characterized by a substantial background of sadness that would dilute the comic contents. It is widely considered to have started with Mario Monicelli's *I soliti ignoti* - Big deal on Madonna Street, in 1958 and derives its name from the title of Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana* - Divorce Italian Style, 1961" - Wikipedia).

Lino Banfi is an Italian film actor and presenter from Puglia, who became one of the most known actors in Italian sexy comedies ("a sub-genre of Italian commedia all'italiana that had a large commercial success between the 70's and the early 80's. The commedia sexy is characterized by the habit of showing nudity for box office purposes" - Wikipedia). He then proceeded to act in comedies and popular TV series. During his career Lino Banfi characterized almost all his characters with a marked pronounce of the Barese dialect.

Family Flaw features a soundtrack by Academy Award winner Ennio Morricone. The film was awarded with a "Grolla D'Oro" (2003), one of the most ancient Italian film awards, for best original screenplay and with a "Ninfe D'Or" for best screenplay at the Festival du Television in Montecarlo, France.



Simone was asked to rewrite the story for an American audience and “the new version will have two brothers of Italian descent who live in the United States and, after their mother's death, they have to fly to Italy to fulfill her last wish,” Simone himself explained. The new story seems to be exciting as well, although it is going to be very different from the original; it is basically impossible to recapture that atmosphere, that magic between Manfredi and Banfi, although something tells us the new product will be impeccable as well. All we need to say is that Al Pacino has read for the role of Francesco.

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