

25 Years of N.I.C.E., New Italian Cinema Events

Natasha Lardera (November 17, 2015)



Foto di Claudio Innocenti
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Every fall for the past 25 years, N.I.C.E., New Italian Cinema Events, has brought an important selection of Italian films by first time and second time directors to New York. Directed by Viviana del Bianco N.I.C.E. has a mission: supporting and promoting contemporary Italian cinema on an international level. Through the years the festival has discovered many talents, including Oscar-winner Paolo Sorrentino. I-Italy spoke to Maya Breschi, US Executive Director.

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Before its official beginning on November 17th, we had a chance to speak to Maya Breschi, US



Executive Director who talked us about this year's special edition and about the condition of Italian cinema in general.

This year marks an important anniversary for N.I.C.E. How have you planned to celebrate it?

This year marks N.I.C.E.'s 25th festival in the USA, which is certainly a big achievement for a not-for-profit Italian organization committed to showcasing first and second-time Italian directors out of their homeland and "comfort zone". For our 25th celebrations, we are taking our annual film showcase to 4 major US cities, such as San Francisco (November 11 to 15), Washington D.C. (November 16 & 17), New York City (November 17 to 22) and Philadelphia (December 3 to 6).

The festival in NYC, the first to have ever been organized by N.I.C.E. back in 1991, will be inaugurated at the Italian Cultural Institute this coming Tuesday, November 17th in the presence of a selection of this year's competing filmmakers, to then move on to another long-lasting partner of the festival, the Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò - New York University, where director Marco Pontecorvo will meet with the students and members in attendance.

On Friday, November 20th, during a gala evening at SVA Theatre - School of Visual Arts, director Marco Pontecorvo and actor John Turturro will introduce the screening of *Partly Cloudy (With Sunny Spells)* (*Tempo instabile... con probabili schiarite*) to be followed by the screening of Edoardo Falcone's box-office hit comedy *God Willing (Se Dio vuole)* starring Alessandro Gassman, Marco Giallini and Laura Morante. Four additional films will finally be screened at historic Anthology Film Archives over the weekend of November 21-22.

As part of this year's celebrations, all NYC screenings will be free and open to the public upon registration here [>>>](#) [4].

How did you select the films and how do you discover new talents?

N.I.C.E.'s selection committee, featuring well-respected international festival programmers and film critics, does an incredible job every year in going through the latest Italian film production to select the seven most valuable and deserving new voices in contemporary Italian cinema to be showcased internationally through N.I.C.E.'s annual festivals. Our long-lasting challenge and mission is to offer a diversified and high-quality programming in tune with the taste and sensitivity of our international audiences, while showcasing and supporting Italian newcomers and their first or second feature-length films across the United States, Russia and China.

How is Italian cinema exported to the US?

Italian comedies are traditionally very appreciated in the US and worldwide, but when it comes to actual US releases of any foreign content, there are a number of parameters affecting the distributors' decision other than simple genre, the first of which being whether the film has received any recognition at a major international festival (ideally Cannes, Berlin or Sundance), the presence of any direct connection to the US film industry (whether it is a US prize, a location, or a cast or crew member) and finally the extent of the promotional effort provided by any stakeholders, both Italian and local. In this regard, showcases like N.I.C.E. represent a precious opportunity to think outside of such parameters, while trying to broaden the audience's expectations and the local distributors' strategies.

Which directors are the most known in the US right now and how is current Italian cinema promoted?

The very nature of the N.I.C.E. competitions is to feature the work of first and second-time directors who are as talented as they are often unknown to the local public and industry. Three out of this year's USA competing films are comedies: *God Willing (Se Dio Vuole)* by Edoardo Falcone, *Partly Cloudy (With Sunny Spells)* (*Tempo instabile... con probabili schiarite*) by Marco Pontecorvo and starring John Turturro, and *Italo* by Alessia Scarso. In addition, we have included four dramas: *Chlorine (Cloro)* by Lamberto Sanfelice, *Io, Arlecchino* by Matteo Bini and Giorgio Pasotti, *My name is Maya (Mi chiamo Maya)* by Tommaso Agnese, and *Mediterranea* by Jonas Carpignano.

N.I.C.E. homeland, Tuscany, does also have a special place in this year's programming, being the setting for films such as *Wondrous Boccaccio* by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani and *Leopardi (Il Giovane*



Favoloso) by Mario Martone, and other special events in San Francisco feature Mia Madre by Nanni Moretti and Youth (La Giovinezza) by Oscar-winner Paolo Sorrentino. These established directors are among the most appreciated and recognized Italian film authors in the US at the moment, whose films usually land a US distribution. Predictably, when it comes to newcomers, we need to go back to the above-mentioned “parameters”, which explain why only two out of this year’s seven competing films have a US distributor so far: *Mediterranea* (which is a two-time SFFS / KRF Filmmaking Grant recipient) and *Chlorine* (which was originally presented in Sundance and Berlin).

All in all, our challenge and objective as festival programmers is really to find a good balance between what our international audiences seek and expect from our showcases and what we believe is worth watching and supporting, with the aim and hope to ultimately higher the chances for our annual film selections to be released worldwide. For that only, let’s toast to 25 more years of New Italian Cinema Events in the US!

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[1] <http://ftp.iitaly.org/files/sediovuolegassmangiallini1447739098jpg>

[2] <http://www.nicefestival.org/en>

[3] <http://Paolo Sorrentino>

[4] [http:// http://www.eventbrite.com/o/new-italian-cinema-events-nice-7532201901](http://http://www.eventbrite.com/o/new-italian-cinema-events-nice-7532201901)