

N.I.C.E. Discovering the Talent of New Italian Filmmakers

Natasha Lardera (November 19, 2015)



Before its official start on November 20th with the screening of *Partly Cloudy (with Sunny Spells)* by Marco Pontecorvo, N.I.C.E.-New Italian Cinema Events was introduced to the public at a press conference held at the Italian Cultural Institute and at a special preview of the film at Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò. The organizers, Viviana del Bianco (Director) and Maya Breschi (US Executive Director), and some of the talent, directors Marco Pontecorvo, Matteo Bini and Alessia Scarso took the time to celebrate with the audience the festival's 25th edition.

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The organizers, Viviana del Bianco (Director) and Maya Breschi (US Executive Director), and some of the talent, directors Marco Pontecorvo, Matteo Bini and Alessia Scarso took the time to celebrate with the audience the festival's 25th edition. "N.I.C.E is the longest running Italian film festival in the US," the Institute's director Giorgio Van Straten said, "and its mission has been to bring around the world, not just the US, Italian cinema by new talents, specifically directors at their first or second feature."

"Lasting this long has not been an easy feat," Director Viviana del Bianco has responded, "Sorrentino, Archibugi, Mario Martone, Edoardo Winspeare, Matteo Garrone... we are proud to have discovered their work and having promoted it around the world in the past. Young filmmakers are our strength and motivate us to continue with down this path."

[Marco Pontecorvo](#) [5], a Rome-based cinematographer at his second feature film, participates with *Partly Cloudy (with Sunny Spells)* a comedy starring [Luca Zingaretti](#) [6], Lillo and [John Turturro](#) [7]. His is a film on the effects of unexpected wealth on a friendship and, on a larger scale, on a small



town. Matteo Bini, an editor and documentary maker, participates with the drama, *I, Harlequin*, co-directed with Giorgio Pasotti. The film focuses on the relationship between a father and a son, identity and tradition. *Harlequin* is a famous stock character from the *Commedia dell'Arte* with incredible physical agility and the ability to always tell the truth. In the film, both father and son, wear his mask.

Alessia Scarso, in the company of a cute stuffed animal, introduced her *Italo*, a drama starring a sweet Golden Retriever, which is based on a true story. This is the story of a Sicilian village which seems to be ruled by a dog able to make everything right.

N.I.C.E. is a festival of quality films that represents Italy abroad; it doesn't only promote its cinema but it also invites audiences to reflect on Italy and its reality. All three films mentioned above, are a slice of Italy in their own way: “ *I, Harlequin* represents the importance of culture and a certain cultural tradition in Italy. Italian Theater and, more specifically, *Commedia dell'Arte* are known worldwide. Keeping culture alive can be challenging at times but there are those who work hard to do it. In the film the father is an actor who is used to transforming himself into *Harlequin*.

The son, works in a reality TV show, and even though he does not have to wear a mask, he plays a character even more than his father does. It will actually be at the moment that he puts the mask on that he can finally find himself. Our cultural tradition is often forgotten and it is important to keep it above, locally and internationally.”

“In *Partly Cloudy (with Sunny Spells)* the small town represents a bigger reality where wealth is used to enhance the differences between people,” Marco Pontecorvo explained, “While featuring a series of funny sketches, this directly references the tragic death of Enrico Mattei, an Italian public administrator who died in a mysterious plane crash in 1962, likely caused by a bomb. At the core of the film, though, there is friendship.” The reality of a small town is also presented in *Italo*, where a dog teaches people to love each other. “The town is a place where people gossip all the time, they know everything about each other and can't get enough of it,” Alessia Scarso said, “Of course I exaggerated in the film just to make it all more obvious and fun, but growing up in the area, that's the way things are.”

Now more than ever, Italian cinema is living through a moment of great development and recognition abroad. American audiences are responding with enthusiasm. “You get the impression that they don't sit down to judge you,” Marco Pontecorvo explained, “American audiences are there to welcome what the film is giving them for pure enjoyment. I sat down and watched my film, which was screened in San Francisco before coming to NYC, with them, just to hear their reaction, something I don't usually do, but the experience was particularly gratifying and I could not get out of that room.” Both Bini and Scarso agreed with Pontecorvo. Audiences aside, in Italy, all three films were well received, but distribution still seems to be an issue. That is something that N.I.C.E. is working on.

N.I.C.E. is not just a showcase of films, but it is also a competition. In addition to the three aforementioned films, we find *Chlorine* by Lamberto Sanfelice, *Mediterranea* by Jonas Carpignano, *My Name is Maya* by Tommaso Agnese, and *God Willing* by Edoardo Galea.

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