

Valeria Golino, Female Presence in Italian Cinema

Monica Straniero (May 02, 2019)



Valeria Golino just received the Federico Fellini Platinum Award during the 2019 edition of Bif&st, the Bari International Film Festival. We sat down with the internationally renowned actress and director who will be presenting “Portrait d’une jeune fille en feu,” a film by Celine Sciamma at the upcoming Cannes Film Festival. “I play my first ‘old lady’ part. Initially, I didn’t want to do this movie but Celine convinced me by saying that she couldn’t imagine any other actress in this role.” “I wanted to play the female leads in Hollywood but how could I compete with actresses such as Julia Roberts, Demi Moore and Uma Thurman?”

Valeria Golino, renowned actress and director even beyond Italian borders.

Following her Italian debut, she went on to pursue a brilliant career in Hollywood.

Of note is her successful interpretation in “Rain Man”, in which she acts alongside Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman.



In America, she quickly gains popularity also as a comedic actress thanks to the “Hot Shots!” series. (Jim Abrahams, 1991 and 1993)

In Italy, she starred in multiple films up until her directorial debut with the film “[Miele](#) [2]” (“Honey”) in 2013, followed by “Euphoria” in 2018. She is one amongst the very few women who manage to make it on the Italian cinematographic landscape both as an actress and a director.

We meet with her just after she accepted the Federico Fellini Platinum Award for the 2019 Edition of [Bif&st](#) [3], the Bari International Film Festival.

She will attend the Cannes Film Festival to present the film “Portrait d’une jeune fille en feu” by [Céline Sciamma](#) [4]. “I play my first ‘old lady’ part. Initially, I didn’t want to do this movie but Céline convinced me by saying that she couldn’t imagine any other actress in this role. This role didn’t take up too much time anyway. I now feel the need to not work too much and to do so only with the directors I’m friends with.”

Can you tell us about your film debut?

It happened by pure chance. It was 1983 and I was living in Athens, where I had been working as a model for a couple of years. One day I was going to Naples to see my father and I stayed in Rome with an aunt who convinced me to audition for the role of [Ugo Tognazzi](#) [5]’s daughter in [Lina Wertmüller](#) [6]’s new film “Scherzo del destino in agguato dietro l’angolo come un brigante da strada.” (“Joke of Destiny”) Even though I had never dreamed of being an actress, I then decided to pursue this career and when I was 19 I was chosen to star in [Peter Del Monte](#) [7]’s “Piccoli Fuochi.” (1985)

Success came when you received the Coppa Volpi for your role in [Citto Maselli](#) [8]’s “Storia d’amore” at the 1986 Venice Film Festival.

I wasn’t expecting it, also because I was told that the award for best interpretation was certainly going to be given to Sabine Azema. (who starred in Alain Resnais’ “Melo” ed.) An award I won again in 2015 for Giuseppe Gaudino’s film “Per amor vostro.”

After decades following an international career, you had your directorial debut with “Miele,” a courageous and delicate film on the theme of euthanasia, and “Euphoria” with [Riccardo Scamarcio](#) [9] and [Valerio Mastandrea](#) [10], who play two distant brothers who come together when one of them becomes ill. When did you get the desire to test yourself behind the camera?

I’m a movie lover before being an actress because I love the aesthetic of film. I have wanted to



direct for a long time but I didn't talk about it in part because I didn't have the time to realize my ideas and also due to a lack of self-esteem. If at 45 I finally decided to go for it, I owe it in part to the encouragement of Riccardo Scamarcio and Viola Prestieri, my producers. My experience as an actress is fundamental in establishing an almost sacred rapport with the leads of my films.

You've often mentioned how you don't rewatch your films.

Yes, I do that after the promotion and festivals are over to avoid being disappointed by interpretations that I initially deemed positive. It's not the case with 'Storia d'amore' though, there I find myself very good every time I see it.

Do you already have something in mind for your next film?

I don't have the right idea yet.

A topic that's being widely discussed nowadays: the gender gap in the film industry.

We haven't reached gender equality yet but my presence in the film industry as a woman has changed over the years. When I began my acting career, there were only two women directors in Italy: Liliana Cavani and Lina Wertmuller. Now there are many more. It's better for actresses as well. There are more roles and they can keep finding work even in middle age, which didn't use to be the case. When it comes to equal pay, however, there is still much to be done. Women continue to be paid less than men who hold the same positions and merits. The situation is inconceivable.

Only 22-years-old, you moved to Hollywood and were chosen as the lead in Randal Kleiser's "Big Top Wee Wee." (1988) Almost simultaneously you got a role alongside Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman in the movie "Rain Man" by Barry Levinson.

It was a really exciting time. I was there for 12 years and I worked on 17-18 films. But I know I should've done more. I auditioned for many roles for American women but the fact that I was foreign and had a strong Italian accent didn't help me get those roles. Plus, I found myself competing with actresses such as Julia Roberts, Demi Moore and Uma Thurman.

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