

ITALIAN FILMS AT CANNES 1960-1999

During the closing ceremony at the 1960 Festival de Cannes, the presentation of the Palme d'Or to Fellini for *La Dolce vita* and the Jury Prize to Antonioni pour *L'Avventura* (*The Adventure*) were greeted by loud whistling. Georges Simenon, the President of the Jury, had appreciated the stylistic and thematic innovations of both works and would go on to strike up a brotherly relationship with Fellini. Both films marked the transition from a period of **slow economic recovery** to one of **sudden** economic boom, denouncing the disappearance of traditional moral values along the way.

During the golden age of Italian cinema in the 1960s, the Festival honoured masterpieces such as *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*), directed by Visconti (Palme d'Or), *Signore & signori* (*The Birds, the Bees and the Italians*), directed by Germi (Grand Prix), and *Blow up*, directed by Antonioni (Grand Prix), as well as the exceptional performance of Sophia Loren in *La ciociara* (*Two Women*), directed by De Sica (an Award for Best Actress which would be a prelude to an Oscar for the actress). It also brought into the limelight **Valerio** Zurlini's lyricism (*La Ragazza con la valigia - Girl with a Suitcase*), **Pier Paolo** Pasolini's experimentalism (*Uccellacci e uccellini - The Hawks and the Sparrows*), **Marco** Ferreri's irony (*L'ape regina - The Conjugal Bed*), **Francesco** Rosi's disillusionment (*Il Momento della verità - The Moment of Truth*), **Elio** Petri's fierceness (*A ciascuno il suo - We Still Kill the Old Way*) and **Ermanno** Olmi's mysticism (*I Fidanzati - The Fiances*). In the 1970s, baptised the "Years of **Lead**" due to increasing terrorism and the threat of a military coup, the *commedia all'italiana* (Italian-style comedy), which served as a hilarious antidote to the ideological clashes going on at that time, made Festival audiences laugh **loudly**: *Dramma della gelosia* (*The Pizza Triangle*), directed by Ettore Scola (Best Actor Award went to **its versatile protagonist, Marcello** Mastroianni), *Per grazia ricevuta* (*Between Miracles*), by the brilliant comic and first-time director, Nino Manfredi (Best First Work Award), *La grande bouffe* (*The Grande Bouffe*), directed by Ferreri (FIPRESCI award), *Vogliamo I Colonelli* (*We Want the Colonels*), directed by Mario Monicelli, *Profumo di donna* (*Scent of a Woman*), directed by Dino Risi (Best Actor award went to the irresistible Vittorio Gassman), *Brutti, sporchi e cattivi* (*Ugly, Dirty and Bad*), directed by Ettore Scola (Best Director Award), *L'ingorgo - Una storia impossibile - Black Out in Autostrada* (**THIS IS THE FULL ITALIAN TITLE, WHICH IS THE ENGLISH TITLE?**) directed by Luigi Comencini, and so on.

The 1972 Grand Prix was awarded jointly to two very lucid counter-inquiries: *Il Caso Mattei* (*The Mattei Affair*), directed by **Francesco** Rosi and *La classe operaia va in paradiso* (*The Working Class Goes to Heaven*), directed by **Elio** Petri. This important **event** marked the return of social and political commitment, some twenty years after the end of the neorealist movement. And it was with great pride that Roberto Rossellini, President of the Jury in 1977, awarded the Palme d'Or to *Padre Padrone* (*Father and Master ENGLISH TITLE???*) directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, two of his protégés, who, like their mentor, had decided to turn their attention to "**pauperistic**" television.

The arrival of Nanni Moretti on the scene in 1978 with *Ecce bombo* signalled the beginning of an era of **autarchic** screenwriter-actors that would leave a permanent mark on the film scene, from Maurizio Nichetti to Francesco Nuti, Adriano Celentano, Carlo Verdone, Massimo Troisi and Roberto Benigni.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Italian cinema faced a **general** shortage of resources and ideas. I remember that *Once Upon a Time in America* directed by Sergio Leone was awaited eagerly at Cannes after taking several years to shoot, backed **by astronomical** budget and ambitions, the likes of which have not been seen since. At the 1987 Festival, Fellini made a comeback with *Intervista*, a **subdued**, but **very** brilliant autobiography which tackled the crisis of the film industry **massacred by TV**, and made clear that the golden era of *la dolce vita* was **indeed** a thing of the past. Mastroianni, **who appeared as himself in *Intervista***, at the same Festival **he got** the Award for Best Actor for *Dark Eyes* directed by Nikita Mikhalkov.

The **rising** original **filmmakers** were **rather** few in number and did not really form a homogenous group: Giuseppe Tornatore (*Cinema Paradiso*, Special Grand Prix), Daniele Luchetti (*Domani accadrà –It's Happening Tomorrow*), Michele Placido (*Pummarò –Tomato*), Gabriele Salvatores (**ITALIAN TITLE FIRST**--*Strada blues*), Pupi Avati (*Magnificat*), Francesca Archibugi (*Il grande cocomero –The Great Pumpkin*), Mario Martone (*L'amore molesto –Nasty Love*), Mimmo Calopresti (*La Seconda volta -The Second Time*), Peter Del Monte (*Compagna di viaggio – Travelling Companion*) and Gianni Amelio (*Il Ladro di bambini –The Stolen Children*, Jury Grand Prix).

The “before the revolution” generation

Thanks to the support of nonconformist producers such as Franco Cristaldi, Angelo Rizzoli, Mario Cecchi Gori, Goffredo Lombardo, Alfredo Bini and Moris Ergas, a wave of young **talents** was able to assert itself in the first half of the 1960s: Ermanno Olmi, Valerio Zurlini, Marco Ferreri, Marco Bellocchio, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Bernardo Bertolucci, Elio Petri, Franco Rossi, Ettore Scola, Ugo Gregoretti, Luciano Salce, Tinto Brass, Vittorio De Seta, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Florestano Vancini, and so on. Their generational revolt, which was aesthetic and political **as well**, was **frequently in antithesis** of the principles espoused by Visconti, Fellini, Antonioni, Germi and De Sica. **Because of this sons-versus-fathers rebellion**, as President of the Jury in 1969, Luchino Visconti **decided to snub Marco Ferreri's *Dillinger è morto (Dillinger is Dead)***, a desperate ‘harakiri’ using ultramodern language.

In parallel, during the same decade, a remarkable group of **busy craftsmen** emerged who would bring new blood - often literally – to popular genres, from horror films to westerns, “sword-and-sandal” epics and erotic films: Mario Bava, Sergio Leone, Sergio Sollima, Sergio Corbucci, Antonio Margheriti, Pasquale Festa Campanile, Damiano Damiani, Salvatore Samperi, Duccio Tessari, Franco Giraldi, and **several others**.

When television saved cinema

“*The relationship I’ve developed with RAI has been beneficial each time I’ve experienced difficulties securing the necessary funding to make my films. Without the unfailing support of television, the odds are that I wouldn’t have been able to survive; I wouldn’t have been able to continue making a particular type of film. In the end, I probably would have changed career! Television deserves credit for understanding not only that it had to join forces with cinema, but also that it had to help ensure the survival of a type of cinema that was under serious threat. That’s how a number of highly valuable works came to be made, which benefited both cinema and television*”, admitted Ermanno Olmi. The award of the 1978 Palme d’Or to Olmi’s **astonishing** *L'albero degli zoccoli (The Tree of Wooden Clogs)*, one year after it was awarded to another

television production, *Padre **Padrone** (Father and Master)*, directed by the Taviani brothers, marked the start of a new era, which would, **unfortunately, be** short-lived. Federico Fellini, Gianni Amelio, Nelo Risi, Luigi Comencini, Bernardo Bertolucci and Liliana Cavani are just some of the directors who would make non-conventional, often disturbing works for television. From the 1980s onwards, RAI and its competitor, Mediaset, would invest more and more regularly in films produced for **wide** commercial release.

Lorenzo Codelli