



FESTIVAL DE CANNES

OFFICIAL SELECTION

COMPETITION

THE CAIMAN

a film

by

NANNI MORETTI



BAC FILMS and SACHER FILM present



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COMPETITION

THE CAIMAN

IL CAIMANO

a film by
NANNI MORETTI

Starring

SILVIO ORLANDO

MARGHERITA BUY

JASMINE TRINCA

NANNI MORETTI

Produced by

Angelo Barbagallo and Nanni Moretti

a Sacher Film, Bac Films, Stephan Films, France 3 Cinéma coproduction

In collaboration with Wild Bunch, Canal +, CinéCinéma,

in association with Sofica unietoile 3 and Sofica cofimage 17

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SYNOPSIS

Bankrupt in his professional and personal life, Z-grade movie producer Bruno Bonomo – responsible in the past for such evocatively-titled offerings as *MOCASSIN ASSASSINS* and *MACISTE VERSUS FREUD* – is finding it impossible to raise the finance for his latest project, *THE RETURN OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS*.

Entangled in debts and his own weaknesses, struggling with a capsizing marriage and his wayward kids, Bruno is going under.

By chance, he meets a young director who gives him her script, *THE CAIMAN*. At first Bruno takes it for a half-hearted thriller; a more careful - if belated - reading reveals a film about Berlusconi.

No longer can he stand back. He must set up the production, find the lead actor, sort out the financing of the film – all the while trying to pick up the pieces of his broken relationship.

Yet in the midst of the endless setbacks and problems, a new spirit is awakened in Bruno Bonomo, and with it, the assertion of his dignity.

This man, washed up as he seemed, finds within himself the energy to pursue the project to its end – what came to Bruno as the result of pure chance has become in his eyes a matter of life and death.

INTERVIEW WITH NANNI MORETTI

When did you begin to feel the desire to return to cinema, to prepare a new film?

Before the Place Navone incident, at the end of 2001, I was working on a documentary about Berlusconi. My direct political activity meant I had to put the documentary to one side. I took many steps forward with regards to this project. With two scriptwriters, in 2002 I wrote a more head-on treatment than *THE CAIMAN* about Berlusconi, but I wasn't happy with it. Meanwhile, my political engagement continued. I also began preparations for Valia Santella's film, *I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES*. A little later, first with Heidrun Schleef, then with Federica Pontremoli and Francesco Piccolo, I found a more oblique way of talking about Berlusconi and his 'adventure'.

Were you looking for a balance between Bruno Bonomo's 'private' life (his divorce, his relationship with his children) and his public life? What's the link between them?

THE CAIMAN is a film about love, an homage to cinema, and a political film. The character of Bruno (and Silvio Orlando's performance) unifies these different aspects. At the beginning, Bruno finds himself involved almost by chance in this young first-time director's film, then slowly, begins to grow passionate about the project. But I didn't want to turn Bruno into a character who 'wakes up'; I didn't want to give him an ideological journey. Maybe he's intrigued by this young woman and her stubbornness. Maybe he wants to show his wife, from whom he is splitting up, that he too is capable of producing an important film. Maybe it's also the number of rejections he's had to endure: he ends up convincing himself that the film should be made, that it's necessary. But above all he is eager to get back to work, to get back on a set, to hear the cry : Lights ! Camera ! Action !

What does Bruno's character symbolize? An average Italian, a Forza Italia voter? A man of the past?

Like many Italians, Bruno voted in the past for Berlusconi, but he's not a politicized person. He's a producer in love with his work. A craftsman who enjoys a real love affair with cinema, an almost physical relationship:

he lives and sleeps in his offices from which he can see his old studios, now unused. I wanted to construct this character: his relationship with his children, his wife, with whoever, with his work, but I didn't trouble myself with whether or not Bruno is representative of a certain type of Italian..

What should we make of the films he's produced? You seem to have taken real pleasure in filming in a certain populist cinema style, making Margherita Buy a sort of Tarantino heroine. Was that the case?

Naturally I had a lot of fun shooting CATARACTS and imagining the filmography of producer Bruno Bonomo : MACISTE VS FREUD, MOCASSIN ASSASSINS, LADY COP IN STILETTOS. My affection isn't so much for the films Bruno produces, as for the relationship he has with his films, with his work, with cinema. A type of cinema that is no longer made. But, unlike other genre or Z-grade producers, Bruno is not a frustrated person, he feels no rancour towards auteur or politically engaged or big budget cinema. He doesn't suffer from either an inferiority or a superiority complex.

Why did you make Teresa a 'lesbian mother'? To confront Bruno with a more modern lifestyle ? Or to put forward an Italy without men, without machismo?

It gave me great pleasure to put another sort of family on screen. Without delivering ideological speeches, without rhetoric, but rather, very simply. Initially, Bruno reacts with a sort of comic hysteria, but that doesn't prevent him, from the next scene on, starting back to work on the preparation for Teresa's film.

Berlusconi appears in four different incarnations. The first one is played by Elio De Capitani, who bears a strong physical resemblance... He embodies Berlusconi in Bruno's imagination when reading the script to Teresa.

I play on the fact that Bruno reads the scenes that excite him: the viewer understands that he's reading a script about Berlusconi, while Bruno, on the other hand, hasn't understood because he's carried away by the action scenes. Maybe as he reads, he's thinking: "It's a great scene, but it will be too expensive". He's not concentrating fully, because of his problems with his wife;

he's distracted. And he's desperate, having been dropped earlier by another director. During the writing, we wanted to joke about the producer's lack of understanding. In one of the first versions of the outline, well before the script, when I was working with Heidrun Schlee, we even had Americans reading the script and mistaking it for a gangster movie!

Second appearance of Berlusconi is the man himself, seen in extracts from archive TV footage.

In the script, Bruno and Teresa watched a foreign documentary while preparing the young director's fictional film. At one point Bruno (Silvio Orlando) says: "But that's a documentary and we have to make a film ". However, I don't explain it, it's not necessary. In the script, it was a documentary because I wanted to show an outsiders' take on us: the Polish producer, for example, talks about "Italian Operetta". They had to watch a foreign documentary - American or French - during the preparation for Teresa's film, as in real life, while writing the script, we watched an American and a French film about Berlusconi. An outsiders' point of view is very important because we've come to accept things that should be unthinkable in a democracy, starting with the fact that the Prime Minister owns three TV stations and can present himself and his message through incredible television characters.

The prepping of Teresa's film follows. Bruno begins the search for his lead actor. And so Berlusconi is played here by Michele Placido.

For me, Michele Placido has a great presence and has also become a very fine actor. I loved the idea of a well-known actor making fun of the character of a well-known actor - Marco Pulici in the film. I have to say that I was very surprised by his receptiveness. Sometimes I can be a little annoying, insisting on numerous takes and so forth, so at the beginning I was uneasy, I was afraid that Placido would get sick of it. On the contrary, he was tremendously receptive on set, which astonished me.

Finally we reach Berlusconi's fourth appearance. And it's a real surprise that we must not unveil. How did you get the idea?

What I liked most of all was the effect of surprise; then I wanted that there should be no physical resemblance and no attempt in the performance to resemble him physically either. I also liked the fact that I was tricking the spectator: I refuse Teresa's film at first by saying things I believe, by rightly making fun of the Left. The idea was to wrong-foot expectations and to play the role without caricaturing Berlusconi, while trying to recreate for the viewer something of what happened during those years, the seriousness of which we have perhaps not fully appreciated. I am talking about the extent of the damage: ethical damage, constitutional damage, psychological, moral, cultural and economic damage, even if in this last area I am not in a position to evaluate the part for which Italy was responsible and the extent to which an international crisis is responsible..

Anyway, Berlusconi had already won thanks to television. Something happened during those years, something happened to people's spirit, and the hoped-for Centre-Left victory won't put things back as they were: it will take decades and decades. The pact upon which this democracy was founded, the Italian Constitution, a non-rhetorical anti-fascism – for in Italy fascism has definitely existed –, this pact has been smashed into a thousand pieces over the last 12 years. I'm not only talking about anti-fascism, I'm talking about values that should be shared by everyone. In a democracy, you can be divided on political questions, but certain values should be held in common by progressive and conservative thinkers alike. For 12 years, that has no longer been the case in Italy. Before, a Christian Democrat and a communist could manage to communicate, to talk to each other. For 12 years that has no longer been possible: centre-Right voters can no longer communicate with their counterparts on the centre-Left, and indeed, no longer want to. Fascists and communists are placed on the same level: this stage was never before reached in Italy, not even when the communist party was very strong. At that time the Italian communist party was respected and feared. Today, in the absence of an effectual communist party - due to the transformation of the old PCI -, the word 'communist' has become an insult. And, over the past 12 years, the fascist representatives have quietly gone into government, even if, for reasons of opportunism or calculation, they have abandoned their previous political convictions. Be

that as it may, it hasn't created any scandal in Italy: the pact on which this republic was founded has been rewritten in TV talk shows. That's where we find the true Italian Constitution today, in the abomination of talk shows.

At the end of the film, we have a political-fiction sequence, where Berlusconi is condemned by the tribunal and responds with an appeal to insurrection, almost a cry for civil war...

It's a charge Berlusconi lays against the magistracy. In its closing minutes, my film and Teresa's are superimposed until they become confused. At the beginning, as a person and as an actor who is playing his role, I make fun of Teresa's script without knowing it. Before that, as director, I put Teresa's script on screen through the imagination of the producer, but it's his imagination, his ideas. Then at the end, in the final minutes of the film, me as director, Teresa as director, me as actor, we are a single person. I loved that superimposition, which makes everything coincide.

Do you see this charge against justice as a possible recourse for Berlusconi should he lose the elections?

It's a metaphor. Above all, you have to remember that when Berlusconi expresses himself, when he addresses people, he does it above all through his television channels. And this endows him with a power and an arrogance in the eyes of the spectators: television is a familiarly arrogant instrument, or an arrogantly familiar one. Thus, via television, you can pass off things not so easily passed off through other media.

It's also a metaphor for the damage he has inflicted on us: so that we think of the irresponsibility of this man, his lack of any sense of the State or its institutions, his permanent relationship of aggression towards the magistracy during all these years. The phrases I utter on the stairs of the court, when he lays into the magistracy and talks about the 'caste' of magistrates, those are his own words. Phrases he recorded and broadcast to millions of televisions three years ago. This is not a man given to debate: he recorded the tape and broadcast a proclamation against the magistrates.

I wanted to go right to the dramatic heart of this political adventure that has paralyzed Italy these past 12 years.

Naturally, I played on numerous facts, a sort of short-circuit between me, THE CAIMAN and the spectator. When I say: "How sad the Left is, sad to the extent of making people sad", it's Berlusconi talking, but interpreted by me, as I have often judged the Left without indulgence. Or again, when I say: "When I had a tumor," Berlusconi has had a tumor, and so have I. When I say: "My allies were fascists," I use the character of Caiman to say things I think, to recall that in fact they were fascists. And avoiding, I repeat, the outlandish or caricatural aspect of a satire in which the character takes part 24-7, but which doesn't interest me.

Certain scenes in the film – particularly the ending - recall the political Italian cinema of Francesco Rosi and Elio Petri. What are your feelings about these films, and about their disappearance since the 1970s?

In the 70s, political cinema was widespread, it became a genre, almost a money-spinner. These sorts of films haven't been made for a very long time. I don't know whether it's the result of self-censorship on the part of the writers, directors and producers, or of the fact that some of a film's financing comes from TV, or of the difficulty of objectively recounting the changes in our country, or, finally, from the fact that the reality of Italian politics goes way beyond the most fertile imagination. In any case, in my own modest way, I try to do it. Through cinema, I try to recount a reality we are no longer able to see, to perceive. I think that our problem is one of habit: we grow to accept people and situations which in fact should be truly unthinkable in a democracy.

Extracts from an interview
conducted by Jean A. Gili,
published in Positif,
n° 543, May 2006.

NANNI MORETTI - FILMOGRAPHY

AS DIRECTOR

- 2006 The Caiman (Il Caimano)
- 2001 The Son's Room (La stanza del figlio)
- 1998 Aprile
- 1993 Dear Diary (Caro diario)
- 1989 Palombella rossa
- 1985 The Mass is Ended (La messa è finita)
- 1984 Bianca
- 1981 Sogni d'oro
- 1978 Ecce bombo
- 1976 I Am Self-Sufficient (Io sono un autarchico)

SACHER FILM - FILMOGRAPHY

- 2006 The Caiman (Il Caimano) – Nanni Moretti
- 2004 I Can See It In Your Eyes (Te lo leggo negli occhi) – Valia Santella
- 2003 The Last Customer – Nanni Moretti - documentary
- 2002 I diari della Sacher – 4 documentaries
- 2001 The Son's Room (La stanza del figlio) – Nanni Moretti
I diari della Sacher – 7 documentaries
Il grido d'angoscia dell'uccello predatore – Nanni Moretti –short
- 1998 Aprile – Nanni Moretti
- 1995 La seconde volta – Mimmo Calopresti
Il giorno della prima di Close-Up – Nanni Moretti – short
- 1993 Dear Diary (Caro diario) – Nanni Moretti
- 1991 Le porteur de serviettes (Il portaborse) – Daniele Luchetti
- 1990 La Cosa – Nanni Moretti - documentary
- 1989 Palombella rossa – Nanni Moretti
- 1988 Domani accadrà – Daniele Luchetti
- 1987 Notte italiana - Carlo Mazzacurati

CAST

Bruno
Paola
Andrea
Giacomo

Teresa
Luisa
Margherita

Marco Pulici
Marisa
Franco Caspio
Jerzy Sturovski
Peppe Savonese
Rai manager

In the film THE CAIMAN

The Caiman
Cesari
Journalist
The Caiman
Prosecutor
Presiding magistrate
The Caimans lawyer
Driver

In the film CATARACTS

Aïdra
Maoist leader
Aïdra's husband
Restaurant critic
Waiter

Teresa's film troupe

Production manager
Assistant director
Set designer
Wardrobe
DP

Football coach
Stunt driver
Franco Caspio's assistant director
Solicitor
Bank manager
Babysitter
Teresa's father

Silvio Orlando
Margherita Buy
Daniele Rampello
Giacomo Passarelli

Jasmine Trinca
Cecilia Dazzi
Martina Iero

Michele Placido
Luisa De Santis
Giuliano Montaldo
Jerzy Stuhr
Tatti Sanguineti
Antonio Catania

Elio De Capitani
Valerio Mastandrea
Toni Bertorelli
Nanni Moretti
Anna Bonaiuto
Stefano Rulli
Antonio Petrocelli
Paolo De Vita

Margherita Buy
Paolo Virzi
Paolo Sorrentino
Dario Cantarelli
Carlo Mazzacurati

Antonello Grimaldi
Lorenzo Alessandri
Giancarlo Basili
Giovanna Nicolai
Matteo Garrone

Mimmo Mancini
Bruno Memoli
Luca D'Ascanio
Fabrizio Morandi
Andrea Tidona
Sofia Vighiar
Renato De Maria

CREW

Directed by
Story

Nanni Moretti
Nanni Moretti
Heidrun Schleef

Screenplay

Nanni Moretti
Francesco Piccolo
Federica Pontremoli

DP

Production designer

Arnaldo Catinari
Giancarlo Basili

Wardrobe

Lina Nerli Taviani

Sound

Alessandro Zanon

General organisation

Gianfranco Barbagallo

Assistant director

Loredana Conte

Editor

Esmeralda Calabria

Music

Franco Piersanti

Producers

Angelo Barbagallo

Coproducers

Nanni Moretti

Sacher Film

Bac Films

Stephan Films

France 3 Cinéma

Wild Bunch

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