

Sorrentino's Victory Marks a Moment of Great Pride for Italy

N. L. (March 03, 2014)



The Great Beauty is a Winner at the 86th Academy Awards. Fifteen years after Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*, the much coveted golden statue for Best Foreign Language Film, returns to Italy thanks to *The Great Beauty*, a film on an emotional crossroads that is reminiscent of Fellini's art and that has run a very successful awards season in the United States and Europe (winning, among other things, at the Golden Globes and at Britain's BAFTAs).

It lacked the enthusiasm of Sofia (by that we mean Sofia Loren screaming “Roberto!!!”) and it lacked the acrobatics of Roberto (by that we mean Benigni standing on the back of his seat at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles when he was pronounced the winner of the Best Foreign Language Film at the 71st Academy Awards). Yet the victory of Paolo Sorrentino at the 86th Academy Awards is definitely unique and special in its own way.



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Sorrentino has declared he was surprised by his victory, yet many who noticed the soundtrack of *Cinema Paradiso* as the winner for Best Foreign Language Film was announced by Ewan McGregor and Viola Davis had already started posting online their congrats to the Neapolitan director. Visibly moved, Sorrentino went on stage with Toni Servillo, leading actor of *The Great Beauty* and of several other of his films, and with producer Nicola Giordano. "I want to thank Toni and Nicola, the actors and producers. Thank you to my inspiration, Talking Heads, Federico Fellini, Martin Scorsese, Diego Armando Maradona," he said (causing lots of comments on his Maradona credit), "They all taught me how to entertain, and that is at the roots of cinema. And thank you to Roma, Napoli and to my personal great beauty, Daniela and our sons. I am very emotional, I did not expect this, the other films were strong and, and I feel happy and relieved."

The other nominees in the category were Belgium's melodrama "The Broken Circle Breakdown," the Palestinian thriller "Omar" and Cambodia's first-person documentary, "The Missing Picture." This was the seventh nomination for Belgium, second for a Palestinian film and first for Cambodia in the category. "The Hunt," the film from Denmark, was although the one seen as competitive with Sorrentino's. *The Hunt* premiered nearly two years ago at the 2012 Cannes Film festival and is about the devastating effects of false accusations of child molestation on the life of an innocent kindergarten teacher.

The Great Beauty addresses a rather different theme as it narrates the story of an aging writer, his reflections on life and his search for meaning among Rome's rich & perverse. After his 65th birthday, writer Jep Gambardella, played by Toni Servillo, looks back over what became of his once-promising life and career. The portrayal of all-night parties and high-class affairs have reminded critics and the general public of Fellini's "La Dolce Vita," in its representation of the Italian capital's hedonistic life style.

"Maybe it is a metaphor for Rome," Sorrentino has said to the press in the past, "The underlying theme of the film is not so much the decadence of Rome and all that, it really has to do with this fact that people deep down, as horrible, bizarre and gross as they can be, deep down they all have a fragility. And people living that life are trying to find a way to distract themselves, with gossip, being frivolous, going to stupid parties and all that." Before the Oscars, the director also said that in the film he wanted to contrast the visual beauty of Rome with the "people who don't realize that this beauty is all around them."

Sorrentino's victory marks a moment of great pride for Italy, in a moment of great turmoil. The newly appointed Minister of Cultural Affairs, reached out and called Sorrentino to express all his happiness. He wrote on twitter "This is a boost of confidence for Italy. Viva Sorrentino, Viva il cinema italiano! When our country believes in its talent and its creativity, it's a real winner." The Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi also tweeted about the victory: "Right now we must focus on something else and we are indeed doing it, yet there is room for great Italian pride of Sorrentino and his *The Great Beauty*." "His Oscar," Renzi has also declared, "is an important step towards the realization that we should not be cared to broaden our ambitions." Last but not least, Italy's president Giorgio Napolitano added, "Sorrentino's film captures both the characteristic tradition of Italian cinema and the new ability to represent reality and today's world in a creative way. This is a great victory for Italy."



All the winners

Best picture

WINNER: 12 Years a Slave

Best actor

WINNER: Matthew McConaughey, Dallas Buyers Club

Best actress

WINNER: Cate Blanchett, Blue Jasmine

Best supporting actor

WINNER: Jared Leto, Dallas Buyers Club

Best supporting actress

WINNER: Lupita Nyong'o, 12 Years a Slave

Best director

WINNER: Alfonso Cuarón, Gravity

Best animated feature film

WINNER: Frozen

Best foreign film

WINNER: The Great Beauty

Best original screenplay

WINNER: Her, Spike Jonze

Best adapted screenplay

WINNER: 12 Years a Slave, John Ridley

Best original score

WINNER: Gravity

Best original song

WINNER: Let It Go, from Frozen

Best cinematography

WINNER: Gravity

Best costume design

WINNER: The Great Gatsby



Best documentary feature

WINNER: 20 Feet From Stardom

Best documentary short subject

WINNER: The Lady in Number 6

Best film editing

WINNER: Gravity

Best makeup and hairstyling

WINNER: Dallas Buyers Club

Best production design

WINNER: The Great Gatsby

Best animated short film

WINNER: Mr. Hublot

Best live-action short film

WINNER: Helium

Best sound editing

WINNER: Gravity

Best sound mixing

WINNER: Gravity

Best visual effects

WINNER: Gravity

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