



Open Roads Roundtable: “Directors See it All”

Natasha Lardera (June 07, 2016)



The artistic delegation of Open Roads, New Italian Cinema 2016 participated in an exciting roundtable at Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò moderated by Professor David Forgacs. Open Roads, co-presented by the Film Society of Lincoln Center and Istituto Luce Cinecittà, is a yearly appointment with Italy's contemporary cinema.

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Claudio Cupellini (director, [The Beginners](#) [4]), Gianluca and Massimiliano De Serio (directors, River Memories), Edoardo Falcone (director, [God Willing](#) [5]), Ondina Quadri (actress, [Arianna](#) [6]) Carlo Lavagna (director, [Arianna](#) [6]) Gabriele Mainetti (director, [They Call Me Jeeg](#) [7]), Vincenzo Marra (director, [First Light](#) [8]), Laura Morante (director/actress, [Solo](#) [9]; actress, [God Willing](#) [5]), Gianfranco Pannone (director, [The World's Smallest Army](#) [10]), Maria Sole Tognazzi (director, [Me, Myself and Her](#) [11]), Adriano Valerio (director, [Banat](#) [12]) and Eugenia Costantini (actress, Solo), shared some secrets with the audience.



"We collected material for a very long time but we didn't really know how to paste it all together," Laura Morante said of her film *Solo*, "I was ready to move on but my writing partner, Daniele Costantini, asked for one more week and that's when magic happened. The original idea was to write a film about a woman of a certain age who is suddenly single and needs to make it on her own. There aren't many films about that. Livia is roughly based on me: shy, private, insecure. When I was little my brother's friends would think I didn't exist because every time they came over I would hide. Flavia needs to react, to be stronger."

Maria Sole Tognazzi, definitely agrees and after making a film about a strong, single woman (*A Five Star Life*, 2013) she comes back with a vengeance with a film about a lesbian couple played by Margherita Buy and Sabrina Ferilli. "In Italian cinema there are films about male gay couples or films where among the different characters there is a homosexual. There was nothing about a lesbian couple, and in this case, an older couple. I wanted to do another film with Buy out of gratitude because she was so amazing in our previous one. At Cannes I met Ferilli by chance and promised her we'd work on a project together. Then it just came to me. This is not a remake of *Il Vizierto*, a famous film on a gay male couple where my father, Ugo Tognazzi played one of the two leads, but a homage."

Gabriele Mainetti paid homage to the superheroes of his childhood with a Roman twist in [They Call Me Jeeg](#) [7], winner, in 2016, of eight David di Donatello, the Italian Oscars, while Edoardo Gubino, who won a David in 2015, wanted to "talk about spirituality in a fun way. My comedy is a satire on radical-chic people who talk of democracy and respect for others but in the end they are the opposite. I was strongly inspired by *Commedia all'Italiana*, comedy Italian-style, a humorous film that focuses on current social issues, in this case the way people see religion. The main character, Tommaso, would rather have a son who's gay than a son who wants to become a priest."

Vincenzo Marra's film *First Light*, also focuses on a current situation, which is the custody of children after a breakup. "I am not taking sides but just trying to present a situation that is afflicting today's society. I wanted to tell the story of a love that ended and show that who ends up paying the price is the child. In the world 85% of children are given to the mothers but fathers have rights too. This is also a topic that is not often portrayed in films, especially Italian ones."

Adriano Valerio's *Banat*, is about "displacement, about people who leave their country for another one," while Lavagna's *Arianna* addresses the issue of gender identity, a hot topic in contemporary cinema. "When I was little, about 9 or 10, I had a recurring dream of being an older woman," Lavagna confessed, "and that stayed with me. I wanted to find out why and started researching the topic." *Arianna* was defined as a "strikingly presented debut that will find a particularly welcoming niche in gender-themed and LGBTQ fest programs," by Guy Lodge of *Variety*.

The De Serio brothers researched and captured on film the life of the Romani people, gypsies that are often seen as synonymous of criminality, while Pannone looked at the Swiss Guards living and working in the Vatican with a "secular eye."

"It seems that things are really moving for Italian cinema," Falcone told i-Italy before the presentation, "After years of crisis there is a lot to do and lots of stories to tell. Directors have their eyes open on what surrounds them and tend to capture it on film. Their eyes on the world are wide open." Needless to say that most of these directors have all said "this topic was not really presented in Italian cinema before, and now, with my film, it is."

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