

Euthanasia, Wealth and Compromises: Focus on the Italian Films in Venice

Natasha Lardera (August 21, 2012)



The 69th edition of the Mostra Internazionale del Cinema di Venezia is about to start. Italy competes with three films that present a thorough portrait of today's Italy and its current issues. Italian legendary director and screenwriter Francesco Rosi will be awarded with the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement.

The beginning of the 69th edition of the [Mostra Internazionale del Cinema di Venezia](#) [2] is approaching (August 29th-September 8th) and it promises to be unique and totally different from previous showcases: there are only going to be 18 films in competition (about half of the films presented last year) addressing important issues such as the current economic crisis and fundamentalism.



Italian director and screenwriter [Francesco Rosi](#) [3] will be awarded with the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement on August 31 in combination with the presentation of the restored copy, the project was funded by Martin Scorsese's Film Foundation and Gucci, of his famous masterpiece *Il Caso Mattei* (The Mattei Case, 1972).

Francesco Rosi is considered a symbol and innovator of socially-committed Italian filmmaking, the author of important and meaningful films such as *Le mani sulla città* (Hands over the City), winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice International Film Festival in 1963, *Il caso Mattei* (The Mattei Affair), Golden Palm at Cannes in 1972, and *Salvatore Giuliano*, Silver Bear in Berlin in 1961.

The Director of the Venice Film Festival, Alberto Barbera, has stated: "In his long though not very prolific career, Rosi has left an indelible mark on the history of Italian filmmaking after World War II. His work has influenced generations of filmmakers around the world for its method, style, moral severity and the ability to bring urgent social issues onto the screen.

For this reason he has repeatedly been associated with post-war Neorealism and is considered the founding father of the activist film movement that was so important to our national production in the Sixties and Seventies.

In comparison with Neo-realism, which was so influential in his cultural education, Rosi's cinema went much further in its deliberate intent to combine a keen proclivity for narrating real events, people and places with what Fellini defined as "the great crafting heritage of good American cinema". Rosi's reply was: "I am honoured and very happy to receive this extremely prestigious acknowledgment, which has been awarded in the past to many great authors whom I love and admire."

Among the 18 films presented (the complete list can be found [here](#) [4]. There are three Italian productions that are competing and that present a thorough portrait of today's Italy: *Bella Addormentata* by Marco Bellocchio, *È stato il figlio* by Daniele Ciprì and *Un Giorno Speciale* by Francesca Comencini.

There is great anticipation for Bellocchio's latest, a film that has been surrounded by controversies even during pre-production. Inspired by the story of [Eluana Englaro](#) [5], a young woman who spent 17 years in a persistent vegetative state due to a horrific car accident, the film addresses the topic of euthanasia.

In reality, after a long public and legal battle, Eluana's father and legal guardian was allowed to stop his daughter from being kept alive yet in Bellocchio's film "The stories and characters are all fictitious," the director stated, "and Eluana's story is just in the background. The film addresses the issue of life and death and each story portrays it in a completely different way."

"I, as well as thousands of Italians," Bellocchio continued, "was emotionally involved in Eluana's case and I in the film I present my atheist view." Beppino Englaro, Eluana's father, who has been recently [interviewed](#) [6] by the Italian newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano* has not seen the film (that will open nationwide in Italy on September 7th) but he said that "after meeting with Marco Bellocchio, I understood how he was going to approach the subject of boundaries: the boundaries between life and death and how medicine influences them."

The cast includes actors Maya Sansa, Piergiorgio Bellocchio, Toni Servillo, Isabelle Huppert, Alba Rohrwacher, Michele Riondino, Brenno Placido, Gianmarco Tognazzi and Fabrizio Falco while Daniele Ciprì is the director of photography. Coincidentally Ciprì is also the director of another film that's presented in Venice, *È stato il figlio*, a film, according to the director, about the "misery of wealth."

Based on the novel by Robert Alajmo the film "portrays reality tragically although it makes you laugh a lot," the director stated. "It presents the grotesque of real tragedy especially in the final chapter of the film, which I cannot reveal of course, that is a real punch in the stomach. Although the novel is set in the 1970's my story does not fit in a definite era, it fits at any time and it does not end well... I never finish my stories with an 'happily ever after'."



What we do know about the film is that the film is the story of a family of six, the Ciraulos, who lives in ignorance and poverty and spends the money received by the State after the death of a family member to buy a brand new Mercedes. "It is a mirror of today's society where people are driven by the wish of wealth and to be on television, a tragic death becomes the macabre opportunity to change one's social status" the director further explained.

The cast features Toni Servillo, Giselda Volodi, Aurora Quattrocchi, Benedetto Raneli and Fabrizio Falco.

The third film in competition is Francesca's Comenicini Un Giorno Speciale, a low cost comedy that "want to give hope to the young generations" by telling the story of young Romans who, with ambition and determination, must face life and its values.

The special day mentioned in the title is the first day at work for Gina (Giulia Valentini) and Marco (Filippo Schicchitano): she is scheduled to meet with an important politician who has promised to help her get in the entertainment industry and he is the chauffeur who will drive her to her meeting. They do not know each other but they will spend the whole day together.

Among the compromises Gina has to deal with, she has to provide specific sexual favors. "She is a girl like many others," Comenicini explains "who believe that beauty and a careless freedom will take her where she believes she has to get to. They are open to anything just to make it!" But this type of compromises take you nowhere.

"With my film I want to tell today's guys and girls that life has a value and it is possible to find it, even through suffering and pain."

A special screening, out of competition, of La Nave Dolce (The Human Cargo) by Daniele Vicari will also take place. The film tells a story of immigration from 1991, when 15.000 immigrants from Albania arrived in Italy aboard the mercantile Vlora, but where immediately sent back.

The aim of the Festival is to raise awareness and promote all the various aspects of international cinema in all its forms: as art, entertainment and as an industry, in a spirit of freedom and tolerance.

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[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eluana_Englaro

[6] <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2012/02/02/la-bella-addormentata-nellodio/188385/>