

Italian TV Series Raising the Bar on the Global Map

S. K. (October 20, 2017)



The Italian television market is making its mark on the international community with creative and exhilarating shows that deviate from tradition. Demands from the global media landscape have prompted local content providers to step up their game. The Italian series breaking into the Netflix platform serve as just one example of this.

This month, Netflix released its first Italian-language original series *Suburra: Blood on Rome*, a contemporary crime drama centered on corruption in Italy's capital. The show, which will also air domestically through collaboration with RAI-Italy's national broadcasting network, provides a thrilling glimpse (based on recent scandal that broke in Rome) into the "underworld" of politics, religion and Mafia.

Following the lead of groundbreaking local productions like [Gomorra](#) [2] and [The Young Pope](#) [3], *Suburra* is the latest in evidence of a shift in Italian TV toward catering to broader global tastes. The transition derives, in large part, from the ambitions of Italy's creative talent to command Hollywood's attention back to their country.

In the 1950s and 60s, Rome's [Cinecittà Studios](#) [4] triumphed as one of the largest and most successful studios in Europe. The city became known as "Hollywood on the Tiber," as stars like



[Sophia Loren](#) [5] and [Marcello Mastroianni](#) [6] dazzled audiences around the world in films by world-class directors such as [Leone](#) [7], [Fellini](#) [8] and [Rossellini](#) [9]. Italian cinema defined the era, but crisis plagued the industry throughout the 80s, seeing a stark decline in the notability of Italian films.

Since the 90s, a new generation of directors and actors have been driving Italian cinema to compete on a global level. This time, they are blazing the trail with high-end television. Many of these new TV series embrace shocking topics such as drugs, prostitution and gangsters, as well as political and religious exploitation—areas that were avoided by the more reserved shows of the past.

Italian journalist [Roberto Saviano](#) [10], author of international bestseller *Gomorrah*, teamed up with Palomar and Entertainment One to develop a series titled *Qaddafi*, about the late Libyan tyrant of the same name. Co-written with Israeli director Nadav Schirman, revolves around a cruel dictator with a “bottomless desire for power” and “worldwide revolution.”

RAI’s [Medici: Masters of Florence](#) [11] began shooting a second season this September. The show enjoyed widespread success last year, as it told the story of a young Cosimo de Medici, who found himself at the head of the family banking empire after his father was mysteriously poisoned. The coming season will continue the story of the Medici, seeing Cosimo as a budding Florentine revolutionary.

Additionally, [Paolo Sorrentino](#) [12] plans to shoot another limited series, set to air on Sky and HBO, called *The New Pope*, following his hit, *The Young Pope*. Details are being kept confidential, but production is planned to start in late 2018, seeing a different character as pope in the new show.

Efforts to adapt and enhance Italian TV are part of a [larger movement](#) [13] that includes reviving the status of the nation’s cinema as well. Through a combination of greater tax credits and renovated production facilities, the industry hopes to recreate a distinct, Italian cinematic identity that rivals others around the world.

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Links

[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/suburrajpg-0>

[2] <http://www.sundance.tv/series/gomorra>

[3] <https://www.hbo.com/the-young-pope>

[4] <http://cinecittastudios.it/en/dream-factory/history-and-myth>

[5] <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sophia-Loren>

[6] <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/20/movies/marcello-mastroianni-self-deprecating-charmer-of-italian-film-is-dead-at-72.html>

[7] <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sergio-Leone>

[8] <http://www.federicofellini.it/en/biography>

[9] <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Roberto-Rossellini>

[10] <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/italy801/interview/saviano.html>

[11] <http://medicimastersofflorence.com/>

[12] <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/09/movies/paolo-sorrentinos-great-beauty-explores-italys-decline.html>

[13] <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/rome-market-puts-spotlight-tv-as-italy-looks-lure-hollywood-back-1049913>