

Labia's Italian fest offers reel feel for independent films

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WHEN producers of the film *Italy In a Day* called on people to submit content for their communal project, they received 44 197 videos.

Hours after viewing and editing this footage, along with 2 200 hours of images they received, they made a film that offers "honest reflection, without intellectual filters, on the meaning of our communal trip on planet Earth".

"It is a diary of the emotions and the thoughts of the Italians, some tender, others angry, funny or desperate," informs the film's synopsis.

"It is the first Italian experiment of a communal film in which the narration is supplied by anybody, while the set-up of the story is entrusted to professional editors, musicians and director."

With its "desires, dreams, fears, thoughts, or simply what could be seen by looking out of the window", *Italy In a Day* is among six films showing at the Italian Film Focus festival which started this week.

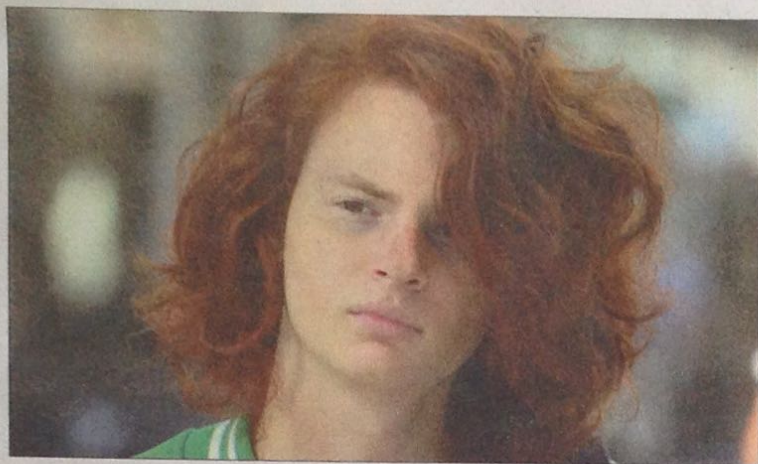
The latter runs in different cities nationally, with the Labia cinema on Orange Street playing local host for 10 days until November 23.

Festival director Antonio Falduto, a former Cape Town resident who has returned to his homeland Italy, selected films that have already travelled globally.

Falduto believes Italian cinema in recent years went through uncertain times due to the "intrusiveness of Italian commercial television, which has not been of great benefit to cinema or itself".

But, he says, that has changed, marked most notably by this year's Academy Award that Italian director Paolo Sorrentino received for his melancholic film, *The Great Beauty*.

"New Italian cinema is claiming



OUTCAST: *Darker Than Midnight* explores 14-year-old Davide's journey into a world apart from the rest of the city, where regulars live on the margins of society.



PAST: *Seven Little Killers* is about a terrible event in an Italian village.

back its identity, roots and ambitions. Italian films are presented at the most important festivals," says Falduto.

"This year we present a variety of films (at the local festival) that have shown a great sense of story, language and intellectual curiosity.

"If we consider how our film industry has substantially decreased in recent decades, this

seems like a small miracle."

Apart from showing films, Italian film companies are also involved in co-productions in South Africa, says Falduto. Italian filmmakers showed films at the Durban International Film Festival and have support from the National Film and Video Foundation, as well as the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission.

Falduto played a role in the signing of a co-production agreement between South Africa and Italy in 2006. Since then, five feature films and two documentaries have been made. At this year's festival, he says, Italian film industry professionals will attend to "find and build stories in collaboration with local professionals".

The festival's opening night films are *Darker Than Midnight*, with its director in attendance, and *Seven Little Killers*, with its producer and screenwriter also in attendance. *Darker Than Midnight* tells the story of 14-year-old Davide whose "delicate and effeminate



RECESSION: *Quiet Bliss* is a film about the effect of Europe's economic crisis on four women from the same family.

looks do not fit in with his father's ideas of what a boy should be like".

"Fleeing the constant conflicts at home, he is drawn to Catania's biggest public park, Villa Bellini, a world apart that the rest of the city pretends not to see and whose regulars live on the margins of society," reads the synopsis.

"Davide takes refuge in the company of hustlers and outcasts who accept him as one of them. But his double life between the expectations of his family and his new friends becomes intolerable, and Davide is inexorably pushed into impossible choices that he has to face alone."

Its director Sebastiano Riso will be at the screening to interact with the audience at the Labia tomorrow at 6.15pm. On Monday at 6.5pm, the producer and screenwriter of *Seven Little Killers* will interact with the audience after their screening.

Seven Little Killers starts in the 1980s, "in a small village in the south of Italy when a group of kids enjoy their youth until on a windy

afternoon something terrible happens. Thirty years later, now adults, they have to deal with the ghosts of their past".

The festival's *Quiet Bliss* meanwhile interrogates the "playing out of the economic crisis afflicting our global village, in a small town in Salento, at the tip of the heel of Italy".

"It tells the story of four women from one family who face a crisis as their small textile factory, on the fringe of western Europe, heads for bankruptcy. Obligated to sell their house and their factory... they will have to get used to a complete lack of comfort and money," reads the synopsis.

"They find a way to tackle their situation and begin to appreciate what they have and what is actually needed to feel quiet bliss. All of a sudden happiness will be unexpected, like an answer to a prayer in a moment of grief."

● See www.italianfilmfocus.co.za or visit the Labia cinema on Orange Street.