



# 27 NOVEMBER - 1 DECEMBER 2025

THE LARGEST SHOWCASE OF RECENT ITALIAN FILMS IN AFRICA FOR 25 YEARS











































# 192 films screened

6 co-productions brought to life



# 130 guests from the Italian Film Industry

# Italian Film Focus 2025

#### **INSTITUTIONAL GREETINGS**

This year again, the Consulate General of Italy in Johannesburg is contributing to the organization of the Italian Film Focus, a film showcase promoted by the association of film authors Controluce, in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Culture.

On the occasion of its 25th edition, the screenings — all in Italian with English subtitles — will take place for the first time at Johannesburg's independent cinema, The Bioscope.

The programme features *The Last One for the Road* by Francesco Sossai, *U.S. Palmese* by the Manetti Bros, and *La Grazia* by Paolo Sorrentino. We look forward to welcoming you from 28 to 30 November for this showcase of recent Italian productions, a unique opportunity to explore the evolution of Italy's social, cultural, and human landscape in recent years.

By Livio Spadavecchia, Consul General of Italy in Johannesburg



Dear spectators and Italian cinema enthusiasts,

It is a true honor to welcome you to the 25th edition of the Italian Film Focus, a remarkable milestone celebrating a quarter of a century of dialogue between Italy and South Africa through the power of cinema. For twenty-five years, this event has brought the finest of Italian filmmaking to South Africa and the continent, as the largest showcase of Italian cinema in Africa. It has offered audiences a window into the creativity, depth, and diversity of contemporary Italian cinema.

This anniversary marks not only a celebration of longevity but also a renewal of vision. After many years at its historic home, the Labia Theatre in Cape Town, the festival is expanding its reach to new audiences and contexts, from the refined setting of Franschhoek, in the heart of the Cape Winelands, to the vibrant community of Mitchells Plain. This evolution reflects the festival's enduring mission: to make Italian cinema accessible to all, across different spaces, voices, and experiences.

In the past year, Italian cinema has once again shone on the international stage, acclaimed for its storytelling, artistry, and vision. Much of this ongoing success is made possible by the work of Associazione Controluce, which for decades has been at the forefront of promoting Italian cinema abroad and building bridges between filmmakers, institutions, and international audiences. Thanks to its dedication, the Italian audiovisual sector continues to grow in both quality and reach, reaffirming the global appeal of Italian creativity and cultural identity.

The Italian Film Focus is much more than a festival: it is a bridge between cultures, a meeting point where ideas, emotions, and identities cross paths.

Through the language of film, we share stories that reveal who we are and what unites us, reaffirming the power of culture as a tool for connection and mutual understanding. Italy, too, is eager to discover South African identity, history, and society through art. For this reason, the promotion of cooperation between our countries in the audiovisual field was highlighted during the Giornate d'Autore at the Venice Film Festival, where two young South African directors participated also as members of the prestigious UNIMED Jury Award. My deepest gratitude goes to Associazione Controluce, the Ministry of Culture of Italy, the Embassy of Italy in South Africa, the Italian Cultural Institute in Pretoria, the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, the Labia Cinema, RLabs in Mitchells Plain, Franschhoek Teather, as well as to our sponsors Southern Wind Shipyard and Vinotria, whose support and enthusiasm have made this year's edition possible.

As we celebrate this twenty-fifth edition, let us continue to look ahead with the same curiosity and enthusiasm that have guided us from the beginning — keeping alive the dialogue between Italy and South Africa through the magic of cinema

Enjoy the festival, and here's to the next twenty-five years of Italian Film Focus!

By Giulio Mignacca, Consul of Italy in Cape Town The intensity of Francesco Sossai, the imagination of the Manetti brothers, and the magic of Paolo Sorrentino. Italian Film Focus, now in its 25th edition with the freshness of a debutante and the maturity of an established event, returns to bring the best of contemporary Italian cinema to Johannesburg and Cape Town. It's important to preserve spaces for cinema that expresses a vision of the world, enriching the local scenery with universal content, because stories are born in one place, but belong to everyone. Long live art film in Italy and South Africa!

By Michele Gialdroni, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Pretoria



# over 17.000 spectators

# 450 Hours of teaching at local Film Schools

Educational and professional exchange programmes with Italian Film Festivals



# Italian Film Focus 2025

#### **CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ITALIAN FILM FOCUS**

Who would have thought, back in 2001, when Controluce arrived in South Africa to present the first ITALIAN FILM FOCUS at the Sithengi Film Festival in Cape Town, that this remarkable cultural, human, and professional journey would continue for 25 years?

Over the years, IFF has become a cornerstone of cultural exchange between Italy and South Africa, bringing hundreds of Italian films and guests to Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban, and offering masterclasses, workshops, and production meetings. These exchanges have fostered education and collaboration in audiovisual storytelling, culminating in the historic Italy–South Africa co-production agreement of 2006, the first with a European country, which has already produced six feature films and several documentaries. Education and professional exchange remain central to the festival. Each year, the Italian delegation takes part in masterclasses at AFDA Film School and UCT, and engages South African filmmakers and producers in meetings on co-productions and industry partnerships. Controluce also collaborates with the Encounters Festival and local institutions to develop new exchange programs for 2026.

These initiatives follow two key conferences on Italy–Africa training programs: one at the Venice Film Festival's Giornate degli Autori, attended by South African faculty, filmmakers, and the South African Ambassador to Italy; and another at the Rome Film Festival in the Roma Lazio Film Commission space, attended by academics and institutional leaders.

Two South African film students were able to join the UNIMED jury at the Venice Film Festival thanks to the support of Controluce, Confartigianato



Cinema e Audiovisivi, the Western Cape institutions, and the Embassy of South Africa in Italy. Building on this success, they are working together to increase the number of South African students participating in festival juries and related programs in Italy.

IFF also extends its reach beyond the traditional festival circuit.

Thanks to the support of local partners, this year's festival brings a film to RLabs House in Mitchell's Plain and Franschhoek Theatre: the lively comedy *U.S. Palmese*, where football becomes a lens for exploring cultural diversity and community connection.

IFF 25 features films from the recent Cannes, Venice, and Rome festivals, showcasing the vitality of contemporary Italian cinema. Highlights include *La grazia* by Oscar-winning director Paolo Sorrentino, one of IFF's first guests in 2004, who later returned to South Africa to film part of *The young people*.

Also featured is *The Last one for the Road*, Francesco Sossai's tender debut set in the Veneto countryside, presented by co-star Filippo Scotti, one of Italy's most sought-after young actors and star of Sorrentino's *The Hand of God*.

Screenwriter Mimmo Rafele, a veteran of Italian cinema and television, will present *The Council Chamber* by Fiorella Infascelli, a "Kammerspiel" weaving together the personal and judicial dramas of a mafia trial jury. From Cannes comes *Heads or Tails?* by Alessio Rigo de Righi and Matteo Zoppis, an original Italian western blending history, genre, and geography.

Among the guests is Corrado Azzolini, president of the independent producers' association Confartigianato, presenting *The olive tree and the baobab*, co-written with director Serena Porta, exploring shared stories and challenges between Italy and Africa.

IFF will also present the Italian box-office hit *Madly*, a refined psychological game of mirrors by Paolo Genovese, acclaimed director of *Perfect strangers*.

IFF continues to unite Italian cinema promotion with education, co-production, and cultural outreach, strengthening the creative bridge between Italy and South Africa. Cinema may not change the world—but it can certainly change how we see it.

By Antonio Falduto, Head, Association of Film Authors Controluce



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#### 25TH CAPE TOWN ITALIAN FILM FOCUS 2025

#### NEW TRENDS IN ITALIAN CINEMA IN 2025

by Giovanni Ottone

Italian cinema boasts a long and admirable tradition, both in terms of the quality of its authors, screenwriters and directors, as well as its other professional technical figures, and in the development of a prestigious production and distribution industry. Over the past decade, Italian cinema has been characterised by several new directions and themes. The essential aspect is a significant revival of genre cinema.

First of all, we have witnessed yet another resurgence of comedy, in various forms, some more dramatic than others, and with variants reflecting regional identities, resulting in works of differing originality and quality. At the same time, other specific genre types have been redefined: melodrama and existential and/or psychological drama, with different social and generational perspectives, and with many films dedicated to young people, women, immigrants, the inhabitants of the overcrowded and deteriorated working-class suburbs of Rome and Naples, and those living on the margins of society. There has also been a renewed presence of thrillers and noir films, in some cases marked by precise references to current political events, with timid echoes of the socially committed or investigative cinema of the 1960s and '70s; gangster movies, combining realist and naturalist tones, focusing on Italian mafia criminal organisations, as well as police films; and incursions into fantasy and science-fiction cinema, sometimes in a pseudo-trash vein. There are also highly successful films that pay homage to multiple genres, mixing different codes and conventions.



The Italian film industry is historically well established at both production and commercial levels. It maintains profitable market and co-production relationships with other European countries, as well as ongoing exchanges with the American Hollywood industry, and it continually renews a tradition of internationally recognised quality in terms of authors, screenwriters, directors, and other professional technical roles, and in the field of conservation and restoration of films.

In fact, in Italy, the film and audiovisual sector has experienced a strong upward production trend in recent years, supported above all by public funding, particularly the tax credit, and by more recent legislation, namely the law "Regulation of Film and Audiovisual Works" No. 220 of 14 November 2016, and its subsequent amendment, Legislative Decree No. 203 of 7 December

2017, pursuant to Article 33 of the aforementioned law.

Reviewing the final data for the Italian film industry, market and audiences in the 2024 season, taken from the 2024 Cinetel Report, we see that the box office recorded an overall positive trend, with total revenues of €493.977.853 and 69,709,089 tickets sold, despite disruptions caused by fluctuations in the availability of international films due to the 2023 Hollywood writers' and actors' strikes. The specific box office results for Italian productions, including co-productions, amounted in 2024 to a total of €121.404.986, with 17.889.182 admissions. These figures correspond to 24.6% of total box-office revenue and 25.7% of total admissions. Therefore, in 2024 the market share of Italian films, in terms of spectators and box-office revenue, amounted to 25% of the total. We now present some essential data concerning the film industry, market, and audience in Italy for the 2025 season, based on the preliminary 2025 Cinetel Report. Between 1 January and 31 October 2025, the total box office revenue of Italian cinemas reached approximately €357,900,000, with around 50,300,000 tickets sold. Compared with the same period in 2024, there is a slight decrease: -2.4% in revenue and -2.9% in admissions. However, these figures still reflect a very significant gap compared with the same period in 2019: -26.9% in revenue and -33.1% in admissions.

According to preliminary data for the first half of 2025, the specific box office for Italian films, including co-productions, generated total earnings of around €79,000,000, showing a significant increase of +18% compared to the same period in 2024, and recorded 11 million admissions. Market share data for national cinema shows a gain of 32.8% of total admissions, marking an increase of +3% compared to the same period in 2024.

Unfortunately, during the summer (from 1 June to 31 August), there was a sharp drop in box office results, including for Italian films and co-productions, which recorded total earnings of €5,974,015, with a rather marginal market

share, limited to only 7% of total admissions, almost identical to the 7.2% recorded in the corresponding period of 2024.

In September, the market share for national cinema rose slightly, reaching 13.4% of total admissions. In October, Italian films played an essential role in the market's recovery and in bringing audiences back to cinemas, generating total earnings of around €9,200,000, practically identical to those of October 2024, and a market share of 31%.

According to preliminary statistics, in the first 10 months of 2025, 105 Italian fiction feature films and 41 documentaries, produced exclusively by national companies, have been released in cinemas so far.

Particularly noteworthy are the Italian feature films that, as of 13 November 2025, achieved the greatest box office and audience success.

Follemente, the psychological comedy by Paolo Genovese, released in theatres on 20 February and still screening in some cinemas even during the summer, recorded 2,483,785 admissions and total earnings of €17,951,533.

La vita va così, the dramedy by Riccardo Milani, distributed in 650 copies and in theatres since 23 October and still running, has so far reached provisional earnings of €5,516,871.

10 giorni con i suoi, the dramedy by Alessandro Genovesi, released on 23 January and still screening in some cinemas even during the summer, totalled 639,533 admissions and total earnings of €4,623,728.

L'abbaglio, the period dramedy by Roberto Andò, released on 16 January and still screening in some cinemas even during the summer, recorded 528,068 admissions and total earnings of €3,424,462.

During 2025, several of the trends and themes that have emerged in Italian

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cinema over the past decade were confirmed. In particular, various forms of comedy and dramatic works exploring contemporary existential journeys remain dominant, offering expressive and often effective portraits of male and female characters, as well as couples. There is a distinct existential focus in stories about adolescents facing identity crises and relational difficulties within the family, at school, and in the urban peripheries of major cities. There are also thriller films dealing with stories of marginalisation and organised crime. Biographical dramas are also present, dedicated to well-known artists, writers, or political figures, as well as films that reconstruct or creatively revisit crucial periods that shaped the history of Italy in the 19th and 20th centuries. Finally, there is a strong production of documentaries, which make up about one third of Italian films produced and released in the 2025 season. These include works of various kinds, some of excellent quality, centred on social or political themes or offering biographical portraits of figures from the worlds of art, culture, and politics. In particular, we highlight three outstanding documentaries, two of which were presented in major international festivals (Venice and Rome) in 2025.

Ferdinando Scianna, il fotografo dell'ombra, by Roberto Andò, offers a wonderful portrait—intimate, moving, lively, fresh, and poetic rather than celebratory—of Ferdinando Scianna, the renowned 82-year-old photographer born in Bagheria, who moved to Milan at 24, becoming a photojournalist for the magazine L'Europeo. He later settled in Paris as a correspondent, collaborated with Le Monde diplomatique, and befriended the great photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson who, highly impressed by his work, introduced him to the prestigious international photographic agency Magnum Photos, where Scianna became the first Italian member.

Roberto Rossellini, More Than One Life, directed by actress and editor Ilaria De Laurentiis, screenwriter Andrea Paolo Massara, and producer-direc-

tor Raffaele Brunetti, is a fascinating, multifaceted, and anti-rhetorical work. Composed almost entirely of archival material and footage, some of it previously unseen, it offers an honest, courageous and partly new account of the last twenty years of Roberto Rossellini's life. Rossellini was a famous, brilliant, and restless filmmaker, clear-minded and passionate, irreverent and contradictory, who reinvented himself after setbacks and failures, and who was ahead of his time in both cinema and television. He died of a heart attack in 1977 at the age of 71.

*Pino*, by Francesco Lettieri, although not the first film dedicated to Pino Daniele (1955–2015), is an original and surprising work—irregular yet essential. It offers an authentic portrait of the internationally renowned Neapolitan composer, singer-songwriter, and guitarist, who remained deeply connected to his Neapolitan and Mediterranean roots. His musical training was influenced by rock, Louis Armstrong's jazz, the best Neapolitan melodic tradition, and above all the blues, ultimately merging into a stylistic fusion of original elements that he himself called "tarumbo."

The film presents a fresh yet faithful look at the artist and his music, starting from his beginnings in the late 1960s and leading to his definitive breakthrough as a session musician from 1975 onward. Lettieri revisits the significant places that shaped Pino Daniele's personal and artistic journey, moving through land-scapes, memories, family home movies, photographs, notebooks, memorabilia, and the voices of friends, relatives, and long-time collaborators.

Now, let us consider some significant Italian feature films, made by directors with established filmographies, many of which were presented at major international festivals in Europe (Cannes, Rotterdam, Venice, Rome, etc.) and released in cinemas in 2025.

We will offer a critical overview of some of the feature films selected for this year's edition of the Italian Film Focus Festival in Cape Town.



La grazia, the eleventh feature film written and directed by Paolo Sorrentino, earned Toni Servillo the Volpi Cup for Best Actor at this year's "82nd Venice International Film Festival." It is a modern fable about power, essentially structured as a chamber drama, with excellent scenographic solutions.

The protagonist of the story is the President of the Italian Republic, Mariano De Santis (Toni Servillo), a character who confronts himself, his own culture, and his youthful memories, presented through flashbacks intertwined with his affection for Aurora, his deceased wife. He is an elderly man, physically intact, and an eminent jurist, now in the final phase of his term. De Santis is extremely prudent, measured, and cautious at an institutional level, to the point of earning the nickname "reinforced concrete," symbolizing his inclination toward immobility, typical of seasoned Christian Democrat politicians. At the same time, he is an individual who conceals a deeply visceral inner nature, with persistent likes, dislikes, and obsessions, as well as a subtle inclination toward



melancholy. His character, posture, and behavior contain charming references to Mattarella, Napolitano, and Cossiga.

He spends his days following tedious routines and ceremonial rituals, maintaining constant contact with a small circle of collaborators and advisers, both civilian and military. Moreover, the person he continuously engages with is his daughter Dorotea (Anna Ferzetti), a forty-year-old single woman who is also a brilliant jurist and whom he himself appointed as his primary legal adviser. Indeed, De Santis, very aware of the weight of his decisions and the responsibilities he bears, continues to claim—rightly—further reflection, but he tends toward immobility, avoiding decisions or postponing final determinations regarding the laws he must obligatorily enact.

In particular, being deeply Catholic, he is uncertain and conflicted about two delicate issues: whether to promulgate the law on euthanasia, already approved by Parliament, and whether to grant clemency to two individuals who requested it, having been convicted of voluntary manslaughter committed under circumstances that could be considered decisive mitigating factors.

La grazia demonstrates, once again, that the strength of Sorrentino's cinema lies in staging and the masterful use of space, with an architectural logic present in many shots, enhanced by the Quirinal interiors where much of the story unfolds. Paolo Sorrentino creates a dramedy in which the study of character, their passions, and obsessions is truly original and engaging even for a broad audience. The gaze and comic, partially dramatic, energy are often surprising and highly enjoyable, and the depiction of the masks of power is largely successful. Toni Servillo's performance is brilliant, nuanced, and never over-the-top or affected.

Moreover, *La grazia* is a work in which various aspects and themes of Sorrentino's cinematic poetics, developed over the years film by film, come together and overlap. Despite repeated echoes of his refined pop and postmodern

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culture, Sorrentino strongly limits parodic tones, mannerisms, self-indulgences, and cinephilic references, favoring a new, lighter, and more effective approach.

One limitation, however, can be found in the narrative and stylistic turn in the final part of the film. Sorrentino accumulates and multiplies a long series of explanatory passages, weakening the story relative to the potential fate of De Santis.

Heads or Tails?, the second feature film by Alessio Rigo de Righi and Matteo Zoppis, is a fun, exaggerated, adventurous, and picaresque period dramedy—western. Yet it is also a mythical rustic saga, underpinned by a revolutionary social elegy with bandit and anarchist undertones, and finally, a unique coming-of-age road movie.

Set in the countryside of Lazio and among the dunes and rugged coasts of the Circeo National Park, the story begins by recalling a true event. In the early 1900s, the elderly and charismatic Buffalo Bill (John C. Reilly), during his European touring show, arrives in Rome with the famous "Wild West Show," in which he recreates, in his own way, the history of the conquest of the West and the defeat of Native Americans.

After the show, Ercole Rupè (Mirko Artuso), a grim and despotic local landowner who maintains a small group of herders at his service, challenges Buffalo Bill, claiming that his men are better than the American cowboys, and organizes a rodeo to prove it. Secretly, Rupè bets on the cowboys' victory and instructs his men to lose the competition. However, the best of the herders, the dark, rough, and clever Santino (Alessandro Borghi), disagrees and wins. Furious, Rupè confronts Santino in the stables, where he finds him with his wife Rosa (Nadia Tereszkiewicz), an attractive and restless thirty-year-old Frenchwoman who has been abused and insulted for some time. Intent on leaving, she is trying to find a horse to escape. Rupè beats Rosa and threatens Santino, but during the struggle, she shoots and kills him. The two young outcasts then flee together on horseback, hiding in the woods. Rosa falls in love with Santino, and together they plan to reach a port and sail to America. But the hunted couple must face various adventures along the way.

Alessio Rigo de Righi and Matteo Zoppis seek an original path to explore their auteur voice while appealing to a broad audience, drawing on both Italian and American cinema models. *Heads or Tails?* blends multiple genres: in addition to picaresque dramedy, western, and epic social and political elegy, it incorporates elements of magical realism and horror. The film echoes traditions, legends, and folk ballads, contains some experimental devices, and features playful cinephilic references, from the farcical 1970s spaghetti westerns of Bud Spencer and Terence Hill to the cinema of Mario Monicelli, Sergio Leone, and Quentin Tarantino.

The staging exhibits an effective narrative rhythm, with excellent use of open spaces, wild rural and coastal locations, and sunset lighting, enhanced by the notable cinematography of Simone D'Arcangelo.

The Last one for the Road, the second feature film by Francesco Sossai, is an interesting contemporary existential parable that unfolds as an all-male buddy movie. But above all, it is an atypical road movie, comic and dramatic, irregular yet incisive: a coming-of-age journey without a precise destination, traveling through the cities and countryside of the Venetian plain surrounding



Venice, Padua, and Treviso, over the course of a day and two nights.

It recounts a playful and transgressive "escape" that, in some way, breaks the most ordinary and conformist behaviors and customs of Italian provincial life, and Venetian life in particular. The journey moves between nostalgic recovery of memories, surprises and surreal improvisations, mischievous pranks, and moments of tolerance and touching searches for genuineness and sincerity in human relationships.

The driving forces of the story are Doriano, called Dori (Pierpaolo Capovilla) and Carlobianchi (Sergio Romano), two fifty-year-old men who live in a small provincial town and feel adrift after being laid off from the eyeglass factory where they had worked as laborers several years earlier. They are two rogues, living off small, sometimes deceitful schemes: incorrigible alcoholics, not mean or malicious, but rather childish and nostalgic for the 1990s.

One evening they find themselves wandering the streets of Venice. By chance, they meet Giulio (Filippo Scotti), a twenty-year-old Architecture student from Naples, shy and rather reserved, who is on the faculty steps saying goodbye to a small group of university friends after attending the graduation session of Giulia, a student he is secretly in love with. They offer him a ride to Mestre, where he lives, and, thanks to their charm and humorous tales of days gone by, they convince him to join them for the usual "last drink," which never really is the last.

Over the following day and night, they experience a series of delightful adventures. During the long detour, between drives and stops at service stations, the two drinking companions entertain Giulio with stories about Genio, anecdotes, memories, boasts, jokes, and snippets of their day-to-day life philosophy.

Francesco Sossai sets his small "alternative" human comedy within the provincial dimension of Veneto, where the characteristic traits of certain traditions

and localist subculture, consumerism, moralistic propriety, and even certain transgressive euphoria are recognizable. He opts instead for the existential dimension of the coming-of-age novel, oscillating between sketchy and rickety tones and more reflective moments in which the reasons for the hidden inner discomfort of the two mature protagonists emerge, as well as the shift in approach and behavior that Giulio undertakes.

Connections to *My Friends* (1975), Mario Monicelli's masterful dramedy that, however, shows a decidedly different playful and mocking poetics, can be noted. But above all, there is a clear analogy in the narrative structure and in the relationships between very different characters who meet, as present in *The Easy Life* (1962), Dino Risi's masterpiece, which, however, has a tragic ending, entirely opposed to that of *The Last one for the Road*.

*U.S. Palmese*, directed by the Manetti Bros., Marco and Antonio Manetti, is an original and brilliant contemporary fairy-tale comedy set in Palmi, the Calabrian town on the Tyrrhenian coast. It tells an engaging story about ordinary people, their personal and family relationships, and an unexpected, enormous passion for football.

The ensemble story begins during a hot summer season. Twenty-year-old Etienne Morville (Blaise Afonso), of African origin, is a forward, a rising star in international football. He comes from the Parisian suburbs and has been signed by AC Milan. However, due to his bad, quarrelsome character and negative behavior both on and off the field, he is spectacularly dropped from Milan's squad and his contract is suspended.

In Palmi, Don Vincenzo (Rocco Papaleo), a retired small-scale farmer and football fanatic, comes up with an apparently crazy idea and sets about making it happen. The sprightly and petulant sixty-year-old is obsessed with football and spares no effort to raise funds through a subscription open to everyone, aiming to hire Etienne for *U.S. Palmese*, a struggling amateur football

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club. In the end, his plan succeeds. Advised by his agent, Etienne accepts the new contract, secretly hoping to stay in Calabria only for a few months, until the scandal dies down, his misdeeds are forgotten, and he can return to Milan. He arrives in Palmi, greeted by delirious crowds. However, his inability to settle in, opportunistic behavior, demands for privileges, disdain for local customs, and indifference and laziness on the pitch soon dampen all enthusiasm. Meanwhile, Don Vincenzo also faces harsh criticism. Eventually, a turning point occurs in Etienne's relationships with many of the people around him. Marco and Antonio Manetti create an intriguing comedy, especially because it does not follow the classic formula of a fall-and-redemption story typical of sports cinema. They present a bold and fairly successful mix of pop aesthetics and local popular culture, highlighting a varied array of characters and their relationships, weaving together partial character studies, affections, love. conflicts, and grudges. The film also contains delightful references to graphic novel strips and animated cinema, with slow-motion scenes, freeze frames, absurd acrobatics, superimposed animated silhouettes of the goalkeeper, and reminiscences of the atmospheres of certain Italian comedies of the 1950s.

The Council Chamber, by Fiorella Infascelli, is a convincing chamber ensemble drama focusing on criminal justice. It is enriched by a persuasive attempt to give space, without rhetoric, to the identification of the characters and individual stories of the participants. This is a work of civic engagement, a fictional reconstruction of the deliberation room of the most important Sicilian mafia trial of the 20th century.

The Maxiprocesso (Maxi-Trial) took place from February 10, 1986, to November 11, 1987. After 349 hearings, the eight members of the Court of Assizes retired to the deliberation room. The film makes a clear, though non-imitative, reference to 12 Angry Men (1957), the famous courtroom drama by Sidney Lumet.

The film's narrative is limited to an imagined—but plausible—chronicle of the 36 days the deliberation room remained in session, since the actual proceedings are still under secrecy. The eight jurors, the two professional judges, President Alfonso Giordano (Sergio Rubini) and associate judge Pietro Grasso (Massimo Popolizio), along with six lay judges, are perfectly isolated in a bunker-like apartment. It features an octagonal meeting room, spaces for meals, and bedrooms inside the Ucciardone prison.

They must decide verdicts of conviction and acquittal for the 460 final defendants, along with the corresponding motivations. There are four men and four women, who cannot have any contact with the outside world. Television, radio, and newspapers are not available, only thousands of folders, files, and judicial documents. At the start, the President reminds everyone that no jury member can leave and no outsider can enter during the entire period of activity.

The narrative includes moments of tension and confrontation, especially between the President and the associate judge, who clash, for example, over sentences for defendants recognized as mafia members beyond doubt, such as mafia bosses Bernardo Brusca and Giuseppe Calò. Many of the jurors express doubts. After 36 days, the longest deliberation in Italian judicial history, the Court of Assizes possesses the first-instance verdicts for all defendants: 346 convictions, 114 acquittals, 19 life sentences, and prison terms totaling 2.665 years.

Fiorella Infascelli opts for a layered narrative. Collective discussions on sentences and acquittals alternate with more intimate scenes between jurors and judges, often two at a time. The actors portraying the jurors recount their personal and family stories and recall the courage they had to demonstrate, as well as the sacrifices they made over the two-year period of the Maxi-Trial. In *The Council Chamber*, the predominant perspective is one of testimony and civic commitment.

Madly, by Paolo Genovese, is a fast-paced, semi-serious romantic comedy characterized by paradoxical humor, oscillating between problematic communication, psychological confrontation, and sentimentalism. Set in a Roman attic apartment, with a theatrical-style setup, it tells the story, entirely within one night, of the first formal date and potential romantic encounter between a fifty-year-old man and a thirty-year-old woman who had met casually before in a bar.

The film employs a surreal and bizarre live-action narrative mechanism, based on the presence in the minds of the two protagonists of various personalities - emotions that manifest as individuals with bodies and voices occupying a separate physical space. These figures discuss endlessly and animatedly, often disagreeing or opposing each other, striving to dominate one another. They intervene by offering opinions and advice, thereby influencing the thoughts, mental processes, and behaviors of the two protagonists involved in the potential love affair.

Lara (Pilar Fogliati), a thirty-five-year-old furniture restorer, single, seemingly outgoing, accustomed to casual relationships, and recently emerging from an unhappy affair with a married man, has invited Piero (Edoardo Leo), a high school history and philosophy teacher who has suffered romantic disappointments, recently divorced, and father to a restless adolescent, to dinner. Piero is awkward and uncertain about what to expect and how to act.

Their meeting initially goes well, and mutual sympathy seems to exist, but neither has the courage to admit it openly. This opens the door for interference from their various personalities - emotions clashing within their minds: four men and four women.

Piero's advisors: The Professor (Marco Giallini), rational and arrogant; Romeo (Maurizio Lastrico), romantic and tender; Eros (Claudio Santamaria), sensual and passionate; Valium (Rocco Papaleo), disenchanted and paranoid. Lara's

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advisors: Alfa (Claudia Pandolfi), ideological and uncompromising; Trilli (Emanuela Fanelli), sexy and seductive; Sheggia (Maria Chiara Giannetta), irrational and unruly; Giulietta (Vittoria Puccini), romantic and dreamy.

Madly presents a story that is very similar to the famous animated film Inside Out (2015), directed by Pete Docter and Ronnie del Carmen and produced by Pixar Animation Studios in association with Walt Disney Pictures. References and coincidences with Genovese's previous film Perfect Strangers(2016), a successful ensemble comedy widely acclaimed in Italy and worldwide, with 27 remakes across all continents, can be recognized.

Genovese demonstrates a fairly effective use of romantic comedy conventions, incorporating various stereotypes and the usual sex scene. He employs a cast of well-known, versatile, and seasoned Italian actors, aiming to deliver a broadly appealing and engaging entertainment experience for a wide audience.

Giovanni Ottone is an Italian film critic, specializing in Latin American, Iberian, Scandinavian, Turkish, Romanian, and Israeli cinema. He has published articles and essays in various film journals and books in Italy, Great Britain, France, and Brazil. From 2007 to 2016, he served as a consultant to the selection committee of the Pesaro International Festival of New Cinema, and since 2018 he has been a member of the selection committee of the RIFF (Rome Independent Film Festival).



#### Screenings

#### **JOHANNESBURG**

**28 NOVEMBER 2025** 

The Bioscope Independent Cinema - 2:30 pm
THE LAST ONE FOR THE ROAD | Le città di pianura

by Francesco Sossai - duration 98'

Presented by award-winning star Filippo Scotti

**29 NOVEMBER 2025** 

The Bioscope Independent Cinema - 2:00 pm U.S. PALMESE | U.S. Palmese

by Marco Manetti, Antonio Manetti - duration 122'

**30 NOVEMBER 2025** 

The Bioscope Independent Cinema - 13:30 pm

LA GRAZIA | La grazia

by Paolo Sorrentino - duration 131'

#### **CAPE TOWN**

**27 NOVEMBER 2025** 

Bertha House (UCT) / Screening - 10:00 am

THE OLIVE TREE AND THE BAOBAB

L'ulivo e il baobab

by Serena Porta - duration 60'

Presented by scriptwriter and producer Corrado Azzollini

Followed by two Masterclasses

RLabs / Screening - 6:30 pm

U.S. PALMESE | U.S. Palmese

by Marco Manetti, Antonio Manetti - duration 122'

**28 NOVEMBER 2025** 

Cinema Labia / Screening - 6:00 pm HEADS OR TAILS? | Testa o croce?

by Alessio Rigo de Righi, Matteo Zoppis - duration 116'

Cinema Labia / Screening - 8:30 pm

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER | La camera di consiglio

by Fiorella Infascelli - duration 107'

Presented by the scriptwriter Mimmo Rafele

**29 NOVEMBER 2025** 

Cinema Labia / Screening - 6:00 pm

**MADLY | FolleMente** 

by Paolo Genovese - duration 98'

Franschhoek Theatre / Screening - 6:30 pm

U.S. PALMESE | U.S. Palmese

by Marco Manetti, Antonio Manetti - duration 122'

**30 NOVEMBER 2025** 

Cinema Labia / Screening - 6:00 pm

THE LAST ONE FOR THE ROAD | Le città di pianura

by Francesco Sossai - duration 98'

Presented by award-winning star Filippo Scotti

Cinema Labia / Screening - 8:30 pm

LA GRAZIA | La grazia

by Paolo Sorrentino - duration 131'

Presented by Filippo Scotti, award-winning star of Sorrentino's

previous film The Hand of God

1 DECEMBER 2025

Cinema Labia / Screening - 6:00 pm

U.S. PALMESE | U.S. Palmese

by Marco Manetti, Antonio Manetti - duration 122'





## HEADS OR TAILS?

Testa o croce? Directed by: ALESSIO RIGO DE RIGHI, MATTEO ZOPPIS



From Cannes Film Festival, a historical and compelling western set in Maremma, Tuscany! At the start of the 1900s, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show arrives in Italy, sparking a challenge between American cowboys and Italian butteri. Santino, a local farmhand, unexpectedly wins, catching the eye of Rosa, the abused wife of a wealthy landowner. When her husband is killed, Rosa flees with Santino, who is accused of the murder. Pursued by bounty hunters and Buffalo Bill's men, they cross paths with anarchists and dreamers. Between myth and reality, fate is decided by a final "heads or tails" — leaving Rosa to walk her own path.



Cast: Nadia Tereszkiewicz, Alessandro Borghi, John C. Reilly, Peter Lanzani, Mirko Artuso, Gabriele Silli, Gianni Garko Screenplay: Alessio Rigo de Righi, Matteo Zoppis,

Carlo Salsa

Cinematography: Simone D'Arcangelo

Editing: Andres P. Estrada, Jacopo Ramella Pajrin

Set design: Rachele Meliadò

Costume design: Andrea Cavalletto

Music: Vittorio Giampietro

**Producer:** Tommaso Bertani, Alex C. Lo, Filippo Montalto, Massimiliano Navarra, Olivia Musini, Stefano Centini, Agustina

Costa Varsi

**Production:** Ring Film, Cinema Inutile, Rai Cinema, Andromeda Film, Cinemaundici, Volos Films, con il contributo del Ministero della Cultura, con il sostegno di Regione Lazio, Film Commission Torino Piemonte, Toscana Film Commission

Country: Italy / USA

Year: 2025 Film run: 116' Format: colour Festival & awards: Cinema Italian Style - Seattle 2025 | Cinema Made in Italy - Atene 2025 | Denver Film Festival 2025: Special Presentation | Festival de Cannes 2025: Un Certain Regard | Festival do Rio 2025: Expectations | Festival Dolce Cinema 2025: Compétition | Festival du Film Italien de Villerupt 2025: Compétition - Premio degli Esercenti Cinema | Hamburg International Film Festival 2025: Kaleidoscope | Kinomania 2025: Festival del Cinema Italiano | Locarno Film Festival 2025: Piazza Grande | Mar del Plata International Film Festival 2025: Italian Screens | Melbourne International Film Festival 2025: Europe & UK | MittelCinemaFest 2025 | Philadelphia Film Festival 2025: Spotlights | Seminci - Valladolid International Film Festival 2025: Competition - Best Director | Viennale 2025: Features.

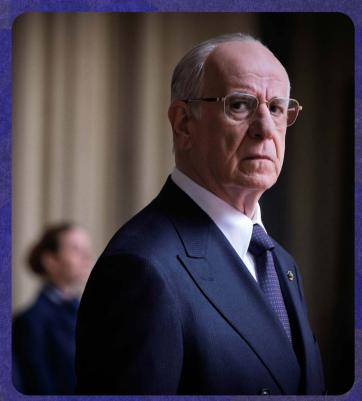


#### LA GRAZIA

La grazia Directed by: PAOLO SORRENTINO

By Oscar-winning director Paolo Sorrentino, one of the most acclaimed films in competition at the 2025 Venice Film Festival, starring the iconic Toni Servillo, winner of the Best Actor Award. Mariano De Santis is the President of the Italian Republic — entirely a product of the author's imagination. A widower and devout Catholic, he shares a close bond with his daughter Dorotea, a legal scholar like himself. As his term nears its end, two petitions for presidential pardon confront him with profound moral dilemmas that intertwine with his private life in unexpected ways. Torn by doubt yet guided by duty, he must make the ultimate decision with dignity and integrity.







Cast: Toni Servillo, Anna Ferzetti, Orlando Cinque, Massimo Venturiello, Milvia Marigliano, Giuseppe Gaiani, Linda

Messerklinger, Vasco Mirandola Screenplay: Paolo Sorrentino Cinematography: Daria D'Antonio

Editing: Cristiano Travaglioli Set design: Ludovica Ferrario Costume design: Carlo Poggioli

**Producer:** Paolo Sorrentino, Annamaria Morelli **Production:** Fremantle, The Apartment, Numero 10

Country: Italy Year: 2025 Film run: 131' Format: colour

Festival & awards: AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival 2025: Luminaries | Athens International Film Festival 2025: Opening Nights | BFI London Film Festival 2025: Journey | Busan International Film Festival 2025: Icons | Chicago International Film Festival 2025: International Competition -

Silver Hugo for Best Screenplay | Cinema Italian Style - Seattle 2025 | Donostia - San Sebastián International Film Festival 2025; Perlak | El Gouna Film Festival 2025; Official Selection Festival Cinéma Méditerranéen de Bruxelles 2025: Avant-Premières | Festival do Rio 2025: World Panorama | Festival Dolce Cinema 2025: Avant-première | Festival du Cinéma Italien de Montélimar - Le Teil 2025 | Festival du Film Italien de Villerupt 2025: Hors-compétition | Hamburg International Film Festival 2025: Kaleidoscope | IFF Italian Film Festival presented by Palace - Australia 2025: Centrepiece | Kolkata International Film Festival 2025: Cinema International | La Biennale di Venezia 2025: Venezia 82 - Film di Apertura - Coppa Volpi (Toni Servillo), Premio Arca CinemaGiovani - Miglior film italiano, Premio Brian, Premio Francesco Pasinetti | LIFFe - Ljubljana International Film Festival 2025: Avantpremieres | Montreal Festival du Nouveau Cinéma 2025: The Essentials | New York Film Festival 2025: Spotlight | Philadelphia Film Festival 2025: Masters of Cinema | Singapore International Film Festival 2025: Horizon | Telluride Film Festival 2025: Main Program.

#### MADLY

FolleMente Directed by: PAOLO GENOVESE

Screened in the Horizons section at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and a hit at the Italian box office, this surprising new comedy from the director of Perfect Strangers features a very talented cast. On their first date in Rome, Piero and Lara are guided by personified versions of their inner selves — from the rational to the romantic. As the evening unfolds, these internal voices navigate the complexities of attraction, vulnerability, and self-doubt Through witty and heartfelt moments, their connection deepens, leading to an unexpected and genuine bond. Madly offers a fresh perspective on modern romance, blending psychological insight with comedic charm.







Cast: Edoardo Leo, Pilar Fogliati, Emanuela Fanelli, Maria Chiara Giannetta, Claudia Pandolfi, Vittoria Puccini, Marco Giallini, Maurizio Lastrico, Rocco Papaleo, Claudio Santamaria Screenplay: Francesco Piccolo, Isabella Aguilar, Lucia

Calamaro, Paolo Costella, Flaminia Gressi

Cinematography: Fabrizio Lucci

**Editing:** Consuelo Catucci

**Set design:** Massimiliano Sturiale **Costume design:** Grazia Materia

Producer: Raffaella Leone, Andrea Leone

**Production:** Lotus Production - Leone Film Group,

Rai Cinema
Country: Italy
Year: 2025
Film run: 98'
Format: colour

Festival & awards: Cinema Italia - Israele 2025 |

Cinema Italian Style - Seattle 2025 | Cinema Italia Oggi - Polonia 2025 | Festa do Cinema Italiano 2025: Panorama |

Festival del Cinema Italiano di Ajaccio 2025: En Compétition | Festival del Cinema Italiano in Giappone 2025 | Festival Dolce Cinema 2025: Panorama | Festival du Cinéma Italien de Montélimar - Le Teil 2025 | Festival du Film Italien de Villerupt 2025: Hors-compétition | Film Fest Gent 2025: Gala & Specials | IFF Italian Film Festival presented by Palace - Australia 2025: Opening Night | Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2025: Horizons | LIFFe - Ljubljana International Film Festival 2025: Avantpremieres | Nuovo Cinema Italiano Film Festival - Charleston 2025 | Shanghai International Film Festival - Haugesund 2025: Main programme | TIFF-Transilvania International Film Festival 2025: Supernova.





### THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

La camera di consiglio Directed by: FIORELLA INFASCELLI

Fresh from the Rome Film Festival, this film, starring the acclaimed actor Sergio Rubini and written by renowned screenwriter Mimmo Rafele, portrays the final act of the largest criminal trial in history: the 1987 Palermo Maxi Trial. Eight jurors, four women and four men, locked inside a deliberation room for 36 days, tasked with convicting or acquitting 470 defendants. Eight people, forced to live together in a small apartment in Ucciardone Prison. All communication with the outside world is cut off: no televisions, telephones or radios. They find themselves imprisoned.





Cast: Sergio Rubini, Massimo Popolizio, Roberta Rigano, Claudio Bigagli, Stefania Blandeburgo, Anna Della Rosa,

Rosario Lisma, Betti Pedrazzi

Screenplay: Fiorella Infascelli, Mimmo Rafele

Cinematography: Fabio Zamarion

**Editing:** Carlo Poggioli

Production: ArmosiA, Master Five Cinematografica, Rai

Cinema, con il contributo del Ministero della Cultura Country: Italy

Year: 2025 Film run: 107' Format: colour

Festival & awards: Festa del Cinema di Roma 2025: Freestyle.



#### THE LAST ONE FOR THE ROAD

Le città di pianura Directed by: FRANCESCO SOSSAI

From the Cannes Film Festival comes a touching comedy and Italian box office success featuring one of the countries most acclaimed new actors, Filippo Scotti. The film tells the story of two broke, bar-hopping fiftysomethings who meet a shy and aimless architecture student. Together, the three men embark...





Cast: Filippo Scotti, Sergio Romano, Pierpaolo Capovilla,

Roberto Citran, Andrea Pennacchi

Screenplay: Francesco Sossai, Adriano Candiago

Cinematography: Massimiliano Kuveiller

Editing: Paolo Cottignola Set design: Paula Meuthen

Costume design: Ilaria Marmugi, Guillem Soler Pou

Music: Krano

Producer: Marta Donzelli, Gregorio Paonessa, Philipp

Kreuzer, Cecilia Trautvetter

#### **Production:**

Vivo Film, Maze Pictures, Rai Cinema, con il contributo del Ministero della Cultura, con il sostegno di Eurimages, Filmförderungsanstalt, Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, Fondazione Veneto Film Commission

Country: Italy / Germany

Year: 2025 Film run: 98' Format: colour Festival & awards: Busan International Film Festival 2025: Flash Forward | Festival de Cannes 2025: Un Certain Regard | Festival de Cinema Italiano no Brasil 2025 | Festival Dolce Cinema 2025: Compétition | Festival du Film Italien de Villerupt 2025: Compétition | Filmfest München 2025: CineCoPro Competition | International Thessaloniki Film Festival 2025: International Competition - Best Feature Film Award, Best Actor Award (Pierpaolo Capovilla, Sergio Romano) | Mar del Plata International Film Festival 2025: Italian Screens | MittelCinemaFest 2025 | Montreal Festival du Nouveau Cinéma 2025: International Panorama | New York Film Festival 2025: Main Slate | TIFF - Toronto International Film Festival 2025: Centrepiece | Vancouver International Film Festival 2025: Panorama | Viennale 2025: Features | VOICES Film Festival 2025 | Bucharest International Film Festival 2025.



#### THE OLIVE TREE & THE BAOBAB

L'ULIVO E IL BAOBAB Directed by: SERENA PORTA

A unique documentary about Italy, Africa, and ancient trees, narrated by the iconic actor and Gladiator Russell Crowe. Presented at the Lecce European Film Festival 2024, The Olive Tree and the Baobab takes viewers from the sun-soaked groves of the Mediterranean to the arid plains of Africa. These two ancient trees embody humanity's enduring connection to the land and its people. Through their stories, the film explores cultural heritage, ecological balance, and the shared challenges of survival in a changing world. With stunning visuals and Crowe's insightful narration, this documentary is a moving journey of discovery and wonder.





Screenplay: Corrado Azzollini Cinematography: Luca La Vopa

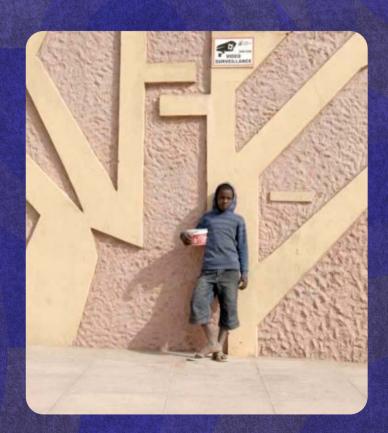
Editing: Claudio D'Elia Music: Kekko Fornarelli

**Producer:** Francesco Cannata **Production:** Draka Production

Country: Italy Year: 2025 Film run: 60' Format: colour

Festival & awards: Festival del Cinema Europeo di Lecce

2024: Cinema e realtà.



## U.S. PALMESE

U.S. Palmese Directed by: MARCO MANETTI, ANTONIO MANETTI

Winner of Best Comedy at the Globi d'Oro 2025, this charming film takes place in Palmi, a small town in Calabria, where Don Vincenzo, a brilliant and retired farmer, comes up with the crazy idea of reviving the local football team. He organizes a quirky fundraising campaign to recruit Etienne Morville, a Serie A player with a difficult temper but extraordinary talent. Although initially reluctant, Morville leaves Milan to move to Palmi and repair his public image. There, he encounters a world grounded in honesty, leading to an unforgettable experience for everyone involved.





Cast: Rocco Papaleo, Blaise Afonso, Giulia Maenza, Claudia Gerini, Gianfelice Imparato, Massimiliano Bruno, Massimo De Lorenzo, Guglielmo Favilla, Aurora Calabresi, Lisa Do Couto Teixeira, Max Mazzotta, Giuseppe Futia, Mario Russo, Luca Attadia, Salvatore Costa, Antonio di Turi, Adriano Fedele, Guillaume De Tonguedec.

Screenplay: Marco Manetti, Antonio Manetti, Luna Gualano,

Emiliano Rubbi

Cinematography: Angelo Sorrentino Editing: Federico Maria Maneschi Set design: Noemi Marchica

Costume design: Ginevra De Carolis

Music: Pivio, Aldo De Scalzi

Producer: Marco Manetti, Antonio Manetti

**Production:** 

Mompracem, Rai Cinema, con il contributo del Ministero della Cultura, con il sostegno di Fondazione Calabria Film

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Commission Country: Italy Year: 2024 Film run: 122'
Format: colour

Festival & awards: Festival du Film Italien de Villerupt 2025: Hors-compétition | Globi d'Oro 2025: Miglior commedia | ICFF Italian Contemporary Film Festival 2025 | IFFR - International Film Festival Rotterdam 2025: Limelight | Festa del Cinema di Roma 2024: Grand Public.





### MASTERCLASSES

# 27 NOVEMBER Bertha House (UCT) CO-PRODUCTION OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS TO EUROPEAN FILM FUNDS

with

Corrado Azzollini: President, Confartigianato Cinema e Audiovisivo

Antonio Falduto: Head, Association of Film Authors

Controluce

Alberto lannuzzi: Filmmaker, DP and Head of Educational

Programs, Association of Film Authors Controluce

#### HOW TO MAKE A TV SERIES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET

with

Mimmo Rafele: scriptwriter of The Council Chamber

#### 28 NOVEMBER AFDA

# OPEN CONVERSATION AND MASTERCLASS WITH STUDENTS AND ALUMNI OF

AFDA, The School for the Creative Economy, 18 Lower Scott Road, Observatory

11:00 AM - OPEN Q&A SESSION AND DISCUSSION ON PRODUCING INDEPENDENT FILMS IN AND WITH EUROPE WITH:

Mimmo Rafele: Screenwriter

Corrado Azzollini: Producer; President, Confartigianato

Cinema e Audiovisivo

Filippo Scotti: Actor; Best Emerging Actor, Venice 2021

Antonio Falduto: President Controluce;

Head of UNIMED Jury (Venice FF)

Alberto lannuzzi: Filmmaker; Festival programmer;

EU-Africa training expert

Stefano Raimondi: CEO, Puntosrt (post-production &

accessibility)

Marta Zani: Production designer; Lecturer, Rome Film

School & University of Padua

12:00 PM - MASTERCLASS BY MIMMO RAFELE: "HOW TO MAKE A TV SERIES FOR THE EUROPEAN MARKET"



#### 1 DECEMBER Nedbank Auditorium, Waterfront

#### INDUSTRY WORKSHOP: CO-PRODUCTION OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS TO ITALIAN & EUROPEAN FILM FUNDS

with

Giulio Mignacca: Consul of Italy in Cape Town

Corrado Azzollini: President, Confartigianato Cinema e

Audiovisivo

Stefano Raimondi: CEO, Puntosrt srl - Post Production

Services

Mandisa Zitha: Director, Encounters

Nadine Cloete: NFVF

David Wicht: Producer, Financier and Co-producer

Khosie Dali: Film producer and Founder of

Miss K Productions

#### CONTROLUCE STAFF

**Antonio Falduto** 

Head, Association of Film Authors Controluce

Alberto lannuzzi

Filmmaker, DP and Head of Educational Programs, Association of Film Authors Controluce

Cape Town Organizing team:
Bettina Elten,
Federica Giovannelli,
Giulia Camerini

Francesca Brasi

Controluce Administration

Marco Fortunati Controluce Graphic Design





# Italian Film OCUS



#### PAST DELEGATES WHO HAVE WALKED THIS JOURNEY WITH US OVER THE YEARS













































