THAT'S ITALIAN!
U of M to host three-film festival, starting April 15

Also returning: Dixon's outdoorsy South Lawn Cinema

Less than two months after the end of the Rhodes College Tournées French Film Festival and some five weeks after the Memphis Jewish Community Center's Morris and Mollye Fogelman International Jewish Film Festival comes another annual movie event with an international perspective, the Italian Film Festival USA at the University of Memphis.

Now in its sixth year in Memphis, the three-film festival begins at 7 p.m. April 5 with "The Legendary Giulia and Other Miracles" ("Noi e la Giulia"), a 2005 comedy written and directed by its star, Edoardo Leo, a filmmaking triple-threat in the comedic tradition of Chaplin, Jerry Lewis and (closer to his home) Robert De Niro. Winner of a best supporting actor award from the Academy of Italian Cinema (which does not have an equivalent of the Oscars), the movie chronicles the misadventures of three friends whose tourism business runs afoul of the camera (an Italian crime syndicate). "Giulia" will be followed at 7 p.m. April 12, by director Edoardo Falcone's "God Willing" ("Se Dio Vuole"), a 2015 comedy about an atheist surgeon (Mazco Gillini) who goes undercover in a monastery to uncover dirt on the monks who have "brainwashed" his son into a desire to become a Catholic priest.

The final film in the series, which screens at 8 p.m. April 15, is "Harlequin" ("Io, Arlecchino"), directed by Matteo Bini and Giorgio Pasotti, a 2014 drama about a handsome young daytime TV host (Pasotti) whose dying father (Roberto Herlitizka — the cardinal in "The Great Beauty") is a long-time theatrical performer in the Italian tradition of "Commedia dell'Arte."

All screenings, which take place in the on-campus University Center Theatre at 499 University St., are free and open to the public. Memphis is one of 13 cities that will host some version of this year's 12th annual Italian Film Festival USA, organized by the Italian Film Festival of St. Louis and the Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago to give wider U.S. exposure to the most acclaimed recent releases of Italian cinema. The event is coordinated in Memphis by Cozetta Gaudenzi, associate professor of Italian at the U of M, with the support of the Memphis chapter of UNICO.

The movies are in Italian, with English subtitles. Coffee and refreshments are provided after the movies, and viewers are invited to stay and discuss the films. For more information, visit www.ianfilmfests.org/memphis.