

Memphis' Italian Film Festival Returns



Screen Visions
John Beifuss
Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENN.

During the 1960s, movies from Italy, created by such visionary auteurs as Fellini, Pasolini and Antonioni, were staples of the art-house cinemas that popped up like cinecybin mushrooms in hip urban centers, university towns and even such minor metropolises as Memphis.

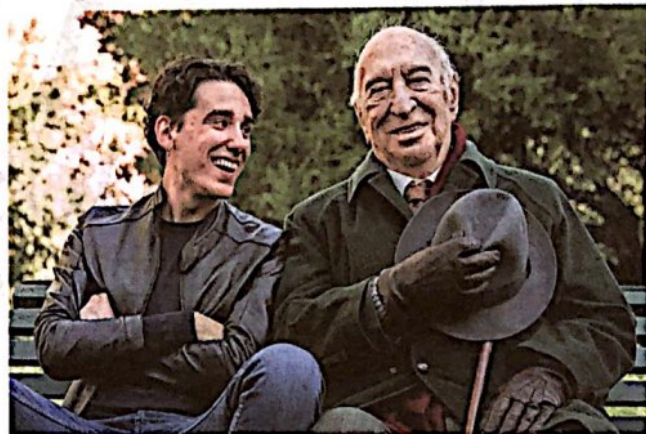
Grindhouses, drive-ins and mainstream commercial theaters also imported their share of Italian cinema, screening dubbed rather than subtitled "Spaghetti" Westerns by Sergio Leone, horror thrillers by Mario Bava, sexy star vehicles with Sophia Loren and "Hercules" muscleman adventures set in Ancient Greece and Rome.

These days, however, American moviegoers have few opportunities to see new Italian (or quasi-Italian) movies in a public venue. Filmmakers such as Palermo-born Luca Guadagnino, whose internationally funded

"Call Me by Your Name" earned worldwide acclaim, and Naples native Paolo Sorrentino, whose Fellini-inspired "The Great Beauty" won the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar for 2013, seem like outliers rather than ambassadors of a diverse national cinema.

Now in its eighth year at the University of Memphis, the Italian Film Festival USA is an annual attempt to correct that disparity — a platform for bringing new movies from Italy to the country that, according to UNESCO statistics, is second only to India in movie theater admissions.

The festival is "a unique opportunity for the Memphis community to be exposed to Italian culture through recent films that are regularly shown only in major American cities like New York and San Francisco," said local festival head Cosetta Gaudenzi, associate professor of Italian in



Andrea Carpenzano (left) plays a young man who takes a job with an Alzheimer's-afflicted poet (Giuliano Montaldo) in "Friends by Chance." IBC MOVIE

the Department of World Languages and Literatures at the University of Memphis.

"With the festival, I aim to employ cinema to open a door to another country that leads beyond the familiar," she said.

Traveling this year to a dozen cities, the Italian Film Festival USA was organized 14 years ago as a touring event by the non-

profit Italian Film Festival of St. Louis. Sponsors include the National Italian American Foundation and the Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago, which explains why the movies are able to be screened free of charge. (Local sponsors include the Memphis chapter of the Italian-American service organization, UNICO, and the U of M.)

This year, as usual, the festival might be more accurately characterized as a mini-fest: The event consists of three movies (in Italian with English subtitles), to be screened in the University Center Theatre at 499 University St. on the U of M campus. (And yes, as stated earlier, admission is free.)

According to Gaudenzi, the three films offer not just "unique perspectives on life in contemporary Italy" but contrasts to the "stereotypes associating Italy with passion, violence and scenic landscape" that characterize such Italy-connected Hollywood productions as "Under the Tuscan Sun" and various gangster films.



Daniele Parisi is a Buster Keaton-like presence in "Ears." 102 DISTRIBUTION

Continued on next page

MOVIE REVIEWS, CAPSULES

Ratings

Motion Picture
Association of
America rating
definitions:

G — General
audiences. All ages
admitted.

PG — Parental
guidance suggested.
Some material may
not be suitable for
children.

PG-13 — Special
parental guidance
strongly suggested
for children under
13. Some material
may be
inappropriate for
young children.

R — Restricted.
Under 18 requires
accompanying
parent or adult
guardian.

NC-17 — No one
under 17 admitted.

Star Ratings

☆☆☆☆
stay home
☆☆☆☆
if you're desperate
☆☆☆☆
has moments
☆☆☆☆
good stuff
☆☆☆☆
don't miss it

Movies

Here are the movies opening in the Memphis area this week, plus special screenings, April 6-12.

Opening Friday

Blockers (R, 102 min.) Parents (including John Cena and Leslie Mann) try to stop their daughters from having sex on prom night. It's a comedy.

CinePlanet 16, Collierville Towne 16, Cordova, DeSoto 16, Forest Hill, Hollywood 20, Majestic, Olive Branch, Palace, Paradiso, Stage, Studio on the Square, Summer Quartet Drive-In.

Chai Mohan Ronga (Not rated, 150 min.) A song-filled Telugu-language romance.

Majestic.
Chappaquiddick (PG-13, 101 min.) Jason Clarke is Ted Kennedy and Kate Mara is the ill-fated Mary Jo Kopechne in this true-life drama based on the 1969 tragedy.

Collierville Towne 16, Cordova, DeSoto 16, Ridgeway Cinema Grill.

Getting Grace (PG-13, 112 min.) A girl (Madelyn Dunder) with cancer crashes a funeral to see what will happen after she dies and ends up instructing the uptight funeral director (Daniel Roebuck) on how to enjoy life.

Wolfchase Galleria 8.

The Leisure Seeker (R, 112 min.) A professor (Donald Sutherland) with Alzheimer's and his cancer-stricken wife (Helen Mirren) embark on an adventurous, comical road trip to the Florida Keys.

Ridgeway Cinema Grill.

The Miracle Season (PG, 101 min.) Helen Hunt plays a tough-love high school volleyball coach in this underdog sports story.

Collierville Towne 16, Cordova, Hollywood 20, Paradiso.

A Quiet Place (PG-13, 90 min.) John Krasinski directs and stars in a horror movie about a family forced to live in silence to avoid attracting the attention of creatures that hunt by sound.

CinePlanet 16, Collierville Towne 16, Cordova, DeSoto 16, Forest Hill, Hollywood 20, Majestic, Olive Branch, Palace, Paradiso, Stage, Studio on the Square, Wolfchase Galleria 8.

Rangasthalam (Not rated, 165 min.) A hearing-impaired man battles the powerful landlords trying to take control of his village in this Telugu-language drama.

Majestic.

Spinning Man (R, 100 min.) A womanizing professor (Guy Pearce) is the suspect when a student goes missing. The supporting cast includes Minnie Driver, Odeya Rush, Clark Gregg and Pierce Brosnan.

Wolfchase Galleria 8.

Special Screenings

The Amendment (PG-13, 88 min.) A retitled reissue of 2011's "Heaven's Rain," in which Mike Vogel ("Bates Motel") and Taryn Manning ("Hustle & Flow") star as real-life siblings Brooks and Leslie Douglass, whose quest for

justice in the wake of their parents' murder led them to become champions of "victims' rights" legislation.

7 p.m. Thursday, Paradiso. Tickets: \$13.50. Visit malco.com.

Beauty and the Beast (G, 84 min.) The 1991 Disney fairy tale that became the first animated film to earn a Best Picture Oscar nomination plays each weekend in April on the giant screen at the Pink Palace.

4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, CTI 3D Giant Theater, Memphis Pink Palace Museum, 3050 Central Ave. Call 901-636-2362 or visit memphismuseums.org for tickets and reservations.

The Bolshoi Ballet: Giselle (Not rated, 140 min.) Filmed live onstage in Moscow, a new production of a romantic ballet partly inspired by Victor Hugo.

1 p.m. Sunday and 7 p.m. Tuesday, Paradiso. Tickets: \$18 (adult), \$15 (child). Visit malco.com.

Continued on next page

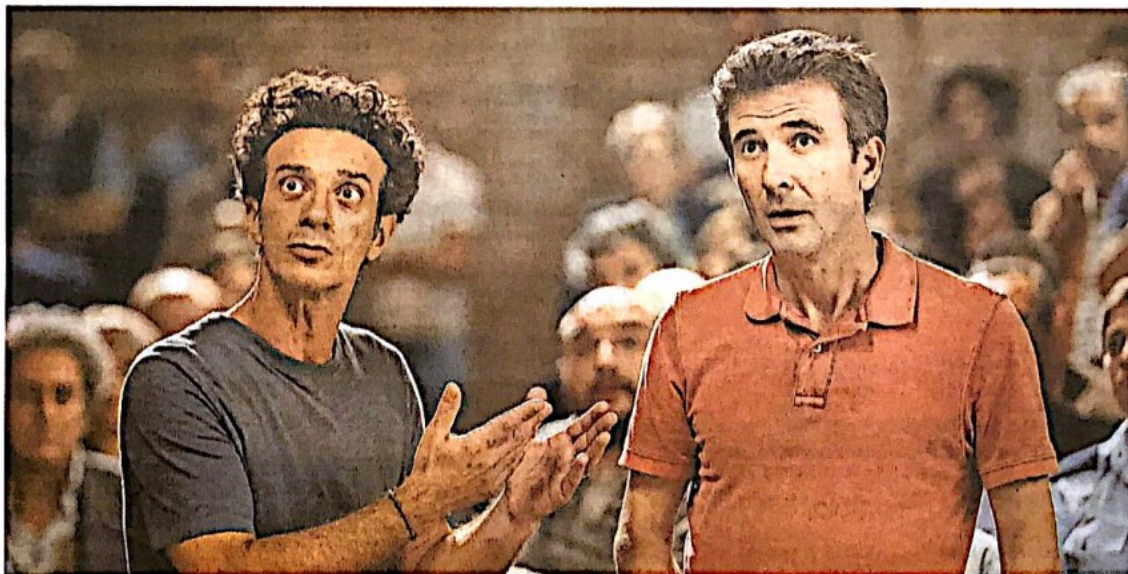
Continued from previous page

Here's the lineup:

"Friends by Chance" — 7 p.m. Monday, April 9. A young man (Andrea Carpenzano) takes a job with an aging, Alzheimer's-afflicted poet (Giuliano Montaldo) whose failing memory contains clues to a hidden treasure in this humanist comedy/drama from director Francesco Bruni.

"Ears" — 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 11. Writer-director Alessandro Aronadio's oddball black-and-white comedy depicts the increasingly strange day-in-the-life of a man (Daniele Parisi) who wakes up to an annoying ringing in his ears and a mysterious message posted on his refrigerator that reads: "Your friend Luigi has died. P.S. I took the car." Reports the website Film Forward: "Kooky and sincere is a tough combination to pull off, but 'Ears' manages it... Parisi's wary sizing up of (the story's) infuriating characters evokes Buster Keaton or the early characters of Jim Jarmusch."

"It's the Law" — 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 18. A smash box-office hit in Italy, this rowdy political satire from director Salvatore Ficarra and Valentino Picone



"It's the Law" was a box-office smash in Italy. MEDUSA DISTRIBUZIONE

stars Tony Sperandio as the crooked mayor of a Sicilian town who is ousted from office by an honest professor (Vin-

cenzo Amato). But do voters really prefer ethics and idealism to glamorous corruption?

For more information, visit italian-filmfests.org/memphis.html.