#00 November 2025



f3 ilm. estival. andom.

profondo cinema

a magazine by Quarta Parete

ORGANIZATION

Editor-in-Chief
Michelangelo Morello

Editor
Francesca Pascale

Editors
- Diletta Coluccia
- Marco D'Agostino
- Tommaso di Pierro
- Sara Mason
- Isabel Musoni
- Laura Piatti
- Jacopo Rampazzo

Graphic Design
Amanda Milaqi

Translation
- Diletta Coluccia
- Laura Piatti

A project by:

QUARTA PARETE


the first magazine by
Quarta Parete

Films, festivals and fandom now seem to form an indivisible trinity. Any discussion of cinema in Italy would be incomplete without these three elements. While new technologies and the spread of knowledge on storytelling have undoubtedly democratised film production and distribution, they have also irrevocably changed its paradigms. An example of this occurred as recently as 2001, when the G8 massacres and the collapse of the Twin Towers were reported not only by broadcasters, but also by ordinary people who found themselves in the midst of those tragedies. Now, more than twenty years later, anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection can produce and distribute video content, and storytelling through moving images has become the most effective form of communication, particularly thanks to social networks. This was evident in the aftermath of the assassination of Charlie Hebdo, when images of the attack were shared on various social media pages without censorship. Local television stations then had to chase after these images and re-broadcast them with the necessary censorship.

As the audiovisual landscape has evolved, the cinema industry has inevitably been affected. While film production has become more streamlined and flexible, the rest of the cinematic ecosystem has not evolved at the same pace. The days when films were mainly —if not exclusively—consumed in cinemas are long gone. The uncontrollable volume of production and the desire to showcase one's work have now pushed creators to seek new distribution channels and shape new markets.Film festivals now seem to be the main places where audiences can experience films that are made using a conscious cinematic language, as evidenced by the large number of festivals that are flourishing in Italy and around the world.Festivals are the natural habitat for enthusiasts of a particular cinematic tradition — a safe space where people can explore their passions alongside others who share the same vision of cinema. The natural outcome of this is the formation of communities that grow and consolidate year after year, often with the unspoken goal of nurturing a shared vision of cinema.

The days when films were mainly, if not exclusively, consumed in cinemas are long gone. The uncontrollable volume of production and the desire to showcase one's work have now pushed creators to seek new distribution channels and shape new markets.

However, social networks have amplified and accelerated the phenomenon of fan culture, with the power to elevate or destroy a figure or project in a very short time.For this reason, we believe that the third term that drives contemporary Italian cinema is 'fandom', a term that identifies a group of people who actively engage with one another and with the creators themselves, rather than passively consuming. Those film industry bodies that can foster participatory dialogue with their audiences and find ways to enhance their projects beyond passive consumption by involving their communities will be the most forward-thinking and resilient.



At **Quarta Parete**, we feel particularly close to this topic, which we have encapsulated in the title F^3, the guiding theme of the first issue of our magazine. The theme will be explored from various perspectives in the following pages, through contributions from our editors and an interview with a promising young production company from the Marche region. However, the future remains uncertain, clouded above all by the lack of dialogue between the different parts of the film industry, which often seem to be moving in opposite directions without a shared sense of purpose.

Michelangelo Morello

"The world began to signify before one knew what it meant: meaning is given without yet being known."

Gilles Deleuze, *Marcel Proust e i segni*, 1964

To attribute meaning to something means to carve a tear into the prose of the world. Quarta Parete, since its founding, has felt the need to communicate, to give voice and sense to things. And what medium is more profound, more universal than cinema to carry out this operation?

Among the metamorphoses of our reality, writing was at first a necessary passage; today, it has become indispensable. With this new editorial project, the magazine [Title], we inaugurate an undertaking that we have cultivated and nurtured synergistically among multiple minds and, after a long gestation, we are finally ready to present it to our audience —to feed it to the public.

For this new project, we chose writing because we feel the need to narrate cinema through all its facets: to write, to write compulsively, in order to give things a name. And by naming things, attempt to understand them.

The semiologist Christian Metz, in Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema, stated:

"There is always a beginning and an end: as if to say that a narrative is a temporal sequence. A sequence twice temporal: there is the time of the thing-told and the time of the telling."

The time of the thing told is our lived experience: retrospectives, festivals, events that for years have seen us engaged in the passionate dissemination of the Seventh Art, the Tenth Muse, however we wish to call it. The time of the telling, instead, is undefined: it begins with these words and will continue as long as young talents and new voices, like those that animate this magazine, have frantic hands ready to write.

The index rerum of Profondo Cinema takes shape through different sections, linked by a fil-rouge: the awareness that, even when we try to separate things, everything always returns to an origin, to an arché. The magazine will open with an editorial dedicated to the reality of Quarta Parete, placed within a historical context rich in contradictions, where the evolution of communication accelerates and becomes unstoppable like a locomotive and inevitably influences both the time-images and movement-images from which cinema takes form. Subsequently [...] there will follow a HOW TO interview with Giungla Collective, a young organization committed to film dissemination like Quarta Parete, where partly analogous approaches intertwine in a vortex. We asked ourselves what the differences and possible synergies might be: a necessary exercise for those who, like us, move forward by questioning themselves.

The Cinema Industry section: after years of festivals — and after creating one of our own — we felt the urgency to address exhibitors as well and to explore what happens behind the scenes of the audiovisual universe.

Prima Visione: the critical section, the beating heart of our work that brings us back to the origins of our digital editorial staff. Since 2022 we have been writing consistently from the most important film festivals, reaching a diverse audience. Here there is space for reviews of debut films, theatrical releases, and new discoveries.

We continue with the essay section: this month we will travel through the myth of Orpheus, from ancient works to the most contemporary ones, with an interlude dedicated to Villoresi and his masterpiece Orfeo, presented Out of Competition at Venice 82; the interview with the director is [...] A journey that could not be interrupted, because cinema must also be investigated with the long gaze of critical thought.

AI and Cinema: a look at the intersections between technology and art, this month with an interview with Davide Bianca and Guido Callegari.

Stop Motion: a fundamental section for the collective, the need to investigate this animation technique has long been rooted in us, even before the birth of the film festival Stop e-Motion Days. Stop motion is not just an animation technique: it is an obstinate gesture, advancing in jolts, like a wounded memory.

With Profondo Cinema we want to explore cinema in all its dimensions, without limiting ourselves to a merely celebratory or hermeneutic approach, but by creating a space in which the Seventh Art can be observed, narrated, and deciphered in all its forms.

Our mission is to narrate cinema as a living language, one that does not reduce itself to a mere imitation of reality, but reworks it, shakes it, and calls it into question. We want to transform images into words, giving them meaning through critical, essayistic, and narrative storytelling.
Our vision is to build an open cultural laboratory in which cinema becomes both mirror and instrument of knowledge. A space where young voices and new perspectives can emerge, creating a community that holds together passion, thought, and creativity.
As Italo Calvino wrote in his Six Memos for the Next Millennium: “imagination is a place where it rains inside.” Our research develops precisely around Calvino’s lesson, when he wrote “imagination is a place where it rains inside,” because with Profondo Rosso we seek to set up. And we want this magazine to be exactly that: a place open to the rain of cinema, capable of receiving and returning the complexity, the wonder, and the necessity of storytelling. We also reflect on the lesson of Czeslaw Milosz, who writes in Annalena: Risking being pedantic, but I know that, dear readers, you will be kind to me and allow me one last important quotation from Annalena by Czeslaw Milosz:

“To whom do we tell what has happened on earth? For whom do we place enormous mirrors everywhere, in the hope that they will reflect something and not vanish?”

Here is our answer: we tell stories so that nothing disappears.

Francesca Pascale

Michelangelo Morello

QP DIARY

What's missing? It might be better to ask what isn't, given QP's potential. So how can we achieve what's missing? Certainly not on our own, that is much clear.



Elena wants to start a publishing house... it feels like a premature step. We don't have solid foundations, neither financially nor editorially. And what would we publish, anyway? Books on cinema? Eh *grazie al cazzo*. Monographs? Everyone already does that, and besides, it's as if writing about cinema were only possible through monographs a legacy of the past, maybe already dead with the disappearance of Il Castoro. And who would we even sell to? We don't have national recognition, nor a writer well-known enough to sell enough copies to at least cover the costs. And honestly, what do we even know about publishing?
Dear diary, the publishing house is a no for now, let's jot it down, maybe will come back to it in ten years but at the moment definitely not.
And then there's the festival we're in the middle of, already a major concern itself. This year it's even harder since we might have set the bar a little too high. But the first edition turned so well, didn't it ? Right now we need to coordinate the selection team, organize all the communication, find a graphic designer (!!!!!!), and that'a real problem. I'm probably forgetting another hundred things. We'll come back to it later.

The press office went well during the SeM in May. Even though it was a first for everyone, they managed just fine.

What's missing at QP? Let's look at it differently: what do we actually have? An editorial team, and plenty of people approaching QP wanting to write. But who could realistically write a book? And does it even make sense to commit someone for months on end, what would the payoff be?
Instead, we could stick with our usual type of publications, but gather them into a single magazine. That already makes more sense. The only catch is we'd need more contributions a monthly magazine with only four articles just won't cut it.

Andrea knows practically everything about stop-motion, he could write about that. It would also tie in nicely with the Festival.
Industry coverage? That's tricky, because we're not journalists yet, but a voice is needed after all, it's no longer taboo to combine topics like economics and culture. What else? Do we have all these writers? How often would we publish the magazine? How many pages would we need?

How would it be laid out? Online or in print? Other questions, doubts, concerns?😕🤯

We're going to do it. The idea is solid and it's time to make it happen. People need room to grow; everyone should have the chance to develop their skills. Do we need to rant about how little space there is for young people? That before even graduating, you're expected to have ten years of experience as a Ferrari CEO just to land a junior role? We all know that already. The apprenticeship in the cultural world? It's probably longer than the first time you watch Sátántangó feels. .

QP should be an accelerator or at least a place where anyone who wants to can express their ideas and skills in cinema, thoughtfully. Most importantly, it should be a space to grow, exchange ideas with peers, and get hands-on experience in the film industry.

We start by recruiting new people the more, the merrier. This way, QP can expand geographically, bringing in people with different backgrounds from beyond the lagoon. But it's not just about us. We already know many other associations and collectives that are active in their communities, creating cultural value. Engaging with them is important, which is why their voices and perspectives on the topics we care about need to be included.
I remember a few years ago, I was finishing my master's, a high school senior called me asking if enrolling in DAMS in Bologna was the right choice to start a career in cinema. He wanted to be a director. Maybe I've mostly faced disappointments myself, but in Italy, establishing yourself as a director isn't a straight path university or academy alone isn't enough. The same goes for any creative profession. I advised him to buy a camera, get 5-6 friends together, and shoot as much as possible on their own, to gain experience.

Working in the cultural sector requires patience and starting early on a long apprenticeship that likely won't end before your 30s. Sadly, this isn't just my opinion, dear diary it's backed by ISTAT data, surveys, and the experiences of people who actually made it. I don't want to bore you, but reflecting on this makes me even more convinced that engaging with other organizations like Quarta Parete, we can learn from each other and join forces to face challenges that many of us recognize.

On top of that, we're living in a time of major technological uncertainty, with AI reshaping the entire industry. This deserves focused attention, so we plan to include a dedicated feature in every issue. Wasn't it all a bit more romantic when we watched films on VHS? 😔

Let's not get carried away by nostalgia. Instead, let's focus on the magazine and the journey each person joining QP could take, and together, let's make it our best.

Michelangelo Morello

INDEX

04 Editorial
by Michelangelo Morello

06 Index Rerum
by Francesca Pascale

08 QP's Diary
by Michelangelo Morello

NextGen - an interview with Giungla Collective by Michelangelo Morello 13

First Insight

Prima Visione is the space dedicated to film critic, where you'll find reviews, reflections and discoveries from the most important festivals.

20 Blue Heron: the fragile relationship between memory and mental health
by Isabel Muson

23 Hot Milk: Rebecca Lenkiewicz between freedom, anger and desire
by Laura Piatti

27 Barrio Triste: Sensory simulation Pack 101
by Diletta Coluccia

Indie observatory

Every film is a journey of thought. With a keen and attentive eye, one can decipher the language of cinema and view the world through this lens alone.

30 Villoresi e Buzzati: comparing poems and visions of Orpheus

INDEX

Stop Motion

We delve into the enduring charm and complexity of an art form that offers a unique vision of cinema as a creative and artisanal act.

42 Animated Découpage : the cinema
by Gianini e Luzzati
by Andrea Piumarta

47 Don't sleep on Stop-Motion!
by Andrea Piumarta

Cinema Industry

This section is dedicated to exploring what happens beyond the screen, from film festivals to cinema exhibitions. It highlights the urgent need for dialogue between everyone involved in the world of audiovisual production.

54 Jurassic Cinema
Evolution of habits between cinema and streaming
by Jacopo Rampazzo

63 Rethinking the film festival of the future
by Marco D'Agostino

71 Animation festivals: a key hub for professionals in the animation industry and beyond!
by Sara Mason

NowAI

We explore the intersection between technology and art, questioning the new narrative frontiers that AI is opening up for us.

78 Interview with Guido Callegari and Davide Bianca
by Michelangelo Morello

Subscribe to the QP newsletter

GIUNGLA COLLECTIVE

APS, NGO, GAL, SRL, SRLS, collectives, SPA and CFP are just some of the many acronyms that describe entities and organisations operating within the cultural and social sphere. Let's try to make sense of them, provide context and, above all, learn from the emerging realities that are carving out their own space in the world of cinema and culture.

At Quarta Parete, by listening to our entire network and the hundreds of people who, like us, are trying to establish themselves in the Italian film industry, we observe an increasingly fragmented, yet diverse, landscape. Many independent entities continue to emerge throughout Italy, in both major cities such as Rome, Bologna, and Turin, and in smaller towns and villages. These entities take various forms, but they all share the same goal: to promote their vision of cinema through production, distribution, and events (such as festivals, reviews, and screenings), as well as through different communication channels (including print, podcasts, radio, and short social videos).

Similarly, we observe how each entity defines its own area of interest and remains true to its own vision of cinema. In this sense, therefore, despite the multitude of subjects not falling under a single umbrella of general coordination and remaining mostly independent, no area involving audiovisual media is neglected.

This promotes the dissemination of film culture in all its forms, satisfying the needs and interests of all audiences.
We have therefore decided to engage with and highlight all the young, promising emerging organisations in the area, in order to exchange knowledge and disseminate useful experiences and information for those wishing to gain work experience in the cultural sector in Italy, particularly in the film industry.

To this end, we spoke with the founding members of Giungla Collective, who specialise in production, distribution and organising film events and festivals. Their journey is particularly interesting, from being a collective to becoming an association and then establishing themselves as an SRL (limited liability company) in 2025 with a registered office in Rome. Francesco Bovara, Andrea Damiano, Giovanni Merlini and Lorenzo Silano, who have been involved in Giungla's activities since the beginning, took part in this interview.





BEFORE WE TALK SPECIFICALLY ABOUT GIUNGLA AND ALL ITS PROJECTS, LET'S MEET THE PARTNERS WHO FOUNDED IT.

Francesco Bovara is an actor who graduated from the Teatro Stabile Acting School in Genoa, where he studied under and met Dario Aita. Alongside his theatre career and his role in Giungla, he has appeared in several of Giungla's short films and two feature films selected for the Venice Film Festival: Welcome Venice (2021) by Andrea Segre and Chiara (2022) by Susanna Nicchiarelli.

Dario Aita is an actor and acting teacher. One of his most notable roles is Sandrino in Paolo Sorrentino's film Parthenope (2024). Despite his greater experience in cinema, Dario shares the vision of the other partners, which is a sign that the issues facing the Italian film industry are being recognised by a large group of professionals. Dario recently joined the Giungla team.

Andrea Damiano is a producer, festival producer and teacher. After completing various production courses, including an evening class at the Civica Scuola di Cinema in Milan where he met Giovanni Merlini, he graduated from the production course at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. He now also teaches there. He has also held the role of CEO for the Giungla Collective company since this year.

Giovanni Merlini is a film director who, alongside Giungla Productions, has made short films including Dulciamara (2020), Che non voleva essere amata (2020), Talafi (2022), Forza e Coraggio (2024), which he co-directed with Francesco Bovara, and Bac sie pawia (2025).

Lorenzo Silano is also a director who has worked with Giungla Productions on films including Bellavista (2019), Fish & Chips (2021), Villa Marina (2022), Il Figlio di Dio (2022), Being Bruno (2023), Batrachia (2024), Analisi sul Territorio (2024) and Memories Printing Device (2025). His debut feature film, Una volta qui era tutta città, is set to be released soon. He is also Giungla's grapic's designer.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT ALL THE STAGES THAT HAVE CHARACTERISED THE HISTORY OF GIUNGLA COLLECTIVE. WHEN WAS IT FOUNDED? WHAT LEGAL FORM DOES IT TAKE? HOW HAS IT EVOLVED? AND WHAT IS YOUR ROLE TODAY?

Andrea: Giungla was founded in San Benedetto del Tronto, in the Marche region, in 2018. Initially, it was a collective, meaning it had no legal form. Instead, it was a group of people who shared an idea and wanted to achieve something together. We started by producing a few short films. They were, and still are, all self-produced, born from the desire of directors Giovanni and Lorenzo in particular. We have always involved various friends and new people who then became friends in turn. The pandemic slowed us down in 2020, but in 2022 we set up a cultural association (APS), which we have only used to organise the Festa del Cinema Pirata. Now in its third year, our festival is aimed at authors under 35. Through the association, we have participated in various public tenders and organised some fundraising events to be able to hold the festival and a few other isolated screenings. This year, we have also set up a company, primarily to develop short and feature film productions. The company is also called Giungla Collective, which is why we are considering changing the association's name to Cinema Pirata, as we mainly use it to organise the festival.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PRODUCTION COMPANY'S CEO?

Andrea: The company is an SRL (limited liability company), even though we initially intended to set up an SRLS (simplified limited liability company) due to the benefits relating to incorporation, management costs and share capital requirements, which can be as low as €1. However, after consulting our accountant, we realised that it would be better to set up as an SRL for a number of reasons. For example, it is possible to access a larger number of public production tenders,

which require a share capital of €40,000 (unlike an SRLS, where the maximum investment is €9,999).

For example, a share capital of €10,000 is often sufficient for making short films and documentaries, but not for fiction. Furthermore, with an LLC, you do not have to pay the minimum required share capital of €10,000 all at once, but can instead put in a quarter of that amount — €2,500, which is what we did — and add the difference year by year using the company's profits, verified at the end of each financial year. As an SRL, we also had greater freedom when drafting the articles of association, enabling us to include various ancillary activities related to production, such as merchandising, graphic design and distribution. For these reasons, we realised that, given our ambitions and activities, it was in our best interests to establish ourselves as an SRL immediately.

Francesco: We also made this choice to pursue our vision of cinema. Today, for a production company, this cannot be limited to production alone; it must also embrace the world of events. To date, we have distributed all our productions ourselves. In other words, the company's objective is to both produce and organise screening events. I believe that, in the future, if we create any cinema products, we will choose how to release them ourselves.

Francesco, I completely agree with you because I see distribution difficulties affecting a wide range of films. Perhaps this is because the current distribution model needs to be revised: it is unable to keep up with the overabundance of production, and it is difficult for everyone to get the right amount of exposure. In my opinion, directors should have a clear idea of their target audience from the outset, which could spark a dialogue involving various stakeholders in the supply chain, such as directors, producers and distributors. This would help to identify the most suitable distribution channels, whether that be cinemas, festivals or other platforms such as streaming services or social media. This seems to me to be a very agile approach to the world of cinema, and is certainly in line with Giungla's modus operandi.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK ANDREA FOR PROVIDING SUCH A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF GIUNGLA. NOW, I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT GIUNGLA MEANS TO EACH OF YOU. I IMAGINE IT MEANS MORE THAN JUST WORK TO YOU; IT ALSO INVOLVES YOU EMOTIONALLY.

Giovanni: Speaking for myself — and I believe this is a shared view — Giungla is, first and foremost, a group of friends. It's a great environment in which to make films, where there is no shortage of emotion or mutual respect. It's perhaps the only way to achieve our goals, because the production and distribution problems we mentioned earlier don't allow you to make films freely. Today, it's difficult to follow the 'established path' of cinema in Italy, and even if you did, there'd be no guarantee that your film would be released in cinemas. So, I believe the right approach is to make films collectively. This doesn't mean doing away with individuality; rather, it means supporting each other's individuality and giving each other what we need. I believe this is the only way to produce quality cinema in 21st century Italy. I also believe that our model is not unique, but can easily be replicated, and that there are already similar models out there.

Lorenzo: Until now, we have had no choice but to explain ourselves or ask permission from third parties whenever we wanted to do something. This approach has many limitations, of course, but it's the only way that allows you to play with the right amount of freedom. For me, it's very important to be able to do what I like and make films in all their forms, as if I were playing.

I'LL TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RESTATE WHAT YOU HAVE ALL SAID IN A DIFFERENT WAY: IS THE FUTURE OF ITALIAN CINEMA MOVING TOWARDS A FRAGMENTED STRUCTURE? IN OTHER WORDS, IS IT MOVING TOWARDS A STRUCTURE MADE UP OF MANY GROUPS, PERHAPS AT A REGIONAL OR PROVINCIAL LEVEL, EACH WITH THEIR OWN COMMUNITY?

OR THROUGH AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM THAT INCLUDES PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND EVENTS, AS IN YOUR CASE?

Francesco: It seems to me that we are moving in this direction. From social media, I can see that many young production companies are moving in the same direction as us, albeit more or less consciously. Currently, we are in the process of attracting the public to our project, which extends beyond the production of a single film. We are keen to share our philosophy, and those who embrace it become loyal to it. Over time, everyone will be able to build audience loyalty. In this sense, I think this is a cutting-edge development in the world of cinema that will become the norm in the near future, encompassing production, distribution and events. It will probably be the only effective method. This is partly because cinema is currently mainly supported by public funds, but who knows if this will still be the case in ten years' time.

Lorenzo: I agree with this view partly because I can't see any other way of doing things and partly because I don't think the traditional way of making films works. However, I don't think this approach will become standard practice. I also don't believe there will be a major shift in this direction, except among those who are already doing it. I think various methods will coexist, and the more traditional approach will undoubtedly continue. Expectations need to be adjusted because, without the means to do something, it is difficult to let people know about your projects and show them to them.

Giovanni: I partly agree, of course, but I don't think we can talk about the avant-garde anymore. It is already a thing of the past because, if we look at recent years, many works have been made on very small budgets and shown in cinemas, but distributed mainly through alternative means, such as social media platforms or YouTube. These works have also been created in a vertical format, as they are intended for viewing on Instagram and similar platforms. Giungla itself has produced Vertigini, a series designed exclusively for Instagram.

We are talking about films that last a few minutes, or sometimes entire movies. In my opinion, this is all part of the democratisation of cinema, a process that the art form has never really experienced before, but which it is now undergoing thanks to new technologies. Another point to consider is whether the filmmaker wants to be satisfied or dissatisfied with the audience they attract. For example, the documentary we are filming now is about an elderly man who lives in Barbarano, a town of around a thousand inhabitants. He makes short, parodic films throughout the year, each about 30–40 minutes long and of questionable quality. He screens these films in the town square to an audience of 400–500 people, which is quite absurd. So cinema is finally breaking away from its industrial paradigm and conforming to what has already happened with other art forms, such as painting. For me, this is cinema, much more so than a film being shown in cinemas.

Lorenzo: I would add that cinema is probably not the best way to portray contemporary life today, but we do it because we enjoy it. It is also more difficult for the public to respect the timing of cinema today, both in terms of waiting for the production and following the film itself.

THEREFORE, I BELIEVE THAT, TO MAKE THIS TYPE OF APPROACH EFFECTIVE, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO FORGE STRONG LINKS WITH THE LOCAL AREA. AT QUARTA PARETE, WE CARE DEEPLY ABOUT VENICE AND, ABOVE ALL, MESTRE. WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SAN BENEDETTO?

Andrea: As an outsider, I can say that I found a provincial microcosm that, while not particularly rich in cultural initiatives, is very interested in cinema. This was evident both when we carried out production projects and during organised events.
In fact, in 2023, we managed to reopen the Cinema delle Palme, which had been closed for over 10 years, for two sold-out screenings of Re Granchio in the company of the film's directors, Alessio Rigo de Righi and Matteo Zoppis. We wanted to organise a series of screenings as part of a festival called 'Altra Marea' (Another Tide), but since holding one screening per month would be too expensive, we transformed our

original idea into the Festa del Cinema Pirata (Pirate Film Festival). This festival is dedicated to films directed by Italian filmmakers under the age of 35. We do not impose any length restrictions on the films we select because Cinema Pirata aims to be a safe haven for filmmakers and enthusiasts looking for an informal alternative to the film industry. This allows them to operate outside the system and support each other.

Francesco: Everything we have done so far as Giungla has happened in a completely natural way. Giovanni and I certainly feel more connected to the community now than when we were growing up in San Benedetto. We have always involved our friends, and this approach has resulted in something unique being created in this area. Over time, collaboration with the local community has become important to everyone and is now part of the city. Furthermore, this collective dynamic, based on friendships and growing organically from the ground up, has allowed us to learn from our mistakes without too much external pressure. This is partly because, as I said before, there were no other cultural initiatives of this kind in the city before we arrived.

In particular, two projects highlight your strong connection to the local area. We have already mentioned the Festa del Cinema Pirata (Pirate Film Festival) in terms of events, but I must also mention the production of the short film Forza e Coraggio (Strength and Courage), which was made using found footage.

CINEMA PIRATA IS NOW IN ITS THIRD YEAR. HOW HAS IT EVOLVED SINCE 2023?

Francesco: The first year was a complete experiment, very artisanal, and it has maintained this level of craftsmanship and spontaneity, which keeps us active and responsive to the unexpected. In this sense, it is and will always be a young festival. Compared to the first edition, we changed location this year, moving to Palazzina Azzurra — another iconic San Benedetto venue — where we organised screenings of the films in competition and masterclasses with guests.

Andrea: As mentioned earlier, Cinema Pirata is a festival that promotes a certain type of cinema. Rather than featuring the big names of Italian cinema, it gives space to new talent and rewards originality. It is therefore difficult to engage those who are neither enthusiasts nor fans of Giungla, nor experts in the field, because it is not in our nature to invite established Italian cinematic personalities who can guarantee a full house at their event. For this reason, it is very difficult to actively involve institutions. During the first edition, we invited Matteo Alfonso, who runs Cinema Gioiello in Genoa — one of Italy's most significant venues and an example of how to revitalise a place and offer cinema in a successful yet unconventional way. However, I realise that he is not such an appealing name for institutions. Instead, we are thinking of setting up a summer school where fifty young people could spend three days at the seaside talking, learning and watching films together.

HOW IS THE PIRATE FILM FESTIVAL ORGANISED? HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED, AND WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Giovanni: The four of us are all involved in the artistic direction and constantly consult each other, particularly during the selection phase. After that, our roles become more specific: I take care of logistics and hospitality, Francesco handles relations with the municipality, Andrea is in charge of communications and social media, and Lorenzo takes care of graphics.

Andrea: During the festival, we employ around twenty people, including long-standing collaborators and new acquaintances who share an interest in cinema and other areas. A community has formed around Giungla's activities, and its members lend a hand at the festival and during our productions. Despite the limited funds we received this year, we were able to reimburse everyone who helped us.

Francesco: Regarding economic and financial resources, we collaborate with both the public and private sectors. However, I would like to highlight that the Marche Region did not publish a call for proposals to support film festivals this year, which has placed us in a challenging position. In previous years, we were successful in obtaining funding. We spent a total of around €15,000 to put this edition together. My advice would be to think creatively about where to find resources — there are many avenues you can explore.





Foto di Luca Apolloni

Le vostre produzioni, da Dulciamara, Che non voleva essere amata a Bellavista, da Being Bruno a Talafi e molte altre, sono state tutte realizzate a San Benedetto e dintorni. Il cortometraggio che omaggia davvero la città è Forza e Coraggio.

HOW DID YOU WORK ON CREATING A FILM THAT FITS PERFECTLY INTO THE PARADIGMS OF THE ITALIAN CINEMA OF REALITY MOVEMENT?

Francesco: The short film is a Giungla production, created in collaboration with the AAMOD archive and the Zavattini Prize partner archives. We won a Zavattini Prize competition, receiving the "Ugo Adilardi" special mention, which enabled us to start production. It is archival work: we searched for and repurposed images to shed light on the history of Sambenedettese, the historic football team from our city. The search for images was carried out in two stages by two people with different sensibilities: myself and Giovanni. I am very attached to this team, and I am happy with the result. I couldn't bear the idea of disappointing the community that has always supported the team, and I felt a great sense of responsibility. Our journey began with the collection of oral testimonies, with no initial intention of creating a short film. Then Giovanni's sensitivity and directing skills came into play, translating everything we collected into a cinematic product. This was followed by archival research and editing work that reconstructed the story we wanted to tell.

GIVEN RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND THE QUESTIONS THAT VARIOUS PRODUCTION COMPANIES, ESPECIALLY THE MAJOR HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS, ARE FORCED TO ASK THEMSELVES ABOUT ITS USE, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU ONE LAST QUICK QUESTION ABOUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

Andrea: We have two short films in the pipeline that use artificial intelligence, but in a non-invasive way. Both were made by Nicola Eddy, an external director. The first, How to Write (2025), is an AI guide in four steps, in which the narrating voices were created using AI, and the short film's theme revolves around the use of artificial intelligence. The second is titled From the Sewers (2025) and will be released shortly.

Both the voices and the images were generated using AI. The archive images are real, but were subsequently modified and animated using AI.

Thank you so much, guys! Your story is invaluable to us and we hope that it will inspire others in the film industry who are looking for a more sustainable way to work.

Michelangelo Morello





Photos by Luca Apolloni



BLUE HERON

the fragile relationship between memory and mental health

There are films that do more than tell a story, they seem to whisper a message to the soul of the viewer, as if trying to fill a void or give shape to an emotion that defies words. Blue Heron belongs to this rare category of works capable of transforming intimacy into a universal language. It is a film that moves with the delicacy of a resurfacing memory, where emotion becomes the true protagonist and time flows, carrying fragments of life, pain, and reconciliation.

With Blue Heron, winner of the Best First Feature award at the 78th Locarno Film Festival, Sophy Romvari brings to the screen a fragment of her own past, transforming an intimate family experience into a universal narrative about memory, fragility, and connection. The film marks a courageous debut in which the director tackles complex themes with grace, merging the personal and the collective to create a work that resonates far beyond its own story.

At the heart of the narrative is Sasha (Eylul Guven), an eight-year-old girl who has just moved from Hungary to Vancouver with her family. Her curious and observant gaze does not miss the behavior of her older brother, Jeremy (Edik Beddoes), whose restlessness and sudden manic episodes break the domestic calm, revealing a deep and often misunderstood unease. Romvari depicts the family dynamic with sensitivity: there is no judgment or easy explanation, but rather an empathetic look at the everyday challenges faced by a family when one of its members experiences a moment of mental fragility.

This first temporal arc is interrupted by the arrival of an adult Sasha, who seeks to reconstruct the past through photographs, recordings, small objects, and fragments of memory.

THE TRANSITION FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD IS NOT JUST A CHANGE OF TIME; IT IS A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY AND RECONCILIATION.

IThe transition from childhood to adulthood is not merely a leap in time but a process of searching and reconciliation: the protagonist tries to make sense of what was once incomprehensible, to fill in the blanks, and to confront the shadows of the past.

Romvari skillfully blends elements of documentary and magical realism, creating a unique cinematic language that alternates between quiet observation and moments of profound intimacy. The director shows us that memory is never objective, it is made of silences, omissions, and perceptions filtered through time. What was once confusion or pain acquires new meaning over the years, and it is in this process of re-elaboration that the film's cathartic strength lies: to heal a wound, one must first reopen it.*Blue Heron* thus becomes an intimate and universal reflection on the fragility of memory and the ability to transform remembrance into an act of care.
Through the bond between siblings, the small gestures of daily life, and the silence within the family, the film suggests that looking at one's past does not simply mean reliving it, but recognizing it and giving it the space to heal. In this sense, Romvari's debut is not only a remarkable technical and narrative achievement but also an invitation to look gently at the visible and invisible wounds each of us carries.

Mental illness does not concern only those directly affected, but deeply involves the entire family unit. The emotions of young Sasha, love, fear, confusion, echo as a mirror of many other silent experiences and unspoken sufferings that often remain invisible to adult eyes. In this sense, Sophy Romvari's film invites us to break the taboo that still surrounds mental illness, refusing to relegate it to the margins of silence, while at the same time exposing a generation that has often been unable to see and understand what was right before it.

Like Aftersun by Charlotte Wells, Blue Heron is born from a profoundly intimate gesture: the desire to translate vulnerability into visual language. Both films look at the past through the eyes of those who try to understand it years later, portraying memory not as a simple recollection but as a sensory experience made of light, movement, and suspension.

In this sense, Sophy Romvari's film invites us to break the taboo that still surrounds mental illness, refusing to relegate it to the margins of silence, while at the same time exposing a generation that has often been unable to see and understand what was right before it.

Like *Aftersun* by Charlotte Wells, *Blue Heron* is born from a profoundly intimate gesture: the desire to translate vulnerability into visual language. Both films look at the past through the eyes of those who try to understand it years later, portraying memory not as a simple recollection but as a sensory experience made of light, movement, and suspension. However, while *Aftersun* drifts in the melancholy of what can no longer be touched, *Blue Heron* takes a different path: it does not merely evoke loss but transforms memory into a space where affection remains alive, suspended between present and past.

Within the context of the Locarno Film Festival, *Blue Heron* proved to be a film capable of sparking reflection on the many ways we interpret mental fragility. The story revolves around a troubled boy and suggests that the director builds her narrative on a struggle that is not merely behavioral but profoundly human. This perspective highlights how complex it remains to recognize and name mental fragility as an integral part of reality rather than as a mere character trait.
In this sense, *Blue Heron* does not demand forced empathy, but attention.

The film speaks to the difficulty and urgency of confronting prejudice, reminding us that mental health does not belong to the realm of exceptionality but to everyday life. Understanding it requires active listening and a language capable of navigating complexity. In a cinematic landscape that often simplifies or sensationalizes suffering, Romvari's film instead chooses the path of intimacy and respect.

To observe fragility not as a flaw but as a ground of shared humanity becomes the very heart of the experience the film offers, a space where understanding and care can truly meet.

Isabel Musoni





HOT MILK:

Rebecca Lenkiewicz between freedom, anger and desire

Rebecca Lenkiewicz identified Hot Milk as the ideal project to give voice to a profoundly feminine story of considerable psychological complexity. The British playwright and screenwriter thus chose to make her directorial debut by adapting Deborah Levy's novel into future film. The film chronicles *the experiences of Sofia* , a young woman who acts as a caregiver for her mother, Rose, afflicted by a mysterious condition that enables her both physically and mentally. The narrative delves into the intricacies of the mother-daughter bond, the pursuit of self-determination and the necessity for emancipation, themes that resonate seamlessly with Lenkiewicz's directorial sensibility. When she entered the production room, she had not planned to discuss directing, yet she felt compelled to do so. She stated that she would only be willing to accept the adaptation if she were given the opportunity to direct it herself. Christine Langan, the executive producer, accepted the proposal. This marked the start of a journey that for Lenkiewicz went far beyond a simple professional assignment. It was an opportunity to preserve the authentic voice of a story to which she felt deeply connected.

For the script adaptation, Lenkiewicz opted to set the story in Greece. Filming in this location was an unforgiving experience. Despite the stunning landscape, temperatures exceeded 45 degrees and there were ongoing fires, which threatened the production. However, these very difficulties became a source of inspiration. The relentless sun, the sea and the Mediterranean atmosphere were transformed into narrative elements, contributing to images of extraordinary emotional intensity. On set, the director collaborated closely with an exceptional cast: Emma Mackey, Vicky Krieps and Fiona Shaw embodied the "triad of women" who drive the story, each with a distinct and magnetic performance, enriching the complexity of relationships on screen.

The title Hot Milk encapsulates the entire emotional and sensual tension of the film. For Lenkiewicz, it represents maternal warmth, reassuring yet painful at the same time, and the intensity of the bond between mother and daughter, suspended between love and the desire for emancipation, care and frustration. Sofia harbours a deep affection for her mother, yet senses the urgent need to break free from the emotional dependency she feels. Her growth journey is made up of progressive gestures, as simple as they are concrete: from the scene where she breaks the dishes to the most intimate choices of her life. Her relationship with Ingrid, portrayed by Vicky Krieps, serves as a catalyst for transformation.

INGRID REPRESENTS A POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE, AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE UNEXPRESSED DESIRES AND EXPERIENCE A NEW FORM OF FREEDOM.

Both her mother and her lover have a significant impact on Sofia, yet she refuses to be overwhelmed. She learns to define her own boundaries, recognise her own voice, and claim emotional autonomy. The jellyfish, a recurrent symbol throughout the film, is a potent metaphor for both pain and rebirth. Sofia experiences a sense of revitalisation after coming into contact with the creature. This sensation of pain is transformed into experience, almost as arite of passage towards freedom: a gesture that intertwines fear, sensuality and courage. For Lenkiewicz, the jellyfish becomes an emblem of defiance and rebirth, representing a necessary pain to understand life and free oneself from the constraints imposed by others. For the director, this personal journey becomes the expression of a universal theme: that of freedom and choice, still at the heart of women's struggle today.



IThe film methodically follows Sofia's emotional progression. The cinematography conveys the heat of the locations and the protagonist's inner oppression, while the night-time sequences and carefully lit interiors reveal her fragility and constant tension. The climax is reached when Sofia finally unleashes her repressed emotions; anger, pain and frustration intertwine in a sequence that is both frightening and liberating. Here, the young woman undergoes a profound transformation, liberating herself from the constraints imposed by others and fully accepting herself in an explosion of life and awareness. The performances complement Lenkiewicz's artistic vision. Emma Mackey's commanding performance on screen ensures that Sofia is portrayed with both vulnerability and strength, in every subtle nuance. Fiona Shaw's performance as Rose is notable for its depth and authenticity, capturing both the complexity of her character and the authentic emotional pain she experiences. In contrast, Vicky Krieps's portrayal of Ingrid is magnetic and enigmatic, with the capacity to profoundly impact the protagonist. The three actresses form an intense and emotionally powerful female triangle, guiding the viewer through a journey of anger, love, desire and liberation. The film represents more than a mere literary adaptation; it is an opportunity to translate the intricacies of human relationships, the psychological depths of the characters and the sensuality of intimate moments into visual images. Lenkiewicz's direction is empathetic and attuned to emotional detail, transforming the written page into a memorable visual and sensory experience. This confirms her as an author and director who can capture the deepest nuances of the human soul.

In Hot Milk, Rebecca Lenkiewicz explores the concept of femininity not as a unified identity, but as a fractured territory, riddled with tensions, repressed desires and emotional dependencies. The narrative is centred on the complex relationship between a mother and daughter, depicted as being entrapped in a symbiotic and ultimately destructive dynamic. Within this relationship, love is portrayed as being conflated with emotional blackmail, and care is depicted as a form of oppression. Rose's condition becomes her tool of power, insofar as she performs fragility to gain control, using her suffering as a weapon.Conversely, Sofia, who is confined within the role of an unwelcome caregiver, perpetually oscillates between pity, anger and guilt. The subject exhibits a dichotomy of sentiments, simultaneously demonstrating profound devotion and a concomitant sense of impatience. This internal conflict can be interpreted as a metaphor for the subject's entanglement in her own emotional bondage, wherein she functions as both a victim and an accomplice in her own captivity

Lenkiewicz's approach to depicting this dynamic encompasses both dialogue and a meticulous visual composition. Sofia's body is frequently captured in rapid, nervous movement, yet she is confined within tight, almost suffocating shots. The landscape that envelops the protagonist becomes either indiscernible or a painted backdrop, reducing the protagonist to a caged animal. This visual claustrophobia is counterpointed by the clear, open sea of the Spanish coast, which is symbolic of both freedom and regression. This image serves as a poignant representation of the multifaceted nature of the



Can someone break free from their mother without repeating her violent behaviour?

mother-daughter relationship, characterised by a delicate balance between its protective and confining aspects . The encounter with Ingrid appears to offer Sofia an opportunity for escape, a chance to access an alternative form of femininity characterised by eroticism and freedom from conventional caring responsibilities. However, even this bond proves to be unstable and ambiguous. Ingrid is not salvation, but a mirror image of Rose: charming and manipulative, present and elusive. Lenkiewicz thus avoids aliberating rhetoric oflesbian desire, framing it not as an answer but as further ground for negotiating emotional power.

The film's thematic underpinning revolves around a fundamental question: is it possible for individuals to liberate themselves from the influence of their mother without perpetuating her form of violence? The final act of abandonment, in which Sofia leaves Rose alone and defenceless in the middle of a dark street, can be interpreted as both an act of self-determination and cruelty. The question remains whether the objective is emancipation or revenge. In this context, femininity is not depicted as a serene quality, but rather a state of perpetual strife. The director does not seek redemption. Instead, she demonstrates that women's emancipation does not stem from mere gestures, but rather from fissures. This process of self-conquest can entail a renunciation of the elements that initially defined our identity. Hot Milk confirms Rebecca Lenkiewicz as a director of great sensitivity and courage, capable of transforming complex literary material into films that are intense and layered. The film explores family ties, personal growth and the desire for freedom in depth, without ever trivialising the characters' emotions. The director's artistic approach is characterised by a meticulous selection of visual elements, delivering performances of notable strength and an elegant symbolism, exemplified by the jellyfish motif. This artistic strategy enables the creation of an experience that is simultaneously intimate and universally resonant. Hot Milk is a noteworthy directorial debut, offering a poignant reflection on the resilience and fragility of women, the fortitude to confront adversity, and the potential for rejuvenation. It leaves the viewer with a profound sense of the intricacies and splendour of the human spirit.

Laura Piatti



BARRIO TRISTE:
Sensory simulation Pack 101

WARNING: You are about to read about an EDGLRD production — the digital house founded by Harmony Korine — known for its pioneering approach to the use of artificial intelligence and experimental visual narratives. Following *Aggro Dr1ft* (2023) and *Baby Invasion* (2024), which were presented by EDGLRD in the Out of Competition section at the Venice Film Festival, comes ***Barrio Triste*: the first feature film by Colombian video maker Stillz**, presented this year in the Orizzonti section. Just like the others, **it is not a film but a "blinx"**: an audiovisual product that hybridizes the cinematic language with other media logics, ranging from gameplay to advertisements and livestreaming.

Barrio Triste stands out for its meticulous **artistic finishing**, which is prioritized over the development of themes and plot, aiming to make the viewer interact with the proposed simulation. Sensory stimulation drives the experience: a frantic flow of images and sounds that produces a hypnotic effect and drags the viewer into an alternative reality, without the use of a controller. In this context, Arca's music proves to be fundamental: it guides us on the journey and acts as an important channel that will bring our breath to the same frequency as that of the barrio to allow us to truly live the "blinx."

We are the main players, the Barrio is our hub (the operational zone, the true protagonist). Stillz's narrative, on the other hand, offers us a subjective point of view (POV), an **immersive threshold** designed to facilitate emotional entry and create a momentary sense of belonging. We travel the streets and the labyrinthine structure of a neighborhood in Medellín in the company of one of the youth gangs forced by organized crime into a fragmented existence and to fight for their survival; the immediate future is a denied luxury, the present is an anxious wait before disappearing. This **illogical condition**, which has marked them since birth, manifests itself in the breathless rhythm of an unstable camera that seems to obsessively repeat the same frames. The technique is the synthesis for a physiological, all too human need that we succumb to: the urgency of telling one's story. If we end up hyperventilating with the Barrio, it is because in its panting rhythm we find expression and redemption from its invisibility.

The simulation's opening cinematic is **the theft of a camera** from a television crew. Three pixels are burned out in the conflict: a **glitch** that remains visible for the entire duration of the film, a permanent wound in the frame that disproves and tears apart the neutral narrative imposed by the crew.The camera then passes into the hands of the gang. Arca's frequencies signal that we have entered their world. The nocturnal shots, hand-held and in long sequence shots, delve into the black bowels of this infected carcass. It is here that economic pressures and crime trigger a social mutation that literally swallows the youths into the urban fabric. The **lo-fi rendering**, a direct echo of Stillz's editing, becomes a visual manifesto of reality: a Barrio that, as a genetic anomaly, pulses and tries to survive like a parasite, feeding on the lives of its inhabitants on the margins of a saturated megalopolis constantly engaged in rejecting it as a foreign body.

Although the "blinx" initially leaves one disoriented, some visual elements, such as the discovery of footage in the opening cinematic and the interviews with the protagonists, help frame the nature of Stillz's filmic work as a **mockumentary**. The appearance of fantastic elements in the final part further resolves the confusion between the authenticity of the documentary and the evident manipulation of the staging. An interesting premise is presented to the viewer, one that fully captures the experimental tones promised by EDGLRD: the work not only commits to telling the story of the barrio but rises to a meta-narrative reflection on the methods and possibilities for doing so.

A 'BARRIO' THAT, LIKE A GENETIC ANOMALY, PULSATES AND TRIES TO SURVIVE AS A PARASITE, FEEDING ON THE LIVES OF ITS INHABITANTS ON THE MARGINS OF A SATURATED MEGALOPOLIS THAT IS CONSTANTLY STRIVING TO REJECT IT AS A FOREIGN BODY.



The result has a **visceral appeal,** stemming from the on-screen alternation of two strongly identity-driven creative forces, **both of which are foreign to the world of cinema**. On one side, there is **Arca**, a composer of experimental electronic music, and on the other, **Stillz**, a video maker (known for Rosalía and Bad Bunny) renowned for his analog rendering. Their work, certainly experimental compared to the cinema experienced in theaters, guarantees an extrasensory experience on a more conventional formal framework that takes shape through certain narrative techniques already explored by Harmony Korine: fragmented storytelling, the pop aestheticization of decay, visual overexposure, and the exploration of the glitch hidden within normality. This is how a distinctive aesthetic is established, in response to a wholly modern need for immediacy of the image, representing an example not only of **Pop Art** but, above all, of **ArtPop**. If the former elevates the image of consumption to a work of art, the latter bends more complex artistic language to the popular dimension, emphasizing the manipulation of style and the creation of identifying signs. Barrio Triste could go viral with edited clips on TikTok: it aligns perfectly with today's cultural consumption; its strong visual component offers elements that, by becoming symbols, immediately create resonance within a precise aesthetic usable for the construction of a group identity, in a media landscape where representability equates to resonance. Yet, paradoxically, the feature **does not translate into an easily distributable product**.

As modern as the narrative may seem, the film tends to repel the viewer and is suitable only for specific viewing contexts. Its fruition requires, in fact, not only a certain patience but also a silent and completely bare environment, and what better place than the cinema hall. This aspect further elevates the work because it demonstrates how the cinematic language receivable in the theater is not exhausted by the forms of classical découpage, but can instead also be expressed through unknown grammars.
Despite its challenges, **the work grips the viewer**. This is because, although Barrio Triste may seem innovative and off-putting, **it is actually the most conventional among EDGLRD's blinx**. Drawing on formal choices inspired by Harmony Korine, **it emulates a specific cinematic tradition of rupture and experimentation**, with American precedents such as Gummo, Julien Donkey-Boy, and Trash Humpers.

One of the most effective formal choices is the decision **to present a real lived experience through simulation** (rather than the other way around, as in Aggro Dr1ft and Baby Invasion). Here, the barrio possesses an autonomous existence independent of the viewer's presence. This premise grants it immediate historical and narrative depth, as well as a stronger sense of engagement. Finally, **there is the sustained and caustic exposure to the material**. In the absence of a traditional narrative, this overexposure imprints the work indelibly on the viewer's mind, explaining how an initially off-putting experience can become the most **memorable aspect**. Both approaches succeed because they continue to work on the viewer's mind long **after viewing**.

Barrio Triste is a debut that asks us to renegotiate the boundaries of film language, redefining our very sensitivity to fruition. In its experimental and somewhat alienating nature, it requires silence and patience to bring cinema back to its original breath: the one felt only together, in the dark. We must be ready to welcome it into theaters without too many questions: we have to let ourselves be permeated. The work leaves something that arrives later, like a light burn that is only felt belatedly.

Diletta Coluccia



VILLORESI E BUZZATI:

comparing poems and visions of Orpheus

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Western culture, the myth of Orpheus has always held a sublime fascination, subject to numerous interpretations over the millennia. The story of the singer who descended into hell for love, with the intention of saving his beloved Eurydice, ended up influencing and shaping multiple narratives in various arts and fields: from painting to sculpture, from music to literature, from theatre to cinema.

Orpheus has always been, in fact, the quintessential empty vessel through which poetry passes, transcending the human to yearn for the divine and triumph over death. If we focus exclusively on the literary side, it is impossible to analyse here the influence of the myth of Orpheus on the history of art, but already in Euripides' Alcestis, first performed in 438 BC, we can find the figure of Orpheus in that of Admetus, king of Thessaly, who, after his beloved wife Alcestis sacrifices herself for him, wishes to descend into the underworld to bring her back to life. In Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica, dating back to the 3rd century BC, the poet Orpheus is explicitly named as one of the companions of the hero Jason on his journey in search of the Golden Fleece. On board the ship, Orpheus' singing "proves to be a powerful weapon, capable of calming storms and enchanting even the most ferocious creatures", as well as "protecting the crew from the dangers of the sea and the mythical creatures that inhabit it".

However, the story of Orpheus as we know it today was defined by two fundamental authors of Latin literature, Virgil and Ovid, the former narrating it in Book IV of the Georgics, the latter in Books X and XI of the Metamorphoses. One myth, two almost identical visions, which differ, however, in the emblematic ending, which coincides with the second and final death of Eurydice, as harsh and bitter in Virgil as it is sweet and compassionate in Ovid. However, changing the order of the addends does not change the result: the poignant death of his beloved will inevitably lead to the more brutal and bloody death of Orpheus, whose only fault is that he was overcome by desire. Like all of us.

Centuries later, the story of Orpheus inspired the little-known but valuable Sir Orfeo, a small gem of English verse dating back to the 14th century, in which Orpheus becomes a valiant king who must deal with the abduction of his lady Heurodis by the King of the Fairies, only to rescue her with the human power of music alone. A delicate and refined rewriting of the myth of the singer, attributable to the romance genre, steeped in magical folklore and with an unusual happy ending that deserves to be rediscovered.
Sir Orfeo, however, is not the only opera to rewrite the Greek myth and give it a happier ending. Fast forwarding to the opera Orfeo ed Euridice (1762) by German composer Christoph Willibald Gluck, it is Cupid himself who intervenes to bring the young Eurydice back to life and give a happy ending to the story of these two ill-fated lovers.

Later still, the myth of Orpheus seems to pervade 20th-century prose and poetry even more deeply. In Paris in the early decades of the 20th century, Paul Valéry was "among the first to see in Orpheus a civilising function that is one with the ideal of poetry", while Guillaume Apollinaire published his first organic collection of verses in 1911: Le Bestiaire ou cortège d'Orphée (1911), dedicating it to the Greek poet. Next came the poet and playwright Jean Cocteau, who, with his Orphée (1926), "dressed Orpheus in modern clothes on the theatrical stage, embodying the poet who, through renunciation, finds poetry in the order of reality rather than in surrealist visionaryism"

lElsewhere, the magazine Orpheu - Revista Trimestral de Literatura projected Portugal in 1915 into full Modernism, under the decisive influence of Fernando Pessoa and Mário de Sá-Carneiro, again under the name of the Greek singer.

In his famous *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1923), on the other hand, the Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke composes "one of the most elevated lyrical meditations of twentieth-century poetry", writing 55 sonnets in which the figure of Orpheus "is the poem, if the poem could become a poet, the ideal and example of poetic fulfilment". Decades earlier, in his poem *Orpheus, Eurydice and Hermes* (1904), Rilke had already narrated "the uncertainty of the singer, who continues with his bride and the messenger of the gods towards the world of the living". The poem also ends by proposing a totally innovative idea, that of "a Eurydice profoundly changed by death, which has made her forget the man she loved so much".

Arriving in our own territory, in Italy, in 1914, "the nocturnal gleams of the Oprhic Songs flash of Dino Campana", an orphic work of writing by vocation (i.e. enigmatic and obscure) that brings to life wild verses full of dreams, darkness and death. Towards the middle of the century, the writer Cesare Pavese published L'inconsolabile (The Inconsolable), a dialogue between Orpheus and Bacca in the collection of short stories Dialoghi con Leucò (Dialogues with Leucò) (1947). Here, the poet adds an even darker and more gloomy, almost unspeakable element to the ending of the myth, where Orpheus, "after encountering the nothingness of death, voluntarily turned towards his companion, who had now lost her vitality: "I thought of that coldness, that emptiness I had crossed and that she carried in her bones, in her marrow, in her blood. Was it worth living again? I thought about it, and I glimpsed the glimmer of daylight. Then I said, "Let it be over," and I turned around."". Finally, it will be Italo Calvino's turn, who in 1980, in the magazine Gran Bazaar, published L'altra Euridice (The Other Eurydice), a story that overturns the Orphic myth, imagining "an underground world rich in life where Eurydice originally lived with Pluto, the king of the Underworld for the Romans". In Calvino's version, Orpheus becomes "responsible for bringing the young woman back to the surface, enchanted by his deceptive song.

In this inverted world, the "superficiality of the surface" contrasts with the authenticity of life underground, from which Eurydice has been unjustly taken away'. For millennia, therefore, the myth of Orpheus has taken on the contours of a lyre that enchants and seduces literary art. And how could the story of an impossible resurrection, and at the same time of a love that transcends death, where pain ends up becoming the driving force behind self-denial, sacrifice and poetry, beyond good and evil, fail to attract?

Today, that "poetry of pain" lives on in various forms, including that of the "vessel" of the seventh art, with the new film version of the myth of Orpheus offered by Italian director Virgilio Villoresi, a new bard, like his Latin namesake Virgil, of the most immortal love story ever told, who decided to draw inspiration for his adaptation from the work of one of the most unique Italian authors of the twentieth century.



VILLORESI AND BUZZATI: TWO DARING ARTISTS

By deciding to adapt, or rather semi-adapt, Dino Buzzati's ***Poema a fumetti*** (**1969**), a sort of "book-film", as Indro Montanelli described it, in order to offer posterity his personal vision of Orpheus, Villoresi made a highly unusual and courageous choice. The director conceived a film version of Orfeo that has the flavour of a "drawn novel, a work based on the fusion of words and drawings, literature and painting", an expression used to describe Buzzati's work, from which it originates, but which is perfectly suited to the film.

the singer, has combined live action and stop-motion in a poetic and surreal tale, where love, sacrifice and imagination intertwine in an extraordinary journey into the afterlife.It is not surprising that the film, presented out of competition at the 82nd Venice International Film Festival, won the favour of audiences and critics alike precisely because of its plot, which seems to stem from the aesthetic principle of making art for art's sake.

The synopsis remains very simple: in this modern adaptation, Orpheus is a young pianist who falls in love with the charming Eura. One night, however, she mysteriously disappears through a door and Orfeo descends into the

underworld to search for her, in a place outside of time and space where he meets a series of incredible characters who hinder him and, at the same time, show him the way to find her.

In transposing the spirit of Buzzati's work, Villoresi has conceived a film that pays homage to the search for languages that Buzzati himself had undertaken in writing Poema a fumetti, a work that in itself contains strange and diverse elements, such as fantasy, Pop Art, surrealism and metaphysics. Villoresi adds to these his own personal art, the language he is familiar with, namely the aforementioned stop-motion, broadening the circle and creatively interpreting Buzzati's comic-book imagery.

The fantasy element, thanks to the use of this technique, becomes even more accentuated, offering an experience of overwhelming beauty, in which different techniques merge to create an artistic, dreamlike film that breaks all the moulds, just like Buzzati's work.

The Belluno-born author is also honoured in other ways. The film's refined and elegant photography, with its bright and vivid colours, both cold and warm, aims to create a surreal and emotional atmosphere in which Buzzati and his graphic choices are ever-present.

Just as Buzzati brought the paintings of de Chirico and Dalí back to life in his *Poema*, so Villoresi, in his visual composition, recreates those images, inventing new ones and dismantling others, taking what he needs at will and then mixing, experimenting and daring.
The entire film, in fact, is designed to be as creative as possible, elegant and refined in its aesthetics, but also disturbing in its execution, almost primordial in evoking the terrifying atmospheres of the afterlife, an afterlife which, in Buzzati's vision, reserves for us a death that is "terrible, inhuman, without appeal, as it condemns us to a grey, empty, endless existence" . Villoresi, through the use of stop-motion, fully conveys this gloomy and horrific vision, yet modifies it, expands it, in a word: "exalts" it, in a sort of perpetual phantasmagoria that stimulates the senses and the imagination; an imaginative and, if I may use a neologism, "imagifysical" weave that Buzzati would certainly have loved.

A FAIRY TALE FROM ANCIENT TIMES FULL OF DARIN

Villoresi, therefore, with his *Orpheus*, pays homage to a thousand-year-old tradition of inspiration and transpositions of Greek mythology, composing an extremely seductive work of art, where love and sacrifice are closely linked, where dreams are the premise of poetry and imagination is the driving force behind every good story, entertaining and captivating the viewer for the entire duration of the film, precluding any escape route, as an ancient fairy tale would do, endowed with an otherworldly charm that still speaks to us and provides a narrative archetype for generations to come.



Villoresi, in an Italian cinema landscape often lacking in daring, has brought us an original and experimental work, whose legacy will certainly be recognised in the history of italian cinema.
Because great stories, especially disruptive ones, have a delayed effect and take time to be appreciated, and even more time to be studied and understood.

With his phantasmagorical work, the director reminds us that Italian cinema can and must continue to experiment and compose fantastical stories that evoke otherworldly sensations through their means and aesthetics, with simplicity and creativity.

In this sense, artisanal cinema can still be rewarding in the hands of young and capable people, and it seems that Villoresi has the right skills to amaze and enchant, composing, like the poet Orpheus with his song, lyrical, poignant and romantic stories that fill the eyes with wonder and delicately touch the deepest chords of the human soul.

If it is true that, by extension, the word “poem” indicates something wonderful and extraordinary, then Villoresi has done full justice to Buzzati’s Poema and, in doing so, also to Greek mythology and the seventh art and, ultimately, to us, the spellbound spectators and lovers of beauty that Orpheus was.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR VIRGILIO VILLORESI



HOW DID YOU COME TO ADAPT DINO BUZZATI'S POEMA A FUMETTI? WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO THE FIGURE OF ORPHEUS AND HOW DO YOU INTERPRET HIS MYTH?

I came across Poema a fumetti while searching for the right form for my first feature film. I needed a story that would intertwine, in an almost invisible way, realism with a more dreamlike and mysterious dimension. When I discovered Buzzati's work, I was struck by it: it had exactly the tension between magic and everyday life that I was looking for. While writing, together with Alberto Fornari, we felt the need to construct a more fluid and cinematic narrative, because Poema a fumetti is a highly elliptical work, made up of leaps and suggestions which, however powerful, required reorganisation for the language of cinema. The figure of Orpheus has always fascinated me. He has a deeply cinematic aura. It is inevitable for me to think of the films of Jean Cocteau, which I love deeply. It is no coincidence that in my Orpheus there is an explicit homage to Le Sang d'un Poète (1930) in the corridor scene. But what attracted me most was the possibility of telling the story of the afterlife.

The myth of Orpheus offered me a powerful creative pretext to explore an unknown world, where I could move without constraints, in total imaginative freedom. The unknown was, perhaps, my greatest attraction: a perfect narrative threshold to give shape to a universe suspended between vision, dream and memory.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PARTICULAR WORK BY BUZZATI, WHICH IS SO UNIQUE AND ALREADY HAS A VISUAL IMAGERY?

I chose Buzzati's work mainly because it offered me the opportunity to put into practice all the techniques I have learned and developed over the years. The visual imagery contained in Poema a fumetti is so powerful and rich that I immediately realised how well it could dialogue with my expressive language. It was the perfect opportunity to push myself to the limit and give full expression to my artistic journey. Thanks to this story, I was able to use mixed techniques, from stop motion to the Schüfftan effect, experimenting and mixing different registers in a personal synthesis. In a sense, it was the ideal context to bring together everything I have learned and loved over time.

WHAT FASCINATES YOU ABOUT THE WORLD OF COMICS? ARE YOU ALSO A FAN OF THIS MEDIUM?

I wouldn't call myself a comic book expert; I've always read them sporadically. However, years ago I came across Nicolas De Crécy's Foligatto, and from there an important project was born: we created a monumental promo, with gigantic sets, in an attempt to adapt it into a feature film. It didn't work out for a number of reasons, but that experience left a deep impression on me. I was fascinated by the idea of reconstructing the comic book drawings in three dimensions, as if they were an aesthetic guide - and not only aesthetic, but also narrative. It was artistically stimulating to try to faithfully stage that graphic imagery. Although that adventure did not lead to a concrete result, it was a great learning experience. It made me realise how powerful comics can be as a starting point for cinema. When I came across Buzzati's Poema a fumetti, I started with the same spirit: I wanted to reproduce his drawings in an almost obsessive way. But then, during pre-production and especially during filming, the film took a more realistic, more cinematic turn, and I realised that it was necessary to distance myself from that formal obsession in order to make room for a more personal interpretation. On the other hand, even though I have been working with storyboards for years – I have created hundreds of them for commercials and short films, over 150 projects in total – I have always remained close to the idea of comics. Storyboards, after all, are a form of storytelling through images that has much in common with the grammar of comics. For this reason, coming to terms with a work such as Poema a fumetti seemed almost natural to me. As if it were an inevitable step in my journey.

WHAT DIFFERENCES DID YOU ENCOUNTER IN TELLING A STORY FOR ADVERTISING AND ONE FOR CINEMA?

The differences are huge, I would say. Advertising, by its very nature, has a much wider margin for "narrative error": it often focuses more on rhythm, visual impact, choreography, scenic intuition or creative flair.

Even if the production set-up can be rich, concentrated, with great resources in a few seconds, on a narrative level we are on another plane. Cinema is something else entirely. They are almost two distinct arts. Cinema has its own laws, linked to the structure of the story, the timing, the rhythm of the editing, the dramatic construction. And no matter how much you know about the theory, it is only through experience that you really learn to master the complexity of the "cinema device". When you're on set, you have to be able to control the entire narrative structure, which unfolds over an extended period of about ninety minutes. It's not a question of which of the two is more difficult: there are extraordinary film directors who are unable to grasp the mechanisms of advertising, and vice versa. This, in fact, confirms how profoundly different these languages are, requiring different sensibilities and visions to be mastered.

There are numerous adaptations of the myth of Orpheus in the history of cinema and audiovisual media, from Jean Cocteau's Orpheus (1950) to Marcel Camus' Black Orpheus (1959), right up to Sandman's Orpheus (2022-2025), which is also based on a comic book.

IN ADDITION TO BEING INSPIRED BY THE MEDIUM OF COMICS, ARE THERE ANY CINEMATIC AND ARTISTIC REFERENCES IN YOUR FILM THAT ARE PARTICULARLY DEAR TO YOU? THE CINEMATOGRAPHY SEEMS TO EVOKE ATMOSPHERES DERIVED FROM FASSBINDER, DARIO ARGENTO AND, OF COURSE, DE CHIRICO...

The first part of the film pays homage to William Dieterle's Portrait of Jennie (1948), a work that had a profound effect on me. I wanted to tell the love story through glances, silences and extended moments, as a tribute to the cinema I grew up with, which always prioritised atmosphere and emotional suspense. From the moment the film enters the dreamlike dimension, I felt the need to reference abstract cinema instead

in particular that of Jordan Belson, who, with his hypnotic visions and his mastery in creating moving images capable of evoking a spiritual dimension, had a very strong influence on me. Along with him, there are also the Whitney brothers and the cinéma direct of Len Lye, Stan Brakhage and Harry Smith: filmmakers who showed me a way of making films that is radically different from classic fiction, capable of speaking directly to the senses and the unconscious. In Orfeo, there are therefore some openly abstract sequences that stem from this fascination. At other times, however, I wanted to pay homage to a more physical and brutal cinema: in the spider scene, for example, I reference Taxi Driver (1976), but also Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch (1969), which was able to represent violence with unprecedented visual power, thanks to the alternation between sudden gestures and slow motion. That visual grammar greatly inspired me in editing that sequence. There is also the influence of Jan Švankmajer, present in some acting choices, especially in terms of gestures and the way of relating to objects and environments. His cinema, so deeply material and psychic, has always been a point of reference.

WHY DID YOU USE SO LITTLE STOP MOTION IN YOUR FIRST FILM, GIVEN HOW MUCH YOU HAVE USED IT THROUGHOUT YOUR ARTISTIC CAREER SO FAR, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE USE OF THIS TECHNIQUE IN ITALIAN CINEMA?

I used stop motion sparingly, otherwise it would have taken me ten years to finish this film! Joking aside, I think this was the best way to tell the story of my first feature film. It's true, I've always had a strong connection with animated films, but this was often due to client requirements rather than personal choice. In reality, my first love has always been live-action cinema with actors. I came to animation later, with a real revelation for Eastern European cinema. But the desire to direct a "real" film, with flesh-and-blood actors, has always been my dream. In this sense, Orfeo represents the realisation of that dream, while keeping my visual identity and taste for craftsmanship, which I have cultivated over time, intact.

ORPHEUS IS THE PRIME AND DEEPLY HUMAN EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE WHO CHOSE THE PATH OF POETRY TO CONSECRATE HIS PAIN AND STRIVE FOR THE DIVINE. DOES YOUR CINEMA ALSO ASPIRE TO THE SAME MISSION?

My cinema strives for the sublimation of beauty. In every single frame, in addition to the technical and narrative aspects, it is essential for me to seek an aesthetic capable of generating wonder. I believe that wonder, in a certain sense, has to do with the divine. It is a feeling that lifts us up, that transports us elsewhere. My obsession is precisely this: to seek, almost viscerally, to get as close as possible to a form of beauty that is total, evocative, and that can leave an impression on the viewer.

SARTRE WROTE: 'HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE'; VINICIO MARCHIONI'S CHARACTER, ON THE OTHER HAND, STATES IN THE FILM THAT 'THE AFTERLIFE IS A DREAM THAT WATCHES YOU'. WHICH OF THESE STATEMENTS BEST REFLECTS THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD? LIKE ORPHEUS, DO YOU TOO HAVE YOUR OWN PERSONAL HELL TO VISIT?

Vinicio's phrase captures a central aspect of the film: in Orfeo, the afterlife is represented as a distorting mirror of reality, a game of reflections where what we know re-emerges in another form. It is a dreamlike journey in which fragments of life reappear transfigured, as in a dream. I was fascinated by the idea of approaching death not as a tragic and definitive event, but as a poetic, mysterious passage to an unknown world, where things lose their precise contours and become symbols. A vision of the end that intertwines with dreams and imagination.

YOURS IS A PURELY ARTISTIC FILM IN WHICH CONTINUOUS METAMORPHOSES TAKE PLACE,

ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF STYLE AND TECHNIQUE. IN THE PANORAMA OF CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN CINEMA, SUCH AN EXPERIMENTAL WORK IS ALMOST MIRACULOUS. IS THERE HOPE THAT OUR CINEMA WILL BECOME A BARD, LIKE ORPHEUS, OF GENRES THAT HAVE ALMOST COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED, SUCH AS FANTASY AND HORROR, WHICH SEEM TO BE SLOWLY RETURNING TO PROMINENCE?

My good fortune, or rather, what made Orfeo possible, was total creative freedom. Being also the film's producer, I was able to create a purely creative work, free from the logic and pressures of the film industry. I was able to shoot at my own pace, staging unconventional themes, languages and imagery, essentially only having to answer to myself. This autonomy allowed me to rewrite parts of the script even during filming, to intervene freely during editing to make the film stronger, more original, more incisive. All this was possible thanks to the production system I have built up over time: shooting in my studio, with my cameras and my lights, meant creating a small independent universe. Orfeo is, to all intents and purposes, a film that belongs more to the world of art - in the purest and deepest sense of the term - than to that of the film industry.

CONCLUSIONS: MASTERING ART TO IMPRINT IT ON LIFE

Realism and dreamlike dimensions, magic and everyday life, vision and memory. These are the elements, invisibly intertwined, that recreate the suspended universe of Orpheus, which Villoresi so fascinatingly constructed, giving the Greek myth a profoundly cinematic form that it never knew it had. Between imagination and technique, between languages and mixtures, between amazement and wonder, Villoresi boldly experimented with his personal idea of cinema, creating a synthesis of artistic registers in a single film that acts as a "world work" and contains the deepest and most radical meaning of "storytelling through images".

Just like Orpheus, who, playing the lyre, or a guitar in Buzzati's version, dominates nature and momentarily defeats death, so Villoresi captures death and life in the eternal fixity of images, proving himself to be a remarkable craftsman-singer, gifted with a pure and precise sensibility, who dominates art and imprints it on life, giving it that semblance of immortality that only a few artists are capable of evoking.



Tommaso Di Pierro

Sources

Bibliography

- Enrico Giaccherini, Sir Orfeo, Nuova Pratiche Editrice, Parma 1994.
- Indro Montanelli, L'ultimo Buzzati, in «Corriere della Sera», 15 novembre 1969.
- Lorenzo Viganò, La discesa nell'Aldilà: l'ultimo viaggio di Dino Buzzati, in Poema a fumetti, Mondadori, Milano 2011.

Webography

Martina Ostinelli, Il mito di Orfeo ed Euridice: storia di un amore che sfida la morte, ilLibraio.it, Milano, 21 agosto 2023, https://www.illibraio.it/, 21/10/25

DÉCOUPAGE ANIMATO:
the cinema of Gianini and Luzzati



Stop-motion animation in Italy has a long history. It first appeared in films over a hundred years ago. Although its development has been less straightforward than in other countries, and despite no stop-motion feature films having been produced yet, frame-by-frame animation has experienced periods of great experimentation and creativity in both Italian cinema and television. Giulio Gianini (Rome, 9 February 1927 – 16 May 2009) and Emanuele Luzzati (Genoa, 3 June 1921 – 26 January 2007) best embodied this art, producing one of the most significant creative collaborations.

For over thirty-seven years (from 1957 to 1994), Gianini and Luzzati worked together. During this time, they created some of their best-known works using a technique called découpage (or cut-out, as it's often called today). Together, they made the Rossini Trilogy, which includes the short films The Thieving Magpie (La Gazza Ladra, 1964), An Italian In Algiers (L'Italiana in Algeri, 1969), and Pulcinella (1973). They also made The Magic Flute (Il Flauto Magico, 1978). Their famous titles for Mario Monicelli's For Love and Gold (L'Armata Brancaleone, 1966) and Brancaleone at the Crusades (Brancaleone alle Crociate, 1970), both close friends of the pair, are also very good.

Luzzati was famous all over the world. He designed theatre sets and costumes, and he made pottery. He also wrote and drew pictures for children's books. Gianini was a famous documentary filmmaker, cameraman and one of the first people in Italy to use colour film. He won his first Nastro d'Argento award at just twenty-five years old in 1952. They first met in Rome in the mid-1950s through mutual friends and realised they both loved puppets and cartoons. This meeting led to an amazing partnership and a friendship that lasted a lifetime.

Gianini's skills as a camera operator and cinematographer improved through animation, revealing him to be an exceptional animator. As proof of his technical skill, he built a custom shooting table and a support system to mount a modified 35mm Debris camera vertically, enabling it to take one picture at a time.

The table had two shooting planes. One was for paper cut-out figures. It had a glass plate and a press to get rid of any unwanted shadows. The other was for backdrops. This created a depth-of-field effect. Luzzati, meanwhile, brought his own imaginative world into animation, drawing on painterly influences (Chagall, Klimt, Miró, Picasso) and theatrical traditions such as Commedia dell'arte masks and Sicilian puppets. As well as drawing, Luzzati made his characters from small pieces of white or coloured paper. Gianini put these together bit by bit before animating them in a lively and expressive way. Their art was all about "making". They were really good at making things simple and using materials in interesting ways. This made them stand out from Disney's animation and from other Italian artists like their friend Bruno Bozzetto.

Even in their first film, The Paladins Of France (I Paladini di Francia, 1961), you can already see many of the things that would become their cinema's trademark: a love of folk tales and fairy stories, the authors' playful and ironic spirit, the puppet-like movement of characters that is not fully realistic, theatre staging (flats, curtains, proscenium), painted backdrops, the use of bright tempera and pastel colours, the almost childlike charcoal lines, and a look and feel that is very tactile. These things helped the film do really well, both in the UK and in other countries. It even won a special prize at the Annecy Festival in 1962 for being the best new film.

Another key feature of Gianini and Luzzati's production was the operatic element, as seen in The Thieving Magpie. Gioachino Rossini's music is important to the story. The authors love music too, and they use the music to create the story. The directors were clearly inspired by Walt Disney's Fantasia (1940), for example, in that they too reference Mickey Mouse in The Sorcerer's Apprentice. However, their approach is more like the experimental cinema of Oskar Fischinger, such as An Optical Poem (1938), or that of Norman McLaren and his Blackbird (Le Merle, 1958), which inspired the magpie's dance as she mocks the three kings chasing her. The only film in the trilogy that sticks closely to Rossini's original plot

is An Italian In Algiers, which also has the most dramatic setting of the three. But it was Magpie and especially Pulcinella that did really well. Both films won the Nastro d'Argento, were nominated for Oscars and were praised by filmmakers like Fellini and Michel Ocelot, who in 1979 created The Three Inventors (Les Trois Inventeurs) using the cut-out technique. Gianini and Luzzati's most ambitious and complex work was The Magic Flute. It was their only medium-length film. It reimagines Mozart's opera in a fairy-tale style. For this project, a new shooting table with four planes



was built to create better lighting effects, including Chinese shadows and spotlights on the characters (for example, during the Queen of the Night's aria). Luzzati used materials like lace doilies, aluminium foil, coloured fabric, plastic and glass fragments to make the staging more tactile and less two-dimensional. Another interesting thing about the film is the live-action parts where the character Papageno (Marcello Bartoli) tells the story between the animated parts, which helps the audience understand what is happening.

This was a decision made by the producers, but Gianini did not like this idea.
In the early 1980s, Gianini and Luzzati made a series of fairy tales for Italian-speaking Swiss television and the music video for Angelo Branduardi's song Il Libro (1983). Immediately afterwards, they started work on an even more ambitious project than Magic Flute, called Opera Buffa. This was never finished because of creative disagreements.

Only Cat Duet (Il Duetto dei Gatti, 1985) was finished. This was also set to Rossini's music.



The pair's last work was the animated parts of the 1993 documentary The House of Magical Sounds (La Casa dei Suoni). This was about conductor Claudio Abbado. The first part, especially, feels like an artistic statement where their favourite puppets and Sicilian marionettes come to life one last time in a child's bedroom, with the second movement of Debussy's Nocturnes (Fêtes. Animé et très rythmé) playing .
The history of stop-motion animation in Italy shows that you can be really creative and famous even without an industry. This is shown by the amazing partnership between Giulio Gianini and Emanuele Luzzati. These two artists were not working for major American studios or more formal animation schools. Instead, they used simple materials and the skill of their movements to create a unique and original visual poetry. This poetry was able to speak to both Italian and international audiences.

They were very good at mixing different types of art, like theatre, painting, music and illustration. This created a new type of animation that has become very popular. Gianini and Luzzati showed that stop-motion animation doesn't need big money or high-tech equipment.
It needs a good idea and someone who wants to tell stories using images that seem real.

For these reasons, rediscovering their work today also means reflecting on the still-unrealized potential of Italian animation cinema, particularly stop-motion, which could find renewed vitality in today's digital and transmedia landscape.

Andrea Piumarta

Bibliography

- A. Bastianich (a cura di), C.R. Gianini (a cura di), *Gianini e Luzzati: Cartoni Animati*, Silvana Editoriale, Milano, 2013.
- G. Bendazzi, *Animazione. Una storia globale*, UTET, Torino, 2017, edizione e-book.
- G. Rondolino, *Storia del cinema d'animazione. Dalla lanterna magica a Walt Disney, da Tex Avery a Steven Spielberg*, UTET, Torino, 2003, pp. 338-340.

DON'T SLEEP ON STOP-MOTION!





GOBELINS, DEL TORO AND NETFLIX LAUNCH A NEW STUDIO-LAB IN PARIS

Gobelins, one of the most prestigious animation schools in the world, will host a new studio-laboratory entirely dedicated to stop-motion in Saint-Marcel campus, Paris. The initiative is co-funded by filmmaker Guillermo Del Toro – who is also the mind behind the project – and Netflix. The announcement was made during an event attended by Gobelins director Valérie Moatti, Del Toro himself, and Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos. The new studio-lab will not only be a place for training and preserving the technique but also an environment for experimentation and innovation, designed for future generations of artists and animators. This new joint venture further confirms Netflix's growing interest in the international animation industry, showcased by prior successes such as the French series Arcane (2021-2024) produced by Fortiche. The project is also a tribute from Del Toro to his friend and collaborator Mark Gustafson – animator of his Pinocchio (2022) as well as Wes Anderson's Fantastic Mr. Fox (2009) – who passed away in February 2024. Del Toro also announced that he is working with Netflix on a new stop-motion film based on the novel The Buried Giant (2015) by Kazuo Ishiguro, which may give students and apprentices at the studio-lab the opportunity to help create sets and puppets.



SENTINEL - THE NEW FILM FROM PHIL TIPPETT BLENDS STOP-MOTION, DIGITAL, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

After Mad God (2021), director Phil Tippett – also visual effects legend behind the Star Wars saga and Jurassic Park (1993) – is working on a new feature titled Sentinel. A brief clip of the film was shown during a panel at this year's View Conference in Turin, attended virtually by the filmmaker and members of Tippett Studio's creative team. The story begins in a post-apocalyptic battlefield and follows a sentinel soldier wearing a gas mask who, on the verge of death, is chosen by the god Anubis to embark on an otherworldly journey. The project was described by Tippett himself as a work that spans the entire history of VFX: from stop-motion to digital and, finally, to the use of generative AI. Over the course of his long and renowned career, Tippett has always been able to adapt to changes in the visual effects industry, and it's no surprise that he's eager to incorporate artificial intelligence – now to be considered a full-fledged animation technique – into his new film. During the panel – fittingly titled SENTINEL and AI: Know Your Foe! – it was emphasized that AI is used only as a support tool for animations and background creation, while the models are still entirely built by the team. Remko Noteboom, the studio's Principal Software Engineer, also explained that, at present, their AI can be trained to generate high-quality images and videos by photographing real materials, but still faces many challenges when working on the creatures made by the studio. Aesthetically, Sentinel appears to reprise the dark and disturbing atmospheres of its predecessor. The main inspirations for the film are instead found in William Golding's novel Pincher Martin (1956) and an episode of The Twilight Zone (1959 - 1964) titled An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge (1962), based on a short story by American Civil War veteran Ambrose Bierce.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM LAIKA, AARDMAN E DWARF STUDIOS

Stop-motion cinema has many surprises in store over the next few years. As well as the return of major studios such as Laika and popular characters such as Shaun the Sheep, we can also look forward to the adaptation of a masterpiece by Taiyō Matsumoto, which combines the artistry of the technique with the poetry of Japanese comics.



Wildwood
Director: *Travis Knight*
Production: *Laika Studios*
Country: *USA*
Technique: *Puppet Animation*
Release Date: *TBA 2026*

After the splendid Kubo and the Two Strings (2016) – and his live-action incursion with Bumblebee (2018) – director Travis Knight returns to Laika for his new feature film, which has been in development since 2011. Based on the eponymous fantasy book series for young readers from Colin Meloy – lead singer of The Decemberists – and illustrator Carson Ellis, Wildwood tells the story of a girl from Portland named Prue, who ventures into an enchanted forest to rescue her little brother Mac, kidnapped by a flock of crows led by a mysterious woman named Alexandra. Accompanied by her classmate Curtis, Prue will encounter talking creatures, bandits, and powerful dark figures, discovering a magical and dangerous world that will force her to confront her fears and grow. The film will also celebrate the 20th anniversary of the animation studio and will be accompanied by the release of a special artbook, scheduled for March 2026, featuring Coraline alongside the new protagonist and heroine Prue on the cover. Moreover, their exhibition Laika: Frame x Frame is currently on view at the Musée Cinéma et Miniature in Lyon – following its stops at London's BFI Southbank and Lisbon's Museu da Marioneta – where it will remain open to visitors until December 31st, 2025.



Shaun the Sheep: The Beast of Mossy Bottom
Directors: *Steve Cox, Matthew Walker*
Production: *Aardman, Sky, STUDIOCANAL*
Country: *United Kingdom*
Technique: *Puppet Animation/Claymation*
Release Date: *TBA 2026*

It has been thirty years since Shaun the Sheep first appeared in A Close Shave (1995) – alongside Wallace & Gromit – and already ten years since his first feature film. After Farmageddon (2019), Aardman is working on the third film dedicated to the most famous sheep in stop-motion cinema history. After paying homage to Chaplin's cinema and Jacques Tati's comedies in the first installment, and parodying Spielberg's sci-fi films in the sequel, the atmosphere of The Beast of Mossy Bottom shifts toward horror, with Shaun suddenly left without his farmer while a mysterious beast roams the woods near the town of Mossingham.

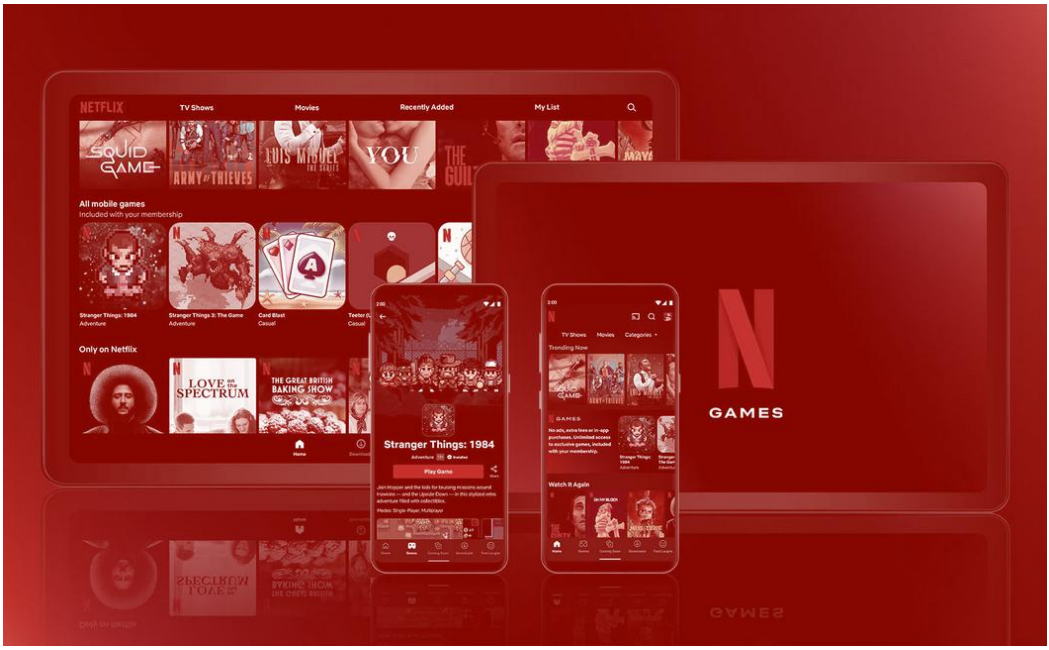


Sunny
Director: *Michael Arias*
Production: *GKIDS, Dwarf Studios*
Country: *Japan*
Technique: *Puppet Animation*
Release Date: *TBA 2029*

Taiyō Matsumoto is one of the most important and distinctive manga artists in contemporary Japanese comics. Adaptations of his works have always been synonymous with quality, such as the acclaimed anime Ping Pong (2014) directed by Masaaki Yuasa and the animated film Tekkonkinkreet (2006) by Michael Arias. It is precisely Arias, the American-born Japanese director, who is handling the cinematic adaptation of Sunny, another major work by Matsumoto. Unlike previous adaptations, the film will not use traditional animation but stop-motion, aiming to capture the aesthetic and magical realism of the original work, along with a tangible materiality that complements the author's dynamic and gritty style. The film will follow the original manga's story, set in 1970s Japan, and depict the lives of a group of children in a foster home called Star Kids. The protagonists take refuge in an old abandoned yellow car in the yard, named "Sunny", where they play and imagine fantastical worlds to escape reality. The animation studio is Dwarf Studios – known for producing the Netflix series Pokémon Concierge (2023–) and Rilakkuma and Kaoru (2019), as well as the outstanding samurai-themed short film Hidari (2023) – and the film was announced at this year's Annecy Festival, with a release window set for an unspecified 2029.


CINE
MA
INDUST
RY

JURASSIC CINEMA
EVOLUTION OF HABITS BETWEEN CINEMA AND STREAMING





Fotogramma da Jurassic World Rebirth. Fonte: Games Radar

THE T-REX IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE D-REX

At the time of this writing (July 2, 2025), Jurassic World Rebirth debuts in international cinemas, the seventh chapter of the saga brought to life by Steven Spielberg's visionary genius in 1993.

It's amusing to think that such an intriguing concept as that described by Michael Crichton in his novels should require a 'rebirth.' One naturally wonders: what happened to the previous form that was so serious as to warrant an actual reboot? After all, who doesn't like dinosaurs, right? After watching the film, doing some research, and reading the most divergent reviews, I find the metaphor proposed by director Gareth Edwards and screenwriter David Koepp more fitting than ever. In truth, it's not the first time this theme has been addressed in the saga, but in this latest installment, it becomes blatantly clear. The film, in fact, deals with the issue of spectacle in service of the mass audience—an audience disillusioned, desensitized, anesthetized by the presence of these ancient beings in cinematic reality for over 32 years. After all this time, we can't expect to have the same wide-eyed expression as Professor Grant at the sight of the Brachiosaurus in the first glorious Jurassic Park, nor can we pretend the industry hasn't evolved to the point of replacing the extraordinary with the ordinary. Distractions abound—too many, often—and production companies compete for our precious leisure time. If cinema once held a prominent role in collective recreation, today the gargantuan multitude of alternatives risks obscuring these adventurous islands.

Between streaming content, live broadcasts, video games, music, and podcasts, the tastes and needs of new generations have changed. Perhaps yet another carnivorous abomination born from bizarre genetic crossings between cuttlefish and tree frogs (!) won't be enough to save the business. So how can we keep attention high and avoid extinction—of the movie theater itself?

SURVIVING CHANGE

According to Deloitte's 19th annual survey, younger audiences prefer spending their free time following their favorite content creators rather than watching premium TV programs or films. Generation Z is increasingly tied to social networks, thanks to the vast entertainment supply offered by influencers compared to big-budget productions. This trend is fueled by rising prices and a perceived loss of content value across various streaming platforms.

The same American-based study reveals that U.S. consumers across generations spend an average of six hours per day engaging with entertainment content. This includes streaming, user-generated content, social media, gaming, music, and podcasts. The entertainment landscape is now so fragmented that production companies struggle to reach a mass audience, and service providers find it increasingly hard to attract new subscribers. While the total leisure time remains stable, the internal proportions have shifted dramatically: new generations are abandoning traditional TV in favor of social platforms that have become central and all-encompassing in everyday life.

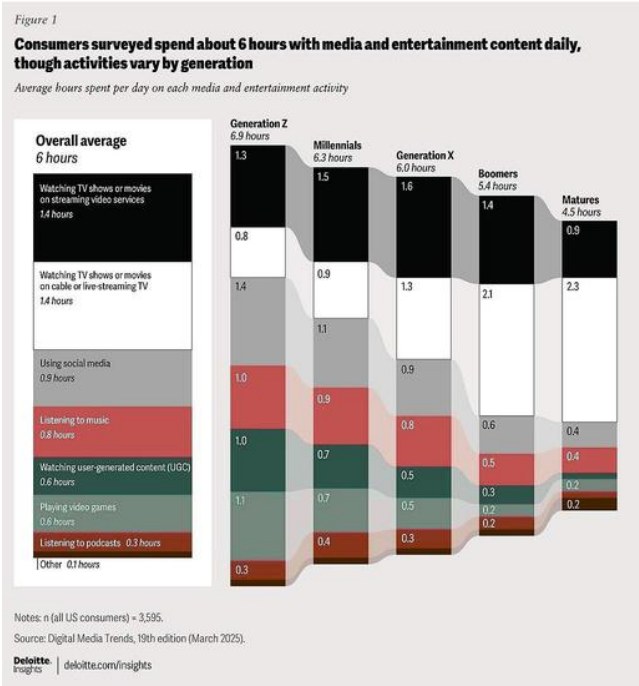


Grafico dei trend generazionali. Fonte: Deloitte.

Data shows that 49% of households still have cable TV, down from 63% three years ago. This aligns with the preferences of young people: 56% of Gen Z and 43% of Millennials believe social media content is more relevant than traditional films and TV programs.
With this constant hemorrhage of audiences—along with rising production and marketing costs—studios are trying to respond through new loyalty strategies, such as diversified offerings to attract different user groups, bundled packages with competitive pricing, and multiple subscription tiers that include advertising.
According to recent estimates, American households now spend an average of $69 per month for four streaming services—up 13% from last year. Among Gen Z and Millennials, the increase reaches around 20%. Despite this, subscription cost remains a crucial factor in how younger users choose to spend their leisure time. Moreover, frustration over the quantity and quality of ads pushes them toward alternatives, like online streaming platforms, where commercials are—at least for now—less invasive than those on traditional TV.

That said, disenchantment toward streaming platforms seems to be growing among younger audiences. 47% of respondents believe they pay too much, while 41% claim the available content is not worth the price—a 5% increase from the previous year, signaling a negative trend. Price remains the key: if subscription costs were to rise by just $5, 60% of users say they would immediately cancel their favorite service. Furthermore, 54% of current subscribers now prefer ad-supported plans—up 8% year-over-year—at an average price of $9 per month. This growing trend toward savings is particularly evident among Gen Z and Millennials, who often choose ad-supported services just to avoid opening their wallets.
Deloitte's estimates suggest that new generations are much more likely to spend their time on social media—54% more than the average—while consuming 26% fewer traditional media products. This shift has fueled a thriving alternative market led by content creators who, in terms of influence, have replaced Hollywood celebrities.
Few actors and directors can still draw audiences to theaters. Once-unshakable entertainment icons have had to yield to new trends—emblems of an era now gone. We all remember the last big blockbuster starring Harrison Ford (at least, those who saw it): Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny. It's just one of countless examples of the sad decline afflicting major studios (Disney included). Costing nearly $300 million, it grossed only $384 million, a resounding flop considering the brand's legacy and the names involved. Pre- pandemic, those factors would have guaranteed success; today, they mean little. Rumors even suggest a reboot is already in development—yet another unnecessary 'rebirth.' According to the same study, 52% of Gen Z and 45% of Millennials feel more connected to influencers than to the traditional movie star system.

Moreover, these online personalities wield such power that they often shape audience choices: 56% of respondents said they watch content only after seeing it promoted by a creator, and 53% rely solely on social media for recommendations.

A COZY NEST

Post-Covid audience habits have changed dramatically. A multitude of at-home entertainment options now allows people to enjoy their ideal content in comfort. Netflix, Prime Video, Disney+, Apple TV+, Paramount+, and others offer a broad spectrum of choices in terms of selection, quantity, and accessibility. Moreover, when viewed from a family perspective, the savings compared to movie theater visits are considerable.
Why rush to the cinema to see a new release—spending time, effort, and money—when I can simply wait 45–60 days and watch it endlessly, comfortably seated on my couch with my loved ones for a fraction of the cost?

What once seemed a practical solution offered by major studios during the pandemic now fuels the depopulation of theaters and the crisis of those very studios. Indeed, the repercussions on the film industry are tangible, starting from box office revenues. In recent years, we've witnessed the impoverishment of the global cinema circuit, where only films with an event aura manage to attract audiences. The star system no longer works—directors, actors, and actresses no longer possess the magnetic charm they once had, and the general distrust toward new intellectual properties exceeds reason. In this production maelstrom, few films stay afloat, though some stand out with extremely positive results. These are usually low-budget titles, often from the horror genre—for instance, Final Destination: Bloodlines, which, with a $50 million budget, grossed $283 million. Even non-franchise films have succeeded, like Five Nights at Freddy's, which cost just $20 million and earned $291 million. Beyond horror, another profitable category includes pop-culture films—typically those backed by strong brands or names, leveraging nostalgia and appealing to younger audiences (e.g., Lilo & Stitch, How to Train Your Dragon, A Minecraft Movie, Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning, Avatar, Star Wars).

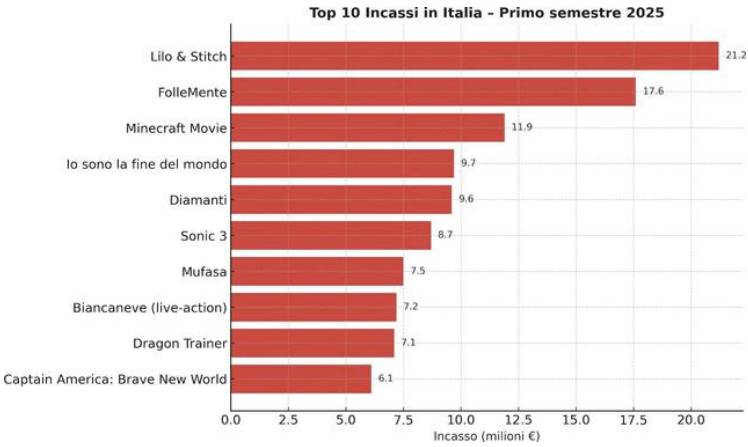
2025 Worldwide Box Office

2025

Rank	Release Group	Worldwide	Domestic	%	Foreign	%
1	Ne Zha 2	$1,899,652,129	$20,858,156	1.1%	$1,878,793,973	98.9%
2	A Minecraft Movie	$954,926,722	$423,947,215	44.4%	$530,979,507	55.6%
3	Lilo & Stitch	$949,682,200	$402,795,674	42.4%	$546,886,526	57.6%
4	Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning	$563,526,149	$187,526,149	33.3%	$376,000,000	66.7%
5	How to Train Your Dragon	$463,575,590	$207,741,590	44.8%	$255,834,000	55.2%
6	Captain America: Brave New World	$415,101,577	$200,500,001	48.3%	$214,601,576	51.7%
7	Thunderbolts*	$381,866,563	$189,839,012	49.7%	$192,027,551	50.3%
8	Sinners	$364,653,307	$278,153,307	76.3%	$86,500,000	23.7%
9	Final Destination: Bloodlines	$283,539,321	$137,039,321	48.3%	$146,500,000	51.7%
10	Snow White	$205,679,463	$87,203,963	42.4%	$118,475,500	57.6%

List of the highest-grossing films in the first half of this year. Source: Box Office Mojo.

As for Italy, in 2025 cinema is rediscovering its role as a cozy nest, though an inherently fragile one. In the first half of the year, Italian theaters grossed €242 million with around 34 million admissions—a modest increase over the same period in 2024 (+2.9% in revenue,
+2.1% in spectators). Promising numbers, yet still well below pre-pandemic levels: box office revenue is down 21.3% and attendance 29.8% compared to the 2017–2019 average. What's most surprising is the excellent performance of domestic films: Italian productions saw an +18% increase compared to pre-Covid levels and +41% over 2024, reaching €79 million and 11 million admissions in the first half of the year, with a 33% market share (versus the pre-pandemic average of ~22%).
However, this welcoming 'nest' is not consistent throughout the year. The summer season has shown an Italian box office often overshadowed by major foreign releases. In August, for instance, no Italian film entered the monthly Top 10: domestic grosses, including co- productions, amounted to only €1.7 million, with a 7.7% market share.
Despite this, Italy's leading films have demonstrated great appeal, carving out a significant audience base. In the first-half rankings, titles like FolleMente (€17.6 million), Io sono la fine del mondo (€9.7 million), and Diamanti (€9.6 million) stand out. Three Italian titles among the top five confirm that, with the right stories and positive word of mouth, domestic audiences can reconnect with theaters—even in an era dominated by the alluring song of Netflix and its peers.
These numbers suggest that the 'nest' of Italian cinema is not merely a nostalgic refuge but a vital space capable of generating balance: if Italian productions maintain consistency, narrative quality, and a connection with younger tastes, they can offer the intimacy and trust that streaming often fails to deliver.



List of the highest-grossing films in the first six months of the year. Source: Boxoffice

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

To revive a limping industry and improve a field of work often perceived as disheartening, major studios should simultaneously adopt several strategies—first and foremost, cutting production costs. A film often fails not because it performs poorly at the box office, but because its production budget was unsustainable—especially if the final result is mediocre. Therefore, producers' top priority should be to contain budgets wherever possible, perhaps by telling smaller stories, reducing scope during the writing stage, trimming excessive locations or elaborate sets, and limiting special effects. Even such measures could considerably reduce losses, allowing studios to redistribute funds and offset greater deficits.

At the same time, marketing campaigns should be reconsidered to prevent waste and ensure greater efficiency. For instance, excluding costly live events with celebrities, and instead focusing on social channels, online sponsorship, and the help of AI algorithms. The involvement of influencers can also contribute to success, though it doesn't always guarantee engagement or positive word of mouth.

Finally, the most obvious yet seemingly elusive element: quality. Major studios, as always, operate under rules that transcend artistic standards due to countless external factors— expectations, investments, pressures, favoritism, and so on. Creating a good film has never been easy, but when creativity is sidelined to please investors or serve the ambitions of cynical executives, it becomes an impossible task. In short, Hollywood must mature, adapt, and change its system —because the world has changed since the pandemic, but production processes have not.

The future of cinema depends on this—but theaters must also contribute to change, creating a positive loop for the entire industry. A concrete example could be the creation of cutting-edge theaters owned by the same companies —Disney, Netflix, Prime, and others—where simultaneous theatrical and streaming releases occur, allowing viewers to choose how to experience the film.

Another incentive could take the form of ticket discounts or gifts (posters, gadgets) for subscribers to the related platform.
Beyond speculation, the hope is that cinema will soon adapt to current trends—to breathe, share, debate, and marvel once again, looking up in wonder as Professor Grant once did.

Jacopo Rampazzo

Sources

- C. Widener, J. Arbanas, D. Van Dyke, C. Arkenberg, B. Matheson, B. Auxier, 2025 Digital Media Trends: Social platforms are becoming a dominant force in media and entertainment, deloitte.com - Tech, Media & Telecom, Londra, 25/032025, https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/digital-media-trends-consumption-habits- survey/2025.html (ultimo accesso settembre 2025).
- D. Cantiere, Jurassic World - La Rinascita, il regista ammette: "Le persone non sono più interessate dai dinosauri", movieplayer.it - Film - News, Terni, 02/07/2025, https://movieplayer.it/news/jurassic-world-rinascita-regista-persone-non-interessate-dinosauri_159113/ (ultimo accesso settembre 2025).
- V. Torlaschi, Incassi 2025 – Un 1° semestre a staffetta: prima l'Italia, poi Hollywood, boxofficebiz.it - News, 06/08/2025, https://boxofficebiz.it/news/incassi-2025-un-1-semestre-a- staffetta-prima-litalia-poi-hollywood/ (ultimo accesso settembre 2025).
- B. Pagan, Harrison Ford e il flop di Indiana Jones e il Quadrante del destino: "Cose che capitano", movieplayer.it - Film - News, Terni, 05/02/2025, https://movieplayer.it/news/harrison-ford-flop-indiana-jones-quadrante-destino-capita_152667/ (ultimo accesso settembre 2025).
- D. Panattoni, Da Mufasa a Follemente: lo strano box office della stagione 2024/2025, movieplayer.it - Film - News, Terni, 1/08/2025, https://movieplayer.it/articoli/stagione-incassi-box-office-botteghino-italia-2024-2025_36007/ (ultimo accesso settembre 2025).
- M. E. Camaroto, Indiana Jones tornerà: Disney al lavoro su un reboot del franchise, movieplayer.it - Film - News, Terni, 30/06/2025, https://movieplayer.it/news/indiana-jones-tornera-disney-lavoro-reboot-franchise_159054/ (ultimo accesso settembre 2025).
- C. Colli, Jurassic World: La Rinascita, la recensione del nuovo film con i dinosauri e Scarlet Johanson, multiplayer.it, Terni, 03/07/2025, https://multiplayer.it/recensioni/jurassic- world-la-rinascita-recensione.html (ultimo accesso settembre 2025).
- 2025 Worldwide Box Office, Lucerne Valley, boxofficemojo.com, https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/world/2025/?ref_=bo_hm_yrww (ultimo accesso settembre 2025).

RETHINKING THE FILM FESTIVAL OF THE FUTURE



PROPOSALS AND IDEAS: YOUTH INVOLVEMENT AND THE NEED FOR RENEWAL

Often in Italy (but also abroad) festivals are a topic that is both a blessing and a curse for film journalism. If in a way it's true that there is no shortage (actually there is an abundance) of publications that write reviews and articles about the movies shown at various events, from the other side it is also true that what is lacking is a systematic discourse around film festivals and their organization. Who funds these events? On what merits is one festival subsidized and not another? In what way is a film festival conceived by its steering committee?

The questions are many and very often even insiders don't have a deep knowledge of the dynamics of cultural field so vast and with such big implications. Festivals are multifaceted and diverse entities that certainly deserve a deep analysis: from the local economy (which often finds fertile ground thanks to those events) to the real impact that they have on film distribution and reception. Film journalism should be able to comment on festival themselves, not only on the films.
The lack of a systematic discourse is directly connected to a deeper analysis on the different sections of an event, on the ways in which a festival is designed to be presented to an audience and which films are chosen to be screened instead of others.

FILM FESTIVALS TODAY: MORE ESSENTIAL THAN EVER

The role of many festivals often appears confused, there are a lot of sections that seem built to please producers and there is a general sense of a lack of a truly strong common thread that could interest people in discovering new worlds and diving into different imaginaries. Returning to journalism, there is an "old-fashioned" communication that doesn't seem to know how to build a narrative around festivals and film events; it almost seems like the mainstream publishing remembers the existence of festivals only when they want to announce the arrival of some big star on the red carpet. But is it really from the red carpets that Italian festivals and film events must restart?
It is reasonable to say that the model of the millionaire festival, that tries to attract a generalist and occasional audience, can and should be set aside. The single idea of a selection, perhaps even put together randomly or without much care, can no longer be enough to convince an audience to participate in a film event. Is all of this known to the many programmers and festival organizers around Italy?
On the other hand, now more than ever, the role of festivals is crucial. The often-cited "crisis of cinemas" is just one of the reasons; the focus point is the vast sea of audiovisual offerings that exists today. In a world where every day we are flooded with new film proposals, on platforms or in cinemas, festivals play an essential role as guides, like lighthouses capable of shedding light on what really deserves attention. It's for this reason that even a giant like Netflix sends its films to festivals: the quality stamp of a festival like Venice or Cannes is still essential to make a film "prestigious" in the eyes of the press, the awards, and the public.

The same is true for smaller productions, they struggle in theaters but find a new life in the festival circuit: it can be cited the case of Vermiglio but the same can be said for dozens of other Italian (and non-Italian) titles that have been seen primarily in arenas, retrospectives, and festivals.
These events ensure commercial survival for those movies (appearances in festivals generate interest which leads to new foreign sales, platforms, and TV broadcasts).



Thinking of a film's life as merely its theatrical release is pure madness today. This crucial role, held by film festivals, unfortunately seems to be misunderstood even by the Ministry of Culture. In fact it turns out that only 1% of the funds for cinema and audiovisuals are destined to festivals.[1] A ridiculous amount that doesn't reflect at all the vital importance that these events hold today (even more than in the past) in the distribution and circulation circuit of films. A lot also should be asked on how the fund allocated to festivals is subsequently divided. Surely it is surprising how a festival of essentially mundane nature (and not research-oriented) like the Rome Film Festival manages to gather a budget (about 8 million euros) that surpasses the budget allocated to all the other subsidized festivals combined (around 7 million euros spread over about 140 events).[2] Who decides how much funding one festival deserves compared to another? There are many questions, and discussions on this topic can be infinite. But let us try to focus on the aspect of research itself, on the ability to shed light on cinema in its newest and most interesting forms. Indeed, there are virtuous models, cinephile strongholds that manage to open themselves to the new and show themselves as protagonists in highlighting cinema that challenges norms and moves in territories different from the known ones. We are now halfway through the third decade of the 2000s; continuing to think of cinema in a "twentieth-century" way can only distance a young audience from progressively discovering the seventh art. It is necessary to find a way to

actively engage with young people and it's vital to know how to communicate with them. It is only through continuous contact with the new that the art form that we love so much will continue to be relevant.

Quoting Alberto Barbera:

"Today, more than in the past, a festival makes sense to the extent that it manages to keep up with changes, realizing that cinema is no longer the one of the twentieth century: it's different, no less interesting nor less stimulating, more engaging and spectacular than the cinema we grew up loving and continue to love. Not realizing this and not working on this diversity for me it's a mistake." [3]

A SERIES OF POSITIVE EXAMPLES: MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE DEL NUOVO CINEMA DI PESARO

A good example in this sense is represented by the Pesaro International Festival of New Cinema. The festival, founded in 1965, continues to honor those seemingly small but actually very important words in its name: new cinema. Citing the current artistic director, Pedro Armocida, "From its origins, Pesaro wanted to be a non-institutional festival, with very young organizers[...] Due to this convergence between new cinema and historical fortune, the first three editions (from 1965 to 1967) had an international resonance unimaginable today. The festival hosted figures such as Pier Paolo Pasolini, Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, Umberto Eco, witnessed the birth of cinema semiology, and featured well-known filmmakers from Third Cinema (for example, Brazilian Cinema Novo) and Eastern Europe. Since its origins it has achieved great success not only because of the caliber of its guests." [4]

The sense of the historical and critical importance of the Pesaro Festival (founded by Lino Micciché and for many years directed by Adriano Aprà) is still strongly felt today. There are many meetings dedicated to authors, completely different from the banal "masterclasses" that overcrowd too many festivals. If elsewhere people seek selfies with stars and there are only trivial questions, in Pesaro the focus is really on cinema, and cinema it is discussed for hours. What is the total budget (partly made up of ministerial contributions) available to such a significant and foundational event? Only 350,000 euros.[5] This figure invites reflection both on the ability to organize a festival with so few funds and on the opportunity to grant much larger ministerial subsidies to culturally much less relevant events. Pesaro's festival is able to propose itself in a way that is well-structured and that interests broad and diverse audiences: the result is that theaters are always full and, overall, it can be felt a sense of hyper-cinephilia through the small streets of the town (in the "Marche" region) during the festival days. What is the secret? The festival's ability to approach cinema in an oblique and non-canonical manner.

In the main competition it is possible to find very different works without limits on format or length: in the same sections there are short films, feature-length films, and works closer to video art. For the selectors, it does not matter whether a film lasts 4 minutes or 120; what matters is how suitable that work is to be screened in Pesaro. A positive effort is made to have the selected film's author present whenever possible. It should be noted how thoughtfully the festival is organized across its various sections; there is even a section dedicated to music videos (Vedomusica). In this respect as well, Pesaro stands out among Italian film festivals as the only event to dedicate a specific section to music videos, a form that has been so relevant and important in the last forty years. The open-air screenings in the piazza are equally as important (it's actually the festival's most "popular" moment), there experimental works left their space for broader films capable of attracting a diverse audience. These films are never chosen "randomly," even if they are more accessible to the general public they still embody the same idea of strong and innovative cinema that seems to permeate all the works in the festival. In recent years, films like Flashdance, Enzo D'Alò's animated work Mary and the Midnight Spirit, Forrest Gump, and others have been screened in the piazza. Also noteworthy is the festival's attention to Italian debuts; it is therefore essential to mention Non credo in niente, a self-distributed film that found big success in the underground Italian circuit and began its journey right in Pesaro.

Even today, more than a film festival, Pesaro is an idea: an idea of renewal, curiosity, and rebellion.



ARCHIVE CINEMA IN THE HEART OF TRASTEVERE: THE UNARCHIVE FOUND FOOTAGE FEST

Another virtuous example is the Unarchive Found Footage Fest, an event dedicated to archive cinema that has been taking place since a couple of years in Rome's Trastevere district and defines itself in its manifesto as an "antifestival."[6] Here too, every screening is packed with passionate and interested young audiences and the secret of its success seems to lie in the formula of the Pesaro Festival: a specific selection aimed at a deeply engaging and highly interested niche. To put it simply it is not a "generalist" event but a festival that tries sto achieve a big fidelization within a specific community. This doesn't translate into elitism; rather, it stems from the fact that the only way to make worthy a film event in 2025 is to present new, powerful works that are not afraid to be outside the norm and off the mainstream "circuit."After all, the reason to keep going to film festivals is to have the opportunity to see works that can't be seen anywhere else. For example, attention should be drawn to the considerable space given at the last Unarchive Found Footage Fest.

to the works of Federica Foglia, an experimental archive filmmaker whose works are outside any official circuit. Foglia manipulates film and images in new ways, overturning the conception of what cinema can be, she plays with filmic material almost like a street artist. It's obvious that dedicating such a large space to an artist like this might be seen as a risky choice for others festivals but instead for the Unarchive Found Footage Fest it becomes a source of pride and an opportunity to attract an engaged audience. Similarly, it can be mentioned the Pesaro Festival's choice to host works that approach video art—films far from traditionally complete narratives but close to the idea of fascination with the image and its cathartic power.

CONCLUSIONS: PROPOSALS FOR FILM FESTIVAL IN 2025

From these models, a winning path for today's festivals can likely be inferred, focusing mainly on two points. The first is a strong and precise audience targeting. We are no longer in the 1990s; today, the market is hyper-fragmented, and the range of choices is immense, this is the reason that leads many viewers to be lost in the ocean of films offered at every level, from mainstream to indie. In this scenario, thinking of a festival in "generalist" terms sense seems at least outdated and certainly unproductive. Instead, the successful choice is exemplified by events like Unarchive or the Pesaro Festival, which address a specific audience, perhaps not vast, but deeply engaged. Both focus on a "militant cinephile" audience—not necessarily young but profoundly embedded in the dynamics of cultural discourse. Beyond hyper-targeting, the second key concept that emerges from this analysis is the courage of choices. As banal as it may seem, it is through the strength to select unusual and non-standard works that festivals can thrive. It is necessary to abandon the idea that the different has to be rejected; very often what draws attention are courageous choices.

The passionate cinema audience exists and is, moreover, made up of many young people. According to a research by AFIC (Association of Italian Film Festivals), 60% of the festival audience in Italy falls within the 15-34 age group.[7]



What is truly necessary, then, is to rethink the model of a film event starting from the idea that a disorganized selection, inattentive to new trends, it's not enough. Events capable of actively engaging the audience are vital, they have to help people to reflect on the different forms cinema can take. Meetings with filmmakers are an effective solution but cannot turn into tired repetitions of the classic "Q&A" sessions that now seem to fill many theaters in Italy: what is needed instead are in-depth analysis and the ability to go beyond a superficial approach (without fear of delving into more complex conversations).

Cinema is more alive than ever; it hides in secret corners. Today, anyone can make films and cinema is often found even where we least expect it (archive cinema is one example, it shows that not even a camera recording anything can define what cinema is). But precisely because the possibilities today are vast, the landscape becomes extremely fragmented: selectors and programmers must therefore be attentive to contemporary developments and possibilities. Cinema is facing a complex moment, and it's truly necessary that the ones able to navigate it can find their way through the jungle of contemporaneity, presenting the audience a coherent and strongly distinctive program. It is difficult to find a selection of works that can truly represent "contemporary" cinema in every aspect but it is necessary to try. We all have to try with all our strength to allow cinema, once again, to shine and awaken the spirits of those enchanted by watching.

Marco D'Agostino

Sources

Notes

1. "*L'economia dei festival cinematografici in Italia. Tanti (oltre 600) ma mal sostenuti dallo Stato*" di Giorgio Gosetti su www.Key4biz.it, 23 Settembre 2024.
2. "*L'economia dei festival cinematografici*", cit.
3. Intervista ad Alberto Barbera (direttore della Mostra del Cinema di Venezia) in "*I festival del cinema in Italia. Forme e pratiche dalle origini al Covid-19*", Maria Francesca Piredda, Carocci editore, Roma, 2012, p.56.
4. Intervista a Pedro Armocida (direttore della Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema di Pesaro) in "*I festival del cinema in Italia*", Piredda, cit, p.67.
5. Maria Francesca Piredda, "*Ifestival del cinema in Italia*", p.219.
6. "*The times of the archives*" su unarchivefest.it.
7. "Cinema di oggi. Spettatori di domani. Una nuova prospettiva – presentati risultati ricerca AFIC" su aficfestival.it, 10.

ANIMATION FESTIVALS: A VITAL HUB FOR CAREER GROWTH IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY AND BEYOND!



Festivals dedicated to film, music, animation and other art forms have always attracted large numbers of enthusiasts, professionals and curious onlookers. Whether motivated by the desire to see a favourite music group perform or attend the premiere of a new film by a favourite director, one often comes into contact with independent or lesser-known artists who, thanks to these events, are able to showcase their work or even launch their careers.

Focusing specifically on film festivals, these events are not just competitions that one can participate in or attend as a spectator. They also provide meeting places for industry professionals and companies, offering spaces designed to facilitate new connections between studios and artists.
One of the most famous and important festivals of the year is the Annecy Festival, the oldest film festival dedicated entirely to animation, with origins dating back to the early 1960s.

Every year, in the mountains of Savoy and on the shores of the lake, artists from all over the world gather to watch the films in competition and connect with various animation studios and organisations. Indeed, the careers of animators, directors, illustrators, musicians and many other professionals working in animation, visual effects and other creative fields gravitate around these festivals.

"MIFA," THE INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION MARKET OF ANNECY

During the Annecy Festival in the early 1980s, the first ideas for creating a new film market dedicated to animation began to take shape. This market would also include thematic conferences. In 1985, the first 'Mifa (International Animated Film Market)' was organised under the initiative of the French Minister of Culture — an international animation market which still attracts a significant number of professionals, including buyers and distributors from over 70 countries today, with the specific goal of supporting the national animation industry. Originally held at the Centre Bonlieu, the MIFA was later moved to the Pâquier and eventually relocated to the new convention centre at the Palais Impérial, where its pavilion was installed in the surrounding park. In 1995, the exhibition area was extended to include all the halls and the conference room of the Palais Impérial. Since then, the area dedicated to Mifa has continued to grow to include the exhibition zone, the Palais Impérial's convention centre, and the Mifa Campus, which has been designated for emerging young talents among professionals and students since 2023.

Mifa boasts a significant number of conferences, professional meetings, workshops and project presentations ('pitches') for works in development on a global scale. One section in particular, 'WIP Features', showcases the creative stages of films currently in production, enabling studios to present and promote their projects. An example of this is the 2021 presentation of La Sirène (2023) by Sepideh Farsi, which recounts the 1980 Iraqi invasion of the Iranian region of Khuzestan — specifically the city of Abadan — through the eyes of Omid, a fourteen-year-old boy. The event featured director Sepideh Farsi, producer Sébastien Onomo, executive producer Vanessa Ciszewski and

designer Zane Najjar. The film was produced by Les Films d'Ici, Katuh Studio, BAC Cinéma, Lunanime and Trickstudio Lutterbeck, and created by La Fabrique d'Image in Luxembourg. It was presented in the festival's feature-length competition in 2023, ultimately winning the award for Best Original Music.

""WOMEN IN ANIMATION (WIA)" AND THE COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUITY IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY

Of the many events at Mifa, the talks organised by WIA (Women in Animation), an organisation also present at other festivals, stand out.

WIA is a non-profit association dedicated to promoting and supporting women and non-binary artists within the animation industry. Its mission is to bring together the global animation community and encourage and uplift individuals who are underrepresented in terms of gender in the art, technology, production and business of animation. According to WIA, gender justice must be upheld "because it will benefit all of us. We are inextricably linked, and we all deserve to be treated fairly".[1]
WIA's efforts revolve around the following goals:

- constantly renewing the conversation on gender equity and representation in the workplace;
- Focusing its programmes on supporting gender balance within the animation sector
- Valuing and spotlighting champions of gender justice.[2]

One of the projects organised by 'Women in Animation' is 'Stories x Women'. Now in its fourth year, the programme selects five delegates who receive one-on-one counselling from mentors chosen from among animation industry experts in preparation for the 'MIFA Pitching Sessions', which are presentations showcased at the Annecy Festival and 'Mifa'. The programme is open to teams that include at least one woman in a leadership role in production, directing or screenwriting.

The initiative specifically supports women animators from emerging animation communities in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America, with the aim of amplifying diverse voices across the global animation landscape.
WIA President Marge Dean emphasises that these varied and authentic stories deserve to be heard and told by their creators. She also highlights the crucial support provided by The Walt Disney Company and UNESCO in collaboration with the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF) towards gender equality and the global growth of animation.

Meredith Roberts, Executive Vice President of “Television Animation” at “Disney Branded Television”, reiterated the importance of supporting women in animation, ensuring they have the opportunity to tell universally appealing stories that reflect the richness of the world around us.

In March 2025, the five women selected for “Stories x Women 2025” were announced, chosen from more than 114 candidates that came from over 100 different countries.
This year’s selected delegations explored themes of identity, cultural heritage, and self-discovery through imaginative worlds.
The candidates are:

- Brazil: “Better City" by Fernanda Bruna Capozzoli and Sara Tenti
- Bolivia: “Condenaditos” by Matisse Gonzalez Jordan
- India: “Jinnbusters” by Yusra Shahid
- South Africa: “Nerve” by Tshepo Moche and Renee van Reenen
- Türkiye: “The Brains” by Idil Sukan

This opportunity serves as a showcase for works ranging from stories of misfit alien geniuses (The Brains), to South African family curses and post-colonial trauma (Condenaditos), to playful, child-friendly ghost tales (Jinnbusters), to horror anthologies (Nerve), and little rabbits finding their way in a big city (Better City).
Director Jordan confirmed that several co-producers have expressed interest in her project Condenaditos, and that she has engaged in discussions with distributors, sales agents and broadcasters, proving the effectiveness of this gender-support initiative. The creators of 'Nerve' report having spoken with potential collaborators, while Capozzoli and Tenti of 'Better City' say they have continued conversations begun at the festival aimed at securing a co-production.

MASTERCLASSES, WORKSHOPS, AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

AThere is also a dedicated section for students and professionals, designed to encourage networking and connections with schools, universities, studios and companies. At the various company booths, visitors can schedule preliminary or informational interviews that could lead to future job opportunities.
At the Aardman Academy stand, the school of the renowned stop-motion animation studio behind films such as Chicken Run, Wallace & Gromit, and Shaun the Sheep, the studio's iconic puppets are on display, offering visitors a hands-on insight into bringing these characters to life. It is common to see swarms of students and professionals from around the world in this environment, armed with business cards and seeking opportunities. This demonstrates the important role of film festivals in bringing communities together and connecting talent with institutions.

In addition, attendees can participate in masterclasses and workshops to hone their skills, discover new techniques, and explore the latest software tools. These sessions are led by animation and film experts, who often collaborate with the brands behind the illustration, animation and related software used in the industry.
Within the pavilion dedicated to students and professionals, there is also an area exclusively focused on the various software used in the industry for artistic creation and production management. These demonstrations are useful for showcasing the capabilities of the software and promoting it. For example, in 2024, artist and animator Nikolai Lockertsen held an introductory session on 'Procreate Dreams', a new 2D animation and motion graphics software for iPad developed by the creators of Procreate, which was originally designed for illustration. The session demonstrated the software's versatility and speed, particularly its iPad-based workflow as an alternative to computer processes. This emphasises the rapid pace of technological optimisation in response to the increasing demand for tighter deadlines in artistic production.

CONFERENCES ON CURRENT TOPICS AND INDUSTRY INNOVATIONS. THE REFLECTION ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ANNECY

The Mifa is an opportunity to gain visibility, look for work or sell products, but it is much more than that. Indeed, numerous conferences are organised here, reflecting on current issues affecting the animation industry and often incorporating stimulating intersections with other disciplines.

The topic that has been discussed the most recently is certainly the role of artificial intelligence in computer graphics and how it may evolve in the future.

For example, this year the Annecy Animation Festival organised three events focused on AI:

- The conference *"AI for Animation"*, a discussion on the evolution of workflows and a reflection regarding the potential for artificial intelligence to become a valuable ally, beginning with an overview of how film and animation studios are testing and integrating it into their procedures.

- *"AI Through the Artist's Lens"*, a panel featuring artists who use AI, sharing their specific approaches. Participants included Nikola Todorovic, co-founder of "*Wonder Dynamics*", a company of "*Autodesk*", who, together with the actor and producer Tye Sheridan, created the AI software "*Autodesk Flow Studio*"; Chris Ebeling, creative technologist, entrepreneur (owner of the consultancy agency "*Beyond Horizons*"), and digital artist with nearly twenty years of experience in gaming VFX and animation (currently an educational consultant for "*Epic Games*"); and Irmak Atabek, CEO and co-founder of "*KidsAI*", a company aimed to ensure a safe and appropriate access to AI for every child.

- The panel *"How AI-Based Real-Time Technologies and Game Cinematics Can Open New Opportunities in Animation and Gaming"* explained the growing need to integrate artificial intelligence into real time technologies, especially in game engines.

The topic of AI remains controversial. Despite its potential being supported by a growing group of people who advocate for the adoption of this technology in the industry, there is still significant scepticism and fear that it might replace human creativity. An example of this occurred during a protest at the 2025 Annecy Festival organised by international animation associations, as well as directors, screenwriters and actors. Their message was: 'Generative AI is neither a tool nor effective or cheap. It is a flawed, destructive copying machine that is expensive to run".

The Annecy event welcomes — and even encourages — both criticism and support on these issues, as confirmed by Artistic Director Marcel Jean. The organisation aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the animation industry, showcasing changes in the sector and the latest trends established by major studios, as highlighted by Mickaël Marin, the Festival's CEO.

INDUSTRY TRADE SHOWS: THE CASE OF *"FMX"*

The creation of professional spaces for people working in animation has become increasingly common. In Stuttgart, for example, a trade fair similar to Mifa called "FMX (Film & Media Exchange)" takes place during the city's animation festival, the "ITFS (International Trickfilm-Festival Stuttgart)". For this event, exclusive use of Haus der Wirtschaft was granted. Initially a State Museum of Applied Arts, this building was later converted into a conference and exhibition centre.

FESTIVAL OF ANIMATION: CAREER OPPORTUNITY, TRAINING AND MORE!

To conclude, festivals play a significant role in the education of new artists and offer students the chance to learn about the realities of the industry. This analysis has revealed that, in addition to showcasing the artists and various studios involved, these contexts bring together different personalities, disciplines and worlds, creating new connections and offering insights into the latest developments and innovations in the field. The collateral events associated with the festivals also generate multiple points for reflection.

Sara Mason

Sources

- The Festival's History, Annecy Festival website, Annecy https://www.annecyfestival.com/en/the-festival/presentation/the-festivals-history (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)
- La Sirène WIP Features, Annecy Festival website, 2021, Annecy https://www.annecyfestival.com/a-propos/archives/2021/programmation-2021/fiche-2021:rdv-200001502399 (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)
- Les WIP : au cœur des futures œuvres incontournables de l'animation mondiale, Annecy Festival website, 2021, Annecy https://www.annecyfestival.com/resources/emailings/2021_annonce_WIP_fr.php (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)
- The Siren (2023), katuhstudio.net https://katuhstudio.net/portfolio/the-siren-in-post-production/?lang=en (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)
- La Sirène, Annecy Festival website, 2023, Annecy https://www.annecyfestival.com/en/node/532/feature-films-official/la-sirene (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)
- D. Sarto, WIA Announces 2025 'Stories x Women' Program Participants, Animation World Network.com, 28/03/2025 https://www.awn.com/news/wia-announces-2025-stories-x-women-program-participants (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)
- V. Davis, Stories x Women: Tales of Jinns, Genius Aliens, Immigrants and Family Curses, Animation World Network.com, 26/08/2025 https://www.awn.com/animationworld/stories-x-women-tales-jinns-genius-aliens-immigrants-and-family-curses (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)
- B. Rogez, Annecy Festival 2025: What Place for Generative AI?, 3DVF.com 28/04/2025 https://3dvf.com/en/annecy-festival-2025-what-place-for-generative-ai/ (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)
- M. Goodfellow, Animation, Writers & Actors Guilds Hold "Historic" Anti-Generative AI Protest At Annecy: "GenAI Seeks Not To Support Artists, But To Destroy Them", www.deadline.com
- 12/06/2025 https://deadline.com/2025/06/annecy-ai-protest-animation-guilds-1236431752/ (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025)

Notes

1. Our values, wearewia.org, https://wearewia.org/mission-vision-values/ (ultimo accesso ottobre 2025.
2. Ibidem.

NOWAI

The audiovisual industry is undergoing a deep transformation, facing the integration of artificial intelligence into its processes, affecting the entire production chain and reshaping the way professionals and crews work.
However, the structured adoption of AI tools has not been without challenges. Doubts, fears, and controversies continue to accompany this shift, both among industry veterans and the new generations of professionals entering the field.
After all, mistrust toward innovation often stems from a lack of understanding of the medium itself, which in turn generates barriers, mostly due to the perceived difficulty of learning how to use it and recognizing its potential.
In the case of artificial intelligence, what complicates its adoption even further is the relentless pace of updates professionals must keep up with to apply it effectively in their work.
We are living in a time when technological innovation becomes obsolete before it's even widely adopted, triggering a constant race toward learning and adaptation that can easily discourage potential users.

Likewise, the absence of a stable framework or established body of literature—still in the process of being written and constantly evolving—makes the path uncertain for future professionals, who are forced to rely on individual, ongoing self-training to master these tools and gather relevant knowledge.
This effort becomes even more demanding when, as in Italy, there is a lack of a sufficient and effective educational system, an issue frequently raised by industry insiders.
Despite these initial obstacles, it is undeniable that new technologies have always been drivers of progress, influencing habits and contributing to the evolution of tekne itself.
Let us not forget that cinema was born precisely from the serendipitous convergence of different technologies, which the Lumière brothers refined into the concept of cinema as we know and recognize it today.

The journey toward modern cinema, however, took centuries: from the Renaissance camera obscura to the 17th-century magic lantern, and the 19th-century optical devices such as the zoetrope and the praxinoscope, humanity gradually learned how to give movement to images.
The invention of photography in 1839 finally made it possible to capture reality, and with Edison's kinetoscope first, and then the Lumières' shared public projections, cinema was born at the end of the 1800s.
Cinema, therefore, is an art form rooted in technological evolution—making it clear that rejecting the potential of AI would be the wrong approach.

It is within this context that the following interview takes place, featuring two professionals exploring the intersection between artificial intelligence and the audiovisual world.

We met Davide Bianca and Guido Callegari during the Stop e-Motion Days to hear their perspectives on a possible dialogue between one of cinema's oldest and most handcrafted animation techniques—stop motion, known for its lengthy and costly production process—and artificial intelligence.

INTERVIEW WITH GUIDO CALLEGARI



Name: Guido
Surname: Callegari
Bio: Art Director specialized in creative AI for video and communication. He is the first Italian Creative Partner of Runway and a Director on the roster of Grail, a next-gen entertainment studio based on AI and a management company headquartered in the United States. He also collaborates with Luma, Freepik, Pika, Minimax, and Kling as a partner and beta tester. Co-founder of the AI Creative Community (40,000 members) and leader of the Runway Italy Community, he works as a consultant and trainer for global agencies and brands. He promotes an ethical, inclusive, and transparent use of artificial intelligence.

LET'S BEGIN WITH A CRUCIAL QUESTION THAT CONCERNS EVERYONE WORKING WITHIN THE VAST MACHINE OF CINEMA: AT WHICH STAGES OF THE PRODUCTION PIPELINE IS AI CURRENTLY MOST APPLIED? AND WHICH PROFESSIONS ARE MOST AFFECTED OR TRANSFORMED BY IT?

AI is progressively permeating all stages of the pipeline, but today it finds its most transformative applications in pre-production and post-production.

In pre-production, AI has become a creative accelerator: brainstorming with large language models, generating visual concepts through prompts (Midjourney), creating storyboards, writing scripts (ChatGPT), visual scouting, virtual locations, and even animatics.

In post-production, we see the dominance of video synthesis (VEO, Sora, Luma, Kling, Runway), upscaling (Topaz and Magnific), voiceover with ElevenLabs, music generation (Suno), and automatic localization. The most affected professions include **directors, art directors, copywriters, visualizers, motion designers, and editors**—but increasingly **also** roles like location **managers, sound designers, and casting directors**, where AI can simulate environments, voices, faces, and performances.

The role of those with a horizontal view of production —such as creative directors or AI team leaders—is becoming crucial to strategically and coherently orchestrate tools, languages, and outputs. More and more, specialized professionals are joining production and strategy teams.

WHICH AI MODELS ARE MOST COMMONLY USED IN AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION TODAY?

Currently, the most widely used (and often integrated) models include:

- **Text-to-Image**: Midjourney, Seedream, Nano Banana – for styleframes, character design, and image editing.
- **Text-to-Video**: Veo3, Sora, Luma Dream Machine, Runway 4, Kling – for generative videos and visual storytelling.
- **Voice & Audio**: ElevenLabs, Suno AI – for dubbing, sound design, voice cloning, and soundtracks.
- **Script & Prompt Engineering**: ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini – for screenwriting, narrative development, and prompt crafting.
- **Postproduction**: Magnific AI, Topaz Labs – for upscaling, interpolation, and frame generation.

The real breakthrough lies in integration: building hybrid workflows using tools like Weavy or custom setups like ComfyUI that merge multiple models according to the creative vision and company policies.

DO YOU THINK ITALY IS ADEQUATELY PREPARING AUDIOVISUAL PROFESSIONALS FOR AI?

Not yet. The effort isn't systemic or coordinated. There are exceptions (some universities and private courses), but a shared national strategy is missing, especially within the public education system. We talk about AI a lot in marketing terms, but not enough from a creative standpoint. Professionals are too often left to self-training or to the initiatives of more forward-thinking companies. The risk is confusion or missing out on AI's real potential.

There's also a lack of transparent dialogue between stakeholders, policymakers, unions, and the tech industry. AI is no longer something to explore "when we have time": it's a professional and cultural urgency.

WHAT'S YOUR IMPRESSION OF HOW ITALIAN PROFESSIONALS ARE ADOPTING AI? IS THERE A GAP COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES?

There's a mix of enthusiasm and skepticism. Those who've started experimenting immediately recognize its transformative potential—**but there's still cultural resistance**, often tied to fears of losing control or to the myth of the "untouchable auteur." Abroad especially in the UK, US, Korea, and Japan there's a **more fluid integration**, as AI is viewed as a **productive tool**, not an ideological threat. They experiment more, fail more, but build real know-how. In Italy, the risk is becoming spectators of a revolution that others are already shaping.

FINALLY, WHERE DO YOU THINK THE ETHICAL BOUNDARY LIES WHEN USING AI IN THE AUDIOVISUAL FIELD?

The ethical limit is **intentionality**. AI is not neutral it's a powerful tool, and as such, it must be **contextualized, disclosed, and responsibly used at every stage**.
Transparency is essential about what is generated, what is remixed, and who owns the rights. Synthetic creations must never be passed off as real, especially in sensitive contexts (news, documentaries, testimonies).
Most importantly, **human work should never be erased, only augmented**.
AI doesn't replace the soul of a project it can enhance, empower, and accelerate it but vision, message, human touch, and storytelling remain at the core. And that core must be protected, even in the most automated future.



Callegari, G., 2025, 内なる蝕 Eclipse Within [Film], Welcome to Grail.

INTERVIEW WITH DAVIDE BIANCA



Name: Davide
Surname: Bianca
Bio: Executive Creative Director, strategist, and technologist, Emmy winner, with nearly two decades of frontline experience in creative innovation. His work with Hollywood studios, television networks, gaming companies, and global brands such as Google, Coca-Cola, and Nike has helped shape pop culture, blending storytelling with cutting-edge technologies to captivate audiences worldwide. With 22 Cannes Lions, 29 Clios, and an Emmy, Davide expertly leads vision and strategy in AI and emerging technologies within production processes, bridging creativity and technology to define the future of immersive entertainment.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF THE HOLLYWOOD INDUSTRY WITH THE RISE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

A year ago, AI polarized Hollywood. Today, the atmosphere is far more pragmatic. All major players are establishing internal AI labs and initiatives to integrate "AI-assisted" workflows across R&D, pre-production, production, and post.

Concrete examples include internal mandates at major studios like Disney and strategic acquisitions in VFX (e.g., DNEG → Metaphysic), clearly signaling the industry's hybrid direction. Even legacy shops like ILM now refer to AI as "one more tool in the toolkit" to accelerate artistic workflows.

On the labor side, following the 2023 strikes, the WGA and SAG-AFTRA introduced protections around AI use (consent and compensation for digital replicas; limits on AI-generated writing). In 2024–25, further agreements (IATSE; video game performers) added similar safeguards.

In short, the question is no longer if, but how—through hybrid operational models that reduce time and cost while expanding creative output, all within contractual rights frameworks.

WHAT ARE YOUR THREE-YEAR PREDICTIONS FOR AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION ACROSS COMMERCIALS, LIVE-ACTION CINEMA, AND ANIMATION?

These three sectors are equally affected, though each with its own nuances.
Within the next 12–18 months, AI tools will be widely adopted in **advertising**. Estimates suggest that 50–60% of content (TV, social, DOOH) will be produced through hybrid or AI-assisted pipelines: concept/look-dev, intrinsic assets, set extensions, face/voice solutions with consent, culturally aware localizations, and ultra-fast versioning.

In **live-action** cinema, we'll see an increase in **hybrid films** where performances and core narratives remain live, but world-building, creatures, large-scale sets, crowds, and "wow" FX are handled via AI+ML within established VFX pipelines. The goal isn't to replace, but to compress timelines and multiply creative possibilities, especially in genres like horror, sci-fi, and fantasy.

At this point, the line between **animation** and live action becomes porous. We'll see features and series that blend light capture, image-to-video, consistent stylization, and traditional post-production.

A provocation: Is Avatar a live-action film with animated sequences—or an animated film

integrating live performances?
These trends are already visible in corporate investments and the public discourse of VFX studios. Recent union contracts define usage boundaries, but they don't slow down adoption.

SINCE WE AT QUARTA PARETE LOVE THE STOP-MOTION TECHNIQUE, WHAT'S YOUR VIEW ON THE POTENTIAL OF HYBRID ANIMATION BETWEEN AI AND STOP MOTION?

I believe the meeting between AI and stop motion is one of the most fascinating combinations imaginable—a "match made in heaven." It merges the handcrafted, tactile nature of stop motion (with its imperfection, physicality, and analog charm) with the power, speed, and flexibility of generative techniques.

AI can intervene in multiple stages of production—from previsualization and concept testing, where it enables rapid proof-of-concept creation, to production itself, helping with tweening (frame interpolation) or restoring damaged frames, drastically reducing labor time.

It's also invaluable in post-production—for extending sets, generating backgrounds, managing particle or fluid simulations, or atmospheric effects—without ever compromising the handcrafted frame-by-frame essence.

The result is a new visual language that preserves the magic and manual nature of stop motion, while unlocking an unprecedented creative freedom. A language where imperfection and materiality coexist with the fluidity and imagination of AI—ushering in a new era of auteur animation and storytelling.

AS OFTEN HAPPENS, PROFESSIONS EVOLVE WITH TECHNOLOGICAL SHIFTS. HOW WILL THE DIRECTOR'S ROLE EVOLVE IN THIS NEW LANDSCAPE? WHAT SKILLS WILL THEY NEED?

The director's role is undergoing a profound transformation.

If, over the past twenty years, Hollywood operated like a finely tuned machine highily specialized and segmented. Tomorrow's directors will need to return to being more complete and autonomous figures, almost like in the independent cinema of the early 1990s.

Technology, especially AI, will make it possible to achieve with 15 or 20 people what once required thousands and blockbuster budgets. This doesn't diminish the value of large productions—it restores a creative freedom that has been partly lost to industrial logic and endless franchises.

We'll see a new generation of filmmakers able to write, visualize, and direct the entire creative process—from concept to final delivery—managing hybrid pipelines where the lines between pre-, production, and post-production blur. In a sense, it's a return to the craftsmanship of cinema, closer to the approach of masters like Fellini or Kubrick, who oversaw every aspect of their visual world.

And since AI drastically reduces time and cost, new voices and independent films will emerge—supported by more accessible funding models such as negative pick-ups or direct-to-platform deals. It will be a true authorial renaissance in every respect.



Bianca, D., 2025, Children of the Earth [Film], Welcome to Grail.

FINALLY, WITH THE ADVENT OF AI, WILL MASTERING PRODUCTION TOOLS BE ENOUGH TO STAND OUT, OR WILL SOMETHING MORE BE REQUIRED?

Tools no matter how powerful are still just tools. And as with every phase of technological democratization, widespread access will trigger an explosion of content: plenty of it, often visually impressive but lacking soul. Technical proficiency alone won't be enough, because soon anyone will be able to generate stunning imagery. **What will truly make the difference is the ability to tell a story that moves us**. Writing, character building, emotional tone, rhythm, and editing sensitivity these will remain the fundamentals.

In a landscape where everything looks perfect, only those who can move us, build an authorial identity, and find a recognizable voice will stand out.

Tomorrow's director must master AI tools, yes but also the languages of storytelling, directing, and art direction combining taste, culture, and human intuition: the things no algorithm can truly replicate.

In short, AI enhances creativity it doesn't replace it. **The real challenge will be to stand out not for what you can generate, but for what you have to say.**

Michelangelo Morello

#00 November 2025

prof.ondo cinema

a magazine by Quarta Parete