

**Fondazione Prada**

—mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica—  
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*Press release*

**FONDAZIONE PRADA IS THE PARTNER OF "THE SECRET HISTORY OF  
ITALIAN CINEMA" AT THE 61ST VENICE FILM FESTIVAL**

The start of a programme to recover and restore "invisible" films

As in other fields, so in cinema too there are two histories: the official one taught us and a secret one, mistakenly considered to be "minor", which is the one that reveals the real cause of events. The Cinema Sector of the Biennale di Venezia wishes to initiate a programme, with the support of the Fondazione Prada and the most prestigious institutional partners, for the recovery, restoration and systematic rediscovery of an Italian cinema that is forgotten, invisible, unknown or misunderstood: a Secret History of Italian Cinema. The retrospective of the 2004 Festival will constitute just the start of a process of study and screenings taking the form of a calendar of permanent activities spanning four years exploring and diversifying the discoveries.

The first part of the project, which will involve the Cinema Sector of the Venice Biennale from the 61st Festival, is entitled Italian Kings of the B's, and will present 20-25 genre films, selected on the basis of their great importance and great invisibility: films that have not been seen for at least a decade, and are here restored and edited to provide the most correct and integral copy. The development of the New Italian Cinema (from the 1930s onwards) was made possible in part because underlying their growth there was a "lower" tier of film-making, one with "low practices", in which directors and craftsmen sought to invent the first true Italian "genre cinema". This was to be a spectacular cinema that was to sweep into the market without losing its innovative charge in terms of style and theme: alongside some minor classics by cult directors, we have chosen to shown some veritable rediscoveries in terms of directors.

The "godfathers" of this retrospective are two great American film-makers, Quentin Tarantino and Joe Dante, who are both great experts of Italian cinema.

The Fondazione Prada, which has for years been active in exploring contemporary forms of art such as photography, video, sculpture, architecture and cinema

through exhibitions, catalogues and congresses, will be the private-sector partner in the project, with a view to investigating new horizons of vision.

The Italian Kings of the B's project will be curated by Marco Giusti and Luca Rea in collaboration with the leading Italian and foreign scholars of genre cinema. *Italian Kings of the B's* will not be just a retrospective programme for the 61st Festival but will mark the start of a long-term programme for systematic recovery and restoration which will lead to a further distribution of the films. On top of the works presented in film, there will be copies of the restored stock in high definition available after the Festival, in line with agreements between those holding the rights to them and distributors. Thus, there will be screenings in some Italian cinemas already equipped for high-definition projections and small series of DVDs published by leading publishers of Italian videos. In Venice, along with Tarantino and Dante, there will be directors such as Sergio Sollima, Umberto Lenzi, Sergio Martino and Lamberto Bava and many of the actors, screenplay writers, set producers and art directors of the films presented.

The project enjoys an extraordinary contribution from the Ministry for Cultural Affairs.

The main institutional partner for the project is the Cineteca Nazionale at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia - Scuola Nazionale di Cinema. Important support has also been forthcoming from the Cineteca Italiana di Milano, the Cineteca del Friuli and the C.E.C. - Centro Espressioni Cinematografiche in Udine.

Italy's leading publishers of videos also support the project (including: Medusa Video, Minerva Video, e-mik Dolmen, Surf Video, Alan Young, Warner Video).

A small circuit of digital cinema auditoria projecting the high-definition copies of the restored films will be set up within the Agis and Medusa Cinema circuits. Alongside the Italian Kings of the B's programme, the Secret History of Italian Cinema will also recover for the 61st Festival a part of the 'rescue' work undertaken on the Italian underground of the 1960s: the first phase foresees the restoration of films by Baruchello, Grifi and Scavolini.

Nicola Mazzanti will be general supervisor of the restoration and high-definition copies. To him, to Morando Morandini and to Pino Farinotti has been given the broader title of "Ordering Committee" of the Secret History of Italian Cinema. Alongside the recovery of the genre cinema of the 1950s-1970s, which in the Italian Kings of the B's programme is to be curated by Marco Giusti and Luca Rea, the more general project aims to restore and recover all of the invisible Italian cinema, setting out the philological lines for each recovery: the underground films of 1960s-1970s by all those important and forgotten directors for whom a corpus that can be consulted has not yet been reconstituted.

Within the programme planned for the Festival, Quentin Tarantino will present a special homage to "Fernando Di Leo, the Boss". The American director's consideration for Di Leo is clearly demonstrated in a declaration he made: "During my adolescence, I worked as a shop assistant in a video-store in Santa Monica, and one of the first cassettes I saw was significant for my future profession: it was *I padroni della città*. I didn't know the film was Italian, nor had I ever heard of Fernando Di Leo; I only remember that after watching the film, I was bowled over. Di Leo had produced a gangster film set in the streets of Rome which could easily have been filmed by Don Siegel: there was the same energy in the directing, the same dry tone as in the great American thrillers. And Jack Palance was simply fantastic in the part of the disfigured man. After seeing *I padroni della città*, I became obsessed and I began systematically to track down and watch the other films Di Leo had directed. The first I saw was *La mala ordina* which in my opinion is a true masterpiece of police thriller. I can still remember the impact this little Italian had on me as he was swallowed up in the big league and given orders from New York to take on the pair of killers played by Henry Silva and Woody Stroode. I think that in this film Di Leo gave his all. There's also an amazing chase between the glutton and the guy who's killed his wife and daughter, which lasts at least a quarter of an hour. At a certain point, he leaps on to a truck and smashes the windscreen with his head! Yes, he butts it with his head, amazing! Only a great director could imagine and film such a long scene without losing the tension for an instant. Then I got hold of *Il boss*, which in America was distributed with the name *Wipeout!*. This is another masterpiece full of bitterness and cruelty, again featuring the legendary Henry Silva playing a Mafia killer who murders everyone to get to the top, and by Richard Conte. The thing I like about Di Leo's characters is that they're real delinquent sons of bitches but never standardised or fake figures. And there's always an underlying irony, even in the grimmest things shown, and this makes his films truly unique. I owe Fernando a great deal in terms of passion and film-making." ("Nocturno", September 2003).