

# THE BUSINESS<sup>TM</sup> OF FILM

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2007

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TALENT



## The Road From Italy That Led Christian Filippella To AFI. Has Italian Cinema lost one of 'a new breed of exciting and imaginative young directors'?

Prior to attending AFI, Christian Filippella studied at Italy's Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, which is one of the two oldest schools of cinema in the World, the other being in Leningrad. Whilst working in Ireland where he collaborated on and directed films for the Northern Ireland Film Commission, Filippella won a prize as one of the best young filmmakers in Ireland. In 2002 he was selected for participation in Italy's Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, considered by many to be the best film program in the world, and after interviewing with CSC's Gianni Amelio, decided to join their program. Only 6 students are accepted per year, and for a period of three years they work in 35mm at the amazing facilities with access to AVID rooms, PRO TOOLS rooms, and mixing rooms. The school has one of the biggest sound stages in Europe, and is located adjacent to Cinecittà studios affording the students access to the sets of productions shooting at the studio. For Filippella's thesis film he and composer Roberto Boarini wrote the original soundtrack which was recorded in Dolby digital sound with a 35-piece orchestra in a theatre in Venice. With a background in pho-

tography, painting, sculpting, and writing, Filippella entered Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia wanting to experiment with associating image and sound in an unconventional way. He found that in Italy there is "little space for young directors with new ideas" and "producers are always investing in the same projects and people". As an Italian filmmaker he feels, "Italian Cinema is old and not renewing itself. It's stuck to ideas of films from the Neorealist period and hasn't ventured to start 'a new wave' of productions." Over the last 30 years or more, with the exceptions of cinematic geniuses like Bertolucci, Tornatore, Benigni, and Troisi, Italy has not enjoyed a period of good movies. The industry has shrunk, and the rare good directors often look for funds in other countries.

Unlike France, the Italian film industry has never modernized. While the French have kept 'their style and personal vision' in a modern perspective, in Italy there is a lack of ideas and young producers. It is one of the reasons Filippella decided to leave Italy after graduating Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia and move to Los Angeles. He said, "The market for Italian films internationally was

killed because our government decided to impose the Italian language on every Italian production and denied producers the possibility of having international casts. There were no private investors and films could only be produced with public funds, which meant passing through the political filter and which resulted in only certain films being promoted and financed. I believe films should always be free from any kind of control. In recent years one of the best examples of how Italian producers are not focused on searching for new ideas and talents was Emanuele Crialese. He was not selected by the Centro Sperimentale and couldn't find a producer in Italy. He decided to move to the States where he went on to study film directing at NYU. His first feature, *Once We Were Strangers*, shot in English in New York and was selected for many festivals, including the Sundance Film Festival. Crialese received many awards including the Grand Prix du Jury at the Valenciennes Film Festival. *Respiro*, his second feature, won the Cannes 2002 Critics Week Award. After that our national TV channel production RAI decided to put money in his new film *Nuovomondo*."

## PROJECTS OMNIARERUM

Before leaving Italy I was going to produce and direct a low budget experimental movie in black and white. The script was given to one of our best Italian actors Alessandro Gassman, son of Vittorio, who accepted the main role enthusiastically. The idea was to make a completely new style of film, creating a new underground movement. Even with Gassman on board and a low budget requirement, I couldn't find a production company to finance the project. Everybody said the script was too experimental. I wanted all young people on the crew, all my talented friends I had met over the years. In Italy people get old and conform to old styles before leading a team, so they never try new and different things. I decided to not conform to this pattern. Instead, I have chosen possibly the longest and hardest way of making films. In the past I have also worked as a waiter and barman to pay for my own studies to keep doing what I love. In the last 8 years I have worked with low budgets and gained enormous experience making these kinds of films work well. Ultimately, I would like to make this film in Los Angeles with an estimated \$250,000 budget. I am looking for an interested independent production company in the States.

## THERMAE

I just finished writing a screenplay set at the end of the Roman Empire with the idea of shooting the film in Latin as my first feature. My wish list is for the German producer Roland Pellegrino to make it. I consider him an example of how a real producer should be. The title is the same as my thesis film at the Centro Sperimentale with some common elements but a totally different story.

## L'HOMME OISEAU

I am currently adapting this wonderful book for the screen and am looking for a production company in Los Angeles. While studying in Italy Christian Filippella was mentored by some of Italian cinema's legendary filmmakers including Gianni Amelio (directing), Piero Tosi (costumes), Giuseppe Rotunno (cinematography - Fellini's cinematographer for 20 years), as well as Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, Pietro Germi, and Furio Scarpelli.