



MIGRANT STORIES TAKE CENTRE STAGE IN THIS YEAR'S ST. ALI ITALIAN FILM FESTIVAL 2025 VENICE OPENING NIGHT SELECTION FROM PAOLO SORRENTINO ANNOUNCED AS FESTIVAL CENTREPIECE

Presented by Palace, the 2025 ST. ALI Italian Film Festival's annual Spring escape to Italy is one step closer with the announcement of the full programme. From 17 September for four weeks, a bellissimo selection of box office hits and award-winning films will dazzle screens in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth, Ballarat, Byron Bay and Ballina. Returning as Festival Ambassador is the multi-talented Italian-born chef, TV presenter and host **Silvia Colloca**, who will be opening the festival in Sydney and for the first time in Brisbane.

The festival opens with Paolo Genovese's record-breaking hit **SOMEBODY TO LOVE** (*FolleMente*), a romantic comedy with an all-star cast including Edoardo Leo, Pilar Fogliati and Vittoria Puccini. Following the global success of *Perfect Strangers (IFF 16)*, writer/director Genovese's latest film reveals the innermost thoughts and uncertainties of a modern Italian couple on their awkward first date.

Following its World Premiere at the Opening Night of the 2025 Venice International Film Festival later this month, Oscar winner Paolo Sorrentino's latest film **LA GRAZIA** is this year's **Festival Centrepiece**. The highly anticipated drama stars Toni Servillo, Anna Ferzetti and Massimo Venturiello.

This year, the festival showcases migrant stories from two different sides of the globe with **SIGNORINELLA: LITTLE MISS** (from the team behind *LYGON ST - Si Parla Italiano*) and **NAPOLI – NEW YORK**. Celebrating the tenacity and spirit of Italian women who helped shape the Italian-Australian community, **SIGNORINELLA: LITTLE MISS**, narrated by Greta Scacchi, profiles their incredible life stories. **NAPOLI – NEW YORK**, from Academy Award-winner Gabriele Salvatores, is based on an original screenplay by Federico Fellini and Tullio Pinelli. Featuring festival favourite Pierfrancesco Favino and a stellar cast, it is a compelling and hopeful account of the migrant experience, the search for identity and pursuit of a better life that follows two Neapolitan children as they journey from Naples to New York in 1949.

Closing the festival and celebrating its 25th anniversary this year is the Australian coming-of-age classic **LOOKING FOR ALIBRANDI** starring Pia Miranda, Greta Scacchi and Kick Gurry. Audiences new and old can delight in the stunning 4K restoration of the much-loved film whose themes still resonate over two and half decades later.

The Festival **Special Presentation** is the critically acclaimed, 2024 Venice Film Festival Grand Jury prize winner **THE MOUNTAIN BRIDE – VERMIGLIO** (*Vermiglio*). Maura Delpero's atmospheric, visually breathtaking film portrays a family caught between tradition and modernity in the final year of WWII.

From acclaimed filmmaker Ferzan Özpetek comes the stunning, female led drama **DIAMONDS** (*Diamanti*). An ode to the beautiful craftsmanship of film costume designers and seamstresses, Luisa Ranieri and Jasmine Trinca star as sisters running a couture costume design house in 1970s Rome.

Elio Germano delivers standout performances in dramas **SICILIAN LETTERS** (*Iddu*) and **THE GREAT AMBITION** (*Berlinguer. La grande ambizione*). Toni Servillo joins Germano in a story of dangerous liaisons set in early 2000s Sicily in **SICILIAN LETTERS**, during Cosa Nostra boss Matteo Messina Denaro's three decades as a fugitive from Italian justice. In the meticulous biopic **THE GREAT AMBITION** Germano transforms into Enrico Berlinguer, the former leader of the Italian Communist Party between 1973 and 1978. His performance won him Best Actor at the David di Donatello Awards.

A box office sensation in Italy, moving drama **THE BOY WITH PINK TROUSERS** (*Il ragazzo dai pantaloni rosa*) features rising star Samuele Carrino in a powerful performance. Exploring the real story behind Italy's first publicised case of online bullying, the film garnered much attention in Italy and sparked important discussions about the issue.

From acclaimed writer/director Mario Martone comes **FUORI**, an elegant biopic drama that follows a decisive event in the life of renowned Italian feminist writer Goliarda Sapienza. A brilliant Valeria Golino stars as Sapienza in an inspiring story of friendship, female solidarity and freedom in the early 1980s. And in thoughtful drama **MY PLACE IS HERE** (*Il mio posto è qui*), set during the aftermath of WWII in a rural village in southern Italy, a single mother befriends the local wedding planner and begins to understand her rights as a woman. The film stars Ludovica Martino and Marco Leonardi (*Cinema Paradiso*) and is based on the eponymous novel by Daniela Porto.

The common thread of family focused stories is at the heart of several films in this year's lineup including **THE LIFE APART** (*La vita accanto*), an enthralling and music-imbued drama set in beautiful Italian art city Vicenza that follows a wealthy family whose daughter must contend with profound rejection due to her appearance; in **VITTORIA**, a hairdresser from Naples with three loving sons and a devoted husband risks everything to pursue her dream of having a daughter, in a deeply moving drama based on true events; Ivano de Matteo's compelling drama **MY DAUGHTER** (*Una Figlia*) stars Stefano Accorsi as a widowed father whose 16-year-old commits a serious crime, testing his ability to forgive; personal tale **THE TIME IT TAKES** (*Il tempo che ci vuole*) from filmmaker Francesca Comencini pays homage to her father Luigi Comencini and their connection with cinema; the debut feature from director and writer Sara Fgaier, **WEIGHTLESS** (*Sulla terra leggeri*) delivers a sensitive drama about the power of memory, love and how to find someone you have lost; and when a woman returns to her hometown in **SIBLINGS** (*La vita da grandi*), her autistic brother enlists her help in becoming independent and chase his dream of becoming a singer in this fun dramedy from Greta Scarano.

Hotly anticipated Italian comedies include popular comic duo Ficarra & Picone and festival favourite Toni Servillo in **THE ILLUSION** (*L'Abbaglio*), a fun re-imagining of Giuseppe Garibaldi's 1860 campaign that unified Italy; the adventures of the Rovelli family continue in **WHEN MUM IS AWAY...WITH THE IN-LAWS** (*10 Giorni con I suoi*) with a trip to Puglia in the hit comedy directed by Alessandro Genovesi and starring Fabio De Luigi and Valentina Lodovini; and set in 1980s-1990s Italy, **DIVA FUTURA** is an entertaining reimagining of Riccardo Schicchi's agency Diva Futura that revolutionised mass culture by turning free love into porn, making stars of Ilona Staller (Cicciolina), Moana Pozzi and others in an intoxicating story of private and widespread desire.

The story of fashion icon Gianni Versace, from his youth in Reggio Calabria in the 1960s to his rise in the world of fashion design is explored in **GIANNI VERSACE - EMPEROR OF DREAMS** (*Gianni Versace: L'Imperatore dei sogni*). The witty biopic from director Mimmo Calopresti intertwines fiction and

documentary, reconstructing the world, life and creativity of the famous designer. In **HOLD TIGHT, MISSY! ISABELLA DUCROT UNLIMITED** (*Tenga Duro Signorina! Isabella Ducrot Unlimited*) 90-year-old artist Isabella Ducrot is followed for two years as her incredible story of her rise as an artist unfurls. Ducrot is sought after by leading galleries the world over after devoting herself to art at the age of 55.

In historical drama **BATTLEGROUND** (*Campo di Battaglia*) a powerful story of courage and compassion emerges when two military doctors, who work at a clinic in Northern Italy in the final year of WWI, must face the devastating Spanish flu as it strikes the city. Inspired by true events that remain powerfully resonant 20 years on, dramatic thriller **THE NEGOTIATOR** (*Il Nibbio*) stars Claudio Santamaria as Nicola Calipari, deputy director of operations of the Italian secret service who sacrificed his life to save journalist Giuliana Sgrena.

In special encore screenings, gripping historical drama **THE TASTERS** (*Le assaggiatrici*), from multi award-winning writer/director Silvio Soldini and adapted from Rosella Postorino's bestselling novel *At The Wolf's Table*, is inspired by the incredible true story of Margot Wölk, a woman who was conscripted to be one of Hitler's food tasters.

For an unforgettable plunge into the dark heart of cinema, the festival retrospective this year focuses on Italy's Giallo cinema. Born from Italy's yellow jacketed crime paperbacks, this selection of classic thrillers are not for the faint of heart! Showcasing a stunning new 4K restoration of **DEEP RED** (*Profondo Rosso*), widely regarded as one of Dario Argento's greatest films and a cornerstone of Italian horror cinema, it blends mystery, artistry, and psychological terror in unforgettable fashion.

Also included is **A LIZARD IN A WOMAN'S SKIN** (*Una lucertola con la pelle di donna*) Lucio Fulci's surreal giallo that blends psychedelic visuals and an Ennio Morricone score to create a truly unique experience; **BLOOD & BLACK LACE** (*Sei donne per l'assassino*) a founding classic of the genre that follows a masked killer stalking fashion models and said to have pioneered the modern slasher aesthetic; Pupi Avati's **THE HOUSE WITH LAUGHING WINDOWS** (*La casa dalle finestre che ridono*) renowned for its slow-burn suspense and shocking finale; and the hypnotic **ALL THE COLOURS OF THE DARK** (*Tutti i colori del buio*) which follows a traumatised woman who is drawn into the occult, starring Edwige Fenech and featuring a Bruno Nicolai score.

Festival tickets are now on sale. The 2025 ST. ALI Italian Film Festival presented by Palace screens in the following locations:

Canberra 17 September – 15 October, Palace Electric Cinema

Adelaide 17 September – 14 October, Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas, Palace Nova Prospect Cinemas

Sydney 18 September – 15 October, Palace Moore Park, Palace Norton St, Palace Central, Chauvel Cinema

Melbourne 19 September – 16 October, The Astor Theatre, Palace Balwyn, Palace Brighton Bay, Palace Church St, Palace Cinema Como, Palace Penny Lane, Palace Westgarth, The Kino, Pentridge Cinema, Cinema Nova

Ballarat 20 September – 16 October, Palace Regent Cinemas

Brisbane 24 September – 22 October, Palace Barracks, Palace James Street

Byron Bay and Ballina 25 September – 15 October, Palace Byron Bay, Ballina Fair Cinemas

Perth 25 September – 22 October, Palace Raine Square, Luna Leederville, Luna on SX, Windsor Cinema

For information and updates, please visit italianfilmfestival.com.au and sign up or follow us on **Facebook** @ItalianFF and **Instagram** @ItalianFilmFest for all the latest news.

FOR IMAGES, INTERVIEWS AND PREVIEW SCREENER LINKS, PLEASE CONTACT

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