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N.I.C.E. Film Festival Brings the Best of Contemporary Italian Cinema to Moscow

Catch award-winning films from the land of Fellini and Bertolucci until April 9

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In 'They Call Me Jeeg,' Claudio Santamaria plays a petty thief who becomes a crimefighting superhero after falling into the River Tiber. **N.I.C.E. FILM FESTIVAL**

The Italian film festival N.I.C.E. — New Italian Cinema Events — is back in the Russian capital, giving locals the chance to see award-winning and critically acclaimed movies from the land that gave us great directors like Federico Fellini and Bernardo Bertolucci.

Now in its 20th year, N.I.C.E. — a collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute of Moscow — is screening 19 movies in Moscow through April 9. This year, it will show the films not only at the Karo 11 Oktyabr cinema, but also the Multimedia Art Museum and the State Tretyakov Gallery's conference hall.

“Cinema proves to be an extraordinary vehicle of knowledge and dialogue between Italy and Russia, two countries that share a deep interest in culture,” Cesare Maria Ragaglini, Italian Ambassador to Russia, told The Moscow Times.

“The interest of the Russian audience in Italian cinema is traditionally strong,” said Ragaglini, pointing out the successful collaborations and co-productions between the two countries: from the famous “Sunflower” with Sophia Loren and “Dark Eyes” with Marcello Mastroianni, to the recent “Ten Winters” and a movie Andrei Konchalovsky is now directing about Michelangelo.

As in the past, part of the festival program is devoted to a retrospective, and this year’s focus is on Valeria Bruni Tedeschi. The French-Italian actress starred in the festival opener on April 4, Paolo Virzì’s award “Like Crazy” (La pazza gioia), which examines the unusual friendship between two women who meet in a mental institution. The movie won five prizes at the 2017 David di Donatello Awards, Italy’s equivalent of the Oscars.

However, Moscow audiences have another opportunity to acquaint themselves with Tedeschi, albeit in another role: Her 2003 directorial debut “It’s Easier for a Camel…” (Il est plus facile pour un chameau…) will be screened on April 9.

In the movie, Tedeschi plays Federica, a rich young woman living a life of few responsibilities. Problems arrive when Federica inherits an estate and is forced to face the reality that she is not able to manage family affairs, love relationships and herself.

The festival program also includes another of last year’s “Italian Oscar” winners: Gabriele Mainetti’s 2015 film “They Call Me Jeeg” (Lo chiamavano Jeeg Robot), screened on April 6.

The movie is a courageous debut for Mainetti, who chose the truly unusual approach of blending a superhero film, a drama and a sci-fi movie. The film comes to Moscow following a successful run in Italian cinemas and a limited release in the United States.

“They Call Me Jeeg” is a tribute to the series “Steel Jeeg,” a Japanese super robot anime created by manga artists Go Nagai and Tatsuya Yasuda. The title is an inside joke based on the fact the protagonist believes in the hero of the series. Enzo, played by Claudio Santamaria, is a lonely and misanthropic petty thief who has lost all faith in society. After falling into the Tiber river, he mysteriously gains superpowers and begins using them to save the city of Rome from crime.

Another festival highlight is the 2016 drama “Italian Race” (Veloce come il vento), starring Stefano Accorsi, whose performance convinced the jury of this year’s David di Donatello Awards to name him best actor.

Loosely based on the true story of rally racing driver Carlo Capone, “Italian Race” portrays the relationship between a hopeful young race driver named Giulia and her brother Loris (Accorsi), a 30-year-old drug addict and former rally champion. The film will be screened in Moscow on April 7.

One of the program’s strengths is not only the diversity of the films on show, but also active discussions between the directors and the public. This year’s guests include the director

Mimmo Calopresti and Francesco Fei, who is visiting Moscow to present his documentary "Segantini: Return to Nature."

Another key to the festival's success is that it brings to Russia not only established directors and actors, but also young artists, who play a vital role in ensuring that Italian cinema continues to evolve and develop.

After Moscow, the festival will move on to St. Petersburg and 10 other Russian cities, continuing to build a cultural bridge between Russians and Italian cinema.

http://www.nicefestival.org

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