



## NICE FILM FESTIVAL

# Short is beautiful

by Paola Romagnani

This year's NICE Film Festival presents seven short films, in which, during each day of the festival, one of the shorts will be screened just before the presentation of one of the feature films in competition. Almost all of the shorts have been shown in previous film festivals, including the Turin, Venice, Rotterdam, and Berlin festivals.

Let's take a look at each one of them. The first, *Rosso Fango* ("Mud Red"), by director Paolo Ameli, has obtained the recognition of "National Cultural Interest" in Italy, and has received financing by the state in accordance with Article 8 of Italy's cinema law. The film was shown at the Venice Film Festival 2002/3. It is, indeed, a very good telling of an apparently small historical detail that we realize, at the end, has had a huge impact on the history of the entire western world. We are in a town named Marcoing, near Cambrai, in France. It's September of 1918. An English soldier, Henry Tandey, finds himself facing the enemy: a German soldier who tries to kill him. The German fails in his goal as his rifle misfires. The English soldier pulls out his knife and strikes his enemy, but can't bring himself to kill him. Instead, Tandey ends up bandaging his victim's wounds. Before leaving, after the German has asked for his enemy's name, the English soldier asks him the same question. "Caporal Adolf Hitler" is the German soldier's response. The film's special effects, its colors, and its skilled direction, give us a clear sense of desperation and make us feel the insanity of war. The last line, pronounced by the German soldier, is mesmerizing; it leaves us truly astonished, giving us a chilling sense of how thin the line is that makes history. We are most certainly left wondering what would have happened if...

*Ritratto di Bambino* ("Portrait of a Child"), by Gianluca Iodice, is a little story of a child who witnesses the death of a friend, during one of the most joyous moments of the Italian soccer match at the 1982 World Cup: the game between Italy and Brazil. The film, shot in black and white, seeks to render the psychology of a small child who faces a difficult choice: telling



Seven short films for seven movies

A scene from "Il Naso Storto"

the truth or remaining silent in the face of an event that's bigger than himself. This short film was presented at last year's Turin Film Festival.

*Playgirl* is a story of how men can be deceived by women... or how reality can be viewed in different ways... or who is right and who is wrong? Each one of us has his or her own truth. In this film, Daniele, the protagonist, has a fight with his girlfriend and leaves the apartment that the two share together, to calm down. When he returns later that day, he finds his girlfriend with another young man in a compromising position. She accuses him of having been gone for two years. Daniele is confused and leaves again, wandering the city for hours. When he returns home in the evening he finds his girlfriend resolutely determined to make peace after their fight. Daniele is even more confused, but

overwhelmed by her kisses and tenderness, he gives in. What's happened? Two years? Two hours? We have just the time to see the girl's lover leaving downstairs. An interesting story, this is the second short film by director Fabio Tagliavia, after *Kissing Paul Newman* (2001).

*La Partita* ("The Match"), by director Ursula Ferrara, tells the story of a moment in the minds of the spectators at a soccer match. This animated film was shown in the 2003 Berlin Film Festival; and won the Kodak short film award at the last Torino Film Festival.

*Il Naso Storto* ("The Crooked Nose"), by director Antonio Ciano, tells the story of Giovanni, whose dead mother communicates with him through a dream. In it, she tells her son that he has lost too many opportunities in life to be his real self; she tells him he's already dead inside. This dream has a huge impact on his life: he starts, apparently for the first time, to tell the truth. The director had this to say apropos of the story: "The risk of becoming conventional and succumbing to conventional role models and accepted values becomes an ever more serious one. The condition of a man who realizes he too, has a crooked nose becomes bitterly comic."

The director Ugo Capolupo got the idea for his short film, *L'Ultimo Rimasto in Piedi* ("The Last One Standing") from the daily political debates on public funding, and on the political and economic confusion of Italy, particularly of the area of Bagnoli near Naples. Capolupo has worked with such directors as Mario Martone, Stefano Incerti, Wilma Labate, and Gabriele Salvatores.

*In Tram*, the first film by director Filippo Soldi, is about a man's disbelief at the tremendous use of English throughout Milan (Italy). What happened to the mother tongue? On Franco's way to work, an elegant gentleman tells him that everybody speaks English because a new EEC regulation has imposed English as the official language. An enlightening discussion ensues between them. Written in collaboration with Carlo Gabardini, *In Tram* has obtained the recognition of "National Cultural Interest," and has been financed by Article 8 of Italy's cinema law.