

Film Review – Lavazza Film Festival – October 2014

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This is the first time that I have been to the Lavazza Film Festival, but after this experience, I will certainly be going every year. The atmosphere and excitement of seeing films in Italian (with subtitles) was palpable.

Marina:

Marina is a biopic of Rocco Granata who is the cantautore and piano accordionist of the famous song “Marina”. Rocco and his family were from humble and poor surroundings in Calabria. Due to the high unemployment in the region, the father leaves to work in the coal mines in Belgium. After a period of time, the rest of the family join him there.

The film highlights the struggles of an immigrant family, as they learn the language and the customs of their new land. It tells the story of Rocco and his love of music and his desire to become a professional musician, much against his father’s desire. It also tells of his love affair with a young lady that he had met in his early childhood just after they family had relocated.

The film beautifully portrays the relationships between Rocco and his family and his friends. It shows both the joys of youth and also the trials of a young immigrant boy.

The music throughout the film is entertaining, and the culmination of the writing and performance of the song “Marina” is thoroughly enjoyable. Like all good films, it has a happy ending. I would certainly see the film again, and would commend it to you to see. If you do see the film, look for the cameo appearance of the real Rocco Granata, who sells a piano accordion to the young Rocco Granata.

I Can Quit Any Time I Want (Smetto Quando Voglio):

This film was equally as enjoyable as “Marina”, but a completely different genre. This film won the award as the most popular comedy in 2014 and has become a cult film. It tells the story of a university professor Pietro, who finds himself unemployed after his research grant is not renewed.

Pietro has huge debts, and his partner (a Social Worker working with drug addicts) is pregnant. He finds that tutoring students is not sufficient to cover his expenses, so he looks for other ways to make ends meet. He accidentally finds out that if a drug is not on the Government’s official list of illegal drugs, then it is “legal”.

He joins forces with a group of ex-colleagues (economists, chemists and anthropologists) from the university who are also unemployed or employed in menial jobs such as petrol station attendants. The hapless group of professionals, despite their activities of drug manufacture and distribution, are very likeable characters. The film follows their struggles, their social ineptness and their increase in fortunes. Pietro's Social Worker partner has no idea where the wealth has come from, as she cannot get any straight answers from her partner.

The film has a lovely twist at the end, but thankfully a happy ending. Again, another great film, and one that I can fully recommend if you get a chance to see it.