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THE LEISURE SEEKER

INDIANA PRODUCTION and RAI CINEMA
Present

In collaboration with MOTORINO AMARANTO

In association with
3 MARYS ENTERTAINMENT S.R.L.

A Film by PAOLO VIRZÌ

112 Min
Rated R

Opens NY/LA 1/19/18

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3 MARYS
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In association with
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An **INDIANA PRODUCTION** with **RAI CINEMA** production

FILMMAKERS

directed by
PAOLO VIRZÌ

produced by
FABRIZIO DONVITO
MARCO COHEN
BENEDETTO HABIB

executive producers
ALESSANDRO MASCHERONI
DOV MAMANN
DANIEL CAMPOS PAVONCELLI
COBI BENATOFF
DAVID GRUMBACH
MATHIEU ROBINET
GILLES SOUSA
BRYAN THOMAS

screenplay by
STEPHEN AMIDON
FRANCESCA ARCHIBUGI
FRANCESCO PICCOLO
PAOLO VIRZÌ

based upon the book by
MICHAEL ZADOORIAN

music by
CARLO VIRZÌ

director of photography
LUCA BIGAZZI

editor
JACOPO QUADRI

production designer
RICHARD A. WRIGHT

costume designer
MASSIMO CANTINI PARRINI

Line producer
JAMES SPIES

producer
MARTY ELI SCHWARTZ

Co-producer
ELISABETTA BONI

CAST

HELEN MIRREN (Ella Spencer)

DONALD SUTHERLAND (John Spencer)

CHRISTIAN MCKAY (Will Spencer)

JANEL MOLONEY (Jane Spencer)

DANA IVEY (Lillian)

DICK GREGORY (Dan Coleman)

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Directed by Paolo Virzì, winner of the 2017 David di Donatello Best Director Award, *The Leisure Seeker* stars Academy Award-winner® Helen Mirren and two-time Golden Globe- winner® Donald Sutherland as a runaway couple on an unforgettable journey in the faithful old RV they call the Leisure Seeker. The couple travels from Boston to The Ernest Hemingway Home in Key West, recapturing their passion for life and their love for each other on a road trip that provides revelation and surprise right up to the very end.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Back when JOHN and ELLA SPENCER (Donald Sutherland and Helen Mirren) were young, the '75 Winnebago Indian they christened "The Leisure Seeker" was a beloved family getaway. Now, the Leisure Seeker has become their actual getaway vehicle, an escape from their well- intentioned but overbearing middle-aged children. Faced with more caregiving than they care to accept, John and Ella resolve to enjoy the freedom of one last RV road trip on their own.

Old age and its challenges be damned, John still pilots the 20-foot-plus RV with confidence, gusto, and (more or less) capability. Their road trip will take them from their suburban Massachusetts home, down along the East Coast's iconic Route 1, all the way south to Key West and their intended destination, the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum. It's a pilgrimage for John, who as a high-school English teacher conveyed a reverence for literature to generations of students, and who still quotes Hemingway and James Joyce from memory even as he loses track of his adult children's names. Ever the academic, John sports a natty tweed jacket and tie as he wheels the Leisure Seeker through the humid South; Ella, years younger than John and plenty sharp of mind, is a transplanted southerner with a breezy-belle chatterbox manner that belies a core of strength and determination. Much to the consternation of their apoplectic son WILL (Christian McKay) and more accepting daughter JANE (Janel Moloney), Ella refuses to divulge their whereabouts, asking lovingly but firmly (from untraceable pay phones) that the kids just let them enjoy this last spontaneous foray.

Along the way, they sojourn at RV campgrounds and visit a historical theme park, regale diner waitresses and gas station attendants with chitchat and philosophy, stumble into a political rally and finesse their way out of a roadside robbery. For John, time is fragmentary; one moment he's blessed with the ability to savor life (and an ice cream cone) purely in the present; at another time, he's raging obsessively about a romantic rivalry of fifty years earlier. Ella must navigate the uncertain present and ominous future for both of them, while she tries to keep the past alive with anecdotes, photos, and nighttime slide shows which draw curious campers to their flickering light.

Through it all, John and Ella are sustained by their bond of shared love and history. They still laugh and bicker, comfort and resent, feel tenderness and jealousy, and still discover surprising revelations after a lifetime's long journey traveled together

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

An American movie?

I never thought that one day I would make a film in another country, in a language that is not my own, and I am still wondering how that happened. Did I feel like a change of scenery, taking my crew wandering? Has the world shrunk so much that contemporary cinema can afford a freedom of movement that was unthinkable a few decades ago? Meanwhile, let me try to recap the creative process and production steps of “The Leisure Seeker”, which actually began a few years ago when a film of mine, and then another one, were selected as “Italian entries” to take part in that fun and slightly nonsensical merry-go-round of the Oscar campaign for the “Best Foreign Language Picture” award. As both films had been released in the U.S. I found myself receiving offers to make some movies there, but I declined every time. In most cases, they were scripts of projects in which I had, frankly, little interest and which may never see the light. My Indiana Production partners, who shared that campaign experience with me, could not set their minds at rest, they could not understand why I wanted to dodge these opportunities. So I made them a promise: let’s find an intriguing idea, perhaps starting from a book, and work the way I am used to, with my writing team, and then I would be happy to reconsider. So boxes and boxes of American novels and short stories began pouring into my office, sent by the Indiana Production people. Among them was this short novel by Michael Zadoorian, the story of an elderly couple running away from the Detroit suburbs to California in their old RV, along the iconic Route 66. I immediately found something very appealing in it: a subversive spirit, a rebellion against the hospitalization imposed by doctors, their children, society and the health care system. But at the same time I felt that their trip retraced an itinerary across a landscape seen so many times in many great movies; there was a danger of getting stuck on clichés, as sometimes happens to American directors when they make movies in Italy and end up shooting mostly touristy and picturesque places. Moreover, Zadoorian’s book paints an affectionately ironic picture of a very tacky America, culminating in Disneyland; that kind of tone seemed usable in earnest, without superficial mockery, only by someone born and bred there. So I put it aside and worked on something else: another Italian film, set in Italy. Sometime later, it was my friends Francesca Archibugi, Francesco Piccolo and Stephen Amidon lovely people with whom it is great to write, who tried to convince me to go back to it. They suggested taking inspiration from the book but changing the itinerary and, consequently, the socio-cultural background of the characters: an elderly retired professor of literature from New England, with a wife who is about ten years younger and comes from South Carolina, travelling to the Ernest Hemingway House in Key West. What clinched it for us – I am admitting it for comedy value – was trying to imagine that elderly couple as a sort of Micaela, my wife, and myself in thirty years’ time. He, grumpy, forgetful, wordy and pedantic; she, lighthearted and seemingly frivolous, always good-humored: two very different personalities, both of them at the end of their days, united by a passion that produced two children and a lifetime together. So with Francesca and Francesco we tried to sketch the scenes and dialogues in Italian first, and then we sought the precious contribution of Stephen, six hours of time zone away, to adapt them to American English in the first draft of the script. I remember saying to our Indiana Production friends: “if Donald Sutherland accepts to play John and Helen Mirren accepts to play Ella, I swear I will make this movie”. But it was only big talk, I was playing it safe, hiding away from this craziness that my producer and co-scriptwriter friends heartily promoted. But fate caught me off guard: unpredictably – and I still cannot fathom how that was possible – both Mirren and Sutherland were in. Donald accepted immediately, with an enthusiasm and an élan that left me astonished,

Helen after only a week of hesitation (she eventually explained to me that she had made a pact with herself that she would take certain roles only later on in her career). We were also urged by their agents to start shooting as soon as possible, because of their hectic schedule. A few weeks later we were already at work: I barely had time to focus on what was happening and found myself plunged into preparation and shooting.

Anyway the United States is a literary and cinematic country where somehow I feel at home: as a consumer of American films and books, I naturally feel familiar with those landscapes and those people, I admire certain expressions of American culture, and feel perturbed by others. As a filmmaker I think I am artistically indebted to many directors I have loved so much: from Altman to Scorsese, from Martin Ritt to Hal Ashby - the list could be endless.

At the same time, I have always been interested in the many journeyman directors who have narrated America through an outsider's gaze influenced by their roots, ranging from Billy Wilder to Miloš Forman, from Wim Wenders to Ang Lee, up to the more recent examples of Cuarón and Iñárritu.

No undue comparisons, though: it is not as if I went there to try and become "an American movie director", I never will be one. Although we are living in a world where the global sharing of stories and visions makes national borders weaker and a little obsolete as well, I am proud to be part of the community of Italian filmmakers and of the splendid history of our cinema. Therefore, even along the Old Route 1 I tried not to give up my habit, as a filmmaker born in Italy (or, rather, in Livorno) of using those ingredients that have always been dear to me, namely truth, humanity and irony. And just as I did in my previous films, I tried to break down the boundaries between comedy and tragedy in a film mixing melancholy and harrowing pain with the comical misadventures and moments of pure joy of two inadequate travelers.

But maybe it has always been like this: great masters such as Bertolucci or Antonioni, whose inspiration was rooted in their own background, ended up getting interested in stories which took them elsewhere, occasionally to faraway places, but I think they ultimately remained themselves. For better or for worse - and that is the real trouble - you can escape your country, but you cannot escape yourself.

I think that in the end what we have here is a road movie about the freedom to choose together every moment of life right to the very end, after sharing a lifetime of mutual devotion which, like all love stories, also has its shades of mystery: petty jealousies, obsessions, small, shameful, unmentionable secrets which suddenly come up to the surface in zany and comical ways.

We were aiming for a movie as simple and compact as a poem or a song: I tried to imagine this film as a sweet and sad ballad, a hymn to individual freedom; something unreasonable and crazy, but at the same time full of life, energy and happiness.

Simplicity was the key word, both in the writing and in the *mise-en-scène*. Actually, perhaps this is the most substantial novelty in comparison with my other films, which tend to be fairly long, with an elaborated plot, with crowds of characters, with melody, countermelody, chorus and counterpoints. This time we decided otherwise, and we made professor John Spencer explain it to the clueless waitress of a diner when describing Hemingway's style: "simplicity and economy of words". So we tried to create an almost impalpable narrative thread, and tried to focus above all on the two main characters.

Ella is an ebullient and chatty lady, ready to buttonhole anybody she meets along the road and enthusiastically tell them her own private matters; seemingly vivacious and with a lust for life, it is eventually revealed that she is only still standing because of a miracle. John is a grumpy and muddle-headed former professor who sometimes forgets the names of his wife and children; who alternates between blankness and moments when he is obsessively immersed in the pages of the writers he has studied and taught to his students all his life.

Time and illness have cruelly weakened her body and his mind, and now the two of them together barely make up a full person. John is the body and Ella is the mind in an adventure that seems bigger than they are, but that they will miraculously manage to live to the very end. And Ella's plan is full of courage, dignity, respect and love.

While we were scouting for film locations in June 2016, the presidential campaign was in full swing for the elections that would take place the following November. Everywhere we went we would come across rallies, meetings, large propaganda billboards for that extremely aggressive campaign that was setting the US on fire. I immediately decided I would include traces of that historical moment in the film: I felt it mirrored something significant in Ella and John's personal story, as they cross an America which is changing around them and becoming something they no longer recognize, something they seem to wish to escape forever.

This search for a link between personal vicissitudes and the big picture of society seems to characterize classic Italian cinema: out of the many examples that come to mind, the story of the tempestuous relationship between Filumena Marturano and Don Mimì, in the Vittorio De Sica film *Marriage Italian Style* starring Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni, was also marked by quarrelsome political events in Italy.

Let us now turn to Helen Mirren and Donald Sutherland: I have already owned up I would not have made this film without them. Working with a sublime actress like Helen and an authentic legend like Donald was both electrifying and instructive. They are brilliant comedians who fully inhabited their characters. It was mesmerizing to watch them acting: he, so intense and regal, but also funny and unpredictable; she, sharp, wise, very witty, then suddenly full of fieriness, rage and sorrow. Although we were crammed in that creaky stifling camper, it was hard for me to say "stop" or, rather, "cut!". They were so wonderful to watch: it seemed to me that even basic lines, when recited by them, became poetry, and just seeing them together, side by side on the set, was a wonder to behold: they would emanate a palpable grace, which my crew and I tried to capture as naturally and genuinely as we could.

To sum up, they are the real life and soul of this movie, and perhaps it was above all in order to be able to share this experience with these two artists who fascinate and move me that I decided to pack my bags and go shoot a film in America, at least once in my career as a film director.

P.V. sabato 29 luglio 2017

PRODUCTION NOTES

The great American road movie is renewed and refreshed in *The Leisure Seeker*, directed with Italian cinematic flair by PAOLO VIRZÌ and brought to life by extraordinary actors HELEN MIRREN and DONALD SUTHERLAND playing ordinary people confronting the vicissitudes of old age. Virzì, winner of the 2017 David di Donatello Best Director Award for his Best Picture winner *Like Crazy (La Pazza Gioia)*, brings his distinctive blend of humor, social commentary, and rich character study to his tale of a long-married couple determined to hit the road one last time in their beloved RV.

“I have this vice or this habit to take sad topics, painful topics, and try to transform them into entertaining adventures,” says Virzì. “The key is to combine comedy and tragedy, always.” Indeed, there’s no lack of painful topics nor of entertaining adventures in *The Leisure Seeker*.

“I was a little wary of a film focused on old age,” says Helen Mirren, “but I looked at the work of Paolo Virzì, in particular *Human Capital*, and I thought he had a wonderful, humane, witty, easy way of approaching these complicated but very, very realistic human situations. Paolo’s calling card is naturalism, human behaviour that can be silly or heroic but never melodramatic. I just loved his style.”

Donald Sutherland agrees. “Paolo is brilliant in the most subtle, complicated ways. The long and short of his sensibility, his understanding of the human condition, is that it is an epiphany.” Recalling what drew him to the role of a former English teacher still steeped in literature even while his mind begins to fail, Sutherland says: “I was probably twenty pages into the script when John sat up and started to talk to me. It was a wonderful conversation. He was very articulate. And very specific. And he liked the script.”

Although *The Leisure Seeker* embraces the iconic Americana of campgrounds and diners, theme parks and scenic vistas, “I didn’t want to make an American movie—I wanted to make a movie of my own in America,” explains Virzì. “It was always an Italian production, with my Italian way of looking at things. I’d say that means to have no fear of the ridiculous part of life. Life is something frightening and exhilarating at the same time and this is what I always try to put in a movie.”

The original novel of the same name by Michael Zadoorian traversed legendary Route 66 through the American West to Disneyland, but, as Virzì explains, “For us to go film in the grandiose landscapes of the Arizona desert or Monument Valley would be like an American director coming to Italy, going to the Coliseum and St. Peter’s Cathedral and the Leaning Tower of Pisa and trying to have new insights. We were looking for a more ordinary landscape. Sweet and sad like the story we were telling.” The East Coast’s Route 1 is less freighted with weighty symbolism but has plenty of natural beauty and cultural resonance, especially when the adaptation endowed John Spencer, Sutherland’s character, with a passion for Hemingway; John and Ella’s goal is to reach the Hemingway home in Key West.

The screenplay marshalled the combined writing efforts of some notable Virzi collaborators. “I felt like I was joining a dream team of writers,” reports STEPHEN AMIDON, an American novelist whose 2005 novel Human Capital was adapted by Virzi into the film that had so enchanted Helen Mirren. Amidon and Virzi became close friends, and when *The Leisure Seeker* came to Virzi’s production company Motorino Amaranto by way of Indiana Production, producers of “Human Capital” and “The First Beautiful Thing”, Virzi turned to Amidon as his house expert on American language and mores. Virzi also enlisted the help of Italian screenwriters FRANCESCA ARCHIBUGI, with whom he had written *Like Crazy*, and FRANCESCO PICCOLO, with whom he had written the screen adaptations of *The First Beautiful Thing* and *Human Capital*. (Francesco Piccolo, incidentally, is currently at work adapting Elena Ferrante’s My Brilliant Friend to the screen.) Thus, a writing team of three Romans traded pages in both languages with a bilingual Bostonian adept at colloquial American language and culture.

As Amidon tells it, “We worked kind of like a 24-hour factory—I’d get up in the morning and they had written something, and then I’d work, and I’d send it to them—a real Socratic back and forth. It was very collegial.”

Amidon carried out his role of American advisor through production locations in Atlanta and down along Route 1 to Key West at the edge of the continent. Most of Virzi’s principal crew were Italian, including Director of Photography LUCA BIGAZZI, best known in the States for his work on *The Great Beauty*, 2013 Academy Award® winner for Best Foreign Film. An American crew worked by their side; American Production Designer RICHARD WRIGHT helped Virzi achieve the balance that he sought of realistic American setting and his own cinematic sensibility.

“I like to fill the mise-en-scène with realistic elements, with true faces, a sense of truth,” Virzi explains. “This time there was a filter, because I’m not an American—though I feel at home in America because of all the movies, books, and stories that have fed my imagination. When we were scouting the locations, I tried to catch the atmosphere, the sense of what was happening behind our story. That’s another habit—or vice—of an Italian style of filmmaking, of storytelling: to frame the private personal stories of your little characters within the big picture of the society.”

In the summer of 2016, one unavoidable piece of that big picture was the Presidential campaign. As Virzi recalls, “During the location scout there were billboards and advertisements for both candidates everywhere, and I felt that Summer 2016 would be a historical summer. I am not a clairvoyant, I didn’t know what would happen, but I sensed that it was important to put the political moment in the background of our story—as if the characters were going through an America they didn’t recognize anymore. It seemed relevant. I don’t like to be the one who picks metaphors from a movie, but I feel there is something and that it means something.”

“The Trump rallies were in full flood while we were shooting,” says Helen Mirren. “It became part of the script, a funny way of indicating something about John—as Ella says, ‘You’ve been a Democrat your whole life, what are you doing?’ ‘But these people are so nice!’ It was just a very sweet way of charting how John’s mind was working at that point.”

“We called John’s mental state Spencer Syndrome,” says Virzi, “because every human has his own syndrome.” John’s confusion sometimes gives way to moments of sparkling lucidity and charm that are all the more poignant as we glimpse the companion and lover whom Ella is so stricken to lose. The character of John, in all his unpredictability, became almost a spiritual brother to Sutherland:

“I was just channeling John. It happens once in a while. Not often, certainly not all the time, but sometimes, and it happened in this film. John told me what to do, said what he wanted, remembered when he could and forgot when he couldn’t. He got frustrated. I didn’t. It seemed to me I was there for the ride and riding with Helen and Paolo, with everyone there, was a terrific trip.”

Sutherland reread Hemingway— “Every one. The oeuvre. I hadn’t been in there for fifty years”— and trusted the character of John to come through: “He took off, and I went with him.”

“Donald was really impassioned,” says Virzi. “He was already a great scholar of Hemingway and Joyce. He immersed himself in John Spencer. He became John Spencer. When we needed the RV to get back to the starting point to shoot another take, he didn’t want a driver to do it for him. He was jealous of his RV. I was astonished by his enthusiasm, his devotion to the film and to John. He was like an Actor’s Studio-style actor in the way we imagine, in the legend.”

“Helen Mirren,” Virzi continues, “has a different approach. She’s one of the most brilliant actors ever, and extremely clever and so funny. She arrives on set, she’s perfect in every take and then, ‘Bye, darling see you tomorrow.’”

“We called her The Queen,” says Stephen Amidon. “She’s the most professional human being I’ve ever been around. It was fascinating to watch the two of them together, because she’s so classically Shakespearean and Donald is so Method—but those contrasting approaches fit the characters so perfectly.”

“They didn’t really need a director on set, I guess” laughs Virzi. “I could just stand next to the camera and try to capture what they were able to create, to do together.”

As Mirren describes her character, “Ella is fiercely committed to life. She holds onto it tenaciously with full energy and commitment and joy. She hasn’t withdrawn from life at all. You can see her resolve and her backbone as she puts on her lipstick and her wig, the uniform she puts on to face the world.”

Mirren, who speaks fluent Italian, also found herself in a fascinating observer’s role as the American and Italian crews worked together. “It was very enjoyable, because I could stand on the outside, being a little bit American and a little European.”

Virzi learned the hard way the difference between an extra and a bit player: “We took a lot of care with casting the extras, the faces at the rally and in the background scenes. We never wanted to mock or satirize this American slice of life. One day an extra was walking around the scene in

an awkward way, so I gave him a little direction and said ‘Just wave at that guy and say ‘Hi!’’ He ran off and yelled ‘I got a line!’ and had to be paid an extra for that ‘Hi!’ I ruined the production budget for that day.”

No matter how big the crew, however, when it came to filming key scenes inside the Winnebago, only so many warm human bodies could cram into the space. “We were in a very uncomfortable vehicle with no air conditioning, under the July and August sun in hot and humid Georgia and Florida,” relates Virzì. “I put these two little fans blowing in the faces of John and Ella because it was the only way to have some air inside that camper. We were all squeezed together, so sometimes we forgot to call the hairdresser and I was the one to fix the wig on Helen, or the DP would do her makeup. She liked that atmosphere—she had worked in some Italian movies in the 70's and 80's. And, of course, Donald was ready for anything.” Even mishaps ranging from a fire ant invasion to a full-blown hurricane evacuation failed to dampen spirits.

Filmmakers and actors alike shared an affection for John and Ella, their aging lovers on the lam. Giving Helen Mirren the closing word: “There’s nothing quite like that later phase of love, when you know each other so incredibly well, you know each other’s faults, you know each other’s strengths, you know the other person so well that you know there are sides of them that you don’t know—that’s the process of discovering how little you can know another person. We are certainly looking at a couple who have been through all those stages and they are still in a process of discovery. They’re an ordinary couple, these two. John and Ella are totally ordinary. You could look out your window and see a million of those every day—ordinary people—America is a huge country full of many families—nothing so special about them. They become special because we put a frame around them and we watch them. I think that’s the great strength of Paolo’s filmmaking—he makes films about people we can identify with. They are very, very human.”

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ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Paolo Virzì (Director)

Paolo Virzì was born in Livorno, Italy, in 1964. His father was a Carabinieri police officer and his mother a former singer. After spending his early childhood in Turin in the north of Italy, Virzì and his family moved back to Livorno, where he grew up in Le Sorgenti, a working-class neighborhood.

Virzì's versatility became apparent as a teenager, when he spent most of his time writing, directing and acting in plays for local drama companies.

He later left Livorno for Rome to study screenwriting at the time-honored *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* film school, and graduated in 1987. His teachers included well-known film director Gianni Amelio and Furio Scarpelli, who wrote some of the greatest Italian movies of all time. Scarpelli was to play a crucial role in Virzì's life, becoming his mentor and his "maestro". With him, Paolo co-wrote the screenplay for Giuliano Montaldo's *Time to Kill*, based on the Ennio Flaiano novel and starring Nicolas Cage, as well as several other projects for cinema and TV.

Virzì made his directorial début in 1994, with *La Bella Vita*, the story of a love triangle set against the backdrop of the irreversible identity crisis of the Italian working class. The movie premiered at the 1994 Venice International Film Festival and went on to win the *Ciak d'oro* award, the *Nastro d'Argento* award, and the prestigious *David di Donatello* award in the "Best New Director" category.

In his first film, Virzì's talent for directing actors already shone through, as well as his skilful handling of serious issues with an ironic touch, mixing drama and humor.

His following film, *Ferie d'Agosto* (1995), featuring an impressive cast of Italian stars, was an ironical reflection on political tension in Italy after Silvio Berlusconi's triumphant appearance on the political stage. The film won the *David di Donatello* Award for "Best Film" of the year.

Ovosodo ("Hardboiled Egg", 1997), named after a neighborhood in Livorno, is one of Virzì's most personal films. Despite being strongly rooted in local lifestyle and accents, *Ovosodo* received widespread acclaim from critics and audiences alike: the Venice International Film Festival jury, presided over by Jane Campion, awarded Paolo Virzì the Jury Grand Prize.

In 1999, Virzì directed *Baci e Abbracci* ("Kisses and Hugs"), a mixture of fable, social comedy and a Dickensian Christmas tale, which, once again, portrayed life in a provincial community seduced by the irresistible appeal of modernity.

My Name Is Tanino (2002), was shot in Sicily, Canada and the United States. In this movie Virzì confirmed his talent scouting skills, with the Canadian actress Rachel McAdams appearing on the screen for the first time in a small role.

Virzì's next feature, *Caterina Va in Città* ("Caterina in the Big City", 2003), is dedicated to Rome, a much loved and hated city, with its enthralling discoveries and its bitter setbacks. Margherita Buy won the *David di Donatello* and the *Nastro d'Argento* awards for Best Actress in

2004 playing Caterina's mother, while 13-year-old Alice Teghil, who played Caterina, won the Guglielmo Biraghi award.

N (Io e Napoleone) ("Napoleon and Me", 2006), is Virzì's attempt at combining Italian-style comedy with a historic period piece peppered with allusions to the present day. *N* features an international cast, including French icon Daniel Auteuil in the role of Napoleon, Monica Bellucci and a young Elio Germano in his first starring role (he then went on to win Best Actor at Cannes Film Festival in 2010).

Virzì's next project, the ensemble piece *Tutta la Vita Davanti*, is one of his most scathing and bitter films. It is a grotesque comedy with an apocalyptic vision of the world of work. The film won a slew of awards, including the *Nastro d'argento* and the *Globo d'oro* (Italian Golden Globe) for Best Film, as well as the *Ciak d'oro* for Best Film and Best Director, not to mention the many other prizes awarded to the actors in the movie-

In October 2008, the Annecy Cinéma Italien granted Paolo Virzì the Sergio Leone Award in recognition of his overall career achievements.

In 2009 Virzì shot *La Prima Cosa Bella* ("The First Beautiful Thing"), released in Italy on 15 January 2010. The project took him back to his hometown, Livorno. The film stars Micaela Ramazzotti, Valerio Mastandrea, Claudia Pandolfi, and Italian film icon Stefania Sandrelli, who starred in films such as Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist* and Pietro Germi's *Divorce, Italian Style*.

La Prima Cosa Bella received 18 nominations for the *David di Donatello* Award in 2010, winning Best Screenplay (by Paolo Virzì with Francesco Bruni and Francesco Piccolo), Best Actress (Micaela Ramazzotti) and Best Actor (Valerio Mastandrea). In July 2010, the film won 4 *Nastri d'argento* awards: Director of the Best Film of the Year (Paolo Virzì), joint Best Actress Micaela Ramazzotti and Stefania Sandrelli, Best Screenplay and Best Costume Design to Oscar-winner Gabriella Pescucci.

The European Film Academy shortlisted Paolo Virzì for the Best European Director award 2010. In September 2010, the Italian Film Industry Association (ANICA) selected *La Prima Cosa Bella* as Italy's Official Academy Award Entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 83rd Academy Awards. On November 9, 2010, *La prima cosa bella* opened the Cinema Italian-style Film Festival in Los Angeles. In January 2011, the film was presented at the Palm Springs International Film Festival.

In October 2012, *Tutti i Santi Giorni* ("Every Blessed Day") was released in Italy. It was Virzì's tenth feature film. Loosely based on Simone Lenzi's novel "*La Generazione*", the film follows the lives of Guido and Antonia (played by Luca Marinelli and singer-songwriter Thony) and their attempts to start a family.

In 2013, Virzì was appointed as director of the 31st Torino Film Festival. His tenure was marked by a 30% increase in attendance.

In January 2014, *Human Capital*, Virzì's eleventh feature film was released in Italy. Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi won the Best Actress award at the Tribeca Film Festival, for her leading role as high-society housewife Carla Bernaschi. The film went on to receive 19 nominations for

the 2014 *David di Donatello* awards, winning seven, including Best Film. The film also won a number of other major Italian awards, including six *Nastri d'Argento*, four *Ciak d'Oro*, and the *Globo d'Oro* for Best Film, a prize awarded by members of the international press. *Human Capital* was chosen as the official Italian entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2015 Academy Awards.

In 2016, *La Pazza Gioia (Like Crazy)* was released, with Micaela Ramazzotti and Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi as leading characters, playing two patients running away from a mental institution. The film premiered as part of the Directors' Fortnight section of the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, and 400 copies were distributed in Italian theaters as of May 17th 2016.

La Pazza Gioia won 5 *Nastri d'Argento* and obtained an impressive 17 *David di Donatello* nominations.

Stephen Amidon (Screenwriter)

Stephen Amidon was born in Chicago. He is also the author of a book of short stories and seven novels, including The New City and Human Capital, which The Washington Post selected as one of the five best novels of 2004. Paolo Virzi's Italian film version of the novel, *Il Capitale Umano*, won best film at the 2014 David di Donatello, Nastri d'argento, and Globi d'oro awards, and was selected to represent Italy as Best Foreign Language film at the 2015 Oscars. Amidon has also written two non-fiction books, reviewed films for the *Sunday Times* and the *Financial Times*, and contributed to various newspapers and magazines in the United States and Great Britain. His books have been published in sixteen countries. He lived in London for twelve years before returning to the United States in 1999. He currently divides his time between Massachusetts and Torino, Italy, where he is on the faculty of Holden School. His serial drama *6Bianca* debuted at Teatro Stabile in Torino in February 2015. The Real Justine, Amidon's seventh novel, has recently been released.

Francesca Archibugi (Screenwriter)

Francesca Archibugi is a film director and writer based in Rome. She began her film career writing and directing short films in the 1980s; her first three feature length films, *Mignon è partita* (1988), *Verso sera* (1990), and *The Great Pumpkin* (1993), were each awarded several David di Donatello awards including Best New Director for the first and Best Film for the second and third. Her more recent screenwriting credits include *Questione de cuore* (2009) and *Il nome del figlio (An Italian Name)* (2015). Prior to collaborating on the screenplay for *The Leisure Seeker* with Paolo Virzì, she also co-wrote *La pazza gioia (Like Crazy)* with him.

Francesco Piccolo (Screenwriter)

Francesco Piccolo is an Italian author of novels, short stories and screen plays. In 2014, he won Italy's leading literary award the Premio Strega for *Il desiderio di essere come tutti*. He has published numerous novels and short story collections, and is the recipient of several literary prizes.

In the cinema, he has worked on screenplays for *My Name Is Tanino, Paz!* (based on cartoons by Andrea Pazienza), *Ovunque sei, Il caimano* (The Caiman) (which was awarded the 2006 David di Donatello for Best Script), *Nemmeno in un sogno, Caos calmo* (in which he also made an appearance) and *Giorni e nuvole (Days and Clouds)*. Prior to collaborating on the screenplay for *The Leisure Seeker* with Paolo Virzì, he also co-wrote *The First Beautiful Thing* and *Human Capital* with him.

He has also written for newspapers and periodicals, including *la Repubblica* and *Diario*. Piccolo lives in Rome, where he runs the screenwriters' laboratory for the DAMS course at Roma Tre.

ABOUT THE CAST

Helen Mirren (Ella Spencer)

Helen Mirren has won an Oscar[®], Emmy, SAG Award, Tony, multiple BAFTA Awards and Golden Globes, as international recognition for her work on stage, screen and television. For her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II in 2006 in *The Queen*, she received an Academy Award[®], Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Award, and BAFTA Award for Best Actress. She was also named Best Actress by virtually every critics' organization from Los Angeles to London. In 2014, she was honored with the BAFTA Fellowship for her outstanding career in film.

On stage, in 2015 Mirren reprised her role as Queen Elizabeth II on Broadway in "The Audience," a play by Peter Morgan, directed by Stephen Daldry, for which she won the 2015 Tony Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role. In 2013, she debuted her stage role of Elizabeth II in "The Audience" in London's West End, for which she received the Olivier Award and Evening Standard Award, and 2014 WhatsOnStage Award, for Best Actress.

Mirren will next be seen in *Winchester*, portraying Sarah Winchester, and *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms*.

Most recently, she was seen in *The Fate of the Furious*, *Collateral Beauty*, *Eye in the Sky*, portraying an army Colonel in a world of remotely piloted aircraft warfare, *Trumbo*, portraying Hedda Hopper, and *Woman in Gold*, portraying Maria Altmann, the Austrian Jewish refugee who fought to reclaim her family's art that had been stolen by the Nazis in World War II.

Other recent films include *100 Foot Journey* directed by Lasse Hallstrom and produced by Stephen Spielberg and Oprah Winfrey and the HBO biopic *Phil Spector*, for which she won a SAG Award for her performance and was nominated for an Emmy and a Golden Globe. Additionally, she voiced the character of 'Dean Hardscrabble' *Monster University*.

Previous works include *Hitchcock*, for which she was nominated for a Golden Globe and a SAG Award, *RED* and *RED 2*, John Madden-directed thriller *The Debt*, in which she plays a Mossad agent, and Hungarian director Istvan Szabo's *The Door*.

Mirren began her career in the role of Cleopatra at the National Youth Theatre. She then joined the Royal Shakespeare Company, where she starred in such productions as "Troilus and Cressida" and "Macbeth." In 1972, she joined renowned director Peter Brook's theatre company and toured the world.

Her film career began with Michael Powell's *Age of Consent*, but her breakthrough film role came in 1980 in John Mackenzie's *The Long Good Friday*. Over the next 10 years, she starred in a wide range of acclaimed films, including John Boorman's *Excalibur*, Neil Jordan's Irish thriller *Cal*, for which she won the Best Actress Award at the Cannes Film Festival and an

Evening Standard Film Award; Peter Weir's *The Mosquito Coast*, Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, and Charles Sturridge's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*.

Mirren earned her first Oscar[®] nomination for her portrayal of Queen Charlotte in Nicholas Hytner's *The Madness of King George*, for which she also won Best Actress honors at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival. Her second Oscar[®] nomination came for her work in Robert Altman's 2001 film *Gosford Park*. Her performance as the housekeeper also brought her Golden Globe and BAFTA Award nominations, several critics groups' awards, and dual SAG Awards, one for Best Supporting Actress and a second as part of the winning ensemble cast. Most recently, Mirren earned both Oscar[®] and Golden Globe nominations for her performance in *The Last Station*, playing Sofya Tolstoy.

Among her other film credits are Terry George's *Some Mother's Son*, on which she also served as associate producer, *Calendar Girls*, *The Clearing*, *Shadowboxer*, *State of Play*, *The Tempest* and *Brighton Rock*.

On television, Mirren starred in the award-winning series *Prime Suspect* as Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison. She had earned an Emmy Award and three BAFTA Awards, as well as numerous award nominations, for her role in early installments of the *Prime Suspect* series. She won another Emmy Award and earned a Golden Globe nomination when she reprised the role of Detective Jane Tennison in 2006's *Prime Suspect 7: The Final Act*, the last installment in the PBS series. Most recently Mirren was also honored for her performance as Queen Elizabeth I in the HBO miniseries *Elizabeth I*, winning an Emmy Award, a Golden Globe and a SAG Award[®].

Her long list of television credits also includes *Losing Chase*; *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, *Door to Door*, and *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, earning Golden Globe, Emmy and SAG Award nominations and awards.

Mirren has also worked extensively in the theatre. She received an Olivier Award nomination for Best Actress for her performance in "Mourning Becomes Electra" at London's National Theatre. In 2009, Mirren returned to the National Theatre to star in the title role in "Phèdre," directed by Sir Nicholas Hytner.

Helen Mirren became a Dame of the British Empire in 2003.

Donald Sutherland (John Spencer)

Donald Sutherland is one of the most respected, prolific and versatile of motion picture actors, with an astonishing resume of well over one hundred and fifty films, including such classics as Robert Aldrich's *The Dirty Dozen*; Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H*; John Schlesinger's *The Day of the Locust*; Robert Redford's *Ordinary People*; Bernardo Bertolucci's *1900*; Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* with Julie Christie; Alan Pakula's *Kluge* with Jane Fonda; Federico Fellini's *Fellini's Casanova* and in Brian Hutton's *Kelly's Heroes* with Clint Eastwood, who later directed him in *Space Cowboys*.

Sutherland was producer, screenwriter and star (voicing the lead character, 'Captain Johnson') of *Pirate's Passage*, an animated movie based on William Gilkerson's acclaimed novel, winner of

Canada's Governor General's Award for Children's Literature in 2006. The film recently won the 2016 international Kidscreen Award for "Best Special or TV Movie"

Sutherland was 'President Snow' in all four enormously popular film adaptations of *The Hunger Games* series.

He has appeared as Nicole Kidman's father in Anthony Minghella's *Cold Mountain*; as Charlize Theron's father in F. Gary Gray's *The Italian Job* and as Mr. Bennett, Keira Knightley's father, in *Pride and Prejudice*. For the latter he received a Chicago Film Critics nomination. He starred opposite his son Kiefer in *Forsaken*, a period Canadian Western, which premiered at the 2015 Toronto Film Festival.

Sutherland's extensive film credits include Paul Mazursky's *Alex in Wonderland*; Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*; Bud Yorkin's *Start the Revolution Without Me*; John Sturges' *The Eagle Has Landed*; Herbert Ross' *Max Dugan Returns*; Louis Malle's *Crackers*; Phillip Borsos' *Bethune*; Oliver Stone's *JFK*; Ron Howard's *Backdraft*; Richard Marquand's *Eye of the Needle*; Euzhan Palcy's *A Dry White Season* with Marlon Brando; Richard Pearce's *Threshold*, for which he won the 1983 Genie Award as Best Actor; Fred Schepisi's film adaptation of John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation*; Robert Towne's *Without Limits*; and John Landis' *National Lampoon's Animal House*, in which he made a memorable cameo appearance. He has starred as the voice of 'General Stone' in the animated feature of the manga classic, *Astro Boy*; in Andy Tennant's *Fool's Gold*; in Griffin Dunne's *Fierce People* with Diane Lane; in Robert Towne's *Ask the Dust* with Salma Hayek and Colin Farrell; in *American Gun* with Forrest Whitaker; in *An American Haunting* with Sissy Spacek; in *Land of the Blind* with Ralph Fiennes; in *Aurora Borealis* with Louise Fletcher and Juliette Lewis; in *The Eagle*, opposite Channing Tatum and Jamie Bell for director Kevin Macdonald; in Simon West's *The Mechanic* with Jason Statham and Ben Foster; in Seth Gordon's *Horrible Bosses* as Colin Farrell's father; in Mary McGuckian's *Man on the Train* with U2's Larry Mullen, Jr.; *Milton's Secret*, a feature adaptation of Eckhart Tolle's beloved children's book; and *Measure of a Man*, based on Robert Lipsyte's young adult novel, [One Fat Summer](#).

In television, Sutherland won both Emmy and Golden Globe awards as Best Supporting Actor for his performance in the HBO film *Citizen X* and he won a Golden Globe for his portrayal of Clark Clifford, advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson, in the HBO historical drama *Path to War*, directed by the late John Frankenheimer.

Sutherland starred in 2016 in the premiere season of the AT&T Audience crime drama series, *Ice*; alongside an international cast in Tandem's action crime series, *Crossing Line*; and in the highly-successful long form adaptation of Ken Follett's best-seller, *The Pillars of the Earth*. Sutherland co-starred with Peter Krause in the ABC-TV series *Dirty Sexy Money*. For his performance as the family patriarch, Tripp Darling, he was nominated for a 2007 Golden Globe as Best Supporting Actor. Prior to that, he co-starred with Geena Davis in the ABC drama series *Commander-in-Chief*, and was nominated for a Golden Globe as Best Supporting Actor for his portrayal of House Speaker, Nathan Templeton. At the same time, he was nominated for a Golden Globe as Best Actor for his performance opposite Mira Sorvino in Lifetime Television's much-lauded miniseries, *Human Trafficking*.

On stage, Sutherland starred with Justin Kirk and Julianna Margulies in a sold-out, critically acclaimed, Lincoln Center engagement of Jon Robin Baitz's *Ten Unknowns*. For that performance he received an Outer Critics Circle Award nomination for Best Actor. He also starred in the London, Toronto and Los Angeles productions of *Enigmatic Variations*, an English language translation (by his son Roeg Sutherland) of Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt's French play.

Donald Sutherland was appointed an officer of the Order of Canada in 1978 and a Chevalier des Arts et Lettres in France five years later. In 2012, he was awarded the highest French honor, the Officier des Arts et Lettres.

Christian McKay (Will Spencer)

Christian McKay is a British actor working in theatre, film, and television. He is also a classical musician, singer, and concert pianist. He trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Queensland Conservatorium of Music, and the Royal College of Music. Prior to his role in 2017's *The Leisure Seeker*, McKay appeared in many films including *Florence Foster Jenkins* (2015); *Churchill's Secret* (2015); *The Theory of Everything* (2014); *Rush* (2012); *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (2010); and *Me & Orson Welles*, in which he played the title role (Orson Welles, not Me). His latest television appearance was in 2016's Netflix series *Frontier*. He will next be seen in the films *Crooked House* and *Provenance* and in the television series *The No Hoppers*.

Janel Moloney (Jane Spencer)

Two time Emmy Award nominee Janel Moloney is best known for her work as "Donna Moss" on *The West Wing*. More recently, Janel appeared for three seasons on HBO's critically acclaimed *The Leftovers*. Other recent film and television appearances include Sundance hit *Concussion* and recurring roles on Amazon's *Alpha House*, NBC's *Blacklist* and this season on *American Crime*.