

Alberto Lattuada's **MAFIOSO**,  
Sensation of the 2006 New York Film Festival,  
To Be Released Nationally by Rialto Pictures in January '07

Alberto Lattuada's rediscovered black comedy masterwork **MAFIOSO**, starring Alberto Sordi, will be re-released nationally by Rialto Pictures beginning in January 2007.

A sensation when it was screened at Alice Tully Hall as part of this year's New York Film Festival, *MAFIOSO* stars Sordi (the immensely popular star of Fellini's *The White Sheik* and *I Vitelloni* and scores of other movies) as a FIAT factory foreman in Northern Italy who returns to his hometown in Sicily, only to find himself unwittingly tapped as a hitman by the local Don. One of the darkest, most authentic movies about the mob – and the funniest – it pre-dates *The Godfather* and most other Mafia movies by a decade.

In a Film Festival round-up, *New York Times* critic A.O. Scott called *MAFIOSO* “an utter blast, happily blending low comedy, high sentiment, neorealism and farce — almost a film festival unto itself, and evidence that the gap between popular entertainment and artistic accomplishment has not always been so wide.”

The Film Festival's Kent Jones calls it “so inventive, so daring, so apparently effortless in its blending of the comic and tragic, so alive to the particulars of Sicilian life, that it makes most modern movies look paltry by comparison.”

“A grossly unappreciated directorial talent,” in the words of critic Andrew Sarris, Lattuada (1914-2005) was a key figure in Italian cinema from the 1940s through the 80s, though he's perhaps best known in this country for giving Federico Fellini his first directing assignment: the two shared credit on Fellini's first film, *Variety Lights* (1950), a collaboration that has overshadowed Lattuada's own considerable achievements.

*MAFIOSO* was written by Rafael Azcona, Marco Ferreri and the famed team of “Age Scarpelli” (Agenore Incrocci and Furio Scarpelli), whose credits also include Leone's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, Monicelli's *Big Deal on Madonna Street* and Germi's *Divorce Italian Style*. Given only a limited release here in the 1960s, and unseen since, *MAFIOSO* will open at New York's Lincoln Plaza Cinemas in January 2007.

# **MAFIOSO**

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## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Director

**Alberto Lattuada**

Screenplay

**Rafael Azcona**

**Marco Ferreri**

**Agenore Incrocci & Furio Scarpelli ("Age Scarpelli")**

**Based on a story by Bruno Caruso**

Producer

**Antonio Cervi**

Executive Producer

**Dino De Laurentiis**

Cinematography

**Armando Nannuzzi**

Art Director

**Carlo Edigi**

Editor

**Nino Baragli**

Music

**Piero Piccioni**

English subtitles (2006)

**Tommaso Cammarano**

**Bruce Goldstein**

Additional subtitle editing

**Lenny Borger**

**Adrienne Halpern**

Italy 1962 B&W

Aspect ratio 1:1.66

In Italian with English subtitles

Running time: 99 minutes

**A RIALTO PICTURES RELEASE**

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## CAST

Antonio Badalamenti ("Nino")  
**Alberto Sordi**

Marta  
**Norma Bengell**

Rosalia  
**Gabriella Conti**

Don Vincenzo  
**Ugo Attanasio**

Don Calogero  
**Francesco Lo Briglio**

Don Liborio  
**Carmelo Oliviero**

Cinzia  
**Cinzia Bruno**

Caterina  
**Katiusca Piretti**

Dr. Zanchi  
**Armando Tine**

Dr. Zanchi's Secretary  
**Lilly Bistrattin**

The Baroness  
**Michèle Bailly**

Drunken Man  
**Hugh Hurd<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Hurd was an African-American actor who three years earlier had co-starred in *Shadows*, John Cassavetes' debut feature.

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## A SHORT MAFIOSO GLOSSARY

Much of the dialogue in *MAFIOSO* is spoken in Sicilian dialect, though toned down in order to be understood by the average Italian. Sordi's character Nino speaks an overly-eloquent, almost pompous, Standard Italian when at home with his family in Milan, but reverts to his native Sicilian dialect when speaking among friends and family in his hometown. The language barrier is a major contributor to the alienation felt by his very Northern wife Marta.

Three important words and phrases in *MAFIOSO* lose their flavor or force in translation, so we've used the Siciian words in our subtitles:

***BACIAMO LE MANI:*** literally, "We kiss your hands" – a salutation showing the highest respect for the recipient.

***PICCIOTTO:*** slang for "child" or "little man" – or a Mafia enforcer. A *picciotto d'onore* ("child of honor") is a *picciotto* who has distinguished himself in the ranks.

***CORNUTO:*** literally, "horned one" or "cuckold" – a guy whose wife sleeps around. Never, ever call a Sicilian "cornuto." Never.

Please memorize. All three expressions will pop up more than once in the subtitles.

*Grazie Mille,*

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## SYNOPSIS

Antonio Badalamenti (Alberto Sordi) is a Sicilian who has every reason to be pleased with himself. He has made good in Milan, where he's a foreman in a large FIAT plant and is happily married to Marta, a beautiful northern Italian blonde, with whom he has two lovely little blonde girls, Cinzia and Caterina. And now Antonio looks forward to a long-deferred visit home to Sicily where he wants to introduce his wife and children to his humble but proud peasant family.

For Antonio, the family reunion could not be sweeter in its joyfully tearful hysteria, even if Marta's mainland habits and aloofness provoke silent disapproval from her traditionalist in-laws. He finds little that has changed: people still die of old age or bullet wounds, his unhappy sister still has her mustache and hairy arms, and his old friends, who haven't had his good luck, continue to laze about on the town square and beaches -- except for those who have died, emigrated, gone to prison or betrayed the Sicilian code of honor.

Most of all there is still Don Vincenzo, the avuncular village notable and Mafia *capo di capi* to whom Antonio is indebted for making his new life in Milan possible. Antonio goes to pay his respects and to bring him a gift from his factory boss in Milan (a Sicilian by way of Trenton, New Jersey!): a solid gold sacred heart for the church altar. Among the donors, one name is missing...

Something must be done and Don Vincenzo thinks that Antonio may be just the man to do it. After all, Antonio boasts he's still a Sicilian who knows the meaning of honor... more importantly, he has lost none of his eagle-eyed prowess with a gun.

Antonio is invited to take a two-day hunting trip. The morning of the hunt, Antonio is puzzled when his father embraces him emotionally, as if he were going off to war.

Don Vincenzo asks him for a favor: just take a "long and short" trip... to hand-deliver a letter to a friend...

It's an offer the still uncomprehending Antonio Badalamenti can't refuse.

*NOTE: We're purposely not revealing the ending.*

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**NOTE: THIS ESSAY CONTAINS SPOILERS  
WE SUGGEST THAT YOU READ IT AFTER THE SCREENING**

*MAFIOSO* is exemplary of Alberto Lattuada's ability to mix genres and deftly switch tones from comedy (satire, irony, and parody) to drama. Sordi, a foreman at a Milan car plant, is ecstatic in anticipation of his visit to his hometown in Sicily, where he will introduce his wife and two children to his family. The sequence where he first meets his family is vintage Italian comedy. Sordi is overwhelmed with tears of joy, slipping easily from proper northern Italian to his rural town dialect as he makes his way from sibling to father to aunt and, lastly of course, mother. Lattuada underscores the melodramatic hysteria by shooting the sequence (mainly) in a close-up long take. Lattuada slips easily from such moments of high comedy to the mounting tension in the sequence where he is blindly flown to New York where he must perform the duties of a professional killer to repay his debt to the community godfather Don Vincenzo. This whole extended sequence is one of the highlights of the film and demonstrates Lattuada's excellent use of architecture and *mise-en-scène* to portray the scene's emotional core. As his hometown visit progresses, it becomes evident that Sordi is being groomed by the Mafia to kill a rival Don in New York City [actually, in North Bergen, New Jersey]. Don Vincenzo, who has already sown the seed of duty by setting Sordi up in his Milan job, tightens the noose by resolving a land dispute in Sordi's favor. With the deck stacked, the Don asks Sordi for a simple favor, one that he obviously cannot refuse: hand deliver a letter to someone. To shield the incident from Sordi's wife and children, a ruse is set: Sordi is leaving on a two-day hunting trip. Everyone else in the town seems to know what is really transpiring, but the law of *omerta*<sup>2</sup> prevails. Even Sordi seems oblivious to what is happening.

Lattuada's ability to play humor off the tension is in evidence when on the morning of the hunting trip, Sordi's father hugs his son as if he were going off to war. Lattuada expresses the power and sway the Mafia have on Sordi, and by extension the whole community, with a *mise-en-scène* that gets progressively claustrophobic. The passing on of the ruse letter occurs in the crowded back seat of a car. The "hunting" trip begins with Sordi's early morning walk through the town's desolate, dimly lit narrow streets to his meeting place. The next series of locations play on this notion of the Mafia's social and cultural stranglehold. Sordi moves from crowded car, to the back of a truck, to an airmail shipping crate (where he spends the whole Sicily to New York flight), to a crowded car in New York, to a cramped elevator that brings him to a small hotel room where he is shown home movie footage of the person he is to assassinate.

A landmark of the gangster/Mafia film, *MAFIOSO* is, to the best of my knowledge, the first film to portray the Mafia in such stark and uncompromising terms. I have little doubt that Francis Ford Coppola studied this film before making his Godfather films. The film is filled throughout with scenes, moments, and images that [would later be repeated in] the Godfather trilogy: a character returning to a seemingly sleepy Sicilian town; shots of criminals seated at a café terrace that render an edge of terror to the

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<sup>2</sup> the conspiracy of silence in the criminal underworld

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town's everyday reality; family head Don Vincenzo seated in the garden of his well fortified estate, socializing with family and friends; the link between the church and the Mafia; attention to such detail as clothing and dialect, including the poor Italian spoken by the Italian-Americans of New York; Sordi's assassination of a rival gang leader at a [New Jersey] barbershop.

- Donato Totaro, *Offscreen* (Canadian film journal)

## WHAT THE CRITICS ARE SAYING....

*The following reviews appeared following the press and public screenings of Mafioso at the 44<sup>th</sup> New York Film Festival (September 2006):*

“A lost forerunner of Hollywood's endless obsession with Italian organized crime, *Mafioso* is a revealing portrait of Italian society and **an utter blast, happily blending low comedy, high sentiment, neorealism and farce -- almost a film festival unto itself**, and evidence that the gap between popular entertainment and artistic accomplishment has not always been so wide.” – **A.O. Scott, *New York Times*** (September 29, 2006)

“**Alberto Sordi was that rare thing, a matinee idol with a gift for ridiculous comedy.** (Imagine a voluble, foolish Cary Grant.) This nearly forgotten 1962 feature, directed by neorealist pioneer Alberto Lattuada, opens with Sordi's proud efficiency expert striding through a huge Milan factory. Modern times become more feudal once he returns to native Sicily for a vacation en famille. His northern wife and two young children are swept up in a series of huge meals and screaming reunions but the real culture shock is his. Sordi's adult persona disintegrates; he finds himself in thrall to the local don, [with a] **hilariously shocking** turn of events. **Another superb Rialto reclamation job.**” – **J. Hoberman, *Village Voice*** (September 26, 2006)

“**The most unalloyed pleasure I've had from a festival offering** this week came from *Mafioso*, **a humdinger of a comedy** that has been lovingly resuscitated. This dark-hued delight boasts **a rich, exuberant performance** by Alberto Sordi.” – **Jan Stuart, *Newsday*** (October 3, 2006)

“**The [New York Film] festival's unequivocal high point.** Pre-dating *The Godfather* and most other influential mob films, *Mafioso* transplants Antonio (the late, great Alberto Sordi), a Fiat factory foreman, and his family from their comfy Northern Italy home to Sicily to visit his family and his family. What follows is a **rousing mix of dark humor, sweaty palms, and gangster mentality that consistently stretches the boundaries of the mob film.** *Mafioso* stands as a testament to a great director who was never recognized for his mastery and skill of the celluloid dream.” – *filmcritic.com*

## **A Conversation with Alberto Lattuada**

Excerpted from the book *Alberto Lattuada* by Claudio Camerini (1982)

***Your work as a director is generally linked with your activities and interests as a young man; namely, as a film critic, film collector and cinephile. But are there other reasons that help to explain your choice of career?***

There are undoubtedly deep-rooted origins of my interest in movies. When my father, Felice<sup>3</sup>, a musician, worked at La Scala in Milan, I was able to move around backstage, watching them put together this miracle of painted cardboard and lights—in other words, things created from nothing—that from the stage became spectacle, entertainment, illusion. I was still just a kid, so for me it was my first glimpse of what it could mean to use these tools to move and win over an audience: it was the miracle of *mise-en-scène*. So as a child I'd already assimilated, through opera, a great passion for the performing arts. And as opera became more and more a pastime for the elite, many years later I spontaneously came upon cinema as the most appropriate means to express myself, to entertain the audience. So I'd say my roots are basically in the theater.

***Opera may have given you the idea, but your later models were essentially cinematic.***

Without a doubt. First there was my collecting of old films, hunting, with my Milanese friends, for films headed for the dustbin. And then, a little later, I began to work as a film critic. While the activities of what after the war became the Cineteca Italiana<sup>4</sup> were expanding, Henri Langlois [co-founder of the Cinemathèque Française] was sending us from Paris, in diplomatic pouches, the films of Vigo, Renoir, Clair, Lang. I saw hundreds and hundreds of movies. I soaked up American cinema (Hawks, Walsh, Ford) and at the same time learned to appreciate the closer to home European cinema headed by the French (Renoir, Clair, Vigo) and Germans (Pabst, Lang, Murnau), not to mention my unbridled admiration for Erich von Stroheim.

***What about neorealism?***

I've always had a strong tendency to make a "constructed" cinema, entirely fictitious.

***Your long career has been characterized by a tendency to place the public's approval before that of the critics.***

I instinctively feel the need for the broadest possible contact with the public, to be accepted and understood. Sometimes I've deliberately eliminated experimenting with style and preciousness because I believe in a popular cinema. I've always tried to be

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<sup>3</sup> As Carmine Coppola did for his son Francis, Felice Lattuada (1882-1962) wrote scores for several Lattuada movies, including *Il Cappotto*, *Il Bandito* and *Variety Lights*.

<sup>4</sup> Lattuada was, with Luigi Comencini and Mario Ferrari, one of the founders of the Cineteca Italiana, Italy's oldest film archive; see Lattuada's biography on page 11.

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clear, simple, acceptable, and not trapped in a formula of difficult experimentation. I think experimental films are fantastic, but they're also incomplete expressions of film since they never reach the general public. But experimentation is indispensable for the ongoing transformation of cinematic language, for its enrichment.

***In your latest films your cinematic language is particularly concise, free-flowing, heedless of a classical approach to film editing—which traditionally worries whether the audience can understand a sketchy sequence or a sudden change of time or place.***

I'd say that directors are still too pedantic about editing. We listen too much to the objections of the old producer who, watching the editor cut and shorten from the other side of the Moviola, worries that the audience won't understand certain scenes. I find it's better to always shoot short scenes—and in this I imitate both the classic film comedies and silent film directors. Short scenes give you greater freedom in the cutting room. They allow you to fix any uneven bits that might come up. Cutting, abbreviating and shortening has become second nature to me.

***Do you take liberties with the screenplay when you're shooting?***

There should always be a certain amount of freedom, because spontaneous changes are often needed due the topography of the scene, the attitude of the actors, or shooting conditions. When you discover that a line delivered by an actor doesn't have the desired effect, you have to make changes. The ability to make on-the-spot script changes is almost impossible in the American system.

***What is your method of working on a screenplay?***

In general I start working with one screenwriter, and then the work is completed by another, and then I revise or completely rewrite it. For example, for *Venga a prendere il caffè da noi*, I had two complete drafts by two different writers. I took something from each of these two scripts, but I rewrote them from the start, imagining a completely different film. Once it was shot, it was transformed once again on the Moviola. A screenplay is an ongoing process of writing and rewriting that only ends with the final print.

***Films like Mafioso give the impression that they were shot from very detailed, exact screenplays.***

You have to envision the final cut; otherwise you might be in for some nasty surprises. That was true for *Mafioso*, though the American episode was entirely improvised in New York over the space of a few hours.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A skeleton Italian crew arrived in New York, not realizing that permits were required. They got around this by "stealing" street shots very early in the morning.

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## ***And the editing?***

For me it's even more important than the screenplay. Early in my career I cut my films myself, frame by frame. Not today. Now I sit next to the editor, give him some notes, put the material through the Moviola again and again, then I leave him alone. I come back after a while, this time as a critic, and I'm often pleasantly surprised.

## ***How do you work with actors?***

You have to delve into their personalities and then guide them affectionately. I always try to use diplomacy to get the reaction I'm looking for. I encourage their vices and virtues and become their friend, their confidante, their accomplice. I'm never violent, authoritarian, or bullying. I try to speak to them by backing them up, dining with them, agreeing on things that have nothing to do with movies. I camouflage myself and change my behavior depending on the actor.

## ***In the 1950s and 60s, you were thought of mainly as an eclectic director, and hard to classify.***

I'm delighted to be considered eclectic. The search of a subject to develop corresponds to my needs of the moment, my desire to weigh in on current issues. I don't mind at all that my impulses are varied and unclassifiable. But if you look carefully at my films, you'll always discover something recurrent, something of me -- maybe the solitude of many of my characters, or the search for female beauty, mystery, youth, and so on.

## ***Your films have recently been rediscovered by the younger generation, especially the cinema studies people who are so interested in older cinema.***

My rediscovery, especially by younger critics, makes me extremely happy, because today they don't have the same political blinders that so many Italian critics wore in the 1950s and 60s. And then the French, who are always so generous, are carrying out a very attentive review of our cinema with great critical authority.

## ***You've had good relations with producers — but you've also had some rejected projects.***

There are some very intelligent producers that love cinema. Others have changed from cinema lovers into bankers. They're interested only in business, predicting the box office, measuring with a chronometer the laughter that a movie has to provoke. There are very few producers nowadays who are active collaborators on the film.

***Translated from the Italian by Michael F. Moore***

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## **ALBERTO LATTUADA (director/co-writer)**

***“a grossly underappreciated directorial talent”***  
**– Andrew Sarris**

One of the most sadly underrated and versatile of the great Italian filmmakers to emerge in the post-World War II years, Alberto Lattuada was born in Milan in 1914. His father, Felice (1882-1962), was a well-known composer and conductor who would later score his son's early films. Alberto trained as an architect, at the same time developing a love of opera, photography and literature. An ardent anti-fascist, he published articles, poems and stories in several anti-conformist reviews, organized an international retrospective film festival in 1940 (which included a tumultuous screening of Renoir's *Grand Illusion*) and, with Luigi Comencini and Mario Ferrari, laid the foundations of Italy's oldest film archive, the Cineteca Italiana, in Milan.

Thanks to his range of skills and interests, Lattuada entered the film industry during the war and worked his way up the ladder as screenwriter, set designer and assistant. He made his directing debut with *Giacomo l'idealista* (*Giacomo, the Idealist*, 1942), the first of Lattuada's many literary adaptations. His second film, *La Freccia nel fianco*, whose release was held up until 1944, was another literary adaptation in the same style.

After *La nostra guerra* (*Our War*, 1945), a short documentary about the liberation of northern Italy, Lattuada came into his own after the war with two powerful neorealist works, *Il bandito* (*The Bandit*, 1946), about a homecoming Italian POW who must turn to crime in order to survive, and *Senza Pietà* (*Without Pity*, 1948), a tale of interracial love between a black American soldier and an Italian prostitute. Praised for their humanity and raw authenticity, both films also reflected the influence of American crime movies in their melodramatic representation of violence, complete with gun battles and car chases. In between these two films, Lattuada slipped temporarily back into the formalist mode with *Il delitto di Giovanni Episcopo*, an adaptation of a novel by the poet Gabriele d'Annunzio. The film's screenwriting team included the young Federico Fellini.

Lattuada's first masterpiece is considered by many to be *Il Mulino del Po* (*The Mill on the Po*, 1949), which, though considered neo-realist, was atypically based on a novel and set in the past. Co-scripted with Fellini and others, it dramatized the agrarian struggles in northern Italy in the late 19th century and the rise of socialism there. Its release in 1949 coincided with a national strike of agricultural workers. Lattuada would later recall with satisfaction that this epic film, which used Soviet style montage effects, was attacked both by the communists and the right, a fact that has confirmed Lattuada as an "authentic neorealist" in the eyes of such historians of Italian cinema as Roy Armes.

Lattuada's next film was the famous *Luci del varietà* (*Variety Lights*, 1950), which he co-wrote and co-directed with the debuting Fellini. It quickly became the object of a

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famous film auteurship feud. An anecdotal comedy-drama about a touring music hall company, it has often been qualified as a Fellini movie rather than a Lattuada film, if only because the subject and theme seem closer to Fellini's artistic universe. Lattuada never stopped contesting that his co-writer/director's contribution to the film was more important than Fellini's and the latter seemed to concur when he entitled his most famous autobiographical film *8 1/2* — the "1/2" being *Variety Lights*.<sup>6</sup>

After a commercial melodrama starring Silvana Mangano and Raf Vallone, *Anna* (1951) — reportedly the first Italian film to gross over one billion lire — Lattuada directed one of his finest films, *Il Cappotto* (*The Overcoat*, 1952), a brilliant adaptation with Kafkaesque overtones (by Lattuada, Cesare Zavattini and others) of Gogol's famous short story about a humble clerk whose yearning for a warm overcoat that will also bring him social prominence only leads to humiliation and death. Transposed to modern Italy, the film boasted a memorable seriocomic performance by Renato Rascel.

Lattuada's next made *La lupa* (*The She-Wolf*, 1953), widely considered an unsuccessful adaptation of a story by Italian naturalist writer Giovanni Verga, then contributed a sketch to the omnibus film *Amore in città* (*Love in the City*, 1954), which included episodes by Antonioni, Fellini, Risi and Zavattini. *La Spiaggia* (*The Beach*, 1954), was Lattuada's first color film, a comedy-drama starring French sex kitten Martine Carol as a good-natured prostitute vacationing on the Riviera with her convent-educated young daughter. *Scuola Elementare* (*Elementary School*, 1954) was a touching drama about a younger teacher from the south who gets work in a northern city.

Lattuada's interest in the social and sexual problems of juvenile heroines inspired many of his subsequent films and periodically got him in trouble with the Italian censors: *Guendalina* (1957) dealt with the spoiled daughter of rich parents who gets involved with a young worker; *I dolce inganni* (1960) dealt with the sexual awakening of a young student. Other films in this vein were *L'Imprevisto* (*The Unexpected*, 1961), *Don Giovanni in Sicilia* (1967), *Le farò da padre* (1974), *Così come sei* (*Stay As You Are*, 1978), which starred Marcello Mastroianni and the debuting Nastassja Kinski; and *La Cicala* (*The Cricket*, 1980).

After *The Overcoat*, Lattuada returned regularly to literary adaptations, often of Russian works: *La Tempesta* (*The Tempest*, 1958), an international co-production based on two stories by Pushkin; *La Steppa* (*The Steppe*, 1962), a Chekhov adaptation; *La Mandragola* (*The Mandrake*, 1965), an adaptation of Machiavelli's libertine comedy which enjoyed the honor of being condemned (but not banned) in the U.S. by the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures; and *Cuore de cane* (*Heart of a Dog*, 1975), based on Mikhail Bulgakov's Soviet satire.

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<sup>6</sup> According to Lattuada's wife, Carla del Poggio, who was the star of *Variety Lights* and in virtually every scene, Fellini took a screenwriting job soon after production began and was rarely on the set.

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Like *Mafioso*, several of the Lattuada's later films are hard to categorize and, according to admirers, call for reappraisals. They include *Fraulein Doktor* (1969), an espionage comedy about a female spy during World War I, *Venga a prendere il caffè da noi* (*Come Have Coffee with Us*, 1970), a bitter farce starring Ugo Tognazzi, and *Sono stato io! (I Did It*, 1973), a black comedy about a window wiper who craves fame and fortune so badly he frames himself for a murder he did not commit.

Lattuada turned to television in the 80s, notably directing a mini-series, *Christopher Columbus*, broadcast in the U.S. in 1985. His last work was a portrait of Genoa for the 12-director omnibus film, *12 registi per 12 città (12 Directors for 12 Cities*, 1989).

Lattuada died in Rome in 2005, aged 90. His wife of 60 years was Carla del Poggio (the mambo-dancing star of *Variety Lights*), whose father, Ugo Attanasio, played Don Vincenzo, the Mafia Don in *Mafioso*<sup>7</sup>.

Looking back on Lattuada's career, filmmaker and critic Edgardo Cozarinski wrote that Lattuada's "eclecticism had obstructed an evaluation of his unusual achievement... For over 30 years he has turned out films of considerable interest... without surrendering to opportunism... Most of Lattuada's minor films look considerably better years after they were made... The capacity to work with given materials and achieve something else, in quality and tone, has been one of Lattuada's elusive talents: very much isolated in the Italian cinema of the 1970s, his solid, unadventurous films often prove more biting, more complex even than the flashy concoctions of most 'new' Italian directors."

## ALBERTO SORDI (Nino)

Alberto Sordi was born in Rome's working class quarter of Trastevere in 1920 (1919, according to some sources). He studied recitation at Milan's Academia dei Filodrammatici but was apparently dismissed because of his thick Roman accent and use of dialect. In 1937, he won a contest organized by MGM to find the dubbing voice of Oliver Hardy, which opened the door to regular professional dubbing work of American movies (actors he would later lend his voice to included Anthony Quinn, Robert Mitchum and Mexican star Pedro Armendariz). He landed his first film parts at Cinecittà in 1938, but his screen career, limited mostly to minor supporting roles, took a back seat to the music hall and his increasingly popular radio performances.

Sordi got his first important role in the Mario Matolli's 1942 film *I tre aquilotti*, but movie popularity eluded him for an entire decade. His career took off with two early now-classic films by Federico Fellini, *The White Sheik* (1952) and especially *I Vitelloni* (1953) in which he portrayed the spineless loafer Alberto. There followed a series of films in which Sordi chiseled his jaundiced comic portraits of the petty-minded average Italian in all his mediocrity. Italian critic Goffredo Fofi described his

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<sup>7</sup> An career officer in the Italian cavalry, Attanasio, late in life, appeared in several other Italian films, including Fellini's *The White Sheik*, playing Leopoldo Trieste's uncle. A native of Naples, Attanasio's voice was dubbed by an actor with a Sicilian accent.

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image in this way: "From adventure to adventure, we now find Sordi in a particular role: the low-born petit-bourgeois Roman, ignoble, whining, mama's boy, lady's man, not too keen on doing any work, but who knows how to make himself look good in the eyes of his priest and office chief because he's the kind who knows how to make do and he has an extraordinary capacity for and a wide range of hypocritical attitudes for each occasion... Italians recognized in him the worst aspects of their character."

Films of this period, in which Sordi averaged six a year, included Roberto Savarese's *Mamma mia che impressione!* (1952), which Sordi co-scripted with Cesare Zavattini and Vittorio de Sica, Steno's *Un Americano a Roma* (1954), Mario Monicelli's *Un Eroe dei nostri tempi* (1955), Dino Risi's *Il Segno di venere* (1955), Luigi Comencini's *La Bella di Roma* (1955), and Luigi Zampa's *Il Vigile* (1960).

The late 50s and 60s were Sordi's artistic heyday and coincided with the flowering of Italian film comedy of which Sordi was one of the biggest stars alongside the likes of Vittorio Gassman, Ugo Tognazzi and Nino Manfredi. Beginning with Monicelli's *La Grande guerra* (*The Great War*, 1959) and Risi's *Una Vita difficile* (*A Difficult Life*, 1961), Sordi's roles became increasingly dense and darker in tone, climaxing with Monicelli's bleak 1977 tragicomedy *Un Borghese piccolo piccolo*.

Though consistently one of the most beloved personalities in Italian cinema, Sordi remained less well known than his peers on the international scene. His rare foreign film credits included Charles Vidor's *A Farewell to Arms* (1957), John Berry's *Oh! Que Mambo!* (1958), Guy Hamilton's *The Best of Enemies* (1961), and Ken Annakin's *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (1965).

As writer-director, Sordi made (and acted in) 19 feature films between *Fumo di Londra* in 1966 and *Incontri proibiti* in 1998, which also marked his last screen appearance. In all, Sordi appeared in some 50 films in a career spanning 60 years.

Among numerous other film honors, Sordi was the recipient of seven David di Donatello awards, a Golden Bear for Best Actor at the 1971 Berlin Film Festival for Nanni Loy's *Detenuto in attesa di giudizio* and a Golden Lion career prize at the 1995 Venice Film Festival.

Sordi died of a heart attack at his home in Rome in 2003. He was 82.

## **NORMA BENGELL (Marta)**

Born Norma Almeida Pinto Guimarães d'Área Bengell in Rio de Janeiro, actress/producer/singer/director Norma Bengell was a star of Brazil's Novo Cinema, as well as a popular Bossa Nova recording artist. Her film career began in 1959 with *O Homem do Sputnik*; with *Os Cafajestes* (1962), she became the first actress to appear nude in a Brazilian movie. Married to Italian actor Gabriele Tinti, she made several films in Italy, including *Mafioso* (fourth of her over sixty movies). In recent years, she has turned to directing, including several award-winning documentaries about Brazilian pianists. Still an active filmmaker, she lives today in Rio.

# MAFIOSO

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## **AGE SCARPELLI (co-screenwriters)**

The Italian cinema's most famous screenwriting team, Agenore Incrocci (1919-2005) and Furio Scarpelli (born 1919) – aka “Age Scarpelli” -- both began their careers writing for humor magazines. Partners from the late 1940s, the two earned international recognition in 1958 for their contribution to Mario Monicelli's hilarious *Big Deal on Madonna Street* and became associated with some of the Italian cinema's most important directors, including Lattuada, Mario Monicelli, Dino Risi, Pietro Germi and Ettore Scola, at the same time providing actors such as Marcello Mastroianni, Vittorio Gassman, Nino Manfredi and Alberto Sordi with many of their most famous roles. The team wrote for all genres (including Spaghetti Westerns like Leone's *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* – Hitchcock even hired them to write a never-produced suspense), but excelled in comedy, to which they brought a robust sense of humor, a knack for bright and lively dialogue, and a profound understanding of the contemporary Italian social scene. Their credits include Pietro Germi's *Divorce Italian Style* (1961), Monicelli's *The Great War* (1959), and Ettore Scola's *We All Loved Each Other So Much* (1974). They received Best Screenplay Oscar nominations for Monicelli's *The Organizer* (1963) and *Casanova '70* (1965). The partnership dissolved in the early 80s, but both continued to write separately. Scarpelli's recent credits include Michael Radford's *Il Posto* (1994) and Ettore Scola's *Macaroni* (1985).

-- bio adapted from Ephraim Katz's *The Film Encyclopedia*

## **MARCO FERRERI (co-screenwriter)**

Born in Milan in 1928, Marco Ferreri began directing and co-scripting films in Spain in 1958. In Italy, he began directing such offbeat and acidic satires of contemporary life as *The Conjugal Bed* and *The Ape Woman* (both 1963). After the tour-de-force of *Dillinger is Dead* (1969), his work turned even more savage with films like *La Grande Bouffe* (1973), a Swiftian account of four men eating themselves to death, starring Marcello Mastroianni; *The Last Woman* (1976), a shocking exploration of changing sexual roles starring Gerard Depardieu; and *Tales of Ordinary Madness* (1981), an adaptation of the memoirs of Charles Bukowski. His 1991 *House of Smiles* won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. -- bio adapted from *All Movie Guide*

## **RAFAEL AZCONA (co-screenwriter)**

Born 1926 in Spain, Rafael<sup>8</sup> Azcona, a renowned novelist, poet, and screenwriter, began his career in the early 50s. His novels and many of his screenplays concerned social criticism with an added touch of humor. Azcona adapted his own novel *El Pisito* for Marco Ferreri in 1955 and their collaboration lasted throughout Ferreri's career on such films as *The Grande Bouffe* (1973), *Don't Touch the White Woman!* (1974) and *Bye Bye Monkey* (1978). His recent credits include *Belle Epoque* (1992) and *Butterfly* (1999).

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<sup>8</sup> spelled “Raphael” in the opening credits of *Mafioso*

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## PIERO PICCIONI (music)

Italian composer and jazz musician Piero Piccioni, who wrote the scores for nearly 200 Italian movies, including most of the films directed by comic star Alberto Sordi, was born in Turin in 1920. Piccioni began his career as a radio pianist in 1938, and, after the war, started his own jazz group, the first to be broadcast in Italy. His group soon became popular in Roman night clubs.

Piccioni won notoriety when he was accused of responsibility for the mysterious death of a 20-year-old girl, Wilma Montesi, whose body was found on a beach off the Roman coast in April 1953. As Piccioni was the son of the then Italian foreign minister, a leading Christian Democrat politician, the Montesi affair kept the media occupied for many years, providing much political fuel for the Italian left. In the end, not even the public prosecutor seemed to believe in the defendant's guilt.

Following the trial, Piccioni went back to his music. In 1959, Francesco Rosi chose him to write the music for his second feature, *I Magliari*, for which he wanted a jazz score. Rosi then hired Piccioni for his subsequent film, *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962), the powerful score for which was one of the movie's most compelling elements. Subsequently, Rosi asked Piccioni to compose the music for all his films, from *Hands Over The City* (1963) to *Chronicle Of A Death Foretold*, filmed in Colombia in 1979.

Rosi described their creative collaboration. "It was based on mutual respect. Piero didn't start composing until he had seen the first cut. An example of the way we worked was on *The Mattei Affair* in 1972, where, after I told him I wanted the petroleum chief's heartbeat to be heard on the soundtrack, Piero came up with an entirely electronic score".

Piccioni's melodic score for Rosi's realistic Neapolitan fairy tale, *More Than A Miracle* (1967), starring Sophia Loren and Omar Sharif, was such a success in the U.S. that it made the Hit Parade. Many of the themes he composed for Alberto Sordi were also popular hits. He also composed scores for such directors as Luchino Visconti, Vittorio De Sica, Mario Monicelli, Roberto Rossellini, Tinto Brass, Mauro Bolognini and Bernardo Bertolucci, among many others; he also wrote the score for the Italian release version of Godard's *Contempt*. As the composer of Italian movie scores, he is rivaled only by his contemporaries Ennio Morricone, Carlo Rustichelli, and Nino Rota (who has been erroneously credited with part of the *Mafioso* score).

Piccioni died in 1994, age 82.

- adapted from obituary by John Francis Lane, *The Guardian* (London)

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## RIALTO PICTURES

Described as “the gold standard of reissue distributors” by Los Angeles Times/NPR film critic Kenneth Turan, Rialto Pictures was founded in 1997 by Bruce Goldstein. A year later, Adrienne Halpern joined him as partner. In 2002, Eric Di Bernardo became the company’s National Sales Director.

Rialto’s past releases have included Renoir’s *Grand Illusion*; Carol Reed’s *The Third Man*; Fellini’s *Nights of Cabiria*; Jules Dassin’s *Rififi*; De Sica’s *Umberto D*; Godard’s *Contempt*, *Band of Outsiders* and *A Woman is a Woman*; Julien Duvivier’s *Pépé le Moko*; Buñuel’s *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, *The Phantom of Liberty*, *The Milky Way* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*; John Schlesinger’s *Billy Liar*; Clouzot’s *Quai des Orfèvres*; Mike Nichols’ *The Graduate*; The Maysles’ *Grey Gardens*; Mel Brooks’ *The Producers*; Jacques Becker’s *Touchez Pas Au Grisbi*; Bresson’s *Au Hasard Balthazar* and *Mouchette*; Franju’s *Eyes Without A Face*; and Melville’s *Bob le Flambeur* and *Le Cercle Rouge*. In 2002, the company released the acclaimed first-run film *Murderous Maids*, the chilling true story of two homicidal sisters, starring Sylvie Testud.

Rialto’s 2004 slate included the original 1954 Japanese version of *Godzilla*; the Oscar-winning 1974 documentary *Hearts and Minds*; and Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers*, which became one of the year’s top-grossing foreign films. The company’s 2005/2006 releases included Louis Malle’s *Elevator to the Gallows*, Godard’s *Masculine Feminine*, Claude Berri’s *The Two of Us*, Bresson’s *Mouchette*, and Claude Sautet’s rarely-seen film noir classic *Classe Tous Risques*.

Rialto’s current releases are Carol Reed’s rediscovered masterwork *The Fallen Idol*, the French swashbuckling classic *Fanfan La Tulipe*, starring Gérard Philipe and Gina Lollobrigida, and Melville’s *Army of Shadows*, being released in the U.S. for the very first time. An epic of the French Resistance starring Lino Ventura and Simone Signoret, *Army of Shadows* has become the most critically acclaimed film of 2006.

Later this year, Rialto will re-release Jean-Luc Godard’s long unseen *Two or Three Things I Know About Her...* It opens for a run at Film Forum on November 17.

In 1999, Rialto received a special Heritage Award from the National Society of Film Critics, and in 2000 received a special award from the New York Film Critics Circle, presented to Goldstein and Halpern by Jeanne Moreau. The two co-presidents have each received the French Order of Chevalier of Arts and Letters.

**Pressbook edited and annotated by Bruce Goldstein**  
**Biographies of Lattuada & Sordi by Lenny Berger**  
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**2006 Releases**      ARMY OF SHADOWS  
THE FALLEN IDOL  
FANFAN LA TULIPE  
TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER (Nov. '06)

**2005 Releases**      MASCULINE FEMININE  
ELEVATOR TO THE GALLOWS  
THE TWO OF US  
CLASSE TOUS RISQUES  
MOUCHETTE

**2004 Releases**      THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS  
GODZILLA (U.S. premiere of uncut Japanese version)  
HEARTS AND MINDS

**2003 Releases**      LE CERCLE ROUGE (U.S. premiere of uncut version)  
A WOMAN IS A WOMAN  
TOUCHEZ PAS AU GRISBI  
AU HASARD BALTHAZAR  
EYES WITHOUT A FACE  
THE MILKY WAY

**2002 Releases**      PEPE LE MOKO  
MURDEROUS MAIDS  
QUAI DES ORFEVRES (JENNY LAMOUR)  
UMBERTO D.  
THE PRODUCERS  
THE PHANTOM OF LIBERTY

**2001 Releases**      BAND OF OUTSIDERS  
BOB LE FLAMBEUR  
THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE  
JULIET OF THE SPIRITS

**2000 Releases**      RIFIFI  
THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE  
DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID  
BILLY LIAR

**1999 Releases**      THE THIRD MAN  
GRAND ILLUSION  
PEEPING TOM

**1998 Releases**      NIGHTS OF CABIRIA  
GREY GARDENS

**1997 Releases**      CONTEMPT  
THE GRADUATE

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**WE ASK THAT YOU NOT REVEAL THE CLIMAX  
OF “MAFIOSO” TO YOUR FRIENDS  
– AND ESPECIALLY NOT TO YOUR READERS**

***Baciamo le mani,***

**Rialto Pictures**