

Tuesday September 24th 2024

Cinema Paradiso

Italy, France 1988 118mins Cert PG

Writer-director Giuseppe Tornatore's glorious 1988 love letter to the movies *Cinema Paradiso* (*Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*) is now deservedly hailed as a classic of Italian cinema. This 1989 Best Foreign Film Oscar-winner and Cannes Jury prize-winner would be worth watching for the climactic end sequence alone, in which we're taken on a magical trip through some of the cinema's greatest moments.

The whole film is magical - starting with the magnetic performances of Philippe Noiret as Alfredo, the kindly grouch of a projectionist in the Sicilian small-town fleapit picture house Cinema Paradiso and Salvatore Cascio (just nine years old) as the infatuated little kid Toto who can't take his eyes off the screen. These two, and their growing relationship that turns into a deep friendship are the heart and soul of the movie.

Eventually Toto, having grown into a handsome young man (Marco Leonardi) and fallen in love, Alfredo tells him he must leave Sicily for a new life in Rome and never come back, never be in contact with him again.

Running in one long epic flashback, the film starts with the grown-up and now middle-aged Toto, a successful film director himself (Jacques Perrin), finally going back to his home town after thirty years' absence on hearing the news that Alfredo has died. He's reunited with his mother, old friends, his first love and old colleagues for the funeral and learns that the Paradiso has been closed for six years and is about to be reduced to rubble - so as to build a car park.

Cinema Paradiso is a film for everybody who loves the movies, made with tender care and a lot of heart, warmth and typically Italian sentimentality by director Tornatore. Cinematographer Blasco Giurato, soundtrack composer Ennio Morricone and production designer Andrea Crisanti provide major, distinguished contributions to a visually and aurally thrilling experience. In celebrating the values of the past, Italy's southern culture and the golden age of the movies, Tornatore records the death of cinema in Italy and bemoans his nation's countrymen drifting away from a more cultured way of life. He achieves a cleverly contrived film built out of many contradictions, giving it its power and subtlety. It's a simple story with a profound message - emotionally it's both cosy and harsh, with an ending that is blatantly nostalgic and devastatingly moving at the same time.

Beautifully restored in 2013 (for its 25th anniversary) to Tornatore's original run time of 174mins, the Special Edition of the film is something else again - a satisfyingly immersive wallow in an epic life-long personal journey.

Acknowledgments: Derek Winnert, derekwinnert.com

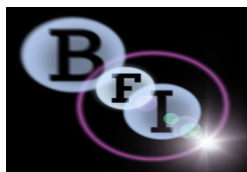
"Cinema Paradiso is about the power of dreams [and] I'd never even been to the cinema before. I didn't really know what it was"
Salvatore Cascio, 1989 BAFTA Best Supporting Role winner

Leading Players

Philippe Noiret	Alfredo
Jacques Perrin	Salvatore di Vita (adult Toto)
Salvatore Cascio	Salvatore di Vita (child Toto)
Antonella Attili	Maria di Vita (younger)
Pupella Maggio	Maris di Vita (older)

Production Credits

Director	Giuseppe Tornatore
Producers	Giovanna Romagnoli, Franco Cristaldi + 1 other
Screenplay	Giuseppe Tornatore, Vanna Paoli
Cinematography	Blasco Giurato
Original Music	Enrico Morricone



ABCD Film Society
The Guildhall, Bridge Street
Abingdon OX14 3HU
<https://abfilms.org.uk>

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