

La Vita è Cinema: the Films of Nanni Moretti at IFC

Natasha Lardera (March 22, 2012)



A comprehensive retrospective of the acclaimed Italian auteur, including all 12 of his feature films on 35mm, plus 2 shorts.

New York City's art house movie theater in the West Village, the [IFC Center](#) [2], is presenting a comprehensive retrospective of the acclaimed Italian auteur [Nanni Moretti](#) [3] (Mar 28-Apr 5).

Nanni Moretti is one of Italy's most celebrated award-winning actors, directors, screenwriters and producers who, In January 2012, was announced as the President of the Jury at the 2012 [Cannes Film Festival](#) [4]. He is known for his start in the film business: once he finished high school studies, he sold his stamps collection to buy a [super8 cinema camera](#) [5], using which he started shooting home-made short films with his friends in 1973. In 1976 he directed his first full length feature, *I am Self Sufficient* yet his professional movie-making career starts with *Ecce bombo* (1978). This was his first nation-wide success, and still a cult-movie for many Italians.



He is loved in his native Italy, yet he does not like to be in the spotlight life, he refuses to talk to journalists and does not appear on TV. In the past, he has said that he is not a film director, but someone

who only makes a film when he has something to say.

Developed in collaboration with Cinecittà Luce, Sacher Films, Warner Bros., Rosaria Folcarelli, Janus Films, Swank; Tamasa Distribution, Marilee Womack and Wild Bunch, the retrospective includes all his feature films and two of his short films.

[I am Self Sufficient](#) [6]

Wed, Mar 28 at: 7:00 PM, 9:30 PM

"Nanni Moretti's 1976 first feature, shot in Super-8 (later blown up to 16- and 35-millimeter) when he was 22, using his friends as cast and crew, shows that his style and personal manner were fully in place from the very beginning. Moretti himself plays the hero, a father whose marriage is coming apart and who is preparing a new production for an experimental theater group in Rome that proves to be a disaster." - Jonathan Rosenbaum, [Chicago Reader](#) [7]

[Ecce Bombo](#) [8]

Thu, Mar 29 at: 7:00 PM

Fri, Mar 30 at: 9:30 PM

"Italian writer-director Nanni Moretti followed up his 1976 underground hit I Am Self Sufficient with this low-budget 1978 comedy, playing a bumbling, neurotic slacker who hangs out with disaffected comrades from the 1968 student movement and dreams of becoming a radical filmmaker... clearly Moretti tapped into the anguish of an alienated generation." - Chicago Reader

[Sweet Dreams](#) [9]

Thu, Mar 29 at: 9:15 PM

Sun, Apr 1 at: 1:10 PM

"In this early comedy, Moretti casts himself as Michele, a filmmaker living with his mother and trying to complete a screenplay entitled—ominously—'Freud's Mother.' With a nod to Fellini's 8 1/2, fiction and reality intermingle as the hapless cineaste begins to daydream scenes from his opus. The hallucinations culminate in a bizarre game-show scene, in which filmmakers engage in a verbal battle royale. Sweet Dreams, according to its director, 'is not a film about cinema and it's not even about the torments of an artist... There's suffering and pain in my film, but that's not cinema, that's life.'" - Harvard Film Archive

[Bianca](#) [10]

Wed, Apr 4 at: 7:00 PM

Thu, Apr 5 at: 9:00 PM

"Often hilarious... Nanni Moretti wrote, directed, and stars in this 1984 Italian comedy set at an alternative high school so liberal minded that it has a psychotherapist on staff to treat the faculty. A neurotic math teacher, Moretti wants the relationships around him to be as harmonious as his numbers (his voyeuristic scrutiny of couples across the terrace in his apartment complex deliberately evokes Rear Window), but when a comely colleague (Laura Morante) returns his love he becomes jealous and mistrustful." - Chicago Reader

[The Mass is Ended](#) [11]

Tue, Apr 3 at: 7:00 PM

Wed, Apr 4 at: 9:15 PM

"Don Giulio, a young, idealistic priest is assigned to his first parish after ten years of seclusion on a remote island. Arriving in Rome, he finds his new parishioners have defected en masse as a result of his predecessor's amorous escapades. To make matters worse, his father is moving in with a younger woman, his unmarried sister is pregnant, and his best friend has become a terrorist. In a series of taut and wonderfully executed scenes, Moretti creates a meditation on the various forms



love takes. Doubting his ability to solve his own problems, much less those of his flock, Don Giulio ponders life with a bewilderment and fascination that is perhaps not far from the filmmaker's own distanced vantage point." – Harvard Film Archive

[Palombella Rossa \[12\]](#)

Tue, Apr 3 at: 9:15 PM

Thu, Apr 5 at: 7:00 PM

"Perhaps the wildest comedy yet from Italian writer-director-actor Nanni Moretti, a European cult favorite—here starring as a water-polo player and communist politician suffering from amnesia. Interspersing clips from a TV screening of Doctor Zhivago and Moretti's own Super-8 work from the 70s as well as cameo appearances by Raul Ruiz as a metaphysical priest, Moretti concocts a dreamy satire about the ambiguous status of the Communist Party in late-80s Italy, with water polo serving as a ruling metaphor (the title refers to a goal-scoring technique); journalism and advertising are particularly singled out for comic abuse." – Jonathan Rosenbaum, Chicago Reader

[The Thing \[13\]](#)

Sat, Mar 31 at: 1:10 PM

Sun, Apr 1 at: 10:00 PM

The events that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War prompted changes in the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which in 1989 announced a historical svolta (sharp turn). A companion piece to Nanni's 1989 PALOMBELLA ROSSA, this documentary tackles the future of the PCI and the future, if any, of a socialistic utopia. Nanni Moretti comments: "THE THING isn't a cinema citation; it's the term people used for what was coming into being — this 'thing' which would replace the old Communist party." From the confronting debates depicted to the re-evocation of the history of the Italian Left and of its founding principles, Moretti expresses here a nostalgic longing for a style of politics that has disappeared in Italy. - IFC

Screening with:

THE LAST CUSTOMER (2003, 23 min., digital projection, in Italian with English subtitles)

Moretti's doc portrait of the last day of business for a small, family-owned New York City pharmacy.

[Caro Diario \[14\]](#)

Sat, Mar 31 at: 3:15 PM

Sun, Apr 1 at: 5:45 PM

Mon, Apr 2 at: 9:15 PM

"In his eighth feature, European cult figure and comic Italian writer-director-performer Nanni Moretti offers a graceful, charming, funny, and intimate three-part film essay. The first part, 'On My Vespa,' follows Moretti as he travels around Rome on his motorbike, visiting various neighborhoods (as well as a couple of movies) and ruminating on what he sees; the second chapter, 'Islands,' has him touring a group of islands off the coast of Italy and Sicily with an intellectual friend, searching for a quiet place to do some work; and 'Doctors,' the most straightforward and factual section, chronicles Moretti's visits to a string of doctors about a mysterious itching ailment and their conflicting diagnoses and prescriptions. For all the wayward digressions of this film (including some fascinating and hilarious notations about the role of television in contemporary Italy), the experience of the three parts is mysteriously and hauntingly unified, and one comes away with an indelible sense of having had human contact." – Jonathan Rosenbaum, Chicago Reader

[The Opening Day of Close-Up \[15\]](#)

Mon, Apr 2 at: 7:00 PM

"At his cinema in Rome, the Nuovo Sacher, Nanni Moretti anxiously oversees preparations for the premiere of the film CLOSE-UP, by Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami. Meanwhile, Disney's The Lion King is taking Italy by storm." – Harvard Film Archive

Followed by:

CLOSE-UP (1990, Abbas Kiarostami, 98 min., 35mm, in Farsi with English subtitles)



“A dense and subtle masterpiece from Iran by Abbas Kiarostami (Taste of Cherry), this documentary—or is it pseudodocumentary?—follows the trial of an unemployed film buff in Tehran who impersonated acclaimed filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf and became intimate with a well-to-do family while pretending to prepare a film that was to feature them. Kiarostami persuades all the major people involved to reenact what happened, finally bringing the real Makhmalbaf together with his impersonator for a highly emotional exchange. Much of the implicit comedy here comes from the way ‘cinema’ changes and inflects the value and nature of everything—the original scam, the trial, the documentary Kiarostami is making. Werner Herzog has called this the greatest of all documentaries about filmmaking, and he may not be far off—if only because no other film does more to interrogate certain aspects of the documentary form itself.” – Jonathan Rosenbaum, Chicago Reader

[Aprile \[16\]](#)

Sat, Mar 31 at: 5:30 PM

Sun, Apr 1 at: 8:00 PM

“More explicitly political than *Caro Diario*, this again occupies that intriguing territory between reality and fiction as it celebrates both the birth of Moretti’s son and (with some reservations) the long awaited triumph of the Left in Italy. Once again, too, it’s heartfelt, eccentric and often very funny, as Moretti shares his anxieties and joys, likes and dislikes, incidentally including his own manifest shortcomings (paranoia, hysteria, self-centredness, indecision). Simultaneously sharp and gentle, rambling and to the point, it stealthily leads us into an ever stranger personal world, so that by the finale, extraordinary images of the film crew (with Moretti in cape, motorbike helmet and shades) swaying to the rhythms of a musical sequence about a Trotskyist pastry chef (!) seem perfectly normal.” – [Time Out](#) [17] (London)

[The Son's Room \[18\]](#)

Sat, Mar 31 at: 11:00 AM, 7:30 PM

Sun, Apr 1 at: 11:00 AM

“The first half-hour or so of Moretti’s Palme d’Or winner deftly paints an unsentimental portrait of an ordinary, almost complacently happy family in a small Italian coastal town. Then the unthinkable occurs. The teenage son dies in a diving accident, and his parents and sister find themselves so distracted by guilt, anger and confusion that they start drifting apart. Then an unexpected letter arrives for the boy from a girlfriend they never even knew existed. Subtle, psychologically astute and engagingly unassertive in tone, the film builds gently but surely to an emotionally powerful climax in which the family – especially the psychiatrist father (Moretti) — are forced to reassess everything they ever put their faith in. Wisely, Moretti steers clear of sentimentality, allowing the deceptively simple narrative speak for itself. A gem.” – Time Out (London)

[The Caiman \[19\]](#)

Sat, Mar 31 at: 9:45 PM

Sun, Apr 1 at: 3:25 PM

“Wittily scripted and lightly played... The film’s interest is fictional delight Bruno Bonomo (Silvio Orlando), a flailing producer of appalling B-movies such as ‘Mocassini Assassini’ who reluctantly agrees to back a cinematic attack on the politician when young writer-director Teresa (Jasmine Trinca) thrusts her script into his hands. It’s only when he begins the soul-destroying process of finding financiers and actors that he warms a little to Teresa’s cause. His mild awakening is superceded by a personal crisis: not only is his career in tatters, but he and his wife (Margherita Buy) are separating. As he struggles to balance family and work, we see some imagined scenes from his Berlusconi film, each reflecting a different stage in its production and each showing Berlusconi played by a different actor, including Moretti himself.” – Time Out (London)

[We Have a Pope \[20\]](#)

Fri, Mar 30 at: 7:00 PM

Nanni Moretti joins forces with the great French actor Michel Piccoli (*Contempt*, *I’m Going Home*) to tell the story of Melville, a cardinal who suddenly finds himself elected as the next Pope. Never the



front runner and completely caught off guard, he panics as he's presented to the faithful in St. Peter's Square. To prevent a world wide crisis, the Vatican's spokesman calls in an unlikely psychiatrist who is neither religious or all that committed, played by Moretti, to find out what is wrong with the new Pope. As the world nervously waits outside, inside the therapist tries to find a solution. But Cardinal Melville is adamant: he does not want the job, or at least needs time to think it over. What follows is a marvelous insight into the concept of a human being existing behind the title of God's representative on Earth. WE HAVE A POPE is the latest film by Moretti to make wonderful use of humor while dealing with serious issues and continue to showcase his deep humanism. - IFC

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Links

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- [2] <http://www.ifc.com/>
- [3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanni_Moretti
- [4] <http://www.festival-cannes.fr/en.html>
- [5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Super_8_film_cameras
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- [13] <http://www.ifccenter.com/films/the-thing-la-cosa/>
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