

Garrone's Reality Comes to American Cinemas

Natasha Lardera (March 11, 2013)



Starring a convicted murderer, Reality tells the story of a Naples fishmonger obsessed with reality TV. The winner of the Grand Prix at the 65th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, will open in movie theaters in New York City on March 15th and in Los Angeles on March 22nd. A national release will follow.

“After [Gomorrah](#) [2] I wanted to do something different, most likely a comedy but I am not sure I succeeded. As things progressed the comedy got a little darker.” With these words Italian award-winning film director [Matteo Garrone](#) [3] described his latest film Reality, the winner of the Grand Prix at the [65th edition of the Cannes Film Festival](#) [4], that will open in movie theaters in New York City on March 15th and in Los Angeles on March 22nd. A national release will follow.

Garrone was in New York to promote the film and shared with the audience of the [Italian Cultural Institute](#) [5], during a conference led by journalist and professor [Antonio Monda](#) [6], some interesting insight.



"The story was inspired by real events," the shy director explained, "Luciano's story is the story of my brother in law. It's a bit more tragic on screen but it is real."

The film is the darkly comedic tale of a Neapolitan fishmonger with a burning ambition to be famous. It is about the role of reality TV in today's society and what regular people would do to be in a show. "Reality is born from a simple but true story that we transformed in order to move through and reflect on the landscape of today. It is a journey of anticipation, of hopes and dreams," Garrone explained, "This is a film about how we perceive the real, the story of a man who departs from reality and enters into his own fictitious dimension."

"Never give up, hold on to your dreams," is what the fictional character of Enzo (Raffaele Ferrante), a former [Big Brother](#) [7] contestant turned into a wedding party celebrity tells Luciano (Aniello Arena), the story's main character, when he is not sure if the show producers will ask him to participate. This gives him more hope. With growing hope there is lasting illusion.

Luciano runs his small fish stand in the town square with effusive charm, doing his best to support his family. A natural-born performer, Luciano never misses an opportunity to entertain his customers and countless relatives. One day, at the urging of his children, he tries out for "Big Brother," where they believe he'll be a hit. After a successful first audition, he eagerly awaits the call that he and his excited clan are convinced will come and rocket him to fame and fortune. As time passes with no word from the producers, Luciano becomes increasingly paranoid (for example, Luciano thinks the TV production has hidden a camera in a cricket to see his every move. As the insect is "singing" he feels under scrutiny. These scene was based on what really happened to Garrone's brother in law) and consumed by this ever-elusive dream.

"Reality is not a film on Big Brother," Garrone really cared to specify, "It is not an exposè or something against TV. This was misunderstood and the film was less successful in Italy because of this." The show itself is just in the background, it never steals the scene but is just something that causes Luciano to act a certain way and he simply can't let go of it. "It is more a film on capitalism. It tells how people want to escape everyday life to follow a fake Paradise. What they have is not enough and they always want more."

"I think of Luciano, the star of the film, as a modern-day [Pinocchio](#) [8], one of childlike innocence and naïveté," Garrone added, "I followed him with my camera as if he were living a fantastic adventure. During the shooting, I was constantly striving for that delicate balance between dream and reality, always searching, even figuratively, for a certain fable-like quality, a sort of magic realism."

And the real story that inspired the film? When asked about the current situation of his brother in law, Garrone explained that he participated in the writing of the film and also consulted with the actor who was playing Luciano. With the money earned from the film he was able to open a fish shop. "The circle is closed," Garrone concluded.

[Oscilloscope Laboratories](#) [9] has acquired U.S. rights to Reality. Oscilloscope's David Laub called the film "a complex, provocative, and deeply compelling look at our media-obsessed culture, executed by one of the most interesting and talented filmmakers working today. Garrone pays homage to classical filmmakers such as [Fellini](#) [10] and [Scorsese](#) [11] while crafting a fresh and very relevant contemporary story."

Reality has created buzz not just for its story but for another reason as well: its leading actor.



Garrone found him performing in a prison acting troupe as he is currently serving a life sentence for double murder. According to the Internet Movie Database Arena has been hailed as an unlikely blend of [Robert de Niro](#) [8], [Mr Punch](#) [12], and [Totò](#) [13], Italy's best loved comic actor. "It was he (Arena) who really developed the character of Luciano. He gives an extraordinary interpretation of a very complex role. This is a man who, having been in jail for nearly 20 years, has discovered a world that he had no idea about," Garrone told The Telegraph in the past.

115 minutes. In Italian with English subtitles. An Oscilloscope Laboratories release. Rated R for some language.

The film opens at the Angelika Film Center on 3/15/2010. for tickets click [here](#) [14].

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