

De Laurentis: "I want to bring Italian cinema to American universities and S.S.C. Napoli in New York"

Letizia Airos (November 16, 2010)



In Washington we were able to interview Aurelio De Laurentis, who received the "United States - Italy Friendship Award" at the NIAF Gala. He told us about his American projects and ideas, both as a movie producer and as president of S.S.C. Napoli, the Naples Serie A soccer team.

We spoke calmly to Aurelio De Laurentis on the morning after the NIAF Convention. Away from the spotlight, we met in the crowded hall of the Washington Hilton, while soft music, strictly Italian, created the background to our conversation.



What are your feelings about last night's Italian-American evening?

"The great American organization is the first thing that struck me. As usual, when it acts, it acts big. Everything is planned ahead and prepared, and we are just like soldiers following a path. It is studied and precise.

To be recognized by NIAF fills me with interest and joy. I felt a great deal of friendship between Italy and America. Important factors are at play, today, that unite the American and European continents. And, within Europe, Italy has a privilege in the fields of fashion, cars, food, and art. I don't believe there is anyone who can keep up to our country.

I feel sorry, though, that in Italy we get lost in destructive games, maybe because we are incurable diseased who only think about destroying each other with envy on their own territory. They don't understand that the American germ gave this huge push towards mutual respect. The prize is give to whoever moves the American economy and there exists a so-called American dream. A new-comer from any country of the world doesn't get excluded because of being a foreigner. He receives help in expressing his own personality and intelligence. That is how the American dream comes true."

And what can cinema do?

"We have to bet on two realities, at some point, localizing the most by reinforcing the Italian language and the dialects, while at the same time producing films that represent Italy in the English language. Through the taste that doesn't anyway get hidden by a linguistic factor. When Milos Forman came to America and presented his *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* he won nine Oscars without betraying the cultural identity he was formed in."

Is there still need to update the Italian image abroad?

"A penetrating action needs to happen toward young people. I see with great pleasure that studying Italian has become a fashion. But we should bring Italians to American universities, like Giorgio Armani, Montezemolo, the great musicians. We Italians think of our music as provincial, but music is music, it is universal, it has no linguistic barrier."

Any more details about how you would approach the universities?

I think that a distribution network could be set up. I always felt the great importance of distributing a product.

Universities are catchment areas that represent the country's voice and, more specifically, are the novelty of a very young population usually distant from political conditioning and any other type of dominating position. Every kid brings his own small experience.

So I would like to create a presentation network for Italian cinema. I would like to create a network of five hundred universities and, when a film is released in Italy, broadcast the press conference in American universities. Present the author, the actor, the director and then screen the film in the universities, with a \$10 admission. The school would keep 50%, while the other 50% would go to the Italian producers."

Are you already working on this or is it only an idea?

"I can launch the idea, supervise it, since I am well accustomed to the world of distribution. I saw it with S.S.C. Napoli, and no other sports club builds and plans like we do. We invented 452 products, from motorcycles, to bicycles, to toys for children, and we distribute them ourselves, as well.

I run eighteen companies, and soccer distracted me. But I think that the cinematic school of a country like Italy is a great one and should still be promoted around the world. I have resisted for thirty-six years, my company is called "Filmauro" but I don't even let it near to an adjective like



"International" that is usual added when you found a company that is already doomed. Mine never failed, it remains there indestructible. I produced over one hundred films, oversaw the distribution and purchase of over four hundred, and we still move on. I don't know how long we will be able to continue doing this in Italy, and I am beginning to get bored, as well.

After all, before S.S.C. Napoli I was working in the States with Gwyneth Paltrow, Jude Law and Angelina Jolie, but S.S.C. Napoli is like an aircraft carrier. Like ten films at the same time. And now I'm interested and I enjoy bringing soccer to the United States. But I also want to return with my great passion for cinema."

And when will you bring S.S.C. Napoli?

"Next year S.S.C. Napoli will come to New York. We have to battle with calendars, that leave no free time. But for a long time I've had the idea of bringing the team to Giant Stadium..."

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