

Playing War with Paolo Sassanelli

N. L. (July 13, 2012)



The celebrated Italian actor's directorial debut *Uerra* (War) is a delightful comedy that revolves around a father and his three sons, who take dad's war stories a little too much to heart. It was presented at Iron Mule, a short comedy screening series presented at 92Y Tribeca.

Bari, summer of 1946. The war has ended but there are no signs of peace between Paolo (Dino Abbrescia) and Luigi (Totò Onnis). Having suffered a superficial wound in Abyssinia, Paolo hopes to receive his pension from the trade unions. Luigi reminds him of his Fascist past. Their discussion becomes heated when Paolo loses at cards yet again. His little boy Antonio (Andrea Montani) watches his father's humiliation in silence. With the money his mother gave him to buy lunch, he buys a toy gun and together with his little brothers he returns home to give the gun to the father, so he can revenge himself.

This is the storyline of [Uerra](#) [2] (War), a short film directed by [Paolo Sassanelli](#) [3], acclaimed theater, cinema and television actor mostly known for his roles in [Un Medico in Famiglia](#) [4] and

[Compagni di Scuola](#) [5].

Sassanelli, who was born in Bari in 1958, has also worked in cinema under the direction of the likes of Matteo Garrone, Giuseppe Piccioni, Silvio Soldini, Cristina Comencini and Gianni Zanasi. He was co-writer of the film "Rosso come il cielo" by Cristiano Bortone. He directed four plays and is preparing to direct his first feature length film.

"I based my story," Sassanelli, who also co-wrote the screenplay with Antonella Gaeta, explained, "on the numerous stories of humanity told by my grandparents. This description of the aftermath of World War II in Southern Italy is something all Italians have in common in the memories of our families. This reminds us of who we are and where we come from. My teacher always used to say: 'If you are able to portray the poetry of life and move people with one simple gesture, what you do is worthwhile!' That is what I tried to do."

And he succeeded in doing so: this delightful 16 minute long comedy that revolves around a father and his three sons, who take dad's war stories a little too much to heart, transports you to a different era and makes you smile at the tough topic of war.

The film was presented at [Iron Mule](#) [6], a short comedy screening series presented at [92Y Tribeca](#) [7].

Iron Mule is a monthly short comedy film festival born in Chicago City Limits, new York City's legendary Improv Theater. It has been running since April 2002, screening the best in short comedy films from around the world. Films that premiered at the festival have gone on to Comedy Central, HBO, Cinemax, PBS and the Sundance Channel. They have also been exhibited at the US Comedy Arts Festival and at the Sundance Film festival.

"We hope to get more Italian films in the upcoming editions," show producer and host Jay Stern said, "we welcome comedies coming from all over. We love to laugh."

The series is a competition and although Uerra did not win the first prize, First Mate by Connor Byrne did, it is indeed victorious: its subtle humor, stunning locations, vivid photography and natural acting captured the hearts of the judges and the audience.

Translating humor is not easy but Uerra did it impeccably.

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