

Jando Music

4 A 4 Productions

In collaboration with **Rai Cinema**

present



UN FILM DI MAURO GIOIA CON DIRTY MARTINI MARK PLATI JACK PETRUZZELLI JULIE ATLAS MUZ HEATHER LITTEER
DIALOGHI ANTONIO PASCALE E SIMONA FRASCA MONTAGGIO BENOÎT DELBOVE CASTING MARITA D'ELIA FOTOGRAFIA VALENTINA CANIGLIA AIC
SUONO IN PRESA DIRETTA MATT PERRY THOMAS CANZONI ORIGINALI MAURO GIOIA E MARK PLATI MUSICHE ADDIZIONALI PASQUALE CATALANO
PRODOTTO DA GIANDOMENICO CIARAMELLA DAVID MATHIEU-MAHIAS MANI MORTAZAVI

a film by
MAURO GIOIA

LOSTLAND

Burt Young Mauro Gioia Mark Plati
Dirty Martini Jack Petruzzelli Julie Atlas Muz

*Based on interviews within the Italian-American community
of Brooklyn, freely rewritten by Antonio Pascale*

Duration: 32"

ARTIST CAST

Burt Young

Doctor
Homeless lawyer
Taxi driver
Pizza maker
Music critic

Mauro Gioia

Singer

Mark Plati

Bicycle dealer

Dirty Martini

Music critic's wife

Jack Petruzzelli

Producer

Julie Atlas Muz

Girl on bicycle

Heather Litteer

Street singer

Shauna Hoskins

Tip Tap girl

TECHNICAL CAST

Director and Author
Script

Mauro Gioia
Antonio Pascale
Simona Frasca*

Director of Photography
Video Editing

Valentina Caniglia, AIC
Benoît Delbove

Original songs
Additional music

Mauro Gioia e Mark Plati
Pasquale Catalano

Produced by

Giandomenico Ciaramella
David Mathieu-Mahias
Mani Mortazavi

* for the Music critic's episode

The Plot

***"I've made up my mind
I leave my place today
Going to hide my pain
Under new skies".***
*From the song "A New Beginning" **

Full of hope, a young Neapolitan singer heads for New York where he is expected by renowned American musicians to record his first album.

His producer rented the recording studio and organized everything from Italy.

This is his chance of a lifetime.

The moment he sets foot in New York however, he suddenly and inexplicably loses his voice.

The recording appears to be compromised.

In desperation, he decides to surrender to the New York night, without a specific aim besides that of reaching oblivion.

As he revisits those same places, following in the footsteps of his emigrated ancestors who placed all their hopes on the American Dream, our singer makes five strange encounters.

Five Italian-Americans

***"New York is huge!
The skyline never ends
We cross from shore to shore
What a beautiful day"***
From the song "What I Really Wanna Do"

In November 2012, I travelled to New York to carry out a few location surveys but mainly to meet with Burt Young for the filming of *Lostland*. I immediately reassured him that I hadn't come with the intention of checking whether I had chosen the right person. I wasn't concerned about the acting, but rather about selecting the best costumes in line with the settings chosen for the film. Actually, I wanted to understand if my idea to have a single actor tackling multiple roles in the same film was well-founded.

Our meeting and the undeniable stage presence of the actor during the test scenes left me utterly convinced. Burt conveyed an emotional charge that exceeded my expectations. He was comfortable in each of the different roles and beautifully embodied the Italian-American spirit with immediate spontaneity. Just as I had expected, his Italian immigrant background had silently refined each one of the characters I had in mind.

The Neapolitan Singer

I decided to play the role of the voiceless Neapolitan singer myself: a costumed character who wanders at night in Brooklyn's deserted streets. I wanted to focus on creating a dreamlike dimension, somewhat out of time, or rather as if time had stopped and the character had stepped out of a different era.

The singer's typical Italian style, elegant clothing that will gradually degrade as the story unfolds, contributes to this effect. He appears wearing a coat, a flabby hat and carrying an enormous old-fashioned suitcase, which directly brings to mind the archetype of the Italian immigrant across time, just like his grandfather, who after the war tried his luck in the new Eldorado. In addition to this surreal atmosphere, I wanted the singer to embody a tragic-comic burlesque figure; capable of evoking memories of other characters in the Italian cinema. In addition to his appearance that clearly contributes to this suggestion, I also used the comic potential to expose the absurdity of his sudden symptom (a singer, victim of a mysterious loss of voice on the eve of a recording !).

Music, Songs, and Musicians

*"Why
Do I wonder all the time 'bout my life?
Just my life
Digging in my past
Every moment"
From the song "The Stalker" **

The songs in this film were written with the specific aim of telling this story and accompanying the singer as he seeks his voice and roots. Entirely mute, his thoughts and character are expressed through music and his songs reveal his confusion and fear, his hopes and illusions. The songs resonate constantly in his mind, in spite of the fact that he has not yet been to the studio and nothing has been recorded yet!

The lyrics of his songs take shape in the night, becoming more refined as they feed on the stories revealed to him, while following the footsteps of his ancestors.

A number of scenes feature the musicians with whom I recorded the album *Lostland*. They are all musicians of Italian origin and it would seem by their appearance and by their way of playing that little remains of their origin. In reality, their family histories, particularly that of their grandparents, are reflected in the characters played by Burt.

Furthermore, their true stories as musicians and descendants of successful immigrants who have actualized the American Dream of their grandparents provide a stark contrast with the dismal accounts in the preceding scenes.

THE PROCESS OF A TWO-SIDED PROJECT

*"This town has a reputation
And there are stories around
It's true.
It is all truth".
From the song "Trust in Your Heart"*

Inception

As most of my musical performances were presented in France, following my debut at the Festival " Les Allumes " of Nantes in 1993, I decided to relocate to Paris in the summer of 2008. During this period, my project related to Nino Rota's compositions was born: *Appuntamento con Nino Rota* - conceived by Fred Chinchin and Catherine Ringer. This brought to the recording of an album, the production of a show (presented at the Théâtre de l'Odéon and in major European cities) and the creation of a documentary film *La visita meravigliosa* (The Wonderful Visit).

In 2010, always in France, I wrote *Una bella giornata napoletana* (A beautiful Neapolitan Day), a musical inspired by traditional Neapolitan songs.

As a citizen of a new country, a new city, I inevitably acquired a different identity. Feeling profoundly disoriented and having to express myself in a foreign language that I hadn't mastered, gradually, my way of relating to others changed, together with my artistic expression.

During this period of transition, I often thought about what my Italian ancestors must have felt when leaving their homeland: having to build new friendships, overcome language barriers, adapt to a new culture and intertwine their roots with those of the host country. Their difficulties and concerns were undoubtedly very different from mine but nonetheless, their paths converge in the universal path of those migrants who have hoped or are hoping to start a new life in a country other than their own.

These reflections provide the basis for *Lostland*.

A Double Concept

Lostland is a musical and a documentary film project inspired by the events of the Italian migration to the American continent. Why America? Because it is one of the country with the largest number of Italian immigrants and which cradled the myth of renewal and rebirth.

A project with two sides: a music album on the one hand and a documentary film on the other; which may be perceived either separately or in conjunction so as to complement each other.

This double project comes from a research on the stories and testimonies of the descendants of Italian immigrants of second, third and fourth generation, which was carried out in the neighborhoods of Brooklyn, Bronx or Bushwick, far from the stereotype of Little Italy in Manhattan, now an overly touristic area.

The stories collected on site deftly portray what remains, nearly a century later, of the sense of belonging to one's own country and culture – when a person escapes from their homeland. My questions arose from the issue of the Italian-American identity and in a short time, I found myself guardian of a number of stories and unique pathways which combined risky projects, amazing accomplishments and shattered lives. All sharing a common theme: that of being uprooted from one's native land and a tenacious hope for a better life, next to those skyscrapers.

Although I composed a number of songs with this abundant material, finalizing the album's recording, the stories of these immigrants continued to echo in my mind.

I felt it was essential to integrate the musical component with a creative documentary.

A Creative Documentary

*“The salt on my face makes fun of me when
I’m chatting and scrubbing away”.
From the song “Black as Coal”*

I imagined a story-line originating from the accounts of the Italian-American immigrants gathered through my research.

Among the most interesting were the testimony of a doctor, a pizza maker, a taxi driver, a musicologist and a disillusioned and homeless ex-lawyer.

In order to truly comprehend the reality of these people who helped form the prosperity and identity of New York, it was necessary to distance myself from those who had confided with me and undertake a task of transposition. To better understand their true personalities I had to detach myself from their stories and, at the same time, find a suitable form to narrate their extreme exploits. I decided asked Antonio Pascale if he could rewrite their stories and place them in a fiction setting. Antonio conceived a typical Italian singer travelling to New York for the first time, in order to pursue his dream: that of recording his first album, in the city where anything is possible. All was planned from Italy; the recording studio was booked and the best musicians and technicians were called. The recording sessions start on the night of his arrival, in fact the musicians are already practicing. Unfortunately, things rapidly complicate and as soon as he sets foot in the streets of New York, he suddenly and inexplicably loses his voice.

In desperation, he surrenders himself to the New York night, wandering aimlessly without goals or desires, except to get lost and forget.

This marks the beginning of a night spent meandering through the deserted streets of Brooklyn; those same streets that once witnessed his Neapolitan ancestors who had departed in the great migratory wave, with their sole belongings being cardboard suitcases, long coats and floppy hats.

Things worsen as the singer, drunk, falls asleep on a bench along the Hudson and gets mugged. Without money, shoes, or identity (his passport was also taken) he suddenly finds himself exactly in the same situation of helplessness as that of an immigrant.

It is therefore in these circumstances of helplessness and uncertainty, similar to those of earlier expatriates and contemporary migrants, that the singer coincidentally makes some crucial encounters with descendants of Italian immigrants who wholeheartedly pour out their life stories to him.

Five characters: a doctor, a pizza maker, a taxi driver, a musicologist and a homeless ex-lawyer, all of Italian origin, who with primeval instinct, recognize him to be an authentic Neapolitan. Like ghosts emerging from his past, they enable him to reconnect with his cultural roots; thanks to them, he recovers his voice and is able to record his album.

Yet he finds himself with a different tone of voice. After the strong emotional impact with these lives that re-emerged from oblivion, he is no longer the same person. His new voice seems to vibrate in resonance with all these voices of the past.

These five different characters are played by a single actor, Burt Young, considered the archetype of the Italian-American immigrant *par excellence*. A world-famous celebrity, he is best remembered for playing Sylvester Stallone's brother-in-law Paulie in *Rocky* (1976), a role that earned him an Oscar nomination. When I told him about my idea his reaction was immediate: "This is my story," and was moved when I asked him to participate in this documentary film to commemorate both his roots and the turbulent lives of his ancestors.

Alternating between the roles of doctor, homeless lawyer, taxi driver, piazza maker, and musicologist, this charismatic actor, with his distinctive Italian-American accent, confers to these stories a genuinely poetic, ironic, tragic and universal dimension.

BIOGRAPHY

MAURO GIOIA

is a Neapolitan, singer and director.

His work is based in Naples' evocative theatrical tradition: variety and cabaret shows that draw on the fantastic and playful tendencies of the twentieth-century avant-garde. Always suspended between popular culture and "intellectual" entertainment, Gioia's works explore the relationship between music and storytelling, the familiar and the exotic, the literal and the implied.

After forming a rock band, while holding a degree in Fine Arts as Set Designer, in 1992 Mauro created PiedigrottaGioia a show paying tribute to Neapolitan songs, featuring four musicians and an experienced tap dancer.

His first album was *Rendez-vous Chez Nino Rota*, in which he performed the legendary Milanese composer's duets together with Ute Lemper, Catherine Ringer, Sharleen Spiteri, Maria de Medeiros, Adriana Calcanhotto, Martirio, and Susana Rinaldi.

With Maria de Medeiros, Gioia has also produced and performed a revue entitled *Cabaret Social Songs*, inspired by the songs of Moravia and Pasolini.

While working on the Nino Rota recordings, Gioia made his first documentary, *La visita meravigliosa* (The Wonderful Visit). The film follows a road trip in which the protagonist—Nino Rota's nephew—explores the Italian peninsula in an old camper, in search of his uncle's friends, and during the process pieces together a personal portrait of the great composer.

ANTONIO PASCALE

Writer and journalist. He lived in Caserta before relocating to Rome where he currently works. Among his published works are: *La città distratta* (Einaudi, 2001 - Premio Onofri, Premio Elsa Morante - isola di Arturo), *La manutenzione degli affetti* (Einaudi, 2003 - Premio Lo Straniero, Ostia, Premio Chiara, Premio Napoli, cinquina Premio Viareggio) and *Passa la bellezza* (Einaudi, 2005), *S'è fatta ora* (Minimum Fax, 2006), *Non è per cattiveria. Confessioni di un viaggiatore pigro* (Laterza, 2006), *L'isola nave e la memoria degli ultimi marconisti* (La Riflessione, 2007), *Scienza e sentimento* (Einaudi, 2008), *Le attenuanti sentimentali* (Einaudi 2013)

He collaborates with Italian dailies *il Corriere della Sera* and *il Mattino*.

BURT YOUNG

Born Gerald Tommaso De Louise (New York, 30 April 1940), Burt Young is an American actor of Italian-American origin.

He is best known for his Academy Award-nominated role as Sylvester Stallone's brother-in-law and best friend Paulie Pennino in the Rocky film series, and for the role of Joe in Sergio Leone's masterpiece Once Upon a Time in America.

Burt was born in Queens, New York, the son of Italian-Americans Josephine and Michael. He received his dramatic arts training under legendary acting coach Lee Strasberg at the Actors Studio. In his long film career (almost 100 films) Burt Young made his name playing rough-edged working class Italian-American characters, typically cast as a thug or villain.

He has also appeared in several television series, including Law & Order, Walker Texas Ranger , M * A * S * H , Miami Vice and The Sopranos .

Although he is known by the general public as an actor, Burt Young is also a painter, author and screenwriter.

DIRTY MARTINI

born Linda Marraccini in New Jersey to an opera singer/visual artist mother and a band director Italian-American father, Dirty is a New York City-based Burlesque dancer, pin-up model and dance teacher.

She is best known for her over-the-top performance acts, which mostly incorporate various classic burlesque styles such as the fan dance, balloon strip tease, the Dance of Several Veils, and shadow stripping, as well as her 50s styled pin-up images.

New York magazine calls her "the Sexpot Sophisticate" and the NY Daily News described her performance as "The decadent expression of female sensuality in action". The New York Times proclaimed her "One of the best in burlesque".

JULIE ATLAS MUZ

is a New York City-based performance artist, dancer, burlesque artist, stage director, and actress.

Julie is best known as a performer in the New York City burlesque scene and neo-burlesque revival. She was the crown holder of the 2006 Miss Exotic World and the 2006 Miss Coney Island pageants. The New York Times calls her "the royalty of burlesque".

MARK PLATI – Producer and songwriter.

Widely acclaimed for his work in the 1990s with David Bowie, he also worked with The Cure, Prince, Hooverphonic, Robbie Williams and Nathalie Imbruglia.

In 1918, his grandfather Pietro left the small town of Fabrizio, in Calabria, for New York City.

JACK PETRUZZELLI

His knowledge of the guitar and keyboards have been heard around the world, alongside musical legends such as Patti Smith and Ian Hunter, as well as contemporary artists such as Rufus Wainwright and Joan Osborne.

His grandfather Pietro left his home in Sant'Agata (province of Foggia) for Newark in 1901.

LISA GERMANO

Singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, she released seven albums featuring her hushed vocal style and distinctive violin. She is also known as a guest performer in over sixty records by a variety of artists, including John Mellencamp, Simple Minds, David Bowie, Yann Tiersen, and Iggy Pop.

Her father Rocco left Plati, a small village in Calabria, at the age of 8 for Mishawka in Indiana.

EARL SLICK guitarist

Born Frank Madeloni, in Brooklyn, he is best known for his collaborations with David Bowie, John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and Robert Smith. He is also the newest member of the New York Dolls. His family left Salerno for Staten Island in 1920.

JERRY MAROTTA drummer

He worked with Peter Gabriel, Tony Levin, Hall and Hoates and recorded and played live with Tears For Fears, Elvis Costello, Paul McCartney, Suzanne Vega, and Joan Armatrading. He is well-known for his use of American Indian drums. Originally from Naples, his family moved to Ohio at the beginning of the century.