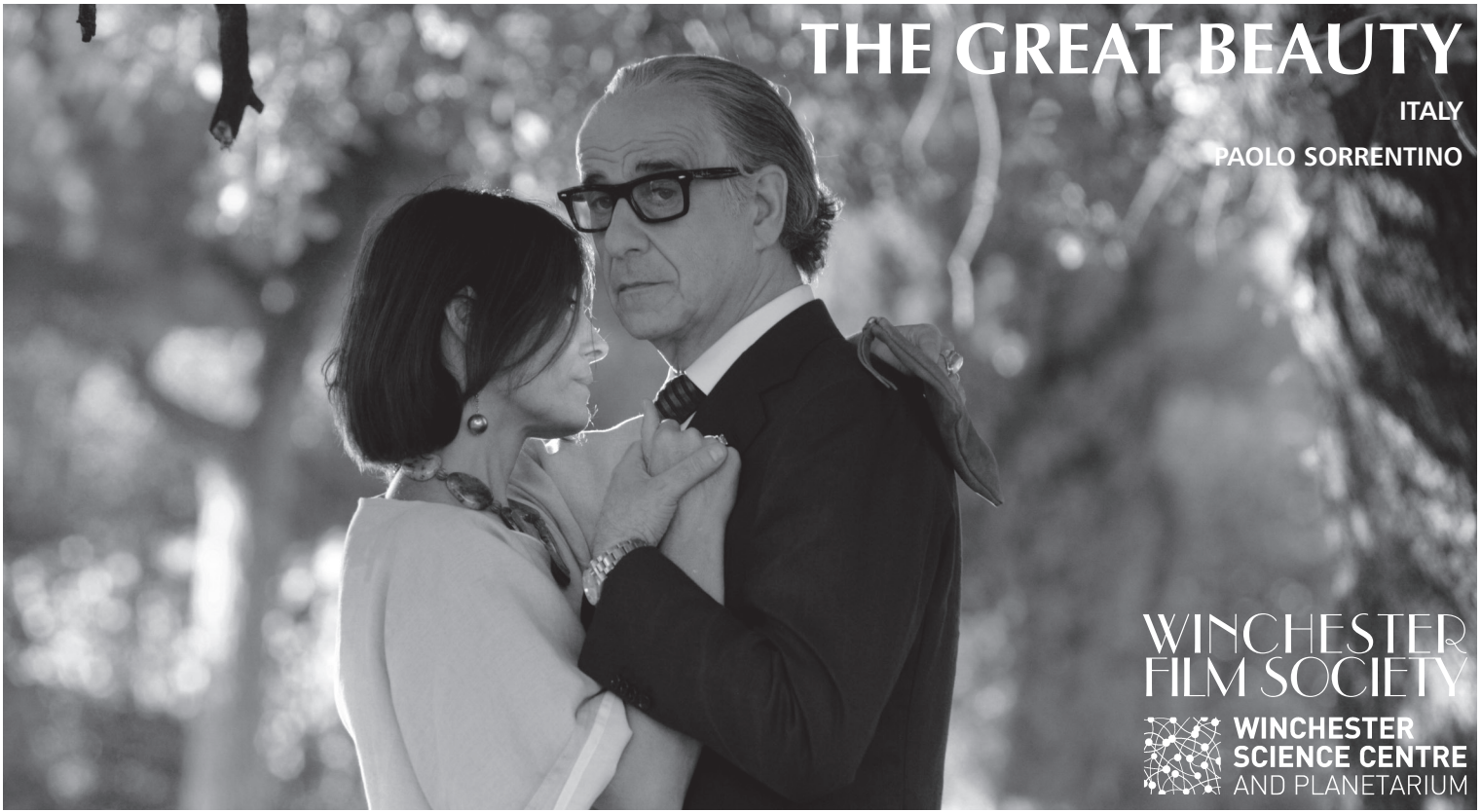


# THE GREAT BEAUTY

ITALY

PAOLO SORRENTINO



WINCHESTER  
FILM SOCIETY  
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Paolo Sorrentino's *La Grande Bellezza* is a compelling tragicomedy of Italy's leisured classes in the tradition of Antonioni's *La Notte* or Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. It is a pure sensual overload of richness and strangeness and sadness, a film sometimes on the point of swooning with dissolute languour, savouring its own ennui like a truffle. But more often it's defiantly rocking out, keeping the party going as the night sky pales, with all the vigour of well-preserved, middle-aged rich people who can do hedonism better than the young. It is set in Rome, populated by the formerly beautiful and the currently damned, and featuring someone who doesn't quite fall into either category.

When I first saw this extraordinary film, I flinched – though admiringly – at the fleshy opulence, and called it a magnificent banquet composed of 78 sweet courses. On a second viewing, it feels more like 84 or 91. Now I see that isn't the point anyway. The sweet course is the most exquisitely sad because it signals the end of the feast.

*La Grande Bellezza* reunites Sorrentino with his favourite leading man, that uniquely potent stage and screen actor Toni Servillo, who like no other unlocks Sorrentino's fierce, Jonsonian satire. He plays Jep Gambardella: an ageing man-about-town at the centre of Rome's fashionable nightlife, elegant as a vampire. Jep's face is a mask of polite disenchantment, but often creasing into a grin of willed, cultivated pleasure. He is famous

for his journalism, and for having written one promising novel in his 20s and nothing else, but more for knowing everyone who matters. The London equivalent might be Nicky Haslam or Taki Theodoracopulos.

In his 60s, Jep is content with his life and about to drift blearily off into mortality's shade when he is electrified by an unexpected event. A stranger presents himself at the door of his bachelor apartment with a revelation that moves Jep profoundly and triggers in him a new passionate connoisseurship of all he has loved, all he has wasted, along with a tiny sense that he might start writing seriously again. The movie is his final Proustian passeggiata.

The grande bellezza, like the grande tristezza, can mean love, or sex, or art, or death, but above all it means Rome, and the city is evoked with staggering flair and attack. Sorrentino's signature swooping and zooming camera discloses scenes and figures and faces.

This is Sorrentino's best film so far, a movie with all the angular caricature and cosmopolitan suavity that marked films such as *Il Divo*, *The Family Friend* and *The Consequences of Love*, but with a new operatic passion and clamour, a sense of love and loss, and an even sharper, more piercing sense of the forms of power and prestige. And for its intense, unbearable melancholy, the final end-title sequence has to be watched through to the very end until the screen goes dark.

Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*

**WRITERS:** Paolo Sorrentino, Umberto Contarello **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Luca Bigazzi **Music:** Lele Marchitelli  
**CAST:** *Jep Gambardella* Toni Servillo | *Romano* Carlo Verdone | *Ramona* Sabrina Ferilli | *Lello Cava* Carlo Buccirosso

VOTING FOR *THE SALESMAN* A55 | B45 | C7 | D1 | E0 | Rating 85.6% | Attendance 113

Next screening | *My Feral Heart* | Tuesday 20 March 2018 8.00pm

'...a beautifully realised, understated character study bolstered by strong performances...'

# Winchester Film Society Presents:



**Tuesday 20 March 2018 8.00pm**

**Preceded by the Winchester Film Society AGM**

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