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**EUROPEAN FILM AWARD NOMINEE 2009  
BEST SCREENWRITER**

# **MID-AUGUST LUNCH**

## **(PRANZO DI FERRAGOSTO)**

a film by Gianni Di Gregorio

The charismatic Gianni Di Gregorio (co-scenarist of the smash hit *Gomorrah*), stars in his directorial debut—an utterly charming tale of good food, feisty ladies and unlikely friendships during a very Roman holiday. Broke, and armed with only a glass of wine and a wry sense of humor, middle-aged Gianni resides with his 93-year-old mother in their ancient apartment. The condo debts are mounting, but if Gianni looks after the building manager’s mother during the Pranzo di Ferragosto (Italy’s biggest summer holiday, and the Feast of the Assumption), all will be forgiven. Then the manager also shows up with an auntie, and a doctor friend appears with *his* mother in tow.... Can Gianni keep four such lively mamas well fed and happy in these cramped quarters?

Winner of numerous prizes at international festivals—including multiple prizes at Venice, the Satyajit Ray Award at London and the Golden Snail at the Academy of Food and Film in Bologna—*Mid-August Lunch* is both warmly vibrant family drama and delicately balanced comedy of manners.

# GIANNI DI GREGORIO



Gianni Di Gregorio—director, writer and actor of *Mid-August Lunch*—was born in Rome in Trastevere, where he still lives and works.

He fell in love with cinema when he was still a child, spending his mornings at school and his afternoons in the local cinemas, sometimes watching up to three films a day.

After studying classics at high school he went to university to study literature, but before graduating dropped out to go to the Accademia di Arti Sceniche in Rome, run by Alessandro Fersen, where he earned a diploma in directing and acting.

For three years he worked in Fersen's experimental research workshop (taking part in seminars and exchanges with the groups of Robert Wilson, Grotowski, Kantor and Chaikin), which led to the play *Leviathan*, presented at the Festival of Spoleto in 1976.

After three years of theatre as an assistant director and actor, Di Gregorio saw Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, which made such an impression on him that he left theatre and started to work in film as an assistant director. He then moved into screenwriting.

In 1986 he wrote the screenplay for Felice Farina's film *Sembra morto ma è solo svenuto*, with Sergio Castellitto and Marina Confalone, which won the Premio FRIPRESCI at the Settimana della Critica, at the 1987 Venice Film Festival.

In the same year he wrote the story and screenplay for Marco Colli's film *Giovanni senzapensieri*, with Sergio Castellitto, Eleonora Giorgi, Aldo Fabrizi, Franco Fabrizi and Luca De Filippo. It was presented at the Director's Fortnight at the 1987 Cannes Film Festival and was awarded the Gran Prix du Jury at the festival of Annecy.

In 1991 he wrote *Naufraghi sotto costa* directed by Marco Colli, and the following year he wrote the story and screenplay for Felice Farina's *Affetti Speciali*.

In 2000 he wrote the screenplay for *Long Live the Monkey!*, based on the short story *Le due zitelle* by Tommaso Landolfi and directed by Marco Colli.

Di Gregorio met *Mid-August Lunch* producer Matteo Garrone after seeing his first film, *Terra di Mezzo*. He started working with him, as assistant director, in 2000 with *Roman Summer*; and continued with *The Embalmer* and *First Love*. In 2007, with Braucci, Chiti, Gaudio, Saviano and Garrone, he co-wrote the screenplay for the highly acclaimed film *Gomorra*, directed by Garrone.

# THE LADIES WHO LUNCH



## VALERIA DE FRANCISCIS (Gianni's mother)

It has been an unexpected and amazing experience. Everybody was so kind and attentive to me, a really lovely mid-August holiday! Will they invite me for Christmas dinner?

## GRAZIA CESARINI SFORZA (The doctor's mother)

I was born in 1918. Put into the balance the mistakes and the satisfactions, the encounters and the farewells, the gains and the losses of a woman who lived through fascism, the War, the Germans, the Americans. Now, with half of my brain completely wiped out and the other half happily productive, I write and sew all day.

*If you were to be born again?* I would be a nun.

The film was an unforgettable experience, a film crew of intelligent, very nice, crazy people. With a delicious subject: three old ladies. Valeria, Marina, Maria... you will always be in my heart.

*The nicest thing:* Having no idea of what kind of film this would be and not knowing how it ends.



## MARINA CACCIOTTI (Luigi's mother)



When the head of the Ostia elderly club told me that a movie company was looking for "old ladies" to make a film, I quickly replied:

"But what does that have to do with me?" Then, we did a little test and I quickly understood that they were serious. And I jumped in.

It has been a beautiful experience. They treated me like a queen, me and the others. I hope so much that the public will like the film, that all the "old ladies" who see it will be able to feel a little less alone, and, above all, I hope that I will please, and that I will have a long career in the movies!

## MARIA CALÌ (Luigi's aunt)

*What was it like to make this film?*

I really had a lot of fun...

*But would you do it again?*

Tomorrow !



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As the only son of a widowed mother, for many long years I had to handle her—a person with an overpowering personality—on my own (my wife and daughters had fled out of an instinct for survival), and live surrounded by her world.

Even though it was a trying experience, I got to know and love the richness, vitality and strengths of the elderly. But I also saw their loneliness and vulnerability in a world that moves on quickly, without knowing where, because it has forgotten its history, has lost its continuity over time, and is afraid of old age and death, unaware that nothing has any value except the quality of feeling.

In the summer of 2000 our condominium manager, knowing that I was behind with my payments, really did ask me to look after his mother for the August bank holiday. In a show of wounded self-dignity I refused, but since then I've often wondered what would have happened if I had accepted. This is the result.

After talking to some professional actresses, in the end I chose women who had never acted before, on the basis of their strength of character, and since they lacked any formal preconceptions.

During shooting they swept me away; the story changed on the basis of their mood, but their contribution in terms of spontaneity and truth was crucial. I even did some takes without them realizing.

The actor who plays the part of the condominium manager, Alfonso Santagata, is a great theatre actor. The others, the doctor and the friend from Trastevere are really my childhood friends, playing themselves.

As for me, I played the leading role because when we were preparing the film, while I was explaining to the crew that we needed to find a middle-aged man, more or less an alcoholic, who had lived for years with his mother, I realized that all eyes were turned to me. I plucked up the necessary courage because when I was younger I studied directing, but also acting, with Alessandro Fersen.

MATTEO GARRONE

presents

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### CAST

Gianni's mother Valeria De Franciscis  
Luigi's mother Marina Cacciotti  
Aunt Maria Maria Cali  
Grazia (the doctor's mother) Grazia Cesarini Sforza  
Luigi Alfonso Santagata  
Viking Luigi Marchetti  
Doctor friend Marcello Ottolenghi  
Tramp Petre Rosu  
Gianni Gianni Di Gregorio

### CREW

Director Gianni Di Gregorio  
Producer Matteo Garrone  
Story by Gianni Di Gregorio and Simone Riccardini  
Screenplay Gianni Di Gregorio  
Director of Photography Gian Enrico Bianchi  
Editor Marco Spoletini  
Production Designer Susanna Cascella  
Costume Designer Silvia Polidori  
Sound Engineer Filippo Porcari  
Music by Ratchev & Carratello

Italy • 2009 • 75 mins • Color • 35mm

Aspect ratio: 1.85:1 • Sound: Stereo

In Italian with English subtitles

Press materials are available at [www.zeitgeistfilms.com/midaugustlunch](http://www.zeitgeistfilms.com/midaugustlunch)

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