



MUSIC BOX FILMS PRESENTS

THE SICILIAN GIRL

Based on a true story

Directed by
Marco Amenta

Starring
Veronica D'Agostino
Gérard Jugnot

An Italian-French Coproduction
R&C Produzioni Eurofilm Roissy Films (Parigi) Studio37
Malec Production Cite Films/France
In Cooperation with RaiCinema/Italy and Mediterranea Film/France
With the participation of Canal+ and TPS Star

110 minutes. Unrated. In Italian with English subtitles.

Please download photos at www.musicboxfilms.com/the-sicilian-girl

Press contact national
Brian Andreotti
Music Box Films
3719 N. Southport
Chicago, IL 60613
Tel: (773) 248-8261
bandreotti@musicboxfilms.com

SYNOPSIS

Based on the true story of Rita Atria and prosecutor Paolo Borsellino, THE SICILIAN GIRL tells the gripping story of a young girl who broke the code of silence -- the "Omerta" -- that enshrouds the Sicilian Mafia.

On a November morning in 1991, 17 year-old Rita Mancusa (Veronica D'Agostino) marches into the District Attorney's office of Palermo, and demands to speak with the anti-mafia prosecutor (Gerard Jugnot).

They had first met six years earlier, in her home village of Balata. At that time he was investigating an apparent mob-related slaying, and Rita's beloved father Michele (Marcello Mazzarella) was a respected leader in the community.

Now her father is dead, as well as her brother (Carmelo Galati). Both men were members of the mafia; both men were assassinated by a rival mob.

Rita demands revenge.

This would be the first time a woman born into the mob would defy the "Family" and offer testimony about the nefarious activities of the Sicilian Mafia.

Rita's first-hand account of life within the Costa Nostra, scrupulously recorded in the dairies she had kept since she was a child, would provide the courts the evidence needed to put away Don Salvo Rimi (Mario Pupella) and his syndicate.

Rejected from her community, estranged from her mother (Lucia Sardo), the threat of violent retaliation around every corner, Rita flees Sicily and seeks secret exile in Rome. There the prosecutor attempts to protect her, his family and himself as the legal battle of their lives draws near.

INTERVIEW WITH MARCO AMENTA (Director/Co-writer)

How long have you been interested in the story of Rita Atria, which was the inspiration for the film?

I began by making a documentary about her in 1997 while working in France as a photojournalist at the Gamma Agency. I had wanted to tell the story of Sicily and the mafia for some time. In Sicily, I had photographed dead bodies, spoke with mobsters, and was even threatened by them. But I was looking for a story with a strong hook, something unique and symbolic, far from the American stereotypes and the clichés about Men of Honor. Documentaries are all about words. They speak to people's minds, not their hearts, which is why I wanted to move to fiction, which allows you to go beyond the report, beyond names. You can speak in a more visceral way, and also make the message universal.

How is Rita's story universal?

It's the story of resistance against oppression. The story a young girl's rebellion against the system, against oppressive and macho power. It's about the mafia, but it could just as well be about Nazism or a South-American dictatorship. Rita's destiny is a tragic one, similar to the tragedy of Antigone, who places morals above social law. It's also the journey of an adolescent who becomes a woman, who chooses a very personal path and who seeks emancipation in order to have a normal life. This is where fiction is key: with the performance of the actors, with the colors, you can show an internal transformation, create conflict between characters.

You do not keep the real names of the characters. Why?

To have more freedom with the story. Fifteen years have passed, current events have become history. The prosecutor, of course, was inspired by Paolo Borsellino who had protected Rita until his murder in 1992. But there's also a bit of Giovanni Falcone in him. I chose a French actor to portray the character in part because in Italy, many of the great actors have already played Borsellino or Falcone or other famous prosecutors. Furthermore, Rita's testimony put some twenty people behind bars and some of the trials are still going on: to use real names would have been difficult. We also chose to eliminate the character of Rita's sister-in-law, her brother's wife, who also gave testimony. I couldn't include everything. But 90 percent of what is in the film is true. Her diary did get used in court as evidence. And there was, in fact, a Romeo and Juliet love story between Rita and Vito: she did love a young man who chose to stay with the mob.

How did Gérard Jugnot prepare for the role of the prosecutor?

Gérard and I went to Sicily. He visited Borsellino's office and the Palermo neighborhoods where the mob still reigns. I had him meet an anti-mafia prosecutor, Antonio Ingroia, who was Borsellino's right hand man and who is his successor. Antonio Ingroia is the man who succeeded in charging Marcello Dell'Utri, Italy's Prime Minister Berlusconi's right hand man, for his ties with the mob!

Gérard spoke with Ingroia quite a bit, he observed his gestures, his little smiles, his sense of humor despite the daily fear of being killed. Gerard asked him about his relationship with his wife, and how you can hide your fear from your family. He also asked him about a prosecutor's work and about the obsession for secrecy for fear of leaks. At first Gérard was very tense at the sight of all those bodyguards by the prosecutor's side, but eventually, he too almost got used to it.

Ingroia told us that initially Borsellino was not obsessed with the fight against the mafia. He was an ordinary man. Gradually, he got involved in the fight, but he stayed humble and kept a low profile.

This is why Gérard Jugnot was perfect for the role. An ordinary man who finds himself forced to become a hero in spite of himself and a mafia-fighting martyr.

Borsellino smoked a lot and Gérard smokes cigars. One day someone asked Borsellino, 'Why don't you quit smoking, it's dangerous, you're going to get cancer.' Borsellino replied, 'I would be happy if I died of cancer.' We wanted to include that joke but Gérard is superstitious, so we didn't.

Gerard said, "I asked myself if it was fair for me, a Frenchman, to play a personality such as Borsellino, who is a hero in Italy. But because I don't look like him and I am not well known in Italy, this allowed me to not imitate Borsellino. I learned that his widow was very moved by the film. That makes me very proud."

Where did you shoot the film?

We avoided the real village of Partanna, because since 1992, some people have been acquitted or have served out their sentences, therefore we would have been bothered. So I chose Palazzo Adriano, where Tornatore filmed CINEMA PARADISO, a film that had a strong impact on me.

We used very real locations, like the bulletproof Tribunal of Palermo. I wanted this realism, in the locations, in the Sicilian dialect (some parts of the film are subtitled in Italy) and in the actors. The actor who plays Vito is from a dangerous neighborhood in Palermo, and is flirting with a life in the mob. Some of the actors have served time in prison.

But I also wanted to escape minimalism, by dramatizing and by giving an epic dimension to the script and images. For the script, I was helped by Sergio Donati, former screenwriter for Sergio Leone. I called on Luca Bigazzi, the best Italian Director of Photography, who worked on the contrast between black, the symbol of the mafia, and red, the symbol of emancipation.

How is Rita Atria regarded in Sicily and in her native village?

She's become a heroine, but she isn't as well known as Borsellino or Falcone, which is also why I chose her. In her village, there is a plaque in honor of her memory in a public garden, but some still see her as a bitch, a whore, someone who sold out her people. I tried to meet her mother who, just like in the film, destroyed her daughter's grave, but she remains closed-off in her own world, which she refuses to question.

How did you find Veronica d'Agostino, who plays Rita?

She was the first girl I auditioned. Although she had a small role in RESPIRO, my producers wanted someone better known and more of an actress. I looked at others but I stuck to my guns. She had in her something harsh, rugged, wild, like Rita, whose strength and instincts were unbelievable. That instinct is essential in order to reject your identity, your family, your values, without thinking about the consequences of your actions. Just like Rita, Veronica grew up sort of away from the world, in Lampedusa (an island in the Mediterranean Sea, 127 miles from Sicily). Rita's personality completely took over Veronica, transformed her; after the film, Veronica had the strength to leave her family to study far away.

ABOUT THE CAST

VERONICA D'AGOSTINO (Rita Mancuso)

Before starring in THE SICILIAN GIRL, Veronica D'Agostino played Marinella in the 2002 film RESPIRO directed Emanuele Crialesi, and Fiammeetta Borsellino in the 2004 television drama PAOLO BORSELLINO.

GERARD JUGNOT (The Prosecutor)

Gérard Jugnot is a highly regarded actor and director. He has performed in ninety-seven films, written or co-written twenty scripts, and directed eleven films and television episodes. During his career, he has received four French Cesar nominations. His first nomination was in 1988 for his role in TANDEM. Then in 1992, he was nominated for Best Actor for his role in UNE EPOQUE FORMIDABLE. He was nominated in 2005 for his leading role in THE CHORUS, directed by Christophe Barratier, and he was nominated for Best Supporting Actor in 1998 for his performance in MARTHE. Other acting roles include Pignoil in Barratier's PARIS 36 (2008).

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

MARCO AMENTA (Director and cowriter)

Marco Amenta was born in Palermo, Italy in 1970. He first worked as an Italian photojournalist at "Il Giornale di Sicilia", and subsequent national weekly publications. In 1992, he moved to Paris where he continue his work as a photojournalist for the French company Gamma along with the French newspapers Paris Match, l'Express, VSD, and Libération.

He received a Masters in Cinema at the University of Paris. During the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, he made his first feature documentary, BORN IN BOSNIA, about the atrocities of war for the French television station Planète. His next feature documentary, LETTER FROM CUBA, about the difficulties of a young Cuban man after Castro's revolution, won the French Rouletabille Award.

In 1998, he directed and produced ONE GIRL AGAINST THE MAFIA: THE DIARY OF A SICILIAN REBEL, which was shown at the 54th Venice Film Festival and won 21 international prizes, including the Pix Italia. In 2004 he wrote, and was the cinematographer for, the documentary L'ULTIMO PADRINO, a Franco-Italian co-production with Arte in France. In 2005 Amenta made the film THE GHOST OF CORLEONE. It was nominated for Best Italian Documentary, and won awards at the Mediterraneo Film Festival, L'altro Cinema Film Festival, and the Etruria Cinema 2007.

THE SICILIAN GIRL is his first feature film.

SERGIO DONATI (cowriter)

Sergio Donati has written seventy-seven feature film and television, including ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST (1968) with co-writer and director Sergio Leone.

GIANNI ROMOLI (cowriter)

Gianni Romoli is an award-winning film producer and writer. Romoli received the Best Screenplay award for SATURN IN OPPOSITION (2007) and the Best Original Story award for FACING WINDOWS (2003) from the Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists. His screenplay for FACING WINDOWS also won the Donatello Award.

ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films serves the viewing interests of sophisticated U.S. movie audiences in select cinemas nationwide, on DVD and Blu-Ray, on cable TV and on emerging electronic delivery formats. With a focus on foreign-language cinema, Music Box's releases include TELL NO ONE, NORTH FACE, SERAPHINE, and THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO.

Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.

CAST

Rita Mancuso	Veronica D'Agostino
Prosecutor	Gerard Jugnot
Don Michele Mancuso	Marcello Mazzarella
Rosa Mancuso	Lucia Saro
Don Salvo Rimi	Mario Pupella
Vito	Francesco Casisa
Carmelo Mancuso	Camelo Galati
Maresciallo Campisi	Lollo Franco
Young Rita	Miriana Faja
Young Vito	Lorenzo Rosone
Lorenzo	Primo Reggiani
Maresciallo Bruni	Paolo Briguglia
Tano	Roberto Bonura

CREW

Director	Marco Amenta
Screenplay	Marco Amenta Sergio Donati Gianni Romoli
Producers	Simonetta Amenta Tilde Corsi Gianni Romoli Raphael Berdugo Marco Amenta Luca Bigazzi Jens Fischer FSF Mirco Garrone Marcello Di Carlo, A.S.C. Pasquale Catalano Mario Iaquone Marco Saitta Cristina Francioni Pino Pellegrino Chiara Agnello Stefania Trippa Susann Billberg Rydholm Alessandro Mattei Davide Bertoni Christian Peritore
Cinematographer	
Additional Photography	
Editor	
Production Designer	
Composer	
Sound	
Sound re-recording	
Costume	
Casting	
Casting (Sicily)	
Make up	
Line Producer	
Production Manager	
First Assistant Director	
Location Manager	

An Italian-French Coproduction
R&C Produzioni Eurofilm Roissy Films (Parigi) Studio37
Malec Production Cite Films/France
In Cooperation with RaiCinema/Italy and Mediterranea Film/France
With the participation of Canal+ and TPS Star
A Music Box Films release