

LOVE, LIFE AND CINEMA IN CINEMA PARADISO

Maria (Pupella Maggio) is knitting when she hears the doorbell and drops the needles. As the knitting unravels, like a metaphor for time moving backwards, she reunites with Totò, her son who hasn't visited their village of Giancaldo in over 30 years.

That's how tastefully starts one of the films that made people fall in love with cinema. *Cinema Paradiso* (1988). Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore and winner of the Oscar for Best International Picture, it's a film about loving films and life itself. We could perfectly encapsulate it in the topic of "a love-letter to cinema".

As a flashback, a man reminisces about his childhood and youth in a small Italian village where he worked in the cinema booth, forging an unbreakable friendship with its projectionist, Alfredo (Philippe Noiret), a lonely and endearing figure who treats Totò (or Salvatore) as if he were the son he never had. Years will pass, and with them life, cinema, and love...

There are a lot of things this film does great, but the one thing that is beautifully portrayed is the passage of time. Three completely different eras in the same place. When our protagonist is a child, interpreted by Salvatore Cascio. At this moment the film is filled with typical Italian comedic moments, giving a radiant contagious joy for life. When our protagonist is a teenager, interpreted by Marco Leonardi. We see the first drops of bitterness arrive when he falls in love for the first time. And Jacques Perrin plays Totò when he's a famous filmmaker in his 50s and returns to that village so significant to him, where he discovers that time spares no one and our end is inevitable, much like the fate that the *Cinema Paradiso* has. There are three well-distinguished and cleverly shown parts.

That's also shown with the evolution of movies and the movie theater. With the *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* we see how the projector has changed, its technique of use is different as well as the movies that are newer. It pays tribute to the art of making movies. Showing us classics such as John Ford's *Stagecoach* and Charlie Chaplin's *Counted Out*, or just the movie posters of *Casablanca* and *Gone With the Wind* in the booth.

It's also a film about growing up in a little town where the only thing that helps its people escape from their poverty and monotonous life's it's the cinema.

It's not a coincidence that Tornatore made the first *Cinema Paradiso* look like a church. For the ones we love films, going to the movies it's almost like a religious experience.

Joan Riba Cos

Tornatore uses this comparison to criticize the Church and how religion only shows us what they want us to see. Not only the Church, but the figure of the censor, in this case portrayed as the priest, that won't allow people to see movies as its creator would like. In other words, how, through censorship, we miss out on so many incredible things in life. We must preserve freedom of creation for movies, or for whatever form of art.

The way Tornatore tells the story is beautiful, melancholic, nostalgic, and full of feelings. It's corny when Alfredo uses film lines to explain Totò the significance of live, but for the ones we love cinema, those lines are like prayers we repeat again and again. It's a movie made for film lovers, this kind of people who want for their lives what happens in movies.

That's exemplarily wrapped with the musical notes of one of Maestro Ennio Morricone's finest works, in one of the most unequivocal examples that film soundtracks transcend mere accompaniment to images. In the case of Cinema Paradiso, Morricone's composition is capable of elevating the film transcending the screen to intoxicate the viewer in a cocktail of melancholy and nostalgia that urges them to embrace, with the same purity and simplicity, the feelings, and experiences of Totò.

To understand the pure significance of the film, we have to take a look at Alfredo and Totò's relationship. That's the heart of the movie. Alfredo becomes a guide for Totò. He becomes the father figure that has been missing in his life. He treats him as his son, giving wise advice and orientation throughout his life.

Alfredo is the one who sees potential in Totò and encourages him to pursue his dreams. Is this friendship what shapes Totò's decisions and life.

One of the most emotional moments in the film is when Alfredo decides to sacrifice his relationship with Totò to allow him to go after a better life outside the town. This action, though painful, demonstrates Alfredo's unconditional love and his desire to see Totò reach his full potential as a filmmaker or as whatever he wants. Because, as he says to Totò before he leaves: *"Qualunque cosa farai, amala, come amavi la cabina del Paradiso quando eri picciriddu"*. Which we can translate as "whatever you end up doing, love it, the way you loved the Paradiso's booth when you were a child", and I think it's one of the best lines in cinema history.

As I said before, it's not a movie just about films, it's a movie about living your life, because movies are great, and you can live thousands of stories with it, but you have to live your own stories and not stay your whole life in a booth. That's why Alfredo asks Totò to leave Giancaldo.

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The symbol that encapsulates the movie is the kiss. In general, kisses. A kiss is a promise, like the one Totò gives Alfredo of not coming back. But a kiss can also be a sign of more things to come, like the promising future Alfredo sees in Totò. A kiss is the excitement of joining in a new shared story, a story that has been told for a long time, and a story that almost everyone would like to be in. There are not a lot of kisses in the history of cinema that have more significance than in Cinema Paradiso. That is why it is key to the film and wraps it perfectly at the end.

I perfectly understand why Cinema Paradiso is, for a lot of people, that one movie that makes them fall in love with movies. Because it's a perfect example of cinema and why it's so important for the ones we love it.