

# Italian Film Festival in Detroit is fantastic food for thought!

## Italian Film Festival USA of Metro Detroit set to go April 4-29

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A still from "At War for Love" a comedy that will open this year's festival at the Detroit Institute of Arts, April 4 at 7:30 p.m.

Nicole Robertson

Fantastico!

Che bello!

Splendido!

There you have it, at least three reasons to experience the Italian Film Festival USA of Metro Detroit, April 4-29.

"The films are also free," says Enzo Paglia of Washington and a member of the committee that organizes Detroit's version of the annual film festival that began in St. Louis in 2014 and currently has 12 cities participating.

Detroit got involved 11 years ago and the popularity of its festival has been growing every year. "We are the largest venue, with the most locations, screenings and dates. Last year we had 3,500 people attending the screenings," says Paglia, who was born and raised in Italy. That is, of course, why he loves the festival but he insists that people who see these films steeped in emotion and character development, like good Italian food, want more.

"There is no set formula for these films," Paglia says. "If you're tired of the normal Hollywood type, this will be a new experience for you. The comedies are really funny, you'll laugh all the way through and you don't have to speak Italian."

The stories speak for themselves, but there are English subtitles. You might want to learn the language once you're hooked. And if you do, Paglia can direct you to Clinton Township's Italian Cultural Society — which teaches Italian, and will host an afterglow party following one of the screenings.

The Detroit Institute of Arts will bookend the festival, which will introduce moviegoers to 13 newly released Italian films and two short film series. Opening night, at 7 p.m. April 4 at the DIA, will feature Italy's David de Donatello Award-winner (Italy's Oscar) "At War for Love" and close the festival with Francesco Bruni's drama "Friends by Chance," at 4:30 p.m. April 29. An afterglow party celebrating the festival is expected to follow the screening.

Weekend screenings will be in locations around the area: Wayne State University (Detroit), April 6-7; Michigan State University (East Lansing), April 6-7; University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), April 13-14; Chippewa Valley High School (Clinton Township), April 20-21; and Bloomfield Township Public Library, April 22.

"We have five directors coming to the festival this year," Paglia says. Among those he is excited to meet is Andrea Magnani who directed the comedy "Easy."

"Easy" will be showing at 7 p.m. April 6 at Michigan State University's Wells Hall in East Lansing and at 7 p.m. April 20 at Chippewa Valley High School's Henrichsen Auditorium.

"It's about a fellow who is a race car driver but gained so much weight he can't get behind the wheel," Paglia says with a grin. Since he's not racing or doing much of anything else when his brother hires him to drive a coffin to Ukraine. He thought it would be an easy job — as the title suggests.

"It's very funny but not in a slapstick kind of way. The humor is more subtle and thought-provoking," Paglia says.

Opening night at the DIA will also be a hoot for guests attending "At War for Love."

Set in New York City in 1943, and directed by Pierfrancesco Diliberto, it tells the story of Arturo, a young man working as a waiter in an elegant restaurant, who falls in love with Flora. But she's engaged to the son of a New York mafia boss. Arturo's only option is to ask Flora's father for her hand, but he still lives in Sicily. Penniless but determined, Arturo enlists in the U.S. Army and takes a "free" trip to Sicily at the start of the Allied invasion. "When he gets there her father is on his deathbed and his father has someone else in mind for his daughter," Paglia says.

It's an adventurous and romantic journey that reveals the complexity of organized crime.

New this year are screenings in East Lansing and a program in Bloomfield Township geared for children. Hoping to draw in younger generations of Italian film lovers, the new initiative is designed for children ages 6-12. The other films would be appropriate for teenagers and maybe even as young as a mature 14, although one film has some disturbing scenes related to murder-suicide. The children's program starting at 2 p.m. April 22 at Bloomfield Township Public Library will feature a selection of short animated and live-action films.

"This year's program is an exciting one," Elena Past, festival organizing committee member, says referring to the expanded selections for children and the inclusion of the East Lansing community. "The festival continues to grow, innovate and bring new voices to Detroit."

For more information and a full list of films, visit [italianfilmfests.org/](http://italianfilmfests.org/).