

*Janus Films Presents*

**Roberto Rossellini's**

# **Journey to Italy**



**NEW DCP RESTORATION!**

<http://www.janusfilms.com/journey>

**Director:** Roberto Rossellini

**Country:** Italy

**Language:** English

**Year:** 1954

**Run time:** 86 minutes

**B&W / 1.37 / Mono**

**JANUS FILMS**

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## JOURNEY TO ITALY

### SYNOPSIS

Among the most influential films of the postwar era, Roberto Rossellini's *Journey to Italy* charts the declining marriage of a British couple (Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders) on a trip in the countryside near Naples. More than just an anatomy of a relationship, Rossellini's masterpiece is a heartrending work of emotional transcendence and profound spirituality. Considered an ancestor of the existential works of Michelangelo Antonioni; hailed as a groundbreaking work of modernism by the critics of *Cahiers du cinéma*; and named by Martin Scorsese as one of his favorite films, *Journey to Italy* is a breathtaking cinematic landmark. Janus Films is proud to present a new, definitive restoration of the essential English-language version of the film, featuring Bergman and Sanders voicing their own dialogue.

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### ABOUT THE ROSSELLINI PROJECT

The Rossellini Project continues the initiative created by Luce Cinecittà, Cineteca di Bologna, CSC-Cineteca Nazionale, and the Coproduction Office as a means of rediscovering and showcasing the work of a reference point in the art of cinema: Roberto Rossellini. Three of Italian cinema's great institutions and an influential international production house have joined forces to restore a central and fundamental part of the filmmaker's filmography, as well as promote and distribute it on an international level.

10 films are involved in the Rossellini Project: *Rome, Open City (Roma città aperta)*, *Paisan (Paisà)*, *Germany Year Zero (Germania anno zero)*, *L'amore, Stromboli (Stromboli terra di Dio)*, *The Machine that Kills Bad People (La Macchina ammazzacattivi)*, *Journey to Italy (Viaggio in Italia)*, *The Fear (La paura)*, *India*, and *Interview with Salvatore Allende (Intervista a Salvatore Allende: La forza e la ragione)*.

Thanks to the Project, these works of cinema have not only been restored, but can be rediscovered as something new. These are films which not only marked the birth and consecration of neorealism, but also inspired cinema from different countries and generations, giving it an autonomy that it did not have before.

Following the debut of *The Machine that Kills* at Cannes and of *India* at the last Venice film festival, the third step of the Rossellini Project is the presentation at the 65th Cannes Film Festival of *Journey to Italy*. This film is one of the very few to be worthy of the label "essential," marking the baseline for all things modern in cinema. As Jacques Rivette said upon its original release: "The arrival of *Journey to Italy* has suddenly made all other films look 10 years older."

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### **ABOUT THE RESTORATION**

The digital restoration of the English version of *Journey to Italy* was performed using the original negatives kept at the Cinecittà Digital Factory. The English opening credits were restored using a positive copy kept at the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique.

The image was scanned at a resolution of 2K. After scanning, the images were digitally stabilized and cleaned, removing signs of wear and tear accumulated over time: dots, lines, scratches and visible splices.

After transferring the sound, it was then possible to carry out a digital cleanup and eliminate background noise caused by wear and tear, whilst keeping the dynamics and the specific features of the original track.

The restoration was carried out by the Cineteca di Bologna at the L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory in 2012.

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### ROSSELLINI'S TRAVELS by Gianni Amelio

#### ***JOURNEY TO ITALY AND THE "TRILOGY OF SOLITUDE"***

*Stromboli* is the first film that Rossellini directed with Ingrid Bergman, and was the result of the new life he was about to live with the actress. While they went on to make many more films together, only three are strictly referred to as the "trilogy of solitude": *Stromboli*, *Europa '51*, and *Journey to Italy*. The time that elapsed between one work and the next, and the works that came in between, do not point to clear planning on Rossellini's part.

On the other hand, his entire filmography from the very beginning is a continuous string of films that make up a kind of ordered chaos through which the director remains true to himself and follows his own intuition. For this very reason, it is not clear whether the three films were conceived to fit together as a unit (as each is a standalone story), or if Rossellini may have pursued – consciously or not – a group of films in which a single character develops along a common theme. That theme is isolation, and Bergman thus became the symbol of a kind of female suffering, a victim of a violence borne of a predominantly chauvinist society. This theme also emerges in the subsequent films *Joan of Arc at the Stake* and *Fear*.

#### **FILMING *JOURNEY TO ITALY*: A DIFFICULT PROCESS**

In the March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1953 issue of *Cinema Nuovo*, Federico Frascani spoke of the filming of the new Rossellini film, *Journey to Italy*. "Vitaliano Brancati is one of the film's screenwriters. In some way, his presence is reassuring, as Brancati is a writer with a great capacity for criticism, even in a bitter or cutting manner."

These words perfectly expressed the opinion that a large portion of Italian critics held at the time of Rossellini and his methods, and gave hope that the director would abandon the loose structure and experimentation of his previous work. The painful and difficult reimagining of the film, however, underlined once more just how much the director needed to both remain faithful to his personal path and set out on new ones.

This time, as well as the usual problems caused by improvisation, there were also language issues (the film is acted in English) and constant conflict between Sanders and the director. In a famous article published that year in the magazine *Cinema*, Riccardo Redi writes in particular detail of the clashes between the two. Sanders accused Rossellini of being slapdash, going so far as to maintain that the much-praised neorealism did not exist because it was simply the product of a lack of funding. As a final touch, he quipped prior to the film's premiere that "I heard the film will be called *Vino nuovo* ("new wine") and that's perfect, for new wine is always awful."

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Rossellini, in relation, did not hesitate to admonish the actor, and in fact pushed him even further outside his usual box, managing (so it is said) to mount the production without a script. Gianni Rondolino stresses this in his biography of Rossellini, noting “Enzo Serafin, who was the film’s director of photography, recalls that *Journey to Italy* was truly filmed without a script, instead following the indications written on Rossellini’s note sheets, with the daily help of Vitaliano Brancati who was in charge of the dialogues. It was Bergman who acted as go-between for Rossellini and Sanders, mainly inventing things and improvising in turn, because Roberto didn’t give her any direction.”

But the result is once again surprising. Bergman becomes the central point of the film, and the tragedy of her character is the sum of the two previous female figures from *Stromboli* and *Europa '51*. This is a work which sees Rossellini take his clean and true-to-reality style to the highest level, all centered around the high drama of the action.

### ROSSELLINI LAMBASTED BY ITALIAN CRITICS

*Journey to Italy* was released in cinemas more than a year after the end of filming. As with *Stromboli* and *Europa '51*, Italian critics spoke of failure, arrogance, and regression. His new works were always compared to *Open City* and *Paisan*, which, in the eyes of reviewers, seemed to be the director’s only successful films. Refusing to see the continuing development of Rossellini’s cinema, the intellectuals bespoke of a betrayal of neorealism, demonstrating that they wanted to pin the director down to something that was more a moment in time than a method of cinematography.

Perhaps the harshest condemnation of the film came from Fernaldo Giammatteo, writing in *Rassegna del film*:

*If anything, Journey to Italy confirms anew, once and for all, that Rossellini has gradually developed – from the day he started forging his own path – the negative qualities which at the time of the ‘war trilogy’ seemed to be not only rigorously controlled, but even bent in order to express something which was, overall, positive ... This value has been lost. The main reason being his tendency towards the macabre which existed even in the ‘war trilogy’ (where it had a place) and which in Journey to Italy we find magnified and isolated ... Let us move on to consider the whole atmosphere of the film. The macabre places, both archaeological and traditional, are part of a setting which we could compare to a mediocre documentary. The film seems to become a vulgar touristic device, over which a psychological complication has been superimposed which – quite obviously – has no effect whatsoever ... Journey to Italy is just what the title promises: a tourist visit around Naples and the surrounding area, with the pointless company of two people intent on torturing one another. The transition from the ‘human’ Rossellini to the refined formalist ... is now complete.”*

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### ROSSELLINI AND THE 'NOUVELLE VAGUE'

Whilst in Italy critics were firing poison arrows at Rossellini's cinema, a group of young French intellectuals were reigniting the cultural debate surrounding the director. In July 1954 *Cahiers du cinéma* published an interview with Rossellini conducted by François Truffaut and Eric Rohmer, future masters of the French new wave. They were the first to actually understand the profound renewal of Rossellinian cinema represented by *Journey to Italy* and to defend him vigorously, considering him a maestro in each and every way.

Driven by this film, they approached the filmmaker, forming around him a group destined to follow its own artistic path. Rossellini spent two and a half years in Paris, a time that immersed him in ongoing cultural discussions, provided him with stimuli for future projects, and allowed him to resolve many issues, including his personal life. It is not by happenstance that at the end of 1956 he decided to realise his Indian film, putting an end to his emotional and artistic relationship with Ingrid Bergman forever. After her voluntary "exile" in Italy, the actress returned to America and was accepted back into Hollywood. Rossellini, however, once again followed his own impervious path.

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### ROSSELLINI SPEAKS OF *JOURNEY TO ITALY*

Eleven years after the release of *Journey to Italy*, Rossellini was interviewed by Adriano Aprà and Maurizio Ponzi. Below is an excerpt from the interview which appeared in *Filmcritica* in 1965.

*How do you feel today about Journey to Italy, a film that is very often spoken of, but about which you have said little?*

I've almost never talked about it, because what is there to say? One cannot exactly defend oneself, and I would have been doing just that, because it was attacked so much... On the other hand, what I do is a craft where one has to take as many risks as possible, don't you agree?

*What do you think is the meaning of the ending, in which many people, mistakenly, in our opinion, saw mysticism?*

Listen, it's difficult to remember these things 10 years on, it's all water under the bridge, one has to forget things that have happened. But the ending... I do remember, yes, it caused a lot of controversy, but it was, I think, quite a simple thing. There were two great big tall people and all these tiny people around them who were even shorter because they were kneeling down. That is the ending, I mean, this sudden and complete isolation. Now, people may say, "but that's not clear," I remember what they said to me at the time – "there you needed a long shot so we could see..." – but I didn't want a long shot... you see. There are things that are implicit. Everything we do in our lives, disgracefully, yes – disgracefully – is not always driven by common sense; I believe that we are all driven to act as much by our emotions as by our intelligence. Now, since our lives are random, to a certain degree – in the end life is beautiful and fascinating because of that – it's pointless going off and theorising. I was struck by this idea. In other words, where could a new rapprochement come from? From being completely removed from everyone. You feel terribly cut off when you find yourself in a crowd of people of another height, don't you? In every way. It feels as if you were naked. Well, it's logical for someone who is naked to hide themselves a bit.

*So it's a faux happy ending?*

Of course, the film is very bitter. Underneath it all. They take refuge in each other, like someone who has been caught naked and covers themselves up, or grabs a towel, or grabs whomever is nearby, to cover themselves, in a certain sense. This is what the ending was supposed to mean.

*And what it does mean.*



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Perhaps I made the mistake of not making it “completely clear,” with “witty remarks.” But seeing as witty remarks aren’t my thing... I think this is quite normal, in modern life: a large proportion of marriages are true business partnerships which, although they’re not faceless incorporated companies, they are business partnerships. People get married because one of them can do a certain job and the other has a certain number of connections, so the wife plays a “public relations” role and the husband is the finance director, to use current job titles. There’s more to life than this. And the couple in *Journey to Italy* was a couple exactly like that. They had nothing to say to each other. The holiday is what kills them, mainly the holiday; the fact of becoming owners of a beautiful villa, in one of the most beautiful places in the world, is worth nothing, because they don’t have anything left to say to each other. If they don’t talk about stock prices, if they don’t talk about the possibility of setting up this or the other deal, well, the relationship between them is truly over.

*In the film there is a discovery of secret feelings...*

Yes, but there’s also Italy, which is a feeling too, a rather important one, that is, all the documented daily life that passes before Katherine’s eyes as if it were nothing out of the ordinary... But it’s a different kind of life, they belong to different ethnic groups, it’s also an ethnographic meeting...

*Do you know that many people saw the miraculous ending as the dramatic crux of the film’s action?*

But you hardly see it, yes, there is a miracle, but it’s completely jumbled, hysterical... and yet... there’s also a certain human element, of faith in the sense of good faith. I mean, what else do these two characters want to be? They want to be two perfectly rational beings, and they want to be so because they’re ordinary people, not geniuses, because they are as “normal” as you can get, but they are rational because their lives are based on things they want to believe in at all costs.

*Don’t you think Journey to Italy was a film about alienation ahead of its time?*

Yes, yes, of course it’s a film about alienation. But here let me tell you that I don’t like my films either, because when I started to do this sort of stuff it was, logically, a sort of search to get my bearings, and everyone searches, it becomes a way of life, the way of life of people who are complaining.

*How do you feel about improvisation?*

That’s what we’re always doing, if the ideas are solid, you can allow yourself the luxury of a bit of improvisation. Because when you start making something and something has to be striking, it needs to have that certain feeling of authenticity

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which, if it's premeditated, it can't have. That is where improvisation becomes powerful, but it must be the improvisation of a civilized man, not a savage.

*Was Journey to Italy an improvised film?*

In the evening we didn't know what we'd be doing the next morning. But then things grow as you go along, there is a certain logic to things that you can't calculate. You're there, you have the atmosphere, the actors, and it forces them to follow a certain path, it almost drags the characters themselves. But in this, you don't need to be there, flipping a coin to see whether they should go left or right.

*What is your relationship with the actors?*

It depends on the personality. George Sanders was forever crying during the film. He moaned terribly and I said "What are you so worried about, the worst thing that can happen is that you make a bad film, nothing worse than that will happen. So I don't think there's anything to cry and despair about. We've all done good and bad films and we'll make more bad ones. What can you do? There's no point pulling your hair out, no one's going to die." No, you really need to get on top of them, let's say it like it is. You can also use these tantrums; if you see in them, or in a certain attitude, a certain face, a certain expression something which can be a useful element, use it, why not? I absolutely don't believe in collaborative art, I can't believe in it. I don't pretend to be an artist but I've always dreamt of creating work of artistic value. You can't start making compromises, you have to achieve your goal at whatever cost, at the cost of arguments, fights, bad tempers, insults, coaxing, whatever it takes.

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## CAST

Katherine Joyce  
Alexander Joyce  
Marie  
The Prostitute  
Paul Dupont  
Tony Burton  
Natalie Burton  
Betty

Ingrid Bergman  
George Sanders  
Maria Mauban  
Anna Proclemer  
Paul Müller  
Leslie Daniels  
Natalia Ray  
Jackie Frost

## CREW

Directed by  
Written by  
  
Cinematography  
Editing by  
Cameraman  
Music  
Sound  
Set design  
Costume design  
Produced by

Roberto Rossellini  
Vitaliano Brancati  
Roberto Rossellini  
Enzo Serafin, A.I.C.  
Jolanda Benvenuti  
Aldo Scavarda  
Renzo Rossellini  
Eraldo Giordani  
Piero Filippone  
Fernanda Gattinoni  
Adolfo Fossataro  
Alfredo Guarini  
Roberto Rossellini  
Sveva-Junior  
Italiafilm-S.E.C.  
Titanus Distribuzione

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