Cultural Daily

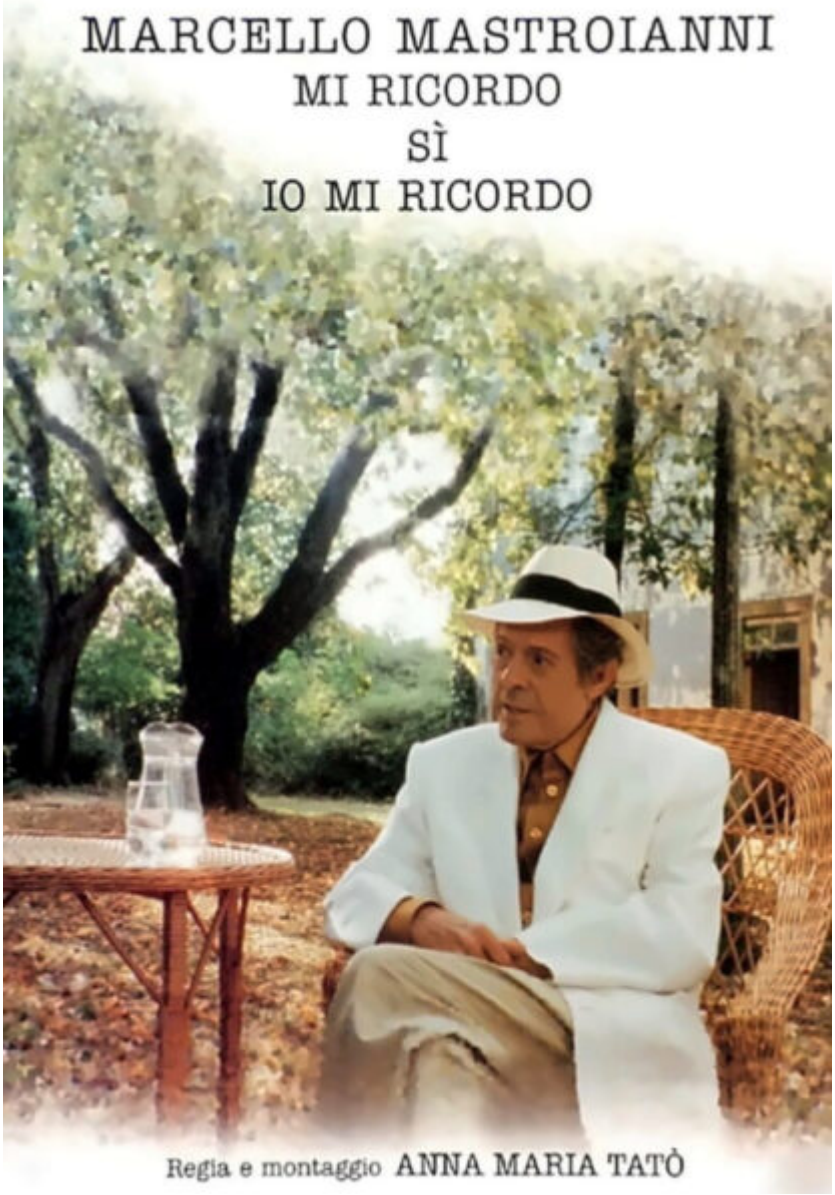
Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Marcello Mastroianni

Elisa Leonelli · Monday, May 12th, 2025

I was reminded of Marcello Mastroianni recently, when I watched a 2024 documentary, *Ciao Marcello, Mastroianni l'antidivo*, that premiered at last year's Roma Film Festival to celebrate the 100 anniversary of the Italian actor's birth, and was included in the Filming Italy Los Angeles Festival.

The same week I made a point to go see at Laemmle Royal *Marcello Mio*, presented at last year's Cannes Film Festival, where Chiara Mastroianni takes on her father's persona, shocking her mother Catherine Deneuve and their actor friends.



When it was screened in Los Angeles, I had seen an earlier documentary, *Marcello Mastroianni: I Remember*, after it played at the 1997 Cannes film festival. It was written and directed by Anna Maria Tatò, the actor's companion from 1976 until his death in 1996.

Marcello Mastroianni-La dolce vita-photo by Arturo Zavattini

I remember that, as a tween living in Italy, I very much wanted to go see *La dolce vita* by Federico Fellini, but my movie loving father went with my mother and would not allow me to go along, since I was well under 16, and the movie was ‘forbidden to minors.”

Marcello Mastroianni © Elisa Leonelli 1978

Little did I know at the time that I would get a chance to meet Mastroianni in person, on April 1, 1978, at a press interview, when he was nominated to the Academy Awards for *A Special Day* (*Una giornata particolare*) by Ettore Scola.

Marcello Mastroianni © Golden Globes 1965

He had been nominated to an Oscar before for *Divorce Italian Style* (*Divorzio all'Italiana*) by Pietro Germi, and had won a Golden Globe as Best actor for that performance in 1963, but it was not until 1965 that Mastroianni first came to Hollywood to collect a World Film Favorite award at the Golden Globes. In fact, he was presented with two statuettes, accepting one for his co-star, Sophia Loren. That same year he was also nominated as best actor for *Marriage Italian Style* (*Matrimonio all'Italiana*) by Vittorio De Sica.

In November 2022, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Golden Globes, I wrote an article about *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (*Ieri, oggi, domani*) by Vittorio De Sica, another movie where Mastroianni co-starred with Sophia Loren.

In January 1993, at the Palm Spring Film Festival, I interviewed Mastroianni about *Used People* directed by Beeban Kidron and co-starring Shirley MacLaine. I wrote an article for Venice Magazine, where I served as Film Editor, and another piece in Italian for Marie Claire.

Here's one of my questions, about politics and war, as I often ask, when I'm allowed:

"George Bush was bombing military and civilian targets in Iraq, at the same time that Bill Clinton was being inaugurated as the new President, stealing headlines from what should have been a message of change, and forcing his successor's hand to continue his militaristic policy. What are your views on the Gulf War and on war in general?"

And Mastroianni's answer: "I don't understand politics, I don't love politicians. Fortunately I'm not president of a country, as some irresponsible actors have been (Ronald Reagan), so I don't take much interest in these things. But the situation seems to me increasingly dramatic, we live in a world that could explode at any moment. I do believe that Saddam Hussein is a crazy megalomaniac, but (and many people think like me in Italy and in France) I also see that, when there was a problem in Kuwait, the Americans jumped right in, and we all followed them, to defend a country where cars have gold handles. When all hell breaks loose in Yugoslavia, and there are shameful massacres, nobody can find a solution. Maybe it's true that oil is ruling the world, in the Middle East, like in Africa and everywhere. But this is just my humble impression, and probably a naive one."

Marcello Mastroianni © Elisa Leonelli 1978

Another of the many question I asked: “What do you think of Italian politics, as opposed to American politics?”

His answer: “I admire you Americans because you love your President, Bill Clinton is being inaugurated today and you’re all in front of the television. In Europe we always hate our Presidents, it’s a completely different way, we don’t have this culture, this ‘homage’ for our President in Italy. We have a lot of ministers who put money in their pockets, but at least what happens in Italy is amusing, if you have an ironic outlook. The other day they arrested the famous Mafia chief (Totò Riina). He had been living in Sicily the whole time, like a normal person, while they were looking for him for twenty years. He claimed he didn’t know anything about the Mafia. We can laugh about this criminal, but the dramatic thing is that we’re always told that some people in the government are involved in the Mafia organization, and are probably responsible, so why don’t they also arrest the other criminals that are in the government?”

These thoughtful words still resonate for us today, when we have wars of aggression in Ukraine and Gaza, and a US President with several criminal convictions who is not in jail.

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