

Inside Cinecittà

Powering Global Productions

A Conversation with Roberto Stabile :
Italy's International Film Blueprint

The Roman Forum & Palatine Hill - Rome



Roberto Stabile

Head of the International Department at Cinecittà.

As the head of the International Department at Cinecittà, Stabile strengthens international cooperation and initiatives, fostering relationships and business opportunities between Italian and international film professionals.

A graduate in Political Science and International Affairs, Stabile has dedicated the past 30 years to developing & strengthening relationships with international cinema and TV institutions working with Italy's premier institutions such as Italian Film Audio Visual & Digital Industries Association, Italian Trade Agency, The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Italian Screens project)



IN CONVERSATION WITH

Anindya Dasgupta, Convenor of the IIFTC Conclave, in conversation with Roberto Stabile

Italy, the very name conjures up what is elemental about cinema, its techniques and the heralded directors... in your illustrious career, what Italian cinema means for you?

It has meant something both profound and natural to me - yet, in a way, also something I took for granted. I grew up in the shadow of the Colosseum without fully noticing its beauty and monumental significance; in much the same way, I absorbed Italian cinema as if it were simply the norm, as though cinema itself had to be like that. Only later, as I grew older - and especially through traveling and getting to know other film cultures - did I truly come to understand the greatness of our cinema and the extraordinary influence it has had on the major film industries of the world. Its contribution to the history of cinema is as undeniable as it is remarkable.

Cinecittà and the Italian Trade Agency, two of the key components of the Italian cinematic system. Could you tell us more on how this system works, and what are your basic work ethics or ground rules for success?

Cinecittà and the Italian Trade Agency, as the operational branches of the Ministry of Culture (MIC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), respectively, are two key institutions for the international promotion of Italian film industry. For a long time, they operated in a disconnected and asymmetrical way. Then, about fifteen years ago - and here I will allow myself to take a small amount of personal credit - we succeeded in developing a strong synergy. For several years, I served as the representative of the audiovisual associations and of the Italian Film Commissions within ITA, with the specific task of fostering collaborations. I have set up a network of information desks on the Italian film industry funding and location services in the major World Markets and created a network of experts that is still active locally today, and together we organize several activities and events.

Italy's beautiful locales have mesmerized Indian audiences in many films. The Indo - Italian Audio - Visual Treaty is operational since 2005... but it has not been utilized much, What is the hurdle?

I must admit that we would have expected more satisfactory results, especially considering that this agreement has now reached maturity.

However, it is important to remember that an agreement is ultimately just a legal framework that enables co-productions; on its own, it remains a sterile tool. Over the years, on both sides, we have tried to create opportunities for producers and creatives to meet, get to know each other, and most importantly, develop a shared need to tell stories of mutual interest. However, there have been sporadic initiatives, but without continuity, and this has not helped the process. Only recently has there been a real sense that the time has come to make a serious effort, with conviction and determination. In the coming months, we will work to raise awareness among Indian producers of all the opportunities Italy has to offer, and we will also seek to bring producers and creatives together.

At the same time, we will further strengthen the presence in India of Italian Screens - born from the collaboration between the Directorate General for Cinema and Audiovisual of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and organized by the International Department of Cinecittà - to promote abroad the best of Italian cinema, and tax incentives in favor of distribution and co-productions.

How are you integrating virtual production and new technologies into the historic studios such as Cinecittà?

Cinecittà is an iconic brand that represents the legacy of classic studios - places shaped by extraordinary craftsmanship into Fellini's dreamlike worlds and Scorsese's American landscapes, among so many other cinematic visions. In recent years, there has been a major investment to expand the number of soundstages, building new ones on an even more ambitious scale while also upgrading the historic facilities. Today, the studios also include Stage 18, Europe's largest and most modern LED wall.

What makes it truly unique is that it's now the first studio in Europe where you can develop the entire production cycle

within a single integrated hub - from pre-production all the way through to post-production.

How do you balance the preservation of the studio's legendary history - from Fellini to the HBO Rome set - with the requirements of modern functionality?

The need to make space for new productions does not always allow for the preservation of sets created for important and iconic films. While the Ancient Rome set is still standing and fully usable - both for film productions and events, it became necessary to demolish the magnificent structures built for Gangs of New York, which for years had been a true attraction. They had effectively become a kind of open-air museum, as well as a set used for other smaller productions.

What incentives or advantages does Cinecittà offer to foreign production?

Cinecittà offers an iconic brand that is immediately recognizable worldwide, supported by the highly skilled workforce that has enabled Italy to achieve the second-highest number of Oscars after the United States. It also allows actors to live and enjoy the beauty of Rome during filming, still experiencing today the enduring "Roman Dolce Vita." It is no secret that many Hollywood stars are willing to significantly reduce their fees if, instead of shooting in studios in Eastern Europe, they can film in Rome.

Of course, the important incentives made available by the Italian government to foreign productions that choose to shoot in our country is an added advantage. Finally, it is also worth mentioning the first-class services provided by regional film commissions and the various funds they manage, which can be combined with national funding.

What are the key infrastructural developments taking place currently to ensure Cinecittà remains competitive with Hollywood-level studios?

Cinecittà is not, has never been, and does not aim to be competitive with Hollywood. Its true strength lies in being complementary to Hollywood. Let us not forget that Cinecittà is commonly known as "Hollywood on the Tiber". This is a strength that no other studio in the world can ever replicate. Technology advances at such a rapid pace that any technological investment is inevitably surpassed in a very short time - much like luxury yachts, where there is always one that is longer and more expensive. But Cinecittà's real strength lies in its iconic status and tradition, in the skilled workforce that has passed down its knowledge through generations, and in the atmosphere - the scent of wood coming from the carpentry workshops that still fills the tree-lined avenues with the creativity of Italian cinema.

What particularly picturesque locations in Italy are yet to be discovered on the silver screen?

There are countless locations to discover. Even historic places that have already been filmed from every possible angle can appear entirely new depending on the director's vision and the cinematographer's technique. Italy offers an endless range of nuances and details, from its cultural and landscape heritage to its biodiversity, all of which are unique in the world.

What do you see as the future of Indo - Italian collaborations?

I am firmly convinced that the time is right to establish a productive collaboration built around three main areas of activity to be pursued reciprocally:

The circulation of Italian audiovisual works in India and Indian titles in Italy.

The increase of co-productions by creating greater and more structured opportunities for encounters between creatives and producers from both countries.

The attraction of Indian productions to Italy, thanks to financial incentives, the country's natural and cultural beauty, and the world class facilities.