

Nuovo cinema Paradiso (1988)

Director: Giuseppe Tornatore

Writers: Giuseppe Tornatore (story), Giuseppe Tornatore (screenplay)

Stars: Philippe Noiret, Enzo Cannavale, Antonella Attili

Cannes Film Festival 1989 – **Winner** – Grand Prize of the Jury Giuseppe Tornatore

Academy Awards, USA 1990 – **Winner** – Oscar Best Foreign Language Film

Plot

A boy who grew up in a native Sicilian Village returns home as a famous director after receiving news about the death of an old friend. Told in a flashback, Salvatore reminiscences about his childhood and his relationship with Alfredo, a projectionist at Cinema Paradiso. Under the fatherly influence of Alfredo, Salvatore fell in love with film making, with the duo spending many hours discussing about films and Alfredo painstakingly teaching Salvatore the skills that became a stepping stone for the young boy into the world of film making. The film brings the audience through the changes in cinema and the dying trade of traditional film making, editing and screening. It also explores a young boy's dream of leaving his little town to foray into the world outside.

The movie opens with Salvatore's mother trying to inform him of the death of Alfredo. Salvatore, a filmmaker who has not been home since his youth, leaves Rome immediately to attend the funeral. Through flashbacks we watch Salvatore in his youth, in a post WWII town in Southern Italy. As a young boy he is called Toto and he has a strong affinity for the cinema. Toto often sneaks into the movie theater when he shouldn't and harasses the projectionist, Alfredo, in attempts to get splices of film that are cut out by the church because they contain scenes of kissing. Toto has a younger sister and war widowed mother who often struggle due to the loss of Toto's father. Toto is banned from the movie theater by his mother when his film bits accidentally catch fire and nearly kill his sister along with burning up the only picture Toto has of his father along with other family photographs. Eventually he sneaks his way back and forms a father-son bond with Alfredo, despite Alfredo's reluctance, Toto even learns how to run the projector. Meanwhile one of the townspeople wins the lotto and becomes a rich man. One day in the cinema, after Toto leaves to watch the movie with his friends below, the film catches fire in the projector and knocks Alfredo out. Young Toto rescues Alfredo from death in the fire, unfortunately the cinema burns down and Alfredo loses his sight. Lucky the lotto-lucky-townsman pays to have a new cinema put up. Since Toto already knows how to run the projector he works with Alfredo in the projection room. Some years pass and Salvatore is now a young man. A rich girl, Elena, comes to town and Salvatore and his friends vie for her attention. Salvatore films her and begins to fall in love. Alfredo advises him to steer clear of love because it only causes pain. Despite his warning, Salvatore confesses his love to Elena, who's reply is that she does not, but she could. So he waits, every night outside her house for her reply. One day he gives up and trudges home depressed and upset only to soon discover that Elena does love him in return. They begin a passionate romance, like that of two

newlyweds. Unfortunately, Elena's father doesn't approve and so he takes Elena away. All summer they try to meet, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. On one particular day he tries to reach her and she him but their paths don't cross. As we discover later, Alfredo catches Elena and convinces her to leave Salvatore alone out of love. Salvatore then wanders without purpose and eventually joins the military due to the requirement by Italian law that all male youths serve for a period of time in the army. When he returns to his home town, all has changed and he cannot adjust. Alfredo urges him to leave and tells him that if he were to ever return, he would not see him. Obviously Salvatore goes on to become a successful filmmaker. As he wanders the remains of his town after the funeral he sees a vision of Elena just as she was when they were young; he realizes it is Elena's daughter and follows her to Elena's home where he sees that she married one of Salvatore's childhood friends, a dunce when Salvatore knew him. He confronts Elena and they meet. They talk and she reveals to him that she didn't miss out on their fateful reunion but rather that Alfredo convinced her to leave. Salvatore realizes what a role Alfredo had in shaping his life and that Alfredo knew that if he stayed with Elena he would have no chance to pursue his love of film and so by going to Rome to become a filmmaker he sacrificed his love for Elena. Salvatore and Elena say farewell and go their separate ways. Salvatore returns to Rome with a can of film left to him by Alfredo. It contains all the splices of the kissing scenes from Salvatore's youth.

It is quite simply the story of a human life and its tragedies and triumphs within the context of a vocation. A young boy matures and gradually learns the lessons of life, cultivates his passion for the cinema, and is rewarded with professional success; however, he remains unfulfilled for true love has escaped him only to return in the form of a gift of love which transcends time, space, and death to reveal at the closing of the film Toto's one true mistress.

A staggering triumph of both the cinematic art and of story telling.

Giuseppe Tornatore's *Nuovo cinema Paradiso* (Cinema Paradiso) is everything good about the movies. It is a story about love. The love between a father and son, an individual and his home, and the love for the movies.

The first part of the film, with Salvatore Cascio as "Toto" a young boy is a love story about two people sharing their love of movies: the kid and an adult "Alfredo" (Phillpe Noiret) who runs the local movie theater. Their love of film bonds them for life.

The word "love" is used repeatedly because that's the dominant theme: the love people had for others and for the world of film, something all of us on this website share.

The second and third parts of the film are the above-mentioned love story of Toto (Marco Leonardi as an adolescent and then Jacques Perrin as an adult) and "Elena" (Agnese Nano / Brigitte Fossey).

The film tells the story of a young altar boy fascinated with the celluloid and a veteran projectionist prone to spoil. Set in a rustic atmosphere, where it is easy to recognize the typical characters of any province, the ratio of Alfredo and Toto, contains the nuances and leads to an intense and profound friendship.

With absolute sobriety and the most charming comic relief, Tornatore taking shape that relationship that will last until the inevitable decline of the old projectionist (Philippe Noiret magnificent), but that will endure in memory of Salvatore di Vito, little Toto become, at present, a prominent filmmaker.

Cinema Paradiso is a pleasant and meaningful childhood memory. A profoundly tender and nostalgic film with which it is easy to identify without restrictions, especially if like Toto we have carried since childhood, or blood clutching a fascination for film.

The movie leads you on in such an easy and enchanting way that you are compelled to the screen to see how this all unfolds.

The secret in this story is that nothing was wasted, all aspects had an eventual meaning and the ending was sheer delight.

Passion exuberance in every frame of the film. A rarity and a great tribute to cinema itself.

The nuances of a child from helping friends to learning things, growing up as juvenile and falling in love, then as a man who does his own thing. The life of a person is shown beautifully with wonderful fine moments. It is lovely the scene in which Alfredo tells him not to trust a blue-eyed woman and how he uses a dialog from an old film is wonderful. From Keaton to Chaplin to Clark Gable to many more. There are wonderful references.

Centered at the life of Salvatore ‘Toto’ Di Vita in a small village in Sicily, Italy filled with stories, ambitions, love, life struggles and self-discovery, meaningful and for some people full of tears. Various events full of joys and sorrows, life lessons, ‘the Dad’s’ advices whenever ‘Toto’ is having a trouble makes this movie just like a family drama about Toto and Alfredo’s closeness.

In the first phase of the flashbacks, we follow little Toto in his childish peccadilloes while following the community in its avid response to movie magic (a funny exception being the gritty social realism of post-war Italian cinema, which proves as impenetrable to Sicilians as to much of the world beyond). This phase ends with the cinema destroyed by fire and Alfredo rescued by Toto but blinded for life.

The Toto of the second phase is apparently in his late teens, perhaps twenty by the end of the flashback. Childish peccadilloes have given way to amateur film-making, running the projector at the rebuilt cinema, and love at first sight with a girl whose social position poses an obstacle - in effect, a princess. As always, the life of the community and that of the film are centered on the shared joys of escape in a darkened cinema. Toto’s personal life is disrupted by a period of military training, after which he finds that he can’t pick up where he left off. He loses touch with Elena, his love, who has moved away. Finally, he takes Alfredo’s advice and leaves town himself to make his way in the world.