

Rosso come il cielo

Red Like the Sky (Italian: *Rosso come il cielo*) is a 2005 Italian drama film written and directed by Cristiano Bortone and starring Luca Capriotti and Paolo Sassanelli. It is based on the childhood experiences of **sound editor Mirco Mencacci**.

Mirco Mencacci (born 1961) is a famous Italian **sound designer** who works with all aspects of sound, within art (film, music).

Mencacci was born in Tuscany in Italy. When he was 4 years old, he was rendered blind due to a shotgun accident in his grandfather's garden. He moved in Genoa at the age of 7 to attend a disabled school, specifically for the blind children. His story inspired the Italian autobiographical film *Red like the Sky* which illustrates the conditions of schools for disabled students in Italy in the 1970s.

In 1981, Mencacci founded the SAM recording-facility in Lari, Italy. Since 2001, he has been fighting a personal battle **against noise pollution** which the second biggest pollutant in the world.

In the cinema field, Mencacci has crafted **sound design for international films** that have screened in over **one hundred film festivals** across the world, such as the Venice Film Festival, the San Francisco International Film Festival, Eye Honors New York, the Milwaukee Film Festival, and the Hamburg International Short Film Festival.

Mencacci is the inventor of the **Spherical Sound System**, which he uses in his cinematographic works. In 2016 he was invited by Dolby to the *Casa del Cinema* in Rome in to demonstrate his system to audiences.

Red Like the Sky - won **the Audience Awards at the São Paulo International Film Festival** and **at the Sydney Film Festival**. It also won **the David di Donatello of the Youth**.

Cast:

- Luca Capriotti as Mirco
- Paolo Sassanelli as Don Giulio
- Marco Cocci as Ettore
- Francesca Maturanza as Francesca
- Rosanna Gentili as Mirco's Mother
- Simone Colombari as Mirco's Father
- Simone Gulli as Felice
- Giusi Merli as Mirco's Teacher

Storyline:

The film is inspired by the true story of Mirco Mencacci (Capriotti), a boy living in Toscana with his parents in the 70s, whose carefree life is abruptly deprived by an accident and he is afflicted

with the irreversible condition of losing his sight, and according to the law, he must be sent to a Catholic school for blind kids.

For Mirco, the most painful thing of all was to lose the ability to see the faces of his parents and friends. When he begins boarding at the blind school, he can just about discern blurry colors and bright lights and stands at the window of the dormitory, desperately “watching” his parents waving goodbye from the courtyard. In a few months, however, he loses the ability to see even the brightest lights. One night the school patron discovers Mirco standing barefoot in the dormitory bathroom, repeatedly switching the lights on and off, calling out that all the light bulbs need to be changed.

Bortone doesn't dwell on the tragedy nor does he waste time insisting on Mirco's sadness or pain. Blindness is treated as a physical condition: unfortunate condition, but one that doesn't need to interfere with a person's happiness. Mirco is besides, too spirited and rebellious to succumb to tragedy, and sets about discovering a whole new world of sound and sound production.

His dislike of sitting still works to his benefit. Instead of learning Braille, he feigns illness and wanders into the headmaster's office, where he finds an unused tape recorder and a radio. He begins to record various sounds, and starts to experiment with how sound can be used to transmit information and evoke emotion, just like words or pictures.

He is accompanied by the school caretaker's daughter Francesca (Francesca Maturanza), who embarks on a secret project with Mirco to produce a school play based entirely on sound production, both recorded and live.

The situation presented in this movie has been compared to the situation in the movie *Cinema Paradiso* which we also discussed. Some are considering this movie the new *Cinema Paradiso* but it's altogether a little edgier and less convenient. Mirco does not have an older companion/paternal figure who guides him on the path of professional cinema. He's mildly supported by people who value his gift for sound-making, such as Braille teacher Don Giulio (Paolo Sassanelli), who encourages the boy and protects him from the wrath of the stern headmaster. But it's a disinterested love, and Don Giulio never attempts to become a part of Mirco's personal life, like in *Cinema Paradiso*.

Also impressive is the stance taken by Ettore (Marco Cocci), a blind student/factory worker who himself had studied at the school. Kindly, he tells Mirco that his time at the school is temporary and that one day he will be free to walk out into the world as a capable adult.

The most endearing moments in the story of the movie

The most endearing/adorable/cute/sweet/lovely moments are always those with the real blind kids, who play Mirco's fellow schoolmates and among those, there is Felice, who became Mirco's best friend. And there is a sighted girl too, Francesca (Maturanza) who takes the charge as the guiding light so that they sneak out of the school in one night to listen... to a movie in the local cinema and predictably develops a puppy love with Mirco.

The leitmotif presented in the children's actions, generally in Mirco's actions

The leitmotif here is to rebel against the oppressive administration influenced by religious clout, and to embrace life through one's unique talent, for Mirco and co. is to record a fairy tale exclusively through sound and voice, an audio book graced with ingenious recordings of sound effects.

The director's work

Bortone and his team are scrupulously dedicated in coordinating a cast chiefly composed of non-professional blind kids.

We are in the seventies and the law forbids blind children from attending normal public schools. The child is therefore forced to continue his studies in an institute for the blind in Genoa, where there is a backward educational system that dedicates him to marginal jobs and to the renunciation of his own personality.

Why to watch such a movie?

It is impressive to watch something extraordinary achieved by ordinary people to temporarily forget about the tumultuous world where we live in presently.

Final considerations about the movie:

The story of "Red like the sky" is an example of determination and courage, even when you are in a disadvantage situation. Even the making of the film appears from a bold choice. The director, Cristiano Bortone, wanted to make some blind children protagonists, making them act alongside the normal visually children. The atmosphere of great complicity that was created between these little actors enriched the film a lot and made it possible to describe the world of children in a simple and direct way.

Reviews:

<http://www.comune.torino.it/pass/artecultura/recensione-rosso-come-il-cielo-regia-cristiano-bortone/>

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2007/08/17/films/film-reviews/rosso-come-il-cielo/#.XrFqUZ4zbIU>

<https://www.cinematografo.it/cinedatabase/film/rosso-come-il-cielo/47800/>