



Presents

L'IMMENSITA

A film by Emanuele Crialese

94 mins, Italy/Spain, 2022

Language: Italian with English subtitles

Distribution

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Characters and cast

Clara	Penélope Cruz
Felice	Vincenzo Amato
Adri	Luana Giuliani
Gino	Patrizio Francioni
Diana	Maria Chiara Goretti
Sara	Penelope Nieto Conti
Grandmother	Alvia Reale
Maria	India Santella
Doctor	Mariangela Granelli
Alberto	Carlo Gallo
Felice's female friend	Rita De Donato
Giuseppina Paola	Valentina Cenni
Ada	Ilaria Giannatiempo
Harassers	Elena Arvigo
	Filippo Pucillo

Credits

director	Emanuele Crialese
original story	Emanuele Crialese
screenplay	Emanuele Crialese, Francesca Manieri, Vittorio Moroni
cinematography	Gergely Pohárnok
editing	Clelio Benevento
assistant director	Ciro Scognamiglio
music	Rauelsson
set design	Dimitri Capuani
set decorator	Alessia Anfuso
costume design	Massimo Cantini Parrini
casting director	Chiara Polizzi, Davide Zurolo
sound	Pierre-Yves Lavoué
production supervisor	Saverio Guarascio, Mandella Quilici
colourist	Red
produced by	Mario Gianani e Lorenzo Gangarossa
co-produced by	Dimitri Rassam, Ardavan Safaee
executive producer	Olivia Sleiter
general organiser	Erik Paoletti
a production by	Wildside (una società del gruppo Fremantle), Warner Bros. Entertainment Italia, Chapter 2, Pathé, France 3 Cinema
with the support of	Canal+, Ciné+, France Televisions
Italian distribution	Warner Bros. Pictures
international sales	Pathé
Country Italy / France	Italia / Francia
Year 2022	2022
Running time 94'	94'

Synopsis

Rome, 1970s: a world which straddles new neighbourhoods being created, TV variety shows still in black & white, societal advances and family models that now seem outdated.

Clara and Felice have just moved into a new apartment. Their marriage has reached a point of no return: they no longer love each other, but they can't seem to leave each other either. Their children are the only thing that keeps them together, the same children that are the syphon for all of Clara's dreams of freedom. Adriana, the eldest, has just turned twelve; Clara's mood swings and the growing tensions between her parents play out before her watchful gaze. Adriana is in a state of refusal of her name and her identity, and her dogged pursuit of trying to convince everyone that she is a boy brings the already fragile stability of her family to breaking point.

As the children search around them for guidance – be it a voice from above or a song on the TV – everything changes, both inside and outside of themselves.

Director's statement

L'immensità is the film I have been trying to make my whole career: it has always been “my next film”, but it always seemed to give way to another story, as I hadn't quite matured enough to feel ready to take it on. It is certainly my most personal film to date, a journey through the past, via memories – at times crystal clear, at others cloudy – and perceptions of times now firmly rooted in the past, that have been revisited and revised through the optics of the present day.

Families are often at the heart of my films; they are almost always fragmented, problematic, even dysfunctional. I think *L'Immensità* is the high-point of a theme I have been tackling for a long time, an exploration of a type of family that can't seem to offer protection, where the children have no sense of security, where conjugal love, teamwork and mature individuals to look up to are absent.

L'Immensità is not only a film about gender identity; nor do I believe that such a complex and raw subject matter can be pigeon-holed. It is an issue that is personal to each and every individual, one that cannot – and should not – be reduced to a leitmotif.

The film is set in Rome in the 1970s. I decided to portray those years by first of all stepping back from too strict an attempt to reclaim the ‘memory of that period’. I asked all the cast and crew to use their own memories: family photographs, Polaroids, all the things that belong to our childhood. A vast family album of the crew whose very heart and soul would be the building blocks of the film. We let ourselves be guided by designing a map of memories that we consulted during the planning process. The visual result is a synthesis of our pasts, our families, the places, colours, atmospheres that belong to us.

We carried out an extensive search for our younger cast members. Today's children have a very different perspective, a very different relationship with reality compared to the children of my recollections, to the child I was. Today's children demand a more equal relationship with the adult world. They are more involved, their opinions are listened to and sought with intent. The children of my recollections liked to be with other children, rarely participating in adult interactions. Somehow the adults remained adults, and the children quietly got on with the task of being children. After searching far and wide in Rome for suitable child cast members, I decided to cast the net further afield into the provinces, those near the sea or the countryside. And that is where I found my young performers, children who were less urbane, children who lived in contact with nature, far from mobile phones and therefore more ‘naturally’ credible as children of the 1970s.

The search to cast Adri led me to reflect on whether or not I should find a girl questioning her own gender identity. After several casting sessions it was clear that I had an issue on my hands, one that, in a different vein, I had already had to face in the past: experiences lived on a set, the depiction of oneself, can be a detonator that explodes, thereby disorienting and disrupting the life of a teenager. By casting a girl actually undergoing that experience, I would have risked “forcing” a process that needs time to define itself, I would have risked contaminating or accelerating the natural course of events by interfering in her process of identification, which is so vulnerable at that age of life. So I simply decided to look for my Adri among girls who practise so-called ‘masculine’ sports. Luana is a motorcycling champion and competes against boys in the

Super Moto circuit. In that sport there are no gendered categories, all that is required is lot of grit and courage, two of the qualities needed to play Adri.

The film underwent numerous modifications during shooting, depending on the approach I chose while working with the younger cast members, taking into account interactions with them and whatever unfolded on set each day. When you work with children, I think that it is fundamental to tread this path, because you will constantly be dealing with thoughts, expressions and interpretations that cannot be categorised; you are therefore continually forced to adjust your goals and redefine your outlook and your plans.

I think that the power of Penélope Cruz's performance also stems from her willingness to lose control, to work 'without a safety net', to keep situations on a loose rein, to act and react without too many preconceived ideas. Children never repeat the same thing twice, and Penélope, besides her extraordinary talent, was able to react to every variation of the children's expressiveness. Thanks to her responsiveness and presence, the scenes remain vibrant, authentic. I had already experimented with this method in the past, and I am convinced it works. Of course, it is a method based on trust, reliability and willingness, and Penélope proved herself to be an extraordinary ally: she is an actress who is both instinctive and rational, open to allowing herself to be possessed by something that transcends her.

Earlier I used the expression 'without a safety net', which in its Italian version "senza rete" casually evokes the title of a long-running RAI TV variety show. In the film, there are numerous references to that period, that imagery, to that black and white world: the TV variety show for my generation was a window onto the world, pure escapism. A world of songs in which women waited at home, misunderstood, accommodating, willing to turn a blind eye to infidelity: at least until the arrival of two icons in the shape of Raffaella Carrà and Patty Pravo, both bringing that breath of fresh air and more than a touch of transgression required to break that tradition. I am particularly enamoured of a cover version sung by Patty Pravo, with Johnny Dorelli, of Love Story, which I wanted to include in the soundtrack of *L'Immensità*: I remember when my mother took me to see the film of the same name; I remember the anguish, the tears, the desperation of one who – still a child – was unable to separate reality from fiction. But most of all I loved, and still do, that opening line: "Grazie, amore mio" (Thank you, my love).

Emanuele Crialese

Emanuele Crialese (Rome, 1965) studied filmmaking at New York University, where he graduated in 1995. In 1997 he made his feature film debut with *Once We Were Strangers*, selected for the Sundance Film Festival. In 2002 his second film, *Respiro*, won the Semaine de la Critique at Cannes and was nominated for a César and European Film Award: one of the best-selling Italian films of the decade, it was a major success worldwide.

In 2006 he directed *Nuovomondo*, which picked up the Silver Lion Revelation Award at the 63rd Venice International Film Festival; winner of numerous international awards, and a nominee for the EFA again, the film was presented by Martin Scorsese in the United States.

In 2011, he returned to Venice with *Terraferma*, which picked up the Special Jury Prize and the Pasinetti Award.

L'Immensità is his fifth feature film, in competition at the 79th Venice International Film Festival.