



Cinema Paradiso

Director: Giuseppe Tornatore

Country: Italy

Date: 1988

A review by Tim Robey of *The Daily Telegraph*:



In the quarter-century since it was first released, this rhapsodic elegy to the thrall of filmgoing has become a cliché in everyone's head. Like just about any internationally successful foreign film, it has come to be remembered as a faint parody of itself: the story of an oppressively adorable Italian urchin and his friendship with a village projectionist, told from the vantage point of emotionally dissatisfied, misty-eyed adulthood. It spearheaded a whole decade of heart-tugging Italian Oscar-winners, from *Mediterraneo* (1991) to *Il Postino* (1994) and *Life is Beautiful* (1997). It felt like we might have had enough of it.

Then you rewatch *Cinema Paradiso*, and it wins you back. It's not just the film's sincere craft and imaginative touches – such as the wall-mounted lion's head in Alfredo's cinema, which comes scarily to life when young Totò (Salvatore Cascio) turns to look at the light beamed from its maw. It's not just the affectionately drawn central relationship, with a warm and irresistible turn from that downcast walrus Philippe Noiret, and the hormonal energy of Marco Leonardi putting a real spring in teenage Totò's romantic travails. It's a more intelligently written film than you may remember, too.

“Don't look back. Don't write. Don't give in to nostalgia,” Alfredo tells his young friend, when he's sending him off to start a new life. It's rare for a film so bathed in the stuff to acknowledge the downside of nostalgia as well, its tendency to infantilise and coddle us. As an older man, played by the inescapably smug Jacques Perrin, Totò returns to the wreckage that was once his past, and Giuseppe Tornatore invites us to reject Alfredo's advice in a near-pornographic trip down memory lane. Tornatore may have hit a sticky wicket with his subsequent work, but he knew what he was doing here: warning us about the irrational lure of the filmed past, which is to say cinema itself, then ushering us grandly to our seats.



From: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/10513472/Cinema-Paradiso-review.html>