A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY **PEPE DANQUART**

AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH

A journey through Italy
following in the footsteps of Pier Paolo Pasolini

PRESS KIT

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Bittersuess Pictures & Albolina Film present

AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH

A journey through Italy following in the footsteps of Pier Paolo Pasolini

A documentary film by Pepe Danquart
Germany 2020, 117 minutes

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R.D'ITALIA

SYNOPSIS

Italy, 1959. Pier Paolo Pasolini embarks on a journey around the Italian coastline in his Fiat Millecento. His 3,000 kilometre trip takes him right round the (in)famous boot, from the Ligurian beach resort of Ventimiglia all the way back up to Trieste. Sixty years on, the observations he made during this extraordinary journey serve as a unique record of European cultural history. Pasolini's description of Italy, then prospering under the economic miracle and the start of mass tourism, is highly perceptive, empathetic and witty. In AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH, German filmmaker Pepe Danquart follows in Pasolini's footsteps. Taking the same route in the same model of car as his predecessor, Danquart uncovers radical changes – changes affecting not just a single country, but an entire continent. As the gateway to Europe, Italy reveals much about the continent as a whole. Having embraced mass tourism and opened up the floodgates to streams of holidaymakers rushing to enjoy its resorts, this historic Mediterranean country has seen its beauty spots overrun by millions of independent travellers. Once flourishing coastal towns on the Italian peninsula are now engulfed by consumerism and disruption.

Pepe Danquart captures a region caught between la dolce vita and a nostalgic doomsday atmosphere, in a riveting, visually powerful and illuminating documentary film which astutely observes how tourism and industry are intertwined and how these two cultures have changed over time. Danquart, who has previously demonstrated his visionary cinematic prowess with films like To the Limit, tenderly and humorously examines the new ideas and aspirations which have sprung up from long-forgotten roots, and shows how Italy epitomises the very essence of a European era which is both magnificent and alarming.

CREW

Director	Pepe Danquart
Screenplay	Pepe Danquart
Assistant director	Nadja Röggla
Cinematography	Thomas Eirich-Schneider
Camera assistant	Mattia Ottaviani
Film editing	Andrew Bird, Gregor Bartsch
Music	Amiina
Song on the end credits	Etta Scollo
Voiceover	Ben Posener
Sound	Martin Fliri
Sound design	Clemens Endress
Re-recording mixer	Adrian Baumeister
Producers	Susa Kusche, Pepe Danquart
Co-producers	Wilfried Gufler, Thomas Menghin

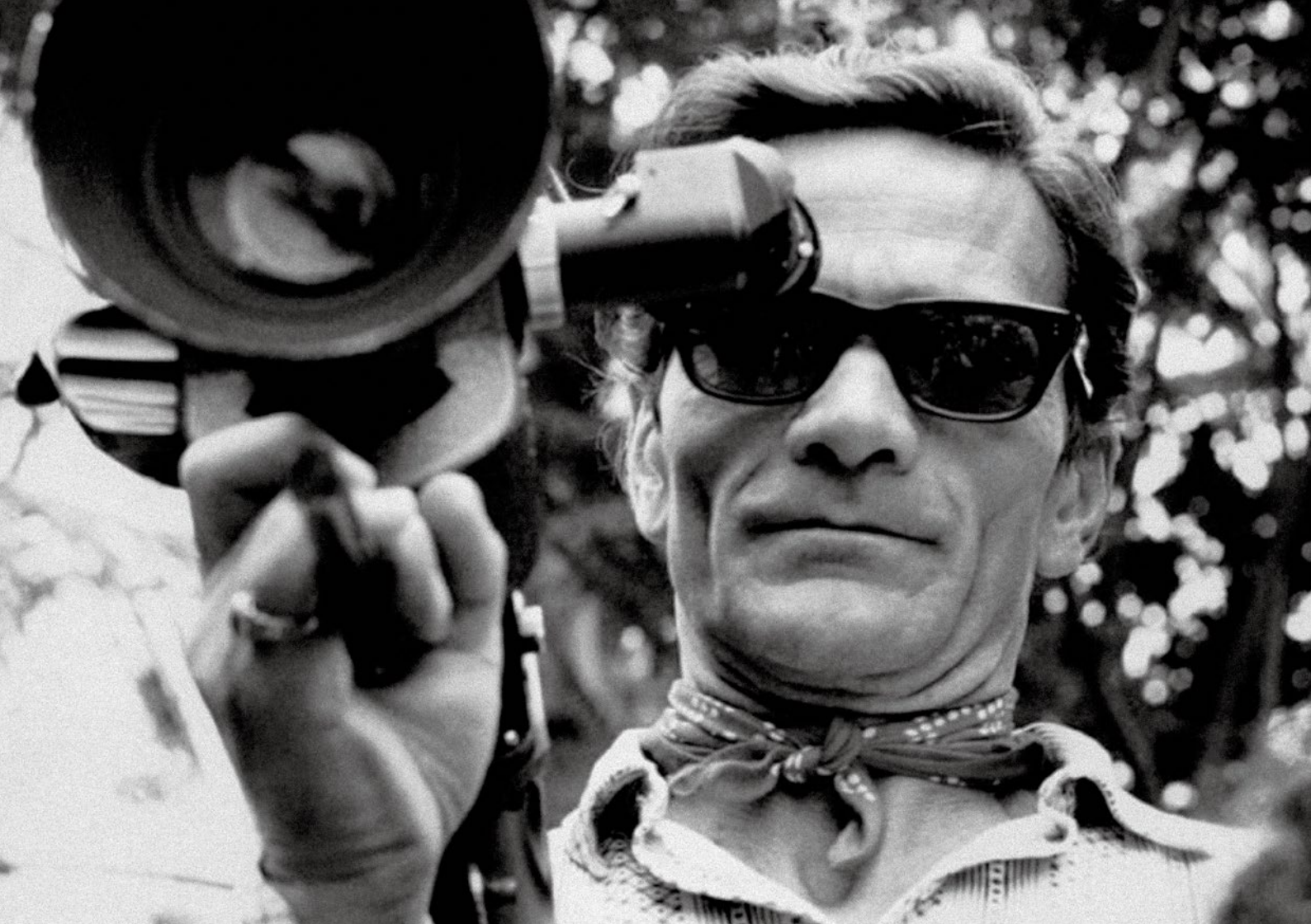
A production by	Bittersuess Pictures
In co-production with	Albolina Film
In collaboration with	Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB) arte
With the support of	Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media) Filmförderung Südtirol (the South Tyrolean Film Fund) Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein (the Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein Film Fund) Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg Deutscher Filmförderfonds (the German Federal Film Fund) Mibac – Direzione Generale Cinema
Editing	Timo Großpietsch (NDR) Jens Stubenrauch (RBB) Dagmar Mielke (arte)

THE DIRECTOR PEPE DANQUART

After winning an Oscar for his short Black Rider in 1994, Pepe Danquart joined the ranks of Germany's most prominent filmmakers. Born in the southern German town of Singen in 1955, Danquart is a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences and the European Film Academy as well as a founding member and board member of the German Film Academy. From sentimental comedies (Auf der anderen Seite ist das Gras viel Grüner, 2017, 50,000 viewers) to gripping sports documentaries (To the Limit, 2007, 200,000 viewers) and pointed documentary films exploring issues of contemporary historical interest (Joschka and Mr Fischer, 2011, 80,000 viewers), Danquart's exceptional talent as a filmmaker extends across all genres. His works have earned him numerous accolades, including the German Film Award, the Bavarian Film Award and a nomination for the European Film Award.

A selected filmography

2019 AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH
2017 AUF DER ANDEREN SEITE IST DAS GRAS VIEL GRÜNER
2013 RUN BOY, RUN!
2011 JOSCHKA AND MR FISCHER
2007 TO THE LIMIT
2004 C(R)OOK
2004 HELL ON WHEELS
1993 BLACK RIDER



PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

Pier Paolo Pasolini was an artistic genius and visionary social critic. Throughout his life, he was both fervently condemned and revered for his work. Pasolini was a filmmaker and a chronicler of Italy's suburbs, a poet and a writer, a Communist and a Catholic. He worked as a teacher during the war, joined the Communist Party as a self-declared Marxist (and was subsequently expelled for being a homosexual), wrote poems and novels about the situation of the Roman subproletariat and produced scripts for Fellini, before choosing film as his preferred medium and making a name for himself as a cult director. His films never sought to win approval, but each of them represented a radical turning point in Europe's cinematic landscape.

His belligerent analysis of capitalist consumerism and his homosexuality caused quite a stir in conservative post-war Italy. His critical and, at times, graphic films, such as the deeply pessimistic and visually shocking Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom (1975), made Pasolini one of the most controversial filmmakers of his time and brought him into conflict with the censors. Today, his films are hailed as classics of European cinema. His murder on Ostia Beach, which was linked to his connections with the world of rent boys, sent shockwaves around the globe and became known as one of the most brutal crimes in Italy's history. The true circumstances surrounding his violent death are still unknown today.

In his journalistic work alongside his contemporary Umberto Eco, Pier Paolo Pasolini produced socially critical articles which long influenced debate in Italy. The key issue discussed by Pasolini was the post-war greed for profit and consumerism, which he believed was leading to a level of social conformity which even Fascism never managed to achieve. He was critical of the resulting erosion of values and felt extremely embittered that neither the Communists nor the Church were able to combat this fatal development in any way.

Although he was friends with glamorous personalities like Alberto Moravia and Maria Callas, Pasolini criticised and distanced himself from high society. He admired the simple life led by the poor, a lifestyle which he himself had experienced with his mother during the war. In his first novels – which incidentally were also his first creative pieces – he scrutinised the harsh reality faced by young people in the Italian suburbs. These prosaic concerns became a common thread running through all his work. The suburbs and the young people residing in them also form the central theme of his debut film, Accattone (1961), which Bernardo Bertolucci, Pasolini's assistant director at the time, described as "the birth of cinema anew". In his biblical film, The Gospel According to St Matthew (1964), he emphasised the social revolutionary aspects of the Christian message by relocating the story from Palestine to economically dependent Southern Italy. Pier Paolo Pasolini would often go on long drives through his country in his Fiat Millecento in search of "real" life. He would travel to the industrial district of Northern Italy and ask people at work or in their free time about love, sexuality and unemployment. He joined forces with the left-wing movement Lotta Continua to make a documentary film about the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan and conducted interviews with the workers in the marble quarries in Carrara.

In his films, Pasolini repeatedly found new ways to ask questions about people, the human condition and the connection between sexuality, spirituality and relationships of power. In his interview-based film Love Meetings (1963), Pasolini asked Italians about love and sexuality and in The Hawks and the Sparrows (1966), he examined the position of the Italian petty bourgeoisie between the proletariat and the Church. Teorema (1968) centres around an upper middle-class family which falls apart after the arrival of a charismatic visitor. Another important theme explored by Pasolini was the myths and legends surrounding the Occidental and Arabic culture. Medea (1969), which stars Maria Callas in the leading role, is based on the famous ancient Greek myth of a woman who kills her children, while The Decameron (1971) is inspired by the collection of tales of the same name by the important Renaissance humanist Giovanni Boccaccio. In The Canterbury Tales (1972), Pasolini adapted stories from the medieval collection of verses by English writer Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400). Arabian Nights (1974) drew on the famous The Thousand and One Nights anthology of Middle Eastern folk tales. Similarly, with Oedipus Rex (1967), Pasolini created, in his own words, "a completely metaphorical and therefore mythicised autobiography" based on the infamous figure from Greek mythology

Pier Paolo Pasolini received numerous awards for his highly controversial films. He won Best Screenplay for Young Husbands at the 1958 Cannes Film Festival. In 1964, his film The Gospel According to St Matthew was awarded the Grand Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival. At the 1971 Berlin International Film Festival, Pasolini took home the Silver Bear for The Decameron, and just one year later, in 1972, the Berlinale jury awarded the Golden Bear to his film The Canterbury Tales. Finally, in 1974, Pasolini's film Arabian Nights was bestowed with the Grand Prix Spécial du Jury at the Cannes Film Festival. To this day, Pasolini's works represent milestones in film history of elementary and singular importance and allow viewers to experience the very essence of cinema.

A selected filmography

1975 SALÒ, OR THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM
1974 ARABIAN NIGHTS
1972 THE CANTERBURY TALES
1971 THE DECAMERON
1969 MEDEA
1968 TEOREMA
1967 OEDIPUS REX
1966 THE HAWKS AND THE SPARROWS
1964 THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MATTHEW
1964 LOVE MEETINGS
1962 MAMMA ROMA
1961 ACCATTONE
1958 YOUNG HUSBANDS

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR PEPE DANQUART

What was it about Pasolini's travel journal from 60 years ago that left you so fascinated?

To be honest, I've always wanted to take a trip around the Italian coastline. It was a personal dream of mine. As an Italy-loving German, I wanted to embark on a long journey through the country, so I could get to know it better, understand the split between the industrialised North and the impoverished South, discover the differences between the various provinces and find out what unites and divides their people. So when I saw The Long Road of Sand in the window of a bookshop, my admiration for Pasolini led me to buy it straightaway without even looking inside. On diving into the book a few weeks later, I found myself engrossed, as fate would have it, in a poetic description of the exact trip which I had always planned to take. It may have been written 60 years ago, but it is just as topical today as it was then. The style of reportage was novel for its time, philosophical, political and personal, and still makes an enthralling read today. Pasolini investigated the changes brought about by Italy's industrialisation and how these developments were affecting the people, politics and everyday life. He commented on the loss of dialects and the class system, he saw the burgeoning tourism industry of the 1960s as highly dangerous, and he regarded the growing consumerism and resulting uniformity and mass production of identical aspirations as a threat to the identity of an entire nation. He found this phenomenon worse than any dictatorship, calling it "hedonistic fascism", and said it would increasingly turn people into beings capable of being manipulated who exist only to serve the powers-that-be. He pinned his hopes on the archaic and impoverished southern half of the Italian Peninsula, on the subproletariat living in the industrial towns and cities and, not least, on African migration, which he saw as providing possibility for change.

All these sentiments are expressed beautifully in the book, which is illustrated with photos by the famous photographer Paolo Di Paolo. It struck me that all these premonitions about the development of the country had proved almost prophetic: excessive mass tourism leading to the collapse of entire cities (for example Venice), the spread of global consumerism thanks to the internet, and migration from Africa becoming a threat (and not a form of relief) for Europe. Rather than just embarking on a personal tour, I was therefore inspired to create a film on modern-day Italy and to incorporate Pasolini's visions and words. And so AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH was born – a road movie which pays homage to the writer, filmmaker and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini.

What is your connection with the Italian film director, poet and journalist Pier Paolo Pasolini?

The writer, philosopher and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini has been one of my role models throughout my career as a filmmaker. When I started out in the mid-1970s, I was fascinated by his neorealist films, including Accattone and Mamma Roma, as well as by his documentary film Love Meetings, an examination of the sexual behaviour of Italians. They spoke to me on both a political and cinematographic level. For me, he was THE quintessential filmmaker, writer and intellectual. And he stirred

up Italian society in a way which virtually nobody else could – either before or after him. Pier Paolo Pasolini revered the Pope and loved football. Expelled from the Communist Party for his homosexuality, he was one of the first Italians to live openly as a homosexual. His death in November 1975 remains shrouded in mystery – was it at the hands of a group of young male prostitutes or was it a planned murder? Opinions are divided but I believe it was a politically motivated attack on one of the most critical intellectual voices against the homophobic establishment.

Pasolini's works became milestones in film history. Examples include Accattone, Mamma Roma, The Decameron and Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom, a feature film on the extent to which absolute power is wielded, which feels like a documentary on the leaders of the Nazi extermination camps. Its depiction of real-life brutality is almost impossible to bear. Pasolini's works are sacred to me. His best films show the cultural, prosaic heritage of Europe in a new light. They include epics like The Gospel According to St Matthew (1964), Oedipus Rex (1967) and the above-mentioned anthropological and deeply pessimistic as well as visually shocking Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom (1975). Although his cinematic works were confined to just two decades (the 1960s and 1970s), his philosophical writing and his contributions to cinema theory have outlived him. When he was murdered in 1975, I had only just launched my own career in film – a career which has been largely influenced by him. And still is today.

The culture of travel has changed tremendously in the past 50 years. What are your opinions on the recent developments in large-scale independent travel?

According to news channel ntv, "In terms of visitor numbers, Italy was the fifth most popular tourist destination in the world in 2016, having welcomed around 52.6 million people."

In the 1950s and 1960s, Italy became the number one place to visit in Europe. Visitors travelled through it in low-powered cars – even Pasolini drove around the country in a small Fiat. Tourists stayed in accommodation which was still being upgraded in terms of its appearance and comfort. People, with all their different physical characteristics and life choices, mingled together everywhere, with the remains of the past merging into the signs of the future, as if caught in a vortex into which they would soon disappear. The beaches were not simply teeming with Germans, other international tourists and Italians, the rich and the poor; they were a melting pot of different lifestyles, temperaments, states of mind and fates, life plans and reservations, all coming together and signposting what the future of Europe could resemble.

Today, tourism is shifting everything in its own unique way. In its infancy, tourism developed out of a demand from workers for rest and relaxation. It then evolved to satisfy a desire to experience somewhere exotic and faraway, with tourist destinations turning into status symbols. Both motives, however, remained rooted in tourism's misguided self-image. The notion that people travel abroad to return home enriched through "relaxation" or "culture" was never really credible. New holiday regions are still being "discovered" today, in the same way that people tap into arable land, sales markets or sources of raw materials, but when it comes to tourism the average punter does not share the same dream as the members of the colonial elite who travelled the world to return with plunder. Consumerism, tourism and the internet have proven themselves to be irresistible forces. They are examples of the exact "hedonistic

fascism" which Pasolini outlined. These forces bring us to the same conclusion as that which he was only able to map out in his 1959 travel diary: "Everyone is affected by the resulting enforced 'cultural' conformity: the common folk and the bourgeoisie, the workers and the subproletariat. Social coherence has become defined by extreme uniformity. These days, all Italians are cut from the same cloth." (Pier Paolo Pasolini)

Why Italy of all places?

The country is a microcosm of Europe: there is a logic behind Italy's fate which has been mirrored across the entire continent over the years. Shaken by migration, marked by different rates of progress and disconnected by different paces of life, as well as economic, social and cultural divides, the very name of our continent is at stake. Austerity, technological revolutions and impending financial crises are allowing nationalist sentiments, born out of resentment, to become rampant and their influence is growing. And, as is always the case when consensus is collapsing, the battle to control the media narrative is becoming increasingly virulent. After all, when words don't tell the truth, then "fake news" escalates and shapes the new reality.

Even today during the "coronavirus crisis", it is clear that solidarity between European countries is still being influenced by national financial interests, meaning there is effectively no solidarity at all. Italy and Spain have been hardest hit by this crisis, through no fault of their own. These are the countries where the virus spread first and where the health and financial systems imploded, hospitals collapsed and the death toll is in the tens of thousands. Italy was already in a precarious economic position. Despite this, the European powers-that-be in Brussels remain vague in their response, refusing to deliver genuine, direct help. The lack of debt relief and eurobonds is only encouraging countries to withdraw into national isolationism. Yet again, Italians (and the Spanish and the Greeks with refugees stranded in swamped camps) feel as if they have been abandoned by Europe. And I believe they have every right to feel this way.

Did any other literary works or films other than Pasolini's travel diary influence AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH. If so, which ones?

Using a number of highly allegorical images and against a backdrop of looming catastrophe, Pasolini predicted developments which subsequently became reality, not because he had mythical qualities, but because his analysis of industrialisation in the modern age allowed him to provide a better and more precise description of the epochal situation than enthusiasts of progress. Pasolini had the foresight to comment on the juxtaposition of North and South (and of an affluent society and poor farmers with no access to the market) as a key issue and, at the same time, strongly criticised the myth of prosperity. "What has industrialisation done? It has torn the masses, the workers, the lowest in society from their old traditions, from their special, real, tangible values, and put them on the road to becoming members of the petty bourgeoisie." (Pier Paolo Pasolini)

This reminded me of Walter Benjamin's description of a painting by Paul Klee, the Angelus Novus. It is a famous painting and although Walter Benjamin's description of it is also familiar to many, it is worth quoting here: "[The painting] shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where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we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress."

This documentary film is a critique and appraisal of the impact and negative offshoots of modern life – a life which we call progress – and of worldwide digitalisation, globalisation, mass tourism and our world's ecological collapse.

What topics did you feel were important to cover in the film?

Whenever I delve into a topic, my image of it changes. The more the world is reported on, the more remote it seems. Alexander Kluge has already acknowledged this in his own work and I wanted to use this film to gauge the exact extent to which we are moving into a reality foreseen and described 60 years ago. I wanted to explore how the future which Pasolini predicted has become today's present and how this is providing us with a different world view to the one we had in the past.

Of course, a journey like this will also uncover discrepancies and contradict Pasolini's opinions. There are some areas where his viewpoint is outdated. One example are his descriptions of the landscape in one particular location where hotel complexes obstructed the view and an entire village found work with the hotels, rendering fishing and other trades obsolete and causing them to disappear – but today the village is no longer afflicted by misery and poverty.

Pasolini's romantic impression of coastal landscapes and the sea has also changed – it's an impression which isn't shared in the same way today, owing to the global political situation. Nowadays, the sea and its endless vastness no longer only speaks to the yearning desire of tourists, but also serves as a route for refugees trying to reach Europe. The direction in which people are yearning has been reversed. And the image of the sea has been politicised. The way we look at it has changed over time but this has happened as a consequence of what Pasolini hypothesised. The aim of AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH was to get as close as possible to the reality. I followed a completely spontaneous approach: I took no prior research trip and instead engaged in chance encounters, remaining open and curious when meeting people and discovering the places I visited.

Travelling and, above all, the experience of travelling have triggered a boom in documentary films, with features like Far. The Story of a Journey around the World and Expedition Happiness enjoying resounding success on the big screen. How can you explain this phenomenon and how does AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH differ from these films?

Besides following an essayistic approach, AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH is also a documentary road movie and travel film. Nevertheless it intentionally and directly takes a stance against the typical travel productions found on TV and in the cinema, which have traditionally contributed to the feelings of longing spoken of and warned against by Pasolini. With this in mind, the film adopts a familiar narrative format, only to undermine it at the same time. This is how my film is fundamentally different from features like Far. The Story of a Journey around the World and Expedition Happiness. These two films both capitalise on people's yearning to leave everyday


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life behind and have a fresh start somewhere new, without the constraints of the here and now – even if this experience is only temporary. In my film, however, I wanted to examine the here and now and use the example of Italy to demonstrate that truly independent travel is virtually impossible these days, that there is no longer anything new to discover and that we are all subject to a powerful (tourism) industry from which there is no escape. Whether you are on one of Italy's beaches, on the snow-covered Alps or on the sands of the Caribbean, there is no evading it.

I nevertheless made use of the classic travel film format – a road movie – which fulfils clear guidelines and meets viewers' expectations. A set itinerary, spectacular shots of the landscape, encounters and, of course, a narrative, which in this case is somebody else's travel diary and nothing subjective. This is also why I don't appear on screen myself. The car, a Fiat Millecento (the same model Pasolini drove during his trip), provides a symbolic "alter ego" for the off-screen narration from Pasolini's travel diary. The car brings the past into the present as if the two were interwoven (Hans-Joachim Lenger).

What made travelling through Italy for this film so special?

For aesthetic reasons, I wanted to have random encounters when making this film. This meant no pre-prepared interviews, pre-selected protagonists or locations researched in advance. I gave the tour authenticity simply by following a pre-determined route. This released me from the constraints of searching for content, as I didn't have to travel back and forwards to capture a specific narrative. I was open to whatever came my way during the trip. I didn't linger anywhere for long, explored my protagonists' lives with the usual amount of depth and discussed relevant topics. I only had a limited amount of time and had to stick to a particular route and every day I tried to draw a comparison with Pasolini's diary. I met and started conversations with people completely by chance – conversations about Pasolini, their living conditions, the reality of life by the sea, the shabby streets, their working conditions or why foreign tourists do not stray down as far as Calabria. I met refugee children on the streets of Palermo, employees of a new resort hotel on the Amalfi Coast, campsite owners and construction workers rebuilding a collapsed motorway bridge near the coastal road in Genoa. Throughout the trip, I sought out images which Pasolini would have been anticipating as he reflected on the modern age, progress and consumerism. I searched for situations where, for example, partygoers aspired to the same "look" or people attempted to emulate a specific fashion at the same time as trying to claim they were individual. It was as if they only found their true selves in a selfie taken on their smartphone. I noticed how tourists' "enjoyment" wasn't affected by holidaying in the midst of the poverty of those who had been marginalised by the European financial crisis and how people's awareness of themselves and the world in which they live changed the further I travelled from North to South, yet how their dreams stayed the same. In a nutshell, I was looking for a way of expressing on film the empty promises and the resulting mass production of identical aspirations brought about by industrialisation.

The "present-day" images captured in the various places where Pasolini stopped over do not simply document my journey in a trivial sense. Instead, my hope is that they show what Pasolini's watchful eyes saw and were virtually blinded by – a future European or even global problem. Recording this journey on film was not about getting lost in the apparent past; rather it was intended to use Italy's brokenness to

work out just how broken Europe is. After all, it is "our" brokenness which we are experiencing anew today.

Who embarked on this journey with you and how did your travel companions contribute to the film's success?

I was on the road with a small group of five people travelling in three vehicles. This gave me flexibility and allowed us to all communicate well as a team. This was the first time that I had ever worked with a crew of young people I had never met before. The majority of them came from South Tyrol because the film is a German-Italian co-production – and the great advantage of South Tyrol is that the people are bilingual.

My Italian is passable but my assistant and woman-of-many-talents, Nadja Röggla, was indispensable thanks to her naturally friendly demeanour, which served us well during (chance) conversations, and her amazing organisational skills. I also couldn't have managed without my bilingual soundman, Martin Fliri, who brought to the table a wealth of experience in making documentary films for cinema, and my cameraman, Thomas Eirich-Schneider, who was able to draw on his time with Milo Rau (The Congo Tribunal, 2017) to create magnificent shots in 4K resolution by improvising and courageously stepping in to document compelling situations. His wide-angle shots of mostly motionless scenes were so powerful that they couldn't have been improved on even if we were making a fictional film. He also captured the truthfulness in someone's facial expression just as beautifully as a landscape, and was able to understand situations straightaway and break them down into shots as if they had been staged. At home in Berlin and Bolzano, we set up a small control centre staffed by Susa Kusche and Wilfried Gufler, who always knew where we were. They obtained permits for us in good time, researched interviewees, gathered documentation and occasionally organised service staff when we needed them. We didn't require anything else...

Our journey took us almost 8,000 kilometres in just under two months. This gave us enough time to maintain our focus every day, so we could take in, discover and shoot our surroundings – and do all the driving, of course. We had a car for the production and camera crew, a car to transport all our gear and our "toy car", a Fiat Millecento (Fiat 1100), which was driven by production manager Daniel Defranceschi. In Pasolini's day, it was the most advanced model of its time. Today, it's a vintage car but it survived the journey extremely well.

I took a super 8 camera with me to record the particularly striking and subjective moments and to pay tribute to a piece of technology which was a phenomenon of its day. The celluloid was a nod to the past and the shots taken with it contrast beautifully with the high-resolution images captured with the digital system camera. I was delighted when Martin Fliri took it upon himself to record sounds which could only be captured without a camera so as to avoid additional background noise. And I was equally grateful for the times when Thomas Eirich-Schneider and his assistant Mattia Ottaviani set off to record atmospheric shots of the sea or images of Southern Italy's towns and cities at night when they were both unable to sleep. During filming we were all equal members of the team, incessantly and tirelessly recording material, which the immensely cool Andrew Bird, who has edited all of Fatih Akin's films, began to cut whilst we were still on the road.


Gela, terra antica bacia
Gela, terra antica bacia
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The film also comments on Italy's economic history. Why should a non-Italian audience take an interest in this?

Pasolini once described himself as "a force of the past". For me, his films, interviews and language, which are humane and full of life, serve the sole purpose of finding out the truth about a nation which the people in my home country of Germany view as their favourite neighbouring country – a country whose early migrants from the 1950s/1960s brought sweeping changes to everyday life in Germany. "We wanted workers. But we got people instead." (Max Frisch)

This quote sums up the answer to this question nicely. During the economic miracle at the start of the 1960s, Germany was in desperate need of more workers and found them predominantly in Southern Europe. The majority came from Italy and this brought about the largest wave of migration in Europe at that time. In the space of just a few years, three million Southern Italians migrated firstly to Northern Italy and then across the border with Switzerland into Germany and France. Today, Germans could not imagine life without their pizzerias, cappuccinos and Italian delicatessens. Italians have broadened our culture and have transitioned from migrant workers into fellow citizens, many of whom are now in the third generation. Italy is still Germany's favourite travel destination. With Turkey becoming increasingly totalitarian, terror attacks turning Egypt into a high-risk destination and war ongoing in the Middle East, more German citizens are now spending their holidays on Lake Garda or on the very same coastline I drove along for this film. Apulia, Sicily, Tuscany and the campsites dotted along the Adriatic Sea are hot spots for German and other international tourists. With all this in mind, why shouldn't this audience of millions take an interest in the film?

Especially in these times – when coronavirus is taking Italy "hostage" and we are being confronted daily with terrible images of military vehicles transporting coffins holding the dead from Bergamo and the rest of the Lombardy region to faraway cold-storage facilities as well as witnessing an economic collapse both in Italy and at home – it is irrefutably clear that a nation-state mentality cannot stop the virus in its tracks. Nationalism also doesn't work for the economy. We have a shared currency and a collective responsibility to keep it stable. It's no longer enough to enjoy la dolce vita in Italy for one or two weeks and then return home to moan and groan about the lazy "eyeties"; to drone on about everything they did wrong during the crisis and why they didn't manage their economy better in the past, et cetera, et cetera. Italy is a country which survives on tourism and is currently without tourists. What it needs at present is solidarity in the form of debt relief and eurobonds. Only then will Italy get back on its feet again – and will the Germans – and other international tourists – get their holiday destination back. This should be reason enough for many people to take an interest in Italy's economic history.

Which experiences during the journey left the biggest impression on you?

Having lived in Italy on and off for more than ten years, I was fascinated by the huge extent to which the North-South divide separates the country in two. We are, of course, all familiar with this notion in theory. Milan, Rome, Turin and Tuscany shape our image of Italy and used to shape mine as well. When I finally discovered the southern half of the country – Naples and the southern provinces like Calabria, Sicily and Apulia – I was left speechless. This part of Italy is reminiscent of Africa's poorest countries and provinces. The landscape is marked by industrial ruins, thousands upon thousands of African migrants toil away in the tomato fields in

deplorable conditions and crumbling villages have been left abandoned, with tourists failing to make it any further south than Rome. Poverty hand in hand with high unemployment is visible around every corner. It's like stepping into another country, which is nonetheless still called Italy. But nowhere else in Italy have I met such friendly, open and hospitable people, people who would literally share their last piece of bread with you. Its expansive landscape relatively unblemished by industrialisation is also completely alluring. I was also amazed by how Pasolini, as a person, poet and filmmaker, was still so present in virtually everyone's mind at all levels of society; from workers to intellectuals and fishermen to civil servants, each and every one of them had a memory of him, a personal story to tell or, at the very least, a film or poem which they could recall. In contrast, outside of Italy, hardy anyone knows how to spell his name.

It also blew my mind how our old Fiat caused such a sensation wherever it went. People crowded around it oohing and aahing and kept touching and admiring it and wanting to speak to the driver. The people there are in love with this car, and I sometimes had the impression that the sense of togetherness felt in a country as diverse as Italy centres around the Millecento. Fascinating!


GRAZIE

TOURISM IN ITALY

The start of the economic miracle in the early 1950s heralded an increase in the number of Germans holidaying abroad. Italy soon became firmly established as the top tourist destination among West Germans. In war-torn and comparatively strait-laced Germany, there was a frenzy of enthusiasm about Italy, reflected in the growing popularity of ice-cream parlours, pizza, Mirácoli spaghetti with tomato sauce and capri pants. By around 1960, almost a tenth of people went to Italy for their main holiday of the year.

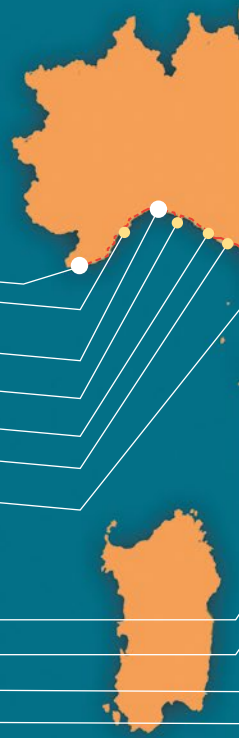
During his journey, the German director Pepe Danquart encountered many different sides of modern tourism. He saw, for example, countless tourists on Capri and met former fishermen who now work as skippers taking tourists to the Blue Grotto. According to the locals, only a very small elite group of guests, such as millionaires or famous actors, visited this spot in Pasolini's day. AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH also introduces resorts like Praia, which is home to 7,000 people, but whose population swells to 70,000 in summer thanks to an influx of tourists from Naples. August is the only month when the locals can make money. They are completely reliant on holidaymakers and without them, the place would gradually become deserted. It hasn't even had its own hospital for years. Praia is an excellent example of Southern Italy, where tourism only exists in a rudimentary form. Hardly any foreign tourists visit the South of the country because Calabria and Apulia lack the level of infrastructure they expect.

Danquart also came across tourist destinations which have hardly changed since Pasolini's time. One such example is Palombina on the Adriatic Coast, a place where Danquart says you can observe "retirees enjoying the good life on the beach". "These people who are now in their fifties are leading the exact same life which appeared idyllic to them when they were in their thirties. Here, the atmosphere is like it was in the pre-war years, with these well-to-do fifty-somethings living out their very ordered lives."

AHEAD OF ME THE SOUTH introduces the audience to a lady in Rimini – the place which Germans once saw as the quintessential Italian holiday destination – who comments on how the resort has changed over the years: "Here on the beach in Rimini all you see now are Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. The locals aren't investing anything in the place because you can no longer make a living here. The tourists who would spend 50 euros on a football or 20 euros on an inflatable boat have vanished. All we sell is junk and that doesn't put food on the table. So everything's steadily gone downhill."

Mass tourism does still exist on a number of beaches in Italy like Lido di Jesolo or Rimini, only the quality has changed somewhat. The value created by tourism in the 1950s simply isn't there anymore. In other small seaside resorts, the scale of mass tourism has reached a point where locals actively complain about and resist the situation. The best examples of this are Capri and Cinque Terre. But even large cities like Venice and Rome, which have to deal with an absurd number of tourists all year round, are looking for ways to restrict tourism. Southern Italy, which was never affected by mass tourism in the 1950s, is still untouched by it today. The infrastructure is simply too poor.

TRAVEL ITINERARY AND FILMING LOCATIONS



Ventimiglia → point of departure for Pasolini's journey.

Finale Ligure

Genoa → the dock worker

Portofino

Levanto

Lerici

Livorno → the container port

Prato del Mare

Ostia → Pier Paolo Pasolini died here

Rome

Sabaudia

Castel Volturno

Naples

Capri → a hotspot for independent travellers

Praia a Mare


Trieste
Jesolo
Venice
Chioggia
Rimini → the quintessential Italian holiday destination
Ancona
Pescara
Francavilla
Gallipoli
Santa Maria di Leuca
Crotone → the "village of gangsters"
Palermo
Reggio
Augusta → the ship graveyard
Syracuse
Portopalo di Capo Passero → Italy's southernmost point