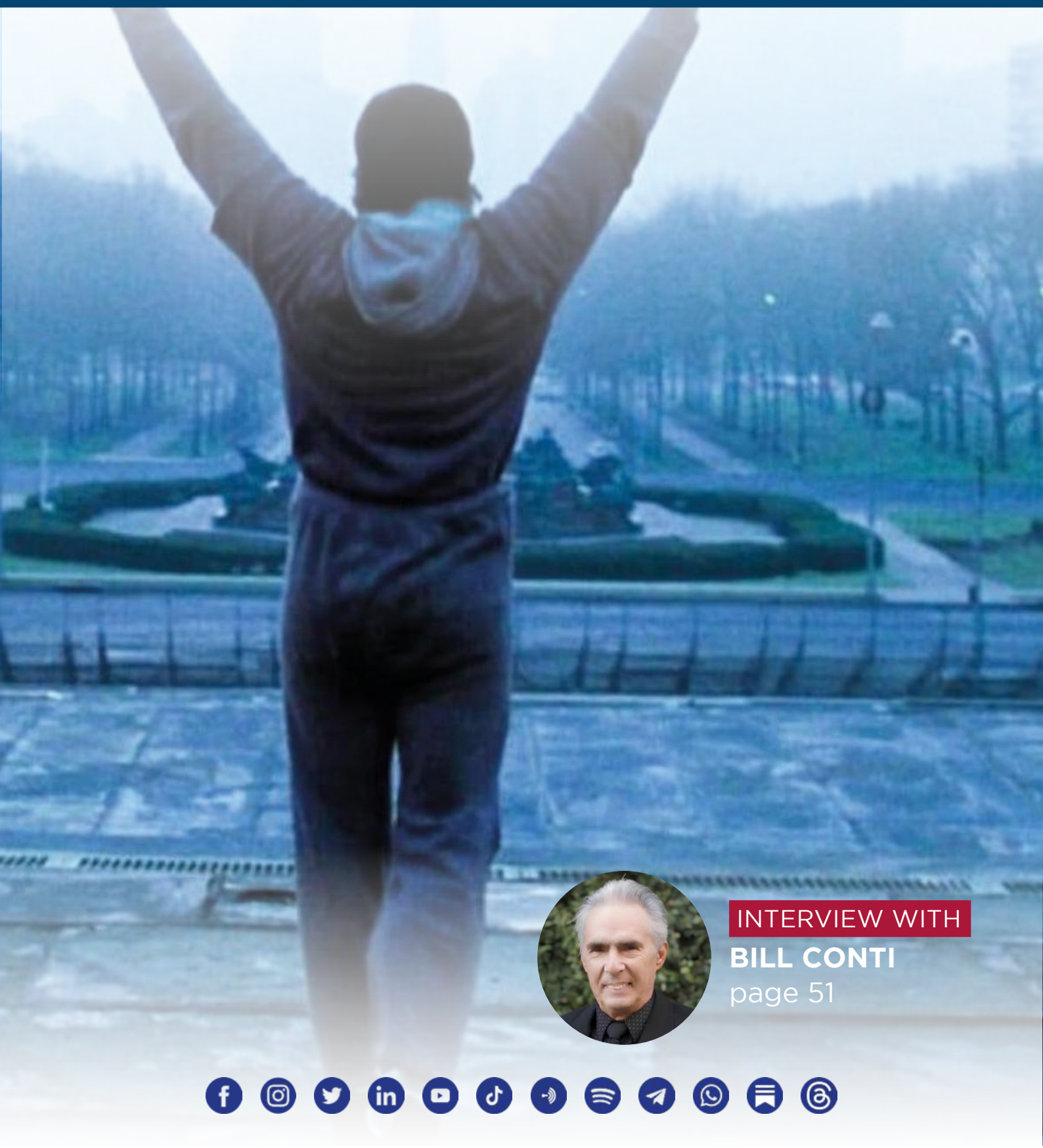


We the Italians

two flags one heart

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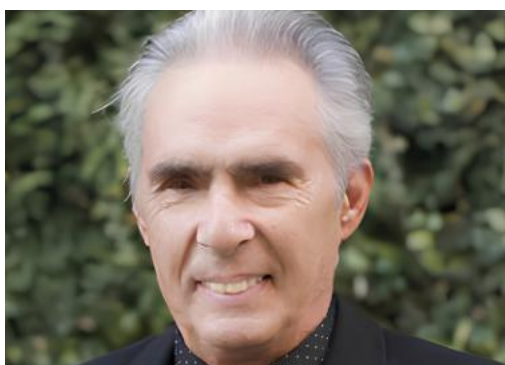
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WHAT'S UP WITH WTI

Editorial # 202

BY UMBERTO MUCCI

Dear friends,

As always, We the Italians never goes on vacation, so here is our editorial for August 2026, with plenty of news about both the present and the future.



The cover of this editorial is mysterious... I still can't announce anything about the project we have been working on for quite some time with a couple of extraordinary friends, even though it is now at a very advanced stage. For now, I'll leave you with a question: what could the image opening this editorial possibly mean? You'll find out soon. We'll tell you next month, and then, I hope, many of you will discover it in person in November 2026. I can tell you that nobody has ever done this before. Nobody. Surprise...

Another project that means a great deal to me is also launching in September. It is called "Relocals," and it is being developed by We the Italians together with Matteo Cerri, our Ambassador for Relocation to Italy. We will officially launch it on September 24 in Rome at the Center for American Studies. In the meantime, this month's magazine includes an initial description of the project, written by Matteo himself for his "My Life in Italy" column. I am very

L'America dice grazie ai montanari modenesi

Novembre 2023. Un parco della cittadina di Highland Park, alle porte di Chicago, è intitolato agli immigrati italiani provenienti dalla provincia di Modena.



Il Distretto Parchi della cittadina ha approvato l'iniziativa che rende "onore a tutti gli immigrati modenesi giunti in questa zona dal 1900". Il progetto è stato reso possibile grazie a una donazione di **Lorenzo 'Larry' Pasquesi, originario di Pievèpelago**, e della moglie **Maria Fontana di Piandelagotti**.

"In questi anni - recita la delibera cittadina - queste persone hanno sostenuto fortemente la loro patria adottiva, orgogliosi di diventare cittadini statunitensi, con molti servizi prestati nelle forze armate statunitensi. Sono stati il loro sacrificio, il loro spirito e la loro etica del lavoro a contribuire alla storia di Highland Park". È stato così intitolato il **parco Cloverdale** (giudicato uno dei più belli della zona) come **"Parco Fontana-Pasquesi"**.



I due coniugi con la loro donazione manterranno e miglioreranno l'area verde attrezzata ad uso del quartiere e dell'intera comunità della zona per molti anni a venire. **Nel parco è oggi affissa una targa dedicata alla storia delle famiglie italo-americane che si stabiliscono dalla provincia di Modena nell'area di Highland Park, poiché è soprattutto dall'Appennino modenese che gli immigrati arrivano nella contea di Southeast Lake a partire dai primi anni del Novecento.**



Highland Park e Modena sono Sister cities. Highland Park ha un rapporto speciale con Modena per via della numerosa popolazione modenese.



Ricorda Larry Pasquesi:

"I genitori di Maria avevano la terza elementare. Hanno dovuto chiedere un prestito per venire in America. Maria, sua sorella, suo fratello e i suoi genitori non parlavano una parola di inglese quando sono arrivati qui. Maria è andata all'università, laureandosi come una laude ed è diventata una commercialista. Mia madre aveva la quinta elementare, mio zio era un minatore di carbone nell'Illinois meridionale. Sono stato fortunato ad andare all'università. Maria ed io siamo persone ordinarie che vivono sulla North Shore. Ma agli occhi dei nostri genitori e agli occhi dei genitori di tutti qui oggi siamo il loro sogno americano."



Pievèpelago

happy about this collaboration.

Some of you may know that my family has roots in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, in a small town called Pievepelago, where I spend a couple of weeks every August. I keep working from this wonderful place, which is cooler, greener and quieter than Rome. This is an area from which many Italians left for the United States, particularly for Highwood and Highland Park in Illinois. I recently had the pleasure of visiting a beautiful exhibition about this history, and I have to confess that I am working on the idea of bringing it to Chicago. Stay tuned!

This coming September 11 marks an anniversary that is particularly important and sensitive for me. September 11 is never a day like any other, and this year marks 25 years since the day that changed everything. I obviously have a particularly strong con-



nection to New York, and on my arm I have a tattoo of the Nine Eleven banner, symbolizing “Never forget.” This year, my friends Maria Teresa Cometto and [Glaugo Maggi have written a wonderful book](#) about how New York has changed over these 25 years. You can find our review here, and [they will present the book](#) at the Italian Cultural Institute in New York on September 10, the day before the anniversary.

At the end of August, we will also publish the fourth insert of [“Two Anniversaries, One Heart.”](#) It will feature 3 new “Happy Birthday Italy” articles focusing on 3 sectors of our country in which we have reason to be grateful to the United States for these 80 years of friendship and cooperation. The insert will also include 3 new articles from “Happy Birthday USA: Italy’s Role in America’s Greatness,” highlighting 3 remarkable Italians who played important roles

in the 250-year history of the United States. Finally, “Happy Birthday USA: Unsung Italian Heroes” will introduce 20 lesser-known local figures whose contributions may not have made them famous, but were no less important. This time, our journey through Italian American history will take us across the Midwest.

Recently, some of you told me that I do not promote the 12 different [We the ItaliaNews podcasts](#) enough. You can find them here. Maybe you’re right. So here is a quick overview.

We started podcasting during Covid in March 2020, explaining what was happening in Italy, the first Western country to go into lockdown. In 2025, we transformed We the ItaliaNews into 2 new weekly audio podcasts: [“Italy in English,”](#) dedicated to what is happening in Italy and produced in En-





glish, and “[L’Italia in America](#),” the first and only Italian-language podcast about what is happening in Italian and Italian American communities across the United States.

In 2026, we launched 8 additional thematic podcasts, released twice a month: [Economy and Laws](#); [Education, Art and Culture](#); [Energy and Sustainability](#); [Healthcare](#); [Made in Italy](#); [Science and Innovation](#); [Tourism and Nature](#); [Traditions, Lifestyle and Sport](#). Finally, every month we also publish a podcast dedicated to [our interviews](#) and another dedicated to [the magazine](#).

They are all available in audio, lasting 20 minutes, and visual format, lasting 10 minutes. They are generated with artificial intelligence and available exclusively behind the paywall for our subscribers. For \$3 a month, subscribers receive 50 exclusive articles, 15 audio episodes and 15 visual episodes. Every month. For the price of an espresso. Will you subscribe? I guarantee you won’t be disappointed.

Another communication tool that we probably do

not promote enough is our WhatsApp channel. By subscribing for free, you can stay updated on our interviews, magazine, podcasts and other content. [You can find it here](#).

This month, our Ambassador family is also growing, with 3 new friends [joining our team](#) – 2 Ambassadors in the United States and 1 thematic Ambassador.



› ROBERT SERRA

Robert Serra is the new We the Italians Ambassador in Kansas City, Missouri. In 1970, Robert L. Serra was appointed Honorary Vice Consul in Kansas City, becoming, at 31, the youngest person ever appointed to the position. He served for 40 years, until reaching the mandatory retirement age in 2010. In 1978, he was bestowed the honor of Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, becoming the second person in Kansas City to receive the distinction. During his career, Serra practiced law and served as a judge, most recently as a Kansas District Judge. He also served as Dean of the Consular Corps of Greater Kansas City.



> MICHAEL CROSS

Michael J. Cross is the new We the Italians Ambassador in St. Louis, Missouri. Michael is a St. Louis community leader dedicated to strengthening ties between Italy and his city. In 2017, he founded the Italian Community of St. Louis and became president of the St. Louis–Bologna Sister Cities organization. He teaches Italian at St. Louis Community College and leads Italian immersion programs. Cross is also the owner and CEO of Vacanze Italiane – Italian Holidays, LLC and Cross the World Adventures, organizing tours to Italy and beyond. His work brings together the Italian language and culture, travel, community building and St. Louis–

Italy relations.

Marco Permunian is the new We the Italians Ambassador for Dual Citizenship. Marco is an expert in Italian citizenship law and lives between Los Angeles, California, and Rovigo, Italy. He earned his law degree from the University of Ferrara and is the founder and CEO of Italian Citizenship Assistance, a leading firm specializing in dual citizenship services for American citizens. Marco is a frequent speaker at events and conferences focusing on U.S. and Italian dual citizenship, and he also hosts a series of video podcasts.



> MARCO PERMUNIAN

And it doesn't stop here! That's why [we ask you to subscribe to We the Italians](#).

It's all for now. Please stay safe and take care, and enjoy our magazine and our contents [on our website](#). Stay safe and take care: the future's so bright, we gotta wear tricolor shades! A big Italian hug from the Appennines.



Based in Washington, D.C., NIAF's mission is to celebrate and advance the inspiring achievements and uplifting values of the Italian culture and presence in America and to strengthen and empower ties between the United States and Italy.

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is a nationwide organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., and is the largest and most loyal representative of the more than 20 million Italian American citizens living in the United States. NIAF was founded in 1975 and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with no political affiliations.

NIAF's two most important purposes are to encourage Italian Americans to continue keeping their culturally rich heritage and traditions alive and present, and to ensure that the entire community never forgets the great contribution that Italians have made to the history and progress of the United States. To this end, the Foundation actively collaborates with the United States Congress and the White House on all major issues affecting Italian Americans.

To celebrate the great legacy that unites us and all the objectives achieved so far, NIAF organizes its Anniversary Gala every October in Washington, D.C., which is usually attended by the President of the United States; figureheads from the political, financial and cultural arenas; illustrious Italian Americans; and about 1,200 guests from the United States and Italy.

On this occasion, the Foundation awards honors to eminent Italian and Italian American personalities who have distinguished themselves in their professional or civic role.



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ITALIAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

Mazara del Vallo, where Sicily meets Tunisia

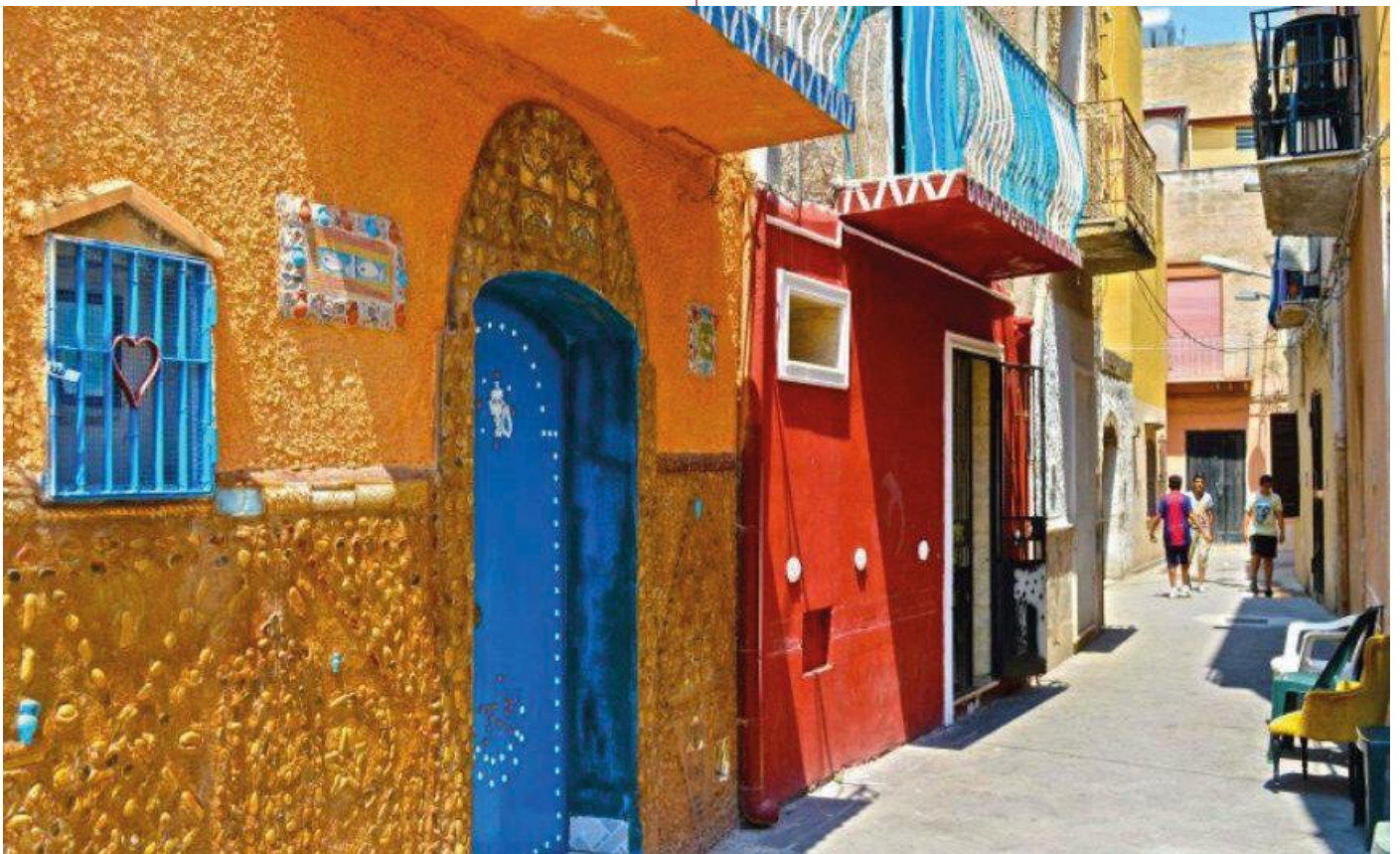
BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

On Sicily's southwestern coast, less than 100 miles from Tunisia, Mazara del Vallo feels less like the edge of Europe than the center of the Mediterranean. Here, Italian and Tunisian cultures do not simply coexist – they overlap, converse and continually reshape one another.

Mazara's relationship with North Africa began long before modern migration. Probably founded as a Phoenician trading post, the city later passed through Carthaginian and Roman hands. In 827, Arab forces landed near Mazara and began the Muslim conquest of Sicily. Under Arab rule, the city became an important commercial and administrative center and gave its name to the Val di Mazara, one of the island's major historical districts.

The most visible legacy of that era is the Casbah,

the old quarter near the mouth of the Mazaro River. Its narrow, winding alleys, enclosed courtyards and irregular street plan resemble the medinas of North Africa. Ceramic decorations, murals and brightly painted doors now enliven a neighborhood that remains a living community rather than an open-air museum.





The modern connection with Tunisia developed during the late 1960s and 1970s, when Tunisian workers began arriving to join Mazara's expanding fishing industry. Many came from coastal areas such as Mahdia, a Tunisian city with its own deep maritime traditions. Workers settled permanently, reunited with their families and created one of Italy's oldest and most established Tunisian communities.

Walking through Mazara today, visitors may hear Italian, Sicilian dialect and Arabic within a few blocks. Store signs, conversations and restaurant menus reflect this multilingual environment. Couscous shares the table with pasta, while Sicilian seafood is prepared with North African spices. Second-generation residents often move naturally between different languages and identities, feeling connected to both Sicily and Tunisia.



Fishing remains the economic and symbolic link between the communities. Mazara has long been one of Italy's leading deep-sea fishing centers, with vessels operating across the Strait of Sicily and farther into the Mediterranean. Sicilian and Tunisian fishermen have worked on the same boats, facing long voyages, dangerous waters and changing international boundaries. The city's celebrated red shrimp has become an emblem of this maritime economy.

The sea has also delivered Mazara's greatest archaeological treasure. In March 1998, the fishing

vessel Capitan Ciccio recovered the bronze Dancing Satyr from a depth of about 1,640 feet between Pantelleria and Tunisia. Now displayed in the former Church of Sant'Egidio, the ancient Greek sculpture embodies the cultural circulation that shaped the Mediterranean for millennia.



Mazara's identity contains many layers: Phoenician commerce, Greek art, Roman authority, Arab urban planning, Norman Christianity, Sicilian traditions and modern Tunisian migration. Church bells, Arabic voices, Baroque façades and North African foods belong to the same urban landscape.

This coexistence is not without economic pressures or social difficulties. Yet Mazara remains one of Europe's most revealing Mediterranean laboratories – a city demonstrating that cultures separated by the sea can also be connected by it.





ITALIAN CUISINE

Genovese by name, Neapolitan at heart

BY ROSARIO RUSSO

Despite its name, Genovese sauce is an unmistakably Neapolitan specialty. The precise origin of its name remains debated. It may refer to Genoese cooks once active in Naples, to a cook known as “o Genovese,” or to the nineteenth-century culinary expression “alla genovese.” What is certain is that the modern sauce - made by slowly cooking beef with an abundance of onions - developed into one of Naples’ most cherished pasta traditions.

Ingredients

For the Bombette

- For 2.2 lb (1 kg) of meat:
- 4.4 lb (2 kg) onions
- 1.5 lb (700 g) beef shank
- 10.6 oz (300 g) beef short ribs
- 2 celery stalks
- 2 carrots
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 glasses red wine
- Extra-virgin olive oil, as needed
- Salt, as needed

Preparation

Pour a generous drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil into a large pot. Brown the meat over high heat, searing it thoroughly on all sides.

Add the finely chopped celery and carrots, along with a small portion of the sliced onions. Sauté for several minutes, allowing the ingredients to release their flavors.

Add the tomato paste and stir well. Pour in the red wine and cook until the alcohol has completely evaporated.

At this point, add all the remaining onions, stirring carefully to distribute them evenly. Cover the pot and cook over medium-high heat for approximately 1 to 1½ hours.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and continue cooking for another 4–5 hours, stirring occasionally. During the final stage, lower the heat even further, remove the lid, and allow the sauce to reduce slowly until it becomes thick and creamy.

The onions should completely dissolve, creating Genovese sauce’s characteristic velvety texture, while the meat should become exceptionally tender.

The Genovese is ready when the sauce develops a deep golden-brown color and a smooth, creamy consistency. There is no need to blend the onions.

The Chef’s Tip

Genovese is one of those sauces that improves as it rests. Once cooking is complete, let it rest for at least 2–3 hours before serving.

This allows the flavors to blend perfectly and the onions to fully absorb the meat’s juices, producing an even richer, more balanced, and more velvety sauce.





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ITALIAN ENTERTAINMENT

The Italian nights that changed dance music

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

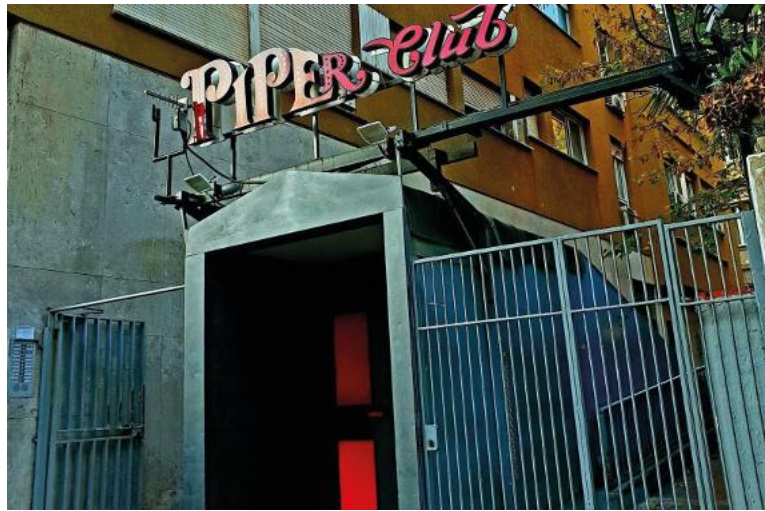
Italy's modern nightclub culture began long before electronic dance music became a global industry. From the 1960s onward, Italian clubs combined music, architecture, fashion, theater, and visual experimentation, creating spaces in which going out was not simply entertainment – it was a cultural performance.

One of the earliest symbols of this transformation was the Piper Club in Rome. Opened in 1965 inside a former movie theater, the Piper was inspired by the clubs of London and New York but quickly developed a distinctive Italian identity. Its colorful interiors, movable furnishings, projected images, and live performances attracted a generation eager to leave postwar conventions behind.

The Piper became closely associated with Patty Pravo, who was initially known as “the Piper girl,” and welcomed Italian and international performers. Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, and numerous protagonists of the Italian beat movement appeared there. Music, fashion, art, and celebrity culture met under one roof, turning the club into a laboratory for the emerging youth culture.

During the following decade, the center of innovation moved toward the Adriatic coast. In 1975, Baia degli Angeli opened near Gabicce Mare. Built on a hill overlooking the sea, the club featured futuristic architecture, glass walls, illuminated dance floors, and elevators that allowed DJs to move between different booths.

American DJs Tom Sison and Bob Day introduced Italian audiences to mixing techniques and musical selections influenced by New York's disco scene. They treated records as elements of a continuous journey rather than as separate songs. Daniele Baldelli, who later became one of Italy's most in-



> PIPER

fluent DJs, continued developing this approach after working at the Baia.

Baia degli Angeli opened 2 years before Studio 54 in New York and became one of Europe's most glamorous nightlife destinations. Its influence extended far beyond its short original life. It helped redefine the DJ as an artist responsible for building the entire emotional rhythm of an evening.

Italian clubs soon began cultivating their own sounds. At the Cosmic in Lazise, near Lake Garda, Baldelli created what became known as “cosmic music.” His sets combined electronic experimentation, African rhythms, funk, Brazilian music, European pop, and records played at unexpected speeds. The result was neither conventional disco nor rock, but a musical universe assembled inside the DJ booth.



The Riviera romagnola subsequently became Italy's great nightlife capital. Rimini, Riccione, and neighboring coastal towns offered hundreds of dance venues, hotels, restaurants, and late-night attractions. Clubs such as Paradiso, Byblos, L'Altro Mondo Studios, and later Cocoricò helped turn summer tourism into a continuous spectacle.

Cocoricò, inaugurated in Riccione in 1989, became especially important during the 1990s. Its transparent pyramid, theatrical performances, and adventurous programming made it a temple of house, techno, and Italian rave culture. The club demonstrated that nightlife could possess an artistic identity as recognizable as that of a theater or fashion house.

Meanwhile, Italian producers were conquering international radio stations and dance floors. Giorgio Moroder, born in South Tyrol and active in Munich, helped revolutionize disco through synthesizers and electronic production. His work with Don-



na Summer, particularly "I Feel Love," provided a foundation for generations of dance music.



During the 1980s, the term “Italo disco” came to describe a broad family of Italian-made electronic dance records characterized by synthesizers, drum machines, melodic hooks, and frequently English-language lyrics. Songs by Gazebo, Ryan Paris, Righeira, Den Harrow, and Sabrina became international hits. Tracks such as “I Like Chopin,” “Dolce Vita,” and “Vamos a la playa” carried an unmistakable mixture of romance, technology, and Mediterranean fantasy.

Italo disco was sometimes dismissed as lightweight popular music, yet its influence proved remarkably

durable. Its synthetic bass lines, bright melodies, and mechanical rhythms contributed to the development of house, techno, synth-pop, and contemporary electronic music.

From the Piper’s beat generation to the futuristic Baia degli Angeli, Italy’s nightclubs were never merely rooms for dancing. They were stages on which Italians experimented with sound, design, identity, and freedom. When Italy danced, much of the world eventually followed.





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ITALIAN SPORT

The winning system behind Italian sports

BY FEDERICO PASQUALI

When Federica Brignone raised her arms after winning super-G gold at the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games, the emblem of Italy's national team was not the only insignia on her racing suit. Brignone is a marshal in the Carabinieri. A few hours earlier, Francesca Lollobrigida had won gold in the 5,000-meter speed skating event – she is a Senior Airman in the Italian Air Force.



› FRANCESCA LOLLOBRIGIDA AIR FORCE

Marcell Jacobs, who won gold in the 100 meters and 4x100-meter relay in Tokyo, wears the uniform of the Italian State Police. Sofia Goggia, the stron-



› FEDERICA BRIGNONE CARABINIERI

gest Italian skier of her generation, competes for the Fiamme Gialle, the sports division of the Guardia di Finanza, Italy's financial police.

To an American audience accustomed to a system in which Olympic athletes are collegiate student-athletes, sponsored professionals, or, at best, recipients of grants from the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, all of this may sound almost surreal: how can a country produce world champions through its police and military? Yet this is precisely the hidden machinery behind decades of Italian medals, and it is one of the most distinctive – and least understood abroad – features of Italy's entire sports system.

Italy has eight Military and State Sports Groups: four belong to the Armed Forces – the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Carabinieri – and four to state law enforcement and public safety agencies – the State Police, with its famous Fiamme Oro; the Guardia di



Finanza, with the Fiamme Gialle; the Penitentiary Police, with the Fiamme Azzurre; and the National Fire and Rescue Service, with the Fiamme Rosse.

The mechanism is as simple as it is effective. An athlete who has already demonstrated talent at the national or international level may enter a public recruitment competition, often specifically reserved for athletes, to join one of these organizations. Once recruited, the athlete becomes a full member of the military or police force: they hold a rank, receive a fixed government salary and retirement benefits, and, most importantly, have the time and facilities

needed to train at the highest level. In return, athletes represent their organization in competitions, wear its uniform at ceremonies, and enhance the institution's sporting prestige.

This is not a colorful footnote – it is the economic backbone of individual sports in Italy. In a country where track and field, fencing, swimming, martial arts, and alpine skiing do not generate the same television and sponsorship revenue as soccer, the government has found a way to provide a stable income to tens of thousands of athletes who otherwise could not afford to train full time.

In the United States, the typical path to the Olympic elite runs through the NCAA college system, private sponsorships, or the often limited support of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee. It is a model driven by private competition and the market: athletes who cannot find a sponsor often walk away from their sport.

The Italian model reverses that logic: the government itself becomes the athlete's employer. The advantages are clear. First, continuity: a gymnast or fencer can train for 10 or 15 years without worrying about paying the rent, because the salary continues whether the athlete wins or loses. Second, facilities: military sports centers provide gyms, pools, and professional-level medical and coaching staffs, often better than those available through civilian sports federations. Third, post-career security: when competitive activity ends, athletes do not suddenly find themselves unemployed. They can continue within the organization as instructors, officers, or in other roles, or leave with the retirement benefits they have earned.

As a result, Italy can cultivate athletes in disciplines that would be financially unsustainable elsewhere: fencing, rowing, modern pentathlon, weightlifting, shooting, bobsled, and cross-country skiing. The least commercial sports – those without multimillion-dollar contracts – benefit the most from this government safety net.

The figures from the two most recent Olympic Games make the scale of the phenomenon difficult to ignore.

At Paris 2024, more than 70% of Italy's 403 athletes wore a military uniform or belonged to a civilian state agency. Of Italy's 40 total medals – 12 gold, 13 silver, and 15 bronze, its best haul ever – the State Police alone, through its Fiamme Oro sports group, contributed 18 medals: five gold, six silver, and seven bronze. That represented about 45% of all podium finishes earned by athletes from state sports groups. If the Fiamme Oro had competed as



a separate country, it would have ranked 15th in the overall medal table, ahead of nations such as Spain and Sweden.

At Milano Cortina 2026, more than 60 of the 196 athletes on the Italian team came from the Armed Forces' Military Sports Groups. Of Italy's 30 total podium finishes – good for fourth place in the overall medal table and the country's best result ever at the Winter Games – 18 medals, including eight gold, three silver, and seven bronze, were earned by athletes from the Defense Sports Groups. Additional medals came from competitors representing the Guardia di Finanza and State Police. In practical terms, well over half of Italy's Milano Cortina medal haul passed through a military or police barracks.

Not everyone in Italy views this system with unconditional admiration. Criticism comes primarily from civilian sports clubs and federations that lack access to this kind of government support. The first argument is economic: private clubs often discover and develop young talent during the earliest stages of an athlete's career, yet they cannot retain those athletes once they reach a certain level and are absorbed by military sports groups offering salaries no amateur club can match. In other words, one institution – the civilian club – does the scouting and youth development, while another – the military or police organization – receives the prestige associated with the medal.

The second argument concerns the distortion of domestic competition. In many individual sports, national championships effectively become contests among institutional colors – Fiamme Oro versus Fiamme Gialle versus the Army – rather than com-

petitions among traditional sports clubs, relegating civilian organizations to a marginal role as little more than talent nurseries.

Third, there is a broader debate over whether the government should invest public resources in a model that effectively selects an elite group of athletes who are already competitive instead of expanding access to grassroots sports, which remain underfunded in Italy. Despite the criticism, the numbers are clear: without the Military Sports Groups, Italy would not be the Olympic power it is today, consistently ranking among the top 10 nations in the medal table since Atlanta 1996. The system grew out of a characteristically Italian compro-

mise, bringing the government, law enforcement, the military, and sports together within a single structure. Yet it ultimately solved a problem that many other countries, including the United States, have never fully addressed: how to give an elite athlete in a sport that does not make headlines every day the opportunity to train and live with dignity throughout an entire career.

For American observers accustomed to viewing the military and elite sports as two separate worlds, Italy offers an almost unique case: a country where the quiet engine behind its Olympic medal count is neither a college nor a sponsor, but a military or police barracks.





5 GOOD REASONS TO JOIN AMCHAM ITALY

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ITALIAN WORLD RECORDS

Perugia, the world's oldest university for foreigners

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

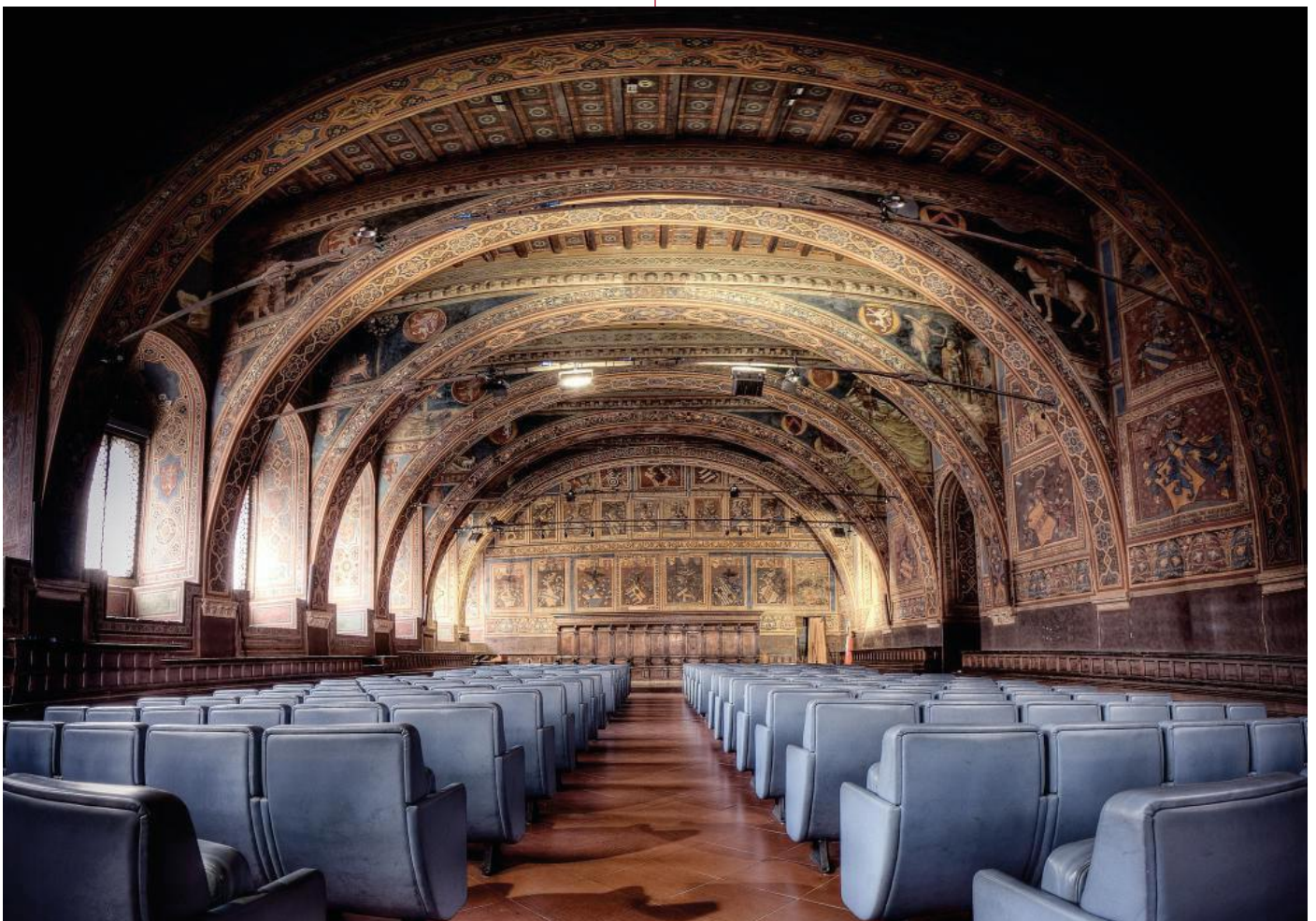
In the green heart of Italy, high above the Umbrian valley, Perugia holds a world record that speaks not of speed, size, or spectacle, but of cultural hospitality. The University for Foreigners of Perugia is Italy's oldest institution devoted to teaching, studying, and promoting the Italian language and civilization for international learners.

Its story began in 1921, when Perugian lawyer As-torre Lupattelli created advanced culture courses designed to introduce visitors to Umbria and Italy. The program presented the region's history, institutions, landscape, and artistic heritage to students arriving from beyond Italy's borders. Italian language courses followed in 1922, forming the nucle-

us of a university with an unusually international mission.

In 1925, royal decrees formally established the Regia Università Italiana per Stranieri, or Royal Italian University for Foreigners. Its purpose was ambitious: to spread knowledge of Italy through its language, literature, arts, history, customs, institutions, industry, and ideas. At a time when international travel was far less accessible than it is today, Perugia was already building a meeting place for cultures.

The university's first classes were held in rooms belonging to the historic University of Perugia and in the Sala dei Notari inside Palazzo dei Priori. Since 1927, its home has been Palazzo Gallenga, an elegant eighteenth-century residence near the monumental Etruscan Arch. From this distinguished setting, generations of students have stepped directly into the narrow streets, stone stairways, cafés, and





piazzas of one of Italy's best-preserved medieval cities.

This location is more than a beautiful backdrop. Perugia itself becomes part of the classroom. Students hear Italian at the market, practice it over coffee, encounter centuries of art and architecture, and experience the rhythms of everyday life in Umbria. Language learning here is inseparable from cultural immersion.

Over the decades, the University for Foreigners has welcomed people from around the world, earning a reputation as a laboratory of intercultural education. Its work has expanded beyond language instruction to include research, teacher training, certification, undergraduate and graduate degrees,

1990s, it gained parity with Italy's state universities, strengthening its role within the national higher-education system.

Yet its essential identity remains unchanged. The university exists to connect Italy with the wider world and to encourage dialogue across languages and traditions. Students may arrive for grammar, literature, art, music, cinema, or professional development, but they also enter a community shaped by curiosity and exchange.

Its alumni form a living international network. After returning home, many become teachers, translators, diplomats, researchers, artists, entrepreneurs, or lifelong ambassadors for Italian culture. Their memories of Perugia carry the university's mission far beyond Umbria. In this sense, every classroom creates new connections between Italy and communities on every continent, one conversation and lasting friendship at a time.

More than a century after Lupattelli's first courses, Perugia's record still matters. This university did not simply teach foreigners how to speak Italian. It turned the Italian language into a bridge—and made an ancient hill town a global crossroads.





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ITALIAN LAND AND NATURE

Capodacqua, Abruzzo's hidden world beneath the water

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Near the historic town of Capestrano, in the province of L'Aquila, a small body of water conceals one of the most unexpected landscapes in Abruzzo. Lake Capodacqua appears quiet and modest from the surface, but beneath its exceptionally clear water lie stone walls, pathways, trees and the remains of old watermills.

The lake is located in the Tirino Valley, below the Gran Sasso massif. Its name derives from the Latin expression “caput aquae,” meaning the head or source of the water. Capodacqua is fed by powerful natural springs connected to the vast underground water system of the Gran Sasso. These springs constitute one of the principal sources of the Tirino, a river celebrated for the clarity of its water.

For centuries, the constant flow of water supported a small rural settlement. Local communities built mills near the springs to harness their energy. Water turned large wheels that powered millstones, transforming locally grown wheat and other grains into flour. The mills were therefore essential parts of an agricultural economy in which water, farmland and human labor remained closely connected.

The landscape changed dramatically in 1965, when a dam was constructed to create a reservoir for irrigating the fields of the Tirino Valley. As the water level rose, it covered old buildings, lanes and vegetation. Two stone mills associated with the Verlengia family disappeared beneath the surface, while part of a former paint-making facility remained above the waterline.

Unlike many flooded structures, the mills did not vanish into darkness or mud. The continuous movement of cold spring water limits the accumulation of sediment and excessive aquatic vegetation.





With temperatures remaining close to 50°F, visibility can be extraordinary. Walls, arches, millstones, channels and tree trunks can be seen resting in a blue-green environment that seems suspended outside time.

This preserved underwater landscape has earned Capodacqua the nickname “the little Atlantis of Abruzzo.” Divers descend to depths of approximately 30 feet and move among the ruins as brown trout pass through empty windows and above former pathways. One mill remains relatively well preserved, although the structures have experienced natural deterioration and damage associated with the 2009 L’Aquila earthquake.

Capodacqua is not an ordinary recreational lake. The area is privately managed and environmentally protected, and swimming is prohibited. Diving must be organized through authorized operators and conducted according to conservation rules. In

some periods, low-impact excursions aboard electric boats with underwater viewing sections have allowed visitors to observe the submerged landscape without entering the water.



The lake also belongs to a much larger historical setting. Nearby Capestrano is known for its medieval castle, the Abbey of San Pietro ad Oratorium and the famous Warrior of Capestrano, a sixth-century BC Italic statue discovered in the surrounding countryside in 1934.

Capodacqua reveals another kind of Italian heritage – one created by nature, agricultural history and modern engineering. Its submerged mills recall a vanished rural world, preserved not in a museum but beneath the remarkably transparent waters of Abruzzo.





Italia

DIAMANTE AZZURRO, ORGOGGIO ITALIANO



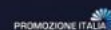
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ITALIAN INVENTIONS

When Edison looked to Italy for a better light bulb

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

The history of the electric light bulb is usually associated with Thomas Edison. But in Udine, in northeastern Italy, a young inventor named Arturo Malignani solved one of the technology's most stubborn problems so effectively that Edison eventually sent an engineer to investigate what the Italian was doing.

Born in Udine in 1865, Malignani grew up around photography, chemistry, optics, and glasswork. He became fascinated by electric lighting when demonstrations reached his hometown in the early 1880s. Edison had already developed a commercially viable incandescent lamp, but early bulbs remained expensive to manufacture and suffered from a crucial weakness – creating and maintaining a sufficiently good vacuum inside the glass bulb.

Malignani attacked precisely that problem.

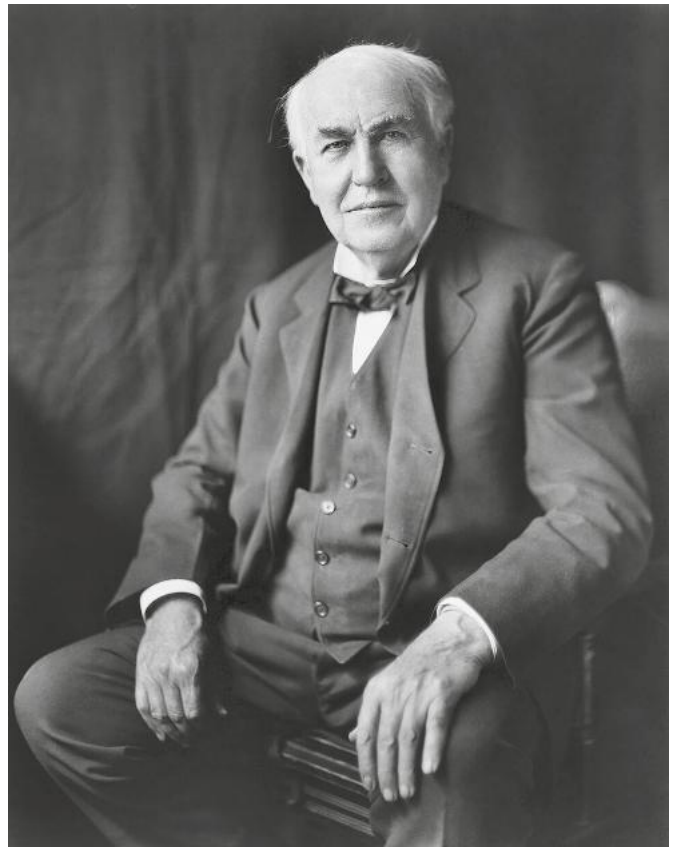
By 1888, he had developed techniques that dramatically improved the evacuation of incandescent bulbs. His most important innovation combined mechanical evacuation with phosphorus used as a “getter,” removing residual gases that remained after pumping. He also devised equipment capable of evacuating multiple bulbs simultaneously rather than treating them individually.

The consequences were enormous. Better vacuum meant longer-lasting filaments, while simultaneous processing made manufacturing faster and cheaper. Contemporary accounts credited Malignani's lamps with exceptionally white light and lifetimes reaching roughly 800 hours.

Udine became his extraordinary real-world laboratory. In 1888, Malignani and his partners obtained the contract for the city's electric public lighting system, and on January 1, 1889, hundreds of incandescent lamps illuminated Udine. The relatively small Friulian city, then home to roughly 20,000



> ARTURO MALIGNANI



> THOMAS EDISON

people, suddenly found itself among Europe's pioneers of electric urban lighting.

Yet Malignani initially underestimated his own achievement. He apparently assumed that major foreign inventors must already possess superior technology. Only later did he patent his vacuum-production process, obtaining an Italian patent

in January 1894. A U.S. patent application followed that August, and U.S. Patent No. 537,693 was granted on April 16, 1895.

Then the remarkable reversal occurred.

It was not Malignani desperately chasing Edison for recognition. Edison's organization became interested in Malignani. Historical accounts report that Edison sent technicians to Udine to verify the Italian inventor's results. One particularly fascinating episode involved Edison engineer John White Howell, who was traveling through Europe and visited Udine to examine Malignani's bulbs and process.

What he found was convincing enough to bring the Friulian inventor to America.

Malignani crossed the Atlantic aboard the City of Rome, arriving in New York in October 1895. He subsequently met Edison in New Jersey and demonstrated the process whose value had first emerged in his Udine workshop. Edison's organization acquired the exploitation rights. One contemporary reconstruction places Malignani's payment at \$30,000 – an extraordinary fortune in the 1890s.



Malignani had not invented Edison's incandescent lamp. His contribution was different and crucial: he developed a superior industrial method for producing the vacuum that allowed incandescent lamps to work more efficiently, reliably, and economically.

And the light bulb was only part of his story. Malignani pioneered hydroelectric development in Friuli, worked on power stations, promoted Udine's electric tram system, experimented with an electric automobile around 1890–1891, and maintained a meteorological observatory.

That makes Udine essential to the story. Far from the great industrial laboratories of America, a young Italian experimented until he found a solution important enough that Edison's people crossed Europe to see it.

In the history of Italian invention, few stories reverse expectations quite so beautifully: this time, America came looking for the inventor in Italy.



We the  Italians
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ITALIAN FLAVORS

White gold from Veneto, the story of Asparago Bianco di Bassano

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

In the Veneto countryside, at the foot of the Venetian Prealps, spring brings one of Italy's most distinctive vegetables. Asparago Bianco di Bassano DOP is not simply white asparagus. Its unusual color, delicate texture, slightly sweet and bitter flavor, and centuries-old connection with the area around Bassano del Grappa make it an extraordinary expression of how Italian agriculture can transform geography into flavor.



The asparagus comes from the local “Comune” or “Chiaro di Bassano” ecotype. Unlike green asparagus, its edible shoots develop underground, away from sunlight. Without light, photosynthesis and the production of chlorophyll are prevented, allowing the shoots to retain their characteristic pale color. The result is an asparagus that is tender, remarkably low in fiber, and recognizable for its subtle balance between sweetness and a pleasantly bitter note.

Its identity begins beneath the soil. The production area lies along the Brenta River and consists largely



of alluvial soils created over centuries by deposits of gravel, sand, and silt. These loose, well-drained soils allow the asparagus plant to develop an extensive root system. The local microclimate is influenced by the Brenta, while the Venetian Prealps and Monte Grappa provide geographical protection. Together, these conditions contribute to the rapid development, tenderness, and low fibrousness of the shoots.

And this is a genuinely local treasure. The DOP production zone is restricted to 10 municipalities in the province of Vicenza: Bassano del Grappa, Cartigliano, Cassola, Marostica, Mussolente, Pove del Grappa, Romano d'Ezzelino, Rosà, Rossano Veneto, and Tezze sul Brenta. European Protected Designation of Origin status was obtained in 2007, formally linking the product's identity to this small corner of Veneto.

Even harvesting reflects tradition. The asparagus is picked by hand, traditionally beginning around St. Joseph's Day on March 19, with the season continu-

ing into late spring. Producers harvest frequently, often in the early morning, because timing is essential for maintaining freshness and keeping the tips tightly closed.

The official specifications are remarkably precise. DOP asparagus must generally measure between 18 and 22 centimeters, have a minimum central diameter of 11 millimeters, and be tender, intact, and predominantly white. After selection, the spears are traditionally gathered into bundles and tied with a “stroppa,” a young willow shoot. Each certified bundle carries a numbered seal that ensures traceability back through the production chain.

In the kitchen, Bassano’s white asparagus is traditionally treated with restraint. Its delicate flavor does not need complicated preparation. One of the territory’s emblematic combinations is “asparagi e uova” – tender white asparagus accompanied by eggs – allowing the vegetable itself to remain the centerpiece.

Asparago Bianco di Bassano represents something larger than a seasonal delicacy. Its whiteness comes from the way it grows, its texture from the soil beneath it, and its character from a microclimate found in a remarkably limited territory.

In Veneto, spring has a flavor – and, in Bassano, its color is white.





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ITALIAN INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

How Bologna in Emilia Romagna became the world's ice cream valley

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Bologna is famous for tortellini, mortadella, and ragù, but the surrounding area also leads a less visible global industry: machines that produce gelato. The concentration of manufacturers, technical knowledge, training centers, and suppliers around the city has earned the territory the nickname “Ice Cream Valley.” Its influence reaches gelato shops, restaurants, hotels, and international chains worldwide.



The story began with Bologna mechanic Otello Cattabriga. In 1927, he founded Officine Meccaniche Otello Cattabriga and developed a motorized machine that reproduced the gelato maker’s manual

scraping and spreading movements. His invention reduced physical labor while improving consistency, helping transform gelato production from a demanding craft into a more scalable business.

During the 1930s, engineer Bruto Carpigiani refined the concept. He designed the Autogelatiera, an automatic machine featuring a sealed gearbox and a rotating helical blade that made production faster and more hygienic. Bruto died in 1945 at age 42, before seeing his invention manufactured.



› OTELLO CATTABRIGA

In 1946, his brother Poerio established Carpigiani Bruto Macchine Automatiche with 50,000 lire in capital, a 20-square-meter workshop, and 12 employees.

The company expanded rapidly during the postwar economic boom. New technologies arrived in the 1960s, including equipment for soft-serve ice cream and the Hard-O-Matic batch freezer. Carpigiani entered the United States in 1964 through Coldelite USA and acquired Cattabriga in 1971. The historic rivals eventually became part of the same industrial group, preserving separate brands while combining production expertise.

Today, Carpigiani is headquartered in Anzola dell’Emilia, outside Bologna, and controls roughly 35% of the worldwide market for artisanal gelato and soft-serve equipment. Recent company



> GELATO UNIVERSITY





accounts have placed annual revenue above €150 million, while a 2022 profile reported €165 million. The company has produced more than 1 million machines and operates a service network of 500 specialized centers across 110 countries.

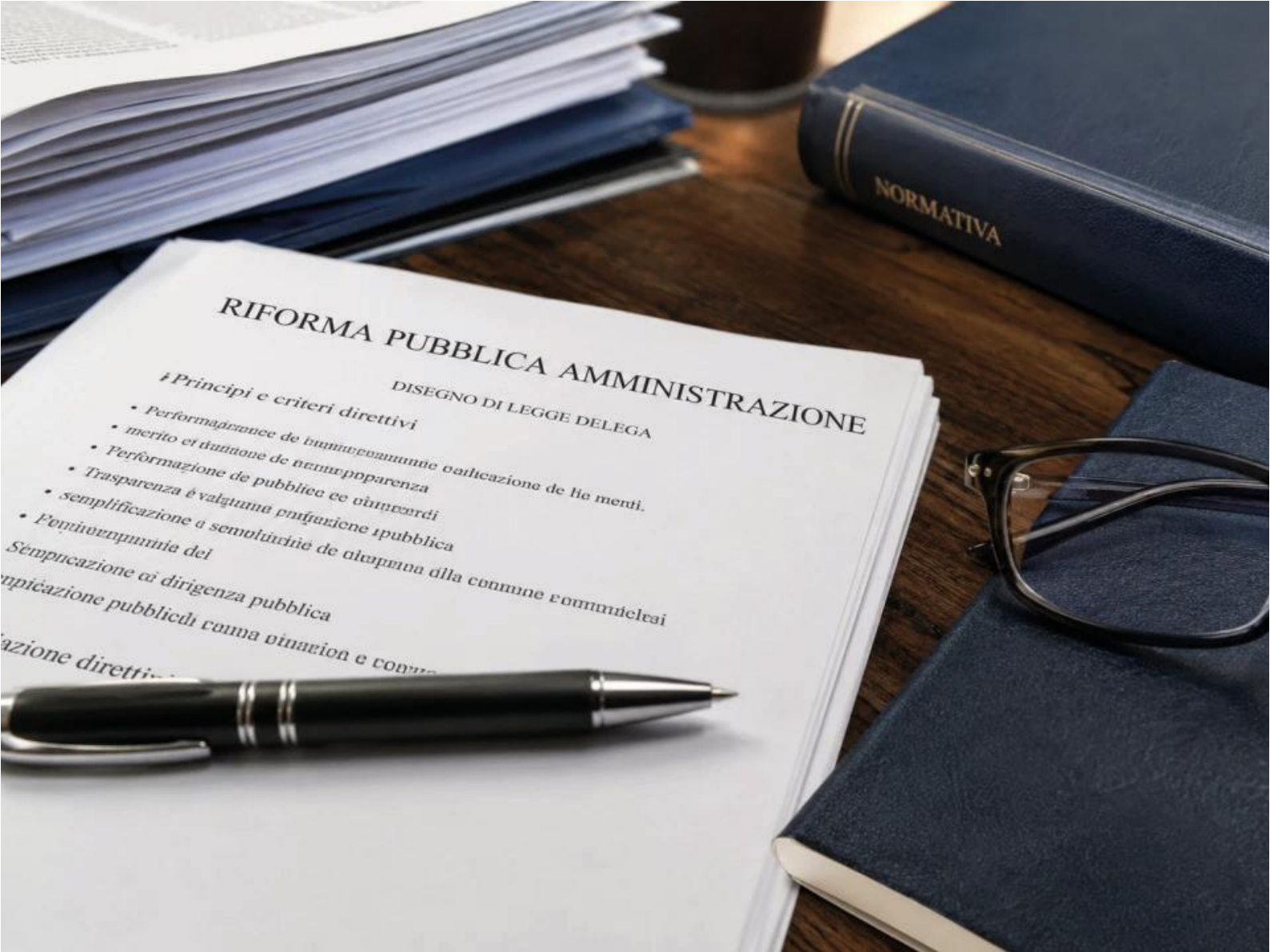
Bologna's leadership depends on more than manufacturing. Carpigiani Gelato University, founded in 2003, trains aspiring gelato makers in recipes, food safety, production methods, pricing, and business planning. Its international campuses help customers adapt Italian techniques to different ingredients, climates, and consumer preferences. The company also opened the Gelato Museum in 2012 inside a renovated 2,200-square-meter section of its Anzola headquarters.

The cluster also includes specialists in refrigeration, stainless-steel components, electronics, display cases, and food-processing systems. This nearby supply chain shortens development times and supports continual experimentation. Knowledge

circulates among engineers, technicians, gelato makers, and instructors, giving manufacturers an advantage that is difficult for isolated competitors to reproduce.

This combination of machinery, education, maintenance, and cultural promotion explains the district's durability. A professional batch freezer is not simply an appliance: it must control temperature, incorporate the right amount of air, maintain texture, and deliver consistent results throughout demanding service hours.

The "Ice Cream Valley" demonstrates how Emilia Romagna turns food traditions into advanced industry. Bologna does not merely export gelato as an Italian symbol – it exports the technology, training, and technical support that allow entrepreneurs worldwide to produce it. Behind countless display cases filled with pistachio, chocolate, and straciatella lies a sophisticated manufacturing system developed near Bologna.



ITALIAN GOOD NEWS

Italy's public administration reform aims to reward merit and accelerate government efficiency

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Italy has approved one of the most significant overhauls of its public administration management system in recent years, introducing a merit-based framework designed to modernize career advancement, improve performance evaluation, and make government services more efficient. The reform seeks to strengthen accountability across ministries, regional governments, municipalities, healthcare organizations, and other public bodies by linking professional growth more closely to measurable results rather than seniority alone.

The new legislation introduces a structured career path for public managers, creating a system in which promotions and leadership appointments depend increasingly on demonstrated competence, performance indicators, and the ability to achieve organizational objectives. Performance evaluations will become a central element in determining career progression, while assessment systems will be standardized to improve consistency across different public administrations.

A major objective of the reform is to make Italy's public sector more dynamic and attractive to highly qualified professionals. By encouraging continuous training, professional development, and measurable achievement, policymakers aim to create stronger incentives for innovation within government offices. Managers who successfully improve organizational performance will have greater opportunities for advancement, while evaluation systems are expected to become more transparent and comparable across institutions.

Another important feature is the increased em-



phasis on identifying internal talent. Rather than relying primarily on automatic career progression, administrations will be encouraged to recognize employees with proven managerial capabilities and prepare them for leadership responsibilities. This approach is intended to strengthen institutional continuity while improving the quality of public management over time.

The reform is also expected to contribute to reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies. Better-performing managers are expected to accelerate administrative procedures, improve coordination among offices, shorten response times, and promote greater use of digital tools already introduced through Italy's broader public administration modernization programs. More effective leadership can also improve the implementation of investments financed through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which requires strict deadlines and measurable outcomes.

Economically, a more efficient public administration has the potential to generate benefits well beyond government offices. Faster permitting procedures, quicker processing of business applications, more efficient procurement, and simplified interactions between citizens, companies, and institutions

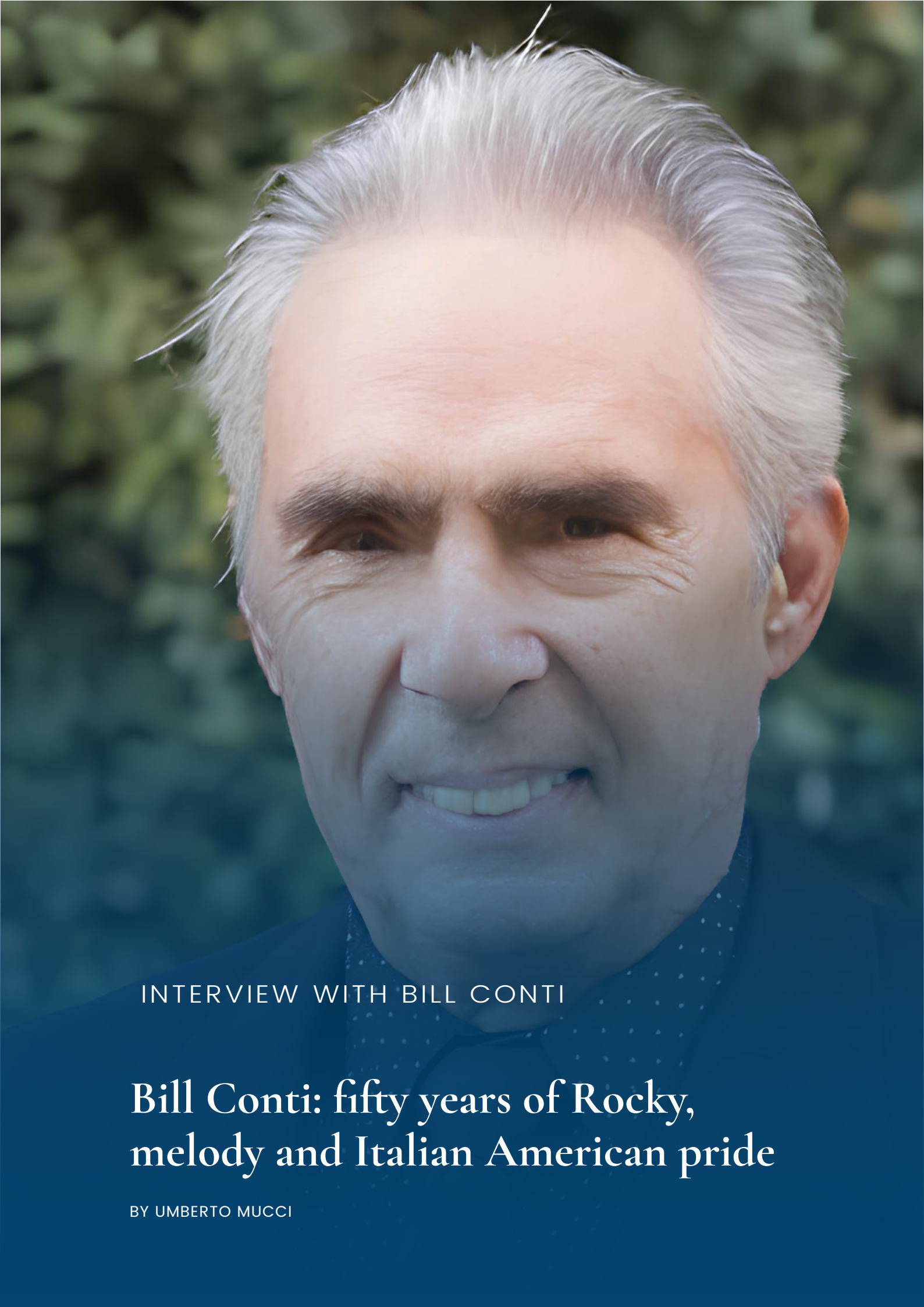


can reduce administrative costs and improve Italy's overall competitiveness. International organizations have repeatedly identified administrative efficiency as one of the factors influencing investment decisions and long-term economic growth.

The legislation also aligns Italy with broader international trends that increasingly emphasize measurable performance, professional accountability, and leadership development in the public sector. Rather than focusing exclusively on compliance with procedures, the new framework places greater attention on outcomes, organizational effective-

ness, and service quality delivered to citizens.

If successfully implemented across the country's thousands of public offices, the reform could gradually reshape how Italy's civil service operates. By rewarding merit, strengthening management, encouraging continuous improvement, and reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, the new framework has the potential to make public institutions more responsive, more efficient, and better equipped to meet the demands of a modern economy while delivering faster and higher-quality services to citizens and businesses.

A close-up portrait of Bill Conti, an older man with white hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a dark blue shirt with small white polka dots. The background is a blurred green foliage.

INTERVIEW WITH BILL CONTI

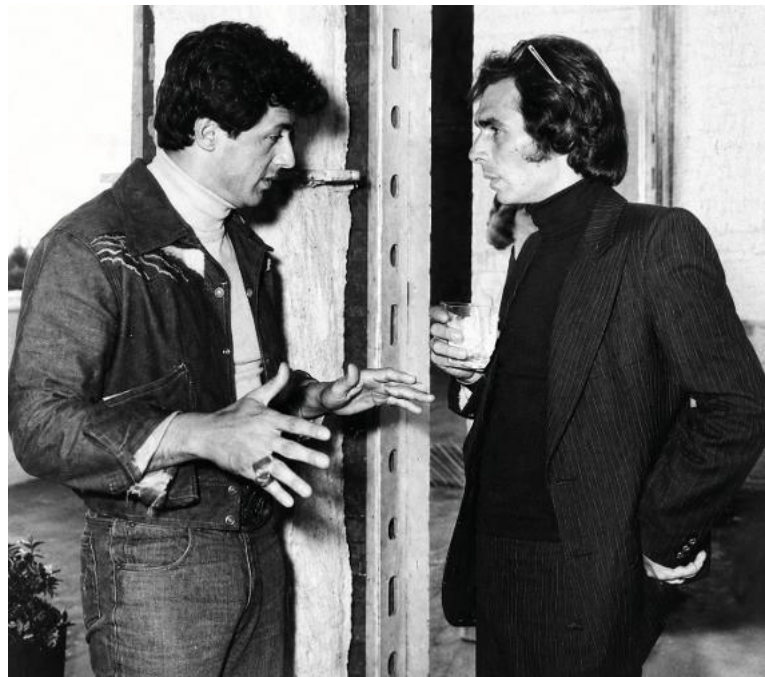
Bill Conti: fifty years of Rocky, melody and Italian American pride

BY UMBERTO MUCCI

Rocky steps out of his house before dawn, while the city is still wrapped in silence. At that moment, he isn't a champion. He's a loser. He's alone. Then the trumpet of "Gonna Fly Now" begins to play. Rocky starts running without stopping, turning every drop of sweat into a declaration of defiance against fate. He runs through South Philadelphia's Italian Market, pushes beyond his limits, and finally reaches the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He climbs them one by one, and when he reaches the top, he raises his arms to the sky. That is where one of the greatest legends in movie history is born - not in the boxing ring. It is born, perhaps above all, because of that music.

I don't know if there's anyone in the Western world who hasn't seen that scene. I don't know if there's anyone who doesn't instantly recognize those notes. The main figures behind it are Italian Americans. If Sylvester Stallone changed the history of world cinema with Rocky exactly 50 years ago, then Bill Conti did the same for the history of film music with "*Gonna Fly Now*." Nominated for an Academy Award the following year and, inexplicably, not honored with the Oscar, it isn't just a theme song: it is *the* theme song. It was written by a great Italian American who, to me, is nothing short of a true legend. I owe a heartfelt thank you to my friend Tito Schipa Jr. for making this conversation with Bill possible. My deepest thanks to both of them.

Bill, on behalf of the entire We the Italians community and personally, thank you for your music, and welcome. It is an honor

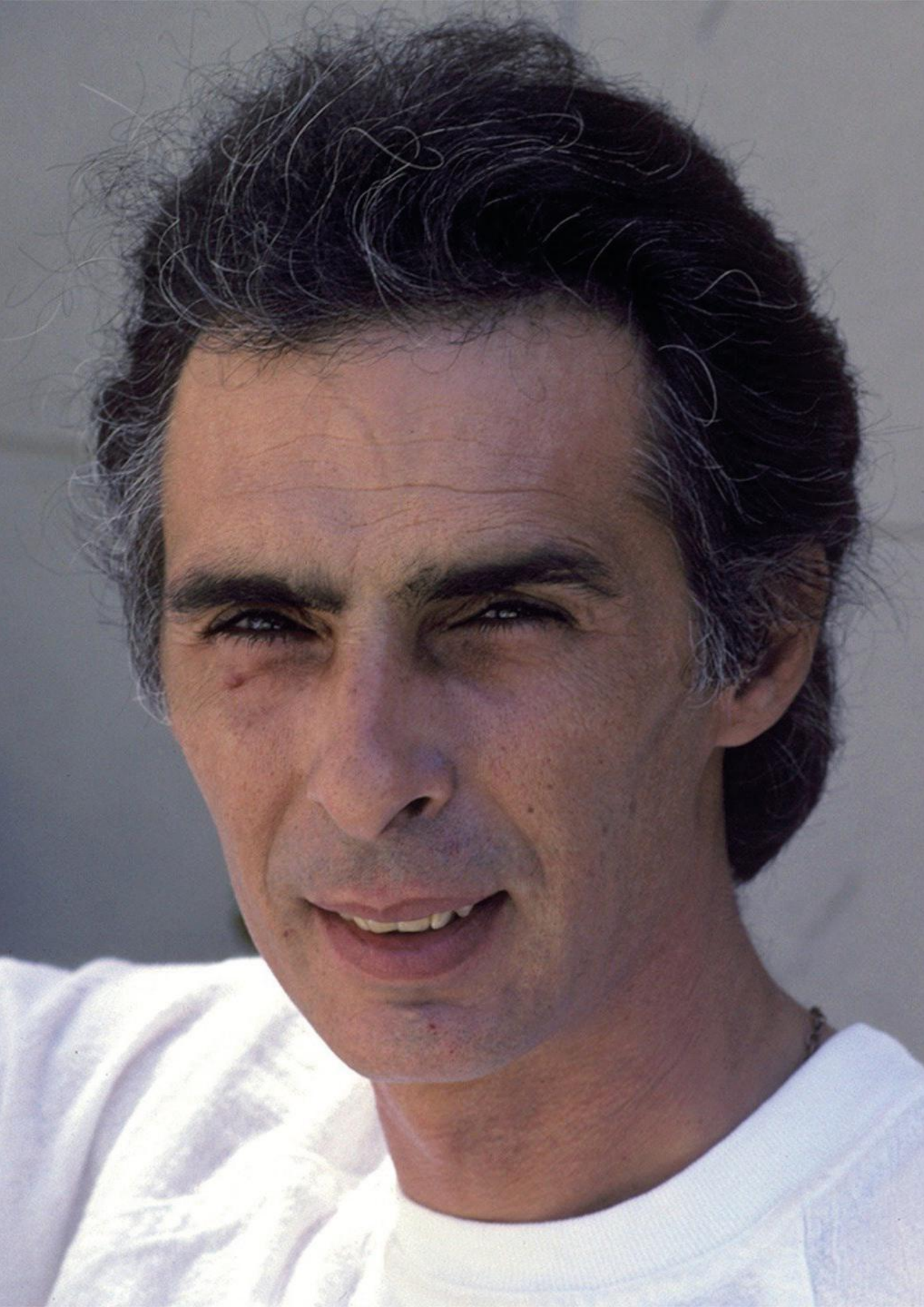


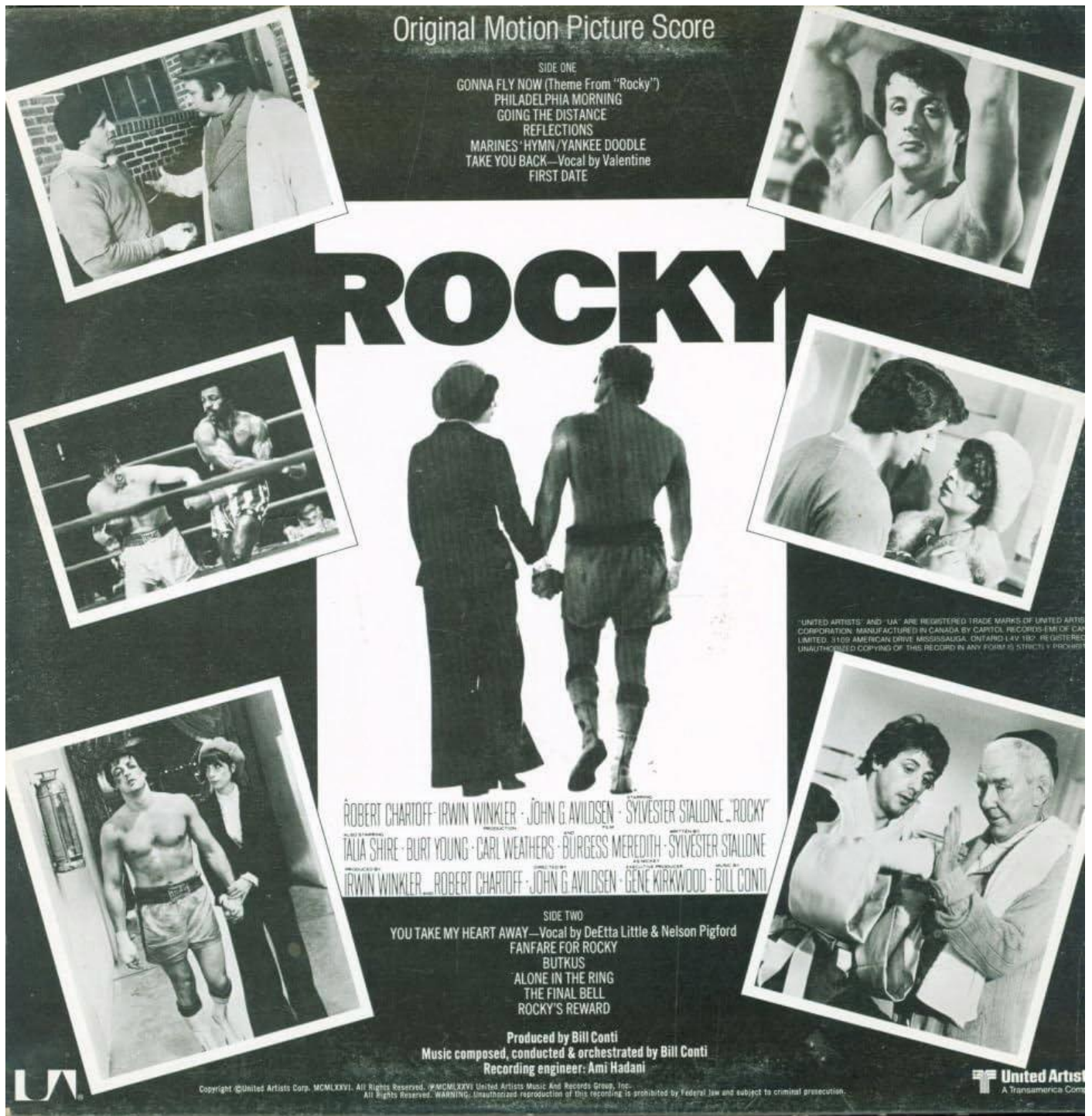
and a privilege to speak with you. You were born into an Italian American family and also lived and worked in Italy before making your way to Hollywood. How have your Italian roots influenced the way you compose music and express emotion? Is there something deeply Italian in your music?

Absolutely. I grew up in a completely Italian household. Both my mother's and my father's families were Italian, so life inside our home was very different from life outside it.

My grandfather, Arcangelo Raffaele Conti, was born in 1885 in Pico, a tiny town south of Frosinone. He came to America as a young man, started a family there, and he played the trumpet. My father was a musician, too. He taught me solfeggio, and there was music everywhere in our house. There were stories about Italy everywhere, too.

One of my favorite memories is my father sitting at the piano while he and my grandfather sang opera together. One would sing the women's parts, the other the men's parts. Looking back, I realize how unusual that was. I don't think many households - Italian, American or otherwise - were like that. But that's how I grew up. Of course, we loved Beetho-





ven, Mozart and Bach. But Puccini and Verdi were alive in our home. They weren't composers we admired from a distance - they were simply part of our daily lives.

Outside the house, though, I was an American kid. I went to American schools, played with American friends and grew up in American culture. You can't separate yourself from that.

The funny thing is that you don't really understand what it means to be Italian American until you actually live in Italy. I was fortunate enough to do that. My two daughters were born in Rome, and living there changed my perspective completely.

As Italian Americans, we're taught to be proud of our heritage. Many Italian Americans have never even been to Italy, and yet they'll defend Italy with all their heart. I understand that feeling because



I had it myself. But once you actually walk those streets, live there and experience everyday life, your relationship with Italy changes. Mine certainly did. Ironically, living in Italy also made me realize just how American I am. That's simply the culture you grow up in. Even if Italian was spoken at home, I still grew up in America.

So, in my case, living in Italy confirmed something important: being Italian is much more than blood. It's a culture, a way of seeing the world, and something you understand much more deeply once you've lived it.

Fifty years ago, *Rocky* was released, a film that would become a symbol of the American Dream. What do you remember about your first meeting with Sylvester Stallone? When did you realize the film would have such an extraordinary impact?

Our first meeting? Two Italian American kids over a tuna fish sandwich in the MGM commissary. Sylvester had written the screenplay and he was starring in the film, but he was completely unknown at the time. He wasn't directing it, but he had very strong feelings about what the music should express.

The thing is, you can tell a composer how you feel. You can describe emotions. But you can't sing the music - that's my job. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but it isn't worth a thousand feelings. My responsibility is to put those feelings into music.

Looking back, I know that growing up with Italian opera shaped the way I approached that challenge. Opera was always playing in our house. Those great emotional struggles you find in Puccini and Verdi stay with you. Sometimes, if you simply read the plot of an opera, it almost sounds ridiculous. But then the music begins, and suddenly you're crying, or laughing, or hoping the hero somehow survives. That's the power of music. It makes you care.

People have understood that for thousands of years. The ancient Greeks believed different musical modes could influence different human emotions. Whether they were preparing for battle or expressing love, they believed music carried meaning. I've always believed that, too. And that's what I tried to bring to *Rocky*.

***Gonna Fly Now* is one of the most iconic themes in film history. How did that piece come to life?**



People often imagine that I sat down one day and wrote a song called *Gonna Fly Now*. That's not how it happened. With film music, you need the movie first. You need to see the picture because everything depends on timing. A piece of music has to fit the film, not the other way around.

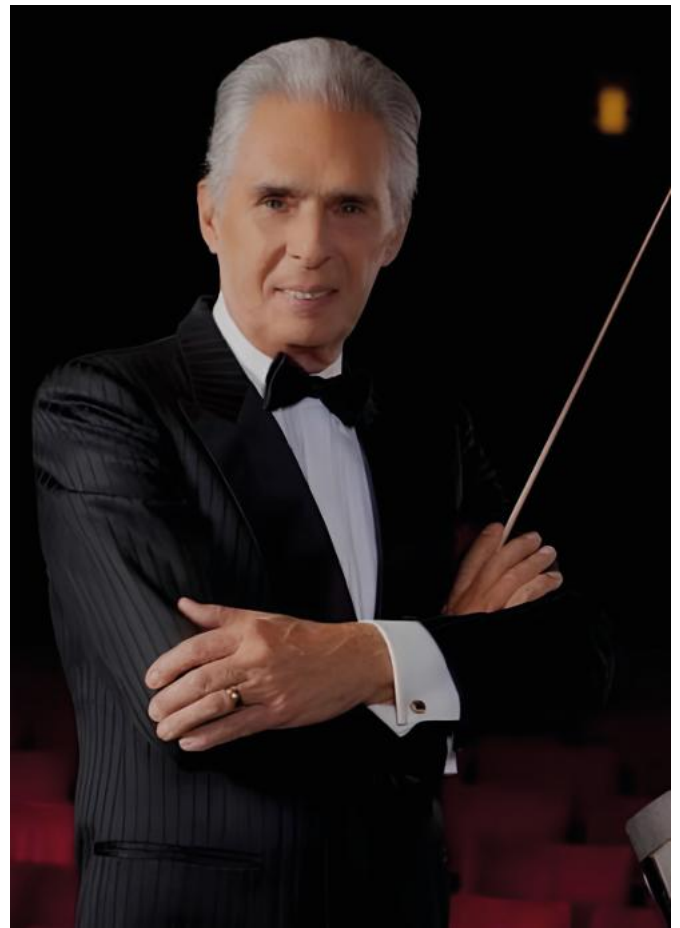
So I never even read the screenplay. That wouldn't have helped me. Once the film was nearly finished, they brought me the footage, and I started writing. I came up with a very simple little theme.

For the first nine reels of the movie, that theme appears in different forms. Then we reached the training montage. The director asked me for about a minute and a half of music so he could edit the sequence. A montage is made up of lots of short pieces of film, and rhythm helps the editor put everything together. So I simply took that little theme and played it faster.

I recorded it, brought it to the director on a cassette, and he synchronized it with the film. After a minute and a half he looked at me and said, "I need another thirty seconds." So I went back to the piano and wrote another thirty seconds. Then he wanted another thirty. And another. Little by little, that minute and a half grew into three minutes. I never set out to write a song. The music simply kept growing because the film needed it.

Only after that did Sylvester say, "Maybe we should say something here." Lyrics were already being written for other songs in the movie, so we asked Carol Connors and Ayn Robbins to write something for this piece. But John G Avildsen, the director, didn't want many words. Rocky is getting stronger, getting better, but the music should carry the story. The lyrics just needed to support it, not explain it.

So the song came together piece by piece - almost like stitching together a quilt. That's how *Gonna Fly Now* was born.



The music of *Rocky* captures an America built on hard work, hope, and redemption. Do you think that score also reflects something of the Italian immigrant experience?

I would never say Italians built America by themselves. A lot of different people built America. But Italians certainly helped build it. They came here without speaking the language. They had to overcome prejudice, adapt to a completely different culture and prove themselves every single day.

That wasn't easy. And yet they helped build the skyscrapers. They fed the country. They created businesses. They contributed to industry, to food, to design, to culture - to the American way of life. They didn't just learn America. In many ways, they helped teach America, too.

They brought their traditions, their craftsmanship, their food, their sense of beauty, their way of designing things and looking at life. Wherever you go



in this country, you can still see what Italian immigrants left behind. Their mark is everywhere.

Is there a behind-the-scenes story from Rocky that the public doesn't know? Perhaps something from the recording sessions or your collaboration with Stallone that you remember especially fondly?

One memory has stayed with me all these years. At the very end of filmmaking, dialogue, sound effects and music all have to be mixed together. We were still finishing the final reel while the premiere screening had already started.

The fight sequence was especially complicated, so we were literally mixing the last reel while people were already watching the beginning of the

movie. When we finally finished, the producers, the director, Sylvester, the mixing crew and I quietly slipped into the back row of the theater. We came in during the ninth reel. That meant we had missed everything - the audience's reactions to the opening scenes, the jokes, the emotional moments. We had no idea how they were responding.

Then came the training montage. And when it ended... The entire audience stood up. Every single person. The only people still sitting were us in the last row.

We looked at each other wondering, "What's happening?" We could feel the energy in the room, but we hadn't experienced the journey that had brought the audience to that moment. All we knew

was that suddenly everyone was on their feet. Honestly, our mouths were on the floor.

That was the first moment we realized something extraordinary might be happening. We looked at each other and thought, “If this keeps happening... we’re in trouble.” And by “trouble,” of course, I mean the best kind of trouble you could ever hope for.

You have composed music for films, television and major international events. You won an Academy Award. At what point in your career did you feel most proud to represent your Italian heritage?





Without a doubt, *Rocky* was that moment. I'd done other work before, but in this business you need a breakthrough. If you don't have a hit, it's very difficult to keep moving forward. *Rocky* was my breakthrough.

And it wasn't just successful - it became part of people's lives. Fifty years later, people still know that music. They still respond to it. They still feel something when they hear it. That's a pretty remarkable thing. I'm very proud of that.

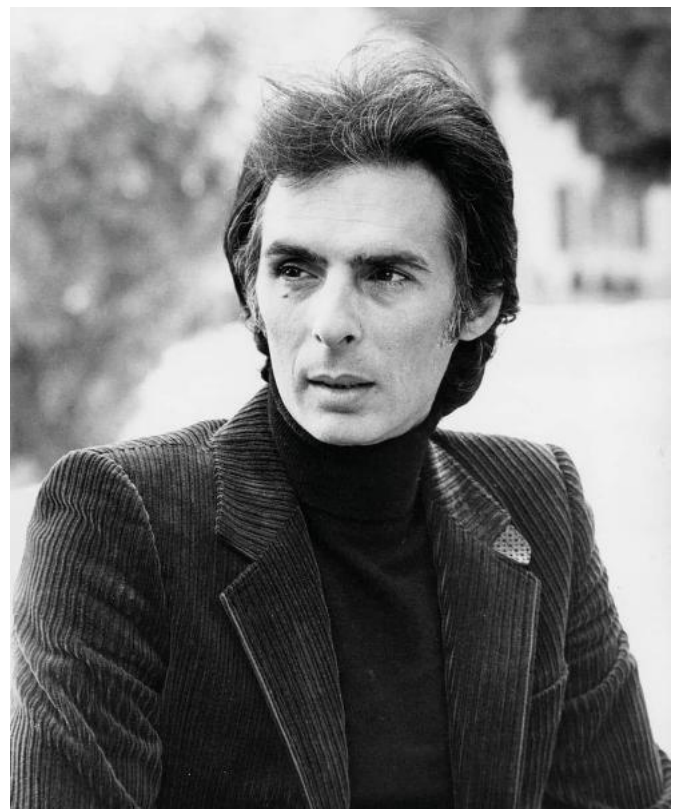
What advice would you give today to a young Italian American composer who dreams of an international career without losing touch with their roots?

I'd tell them to never lose sight of the melody. Music is made of rhythm, harmony and melody. But we Italians sing. We don't beat drums. We don't hum. We sing. That's our tradition.

If you think about the great Italian composers, what stays with you is the melody. A great melody can tell you who a character is. It can express nobility, beauty, love, hope - things that rhythm or harmony alone simply can't do. Melody carries the

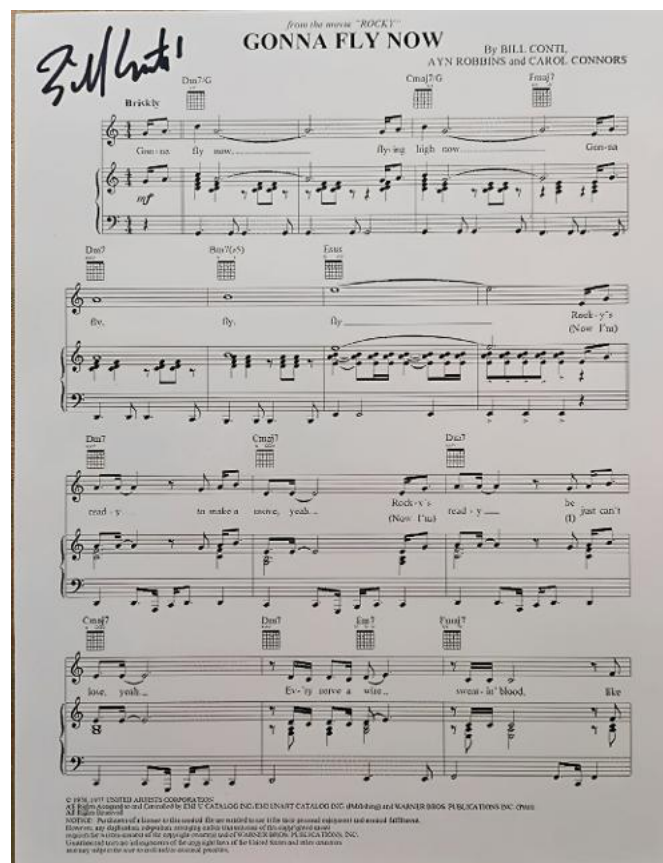
emotion.

So if a young Italian American composer wants to honor that heritage, my advice is simple: write beautiful melodies. They're all around you. You just have to open your ears.



Today, millions of people associate your music with determination and perseverance. How does it feel to know that *Gonna Fly Now* has become much more than a film score - almost a universal anthem of hope?

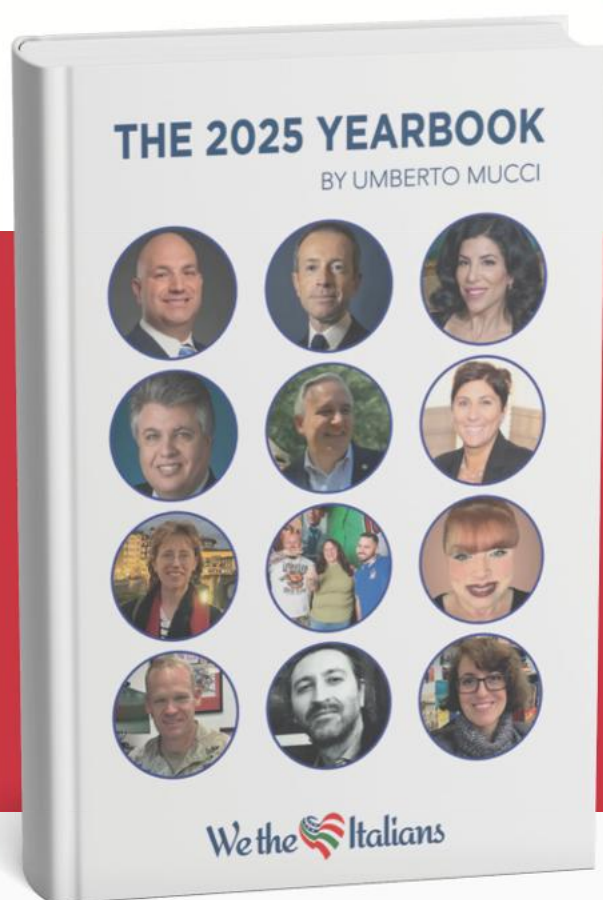
I'm grateful that it means something to people. I don't really think about it in terms of what it does for everyone else. Like anybody else, I still have to keep going. I still look for inspiration. Sometimes I find it in other people's music, just as people seem to find something in mine. That's one of the wonderful things about music - it belongs to whoever needs it.



If *Gonna Fly Now* has become an anthem of hope or perseverance, I'm honored. But what people are really hearing are my feelings. Those feelings were real when I wrote the music. And if they're still reaching people today, fifty years later, that's the greatest compliment a composer could receive.



THE 2025 YEARBOOK OF WE THE ITALIANS



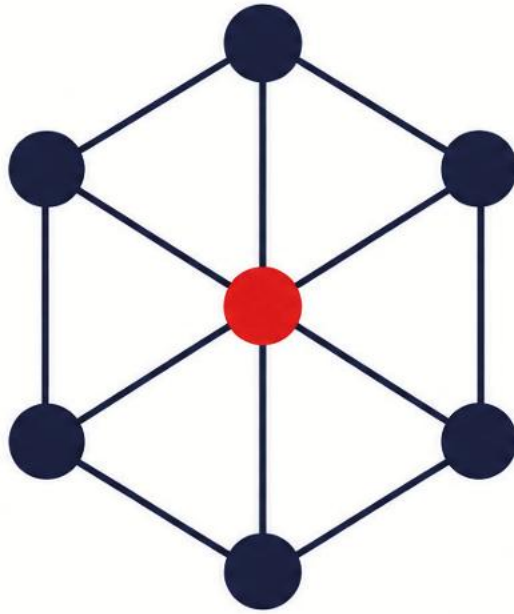
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RELOCALS



MY LIFE IN ITALY

Relocals, from expats to locals -
and perhaps Italy's most authentic
storytellers

BY MATTEO CERRI



Italy has never lacked people willing to tell its story. There are guidebooks, tourism campaigns, television programmes, influencers and enough drone footage of Tuscan hills to last several lifetimes. Yet some of the most persuasive stories about Italy today are being produced by people who were never commissioned to promote it.

They came from elsewhere for work, love, retirement, a house, a business opportunity or simply a different life. At first, many would have called themselves expats. Then something happened. They stayed.

They dealt with the comune, found tradespeople,

met neighbours and learnt the small things that come only from everyday life. They stopped merely living in Italy and began to live Italy.

We call them Relocals.

The word brings together relocation and local. A Relocal is not simply a foreigner with an Italian address, but someone who has chosen Italy as a place to live, built a genuine relationship with a territory and often started telling that experience to people elsewhere.

Some have large social-media followings, many do not. What matters is trust. Calling them “foreign influencers in Italy” would miss the point: the most valuable voice may belong to someone whose smaller community is genuinely considering a move. They do not necessarily influence clicks. They influence decisions.

Taken together, they may represent an extraordinary, decentralised and largely unsolicited instrument for promoting Italy abroad. Nobody recruited them or handed them a script. They chose Italy, tested it against everyday life and started talking.

Relocal is the brainchild of that observation, but also of years of practical experience.

The idea has grown out of the work of ITS ITALY, which in recent years has become a reference point for international people trying to turn an attraction to Italy into something tangible: a home, an investment, a relocation or a different way of living part or all of their lives here.

Working alongside people before, during and after that choice has made one thing obvious: the story does not end when somebody gets the keys or completes the move. In many ways, that is where it starts. When does somebody stop feeling like a visitor and begin to feel part of a place? What

makes them stay? And what do they tell people back home?

That curiosity follows logically from another piece of work developed through NOMAG: a wider research into what international digital nomads and remote workers are looking for when they consider Italy. The two projects are different, but share a wider question: what happens between the international desire for Italy and the reality of choosing it?

NOMAG looks at people considering Italy. Relocal starts one step further along that journey. Its protagonists have already made the choice.

The project will be presented in Rome on 24 September 2026 with an initial study of 100 Relocal. Through questionnaires and interviews, that first group will help us draw a preliminary picture of who they are, why they chose Italy, what happened after they arrived and how they now describe the





country to others.

It is not a definitive census. It is a starting point from which to ask better questions. And the 100 are only the beginning.

After Rome, Relocals will go on the road across Italy.

The road show will call Relocals together where they live: large cities, small towns, celebrated destinations and places that seldom appear in international coverage. We want to meet people of every nationality, listen to them and invite them to contribute.

The working language will be English, but Relocals is not an American or British project. English is simply the shared language that allows people from different countries to join the same conversation. The passport is not what connects them. The choice is.

At each stage we will return to some of the ques-

tions first asked of the original 100. Why Italy? Why this place? What surprised you? What helped you belong? What still makes life unnecessarily difficult? And when somebody abroad asks what it is really like to live here, what do you tell them?

But the questions themselves will also evolve. The road show will not simply take finished research around the country and repeat its conclusions. The road show will become part of the research.

Every stop will add new people, places, evidence and probably contradictions. Participants will not simply be an audience for Relocals. They will help build Relocals.

By the end of the journey, the ambition is not merely to update the findings presented in Rome, but to understand how the picture itself has changed. Which assumptions survived? Which disappeared? What differences emerged between parts of Italy and between recent and long-term arrivals?



We the Italians is the natural partner. Its international audience and relationship with communities that care about Italy beyond its borders make it the right platform not merely to report on Relocals, but to help find and involve them.

The intention is to develop the journey together: beginning in Rome, taking it around Italy, opening it to the We the Italians communities and seeing what people teach us along the way.

Relocals should never become another campaign telling people what they are supposed to say about Italy.

A tourism campaign can show the Italy a country wants foreigners to see. A guidebook can tell you where to go. But somebody who has spent years in a town, dealt with bureaucracy, neighbours and ordinary life, and still chooses to remain has another sort of authority.

Their account is often less polished, but more believable. A Relocal may say that the village is wonderful but public transport is hopeless, or that buying the house was easier than navigating the paperwork afterwards. That does not weaken the story. Often it makes the positive part credible.

Some of what Relocals say will be flattering; some may be uncomfortable. Both are useful. A country that wants to attract international residents, talent and investment needs to understand where the promise matches lived experience and where it does not.

“Expat” often describes somebody who has moved abroad while remaining slightly outside the place where they live. “Relocal” tries to describe what may happen next: becoming local enough that the place is no longer scenery.

Italy becomes the supermarket, the neighbour, the local festival, the town hall and the view from the kitchen window on an ordinary Tuesday.

Italy’s international image has traditionally been



built around the exceptional: art, food, history, villas and sunsets. Relocals can add something different — the credibility of ordinary life, told by people who had other places to choose from and chose this one.

Collectively, they could become an extraordinary instrument of Italian promotion. Not because they are all Instagram influencers - many are nothing of the sort - but because they are credible storytellers of a choice they actually made.

Rome on 24 September is therefore not the destination. It is the first photograph.

From there, ITS ITALY and We the Italians will take that photograph around the country and invite the people inside it - and many who are not yet inside it - to redraw it with us.

By the end, we hope to understand not only who the Relocals are, but what Italy looks like through the eyes of people who arrived from elsewhere, decided to become part of it and now tell its story back to the world.

They may turn out to be one of the most powerful promotional networks Italy has ever had.

Not because anybody asked them to sell Italy.

Because they chose to live it.



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ITALIAN SPIRITS

Sardinia in a glass. Mirto, abbardente and the island's untamed spirits

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Sardinia's drinking culture extends far beyond wine. Across the island, families and artisans have transformed berries, herbs, citrus peels and grape pomace into distinctive spirits that evoke the Mediterranean landscape. These drinks are not simply after-dinner pleasures – they are expressions of hospitality, rural knowledge and a tradition in which almost nothing from the harvest is wasted.

The best-known Sardinian liqueur is mirto, made from the berries of *Myrtus communis*, the ever-green myrtle that grows throughout the island's ar-



omatic scrubland. Its leaves release a resinous fragrance when crushed, while its dark berries ripen between late fall and winter. Traditionally, families gathered them by hand and steeped them in alcohol before adding sugar and water.

Protected as a geographical indication, Mirto di Sardegna must be produced on the island with locally harvested berries. Regulations require at least 150 grams of berries per liter and an alcohol content between 28% and 36%. Artificial colors and flavors are prohibited. The resulting liqueur is deep ruby red, with aromas of wild fruit, herbs and Mediterranean vegetation. Its sweetness is balanced by a slightly bitter, balsamic finish.

Mirto rosso is generally served cold, often from a bottle kept in the freezer, after a substantial meal. It



accompanies holidays, weddings and family gatherings, but it is equally at home after a simple dinner. Mirto bianco offers a different interpretation. Usually made with myrtle leaves or pale berries, it tends to be lighter in color, drier and more herbal.

Sardinia's most powerful traditional spirit is filu 'e ferru, also called abbardente, a name related to the idea of "burning water." It is a clear acquavite distilled primarily from grape pomace – the skins, seeds and other material left after pressing. Although its raw material comes from grapes, filu 'e ferru is not wine. Distillation concentrates the alcohol and aromas, producing a dry, warming spirit comparable to grappa but marked by Sardinia's own methods and identity.

Its unusual name means "iron wire." According

to a popular story, when home distillation was restricted or taxed, Sardinians hid bottles underground and marked their location with a piece of wire emerging from the soil. Whether literal history or colorful folklore, the tale captures the spirit's association with secrecy, independence and domestic craftsmanship.

Filu 'e ferru is traditionally served neat in a small glass, usually at room temperature. Depending on the producer and raw material, it may present floral, fruity or earthy notes beneath its initial alcoholic intensity. Some versions are aged in wood, gaining golden color and softer flavors of spice and vanilla.

Today, a new generation of Sardinian distillers is expanding this heritage. Contemporary gins, bitters and botanical liqueurs incorporate juniper, myrtle, lentisk, citrus peel, wild fennel, helichrysum and other island plants. Their goal is not merely to imitate international styles, but to give Sardinia a recognizable place within modern craft distilling.

From chilled mirto to fiery abbardente, Sardinian spirits preserve the scent of the macchia, the thrift of agricultural life and the pleasure of welcoming guests. Each small glass offers a concentrated portrait of an island – rugged, fragrant and proudly individual.





ITALIAN ECONOMY

When Italy buys America – and starts building it too

BY FABRIZIO FASANI

For many years, I described the economic relationship between Italy and the United States as moving in an almost inevitable direction.



On one side were American companies, backed by substantial capital and capable of acquiring European brands, technologies, and businesses. On the other was Italy, extraordinary at producing and exporting, but far less accustomed to turning its industrial capabilities into a direct and structured presence in international markets.

That narrative is no longer enough.

In recent years, some Italian companies have begun approaching the United States differently. They are not entering the market simply to sell cables, machinery, software, or high-quality products. They are buying companies, acquiring technologies, winning major contracts, building local operations, and establishing themselves from within the world's most important market.

The very recent stories of Prysmian, Bending Spoons, and Farid Industrie, despite operating in profoundly different sectors, illustrate this transformation better than many statistics could.

Prysmian is probably the clearest industrial example.

Its American expansion goes back years. In 2018, the acquisition of General Cable had already transformed the group's international scale. Another decisive step came in 2024 with the purchase of Texas-based Encore Wire for approximately \$4.2 billion. In 2025, Prysmian then acquired Channell Commercial, a California company specializing in connectivity infrastructure.

On August 3, 2026, Prysmian took another major step forward, announcing the acquisition of Atkore, an American group active in electrical systems, cable management, and infrastructure serving data centers and industrial buildings, in a transaction valued at approximately \$3.8 billion.

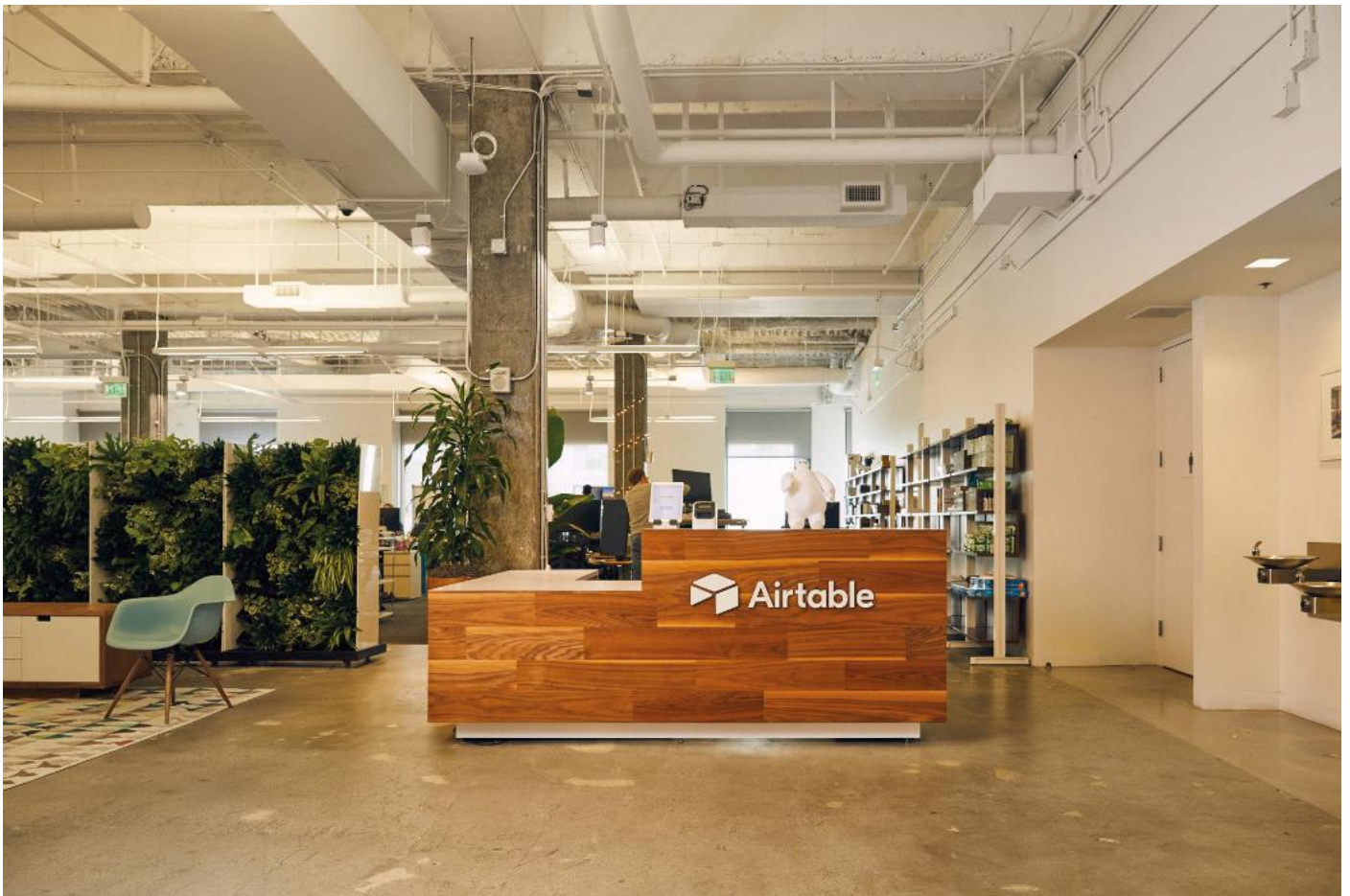
We are no longer looking at an Italian company that simply exports heavily to the United States. We are looking at a global group, with Italian roots and leadership, that now considers North America an integral part of its industrial platform.

Bending Spoons is following an entirely different path, but with the same ambition.

The Milan-based company has developed an original model: identifying already established digital products and platforms, often at a delicate stage in their evolution, acquiring them, and attempting to relaunch them through technology, organization, and new monetization models.

Over the years, it has acquired American names including Evernote, Meetup, Brightcove, Vimeo, AOL, and Eventbrite. On August 4, another piece was added with the announcement of the acquisition of Airtable, an American platform used by companies to build applications and organize workflows, valued at approximately \$1.3 billion in the transaction.

What is interesting is not merely the financial scale. Evernote, Vimeo, AOL, Eventbrite, and Airtable are brands that, at different times, have become part of the history of America's digital economy. A compa-



ny founded in Milan is no longer simply trying to export a good app to the United States – it is buying pieces of the American technology ecosystem and attempting to shape their transformation.

Then there is a third case, seemingly more traditional, that perhaps illustrates the change even more clearly.

Farid Industrie is a Turin-based company specializing in waste collection equipment. In recent days, it has won a contract in New York that could be worth approximately €250 million through 2031. It is Italian technology being applied to one of the world's most complex and visible urban systems. But the most interesting part comes next: Farid has announced its intention to establish a corporate presence in the United States, with dedicated personnel and an American operational base.

It may seem like a minor detail, but it is not.

Prysmian, Bending Spoons, and Farid represent

three different ways of crossing the same frontier. Prysmian acquires industrial capacity and market share. Bending Spoons buys technology, users, and platforms. Farid wins a major contract and, starting from that foothold, builds a stable production and commercial presence.

This, in my view, is where something is changing in the very structure of Italian internationalization.

For decades, we have identified the success of Made in Italy primarily with exports. And rightly so. But exporting ultimately means reaching a market while continuing to remain outside it. The new generation of Italian companies instead seems determined to take the next step – entering physically and corporately into the markets where they intend to compete.

From this perspective, the United States represents the most interesting laboratory. It is no longer enough to ship a product from Italy to an American customer.

Companies need to produce in the United States, acquire American businesses, participate in their supply chains, win public contracts, attract local capital, hire people, build industrial relationships and, above all, accept the challenge of competing directly on the scale of the American market.

We might call this a new Italian approach to off-shore investment, provided that we free the word “offshore” from the almost exclusively financial meaning we often assign to it. In this case, offshore means taking capital, expertise, and entrepreneurship beyond national borders – not to move away from Italy, but to strengthen its competitive capabilities.

Naturally, there are significant risks. Multibillion-dollar acquisitions mean financial exposure, organizational complexity, and difficult integration processes. A major international contract requires a company to guarantee production capacity and continuity for many years. Transforming from an Italian exporting company into a genuinely multinational group also profoundly changes corporate governance.

And perhaps that is precisely the point. Italy is no longer merely the country of excellent companies



attractive enough to be acquired by foreign investors. It is also beginning to become a country whose companies acquire businesses abroad, conquer markets, grow in scale, and decide to compete directly on the playing field of the world’s largest economies.

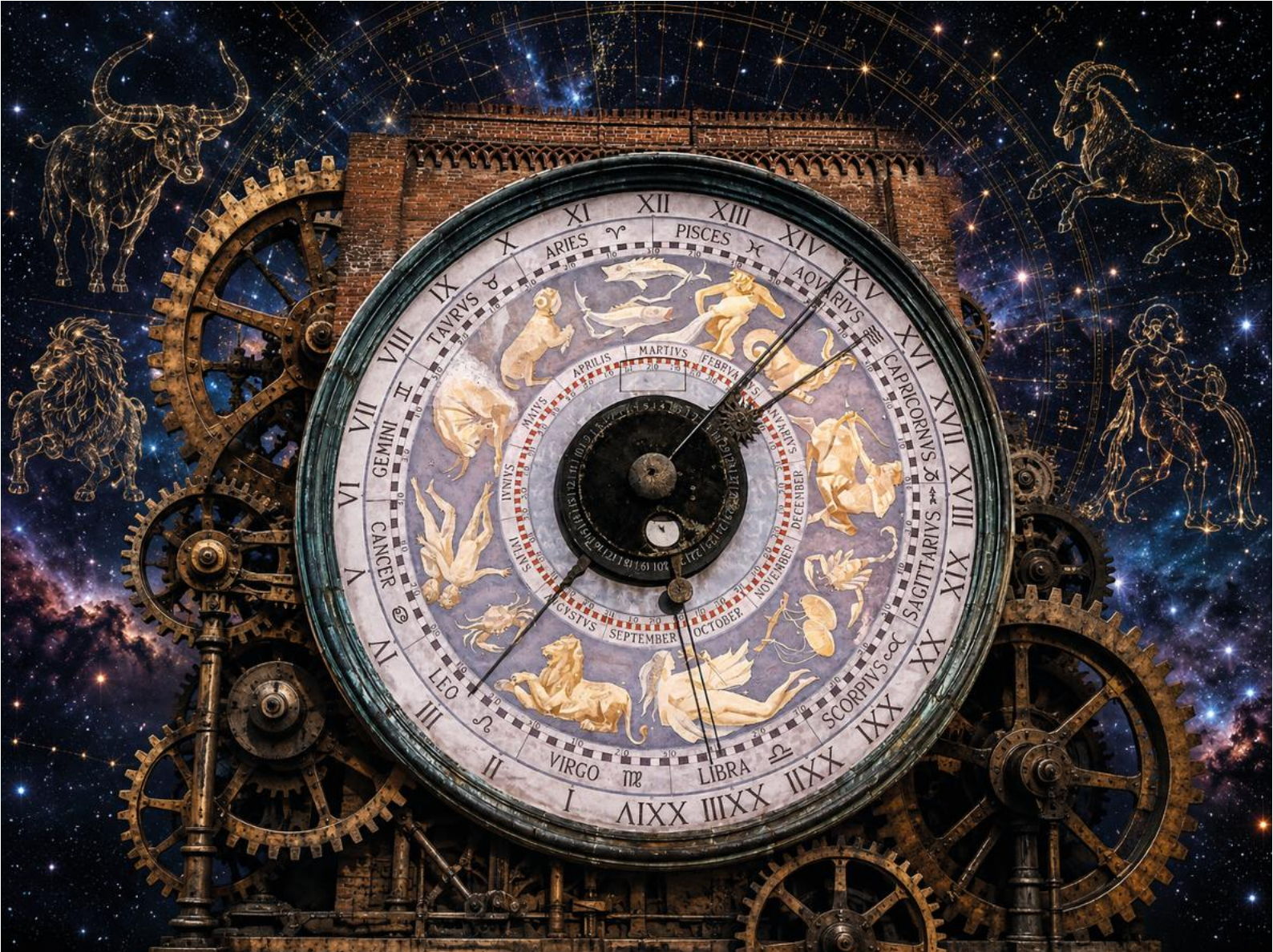
For Italian Americans, this is a particularly interesting change because it alters the very nature of the economic bridge between our two countries.

Wine, fashion, machinery, food, and all the products that have made Italy familiar to Americans continue to travel across that bridge.

But today, moving in the opposite direction from the traditional narrative, Italian capital, technology, managerial expertise, and industrial ambition are crossing it as well.

And perhaps the true Made in Italy of the next decade will be precisely this – not merely something Italy produces and sells around the world, but Italy’s ability to become part of the world without losing its identity.





We the  Italians
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ITALIAN CURIOSITIES

Cremona's 440-year-old machine that still maps the sky

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

High above Piazza del Comune in Cremona, Italy, an extraordinary machine has been tracking time and the heavens for more than four centuries. The astronomical clock of the Torrazzo is not merely a beautiful Renaissance timepiece. It is essentially a mechanical representation of the sky – an analog astronomical computer created centuries before electricity, electronics, or digital calculation.



The clock was created by Cremonese clockmakers Francesco and Giovanni Battista Divizioli, father and son, with work beginning around 1582–1583, at the very moment when Europe was adopting the Gregorian calendar. The mechanism was completed during the 1580s and, remarkably, the original mechanism remains in operation today.

What immediately makes the clock extraordinary is its size. Its astronomical dial measures approx-

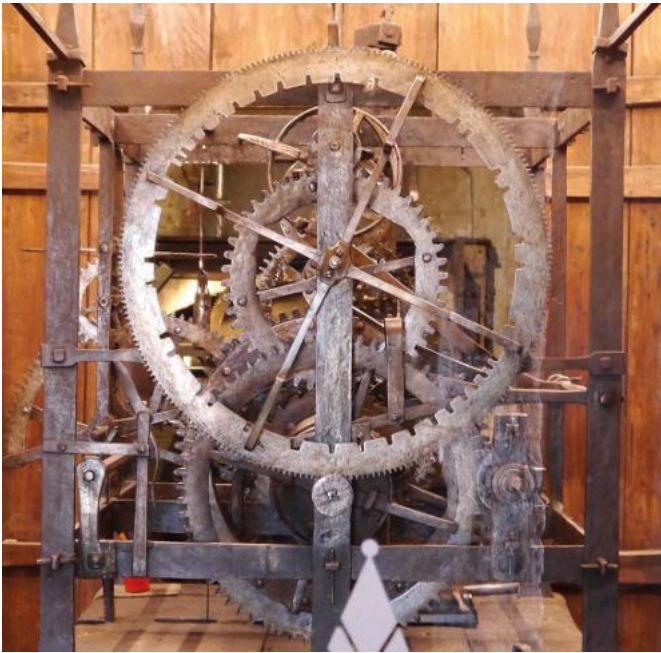
imately 8.2 meters, or nearly 27 feet, in diameter – about 8.4 meters including its copper frame. By comparison, the famous clock faces of London's Elizabeth Tower, commonly associated with the name Big Ben, are approximately 6.9 meters across. Cremona's dial is therefore substantially larger.

But size is only the beginning of the story.

The clock does much more than tell the hour. Its elaborate astronomical display represents the celestial sphere and the zodiac, following the apparent movements of the Sun and Moon. Through an ingenious system of gears and indicators, it can display astronomical information including the Moon's phases, the Sun's movement through the zodiac, solstices and equinoxes, lunar nodes, and information connected with solar and lunar eclipses.

In other words, someone standing in Cremona centuries ago could look at a building and obtain information that today we would normally expect from an astronomical calendar, specialized software, or an app.





The mechanism is entirely mechanical. Gears translate the passage of ordinary time into several different astronomical cycles, each moving at its own rate. The result is particularly fascinating because the machine has continued performing these calculations across approximately 440 years of scientific and technological transformation.

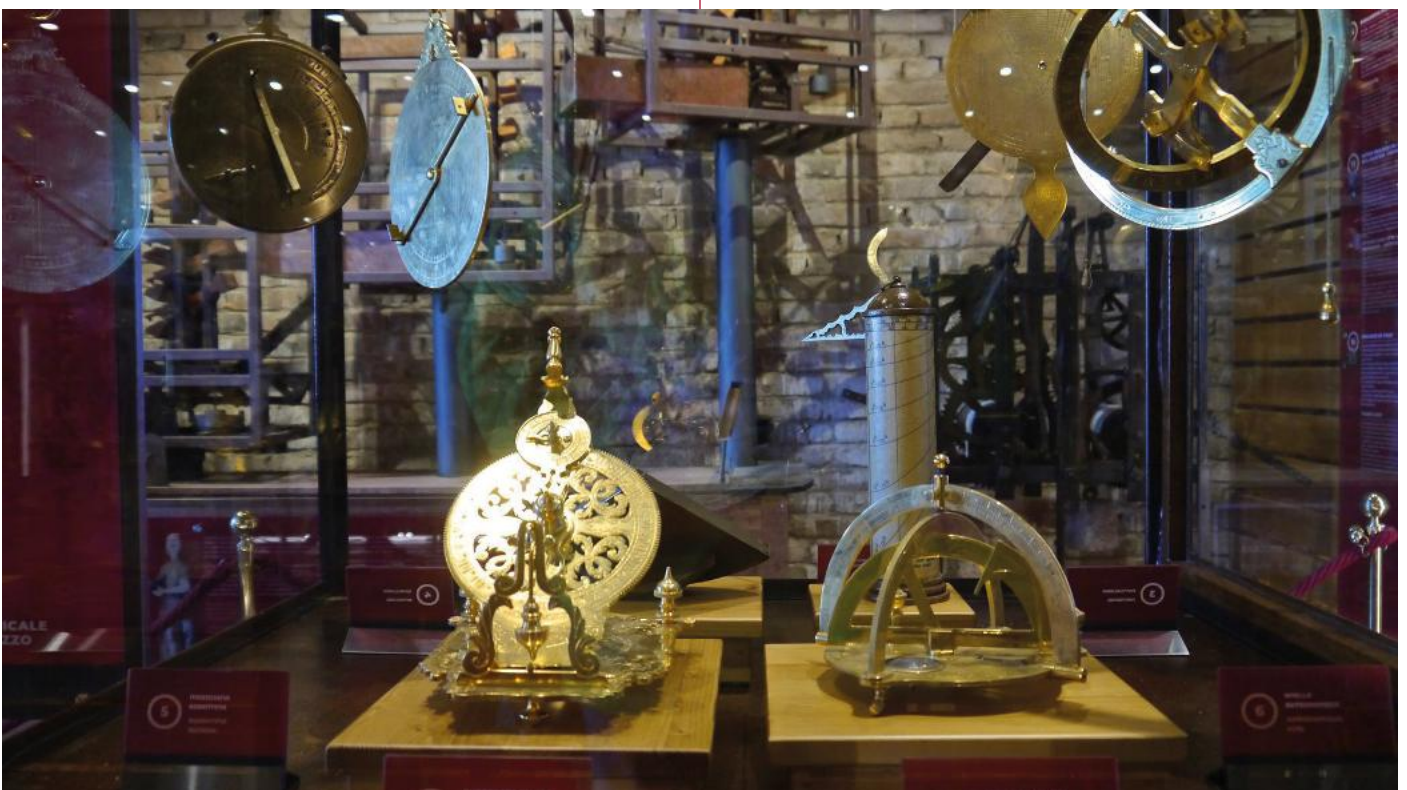
There is another curiosity hidden behind the spectacular façade. The painted dial people see today is

not exactly the one Renaissance residents saw. Its decoration has been restored and repainted several times over the centuries, with the current appearance resulting from 20th-century restoration work. Behind it, however, survives the historic mechanical heart of the clock.

Even maintaining the machine has an old-fashioned dimension. The astronomical clock requires regular manual winding rather than simply drawing power from an electrical system. Inside the tower, visitors can see the mechanism and understand how weights, gears, shafts, and wheels transform mechanical movement into astronomical information.

Its setting is equally exceptional. The clock is mounted on the Torrazzo, the monumental brick bell tower beside Cremona Cathedral. The tower rises more than 110 meters and contains 502 steps, making the journey upward a physical exploration of architecture, astronomy, and the history of time-keeping.

Since 2018, that experience has become even richer through the Museo Verticale, a museum dedicated





to the measurement of time housed inside the Torrazzo.

Perhaps the most fascinating thing about Cremona's astronomical clock is the contrast it embodies. We associate sophisticated calculations with microprocessors, satellites, and computer screens. Yet in Cremona, a machine conceived during the Renaissance continues to model movements in the sky using metal gears and mechanical ingenuity.

More than 440 years later, this remarkable machine is still looking upward.





We the  Italians
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ITALIAN HANDCRAFTS

Calabria's silk road, how San Floro revived a thousand-year craft

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

In the hills near Catanzaro, the small Calabrian village of San Floro is protecting one of Italy's most remarkable craft traditions. Here, among thousands of mulberry trees, silk is still produced through a complete local process – from raising silkworms and gathering cocoons to extracting, dyeing, and weaving the precious thread.



The story begins long before San Floro's modern revival. Silk production reached Calabria during the Greek-Byzantine period, together with the cultivation of mulberry trees whose leaves provide the silkworm's essential food. By the 11th century, Catanzaro had already developed a reputation for its silk textiles.

Between the 14th and 18th centuries, silk became one of the foundations of the area's economy. Mulberry trees spread across the countryside, silkworms were raised by rural families, and looms operated in homes and workshops. Catanzaro emerged as one of Europe's most respected silk-producing cities, admired for velvets, damasks, brocades, and fabrics enriched with gold and silver threads.

The city's knowledge also traveled abroad. In 1470,

silk artisans from Catanzaro were invited to Tours to help France develop its own production. Their expertise contributed to an industry that would later flourish in other French centers, including Lyon.

Calabria's silk economy eventually declined under the pressure of taxation, industrial competition, changing markets, and imported raw materials. By the late 19th century, much of the trade had disappeared. Mulberry groves were abandoned or replaced, looms became museum pieces, and techniques once passed from one generation to the next survived mainly in family memories.

San Floro is now reversing that decline. In 2014, Miriam Pugliese, Domenico Vivino, and Giovanna Bagnato founded the agricultural cooperative Nido di Seta. After studying and working elsewhere, the 3 young Calabrians returned home with the goal of rebuilding the traditional silk chain while creating sustainable employment.

The cooperative manages approximately 5 hectares containing more than 3,000 mulberry trees. During the breeding season, silkworms consume large quantities of fresh leaves before spinning cocoons from a single continuous filament. The cocoons are processed in the cooperative's mill, where the fine fibers are carefully unwound, combined, and transformed into usable yarn.





The work requires patience and sensitivity. Temperature, humidity, leaf quality, and timing influence the worms' development. Extracting the filament demands precision, while spinning, natural dyeing, and weaving involve skills that cannot be replaced entirely by machinery. Scarves, clothing, jewelry, and textile accessories therefore carry the subtle variations of authentic craftsmanship.

Nido di Seta learned from elderly Calabrians who still remembered traditional methods, while also developing a contemporary agricultural and commercial model. Its network now involves silkworm growers and artisans beyond San Floro, connecting local knowledge with a wider Italian supply chain.

The village's Silk Museum, housed inside historic Castello Caracciolo, preserves looms, tools, fabrics, and evidence of Calabria's former silk economy. Visitors can also explore the mulberry grove, observe the silkworms, and follow the transformation from cocoon to finished fabric.

San Floro demonstrates that heritage can become a productive future. Calabrian silk is not a costume preserved for nostalgia. It is a living material shaped by agriculture, design, manual skill, and territorial identity – an ancient thread once again connecting Calabria with the world.

LIBRI CHE FORMANO E TRASFORMANO





ITALIAN SOUNDS

The language without sound. The rhythmic grammar of Italian gestures

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Italian is not spoken by the voice alone. Its rhythm also travels through the hands, shoulders, eyebrows, head, and entire upper body. Watch an Italian conversation with the volume turned off and much of the acoustic information seems to remain visible. Stressed words still appear to receive emphasis, pauses can still be recognized, contrasts remain perceptible, and the conclusion of a sentence is often marked by the body returning to rest.



Italian gestures, in other words, do not merely carry meanings. They also carry sound.

This relationship belongs to the field of kinesics, the study of body movement as a form of communication. Italian gestural culture is usually discussed as if it were a visual dictionary. The famous “pinched fingers” gesture, an open palm, a raised index finger, or a hand moving beneath the chin can express recognizable ideas, questions, reactions, and emotions. Yet this vocabulary is only one part of the story. Gesture also possesses something comparable to rhythm, meter, stress, and phrasing.

When Italians speak, their hands rarely move randomly beside the words. Gestures frequently interact with prosody – the musical organization of

speech created by stress, pitch, intonation, pauses, duration, and changes in intensity. The most energetic part of a gesture tends to occur near a prominent element of the spoken sentence.

Imagine someone saying, “Non è possibile” – “It is not possible.” The hand may move downward sharply on “non” if the speaker wants to emphasize the refusal. In another context, the strongest movement may fall on “possibile,” reinforcing disbelief. The gesture acts almost like a percussion beat placed beneath the accented syllable.

Researchers call many of these movements “beat gestures.” They may involve a quick downward motion of the hand, a small movement of the wrist, an index finger striking the air, or a repeated oscillation between 2 positions. Unlike gestures that imitate an object or action, beat gestures do not necessarily have an independent meaning. Their purpose is rhythmic. They mark the elements the listener should notice.

The body therefore becomes part of the sound system. A stressed syllable may be supported by a stronger movement; an elongated vowel may accompany a wider gesture; a rapid sequence of words may produce shorter, faster beats. A speaker can visually underline a contrast, announce the arrival of important information, or separate one part of an explanation from another.



Italian gestures also provide a form of visible punctuation. The hands may rise as a sentence begins,

remain active while an idea develops, and return toward the body when the phrase reaches completion. A pause in speech may suspend the gesture in midair. A change of direction can signal an opposition similar to “but” or “however.” A final downward movement may function almost like a period.



This coordination is not mechanical, nor is it exclusive to Italian. Speakers of many languages align gestures with prosodic prominence. Individual personality, geographical origin, emotional intensity, and conversational setting all influence how frequently people gesture. Not every Italian moves in the same way, and no gesture lands perfectly on every stressed syllable.

What makes the Italian case especially fascinating is the visibility and cultural importance of this coordination. Italian communication often gives the body enough freedom to make the underlying rhythm of speech unusually clear. The gesture does not simply translate a word into an image. It amplifies the word’s acoustic force.

This may also explain why Italian can seem musical even before a listener understands it. Its sound

is produced not only by open vowels, consonant length, syllabic clarity, and melodic intonation. It is reinforced by a visual rhythm that helps organize the flow of speech.

Italian conversation is therefore a genuinely multimodal performance. The voice provides melody, pitch, and verbal meaning. The hands add beats and accents. The face modifies emotional tone, while posture helps frame the beginning and end of each idea. Together, they create a kind of human orchestration.

Turn off the sound, and the words disappear. Their rhythm, however, continues to move.





We the  Italians
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ITALIAN DESIGN

How Giovanni Battista Giorgini and his relationship with the US gave birth to Italian fashion

BY ALBERTO IMPRODA

One particularly significant aspect of the relationship between Italy and the United States is undoubtedly the world of fashion. The United States is widely recognized as having played a fundamental role in reviving Italy's textile industry, particularly from the end of World War II through the years of the economic boom.

Fortunately, Italy's factories in this sector had remained intact during the war. Because they were not considered strategic military targets, they had largely been spared from Allied air raids. In the postwar period, the United States was therefore able to allocate a substantial share of the financial resources provided through the Marshall Plan to restarting and revitalizing their production.

The United States also introduced its mass-production technologies into Italian factories, enabling the country to modernize its machinery and provide

professional training for a new generation of Italian technicians. At the time, many Italian engineers traveled to the United States for advanced professional training. The trips made by Adriano Olivetti are especially well documented, although they fall outside the specific field of fashion.

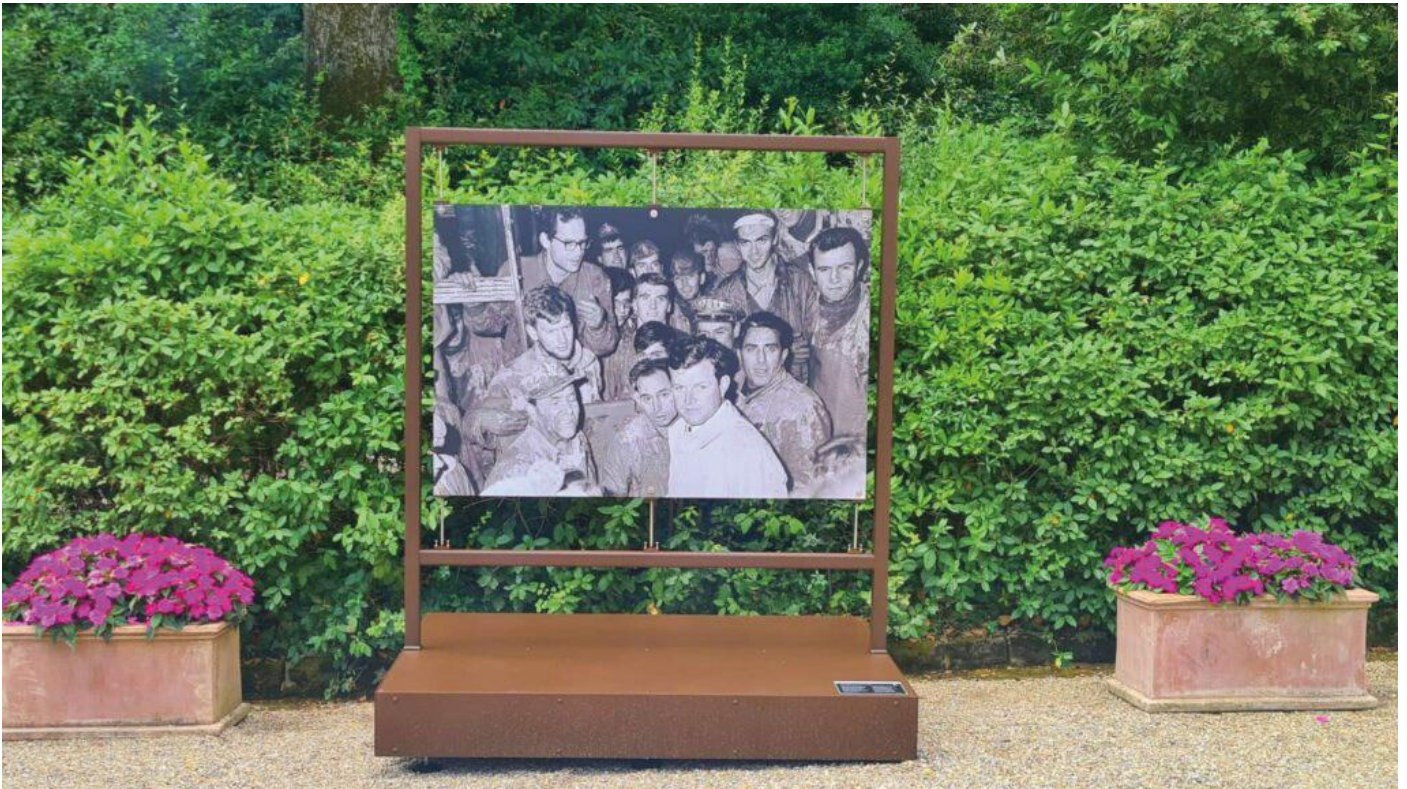
More specifically, the phenomenon that would later become known around the world as Italian fashion emerged from the visionary initiatives of Tuscan marquis Giovanni Battista Giorgini in the years following World War II and from his connections with the United States.

Giovanni Battista Giorgini, affectionately known as Bista, was born in Forte dei Marmi in 1898 into a family of patriots associated with the Italian unification movement. Bista's family owned a company that exported finished marble, one of the signature products of the local economy.

Neri Fadigati, the marquis's grandson, recalls: "In 1923, my grandfather felt trapped in Forte dei Marmi and wanted to leave the provinces for Florence, where he opened a buying office with a Swiss



› GIOVANNI BATTISTA GIORGINI



partner. In 1924, he went to America and began exporting fine Italian handicrafts. These included straw goods, table linens, and leather goods from Florence, ceramics from Faenza, Capodimonte figurines, and Murano glass.”

The marquis successfully became part of America’s social and business world. As Neri Fadigati also explains: “He spoke English fluently because he had studied it, understanding that communication on equal terms was essential. He also spoke French well, having learned it from his Swiss mother, and he was a Protestant, which allowed him to join an American charitable organization.”

The talented Tuscan businessman was therefore well positioned to distribute Italian handicrafts through major U.S. department stores, from Neiman Marcus to Bergdorf Goodman, bringing them into the homes of millions of Americans.

At the time, luxury was a highly exclusive sector dominated almost entirely by French products. Giorgini, however, had understood that the Roos-

evelt-era vision of extending prosperity to an ever-wider range of social groups was opening the way for a different kind of offering and for Italian goods.

On February 12, 1951, Giovanni Battista Giorgini organized Italy’s first true fashion show in the ballroom of his Florence residence, Villa Torrigiani on Via dei Serragli.

The runway featured garments from a number of Italian fashion houses and designers, including Carosa, Fabiani, Simonetta, Schuberth, Fontana, Veneziani, Noberasco, Marucelli, Emilio Pucci, and Gallotti.

Giorgini also invited several leading U.S. buyers and five prominent journalists to the event. From the outset, he understood that presenting the products to the international press, and especially to American buyers, was essential.

The initiative was an enormous success. French newspapers reported that the Florence show had shaken the salons of Parisian haute couture. It

marked the birth of Italian fashion and of the Made in Italy identity.

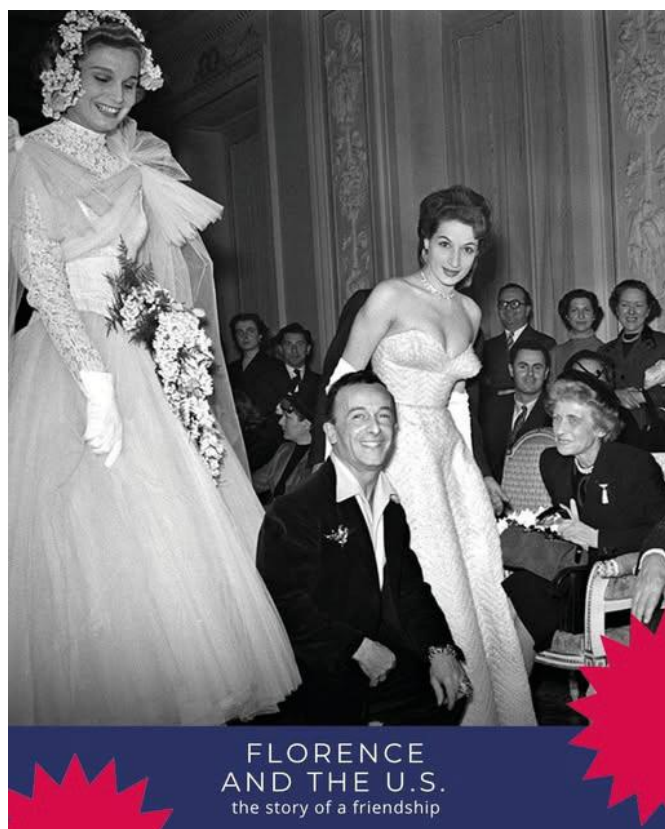
As Bista had perceptively anticipated, American consumers were especially captivated by the products of Italian companies. They were drawn to creations that may have been less elaborate than their French counterparts but were simpler, more practical, and easier to wear.

“Wearable” was, in fact, the term coined by the U.S. press to describe the clothing coming from Italy.

The following year, in July 1952, Giorgini moved the shows to the magnificent Sala Bianca in Palazzo Pitti. Bista continued to oversee their organization until 1965.

The relationship between Italy and the United States in the world of fashion has never been interrupted. It has remained active, vibrant, and productive.

The connections between Italy’s textile and fashion industry, its designers, and American cultural influences have been constant, numerous, and wide-ranging.



Publications such as Vogue USA, where American journalist Bettina Ballard wrote, and Women’s Wear Daily, edited by Italian journalist Elisa Massai, one of the five reporters invited to the February 12, 1951 event, helped introduce Americans to the ideal of the “Italian way of life.”

The era of “Hollywood on the Tiber” is equally unforgettable. Screen icons such as Ava Gardner and Linda Christian wore designs by the Fontana sisters, while Italy’s own Sofia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida appeared in exclusive creations by Schuberth.

The birth of Italian fashion, made possible by the genius of Giovanni Battista Giorgini and his strong ties to the United States, is among the milestones now celebrated in Florence at Giardino Bardini in the exhibition “Florence and the U.S.: The Story of a Friendship.”

The exhibition opened on July 2, 2026, as part of the celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of American independence. It is presented by the Consulate General of the United States of America in Florence, Fondazione CR Firenze, and Fondazione Parchi Monumentali Bardini e Peyron.



> PAMPANELLA



We the  Italians
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ITALIAN STREET FOOD

From pampanella to caciocavallo, the street food of Molise

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Molise may be Italy's second-smallest region, but its street food proves that geographic size has little to do with culinary personality. Located between the Apennines and the Adriatic Sea, Molise has preserved a food culture shaped by farming, livestock, village festivals, and centuries of transhumance. Its street food is not polished or elaborate. It is hearty, intensely flavored, and designed to be eaten while people gather at markets, festivals, and community celebrations.

The undisputed star is pampanella, one of Molise's most distinctive foods. The specialty is closely associated with San Martino in Pensilis, a small town in the province of Campobasso, where it remains a source of local pride. Pork is generously seasoned with garlic, salt, and both sweet and hot red pepper, giving the meat its unmistakable bright red color. It is then slowly baked until tender and juicy.

Pampanella can be eaten hot or cold, but one of the simplest ways to enjoy it is inside slices of rustic Molisan bread. That combination transforms it into genuine street food - portable, inexpensive, intensely flavorful, and particularly popular at festivals and fairs. The municipality of San Martino in Pensilis itself identifies pampanella as the food most closely associated with the town.

Its unusual name is traditionally connected to "pampino," the Italian word for vine leaf, because the meat is believed to have once been cooked or wrapped using vine leaves. The precise history is difficult to reconstruct, but the dish has deep rural roots and eventually moved from domestic cooking into the public world of village celebrations, becoming known throughout Molise.

Another striking expression of Molisan food culture is grilled cheese. Caciocavallo, particularly associated with areas such as Agnone, is one of the region's characteristic cheeses. At festivals across southern Italy, caciocavallo can be suspended near a flame until its surface begins to melt, then scraped or allowed to fall onto bread. The preparation known





> TORCINELLI

as caciocavallo impiccato turns an ancient pastoral product into spectacular street food: fire, melting cheese, and bread are essentially all that is required. Meat traditions are equally important. Torcinelli are small rolls made from lamb offal held together with intestines and traditionally grilled. San Martino in Pensilis lists them among its characteristic meat dishes, another reminder of a rural cuisine in which virtually nothing from the animal was wasted.

Molise also has a sweeter side. In Agnone, ostie ripiene consist of thin wafers enclosing a rich filling traditionally made with ingredients including walnuts, almonds, honey, sugar, chocolate, and cocoa. They are especially connected with the Christmas season and represent a very different side of the region's culinary heritage.

What makes Molise's street food fascinating is precisely what it lacks: standardization. These foods emerged from individual towns, pastoral traditions, family kitchens, religious celebrations, and seasonal gatherings rather than modern street-food culture.

For travelers accustomed to Italy's famous pizza, arancini, and focaccia, Molise offers another experience. A fiery pampanella sandwich or bread covered with melting caciocavallo tells the story of a small region that never needed international fame to develop an extraordinary culinary identity.



> OSTIE RIPIENE

> PAMPANELLA





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ITALIAN SUSTAINABILITY

Italy's “waste-free” municipalities rise to 675 as recycling progress resumes

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Italy recorded renewed progress in municipal waste management in 2026, with 675 communities earning the designation “Waste Free.” The total increased from 663 in 2025, reversing last year’s 5% decline and adding 12 municipalities to the national list.

The results appear in the 33rd edition of Comuni Ricicloni, Legambiente’s annual survey recognizing local governments that combine effective separate collection with very low levels of residual waste. To qualify as Waste Free, a municipality must produce less than 75 kilograms of non-recyclable waste per resident each year.

The 675 winners represent approximately 8.6% of Italy’s 7,894 municipalities. More significant-

ly, the number of people living in participating Waste Free communities rose from 3,715,010 to 4,086,781 – an increase of 371,771 residents. This suggests that progress is reaching several larger population centers rather than remaining limited to very small towns.

Northern Italy continues to dominate the ranking, accounting for 60.3% of all Waste Free municipalities, although its total decreased by 16 communities. Southern Italy and the islands represent 32.8% and gained 16 municipalities. Central Italy, historically the weakest area in the survey, also added 16 and reached 46 communities, equivalent to 6.8% of the national total.

Veneto remains the leading region with 165 Waste Free municipalities. Lombardy ranks second with 104, followed by Campania with 73. Campania’s position is especially notable because it is the highest-ranked region in Southern Italy.



Legambiente also evaluated provincial capitals. Of the 54 capitals participating in the competition, 35 – 65% of the sample – achieved or exceeded the 65% separate-waste collection target. Only 5 qualified as fully Waste Free while also surpassing that collection threshold: Pordenone, Belluno, Nuoro, Trento and Treviso. Nuoro maintained the position it first achieved in the previous edition.

The competition recognized leaders across different population categories. Among municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants were Borrello in Abruzzo, Ripacandida in Basilicata, Morano Calabro in Calabria, Domicella in Campania and Atzara in Sardinia.

Winners with populations between 5,000 and 15,000 included Pratola Peligna, Casali del Manco, Cimitile, Venafro, Sammichele di Bari and San

Giuseppe Jato. In the category above 15,000 residents, recognized municipalities included Siderno, Bacoli, Nonantola, Azzano Decimo, Monserato, Ribera and Vedelago.

A special mention went to Bee, a black Labrador involved in Recycling Dog in Castelbuono, Sicily. The initiative is described as Italy's first organized canine-unit project dedicated to locating plastic dispersed in natural environments.

Legambiente emphasized that collection percentages alone are not sufficient. High-quality separation must be followed by effective recycling, while residual waste sent to landfills or incinerators must be reduced. The 2026 results show improvement, but they also reveal how far most Italian municipalities remain from a genuinely circular waste system.





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ITALIAN ART

The mosaics beneath Otranto Cathedral, a medieval universe in stone

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Visitors entering the Cathedral of Santa Maria Annunziata in Otranto may initially look upward, toward its arches, columns, and painted ceiling. Yet the building's greatest artistic treasure lies beneath their feet. Covering almost the entire floor is an immense medieval mosaic that transforms the cathedral into a stone encyclopedia of faith, history, mythology, nature, and human imagination.



The mosaic was created between 1163 and 1165 under Archbishop Gionata. Its principal author was Pantaleone, a priest traditionally associated with the nearby Monastery of San Nicola di Casole. Once an important center of Greek learning, Casole possessed a celebrated library and scriptorium. Pantaleone may therefore have had access to biblical writings, classical literature, chronicles, bestiaries, and stories transmitted between the Latin West and Byzantine East.

At the center of his composition stands an enor-

mous tree. Its trunk extends along the cathedral's nave, while its branches provide a structure for dozens of different narratives. It is generally interpreted as the Tree of Life, although its symbolism remains open to discussion. Depending on the direction in which it is read, it can also suggest the Tree of Knowledge, humanity's fall, or the difficult journey from sin toward salvation.

Biblical episodes appear throughout the mosaic. Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden, Cain attacks Abel, Noah receives his divine instructions, and animals enter the Ark. The Tower of Babel warns against pride, while agricultural activities associated with the months and the zodiac present human labor as part of a divinely ordered universe.

The mosaic's most surprising images, however, come from outside the Bible. Alexander the Great rises toward the sky with the assistance of 2 griffins, an episode taken from medieval versions of his legendary adventures. King Arthur appears riding an animal, accompanied by the identifying words "Rex Arturus." This is considered one of the earliest surviving visual representations of the British ruler anywhere in Europe.



Elephants, centaurs, mermaids, lions, dragons, monkeys, and other real or imaginary creatures populate the branches. Some were inspired by me-

dieval bestiaries, in which animals carried moral or religious meanings. A creature was rarely included merely because it was decorative. Its behavior, appearance, or legendary characteristics could become a lesson about virtue, temptation, wisdom, or danger.

Pantaleone did not organize these figures according to a simple modern narrative. Sacred history, classical legend, chivalric culture, natural observation, and fantasy coexist without rigid separation. For medieval viewers, these worlds were not necessarily contradictory. Together, they could illuminate humanity's place within creation.

Otranto's geographical position helps explain this extraordinary mixture. Located on the Adriatic coast of Puglia, the city faced the eastern Mediterranean and had long served as a meeting point for Greek, Byzantine, Latin, Norman, and other cultural traditions. The mosaic reflects this frontier identity.



Created from hundreds of thousands of small limestone tesserae, the floor has survived wars, invasions, restorations, and almost 9 centuries of history. Its meanings continue to be debated be-



cause no single interpretation explains every figure.

The mosaic beneath Otranto Cathedral is therefore more than an exceptional decorative surface. It is a map of the medieval imagination – a world in which Scripture, mythology, science, morality, and storytelling grow together from the branches of one mysterious tree.



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ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP ASSISTANCE

Healthcare for Italians Living Abroad

BY ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP ASSISTANCE

A significant change to Italy's healthcare system brings welcome news for Italians living abroad. A new law expands access to healthcare services in Italy for citizens registered with AIRE (the Registry of Italian Citizens Residing Abroad) and will introduce simpler procedures for enrolling in the public healthcare system. This change provides greater access to affordable healthcare services for those living abroad in Italy, including hospital care and prescription medications.



Healthcare Access for AIRE Registered Italians Before the New Law

Currently, recognized Italian citizens who are registered with AIRE and move to Italy are not automatically enrolled in Italy's National Health Service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale, SSN) for routine healthcare services. Likewise, Italian citizens who move abroad, outside of the EU/EFTA area's, and register with AIRE lose their routine enrollment in the SSN after establishing residence outside of Italy. Depending on the region and in-



dividual circumstances, they are typically entitled only to limited emergency coverage for up to 90 days, including urgent hospital care and accident or emergency treatment. They do not have access to a general practitioner or most other SSN healthcare services. As a result, many rely on private health insurance or pay for medical care out of pocket. They do not have the same full access to Italy's public healthcare system as residents of Italy, until now.

The New Law for Italian Citizens Living Abroad

On June 9th, 2026 the Italian Senate approved a bill expanding access to Italy's National Health Service for AIRE registered citizens. The new law allows eligible AIRE citizens to enroll with an Italian Local Health Authority (ASL), obtain an Italian health card, and to have access to services provided by the Italian National Health Service while they are in Italy. This means AIRE citizens will have healthcare coverage for an annual premium of €2,000, which is equivalent to \$2,281.66 US Dollars, the average cost of healthcare for all Italians. The program will be designed to be financially self-sustaining with contributions from participating AIRE citizens intended to cover the cost of the healthcare services they receive rather than placing an additional burden on the SSN or Italian

taxpayers. This means they will have an Italian health card (Tessera Sanitaria) in their pocket which they can use during their stay in Italy to receive the care they need. Minors will be exempt from the premium as long as at least one parent or guardian holds a health card.

Enrollment will be automatic for eligible AIRE registrants. However, access to healthcare services and issuance of the Italian health card will only occur after the annual €2,000 premium has been paid. That premium will go directly to the regional health system and local health authority that provides their care. The government will also make sure the fees are enough to cover the real cost of the services and that the money stays in the region where the healthcare is received. The law also gives the Ministry of Health, working with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the authority to review and adjust the annual contribution paid by eligible AIRE citizens. The fee may be updated each year to reflect the actual cost of the healthcare program and the impact of inflation which helps to ensure that the program remains financially sustainable. Failure to pay the annual premium will result in the user being suspended from accessing National Health Services; in particular, non-urgent scheduled treatments cannot be provided. The government recognized that many Italians living abroad continue to maintain strong connections with Italy and wanted to create a pathway for them to re-enter the public healthcare system.



What's Next?

Although the law has now been approved, AIRE registered Italians cannot pay into the new healthcare program just yet. The law did not take effect until July 27, 2026 and the Ministry of Health has 90 days from that date to detail the whole enrollment process, including how to apply, how payments will be made, how individuals will choose a general practitioner, how the health card will be issued, and a list of all the required documentation. The law will also make it easier for Italians living abroad to enroll in Italy's healthcare system by creating dedicated assistance offices, improving cooperation between the Health Ministry and the Foreign Affairs Ministry, and allowing government databases to securely share information in real time. They are hoping this will help reduce paperwork, speed up enrollment, and simplify the process for AIRE citizens.

Eligible individuals should be on the lookout in late October to find out how they can obtain their access to the Italian National Health Service. Until then, AIRE registered Italians should continue following the current healthcare rules while awaiting further guidance from the Ministry.

If you have any questions or are needing assistance regarding your AIRE registration Italian Citizenship Assistance is here to guide you. Visit them online at www.italiancitizenshipassistance.com or contact them today at info@italiancitizenshipassistance.com.





We the  Italians
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ITALIAN TERRITORIES

Montefeltro beyond Urbino, the Renaissance written across a landscape

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Urbino is the celebrated capital of the Italian Renaissance, but the civilization associated with Federico da Montefeltro extends far beyond its palace walls. Across the northern Marche, a landscape of ridges, valleys, fortresses and small communities preserves the geography of a state built through diplomacy, warfare and architecture.

The Montefeltro is a historical region rather than a modern administrative unit. Today, it is divided among the Marche, Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and the Republic of San Marino. Its geographic center is formed by the Apennine hills surrounding Monte Carpegna, which rises to approximately 4,640 feet. For centuries, this difficult terrain stood between the Papal States, Tuscany and the territories controlled by the Malatesta family of Rimini.

Federico da Montefeltro, born in 1422, transformed this borderland into one of Renaissance Italy's most sophisticated courts. A successful military commander, he used the wealth earned through warfare to support artists, architects and scholars. He became Duke of Urbino in 1474, but his power depended upon controlling roads, passes and fortified towns throughout the surrounding territory.

This political geography remains visible at Sassocorvaro. Its Rocca Ubaldinesca, designed with the involvement of Sienese architect Francesco di Giorgio Martini, has an unusual compact form often compared to a turtle. The building was associated with Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, Federico's trusted adviser and half-brother. Its curved defensive surfaces reveal a period when military architects were adapting fortresses to withstand increasingly powerful artillery.

Centuries later, the Rocca acquired another cultural role. During World War II, superintendent Pasquale Rotondi used it as one of the secret shel-





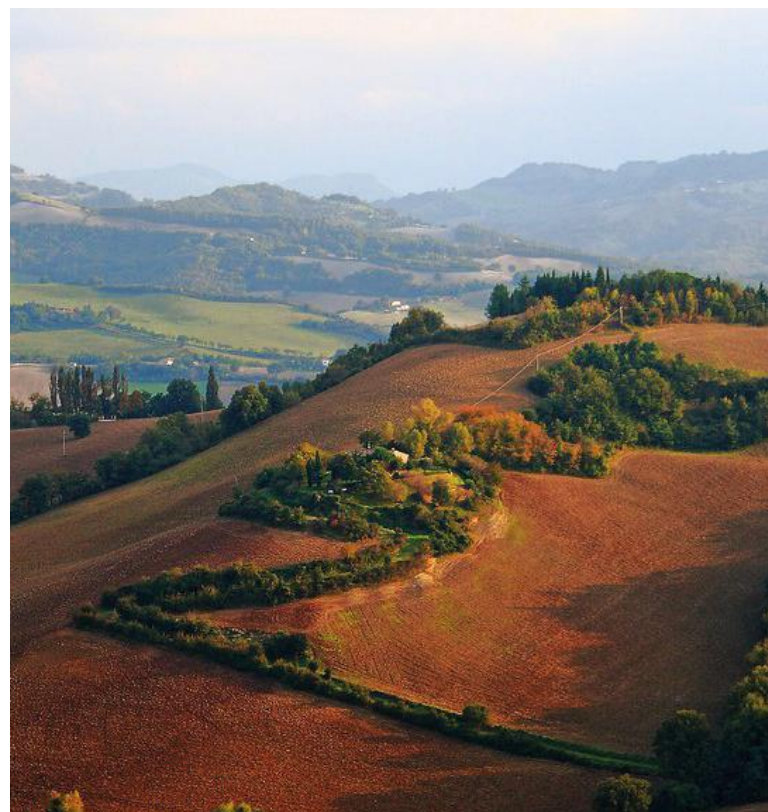
ters for thousands of Italian artworks threatened by bombing, theft and destruction. A Renaissance fortress created to defend territory thus helped defend Italy's artistic memory.

Farther west, Frontino occupies a ridge overlooking the Mutino Valley. Stone houses, narrow lanes and defensive walls demonstrate how settlement patterns followed the demands of security. Nearby, the restored watermill of Ponte Vecchio recalls the agricultural economy that supported these fortified communities.

Macerata Feltria adds Roman and medieval layers to the landscape. Near the modern town are remains associated with ancient Pitinum Pisaurense, while its hilltop center reflects the instability of later centuries. Carpegna, beneath the mountain bearing its name, became the seat of a noble family whose history was closely connected to the wider Montefeltro world.

The landscape unites these places. Wooded mountains give way to cultivated slopes, pastures and river valleys. Every fortress commands a route, and almost every village occupies a defensible elevation. Architecture here cannot be separated from geography.

Traveling through the Marche's Montefeltro therefore reveals the Renaissance as more than an artistic movement centered in Urbino. It was also a system of roads, farms, castles, alliances and carefully controlled borders. Federico's most enduring creation was not simply a court – it was a territory in which political ambition became part of the landscape itself.





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ITALIAN PROVERBS

Tanti galli a cantar non fa mai giorno

WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

The Italian saying “Tanti galli a cantar non fa mai giorno” “Tanti galli a cantar non fa mai giorno” literally means “With many roosters crowing, morning never comes.”

This traditional Italian proverb warns that when too many people try to lead, give orders, or impose their opinions, confusion replaces effective action. Its imagery comes from rural life, when a rooster's crow announced the arrival of dawn. One rooster could perform that role clearly, but an entire chorus symbolized disorder rather than progress. Passed down through Italy's oral culture, the saying was commonly applied to farming, family decisions, and community affairs. Today, it remains relevant in workplaces and politics, emphasizing the importance of clear leadership and responsibility.



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