

**STRAND
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Presents

LIKE CRAZY

A FILM BY PAOLO VIRZÌ

Starring Valeria Bruni Tedeschi & Micaela Ramazzotti

PRESS NOTES

David di Donatello Awards 2017:
Best Picture
Best Director
Best Actress (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi)

Official Selection:
Cannes Film Festival 2016 (Directors Fortnight)
Vancouver International Film Festival 2016

Country of Origin: Italy | France
Format: DCP/2.35/Color
Sound Format: 5.1 Dolby Digital
Running Time: 116 minutes
Genre: Comedy/Drama
Not Rated
In Italian with English Subtitles

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Please download photos from our website:
<http://www.strandreleasing.com/films/like-crazy/>

SYNOPSIS

Beatrice is a motor-mouthed fantasist, a self-styled billionaire countess who likes to believe she's on intimate terms with world leaders. Donatella is a tattooed introvert, a fragile young woman locked in her own mystery. They are both patients at the Villa Biondi, a progressive but secure psychiatric clinic. Paolo Virzì's new film tells the story of the unpredictable and moving friendship that develops between the two women as they flee the mental institution in search of love and happiness in the open-air nuthouse - the world of sane people.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR PAOLO VIRZÌ

After making *Human Capital*, a thriller with a rather cold and jeering tone, the first glimpses of your new film appear to reveal a comedy, with a much warmer feel? Or is this film actually even more dramatic, given that it deals with issues such as mental illness?

We had around a dozen pages of subject matter and the main characters were two psychiatric patients who are the exact opposites of one another who end up, by chance really, running away from the clinic where they are being treated. They break away from the rules, the safety measures, the constrictions governed by their treatment, which leads to a meandering, euphoric journey into the outside world.

So could we call it an adventure comedy?

We wanted it to be a fun and humane comedy, but also a story not afraid of dipping its toe into a fairytale, or even a psychedelic trip, without being whimsical. We also wanted to show the injustice, subjection and suffering of vulnerable people, of women who are stigmatized, ignored, condemned, or shut off. However, we did not want to turn the film into a pamphlet or a social exposure documentary - there are a few very good ones of those around already. If anything, we were looking for glimpses of joy, or at least happiness and pulsating excitement, even when they are constrained and confined. Is it alright to smile, or even laugh whilst telling a tale of suffering, or is this improper and outrageous? I hope it's alright, because this is what I like to do when I make a film. In actual fact, it's my main goal. Without giving too much away, this film has one of the most devastating scenes I have ever filmed. Yet, I realize I have done my best to give it a somewhat upbeat feel. For me this was the only way I could really get close to an otherwise impenetrable enigma.

Could you tell us something about the script, which you co-wrote with Francesca Archibugi?

Before we immersed ourselves in the writing, we met up with many psychiatrists and psychotherapists. We asked them to guide us on a journey into the world of medical frameworks, and tell us about the different therapies and treatments they used. We met all kinds of patients in various treatment centers, ranging from catatonic, hyperactive, melancholic, curious, suspicious, to verbose. At the end of the day, just like people in everyday life: the boundary between sanity and insanity is sometimes so subtle. Some of them were people which the institutions, the legal system, the social services had classified as dangerous, in order to confine them to Judicial Psychiatric Hospitals. We also came across many Beatrice's and Donatella's. At first we couldn't help asking the typical banal questions: What's wrong with these people? Which conditions do they have? What does it mean to be bipolar? Depressed? Borderline? But we would look at each individual's circumstances, delving into what were more often than not turbulent experiences, discovering so much intrigue that we got more excited by not summing up a person's identity in a medical report, with the name of their condition, the medication

they take, or their treatment plan. We really wanted to be on their side. And being on Beatrice and Donatella's side, with their carry on and blunders, meant that we had to emphasize just how important their background is, made up of heartache, abuse, loneliness, suffering and pain. On the other hand there are also many amusing, delirious, comical, and messed up sides to it. We loved them not only while we were creating them, but also while we were filming them, because they made us laugh. Because when they were on set, as soon as they were incarnated, just by being together they radiated a kind of joy which was mysterious, irresistible, and contagious. So I can honestly say that although we included bleak, heartrending, and even violent scenes in this film, on the other hand I don't think I have ever filmed such levels of exaltation, euphoria, or hilarity.

Tell us about Villa Biondi... Does this type of center really exist?

During our location scouting, we saw some dreary places, where patients are merely superficially looked after: sedated by drugs, sometimes restrained with belts and straps, and sometimes forgotten. But we also came across some lovely places full of vital energy, where people are trying to set up optimistic rehabilitation projects, which look beyond simply restraining patients. And we of course met many health workers – doctors, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, rehabilitation experts, and paramedics – who were so motivated, competent and utterly dedicated and involved, often despite a serious lack of infrastructure, or adequate services. We used elements which we actually came across in a clinic located in the hills of Pistoia, in a horticultural setting, where in real life it would be perfectly feasible to come across people with a problematic past, who have just come out of a rehabilitation program. Sure, there is also a skeptical and controlling social worker at Villa Biondi. There are also rules, and an abundance of pharmaceuticals, all of which could make one want to run away. But we also wanted it to be a cozy place, somewhere one would want to return to.

Would you like to tell us a bit about Valeria Bruni Tedeschi and Micaela Ramazzotti? Did you want them to play the main characters right from the start?

I would never have been able to make *Like Crazy* without Valeria and Micaela. The very first starting point for the film came about when I saw them from afar, walking through grass, mud and snow while I was filming *Human Capital*. Micaela had come to see me on set, on my birthday. It was the last take before taking a break. I happened to look over and saw Valeria taking Micaela to the catering tent. Valeria was wearing an elegant gold dress, scurrying along on high heels, while Micaela was hobbling along behind her, with a mixture of both trust and bewilderment. Suddenly, as the ground was bumpy and covered in slush, Valeria held out her hand to Micaela, to help her along. That very moment I had a sudden urge to point my camera at these two fascinating, beautiful, comical and maybe slightly crazy women.

The two main characters are female, and the clinic only has female patients... is this by any chance why you wanted to collaborate with a female screenwriter?

Female characters have always fascinated me, both as a reader and as a spectator. From Madame Bovary to Anna Karenina, there is a certain type of literature inspired by tales of the female soul. Others which spring to mind are Carlo Cassola, the cinema of Pietrangeli, Scola, and Woody Allen... But it certainly was useful to have Francesca as my writing partner. It was something we had wanted to do for some time, and it was in actual fact something we had already done informally once upon a time, when we were both young students with Furio Scarpelli, and just out of film school. In 1987, she had already made her first film when I was still at school. We would always swap scripts, and sometimes also help each other out, and this is something we carried on doing over the years. But we had never actually written an entire film screenplay together, and this just seemed like the right project for us. We share similar views on politics, storytelling, and mental health. We have both had experiences of friends and relatives who were a bit mad, and maybe we both just attract nutters, and people who are a bit psychotic or mentally disturbed.

So could we say that *Like Crazy* is a therapeutic film?

At the end of the day, all films are therapeutic. I wouldn't say they actually heal, but they do at least help us understand life. Especially films which manage to unearth humor in everyday drama and tragedy. ■

INTERVIEW WITH VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI

How did you prepare for this role?

I see Beatrice as a very powerful character. I frequently recalled Blanche Dubois when I was playing Beatrice. Not just all the actresses who have played her, but the actual character and her vulnerability, loneliness, and escape from pain, and how she uses madness to shield herself from pain. I physically experienced how madness can protect one from pain, just as the fantasy and madness inside her safeguard her from unbearable pain and loneliness. Beatrice's character embodies internal conflicts, dynamics, motivations, needs, actions, and dreams – which is why the part is so well-written, so perfect – and this makes everything so much easier for an actor.

How did you approach this character?

At times I would have liked to have been even more explicit, profound, imaginative, and creative. I wanted to be, but maybe I just wasn't capable. But I think this frustration was positive for my character, because Beatrice is not a contented person. I attempted to contribute my own personal dissatisfaction, frustration, and efforts, and sometimes even my incompetence, because she is in actual fact an incompetent person. When I was playing Beatrice, she took me for a stroll, just a little one, to take a look inside her disorder, her mythomania, her lousy behavior, her need for love, basically all her characteristics. However, I ever felt that I was well and that she was unwell, but that I just somehow had to get a little closer to her. Her mythomania, for example, seems very natural, and one

understands why she is such a pathological liar, why at times she behaves so out of order, and at other times becomes so disorientated. And as I said before, I always use my own experiences... Beatrice's loneliness isn't a remote concept, and to me she is not an alien. I may not be a pathological liar in real life, but the first scene we filmed really demonstrates what mythomania is, and I immediately understood that for this woman it is a way of avoiding depression. I don't want to suffer, so I make things up, I find a different kind of beat and create a different universe, because I can't handle things the way they really are. Oddly enough, Beatrice is a mythomaniac who also speaks the truth a lot of the time, if you look at the whole spectrum of what she says...

How did you and Micaela Ramazzotti bring the relationship between the two characters to life on set?

One step, one scene at a time. One of the first scenes Micaela and I are in is the one in which I go to see her and pretend to be a psychiatrist. It is a key scene to the stormy friendship which ensues, in which I fall for her, and she is intrigued by me. I accept her, understand her and she senses this. But then she feels cheated, which triggers my desire to rescue and protect her, and she eventually becomes capable of being rescued and protected. Then there is disappointment, followed by a rapprochement... Various stages of friendship develop between the two, including mutual feelings of affection for one another, a bit like falling in love. Micaela and I handled things valiantly, even when they got more difficult, because our characters experience joyous times, but they also undergo great duress. We lived through it all, feeling genuine joy as well as genuine duress. She gives so much of herself, she is very generous. I think we both accepted that we would fully reveal ourselves, for better or worse, and not handle the roles in a conventional manner, but be as authentic as possible. I think, or at least hope, that these two characters we bring to life embody our own actual experiences. For example the times when we were surrounded by other people but actually felt lonely, just like them. We also felt tremendous happiness, and "empathy" for one another, a real closeness. We did not treat each other with kid gloves. We were not genteel, because our characters are not genteel. So I felt that as actresses it was important to act in the same way. ■

INTERVIEW WITH MICAELA RAMAZZOTTI

How did you create your character?

With the script in hand, I used Beatrice's diagnosis of Donatella's condition: borderline with major depressive disorder, as a starting point. Psychiatry is such an interesting subject matter, and I started reading some medical texts, but the vastness of it is quite overwhelming. So I delved into her background, into Donatella's story. The relationship with her parents who neglected her, her reserved nature, the way she is distrustful, damaged, manipulative, tormented, aloof, and self-destructive. Someone who has always had to put up with injustice, and whose life is disjointed. When she was a girl she most certainly took drugs, becoming addicted to pharmaceuticals later in life. She worked in nightclubs, and used men to try and find love, but ended up with bitterness and derision. She leads a menial existence. It was important to start with her past in order to try and imagine what she was like now. I then decided to go and take a look at hospitals and

clinics, to find out more about today's situation. I went to several clinics in Rome, which were all very different. Some were very tough, like the Sant'Andrea and San Filippo Neri Psychiatric Hospitals, where the medical staff are very competent but the environment uncongenial. Patients are locked up, usually looking out onto an enclosed, empty courtyard. There is not one painting, drawing, or colorful wall... Or the Samadi, a private hospital but equally austere. But I also visited the Maieusis Hospital in Porta Capena, along with Valeria, Paolo and Valentina Camelutti, who was going to play the role of the psychiatrist Fiamma in the film. This center is more like the one in *Like Crazy*. A villa in the countryside with a vegetable garden and colorful murals, where patients with very serious mental illness issues generally undergo rehabilitation treatment, and are taught mosaic making techniques, for local houses and villas, aiming to offer them other prospects besides mere confinement. The health workers told us that sometimes patients return. Meeting these people who are trying to get better was a very intense experience. We ran into painful cases, but also met some very special people, making any trace of hypocrisy fade away, so you get straight to the point, and talk about how difficult living is, and their vulnerability. And at times an incredibly upbeat kind of energy would kick in, because mental illness is also something comical, poetic, surreal, and irreverent, and a form of rebellion. I then proceeded to work on her appearance. When Paolo created Donatella, he had someone very skinny, and a little bit masculine in mind. A psychiatrist told me that girls who are borderline often have a certain look: they are a bit gothic, have tattoos, and are sometimes anorexic. They tend to be skinny and have lots of tattoos, because by openly displaying on their body who they are they feel empowered, it offers them some kind of identity. Donatella has 23 tattoos, and around a dozen scars... Her short hair is cut so badly, it looks like she did it herself. I then lost quite a bit of weight, so that I could obtain this very look, which Beatrice refers to in their first encounter as "anorexic looking". Once I had figured out the physical aspect, along with the corresponding mannerisms, I followed Paolo's instructions: "You are always one step behind Beatrice. You let yourself be taken by the hand. You are not the one who takes the initiative, and you are terrified of everything. Once you decide to trust her, you allow yourself to be guided, but nonetheless remain a bit distrustful, all the while lost in your obsessive thoughts". It is as if Donatella has a swarm of tiny flies buzzing around inside her head, as if she is constantly looking over her shoulders. She is a slave to her unchanging thoughts, her desire to see her son who has been taken away from her, the mess she has made of things, but also the injustice she has suffered. All this is the root of Donatella's silence. This is all she thinks about. She is an asexual type of person, almost as if she were a pre-teen, a ten-year-old. Walking around with this swarm of flies inside my head, these persistent thoughts, wasn't easy. It changed my mood completely. On set I couldn't laugh. On the contrary, sometimes I would suddenly start crying for no apparent reason. How Valeria and I wept while we were filming! And at times we found it hard to shake our characters off. We would carry them around with us. We even took them home. The only time we see Donatella smile is during the scene when she meets the son she has never known. It is as if she opens up. Maybe this is the first time we see her mature, as if she wants to look after herself and her life, in order to see that little boy now and then.

Is there a scene which is particularly close to your heart?

The seaside scene is wonderful, because I didn't expect it to unfold so effortlessly. It was a very warm and restorative scene. Donatella discovers that the little baby who was taken away from her when he was a few months old has grown into a strapping young lad. I acted as if we were two friends of the same age. Maybe Donatella would like to be maternal, but she doesn't know how to. She doesn't know how to act around her son. He was taken away from her too soon, and she feels awkward and nervous. So it was a scene full of insecurity, but also happiness, and the desire to start healing.

You worked with real patients on set. What was your relationship with them like?

The girls from Pistoia who came on set were so kind and generous. They were so willing to tell us their stories about their lives full of ups and downs, and how they wanted to get better and stop taking twenty five pills a day. They were absolutely lovely girls and women with a lust for life and human contact. We were all blown away by them. Maybe I had never met women who were so sensitive, who listen to you... Nobody has ever listened to me so attentively, so compassionately. My relationship with them was primarily very therapeutic, and enabled me to examine certain shadows, moments of melancholy psychiatrists refer to as twilight moments. I don't think it's by chance that many scenes were filmed in twilight. I think Paolo often used this light in between night and day to enhance not only the poetic aspect, but also the low points of these characters. Sunset and dawn instill a sense of beauty as well as sadness. All of us, including the crew, lived through all kinds of twilight phases during filming, and at a certain point it was as if we ourselves were a group of patients being treated. Perhaps this film taught us all how to accept our own psychopathological side, the psychosis we all have within us, latching on to us. ■

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHIES

VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI – Beatrice

- 2016 **FOLLES DE JOIE / LIKE CRAZY** Paolo Virzì
MA LOUTE / SLACK BAY Bruno Dumont
- 2015 **ASPHALTE / MACADAM STORIES** Samuel Benchetrit
- 2014 **LES JOURS VENUS / THE DAYS COME** Romain Goupil
TERRE BATTUE / 40-LOVE Stéphane Demoustier
LES OPPORTUNISTES / HUMAN CAPITAL Paolo Virzì
- 2013 **VIVA LA LIBERTÀ / LONG LIVE FREEDOM** Roberto Andò
UN CHÂTEAU EN ITALIE / A CASTLE IN ITALY Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
- 2010 **LES MAINS EN L’AIR / HANDS UP** Romain Goupil
- 2009 **LES REGRETS / REGRETS** Cédric Kahn
- 2008 **LE GRAND ALIBI / THE GREAT ALIBI** Pascal Bonitzer
- 2007 **ACTRICES / ACTRESSES** Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
- 2005 **LE TEMPS QUI RESTE / TIME TO LEAVE** François Ozon
CRUSTACÉS & COQUILLAGES / MARISCOS BEACH Olivier Ducastel et Jacques Martineau
- 2004 **5 x 2** François Ozon
- 2003 **IL EST PLUS FACILE POUR UN CHAMEAU... / IT’S EASIER FOR A CAMEL...** Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
- 2002 **PEAU D’ANGE / ONCE UPON AN ANGEL** Vincent Pérez
AH ! SI J’ÉTAIS RICHE ! / IF I WERE A RICH MAN! Michel Munz et Gérard Bitton
- 2001 **LE LAIT DE LA TENDRESSE HUMAINE / THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS** Dominique Cabrera
- 1999 **AU COEUR DU MENSONGE / THE COLOR OF LIES** Claude Chabrol
- 1998 **MOTS D’AMOUR / NOTES OF LOVE** Mimmo Calopresti
CEUX QUI M’AIMENT PRENDRONT LE TRAIN / THOSE WHO LOVE ME CAN TAKE THE TRAIN Patrice Chéreau
- 1997 **THE HOUSE** Sarunas Bartas
- 1996 **ENCORE / MORE** Pascal Bonitzer
LA SECONDE FOIS / THE SECOND TIME Mimmo Calopresti
LES MENTEURS / THE LIARS Élie Chouraqui
- 1994 **OUBLIE-MOI / FORGET ME** Noémie Lvovsky
LA REINE MARGOT / QUEEN MARGOT Patrice Chéreau
- 1993 **LES GENS NORMAUX N’ONT RIEN D’EXCEPTIONNEL / NORMAL PEOPLE ARE NOTHING EXCEPTIONAL** Laurence Ferreira-Barbosa

MICAELA RAMAZZOTTI – Donatella

- 2016 **FOLLES DE JOIE / LIKE CRAZY** Paolo Virzì
- 2014 **MEZZANOTTE / DARKER THAN MIDNIGHT** Sebastiano Riso
- 2013 **TON ABSENCE / THOSE HAPPY YEARS** Daniele Luchetti

- 2011 **LE GRAND COEUR DES FEMMES / THE BIG HEART OF GIRLS** Pupi Avati
2010 **LA PRIMA COSA BELLA / THE FIRST BEAUTIFUL THING** Paolo Virzì
QUESTION DE COEUR / A STROKE OF LUCK Francesca Archibugi

PAOLO VIRZÌ - Director & Screenwriter

- 2015 **FOLLES DE JOIE / LIKE CRAZY**
2014 **LES OPPORTUNISTES / HUMAN CAPITAL**
2012 **CHAQUE JOUR QUE DIEU FAIT / EVERY BLESSED DAY**
2010 **LA PRIMA COSA BELLA / THE FIRST BEAUTIFUL THING**
2008 **TUTTA LA VITA DAVANTI / YOUR WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF YOU**
2006 **NAPOLEON (ET MOI) / NAPOLEON & ME**
2003 **CATERINA VA EN VILLE / CATERINA IN THE CITY**
2002 **MY NAME IS TANINO**
1999 **BACI E ABBRACCI / KISSES AND HUGS**
1997 **OVOSODO / HARDBOILED EGG**
1996 **FERIE D'AGOSTO / AUGUST VACATION**
1994 **LA BELLA VITA / LIVING IT UP**

CAST

Beatrice Morandini Valdirana
Donatella Morelli
Fiamma Zappa
Giorgio Lorenzini
Pierluigi Aitiani
Torrighiani
Luciana Morelli
La Signora Morandini Valdirana
Floriano Morelli
Renato Corsi

Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
Micaela Ramazzotti
Valentina Carnelutti
Tommaso Ragno
Bob Messini
Sergio Albelli
Anna Galiena
Marisa Borini
Marco Messeri
Bobo Rondelli

CREW

Director
Story
Screenplay
Editing
Cinematography
Production Design
Costumes
Score
Sound Design
Producer
A production
With
In coproduction with
In association with

Paolo Virzì
Paolo Virzì
Francesca Archibugi
Paolo Virzì
Cecilia Zanuso
Vladan Radovic
Tonino Zera
Catia Dottori
Carlo Virzì
Alessandro Bianchi
Marco Belardi
Lotus Production - a Leone Film
Group company
Rai Cinema
Manny Film
Manny Film
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