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## Italian Thriller and Social Drama 'Human Capital' Opens Jan. 30

By Sophie Braccini



Image provided

The International Film Showcase will present Italian director Paolo Virzi's film "Human Capital" for a one-week run beginning Jan. 30 at the Orinda Theatre. The 2013 satiric social drama was selected as the Italian entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards this year. Set in Northern Italy, the film was inspired by a novel with the same title by American writer Stephen Amidon.

Dino Ossola is a real estate dealmaker on the verge of bankruptcy. The cunning middle class businessman thinks he is going to strike it big when he manages to endear himself to the very wealthy Giovanni Bernaschi, the father of his daughter Serena's boyfriend. Ossola persuades Bernaschi to let him in on a mysterious and highly profitable hedge fund investment. As his story unfolds, we also follow the lives of other characters such as Ossola's wife Carla, who dreams of becoming an actress and is bored and aimless until she finds her calling and decides to become a patron of the arts with her husband's money. The family's balance is threatened after a car accident sends a cyclist to the hospital in very serious condition, and an economic downturn makes the mighty Bernaschi vacillate. As their worlds face collapse, the characters react with desperation, leaving the audience wondering who will make it out alive.

Virzi approaches the story from three characters' points of view: first Ossola, then Carla and finally Serena. As the film progresses, different layers and perspectives are revealed and different sides of the truth emerge. The film's clever

construction adds to the suspense.

Social realism is nothing new to Italian cinema. Virzi presents a satire comprised of pathetic characters who are victims of their greed and fear - nothing incredibly innovative, but the film's quality of acting and the overall beauty of the imagery make it all worthwhile.

A large part of the movie's success in Europe comes from Valeria Bruni Tedeschi, who portrays Carla and was recognized as Best Actress at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival for her moving performance of a poor little rich woman's quest for meaning. Fabrizio Bentivoglio as Ossola is painfully ridiculous until he turns into one of the most despicable characters of the movie. Superb newcomer Matilde Gioli plays Serena, the only angel of the movie. She has strength and emotion, but she is crushed like all the other youngsters in the film.

While a drama, the sarcastic overtone of the film provides many opportunities to laugh and smile. Hardly boring, this is a fast-paced movie. Don't leave before the last comment is displayed on the silver screen. It explains the meaning behind the movie's title.

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