



## ***Mondo - Stefano Calvagna, the lone wolf of Italian cinema winks at Thailand***

**Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 07 mar 2024 (Prima Notizia 24) The Roman director, screenwriter and actor, has in his roster more than 25 films made, with scripts and participation in various capacities in the film industry, his family is the very expression of the world of cinema, two sons, one (Niccolò) who made his first appearance on the big screen when he was**

**only 3 months old in the film *The Wolf* directed by Calvagna himself, and grandson of the great Lamberto Maggiorani starring in Vittorio De Sica's "*Ladri di biciclette*".**

In a hotel of absolute international significance, in Bangkok, you wouldn't expect to meet a film actor and screenwriter wearing a T-shirt with a dark background, dressed like a "pischello" ("kid", Roman term), with sneakers, T-shirt and baseball cap. At 53, married and the father of two sons (almost 18-year-old Niccolò, who played the lead son of Kim Rossi Stuart at age 6 and 17 other films, and Mattia, who is 14), he has taken a liking to Lazio the team of his dad's heart, you'd be hard pressed to recognize him. But then, you see the writing on the T-shirt, "I don't exclude a comeback," the face of Franco Califano and you realize it's really him. He takes off his glasses and comes toward you smiling, in the velvety dimness of the lobby of the large luxury hotel, a light of straightforward Roman-ness comes through and immediately makes you feel at home. I am here to talk to a person about a papable opportunity to open my concepts here, but I am also hoping to find a moment of my own to relax -says Calvagna with a very friendly and quiet manner- work is sometimes particularly heavy in terms of stress, carefully taking care of the entrepreneurial management of a pastry shop and a restaurant in London, my second city in fact, is particularly complex activity. Despite the fact that I have a valuable right-hand man Karolina, in the end it is not easy. My co-workers and employees are followed with careful dedication, payroll is followed by me personally, and everyone is paid a day in advance and never a minute late. But there is also the whole set of issues related to the problems every day with the staff who currently after Brexit, experience great objective difficulties. My cell phones are always burning hot to solve so many complicated problems of all kinds, now in Thailand, I have decided to keep them off because I really need a break. But how did the idea of opening a typical Roman restaurant in London and a pastry shop come about? Exporting Carbonara on the one hand and Tiramisù on the other? Look, as far as "Ci tua" is concerned, already from the header, the idea is to serve not only "Italian" food but to give a touch of real "Roman-ness" to the environment, not by chance the location is decorated with frescoes of the Colosseum, the Rome of Pasquino, but also of Bombolo and Tomas Millian, the music that is played is that of Lando Fiorini, of the "stornelli romaneschi" (Folk songs) but also of my lighthouse-guide and friend of happy times, Franco Califano, a singer-songwriter and poet whom I got to know and know well in this Space/Time and to whom I

dedicated a film that was even presented at Cannes, thus achieving, a dream-promise of mine made to Maestro Califano when he was alive. "Ci tua" is in one of the beating hearts of the "real" London, Notting Hill. As for, however, the pastry shop, I can quote you a personal anecdote of mine, I was a child and with my dad, we walk into a pastry shop and my dad, lovingly asks me, "What pastries would you like? This one? That one?" And I candidly answered him, "No, Dad, look, I would like you to buy me the whole bakery. I would like the pastry shop to be all mine." And this dream I realized, I have my own pastry shop, Trevi Italian Tiramisù, located in South Kensington. The restaurant and the bakery are two important moments, in terms of satisfaction. There was no shortage, however, of tough moments. Here, this one is more interesting: how did you get back up when you were defeated, falling to the ground? When the dark Covid storm came, with all the asphyxiating rules imposed on society and individuals, with the forced closures of all businesses open to the public, catering in the first place, a dramatic condition of hard-imposed limitation fell on me, my family, all the collaborators and employees that did not even allow us to survive, more than to live in the broadest sense. It was hard, it was very hard, but perseverance, commitment, and knowing how to wait in the storm were my way of getting back up and resuming my path. Now the restaurant and the pastry shop have resumed sailing, producing, allowing a decent life for those who work there and, let's face it, dispensing joy to those who frequent Romanesque food and Cuisine as well as fine Italian Pastry. You see, on my left arm I have a carp tattooed, it is a symbol of perseverance, of strong determination, the carp is also a symbol in its going against the tide, with all its strength, always. This determination of yours to pursue your ideas has often led you to make enemies just about everywhere, in Football, you have never perturbed to hide the fact that you have actively frequented the Ultras of Lazio, the team you support, in the world of Politics where you have clearly expressed your opposition to rules and laws that have taken on a dictatorial guise, at an extremely delicate historical moment such as the Covid pandemic, and also in the world of Cinema, where there is notoriously envy, opportunism, nepotism and business dealings, especially in the Italian arena. When the phone no longer rang, when no one -even only the few true and great friends- even called you to ask how you are, well, loneliness was my companion, my trusted companion in life. Loneliness was transformed by me from "isolation" into opportunity, in those moments I was able to find myself, relax, study, write and plan. Solitude has its own intrinsic philosophy where you can find your true self, in the calm and without any external pressure of Time. In 2005 I made the film L'Uomo Spezzato ("The Broken Man"), dedicated to those people who have been destroyed by the media and abandoned at the moment when life restores dignity and the proclamation of innocence, the following year A pugni chiusi ("With Clenched Fists"), the story of boxer Vincenzo Cantatore, and in 2007 I had no fear in making Il lupo, a film that drew me a lot of criticism, often acidic and venomous but which also came to America and under the title "The Wolf" and I won the Fibula d'Oro Award for the second time. These are just a few mentions, just a few awards received among many that attest to my desire and nature to be "other" than the mainstream, in the football fan base, in the world of active politics, in the world and business of Cinema. I have always resented having it on my head to be in charge and tell me what to do and where to go or how to do a certain thing. My films The Escape, A New Day, Baby Gang,

Covid-19 are exemplification of my wanting to give voice to individuals, people, put on the borders and on the borders they live and fight and resist to survive. From this point of view, on closer inspection, Stefano Calvagna in his cinema proposes a reinterpretation of certain aspects of society and daily life in contemporary Italy in a Pasolinian key, although in Italy no one would be willing to write this, after cloaking the Roman director with descriptions and epithets bordering on defamation, in order to make space for himself in the media world by adopting outdated stereotypes against him. The Chinese-style lunch takes place in the luxurious Bangkok hotel restaurant of clear international renown, the food is refined as are the combinations of spices and flavors. Two Italians, who seem more rowdy than the other patrons who frequent that fine restaurant, speak loudly to each other but it is only because two Italian, Latin, Mediterranean souls meet and it is immediately a feast of memories, memories, sounds and music. In Stefano Calvagna's human experience, in fact, there is also that of the drummer who learned the first rudiments from great masters and played the drums with energy and zest for life. Thailand -in its current and already advanced planning stage- is the next geographic location for Stefano Calvagna's business investments; bringing the truest "Roman-ness" to the Land of Smiles could be the next surprise produced by the eclectic, energetic mind of the Roman director. A director and a man, according to those who knew him, also characterized by great generosity.

*di Francesco Tortora Giovedì 07 Marzo 2024*