

FROM THE DIRECTOR AND STAR OF **MID-AUGUST LUNCH**

# THE **SALT** OF LIFE

a film by **GIANNI DI GREGORIO**

**GIANNI IS BACK AND LOOKING FOR LOVE...**



BIBI FILM - ISARIA PRODUCTIONS - RAI CINEMA PRESENTA A FILM PRODOTTO DA ANGELO BARBAGALLO "THE SALT OF LIFE" CON GIANNI DI GREGORIO - VALERIA DE FRANCISCIS BENDONI - ALFONSO SANTAGATA - ELISABETTA PICCOLOMINI - VALERIA CAVALLI - AYLIN PRANDI - KRISTINA CEPRAGA - MICHELANGELO CIMINALE  
LILIA SILVI - LAURA SOZZATO - SILVIA SOZZATO - TERESA DI GREGORIO - GABRIELLA SPORCI. BASED ON A STORY BY GIANNI DI GREGORIO. COSTUME DESIGNER SILVIA POLIDORI. PRODUCTION DESIGNER SUSANNA CASSELLA. SOUND GIANLUCA COSTAMAGNA. MUSIC RACHEV E CARRATELLO  
EDITED BY MARGO SPOLETTI. PRODUCTION MANAGER IVANA KASTRA TOVIC. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GAETANO DANIELE. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GOGO BIANCHI. INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION FANDANGO PORTOBELLO x BIBI FILM AND ISARIA PRODUCTIONS. PRODUCTION IN COLLABORATION WITH RAI CINEMA  
SCREENPLAY BY GIANNI DI GREGORIO AND VALERIO ATTANASIO. PRODUCED BY ANGELO BARBAGALLO. DIRECTED BY GIANNI DI GREGORIO. ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE.

Bibi Film

Isaria  
Productions

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Zelig



## Longing for the Beauty That Is Rome in the Form of Earthly Goddesses

Gianni, the gentle mama's boy and alter ego of Gianni Di Gregorio, the 63-year-old director and star of the wistful Italian comedy "The Salt of Life," is every man who reaches a certain age and feels his vitality waning. Gazing into the mirror, he notices the heavy bags under his eyes and his sagging chin and is seized with a longing for his lost youth.

STEPHEN  
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FILM  
REVIEW

Everywhere he goes Gianni passes beautiful, younger women to whom he is next to invisible. Gogò Bianchi's cinematography, which observes the women through Gianni's adoring eyes, portrays them as voluptuous, carefree goddesses tossing their hair and flashing confident smiles as they strut in low-cut dresses. While watching "The Salt of Life" you may be as intoxicated with them as Gianni and decide that there is no creature on earth more alluring than a Roman woman in her prime. The movie's sensuous appreciation of ripeness and abundance extends to food, clothing and foliage; the lushness of a city in bloom virtually bursts from the screen.

Mr. Di Gregorio wrote the screenplay with Valerio Attanasio, and this movie is a richer variation of his small, exquisite 2010 film, "Mid-August Lunch." In that movie he played another alter ego, also named Gianni, who catered to a group of older women. The extraordinary Valeria de Franciscis Bendoni (now 96), who played his mother in "Mid-August Lunch," returns here as an even more imposing matriarch.

Elegantly coiffed and attired in flowing, brightly colored silks, she is a sight to behold. A fragile but still commanding diva, whether playing poker with her friends on the lawn of her luxurious home or ordering a meal, she insists on getting her imperious way. Her deeply tanned, weathered face with its thousand little creases is a contour map of a long life.

Gianni, who retired at 50, lives in an apartment with an extended family that includes his wife (Elisabetta Piccolomini), with whom he has a platonic friendship; his daughter (played by Teresa Di Gregorio, the director's real-life daughter); and her unemployed slacker boyfriend Michelangelo (Michelangelo Ciminale), who happily tools around Rome on his motorbike and doesn't lift a finger.

Gianni's mother, a heedless spend-thrift, squanders money on designer



"The Salt of Life" with, from left, Gianni Di Gregorio, who also directed, Valeria de Franciscis Bendoni, Kristina Cepraga and Lilia Silvi.

clothes for her full-time caretaker, Cristina (Kristina Cepraga) — one of the many women Gianni discreetly ogles — and stocks her refrigerator with expensive Champagne. She has nearly bankrupted her dutiful son, who subsists on a small pension supplemented by his wife's income. His mother pesters him on the telephone at all hours. Twice in the movie she summons him to her elegant house to adjust the picture on her television.

Gianni is too polite and inhibited to put the moves on women, which his coarser best friend, Alfonso (Alfonso Santagata), a lawyer, does without compunction. Alfonso points out a neighborhood acquaintance Gianni's age who has a younger lover, forces medication on Gianni to treat erectile dysfunction, and even gives him the name and address of a brothel. But when pushed into action Gianni is foiled by comic mishaps, one of which involves drinking an aperitif spiked with a psychedelic drug that sends him reeling. In the most touching scene he visits Valeria (Valeria Cavalli), a long-ago lover who sweetly suggests that his ties to his mother are the reason they never married.

Most of all you are thankful for what "The Salt of Life" is not: another farce in

which a lecherous codger makes a fool of himself over a babe. Only in the final minute does it succumb to sentimentality. Until then the movie sympathetically bears out the observation in Yeats's poem "After Long Silence" that "bodily decrepitude is wisdom."

### The Salt of Life

Opens on Friday in Manhattan.

Directed by Gianni Di Gregorio; written by Mr. Di Gregorio and Valerio Attanasio; director of photography, Gogò Bianchi; edited by Marco Spoletini; music by Ratchev & Carratello; production design by Susanna Cascella; costumes by Silvia Polidori; produced by Angelo Barbagallo; released by Zeitgeist Films. In Italian, with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hour 30 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Gianni Di Gregorio (Gianni), Valeria de Franciscis Bendoni (Mother), Alfonso Santagata (Alfonso), Elisabetta Piccolomini (Gianni's Wife), Valeria Cavalli (Valeria), Alyn Prandi (Alyn), Kristina Cepraga (Cristina), Michelangelo Ciminale (Michelangelo), Teresa Di Gregorio (Teresa), Lilia Silvi (Lilia), Gabriella Sborgi (Gabriella) and Laura Squizzato and Silvia Squizzato (Twins).