


**the**  
**notes**  
**June**  
**2018**

coming up  
@ **kings lynn**

- **FILM:** Thursday 12th July 7.30pm  
**THE BIG SICK**
- **FESTIVAL FILM** Thursday 17th 2.30pm  
**WIND RIVER**
- **FESTIVAL FILM** Friday 20th 2.30pm  
**THE DEATH OF STALIN**
- **FESTIVAL FILM**  
Saturday 21st 11am  
**THE RED TURTLE**

further details [klccc.uk](http://klccc.uk)

# The Conformist

Bernardo Bertolucci, Italy 1970

Screenplay by Bernardo Bertolucci and Lee Kresel from the novel by Alberto Moravia

Jean-Louis Trintignant

...Marcello Clerici

Stefania Sandrelli ..... Giulia

Gastone Moschin ..... Manganiello

Enzo Tarascio ..... Professor Quadri

Fosco Giachetti ..... Il colonnello

José Quaglio ..... Italo

Yvonne Sanson ..... Madre di Giulia

Milly ..... Madre di Marcello

Antonio Maestri ..... Confessore

Alessandro Haber ..... Cieco ubriaco

Luciano Rossi ..... Biondo cieco

Massimo Sarchielli ..... Cieco

Pierangelo Civera ..... Franz

Giuseppe Addobbati

... Padre di Marcello

Christian Aligny ..... Raoul

Carlo Gaddi ..... Hired Killer

Umberto Silvestri ..... Hired Killer

Furio Pellerani ..... Hired Killer

Producers ... Giovanni Bertolucci and

Maurizio Lodi-Fè

Music ... Georges Delerue

Cinematography ... Vittorio Storaro

Film Editing ... Franco Arcalli

Production Design

... Ferdinando Scarfiotti



What makes Bernardo Bertolucci's films different from the work of older directors is an extraordinary combination of visual richness and visual freedom. He was a prizewinning poet at twenty-one, and he has a poet's gift for using objects, landscapes, and people expressively, so that they all become part of his vision. It is this gift, I think, that makes *The Conformist* a sumptuous, emotionally charged experience.

Bertolucci's adaptation of the Alberto Moravia novel about the psychology of an upper-class follower of Mussolini is set principally in 1938 (Bertolucci was born in 1941), and I think it's not unfair to say that except for Jean-Louis Trintignant's grasp of the central character—it's an extraordinarily prehensile performance—the major interest is in the way everything is imbued with a sense of the past. It's not the past we get from films

that survive from the thirties but Bertolucci's evocation of the past—the thirties made expressive through the poetry of images.

Trintignant, who has quietly come to be the key French actor that so many others (such as Belmondo) were expected to be, digs into the character of the intelligent coward who sacrifices everything he cares about because he wants the safety of normality. Trintignant has an almost incredible intuitive understanding of screen presence; his face is never too full of emotion. never completely empty. In this role, as an indecisive intellectual, he conveys the mechanisms of thought through tension, the way Bogart did, and



he has the grinning, teeth-baring reflexes of Bogart—cynicism and humor erupt in savagery. And, playing an Italian, he has an odd, ferrety resemblance to Sinatra. Everything around him seems an emanation of the director's velvet style—especially the two beautiful women: Stefania Sandrelli, an irresistible comedienne, as Trintignant's deliciously corrupt middle-class wife, and Dominique Sanda, with her swollen lips and tiger eyes, as the lesbian wife of an anti-Fascist professor he is ordered to kill.

Bertolucci's view isn't so much a reconstruction of the past as art infusion from it; *The Conformist* cost only seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars—he brought together the decor and architecture

surviving from that modernistic period and gave it all a unity of style (even with the opening titles). Bertolucci brings the period close, and we enter into it. His nostalgia is open; it's a generalized sort of empathy, which the viewer begins to share.

*The Conformist* is his most accessible, least difficult film from an audience point of view. The film begins with the dawn of the assassination day, and the events that led up to it unfold while Trintignant and a Fascist agent are driving to the forest. The editing at the outset is so fast anyway that cutting to and from that car is slightly confusing, but as one gets caught up in the imagery that slight confusion no longer matters.

If anyone can be called a born moviemaker, it's Bertolucci. Thus far, he is the only young moviemaker who suggests that he may have the ability of a Griffith to transport us imaginatively into other periods of history—and without this talent movies would be even more impoverished than they are. The words that come to mind in connection with his work—sweeping, operatic, and so on—describe the talents of the kind of moviemaker who has the potential for widening out the appeal of movies once again. But movies—the great sensual medium—are still stuck with the idea that sensuality is decadent.

*The New Yorker*, March 27, 1971



**Tell us about your friendship and collaboration with Bernardo Bertolucci.**

*The three sections of my own life can also be classified according to three directors that I worked with during each one. And no doubt, Bernardo Bertolucci belonged to the first part of my life. It was my more innocent part, the discovery, the growing up, the time you are forming yourself, which is my Italian part. Then the second part began with Francis Coppola and *Apocalypse Now*. Bernardo and I did a good section of our lives together and remain great friends. We never told our stories through the completely conscious side of our minds. Bernardo's characters never say exactly what's on their minds or what the scene is about. There is always some part that belongs to Bernardo's own unconscious, which you have to suggest and present in that way. That's why I say cinematography is again, writing with light. Using the language of light to get across an idea, or a characterization, or a theme that might not necessarily be spoken of directly.*

**[..] What should a director look for when hiring a cinematographer, and vice-versa, what should a cinematographer look for before working with a director?**

*I can't answer the first question, but I can the second one. From the first moment I meet a director, I try to express myself. You say 'yes' or 'no,' based on your feeling that this story and this director are going in the same direction that you are going. If you feel that, that you are attracted to the story and the director's vision, then you should do it. You have to have some common ground. If you feel comfortable with all these elements, then they're the right person. Sometimes you meet wonderful, gifted people, but for some reason you don't feel comfortable and you pass, you say 'no thank you,' because they were not going in the same direction you were going at that time. There is always something inside you that will push you in the right direction that you will discover through writing, or music, or performance, that will help you discover who you are and what your life is about. This will help you grow up, and help you learn about yourself. In turn you can give this gift to somebody else: your children, your students, your audience. You share this spirit. And in doing that you feel that you are part of the human journey.*

Vittorio Storaro interviewed  
by Yonca Talu [filmcomment.com](http://filmcomment.com)

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(Peter Bogdanovich, US 1971)  
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