



Vittorio De Sica

Director, Actor, Screenwriter

Birth Jul 7, 1902 (Sora, Italy)
Death Nov 13, 1974 (Paris, France)
Genres Drama, Comedy, Romance

The seminal figure of the neorealism movement, [Vittorio De Sica](#) was born in Sora, Italy, on July 7, 1901. Raised in Naples, he began working as an office clerk at a young age in order to help support his impoverished family. He became fascinated by acting while still a youth, and made his screen debut in 1918's *The Clemenceau Affair* at the age of just 16. In 1923, De Sica joined Tatiana Pavlova's famed stage company, and by the end of the decade his dashing good looks had made him one of the Italian theater's most prominent matinee idols. With 1932's *La Vecchia Signora*, he made his sound-era film debut and went on to become an even bigger star in the cinema, appearing primarily in light romantic comedies throughout the decade.

In 1939, De Sica graduated to the director's chair with *Rose Scarlatte*. Over the next two years he helmed three more features (1940's *Maddalena*, *Zero in Condotta* along with 1941's *Teresa Venerdì* and *Un Garibaldino al Convento*, respectively), but his work lacked distinction until he, along with fellow Italian filmmakers Roberto Rossellini and Luchino Visconti, began exploring the possibilities of making more humanistic movies documenting the harsh realities facing their countrymen as a result of World War II. With 1942's *I Bambini ci Guardano*, De Sica revolutionized the Italian film industry, crafting a poignant, heartfelt portrait of a downtrodden culture free of the conventions of Hollywood production. Working with screenwriter Cesare Zavattini, who remained a central figure in the majority of his greatest work, De Sica employed non-professional actors and filmed not in studios but on the streets of Rome, all to flesh out the working-class drama of Zavattini's script.

The war prevented De Sica from directing another film for four years, but finally in 1946 he resurfaced with the brilliant *Sciuscià*. His greatest film, *Ladri di Biciclette*, followed in 1948; a virtual textbook of neorealism in action, it featured all of the aesthetic's key tenets — gritty production, almost improvisational acting, and a lean emotional compression — and it even added authentic documentary footage into the narrative to establish a greater sense of truth. (Like *Sciuscià*, *Ladri di Biciclette* won a special Academy Award; not until several years later was the Oscar category for Best Foreign Language Film officially established.) Three years later, De Sica returned with *Miracolo a Milano*. Its follow-up, 1952's *Umberto D.*, clearly ranked among his finest work, but when it proved to be a box-office disaster, he returned to the lighter material of his formative years with *It Happened in the Park*.

The 1956 *Il Tetto* marked something of a return to neorealist form, but when it too failed commercially, De Sica's career as a filmmaker was critically damaged. Unable to secure financing for subsequent projects, he turned his full focus to acting, starring in a string of pictures including 1957's *A Farewell to Arms* (for which he earned an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actor) and 1959's *It Happened in Rome*. Over the course of his long career, he appeared in over 150 features. Finally, in 1960, De Sica returned to directing with *La Ciociara*, leading his star Sophia Loren to an Academy Award. The 1963 *Ieri, Oggi omani* also won an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, but in many regards De Sica's reign as one of the world's great directors was over. Features like 1966's *Caccia alla Volpe*, 1967's *Sette Volte Donna*, and 1970's *Girasoli* were lightweight at best, and although 1971's *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini* won yet another Academy Award, it bore little relation to his neorealist classics. De Sica died in Paris on November 13, 1974, following complications from surgery. — **Jason Ankeny**

Director - filmography

[\(1970s\)](#) [\(1960s\)](#) [\(1950s\)](#) [\(1940s\)](#)

1. [Il Viaggio](#) (1974)
... aka The Voyage (USA)
2. [Una Breve vacanza](#) (1973)
... aka A Brief Vacation (USA)
3. [Lo chiameremo Andrea](#) (1972)
... aka We'll Call Him Andrew
4. [I Cavalieri di Malta](#) (1971) (TV)
... aka The Knights of Malta
5. [Dal referendum alla costituzione: Il 2 giugno](#) (1971) (TV)
... aka From Referendum to the Constitution: June 2
6. [Le Coppie](#) (1970) (segment "Il Leone")
... aka The Couples
7. [Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini](#) (1970)
... aka The Garden of the Finzi-Continis (USA)
8. [I Girasoli](#) (1970)
... aka Sunflower (USA)
9. [Amanti](#) (1968)
... aka A Place for Lovers (USA)
10. [Woman Times Seven](#) (1967)
11. [Le Streghe](#) (1967) (segment "Una Sera come le altre")
... aka The Witches (USA)
12. [Caccia alla volpe](#) (1966)
... aka After the Fox (UK) (USA)
13. [Un monde nouveau](#) (1966)
... aka A New World
14. [Matrimonio all'italiana](#) (1964)
... aka Marriage Italian-Style (USA)
15. [Ieri, oggi, domani](#) (1963)
... aka Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (USA)

16. [Il Boom](#) (1963)
17. [I Sequestrati di Altona](#) (1962)
... aka The Condemned of Altona (USA)
18. [Boccaccio '70](#) (1962) (segment "La riffa")
... aka Boccace 70 (France)
19. [Il Giudizio universale](#) (1961)
... aka The Last Judgement (USA)
20. [La Ciociara](#) (1960)
... aka Two Women (UK) (USA)

21. [Anna di Brooklyn](#) (1958)
... aka Anna of Brooklyn (UK)
22. [Il Tetto](#) (1956)
... aka The Roof
23. [L'Oro di Napoli](#) (1954)
... aka The Gold of Naples (USA)
24. [Villa Borghese](#) (1953)
... aka It Happened in the Park (USA)
25. [Stazione Termini](#) (1953)
... aka Indiscretion (UK)

26. [Umberto D.](#) (1952)
27. [Miracolo a Milano](#) (1951)
... aka Miracle in Milan (USA)

28. [Ladri di biciclette](#) (1948)
... aka The Bicycle Thief (USA)
29. [Cuore](#) (1947) (children's scenes)
... aka Heart and Soul (USA)
30. [Sciuscià](#) (1946)
... aka Sciuscià (Italy)
[La Porta del cielo](#) (1945)
... aka The Gate of Heaven
31. [I Bambini ci guardano](#) (1944)
... aka The Children Are Watching Us (USA)
[Un Garibaldino al convento](#) (1942)
... aka A Garibaldian in the Convent
32. [Teresa Venerdi](#) (1941)
... aka Do You Like Women (USA)
33. [Maddalena, zero in condotta](#) (1940)
... aka Maddalena, Zero for Conduct
34. [Rose scarlatte](#) (1940)
... aka Red Roses

