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THE 16TH ITALIAN FILM FESTIVAL takes place from **17 April to 27 May** at Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, the Tricycle in Kilburn, the Phoenix in East Finchley and the Curzon Mayfair as well as at leading art house cinemas in Edinburgh (Filmhouse), Glasgow (GFT), Dundee (DCA), Inverness (Eden Court), St Andrews (New Picture House), Manchester (Cornerhouse) and Dublin (Irish Film Institute). Screening the best of contemporary Italian cinema alongside the classics, this is a treat for film lovers and also offers an imaginative selection of short films and documentaries. As a centrepiece the IFF is delighted to showcase a tribute to actress **Alida Valli**, a leading star of the 40 and 50s who worked with some of the greatest directors including Alfred Hitchcock and Luchino Visconti. The Festival is supported by the Italian Cultural Institutes in London, Edinburgh and Dublin.

Highlights in the features section include **Black and White** (*Bianco e nero*) a captivating romantic comedy which is one of the few Italian films to deal with contemporary race relations. **The Girl by the Lake** (*La ragazza del lago*) is a tense murder mystery with a powerful central performance from Toni Servillo (**The Consequences of Love** and **Il Divo**); this film swept the Italian Oscars with ten Davide di Donatello awards. **Days and Clouds** (*Giorni e nuvole*) tells the story of an upper-middle class family whose comfortable existence is torn apart when the father is ousted from the company he founded; Soldini creates a superb poignant social drama that is all too familiar in our current economic climate.

Italian Film Festival favourite **Ferzan Ozpetek** returns with **A Perfect Day** (*Un giorno perfetto*), set over 24 hours in Rome it examines what happens in the afterglow of love as a couple's relationship deteriorates; and British actor Douglas Henshaw pops alongside the stunning Giovanna Mezzogiorno in Francesca Archibugi's **Flying Lessons** (*Lezioni di volo*) which with the light tones of a comedy, tackles the themes of the rites of passage into adulthood, the search for one's own roots, the confrontation between parents and children and cultural diversity

The documentary strand includes **Valentino: The Last Emporer** a fascinating insight to the life of distinguished Italian fashion designer Valentino, who has dressed some of the most famous women of our times. There's a special culinary taster in **Terra Madre**, about the Slow Food network, directed by Ermanno Olmi.

The shorts programme offers a variety of cinematic treats, from an actor's nightmare audition in **Barefoot on the Stage** (*A piedi nudi sul palco*), to a son who inherits his mother's stealing habit in **Sideburns** (*Basette*), to **Water Closet** (*Pillole di bisogni*), which explores how people vent their emotions in a public bar toilet.

Festival Directors

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