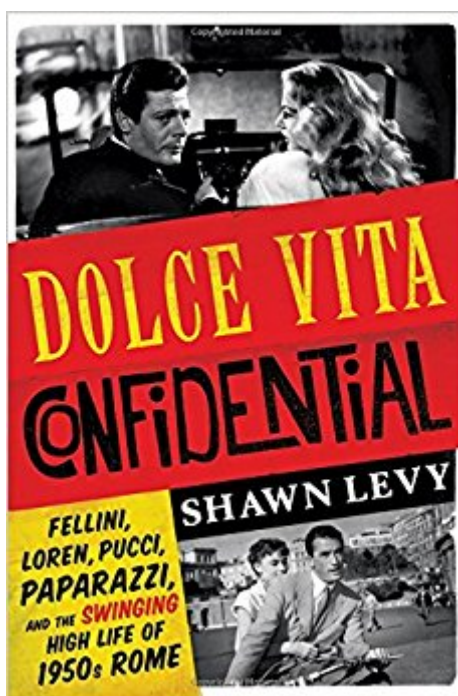


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Dolce Vita Confidential: Fellini, Loren, Pucci, Paparazzi, And The Swinging High Life Of 1950s Rome



Synopsis

A romp through the worlds of film, fashion, and titillating journalism that made 1950s Rome the sexiest city on the planet. From the ashes of World War II, Rome was reborn as the epicenter of film, fashion, creative energy, tabloid media, and bold-faced libertinism that made it a global synonym for taste, style, and flair. A confluence of cultural contributions created a bright, burning moment in history: it was the heyday of fashion icons such as Pucci, whose use of color, line, and superb craftsmanship set the standard for women's clothing for decades, and Brioni, whose confident and classy creations for men inspired the contemporary American suit. Rome's huge movie studio, Cinecittà, also known as "Hollywood-on-the Tiber," attracted a dizzying array of stars from Charlton Heston, Gregory Peck, Audrey Hepburn, Ava Gardner, and Frank Sinatra to that stunning and combustible couple, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, who began their extramarital affair during the making of *Cleopatra*. And behind these stars trailed street photographers like Tazio Secchiari, Pierluigi Praturlon, and Marcello Gèpette who searched, waited, and pounced on their subjects in pursuit of the most unflattering and dramatic portraits of fame. Fashionistas, exiles, moguls, and martyrs flocked to Rome hoping for a chance to experience and indulge in the glow of old money, new stars, fast cars, wanton libidos, and brazen news photographers. The scene was captured nowhere better than in Federico Fellini's masterpiece, *La Dolce Vita*, starring Marcello Mastroianni and the Swedish bombshell Anita Ekberg. It was condemned for its licentiousness, when in fact Fellini was condemning the very excess, narcissism, and debauchery of Rome's bohemian scene. Gossipy, colorful, and richly informed, *Dolce Vita Confidential* re-creates Rome's stunning ascent with vivid and compelling tales of its glitterati and artists, down to every last outrageous detail of the city's magnificent transformation. 8 pages of photographs

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Customer Reviews

"In a brisk, frothy narrative....Levy has a passion for mid-century Italian cinema and is at his best when writing about its giants." • - The Wall Street Journal "Uproariously readable....[Levy] tells some terrific, if dreadful, stories about the convergence of noblemen and actresses....He is a master of the group biography, pacing his chapters for maximum suspense and revelation....The climactic story is a humdinger....Wickedly readable." • - The Sunday Times "Levy's absorbing, well-researched book exalts the intoxicating, beguiling dreaminess of Rome in its celluloid heyday." • - Times Literary Supplement "Levy recounts with enthusiasm and colour....the excitement of that time and place in a prose style that is teeming with satisfying gossip details." • - The Guardian "Dolce Vita Confidential is so much fun that after a few pages you'll want to set it aside, tie on a chic little scarf, jump on a Vespa, and cry 'ciao' as you buzz past corner cafes and flower stands." • - Portland Tribune "Over 400 spirited and frothy pages, [Levy] carries us on a speedy Vespa ride....the book delights." • - Portland Mercury "This is an exciting account of a revolution in art and society." • - The Spectator "Levy's research is deep and his details are revealing....[he] chronicles Fellini and Mastroianni's collaboration with insight and affection." • - Newsday "Shawn Levy has composed an exuberant portrait of postwar Rome and the filmmakers, movie stars, fashion designers, journalists, and paparazzi whose supreme hunger, energy, and creativity transformed it into the most stylish city in the world. He brings an infectious and freewheeling enthusiasm to every page as he reintroduces us to the extravagant romanticism of fast cars, reckless hedonism, and beautiful people behind the resurrection of the Eternal City." • - Glenn Frankel, author of The Seachers: The Making of an American Legend

Shawn Levy is a former film critic for The Oregonian and the best-selling author of Rat Pack Confidential and Paul Newman: A Life. He reviews movies for KGW-TV and lives in Portland, Oregon.

I love Shawn Levy's books and this one is no exception. Exploring Rome's cultural explosion of fashion, film, and excess through the prism of the paparazzi produces a fascinating glimpse into the recent past and explains a little how we got where we are now. Mini biographies of Fellini, Loren,

and Pucci are delightful. Highly recommended.

I've read several of Shawn Levy's books, and I like every one I've gotten to, especially his first, *King of Comedy: The Life and Art of Jerry Lewis*. He has written about the Rat Pack ... he did one book on the Swinging Sixties in London. He doesn't always choose topics I am passionate about, but he makes me interested, so I'll start one of his books no matter the subject, knowing it will be worth it. Thus, I happily pre-ordered his latest, on Rome in the 1950s. I expected to find good stories about the big film names of the period, placed in a larger cultural context, and that is exactly what Levy delivers. Once again, he burrows into areas I hadn't cared much about ... I should have been warned when Pucci's name appeared in the subtitle. But you can trust Levy to make that larger context something you want to learn about, and so I read more than I ever thought I would about post-war fashion, in Italy and in Europe as a whole. And it was indeed educational, since I knew so little about the fashion world. The book convinces us that the big fashion names were integral to the creation of Italian culture after World War II. As for the *dolce vita*, it's all here. Fellini and Loren make the subtitle, but Anita Ekberg deserves special mention. She comes across as much more interesting than her public image ... in fact, we learn that she was more than her image, which seems like a small point until you realize that image is pretty much all we ever knew, or cared about. Levy devotes a lot of time to Fellini, and rightly so ... *La Dolce Vita* is his movie, after all. I don't think I needed convincing about the importance of Fellini to Italian film and culture. I'm not his biggest fan, and I would have enjoyed a more detailed description of the making of *Antonioni's L'Avventura*, my favorite Italian film of all time. But the truth is, *Antonioni's* film speaks to a general malaise ... it isn't specific to its time, which is why the story of upper-middle class people speaks to us, no matter our own class position. Fellini, though, in films like *La Dolce Vita*, managed to make movies that were intensely personal yet also very much of their moment. If you want to see a great film, *L'Avventura* is the choice. But if you want to see Rome in the 50s, filtered through the lens of Fellini the showman, *La Dolce Vita* is where you'd look. Which is why it's a great place for Levy to spend time. Levy's writing is easy to read. You think you're just taking in a history of the scandals. But when you finish the book, you realize you've actually gotten a clear vision of a specific time and place. By blending movies and fashion and celebrity and paparazzi, Levy makes all of the aspects of that life more interesting. *Dolce Vita Confidential* is another success for Shawn Levy.

Levy takes us on a dizzying Vespa (or is Lambretta?) ride through 1950s and early 1960s Rome, where we meet the movie stars, the directors and producers, the fashion designers, the aristocrats, the criminals, and the paparazzi who buzzed about them all capturing their triumphs and tragedies. It's a delicious slice of the sweet life, entertaining, informative, and moving.

If you can't afford a trip to 1950's Rome for Christmas Break this year, Dolce Vita Confidential is the next best thing. With the added benefit that your feet won't get tired. It's a fun romp through places the bodyguards and set security wouldn't let you go even if you can afford a trip in the wayback machine. It is informative, enlightening, but most of all fun!

A well written account of Rome in the early 1950s and 1960s. I read it with joy. I found myself smiling at some of the accounts in the book. A true test of a good writer is making history come alive. This book makes Rome of the 1950s come alive and roaring to life.

Very well written as the author addresses the rise of Italy from post-war activity and the contributions made by a rising Hollywood lifestyle. Presents the facts from multiple sides of the equation which is something I can appreciate.

The author kept me glued to every word, loved it so much I sent one to a friend in Scotland.

This book has it all, amazing and so much fun.

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