

Blu-ray Review: Gorgeous Journey of Oscar-Winning ‘The Great Beauty’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 25, 2014 - 10:04am

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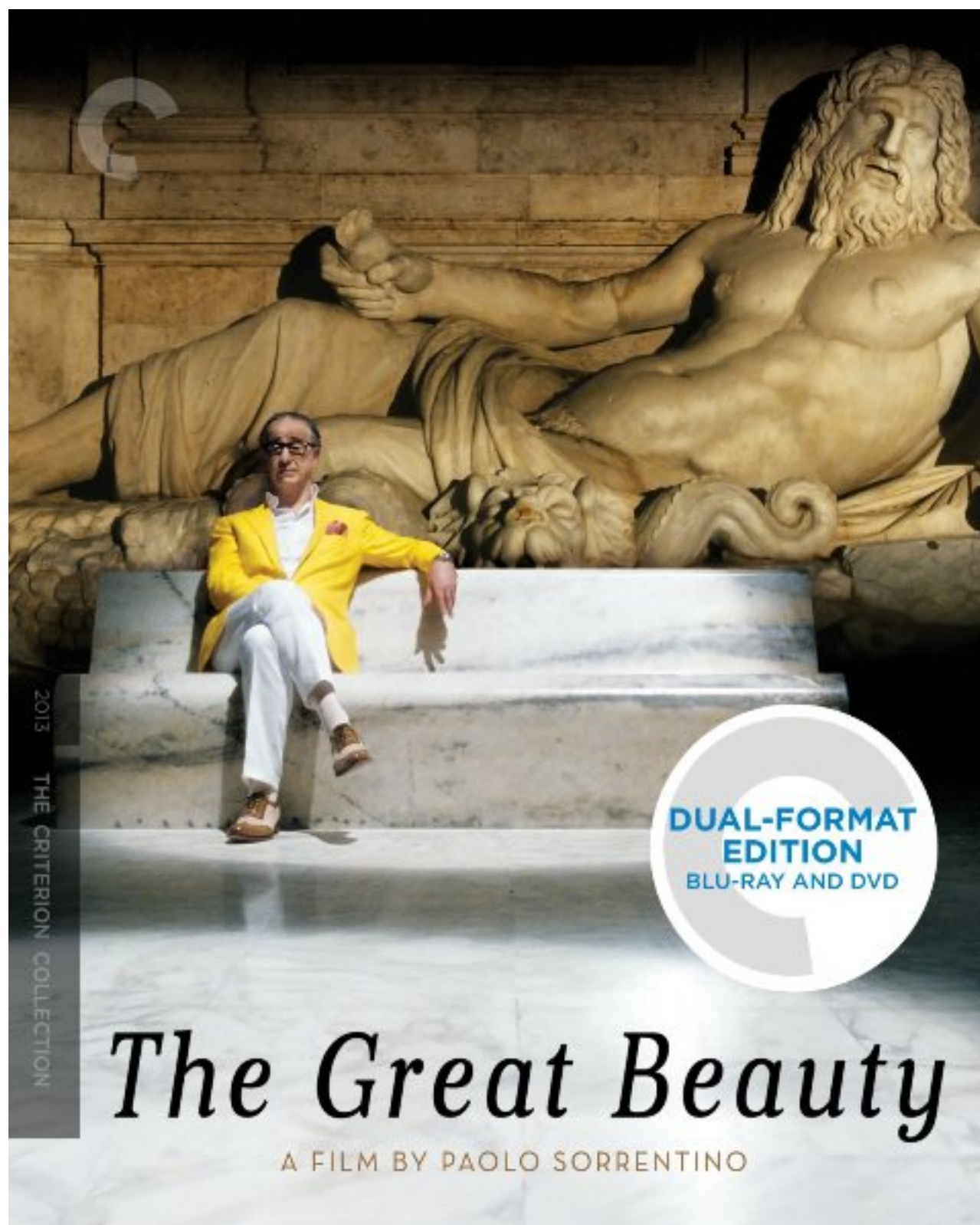
We love to go on and on when the Academy gets it wrong, especially in the notoriously flawed Documentary and Foreign Language categories. And so we should give them a pat on the back when they get it right. Yes, “Blue is the Warmest Color” deserved more attention but my vote still would have gone to Paolo Sorrentino’s masterful “The Great Beauty,” released today on Blu-ray and DVD from The Criterion Collection. It’s one of the best films of the last several years; a mesmerizing ode to the diversionary quality of excess. Don’t miss it.



Rating: **5.0/5.0**

Sorrentino opens his film with three long, complementary sequences: A man drops dead while on a tour group visit through a site of former Roman excess; dozens of beautiful, rich people dance the night away at a rooftop party; the city wakes up as a convent comes to life and locals walk their dogs. With these three sequences, I was already in love with “The Great Beauty”. The way that Sorrentino and his DP Luca Bigazzi (who also shot the director’s “Il Divo”) keep their camera constantly in motion, swooping through the crowds, streets, and over the amazing architecture creates a lyrical quality instantly. We get sucked into the allure of one of the most beautiful cities in the world just as Jep (the perfect Toni Servillo) has since his breakthrough novel made him famous. As he’s tried to find inspiration for another book or just to break out of his alternating existence of parties and conversation, he has been drawn into this gorgeous city that says so much on its own that it leaves little left for a talented writer. As Jep says, their parties have the best dance trains—they go nowhere. Hypnotic in its structure, the true beauty of Sorrentino’s film hits in the final act when it actually becomes emotionally powerful. There’s great beauty all around Jep. And deep within every frame of this film.

Of course, I couldn’t be happier that Criterion handled the Blu-ray release, transferring Bigazzi’s visuals with loving care in a 2K digital film version approved by Sorrentino. They also included new interviews and conversations, although this is truly a masterpiece that speaks for itself.



The Great Beauty was released on Blu-ray on March 25, 2014

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection

Synopsis:

For decades, journalist Jep Gambardella has charmed and seduced his way through the glittering nightlife of Rome. Since the legendary success of his only novel, he has been a permanent fixture in the city's literary and elite social circles. But on his sixty-fifth birthday, Jep unexpectedly finds himself taking stock of his life, turning his cutting wit on himself and his contemporaries, and looking past the lavish nightclubs, parties, and caf  s to find Rome itself, in all its monumental glory: a timeless landscape of absurd, exquisite beauty. Featuring sensuous cinematography, a lush score, and an award-winning central performance by the great Toni Servillo (Gomorrah), this transporting experience from the brilliant Italian director Paolo Sorrentino (Il divo) is a breathtaking Fellini-esque tale of decadence and lost love.

Special Features:

- o New conversation between Sorrentino and Italian cultural critic Antonio Monda
- o New interview with actor Toni Servillo
- o New interview with screenwriter Umberto Contarello
- o Deleted scenes
- o Trailer
- o New English subtitle translation
- o A booklet featuring an essay by critic Phillip Lopate

"The Great Beauty" stars Toni Servillo and was directed by Paolo Sorrentino. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on March 25, 2014.



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [11]

Contributor

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [10]

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