

STAYBLACK PRODUCTIONS, HAUT ET COURT, RAI CINEMA & ARTE FRANCE CINEMA  
PRESENT

QUINZAINÉ  
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT  
CANNES 2021

# A CHIARA

A FILM BY JONAS CARPIGNANO



## INTERNATIONAL PRESS & SALES

### US PRESS

CINETIC MARKETING  
Ryan Werner  
ryan@cineticmedia.com  
+1 917 254 7653

Emilie Spiegel  
emilie@cineticmedia.com  
+1 516 524 9392

### INTERNATIONAL PRESS

RENDEZ-VOUS  
Viviana Andriani  
viviana@rv-press.com  
+33 6 80 16 81 39

Aurélie Dard  
aurelie@rv-press.com  
+33 6 77 04 52 20

### INTERNATIONAL SALES



MANAGING DIRECTOR  
Fionnuala Jamison  
fionnuala.jamison@mk2.com

HEAD OF ACQUISITIONS  
Olivier Barbier  
olivier.barbier@mk2.com

SVP INTERNATIONAL SALES  
Camille Dupeuple  
Camille.dupeuple@mk2.com

INTERNATIONAL SALES  
Quentin Bohanna  
quentin.bohanna@mk2.com

INTERNATIONAL SALES  
Ching-Lo Hsu  
ching-lo.hsu@mk2.com

FESTIVAL MANAGER  
Anne-Laure Barbarit  
anne-laure.barbarit@mk2.com

Visit our website [www.mk2films.com](http://www.mk2films.com)



### SYNOPSIS

The Guerrasio family and friends gather to celebrate Claudio and Carmela's oldest daughter's 18th birthday. There is a healthy rivalry between the birthday girl and her 15-year-old sister Chiara as they compete on the dance floor. It is a happy occasion, and the close-knit family are in top form. However, everything changes the next day when the father disappears. Chiara starts to investigate. As she gets closer to the truth, she is forced to decide what kind of future she wants for herself.

2021 - ITALY, FRANCE - DRAMA - 2K - 5.1 - ITALIAN - 121'



## INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

***Do you see A Chiara as the third part of a triptych which started with Mediterranea (2015), then A Ciambra (2017)?***

Yes. I arrived in Gioia Tauro, Calabria, in 2010. Two African migrants had just been attacked and beaten and this resulted in a violent riot which was the subject of *A Chjàna*, the short film I directed before *Mediterranea*. Soon after I moved there and later became acquainted with Pio and the Roma community which I eventually filmed in my film *A Ciambra*. At first, in 2010, I didn't have the idea of a triptych in mind at all, I just wanted to learn more about the riots. But pretty soon, I knew that I wanted to make three films about three facets of this town. The first was the African community, the second was the Roma community, which used to be nomadic but became sedentary and settled in Gioia Tauro. And lastly, the "Malavita"<sup>①</sup>, the people involved in the underground economy created by the mafia. I knew I was going to make these three films without knowing exactly what form it would take, but I remember finishing the first treatment of *A Chiara* three weeks before I started shooting *A Ciambra* in 2016.

***In three films, you film Gioia Tauro as a laboratory of globalization.***

Without a doubt Gioia Tauro is a microcosm of a larger social and economic trend that in these days is usually called globalization. But I think the only way to achieve the universal is to be precise, intimate, and local. This town has something very particular in the way that these phenomena intersect. There is the underground economy, the great poverty ignored by the state, and to top that, the mass arrival of migrants. Before 2012, almost nobody spoke about it, while I got to know the hard daily life of Koudous Seihon, who had made this trip from Africa. His reality, his experience and that of his friends became the reality of the film. With *A Ciambra* and *A Chiara*, the process was similar.

***In A Chiara, we rediscover characters from your previous feature films.***

I never wanted to make one big film which would combine these three aspects of life in Gioia Tauro: the migrants, the Roma, and the mafia. I wanted to talk about individuals, not generic subjects. And yet I wanted to imply the existence of a larger connection by making some characters reappear, even if briefly, in each film. It was obvious to me that, to make this point, the characters from my first films: Ayiva from *Mediterranea*, Pio and his cousin Patatina from *A Ciambra* had to appear in this new film.

<sup>①</sup> "Malavita" : criminal life, mafia life







***How did you meet Swamy Rotolo, who plays Chiara?***

I was extremely lucky. In 2015 I was preparing *A Ciambra* and we did a small casting because one scene, in the school, required extras. Swamy came along with her aunt. She was 9 or 10 at the time. I'd just finished the screenplay of *A Chiara*. The second I saw her, I knew she was Chiara. I happened to know her aunt very well, her cousins, her family. Over the years, I saw her grow up and I never changed my mind. Gioia Tauro is a small town and I often saw her on the promenade, eating ice cream with her friends or pizza with her father. I got to know her better and I rewrote the script with her in mind. In the film, all the characters are her real family.

***How did you write the screenplay? And can you describe how you worked on the shoot?***

Everything about the family is real, but I included them in a fictional narrative structure. So, it wasn't hard to get them to act because there are scenes that depict what they'd already experienced. For example, obviously Swamy has never had a

confrontation with her father about mafia activities, like in the film, but she has had face-to-face encounters with her father on other subjects, and it wasn't very difficult for her to draw on that.

***Did you have them read the script before the shoot or did you do what you did on your previous two films?***

The actors never read the script. Of course, Claudio and Antonio had an idea of the film's structure and subject matter. But nobody knew the story in detail. Each actor at the beginning of filming knew exactly what that character would know. Claudio knew, for example, that there was a bunker under the villa. But we never told Chiara about it. During the shoot, we kept telling her: "Look at this wall, look closely, there's something to be found". She ended up finding the bunker on her own when we shot the scene where she was supposed to find the bunker. My relationship with the actors is always very deep. We never stopped seeing each other outside of the shoot, even when it was interrupted by the pandemic. I talked to her constantly about the film.

***Do you always work with the same crew?***

90% of my crew worked on *Mediterranea* and *A Ciambra*. This time, the shoot was particularly intense because of the lockdown. We went from a crew of 30 people to 9.

***How did you work on the sound and music of the film? Sometimes the voices fade behind the music, as if to share Chiara's thoughts and emotions.***

Exactly. The music in the film is there to align the viewer with Chiara. The pop music places us squarely in the cultural landscape of what girls this age in Gioia Tauro (and elsewhere) listen to. There is a lot of Italian trap music, and all of these songs corresponds exactly to what Swamy and her friends listen to in real life. With the score we wanted to give the audience access to Chiara's inner-life, what's going on in her head. With Benh Zeitlin<sup>(2)</sup> and Dan Romer, who composed the soundtrack, we didn't want music which would bring pathos or manipulate the audience, we wanted it to mirror her emotional state.

(2) Benh Zeitlin is also the director of *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and *Wendy*

***The film is very realistic, but it also has a poetic dimension. For example, the bunker Chiara goes into also echoes the underground lair where her father hides out.***

Ultimately this is why I don't make documentaries. To me, the documentary-eque realism is a starting point, but the more scripted elements allow the film to, hopefully, operate on a thematic level that deepens the observational side. Examples would be the recurring idea of sleep in the film and the bunker. It could have been anywhere, but the fact that it is underground, and in the heart of the family home, brings an extra dimension.

***In your film, the mafia's crimes and violence are always off-screen.***

I've spent ten years in Gioia Tauro. Any search engine associates this town with the mafia. As soon as I mention its name, people talk to me about the mafia. As if there were shootings in the street all the time. But none of that ever happens. I never saw



the intense violence associated with the idea of mafia in Gioia Tauro. For me, *A Chiara* is much more a film about family than about the mafia. Of course, the mafia culture permeates many aspects of everyday life. But it is not dominant in the way that most people think. When I see movies about the mafia with men driving around in sports cars with guns in their back pockets, it doesn't correspond to what I've seen in my time in Gioia.

***Can you tell us more about this law that's referred to in the film?***

I was working on *Mediterranea* when I first read a long article about this law. The **'Ndrangheta**, the mafia in Calabria, is considered one of the most impermeable because unlike the Sicilian mafia, the Neapolitan Camorra or the American mafias, it is based solely on blood ties and family in the strict sense of the word. It is impossible to join a clan if you do not have a blood relationship with its members. Because of this, there are never any turncoats in this mafia, because nobody turns against their own family. To break this circle the state and the social services of Calabria have decided to take children away from their families until they are 18. Ideally, to give them a chance. Now, on one hand, I understand the logic behind the law, and I understand why it can be effective. That said, I have always been very skeptical of this approach from an emotional standpoint. Living in Gioia Tauro, I've seen the profound emotional

effect a sudden change in life on a 10-year-old girl whose father had been arrested. I will never forget her face when she realized that she would not see her father for a very long time, and as she started to grapple with what this means for her family. I've also come into contact with people who were part of this program and these two things together shaped the point of view of this film. I knew then that the best way to talk about my doubts and my skepticism was through the eyes of a very young girl. The mafia has a very patriarchal structure, with fathers passing on power to their sons, or nephews, etc. And making the film from the point of view of a girl allowed us to escape the preconceived notions one has about mafia families and tell the story from the point of view of a family, not a just a mafia family, but a family.

***Can we define A Chiara as a film about the courage it takes to face the truth?***

It's a film about family, about father-daughter relations. It's a film which talks about how people learn to find their own moral compass, and how they lean to navigate their surroundings. If I had to find a common thread in my three films, that would be it.

Interview by Elisabeth Lequeret





# ABOUT JONAS CARPIGNANO

Jonas Carpignano grew up between Rome and New York. After two short films which won awards at the 68th Venice Festival and Critics' Week in Cannes in 2014, he directed his first feature film, MEDITERRANEA, selected at the Cannes Festival in 2015 (Critics' Week).  
Jonas's second feature, A CIAMBRA, premiered at the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes in 2017.  
A CHIARA, his third film is back at the Directors' Fortnight and closes the trilogy on the town of Gioia Tauro in Calabria, Italy where these three films were shot.

## FILMOGRAPHY

Writer-Director

2021	A CHIARA   Drama, 121'
2017	A CIAMBRA   Drama, 118'   Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 2017
2015	MEDITERRANEA   Drama, 107'   Critic's Week, Cannes 2015
2014	A CIAMBRA   Short Drama, 16'   Discovery Award, Cannes 2014
2012	A CHJÀNA   Short Drama, 19'
2011	BAYOU BLACK   Short Drama, 13'
2010	RESURRECTION MAN   Short Drama, 6'
2006	LA CASA D'ARGENTO BAVA   Short Drama, 13'





## CAST

Chiara  
Claudio  
Giulia  
Carmela  
Giorgia  
Antonio  
Enzo  
Nina  
Giusi  
Patatina  
Celeste Tripodi

**SWAMY ROTOLO**  
**CLAUDIO ROTOLO**  
**GRECIA ROTOLO**  
**CARMELA FUMO**  
**GIORGIA ROTOLO**  
**ANTONIO ROTOLO**  
**VINCENZO ROTOLO**  
**ANTONINA FUMO**  
**GIUSI D'USCIO**  
**PATRIZIA AMATO**  
**CONCETTA GRILLO**

With the participation of

Ayiva  
Pio

**KOUDOUS SEIHON**  
**PIO AMATO**

## CREW

Writer - Director  
Producers

Coproducers

Executive Producer  
Director of Photography  
Editor  
Production Designer  
Music Supervisor  
Sound  
Costume Designer  
Music

**JONAS CARPIGNANO**  
**JON COPLON**  
**PAOLO CARPIGNANO**  
**RYAN ZACARIAS**  
**JONAS CARPIGNANO**  
**ULIE BILLY**  
**CAROLE SCOTTA**  
**ANTHONY MUIR**  
**KATRIN PORS**  
**EVA JAKOBSEN**  
**MIKKEL JERSIN**  
**ALESSIO LAZZARESCHI**  
**TIM CURTIN**  
**AFFONSO GONÇALVES**  
**MARCO ASCANIO VIARIGI**  
**JOE RUDGE**  
**GIUSEPPE TRIPODI**  
**NICOLETTA TARANTA**  
**DAN ROMER**  
**BENH ZEITLIN**

Stayblack Productions, Haut et Court, Rai Cinema, and Arte France Cinéma present "A Chiara" in Association with MK2 Films and MIBACT  
and with the participation of Arte France, with the support of Aide aux Cinémas du Monde - Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image animée - Institut Français and IBC Movie,  
in co-production with Film i Väst and Snowglobe  
International Sales MK2 Films

©2021 Stayblack Productions - Haut et Court - Arte France Cinéma