



Dolce Vita Confidential: Fellini, Loren, Pucci, Paparazzi, and the Swinging High Life of 1950s Rome

Shawn Levy

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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 “Italian” 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 Charleton 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?Tazio Secchiarioli, Pierluigi Praturlon, and Marcello Gepetti?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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