



LOOSE CANNONS (MINE VAGANTI)

Spring
Season
2011

Warning: both reviews reveal much of the plot!

Review by Rich Kline, *Shadows on the Wall*:

Turkish-born Italian filmmaker Ozpetek branches into comedy with this borderline farce about an established family struggling to grapple with the issues of the 21st century. It's bright and smart and ultimately surprisingly moving.

Returning home to Lecce from his studies in Rome, Tommaso (Scamarcio) confides to his older brother Antonio (Preziosi) that he intends to tell his whole family that he's gay, partly to get out of his responsibilities in the family's pasta business. But at dinner that night, Antonio drops his own bombshell, leaving their parents (Savino and Fantastichini) and sister (Nappi) stunned. Their grandmother (Occhini), however, isn't so surprised. Or shaken. Over the next weeks, the fallout continues as Tommaso befriends the sexy, mysterious Alba (Grimaudo) and neglects his boyfriend (Recano) back in Rome. Ozpetek loves these sorts of family-based movies, with lots of passionate, lively people spiralling around each other. And what makes this film work, besides some strong acting, is the more serious themes the story raises as it explores the conflict between generations at what is clearly a transitional point in cultural history (and not just in Italy). The family patriarch isn't against homosexuality per se, but he's terrified that if his son is openly gay he'll be a laughing stock.



Of course, everyone in this film sees things in a slightly different way. And it's the juxtaposition of three generations that makes things intriguing, especially since Occhini steals the film as the wise woman who knows a thing or two from experience. And Scamarcio is thoroughly engaging as a young guy caught between a rock and a hard place, as it were; his anxiety is a little overplayed, but it's also palpable. In fine Italian style, most of the key scenes take place at mealtimes, including both the smaller, quiet moments and the bigger farcical events (such as when Tommaso's boyfriend and three very gay pals visit from Rome). But even in the broadest comedy, Ozpetek roots the characters in authenticity. And by keeping the tone light and frothy, he's able to explore an intensely serious issue with refreshing insight and a warmly personal touch.

Review by Philip French, *The Observer*:

Ferzan Özpetek, a Turkish director trained and living in Italy, made his impressive debut in 1997 with *Hamam*, in which a handsome middle-class Italian and his pretty wife inherit an old Turkish bathhouse in Istanbul that spectacularly transforms their lives. His elegant, deeply romantic films since then have mostly been set in Rome and evoked comparison with Pedro Almodóvar. But his new one, *Loose Cannons* takes place in Lecce, the capital of Puglia, a southern, culturally conservative city in the heel of Italy. Tommaso, an ambitious would-be novelist long absent in Rome, returns to his wealthy family determined to break the news that he is gay. Unfortunately at the dinner party he's chosen for his bombshell, his brother Antonio, who manages the family's world-renowned pasta factory, gets in first to announce his gayness. Dad has a heart attack, Antonio is banished, and Tommaso has to take over the firm.

It's overlong but often touching in an acceptably sentimental way and always amusing in a predictable fashion, most especially so when four gay friends from Rome drop in and have to act straight. *Loose Cannons* is one of those pictures (like *La cage aux folles* and others that followed it) aimed at middle-class audiences, in which being gay is presented as quite normal and homophobia as something old-fashioned conventional folk must get over. The movie's most shocking episode features the death of an elderly diabetic, a suicide one assumes, as the result of an immense overdose of delectable patisseries. Is this possible?

