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Brunello Cucinelli Takes His Brand to the Big Screen With North American Release of ‘The Gracious Visionary’

The docufilm, produced by Brunello Cucinelli S.p.A. and MasiFilm in collaboration with RAI Cinema, opens in theaters in the U.S. and Canada on July 24

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At the start of the new documentary “Brunello: The Gracious Visionary,” Brunello Cucinelli strolls through his vineyards at night, illuminated by dozens of small, contained fires that protect the vines from frost. He’s a man in his 70s, walking with ease and confidence through his domain — a world he spent decades crafting, curating and restoring.

Last Tuesday, the fashion designer strolled in a very different location. He walked down the star-studded red carpet, flanked by his family, at the New York City gala screening, an exclusive event and celebratory dinner in advance of his documentary’s North American distribution by Blue Fox Entertainment.

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Again, Brunello was a man at ease in his surroundings, pleased to share the docufilm about his life and philosophies. There's more to the entrepreneur than the wild success of the pullover cashmere sweaters he crafted beginning in 1978. For decades, he has intentionally fashioned a company based on his brand of humanistic capitalism and human sustainability.

It's a compelling story both in real life and in the film. Director Giuseppe Tornatore combines documentary storytelling and re-created flashbacks in "Brunello: The Gracious Visionary." Friends, family, peers and celebrities speak about Brunello's achievements alongside the re-creations.

"I wanted Giuseppe to undertake this project because he is a poet, and I believe that poets are the greatest human beings on earth," Brunello tells Variety. "Ultimately, my dream was for this film to serve as a testament to what my life, what our life, has been: a legacy to leave behind for our children, our grandchildren and all those who will come after us."

As the docufilm shows, Brunello spent his early years among a loving family, but emerged from a poor, rural farm existence in Umbria, Italy. He met his future wife Federica when they were teens, and she became his entrée into the world of fashion. Becoming the "King of Cashmere" with his eye-catching, durable pullovers, he has over time expanded his reach in both garments and his approach to running his company. As a young man, he overheard his father complaining bitterly about being treated badly in his factory job, which became a "turning point in my life," in which he decided to live, and work, for human dignity.

his company headquarters; along with developing parks, renovating a church, building a theater and creating a library with over 500,000 titles.

Bringing their story to life, one Federica calls a “true fairytale,” shows what the couple of 54 years has achieved together. “This was intended to be, in a sense, our own personal monument to life — partly because Brunello and I met when we were very young,” she tells Variety. “I never would have imagined that we would one day see the story of our lives turned into a film.”

Meanwhile, the environment in Brunello’s company is less that of a factory and more a creative hive, where workers receive higher-than-average pay and craft their garments in natural light, then share communal meals. To Brunello, the business was never only about making money — it was about creating a livable job environment, where his ideas about treating workers humanely could play out in real time.

And over the years, the business has become a true family affair. While Federica runs the Brunello and Federica Cucinelli Foundation, their daughters Carolina and Camilla are vice presidents, who know precisely how to share the Cucinelli brand with the next generation. For the NYC gala screening, Carolina wore a “very feminine dress” and paired it with a “non-biker jacket.” Camilla’s gala outfit was created with an eye toward representing the company. “The concept was to feature, for example, a tuxedo with color-blocking rather than a solid, single color,” she tells Variety. “I felt it would effectively embody our philosophy.”

The family patriarch hopes the company will continue with its mission long after he is gone, ideally in his adopted village of Solomeo. “We feel a profound sense of responsibility toward the company and the people who work alongside

coercion yet driven by a great passion inherited from our parents. We have embraced this philosophy and are now weaving it into our daily work, with the hope of carrying this company and its values forward into the future.”

Possibly the docufilm will be the key to inspiring those next generations, and to convince them to stay the course regarding Brunello’s humanistic philosophy and vision. “One may inherit ownership, but never the actual capacity for entrepreneurship,” he allows. “Yet they truly love it and this whole idea of being here together, with the grandchildren ... it all possesses a certain charm, a certain poetry. And so, I wanted this film, both for my grandchildren and for my daughters, to serve as a small living testament: a record of what we have, and of how we have lived.”

The gala screening, held one day after Blue Fox Entertainment announced the July 24 North American theatrical release date, was also a callback to the past. The first Cucinelli store opened in the United States in the West Village in 2006. Today, the family reveres New York City — and not just as a mecca for fashion. “New York is a city that gives us so much energy and inspiration,” says Carolina. “Every time we visit, we truly take so much back home with us.”

Ultimately, the founder’s wish is that “Brunello: The Gracious Visionary” will take its rightful place alongside other major achievements — the library, the town restoration, his speech at the G20 Summit in 2021 in which he urged leaders to consider themselves the “temporary guardians of Creation.”

Brunello, who’s namedropped in “The Devil Wears Prada 2” and inspired an entire storyline in “Emily in Paris,” says the message of his docufilm is not just for people who share his last name. As with many things he does, it’s a message

up at the sky. The stars will be your source of inspiration.... Do not feel pressured to make everything work perfectly right away. Pursue your dream throughout your life. That is what I would love most of all. Hold fast to this ideal and strive to live as if you were the pro tempore custodians of humanity. Yes, yes we can do it.”

The docufilm, produced by Brunello Cucinelli S.p.A. and MasiFilm in collaboration with RAI Cinema, opened in Italy on Dec. 9 and garnered more than \$1 million during its limited seven-day run.

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