

RAI FICTION

presents

ANTONIO ALBANESE

in

THE RATS

A coproduction



WILDSIDE

In association with
TV Production Department – Turin RAI TV Production Centre

A comedy series

written and directed by and starring **Antonio Albanese**

co-starring Nicola Rignanese, Lorenza Indovina, Tony Sperandeo

Airing on Rai3 Saturday 6, 13 and 20 October at 9.40pm
Online preview on RaiPlay from 2 October

CAST

SEBASTIANO

U STORTU

BETTA

UNCLE VINCENZO

CARMEN

BENNI

AUNT VINCENZA

ANTONIO ALBANESE

NICOLA RIGNANESE

LORENZA INDOVINA

TONY SPERANDEO

MICHELA DE ROSSI

ANDREA COLOMBO

CLELIA PISCITELLO

CREW

Series directed by	Antonio Albanese
Story and screenplays	Antonio Albanese
Co-screen writers	Alessandro Castriota
Assistant director	Fabio Simonelli
Costumes	Carola Fenocchio
Set design	Maurizio Zecchin
Editing	Luciana Pandolfelli
Cinematography	Roberto Forza
Music	Alessandro Castriota
Music publisher	RAI COM
General organizer	Roberto Leone
Project manager Turin PC	Tommaso Crupi
Production manager Turin PC	Carmine Lonegro
Executive producers	Olivia Sleiter and Gianluca Leurini
Delegated producers	Lorenzo Gangarossa and Ludovica Rapisarda
RAI producers	Anouk Andaloro and Alessandra Ottaviani
WILDSIDE producers	Mario Gianani and Lorenzo Mieli
A ... coproduction	Rai Fiction – Wildside
In association with	TV Production Department Turin RAI TV Production Centre

Non-contractual credits

PRESENTATION

Working behind and in front of the camera Antonio Albanese has created for Rai his first ever TV series; a comedy marked by his unique style.

Consisting of six 25-minute episodes, which Rai 3 will air in three peak viewing slots (2 episodes a week, on Saturdays), the series gives life to a new Albanese character with an immense sense of irony and a taste for paradox in addressing the theme of the mafia from a comical stance.

This character is Sebastiano, a mob boss in hiding in a northern Italian villa. A place with a thousand “eyes” spying the outside and ingenious hiding places in the inside: cameras, alarms, fences, secret passages, underground galleries, as well as, of course, a buried bunker. Thanks to this strategic abode and the life of “rats” Sebastiano and his family must lead, the police lost all trace of the man years earlier. And from the villa, with the help of trusted figureheads, he pursues the shady and ludicrous business of his building firm. All this with the cooperation of the entire family: his wife Betta, impassibly involved in all the illegal dealings; his first-born Carmen, a university student often in conflict with her father, but who shares his shirt-sleeve philosophy and eloquent cynicism; Benni, his rather dumb 17-year-old son with ambitions considered rebellious by his father, who also doesn't share his passion for cuisine; and finally aunt Vincenza, an eager gambler, and uncle Vincenzo, the founder of the mafia clan, who has lived in blissful seclusion for 12 years.

The story is based on the many stratagems real mafia bosses adopt to escape arrest and guarantee themselves long periods in hiding. Amusing and extravagant in the series as they are in real life, from which *The Rats* takes its inspiration, the episodes dramatically take these situations to their extreme consequences in its intent to represent the mafia world in a comical key, with an intelligent use of sense reversals and catchphrases. *The Rats* aims at entertaining and amusing viewers in its portrayal of the mafia underworld, while ridiculing and condemning between the lines its codes, misdeeds big and small, misdealings, ignorance and human misery.

Each of the 6 episodes revolves around the mafia way of life, of which the main character is absurdly proud. All this, in the perspective of a plot full of enlightening echoes and contrasts, mixed with everyday family problems and the intimate moments of the individual characters. We can move, for example, from the need to discover what the rival family clan of the Calamarus is plotting to the contrasted sentimental relationship between Carmen and the scion of that family; from decontaminating the house from police bugging devices to Benni's declaration that he intends to become a vegetarian; from the rulebook on how to bribe politicians, to the elderly uncle's candid wish to go to the beach...

MAIN CHARACTERS

SEBASTIANO (Antonio Albanese) is the star of the series. A Sicilian who moved to the north, he is the son of a long dead powerful boss from whom he has inherited a construction firm successful in criminal activities. An emblematic character, proud of his ignorance and of what he has built with his unclean hands. He is wanted by the police, though in the past he staged his own death, and lives his condition of absconder as a thrilling experience. He spends his time locked up in his villa in an unspecified northern Italian location. His days are marked by continuous escapes through the many tunnels that lead to an underground refuge outside the villa. Every time the doorbell rings, Sebastiano slips into one of the several underground passages to avoid being caught. When big problems need to be solved and he is forced to leave the house to meet his right-hand man, U Stuortu (a nickname meaning “crooked” or “sly” in Italian), he does so in the darkness of the night or dressed up as a woman. He takes the “paths” organized by his henchmen with all types of means of transport, from tractors to Segways... His meetings with U Stuortu often take place at the graveyard, at the tomb of his mother Gaetana, with whom Sebastiano confides regularly, always bringing her a bunch of freshly stolen flowers.

BETTA (Lorenza Indovina), short for Calabiscetta, also a Sicilian, is Sebastiano’s wife and she helps him in all situations, but without having any influence on him, without ever opposing him in any way. She too is ignorant and simply follows her husband’s directives, experiencing everything that happens around her as if it were absolute normality. All that matters to her is continuing to lead a comfortable life in her fine villa and surrounding garden.

Their two children were both born in the north. **CARMEN (Michela De Rossi)**, whose real name is Carmela, is their first-born, 24 years old. She studies Economics at university and is a determined girl. She knows exactly what she wants and often changes boyfriends. The cultural contrast with her father is evident, even though they have similar personalities. Carmen represents the new generation of mobsters; educated youngsters who hang around “clean” environments, who “launder” their families with their irreproachable curricula, recycling dirty money through legal activities.

BENNI (Andrea Colombo), short for Benedetto, is a seventeen-year-old and a child of his time. Slightly dumb, his ambition is to become a celebrity chef. He is constantly proposing extravagant dishes that are not taken seriously by anyone in the family and make him the target of his father’s mockery. He recognizes the laws of the family but is not fully conscious of the context and consequences.

UNCLE VINCENZO (Tony Sperandeo), also an absconder, he has lived 12 years locked in the small refuge built in the basement of the villa. It's a life he's so used to that he doesn't even want to go out anymore. Forgotten by everyone, even the police, he spends his days on the sofa listening to the public utility radio station "Isoradio" and painting banknotes of inexistent denominations, like 15 euro, 25 euro... When Sebastiano joins him to hide from indiscreet eyes, they have surreal conversations with long intervals of silence and marked by a repeated judgment with which Vincenzo annotates any subject ("real shit").

AUNT VINCENZA (Clelia Piscitello), Vincenzo's wife, is happily resigned to her situation. She is basically a housewife with a wild passion for gambling, which she hides from her family. Every day she calls a bookmaker and orders him to place bets for her on football matches, and more...

To complete the summary of main characters there's **U STUORTU (Nicola Rignanese)**, a nickname meaning crooked or sly in Italian. He manages the family furrier's shop with his elderly mother: clearly a cover-up activity. He is Sebastiano's close friend and right-hand man, his vehicle for communicating with other clan leaders and convey orders to the employees of Sebastiano's firm. But Sebastiano also uses him to solve practically any kind of problem. U Stuortu is also a fan of poetry. At the meetings between mafia families that take place in the "Holy Room", he often recites verses by heart, creating grotesque situations.

LOCATIONS

Action mainly takes place in Sebastiano's villa, located in an undefined part of northern Italy. Equipped with several alarm systems and cameras, it also features a tall masonry fence all round and a large lawn garden. The peculiarity of the house, as we've said, is that it possesses an extensive network of underground tunnels and intricate secret passages leading to the outside of the property. In addition, other narrow underground paths lead to a tube leading to the hideout where Uncle Vincenzo has lived for 12 years: a single room with no windows but supplied with every convenience (kitchen, bathroom, bed, TV and radio) and even an old entry phone and a special flashing lights code to communicate with the upper floor.

Another important and suggestive location is the Holy Room: an underground circular space with a large oval table in the middle lit up with huge candles. This is where the plenums between the bosses of mafia families take place.

Finally, the graveyard and the cold store in U Stuortu's fur shop, places where Sebastiano meets his right-hand man with no fear of being noticed.

Non-contractual credits

EPISODE SUMMARIES

Episode 1 - "The Calamaru Family"

The first episode sees Sebastiano and his family sitting around the table for their lunch, which is interrupted several times by the buzzing of the entry phone. As a consequence, Sebastiano is forced several times to slide into the underground passages leading to Uncle Vincenzo's hideout. Until they discover the buzzing is from Carmen, who eventually comes in and announces that she is in a relationship with the eldest son of the Calamarus' rival family. Panic all round.

Episode 2 - "Bugs and Insects"

Sebastiano is stuck in the wardrobe connecting the bedroom to one of the underground passages. The door refuses to open and Betta has called a carpenter to repair it. But once the job is done, she suspects that the house is full of spy bugs. After warning Sebastiano, they all rush to uncle's bunker, where they can speak freely and decide what to do. Back in the villa, Benni and Carmen discover a bug. Their fears are confirmed. Sebastiano decides to call a meeting of clan leaders in the Holy Room to find a solution to get rid of the police.

Episode 3 - "The Dock"

In memory of his mother, Sebastiano wants to have a 180-metre-long dock built on the lake. In the cold store of U Stuortu's furrier's shop, the surveyor in charge of the building site explains why it would be impossible. But Sebastiano refuses to give up and asks uncle Vincenzo for advice. The latter suggests contacting Pino U Mitra (Machine Gun Piero), an influential figure who would help the project to go ahead. The only problem is that he's on "holiday," i.e. in prison. But U Stuortu knows how to contact him, and the adventurously manage to present the problem to him.

Episode 4 - "The Dissertation"

Betta is waiting for her friends for a game of Buraco. Carmen, who one month later will be discussing her university dissertation, is also at home. Benni has already planned the buffet menu for the graduation party and Sebastiano, surprising everyone, considering he can't be seen in public, decides to have a new suit cut for him by Nic Boutique, a famous couturier with a disabled son who attends a social

health structure. Sebastiano, while trying on the suit, sniffs out a possible business opportunity.

Episode 5 - "The Young Magistrate"

An important meeting between mafia family bosses is taking place in the Holy Room, interrupted now and again by U Stuortu's attempts to recite his favourite poems. After the meeting, when Sebastiano goes back inside the villa, the whole family is spying on Carmen, who is at the front door passionately kissing a young man. Sebastiano demands an explanation. Carmen replies that it's a friend of hers who is studying to become a magistrate. At this point, more than the live kissing show, it's the word "magistrate" that triggers off Sebastiano's rage.

Episode 6 - "The Beach at Last"

Sebastiano is at his mother's grave, telling her about Carmen's relation with the future magistrate. After a brief chat with U Stuortu, he goes back home, downcast. At night, whilst everyone's asleep, the alarm goes off. Sebastiano manages to escape just before a police raid. After a long search, the cops discover the secret passages leading to the tunnels and begin a manhunt to catch the runaways in a mad pursuit deep through the bowels of the earth. But in the meantime Sebastiano and uncle Vincenzo are in the luggage compartment of a car driven by U Stuortu, with a very precise destination...

Director's Notes

I have described the lifestyle of mafia absconders using irony and paradox and with the intention of making the ridiculousness and absurdity of their condition emerge. The environments and the costumes depict a hidden grey tortuous world, quite literally an underworld. The characters express their inability to live a dignified life, partly as prisoners of their own primitive laws but above all driven by a sterile thirst for power and money that contaminates and impoverishes our social and economic fabric. The comedy also aims at being a tool to reveal the bestiality and ignorance of the mafia realities, which take away nourishment from us and also carry serious "infections," just like rats.

Antonio Albanese

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