



*un film di*  
**PIER PAOLO  
PASOLINI**

# ACCATTONE



## Accattone (*The Scrounger*)

1961, Italy, B&W, Drama, Running time: 120 mins, Rating: 15

Cast: Franco Citti, Franca Pasut, Silvana Corsini

Directed By: Pier Paolo Pasolini

Written By: Pier Paolo Pasolini

***The mark which has dominated all my work is the longing for life, this sense of exclusion, which doesn't lessen, but augments this love of life. - Pier Paolo Pasolini***

Today would have been the 87th birthday of director Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975). A man of contradictions, he was both a journalist and a poet; once a devout Catholic and later an atheist and Communist. The circumstances of his death are lurid. Brutally murdered in November 1975 by being run over a number of times by his own car, there have been many largely unsubstantiated rumors as to who was behind Pasolini's death. Some said it was an anti-communist conspiracy. Others said he staged his own death, due to the eerie similarities that can be found in his films. A young hustler was arrested, and confessed, to the murder of the openly gay director who - as his closest friend writer Alberto Moravia (*Il Conformista*) acknowledged - had a proclivity for

### First Time Directors

Eden Court Cinema  
March 21<sup>st</sup> 2017 at  
7:15 pm

Review from 2009  
by Tony Dayoub, on  
the website Cinema  
Viewfinder.

Interview sourced by  
Tony Janssens, Film  
note compiled by  
Mark MacLennan.

violent, young men since his early days as a novelist (*Ragazzi di vita*).

Pasolini's first film, *Accattone* (1961), portrays the lifestyle of these street people - or as he would often refer to them, the sub-proletariat - that lived outside the conflicting political currents that engulfed Italy and instead, held onto a fading code of morality. Vittorio (Franco Citti), known as "Accattone" to his buddies, is a pimp whose days are spent scrounging for food, lamenting his existence, and making bizarre wagers in order to get enough money to get by. He could just get a real job, but as he observes about the blue collar life:

***Accattone:*** *We're all washed-up and everybody avoids us. If we've money we're alright, if not we're nothing. We're finished because we're incapable of making it on our own. Today it's better to be a thief than follow this despicable trade.*



When his prostitute is sent to jail, he finds himself without income. He meets a naive young woman, Stella (Franca Pasut), who he falls in love with. But before long his desperation for money, and his inability to conform to the mainstream work force, lead

him to persuade her to take up the life of a streetwalker, corrupting the only innocence left in his life. Pasolini's early films were often mistaken for a new kind of neo-realism. There is a grittiness, to be sure. But even *Accattone*, his first film, shows a sense of style not found in the documentary-like work of his Italian predecessors. The credits roll under the strains of Bach's "Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder" from *St. Matthew Passion*, a piece Martin Scorsese would use to opposite effect in the opening credit sequence for *Casino*(1995) many years later. Pasolini uses the operatic tune to elevate his tragic lower class heroes. In one fight scene midway through the movie, the theme aggrandizes the wide-angled perspective on two men grappling in the dirt to an epic battle of honor. Scorsese used the same musical motif to diminish the explosive propulsion of Ace Rothstein (Robert De Niro).



A man flying through the stratosphere of Vegas becomes just another leaf falling from a tree, beautiful but insignificant.

This is but one instance of Pasolini's influence on the young Italian-American directors of the seventies. Like Scorsese used De Niro as his cinematic doppelganger, Pasolini formed a long and productive relationship with Franco Citti. Citti's ugly sad-eyed mug spoke of the streets of provincial Italy, the same way De Niro's grimace did of New York's backalleys in Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) a movie that centers on a subculture similar to the one in *Accattone*. Is it any surprise then that when Francis Coppola was seeking an authentic Italian actor for the part of Michael's Sicilian bodyguard, Calo, in *The Godfather* (1972), that he chose Citti to play him?

Having already worked as a writer on some of Fellini's films (*Nights of*

*Cabiria*) in the fifties, Pasolini would also mentor his young also mentor his young assistant director in *Accattone* whose career would eventually eclipse his, Bernardo Bertolucci (*Last Tango in Paris*). Pasolini would also reinvent himself a few times in the short span before his death. Ironically, the music from *St. Matthew Passion* would inspire one such instance of reinvention 3 years later, when he directs one of the most acclaimed takes on the Gospels, *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*). His constant mutability and knack for courting controversy soon made Pasolini a pivotal figure in Italian cinema.

**Review by Tony Dayoub, on the website Cinema Viewfinder.**

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**Our next screening....*Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles***

**The third and last film in our..*First Time Directors Season***



Eden Court Cinema  
Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017 at  
6.15pm

Jeanne Dielman the widowed mother of a teenage son, Sylvain ekes out a drab, repetitive existence in her tiny Brussels apartment, her days divided between humdrum domestic chores and her job as an occasional prostitute, which keeps her financially afloat. She seems perfectly resigned to her situation until a series of slight interruptions in her routine leads to unexpected and dramatic changes.

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