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1981 LA Filmex

Italy

Ernesto

1979. Color. 1.85 format. 98 min.
In Italian with English subtitles

Producer: Salvatore Samperi/*Screenwriters:* Salvatore Samperi, Barbara Alberti, Amadeo Paganini-/*Cinematographer:* Camillo Bazzoni/*Editor:* Sergio Montanari/*Music:* Carmelo Bernaola/*Principal Cast:* Martin Halm, Michele Placido, Virna Lisi, Turi Ferro, Lara Wendel/*Production Companies:* Clesi Cinematografica/Jose Frade Prod./Albatros Produktion/*Print Source:* Manley Productions, Inc.

Presented at the Berlin (1979), Cannes (1979), Chicago (1980), and San Francisco (1980) film festivals

This extraordinary film, which won the Best Actor Award for Michele Placido at the Berlin film festival (1979), has been ignored by distributors. One feels that they are somehow nervous about its frankness, and yet, *Ernesto*, unlike any film made before, utilizes the freedom of today's cinema to merge a mature theme with an intelligent outlook and psychological authority.

The titular hero of this film is a 17-year-old youth from upper middle class society in Trieste; the period is 1911, during those last years before World War I. Ernesto is being trained for a business career, mostly at the instigation of his mother and aunt, but he yearns to be a violinist and dreams of worldwide fame. Bored with school, and the possessor of what he considers a "bohemian" attitude toward his employer, Ernesto encourages a friendship with an attractive laborer in the establishment's warehouse.

The results of this liaison move into unsuspected byways where the spectator finds not pornographic titillation but a sudden, wryly sardonic commentary on social snobbery and the tragic turns of idealized passion. The young actor, Martin Halm, is a persuasive amalgam of adolescent hauteur and vulnerability as Ernesto, and Michele Placido's laborer is the perfect emblem of someone floundering on the wilder shores of love.

—*Albert Johnson*

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