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# AZZURRO

(SWITZERLAND-FRANCE-ITALY)

A C-Films, TSI (Switzerland)/Alhena Films, Machinassou, PCT Cinema & Television (France)/Gam Film, Technovisual (Italy) production. (International sales: C-Films, Zurich.) Executive producer, Edi Hubschmid.

Directed by Denis Rabaglia. Screenplay, Rabaglia, Luca De Benedettis, Antoine Jaccoud. Camera (color), Dominique Grosz; editor, Claudio Di Mauro; music, Louis Crelier; art director, Fabrizio Nicora. Reviewed at Locarno Film Festival (non-competing), Aug. 11, 2000. (Italian and French dialogue.) Running time: 85 MIN.

With: Paolo Villaggio, Francesca Pipoli, Marie-Christine Barrault, Jean-Luc Bideau, Renato Scarpa, Julien Boisselier, Antonio Petrocelli, Soraya Goma, Tom Novembre.

**A** vignettish tale about a blind Italo tyke "kidnapped" by her old grandfather to visit the Switzerland of his youth, "Azzurro" is often charmingly played but way too slim to make much impression beyond Swiss markets and Euro small screens. Reliable cast, led by veteran Paolo Villaggio as the portly old codger, go through their paces under clean direction by Swiss-Italian Denis Rabaglia in his sophomore outing. Pic made a decidedly lightweight closer to this year's Locarno fest.

Seventy-five-year-old Giuseppe (Villaggio) journeys from Puglia to Geneva with brattish, 7-year-old Carla (Francesca Pipoli) to call in an old debt to pay for her eye operation. Giuseppe spent 30 years working with Gaston (Jean-Luc Bideau) in the lakeside city but arrives to find him in a sanitarium and his company, now cash-strapped, run by his son. Further revelations of Giuseppe's past, and his connection with Gaston's wife (Marie-Christine Barrault), await him. It's all told and shot in a very rational, precise way that's thoroughly Swiss and ineffably local. Villaggio gives dignity to his role, but pic's ultimately soft center pitches it awkwardly between a family film and real drama with depth.

— Derek Elley