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MOVIE REVIEW

An Antonioni Landmark Film

Coming from documentaries and film criticism, Michelangelo Antonioni made his first feature, "Story of a Love Affair" ("Cronaca di un Amore"), in 1950 when he was 37. The movie is not so much the chronicle of a love affair as the story of the failure of love between a couple brought together, then torn apart, by guilt.

Using this old-fashioned and melodramatic premise is a stylistic departure for Antonioni, the brilliant spokesman of casual alienation. Unlike the film-maker's later works, "Story of a Love Affair" is rooted in the film noir of the

'STORY OF A LOVE AFFAIR'

(Cronaca di un Amore)

A New Yorker Film release. Director Michelangelo Antonioni. Screenplay Antonioni, Daniele d'Anza, Silvio Giovaninetti, Piero Tellini. Photography Enzo Serafin. Costumes Ferdinando Sarmi. Music Giovanni Fusco. Production Franco Villani, Stefano Caretta. Featuring Lucia Bose, Massimo Girotti, Ferdinando Sarmi, Gino Rossi, Marika Rowsky, Rosa Miraflore, Rubi d'Alma. Running time: 1 hr. 42 min. Times-rated: Mature.

Hollywood '40s and is neither antidramatic nor elliptical. The subject is too torrid for the director's chill tone. However, it contains stunning social commentary that foreshadows Antonioni's recurring preoccupations with the difficulty of communication, the ease of betrayal and the corrupting influence of postwar industrial society. "Story of a Love Affair" clearly demonstrates the emerging genius of the film-maker.

Set in the northern Italian city of Milan, shown devoid of local character, the film takes place five years after World War II has ended, but economic and moral ravages are still manifested in the characters, viewed in relationship to their physical surroundings.

Lucia Bose plays a beautiful woman, married for seven years, with nothing to negotiate with except her beauty, so she is obsessed with not soiling it. Correspondingly, her clothing is crucial plumage and she dresses for everything, from making love to murder.

Ferdinando Sarmi, her industrialist husband, hires a private detective to learn about his wife's past. The investigation recharges a dormant relationship between Bose and an out-of-work car salesman (Massimo Girotti), but the

lovers have neither the financial independence nor the emotional fortitude to sustain their affair without her husband's money, so they lamely plot to kill him.

The film criticizes a society where private emotions are out of step with public conventions and where advances in technology can be harmful (in this case lethal) without any corresponding advancement in moral and emotional attitudes.

The screenplay, by Antonioni, Daniele d'Anza, Silvio Gi-

ovaninetti and Piero Tellini, has more intellectual glue than emotional conviction and the ambiguity tends to be confusing within the detective genre. We need to either know more or less about the lovers' past, and less would probably work better. The private detective also seems an unnecessary contrivance.

Bose, who was to gain acting prowess later on, is of classic beauty but without emotional depth or the nuances of expression which made Monica Vitti the quintessential An-

tonioni heroine.

Enzo Serafin's beautiful black-and-white photography blends desolation and lyricism.

"Story of a Love Affair" opens today at the Westland in Italian with English subtitles. Times-rated: Mature. While slightly dated because Antonioni was searching for the right form, this moody, poetic and pessimistic film is a remarkable point of departure.

—LINDA GROSS