

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Films</b>
Author(s)	Andrew Sarris Andrew Sarris
Source	<i>Village Voice</i>
Date	1968 Jun 06
Type	review
Language	English English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Accattone, Pasolini, Pier Paolo, 1961

## films

by Andrew Sarris

"ACCATTONE!" seems to have settled down to a successful run at the Fifth Avenue Playhouse after waiting six years for an American release. Pier Paolo Pasolini is supposed to have said that his first film was a parable of the slums and ghettos everywhere, but that audiences in 1962 were reluctant to recognize the message. Contemporary critics have picked up Pasolini's cue to the extent of relating "Accattone!" to American race riots. I don't see the connection. As a character, Accattone belongs more to the underworld than to the lower classes, and the poetics of his personal destiny resemble more the Passion of

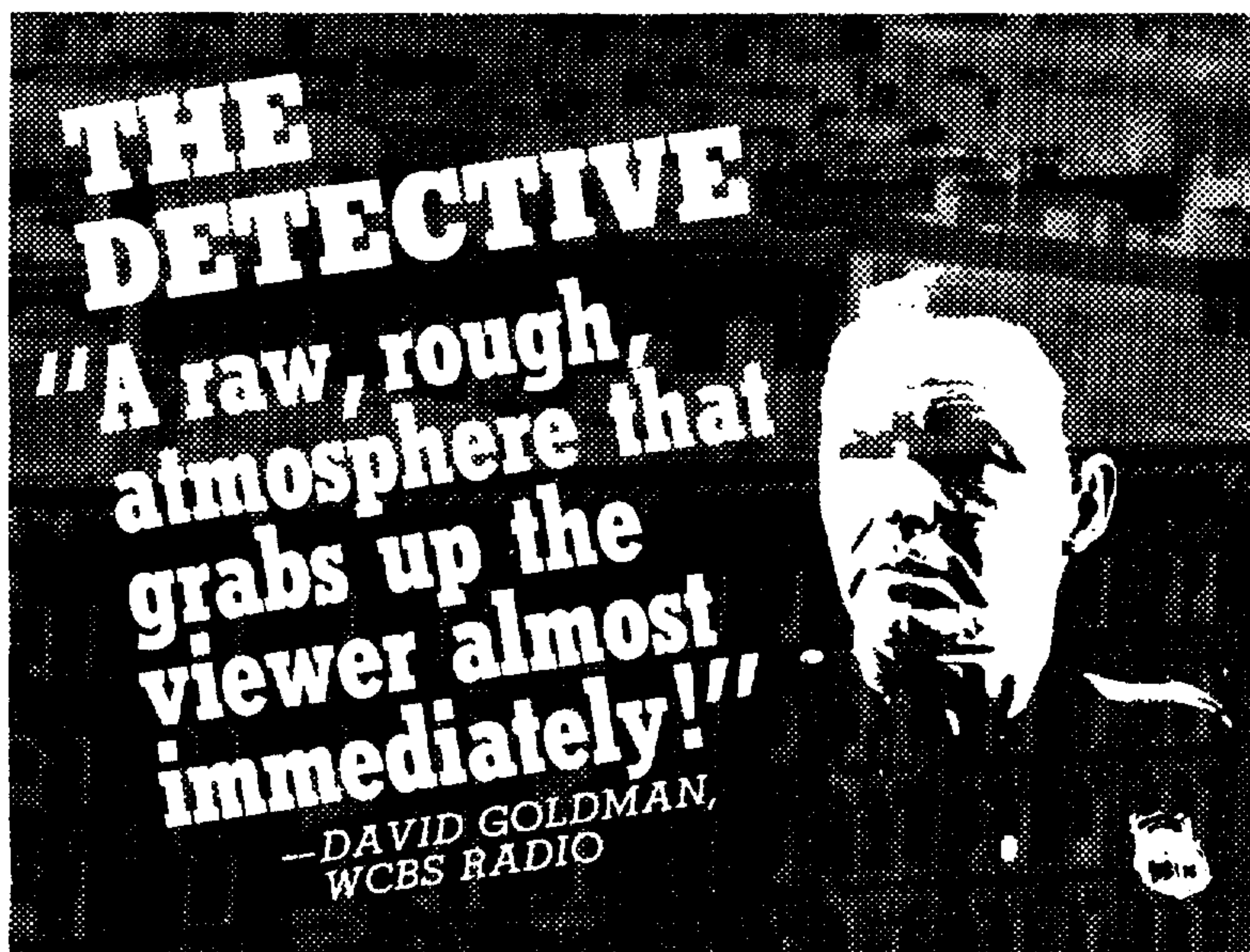
Christ than the Manifesto of Marx. The peculiar coexistence in Italy of Catholic reality and Communist rhetoric may be partly responsible for the emotional excesses of the neo-hysterics — Pasolini, Bertolucci, Bellocchio, and Baldi. Curiously, Pasolini insists on describing himself as a humanistic prose director, thus presumably concerned more with the matter than the manner of his films. But what are we to make of the Bach on the sound-track at moments of despair and degradation? Bach, after all, is as "poetic" a device as any expressionism of camera angle, movement, or focus. For Pasolini, Bach serves as the halo around Franco Citti's curly crown.

Indeed, Franco Citti's Accattone is a study in transfiguration from the opening moments of the film when the Tiber itself disgorges him as unworthy of

drowning. Even the name "Accattone" is a term of derision and contempt, but from the beginning we become attached to Accattone for his animal vitality. To the extent that Accattone is trapped in and by his environment and particularly by the economics of that environment, the film is faithful to certain forms of economic determinism. Pasolini does not have to underline or overstate the pitiful choices available to the poor. A few candid shots of hard labor suffice as ironic comments on the fatuity of honest poverty, and Accattone's richly comic laziness, far from discrediting him as a worthy protagonist, actually implicates the smug bourgeois art-house audience by its complacent laughter in a kind of complicity if not conspiracy with establishment notions of the unworthy poor.

The problem with Pasolini is that he never develops his material with any psychological or sociological complexity. There is no firm grasp of milieu, and the interaction of characters is sluggish. Images, often vivid, are as often dissociated from ideas. The spectacle of a starving pimp eating flowers and laughing wildly at his own shame and futility is remembered long after the context of the spectacle has been forgotten. The narrative is endlessly cyclical rather than dramatic, and the allegorical road of the Italian cinema is overexploited to the point of pedestrian pathos.

The homosexual tics of style are as embarrassing as they are evasive, notably a wrestling match that degenerates into an extended embrace, all male, and a perfunctory treatment of female sexuality that though never malicious is somewhat fatally lacking in involvement. At times, Pasolini's vision of the world seems merely lower-caste Visconti in its preoccupation with the romantic rhetoric of damnation. Fortunately Franco Citti's expressive energy as an actor redeems Accattone from the last-gasp sentimentality of a death scene, half Cagney and half Cocteau, more misty-eyed than mystical.



20th CENTURY-FOX

PANAVISION

COLOR BY DELUXE

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE AUDIENCES

NEW FORUM 47th St.  
47th St. & Broadway PL 7-8320-1

NEW LOEW'S  
Orpheum  
E. 86th St. at 3rd Ave. AT 9-4607

### village movies

#### ART (GR 3-7014)

OUR OF THE WOLF (through Tue)

Pain and paranoia; ambiguous arty Ingmar Bergman tale of tormented artist and wife—with Max Von Sydow, Liv Ullman. WED, THURS: 1.15, 2.45, 4.30, 6.20, 8.15, 10. FRI, SAT: 1.45, 3.30, 5.20, 7.10, 9.05, 11. SUN-TUE: Same as Wed, Thurs. Next Wednesday schedule unavailable; call theatre.

BLEECKER STREET CINEMA (GR 4-3210)