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AQUARIUM
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An Arcadia SAS production. Produced by Riccardo Rovescalli.

Directed, written by Michele Sordillo. Camera (color), Luciano Baresi; editor, Gianni Lari; music, Ludovico Einaudi; production design, Elisabetta Gabbioneta; costumes, Donatella Cianchetti; sound, Amedeo Casati; assistant director, Luca Colocucci; casting, J. Pochintesta. Reviewed at Venice Film Festival (Italian panorama), Sept. 2, 1996. Running time: 75 MIN.

With: Ivano Marescotti, Carlina Torta, Maria Consagra, Paola Iovinella, Lucia Vasini, Maurizio Schmidt.

Alienation Milanese style is depicted in this solemn exercise in which the protagonists all need love but fail to connect with one another. Pic lacks the visual dynamism that Antonioni brought to this kind of theme 35 years ago, but it's a solid, arty entry on the Italo scene that could attract Eurotube attention.

Luca is a dentist who lives with his wife, Francesca. On the rare occasions they get together, usually at mealtimes, they argue about petty irritations. One day, Luca gets a message on his answering machine from a woman with a sexy voice; he returns the call and arranges to meet her at his office after hours.

Meanwhile, 40-ish Caterina has decided to change jobs and doesn't even tell her husband. She finds a position as assistant at a bookstore, but much of her time is taken up caring for the store owner's senile mother, which Caterina doesn't seem to mind.

Anna, who lives alone, gets a call from her brother in Paris, asking her to offer hospitality to his friend, Simona, a would-be model. For a while it seems as though Anna and Simona can become friends, but Simona's infraction of social etiquette destroys the budding relationship.

Apart from Caterina, who finds a certain fulfillment looking after the old lady, the characters in this mournful piece all fail to find the love they so earnestly seek. There's nothing new here, nor has writer-director Michele Sordillo found a fresh way to depict this drama of angst and ennui. The cast members fulfill their chores efficiently; production credits are modest, in keeping with this understated production. —David Stratton