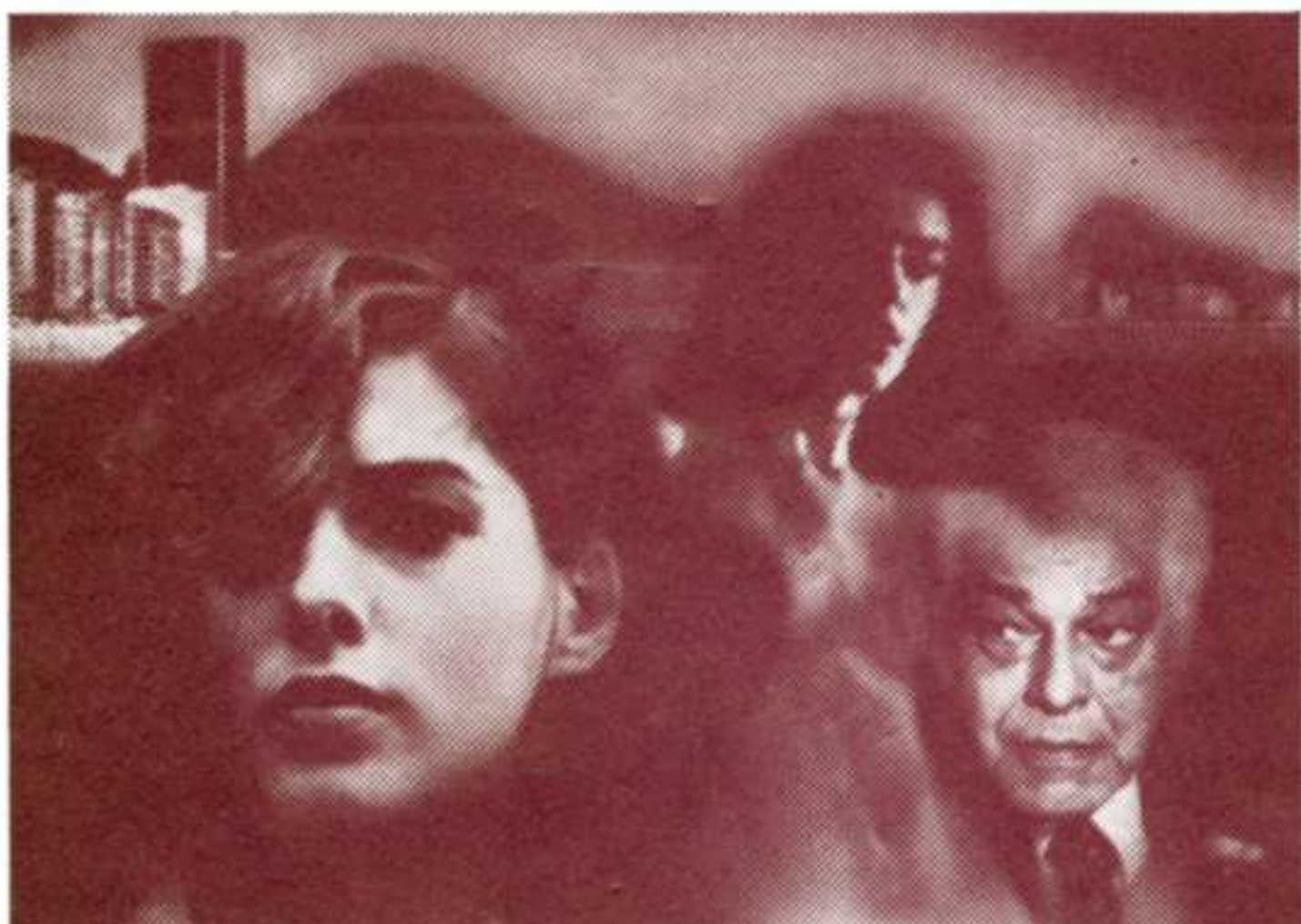


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Bruno Barreto's

AMOR BANDIDO

Brazilian director Bruno Barreto has marvelously captured the seedy side of life with "Beloved Lover." Film is a brutal account of what goes on when one turns to sex as a means of making money as well as a compelling drama focusing on the love relationship between prostitute and hustler in a city being terrorized by a murderer. There seems to be a significant commercial market for item, although a number of American pix with like themes, most recently "Hardcore," could dissuade audiences from attending foreign version of something they could see in English. Still, word-of-mouth should give boost and usual art crowd will lend strong support.

Barreto has a fine eye for detail throughout, capturing the grittiness of the city and degenerate nature of people more through surroundings and action than dialog. Technique is evident from beginning, with chilling opening scene where detective Galvao views daughter Sandra in a strip show and later returns to his empty apartment.

The de-emphasis on words should particularly draw in viewers that are somewhat uncomfortable with subtitles.

Story slowly builds as it's discovered Sandra's transvestite roommate has committed suicide and his ex-lover, Toninho, comes looking for a photograph of the two in Sandra's apartment. Chemistry between Cristina Ache and Paulo Guarnieri as Sandra and Toninho is instant and electrifying, as the two go from love to hate and back again during ensuing scenes.

The desperate distrustful natures of two people on the streets, as well as the carnal passion of a pair of lovers who sense their limited time together, are thoroughly fleshed out by Ache and Guarnieri and their performances ultimately make the film.

There is also fine support from Paulo Gracindo as detective Galvao, who meanwhile is investigating a killer given to murdering cab drivers at night and leaving them locked in their cars with the radio on. Gracindo plays off well against Ache in some father-daughter scenes that could have easily appeared overly sentimental.

Screenplay by Jose Louzeiro and Leopoldo Serran is consistently on-target with the exception of several "coincidences" that manage to weave everything together at a somewhat abrupt ending.

Particularly intriguing is Toninho and his unapologetic manner for a life style that he ably illustrates is his because society left him no other choice.

Music by Guto Graca Mello is appropriate, Raimundo Higino's editing is smooth and Lauro Escorel Filho does an outstanding job on camera.

Although there are those who will probably be put off by some rather graphic sex scenes (a small amount of editing may be needed to achieve an R rating), mostly pic succeeds in combining both believable character studies with contemporary drama. And few pictures made in any country today can claim that. *Berg.*

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