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ACLÀ

La discesa di Aclà a Floristella

Italy, 1992, 86 minutes

Director: Aurelio Grimaldi **Production**

Company: Cineuropa 92 / Nova Films / Pentafilm

Producer: Pietro Valsecchi, Camilla Nesbitt

Screenplay: Aurelio Grimaldi **Cinematographer:**

Maurizio Calvesi **Editor:** Raimondo Crociani

Composer: Dario Lucantoni **Leading Players:**

Francesco Cusimano, Tony Sperandeo, Luigi Maria

Burruano, Lucia Sardo, Giovanni Alamia **Print**

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Canadian Premiere

It is Sicily, in the 1930s. Aclà is a strong-willed, strikingly beautiful eleven-year-old boy. His white-blond hair and fair skin not only set him apart from other men and boys, but are a sign of his purity and promise. Like his father and his brothers before him, however, Aclà has been indentured to work in the sulphur mines. Six days a week for eight years he is destined to labour and work below ground. "Everything here is mine," he is told by his brutish foreman on the first day, "—you included." But the boy cannot grow numb to the beatings and abuse as the older men have. His abiding dream is to run away, reach the sea, and escape to Australia. . .

Aurelio Grimaldi's film is packed with striking imagery and is distinguished by the provocative homoerotic overtones present in an all-male society that lives—nearly naked—below ground. Yet Grimaldi is clearly a talented, intelligent filmmaker whose observations of Italian society are intended to be more than sensational. The film was inspired by photographs in a 19th-century book about the Sicilian sulphur mines, which did rely on child labour. *Aclà* is a moving, powerful metaphor for the way the innocent spirit of a child can be oppressed by forces beyond his control. "A minor masterpiece." (*Village Voice*)

John Teegarden, Seattle International Film Festival
Vancouver Int'l FF 1993