

Document Citation

Title	Abissinia
Author(s)	David Rooney
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1993 May 17
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Abissinia (Abyssinia), Martinotti, Francesco Ranieri, 1993

5/17/93

ABISSINIA
(ABYSSINIA)
(ITALIAN)

An Istituto Luce/Italnoleggio Cinematografico release of an Itefilm production in association with RAI-2/Istituto Luce/the Ministry of Tourism & Entertainment. (Intl. sales: Sacis.) Produced by Laurentina Guidotti. Directed by Francesco Martinotti. Screenplay, Fulvio Ottaviano, Martinotti, from Michele Corsi's story. Camera (color), Mauro Marchetti; editor, Annalisa Forgiione; music, Fiorenzo Carpi; art direction, Giantito Burchiellaro; costumes, Sergio Ballo; sound, Fabio Felici. Reviewed at Anica screening room, Rome, May 7, 1993. (In Cannes Film Festival, Intl. Critics' Week.) Running time: **87 MIN.**
Antonio Enrico Salimbeni
Enzo Mario Adorf
Francesca Grazyna Szapolowska
Armida Milena Vukotic
Marco Luca Zingaretti
Renato Paki Valente

A shiftless stranger gets drawn into the firing line of another man's pathological jealousy in "Abyssinia," a bleak, slow-burning tragedy quirkily recounted in an appealingly discordant key. Film noir-styled tale of lethargy gone lethal will need critical support to overcome its nameless cast domestically, but it should make a healthy traveler, wangling fest dates and some specialized off-

shore release.

Set in the Adriatic coastal town of Riccione, pic immediately establishes its balancing act of lightness and sobriety, with a coffin moving down the flash/trash tourist mecca's main street. Backtracking, it recaps the events leading to the death, saving the contents for a final-reel surprise.

Turfed out of his restaurant job, and roughed up by the boss' flunkies for pilfering his outstanding wage, indolent waiter Enrico Salimbeni is taken in by gruff restauranteer Mario Adorf, whose unpopular eatery's location is so out of the way, it's nicknamed Abyssinia. Salimbeni settles right into the place's all-consuming inertia, piecing together the once-illustrious pasts of Adorf and his fiery femme Grazyna Szapolowska through tidbits from the bone-idle staff.

Director Francesco Martinotti slyly maintains the sense of dread as more an unnerving hint than a promise, quietly milking the setting's stifling oppressiveness. Helping him keep a tight rein on the smoldering events is Salimbeni's easy mix of awkwardness and cool nonchalance. Other thesping is mostly strong, but one detour into histrionics briefly upsets the balance.

Pic is smoothly edited and shot, and Fiorenzo Carpi's music nicely reinforces the mood. Art director Giantito Burchiellaro captures the dusty, kitsch decadence of unfashionable beach resorts.

— David Rooney