

## Document Citation

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**TICKETS**

(ITALY-U.K.)

A Medusa Films release (in Italy) of a Fandango (Rome)/Sixteen Films (London) co-production in association with the U.K. Film Council. (International sales: The Works, London.) Produced by Carlo Crest-Dina, Babak Karimi, Rebecca O'Brien, Domenico Procacci; music, George Fenton; production designer, Alessandro Vannucci; costume designer, Maurizio Basile; (Dolby Digital). Reviewed at Anica, Rome, Feb. 15, 2005. (In Berlin Film Festival — noncompeting.) Running time: 106 MIN.

**Episode 1:** Directed, written by Ermanno Olmi. Camera (color), Fabio Olmi; editor, Giovanni Ziberna; sound, Francesco Liotard.

With: Carlo Delle Piane, Valeria Bruni Tedeschi.

**Episode 2:** Directed, written by Abbas Kiarostami. Camera (color), Mahmoud Kalari; editor, Babak Karimi; sound, Maricetta Lombardo.

With: Silvana De Santis, Filippo Trojano, Carolina Benvenga, Marta Mangiucca.

**Episode 3:** Directed by Ken Loach. Screenplay, Paul Laverty. Camera (color), Chris Menges; editor, Jonathan Morris; sound, Ray Beckett.

With: Martin Compston, William Ruane, Gary Maitland, Blerta Cahani, Klajdi Qorraj.

(Italian, English, Albanian dialogue)

**By DEBORAH YOUNG**

**A**fter last year's "Eros" revitalized the old formula of three "name" directors sharing credit for one omnibus film, presumably on the theory audiences will pay to view their favorite auteurs' work irrespective of story and stars, "Tickets" reveals the joys and hazards of such projects. Once again it's the Italian master — in this case, Ermanno Olmi — who lags behind in the trio of tales set on a train racing through Italy. Thereafter film gains momentum: Abbas Kiarostami takes a break from experimental work with a humorous, liberating change of pace; Ken Loach lets loose in the film's rousing final story.

Viewers will step off this train grinning, but weakness at the locomotive end is likely to brake critical support and keep viewers cold until near pic's midpoint. Unless arthouse distributors gamble on the existence of automatic auds for three prestigious directors, all near peaks in their feature careers, the film looks to have less theatrical draw than "Eros," given train travel is less exciting than sex.

Despite the producers' insistence on the film being non-episodic, the three yarns are not integrated in theme, tone or lensing style — which is actually most

instructive for filmmaking students and others who watch cinema closely. Following Olmi's original idea, the directors worked separately on their stories, which are only connected in that they take place on the same Rome-bound train. Fortunately, a few characters pop up as extras in multiple episodes, giving some sense of continuity.

Olmi's concern with warfare in his two most recent films, "The Profession of Arms" and "Singing Behind the Screens," reappears in the guise of grotesque military checks on the international train carrying an elderly biochemist (jaunty Carlo Delle Piane) home to Rome. Returning from a meeting in Germany, where an attractive woman (a smoldering Valeria Bruni Tedeschi) has inflamed his dormant romantic impulses, he ruminates over their brief professional encounters and fantasizes about seeing her again. Fancy cross-cutting can't lift his saccharine memories out of the doldrums, and the dichotomy between love and aggression leads to a simplistic conclusion.

Where Olmi seems to be working with masks rather than 3-D characters, Kiarostami's naturalism with his characters, all speaking believable Italian, is a breath of fresh air. Young Filippo (Filippo Trojano), who is doing his civil ser-

**Dichotomy between love and aggression in Ermanno Olmi's seg of 'Tickets' leads to a simplistic conclusion.**

vice in place of military duty, has been saddled with the unenviable task of escorting a general's battleaxe widow (Silvana De Santis) to a memorial service.

De Santis, a theater actress and the only pro in the episode, is superb both in her comic arrogance and later in her lonely despair. Trojano and especially the young girls he chats up demonstrate that the Iranian technique of improvising with non-pro actors can yield astounding results in any language. The moments of laugh-out-loud comedy, including a dispute over ownership of a cell phone, confirms the director's artistic versatility in this period.

But the warmest, most appealing piece is Loach's. Bringing back the three boys from "Sweet Sixteen," he crafts a dynamic little tale, about a stolen train ticket, that never loses speed. Supermarket workers Jamesy, Frank and Spaceman (Martin Compston, William Ruane and Gary Maitland) are rambunctious, loudmouth Glasgow Celtic fans who have pooled their savings to attend the Champions League game in Rome. When Jamesy can't find his ticket, they are suddenly and comically faced with a giant dilemma: jail, or a showdown with a poor family of Albanian immigrants.

The characters come across as so terribly, obnoxiously and pathetically real that Loach doesn't need to thrust moral lessons down anybody's throat. Though this is the only episode shot primarily in English, the boys' heavy Glaswegian accent requires English subtitles (used in the Berlin festival print).