

Document Citation

Title	[The passenger]
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Source	<i>Village Voice</i>
Date	1985 May 23
Type	review
Language	English English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Professione: reporter (The passenger), Antonioni, Michelangelo, 1975

VILLAGE VOICE
5/23/85

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Michelangelo Antonioni's The Passenger (1975), from a screenplay by Mark Peploe, Peter Wollen, and Antonioni, based on Peploe's story, with Jack Nicholson, Maria Schneider, Jennie Runacre, and Ian Hendry, is a hauntingly beautiful work of art anchored to a modern sensibility of psychic dislocation. The film opens in North Africa, using a topographical metaphor for the desert in men's lives, and touches lightly on sterile marital relationships between artisans, the social conscience of radical postcolonial movements, and a new spirit of questing among contemporary youth. Nichol-

son, though somewhat miscast as a dispirited television personality who assumes the identity of a committed journalist (a probable gunrunner), gathers force as the heroic antihero. Schneider, however, as the ministering angel of adventure, turns out to be the big surprise by exuding a purity and innocence at polar variance with the perverseness and insatiability of her *Last Tango* role. Their trip into alienated, doom-ridden modernity is true to the continuing vision of Antonioni, a creator without nostalgia, a seemingly rootless world traveller whose journeys always progress from the present into the future, without looking back longingly or otherwise. Again, as in the innovative ending of *Eclipse*, the long climax of *The Passenger* is wiped clean of the film's characters, but is another great conjunction of cinema as narrative and cinema as art object. (Co-feature: Antonioni's *Blow-Up*) **Cinema Village: through Tuesday, 3:55, 8.**