



FILM MOVEMENT

## *Light of My Eyes*



A film by Giuseppe Piccioni  
Italy, 113 Minutes, 2001

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*Press Kit*

## *Light of My Eyes*

### **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Antonio is a fallen angel, a rootless chauffeur in Rome, who relates only to the lonely heroes in the pulp science fiction novels he grew up with. Only through a chance encounter with Maria, a woman struggling to hold onto her daughter and her business, does he discover a hope that's been lacking in his detached existence. Antonio is drawn into the suffering of Maria's world, where she draws her inner strength from her fragile solitude. A haunting score, poetic atmosphere and award-winning lyrical performances by the two leads evoke the beauty of a precarious existence.

### **FESTIVALS AND AWARDS**

- Venice Film Festival winner, including:
  - Best Actor
  - Best Actress
  - Sergio Trassati Award
  - Golden Lion Nomination
- 8 David di Donatello Award (Italian Academy Award) nominations, including:
  - Best Film
  - Best Director
  - Best Actor
  - Best Actress
  - Best Cinematography
- Toronto International Film Festival 2001
- London Film Festival 2001
- Havana Film Festival 2001

### **SYNOPSIS**

Venice Best Actress Sandra Ceccarelli very much resembles the film's heroine: her precarious existence, her solitude, that strong fiber of inner strength with which she faces life.

And Luigi Lo Cascio, has the same dreamy gaze as the film's hero, a taxi driver, a "fallen angel" on this earth, with no ambition other than listening to his passengers talk, and through them to know all human universes.

Estranged and detached, both travel aimlessly like urban nomads in today's oblivious world until the day they meet. Maria, a single mother, closed, wary, yet determined to struggle for survival, is fighting a losing battle to save both her shop and custody of her little girl. And gentle Antonio, relates only to the lonely heroes of science fiction novels. Though never resigned, he is now full of hope and even self-sacrifice for this hauntingly beautiful young woman.

As they enter each other's lives, and Antonio is gradually drawn into the suffering, tragedy and mysteries of Maria's world, the inner journey of their love also becomes the discovery of compassion and fantasy before the harsh realities of a perplexing world.

## **CREDITS**

*an*  
**ALBACHIARA  
RAI CINEMA**  
*production*

*under the patronage of the*  
**DIREZIONE GENERALE PER IL CINEMA  
DEL MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITA' CULTURALI**

*in partnership with TELE +  
in association with MEDUSA VIDEO*

### **CREW**

*director*

**GIUSEPPE PICCIONI**

*producer*

**LIONELLO CERRI**

*story*

**UMBERTO CONTARELLO  
GIUSEPPE PICCIONI**

*screenplay*

**UMBERTO CONTARELLO  
LINDA FERRI  
GIUSEPPE PICCIONI**

*music*

**LUDOVICO EINAUDI**

*director of photography*

**ARNALDO CATINARI**

*editor* **ESMERALDA CALABRIA**

*art director* **GIANCARLO BASILI**

## **CAST**

*Antonio* **LUIGI LO CASCIO**

*Maria* **SANDRA CECCARELLI**

*Saverio* **SILVIO ORLANDO**

*Lisa* **BARBARA VALENTE**

*Mario* **TONI BERTORELLI**

## **DIRECTOR'S NOTES**

### **Stories, characters**

In my stories the main characters have somehow been cast away, they are always about to lose themselves. They aren't winners, they're not able to learn from their mistakes. They are not proud of themselves, there is something wrong with them, they feel they're not up to the standards of efficiency and practicality that conventional life requires. In short, they're "not of this world".

Their unhappiness is not a common feeling that everybody can share. Their choices are wrong, they don't speculate on the stock market, they have no ambitions.

One of their wrong choices is love: it is disadvantageous, uneconomical, but it is also a feeling that goes beyond appearances, that brings them out of themselves. Although they feel different they don't feel allowed to mistreat others. They are not certain about anything, they try to grab the first real chance of happiness that comes by. They want to fill the distance there is between them and the possibility to lead a normal life.

Antonio's point of view and his passion for sci-fi represent both his desire to be with others and his inability to do so, his loneliness. He's a driver, a traveler with no direction who looks at the outer world just as the heroes of his favorite novels: it is a world of visitors, of men and women coming from somewhere else and looking for happiness. Everything is repeated like a merry-go-round, everyday, just as Ludovico Einaudi's music repeats itself over and over again. There is nowhere to go, no final destination, nor a different starting point, everything just keeps going...

Maria is lacking something too, she feels her life has escaped her control. She tries to be a better person but she doesn't succeed. She fights against her destiny, that is, to make mistakes, to go on not loving herself, and feeling everybody else's judgment of her.

Beside them, other people, travelers who have lost the sense of their journey, drivers and clients, all of them demanding the right not to be left by the wayside.

### **How I work with my actors**

I like all my characters to surprise me, to be unpredictable and independent. This is why when I work with the actors I like to get to know them better, to see them regularly, to find something about them that fits their character. It can be just the idea for a cue or a certain gesture.

I like rehearsing a lot. Sometimes, the atmosphere of a scene or the tone of a cue are not exactly realistic. But I look for something different: the actor must sound simple and true, as if he isn't using any tricks, nor cheating as he's playing, as if he is forced to look the audience in the eyes, without a mask. For this reason I believe that emotions and atmosphere are more important than the credibility of a scene.

I like actors who are responsible for the character they portray. I need to let them understand that they are part of a project, I need them to be active. I like generous actors, no matter what their method is.

Meeting the actors is the first step to dealing with the credibility of a story. The actors are the first elements that allow me to believe that the story I am about to tell is not totally unbelievable.

I love working with actors, I love seeing the make up, the hair stylist, choosing their costumes. I want their support and the only thing I try to communicate is the importance of their character's destiny.

When I work with an actor I use all methods of directing. Sometimes I try to suggest the intonation for a line, or to say the line myself, I am bad at both! It is something I need, I must recognize their voice, the look in their eyes. At other moments my job is simply to pay attention, to oversee. My only regret is that often, during rehearsals, something happens that cannot be included in the film. But it cheers me to think that memory saves everything: this is why I always use a digital camera, it helps me take notes during rehearsals.

I chose Sandra Ceccarelli and Luigi Lo Cascio thanks to their auditions but before that I was already curious about them, I hoped that the auditions would confirm my first impression. I saw the actors for the first time in the leading roles of two films: Sandra was the leading actress of *Tre storie* by P. Gay and R. Sampietro and Luigi, of course, was the lead actor in *I cento passi*.

As for Silvio, we had already worked together. His character was risky, but I knew he would manage to avoid being ordinary. Silvio is a person you can rely on, I knew that if I gave him a character, he would improve it.

### **My crew**

My crew is invaluable. I need every single one of them. I want them to hang out around me, to put up with my doubts. I need their suggestions, even when they're not strictly qualified in a problem I have to solve, I couldn't do without them. I couldn't do without Esmeralda Calabria. Not only for the editing. I involve her and I listen to her right from the beginning. I like everybody to feel that what they're working on is in a sense their film too. I am jealous. I am terribly jealous of my actors and crew. I am filled with dismay when I think that once the shooting is over they will start other projects and I will have to finish the film by myself.

### **Ups and downs...**

Many people can't believe how positive the atmosphere is during the shooting of my films, I think I should give half the credit to the producer Lionello Cerri. He likes being part of the group, meeting everybody and knowing the whole crew by name... Nothing like your typical producer who is always "on the other side".

But I also know it's not always pleasant to work with me. Sometimes I lose my temper, I'm touchy and suspicious, I feel that anything or anyone might ruin my film, I often unload my worries and disappointments onto the people near me. At times it's difficult to work with and put up with me. So there's one thing I want to say to all the people who have contributed to my film: Thank you, sincerely.

### **Sci-fi**

When you are very young the passion for reading books often arises when you are forced to be alone... unless you grow up in a house filled with books. Personally, I read the greatest number of books in my childhood when I was convalescing.... it is easier to start reading Bram Stoker's *Dracula* rather than Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi*!

For a while, when I was young, I was a fan of B-films, including several genres such as sci-fi or Hammer vampire films. Maybe it was just a habit, I was trying to be an intellectual snob, to stand apart from the others. Then I started seeing American independent movies, I discovered Truffaut, and things changed. But I still believe that a good sci-fi film can offer care and attention to human beings and their destiny, much more than other films that cry such intentions out loud. This is why I wanted Antonio to be a sci-fi fan and to have this particular point of view when looking at the outside world.

### **Making films...**

I have never felt that directing is my job, that I do it for a living. I believe that first of all a director must have something to say, an idea of the world, a particular point of view. I need to tell a story. But I like hiding my point of view in the story, my sensitivity.

In my opinion the good result of a film depends on how few regrets you have at the end: the choices you have made, the good advice you have accepted but also the bad advice you realized was such and rejected.

A good film follows you when you leave the movie theatre. You feel you are bringing something home with you: an actors performance, a face, an image, a world that has touched your feelings. Words. I love cues, I like writing them. When I went to the movies I often wrote down the lines I liked best. I also like pop songs, for the words and the truth they tell in a simple, direct way, without making too much of themselves.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKER**

### **Giuseppe Piccioni, Director and Writer**

After studying under Renzo Rossellini at the Gaumont Film School from 1980-83, Giuseppe Piccioni made his directorial debut in 1987 with *Il grande Blek* which won the De Sica Award for the best new Italian film of the year. The film screened at that year's Berlin Film Festival and also won the Nastro d'Argento.

His next film, *Chiedi la luna*, won a Grollio d'Oro for best director and was selected for the 1991 Venice Film Festival. Mr. Piccioni established himself internationally in 1999 as his film *Fouri dal mondo* went on to win five David di Donatello awards for Best Film, Best Screenplay, Best Actress, Best Producer and Best Editing. It garnered four Ciaks d'Oro's as well as the Special Grand Prize of the Jury Award at

Montreal and both the Audience Award and the Grand Jury Prize at the AFI festival.

## **Filmography and Awards**

*2001 LUCE DEI MIEI OCCHI / LIGHT OF MY EYES*

VOLPI CUP BEST ACTRESS and BEST ACTOR Venice Film Festival

*1999 FUORI DAL MONDO*

GRAND JURY PRIZE and Public's Best Film Award at the Los Angeles AFI.

Italian candidate at Oscars 1999

DAVID DI DONATELLO: Best Film, Best Screenplay, Best Actress, Best Producer, Best Editing.

CIAK D'ORO: Best Screenplay, Best Supporting Actress, Best Sound, Best Photography.

PREMIO FLAIANO for Best Director.

PREMIO AMIDEI

PREMIO CASA ROSSA for Best Italian Independent Film, Best Director, Best Leading Actress, Best Leading Actor, Best Sound Track.

GROLLA D'ORO for Best Producer.

GRAND PRIX SPECIAL DU JURY at the Montreal Festival.

SILVER HUGO AWARD at the Chicago Festival.

*1997 LE PAROLE DEL CUORE* (montage film produced by RAI)

*1996 CUORI AL VERDE*

PUBLIC'S AWARD at Annecy and Bastia Festivals.

GRAND PRIX (1997) at the Alpe d'Huez International Comedy Festival.

*1993 CONDANNATO A NOZZE*

VENICE FILM FESTIVAL Official Selection

*1990 CHIEDI LA LUNA*

GROLLA D'ORO for Best Director.

SACHER D'ORO for Best Leading Actress, Margherita Buy.

VENICE FILM FESTIVAL Official Selection

*1987 IL GRANDE BLEK*

NASTRO D'ARGENTO

PREMIO DE SICA for Young Italian Cinema.

BERLIN FESTIVAL Official Selection

## ABOUT THE CAST

### **Luigi Lo Cascio, *Antonio***

Luigi Lo Cascio graduated in acting from the Silvio d'Amico Accademia Nazionale d'Arte Drammatica in July 1992, with a thesis on Hamlet edited by Orazio Costa. During his three years at the Academy he studied under Luca Ronconi, Mario Ferrero, Giuseppe Manzari.

### FILM

2001 *LIGHT OF MY EYES*  
(*LUCE DEI MIEI OCCHI*)  
*Awarded*

Volpi Cup BEST ACTRESS and BEST ACTOR  
Venice Film Festival

*Directed by*

Giuseppe Piccioni

1999 *I CENTO PASSI*

Italian candidate at the 2000 Academy Awards

Marco Tullio Giordana

### **Sandra Ceccarelli, *Maria***

Before being awarded the Volpi Cup for BEST ACTRESS at the 2001 VENICE FILM FESTIVAL for *LIGHT OF MY EYES* directed by Giuseppe Piccioni, the actress was also awarded:

SPECIAL MENTION at the 1998 Annecy Festival for her performance in *Tre Storie*

PREMIO SACHER D'ORO 2001 for BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS in  
*I Mestiere Delle Armi* directed by Ermanno Olmi

### FILMOGRAPHY

2001 *LIGHT OF MY EYES / LUCE DEI MIEI OCCHI*

*Directed by*

Giuseppe Piccioni

2000 *IL MESTIERE DELLE ARMI*

Ermanno Olmi

1999 *GUARDA IL CIELO- STELLA, SONIA, SILVIA*  
*IL DENARO*

Piergiorgio Gay

Ermanno Olmi

Alberto Rondalli

1998 *TRE STORIE*

Piergiorgio Gay

Roberto San Pietro

1984 *SEGRETI SEGRETI*

Giuseppe Bertolucci