

# Screen: 'L'Avventura'



Monica Vitti and Gabriele Ferzetti in film "L'Avventura"

## Film by Michelangelo Antonioni Opens

By BOSLEY CROWTHER

**WATCHING** "L'Avventura" ("The Adventure"), which came to the Beekman yesterday, is like trying to follow a showing of a picture at which several reels have got lost.

Just when it seems to be beginning to make a dramatic point or to develop a line of continuity that will crystallize into some sense, it will jump into a random situation that appears as if it might be due perhaps three reels later and never explain what has been omitted.

At least, that's how it strikes us.

What Michelangelo Antonioni, who wrote and directed it, is trying to get across in this highly touted Italian mystery drama (which is what we take it to be) is a secret he seems to be determined to conceal from the audience. Indeed he stated frankly to a reporter from this paper last week that he expects the customers to search for their own meanings. "I want the audience to work," he said.

That would be all right, if the director would help us a bit along the way, if he would fill in a few of the big potholes in this two-hour-and-twenty-five minute film. But he doesn't. Like a breathless storyteller who has a long and detailed story to tell and is so eager to get on to the big doings that he forgets to mention several important things, Signor Antonioni deals only with what seems to interest him. He omits such little details as whatever happens to some key characters and why others turn up in certain places and do what they do.

For instance, it might be helpful if he would have the kindness to explain what gives on a curious, barren island, where his drama presumably begins. To this lava rock off the coast of Sicily he brings a peculiarly viperous group of jaded and selfish worldings in a conspicuously crowded little yacht. While they are wandering across its waste space, he has one of the party disappear—a sad young woman who has been having a bit of a dido with one of the handsome bachelors in the group.

What has happened to this poor young woman? Has she committed suicide? Has her lover stuffed her in a cozy crevice? Signor Antonioni never explains. He just keeps us there on that ugly island for what seems an interminable length of time while the party and police hunt for the body. Then he suddenly jumps the scene to Sicily, where the lover and another young woman in the party somehow meet on strangely disagreeable terms.

## The Cast

L'AVVENTURA, written and directed by Michelangelo Antonioni; produced by Cino del Duca; presented by Robert and Raymond Hakim; distributed by Janus Films, Inc. At the Beekman Theatre, Second Avenue and Sixty-fifth Street. Running time: 145 minutes.

Claudia .....	Monica Vitti
Sandro .....	Gabriele Ferzetti
Anna .....	Lea Massari
Giulia .....	Dominique Blanchar
Corrado .....	James Addams
Anna's father .....	Renzo Ricci
Patrizia .....	Esmerelda Ruspoll
Raimondo .....	Lello Luttazi
Gloria Perkins .....	Dorothy De Pollolo
Young Prince .....	Giovanni Petrucci

Has that prelude on the island been symbolic? Are the two, now isolated, meant to be the forlorn and exhausted relics of a social catastrophe? Maybe so, maybe not, but in a short time they are on anything but disagreeable terms. They are suddenly enthusiastic lovers, embracing frequently.

However, their affair does not run smoothly. They have doubts, anxieties, violent spats. One time they drive together into an empty city and look at the cold austere facade of a concrete church. ("These buildings are madness," the girl says.) They are lonely amid gay people.

One night the man stays away with another girl. The woman finds them together the next morning. They have a dismal reunion in the cheerless dawn.

Perhaps Signor Antonioni is saying something valuable in this. We would very much hate to think he isn't, for he has put a lot of craft into his film. His photography is exquisite—sharp and immensely picturesque. Much of it is shot on location, in the cities and countryside of Sicily, and there is a great deal of beauty and excitement in the pure composition of movement against architectural forms.

Signor Antonioni also has great skill in conceiving and conveying provocative isolated images. A shot of the woman walking from her first assignation past a lineup of ogling, leering men, or one of her running distractedly down an endlessly long hall to seek aid, flash vivid concepts of feeling. And the actors are all provocative types and interesting performers of the odd things they have to do.

Gabriele Ferzetti as the lover has a taut, tireless energy, and Monica Vitti, as his second mistress, is weirdly coquettish and intense. Lea Massari, Dominique Blanchar and James Addams make odd sybarites—until they are dropped like hot potatoes. Several others fit into that class.

A wry musical score and sound track and English subtitles that seem inadequate contribute to the mystification of this picture, which won prizes in Europe.

'Tis strange.

Or maybe Signor Antonioni isn't out to prove anything—just to give us a weird adventure. Well, it gives us that.