

La Discesa di Acla a Floristella

("Acla's Descent into Floristella"; aka: "Acla")

Italy : 1994 : dir. Aurelio Grimaldi :

: c86 min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

[Francesco Cusimano](#)

Adult cast unknown

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ € Z ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Source: Movieboys internet site

Award Films International (video distributors)
ad:

" "A neorealist vision of hell through the eyes of
a child! " - **Weekly Variety** "

Gayweb internet site review:

www.gayweb.com/106/index.html

"Inspired by true events, Aurelio Grimaldi's
"ACLA" is an unflinching exploration of social
mores and sexual practices largely unfamiliar to

American audiences¹. Set in Sicily in the
1930s, Grimaldi's feature debut chronicles the
harsh life of 12-year old Acla, sold by his
destitute parents to work in the underground
Floristella sulphur mines. Semi-nude, over-
worked and underfed, Acla toils from Monday
to Saturday beside his father and older brothers
in the steamy, candle-lit labyrinths. Repeatedly
beaten by his brutal "owner" and tormented by
the ever-present spectre of sexual abuse [sic],
Acla attempts to escape.. with dire
consequences for both his family and himself.

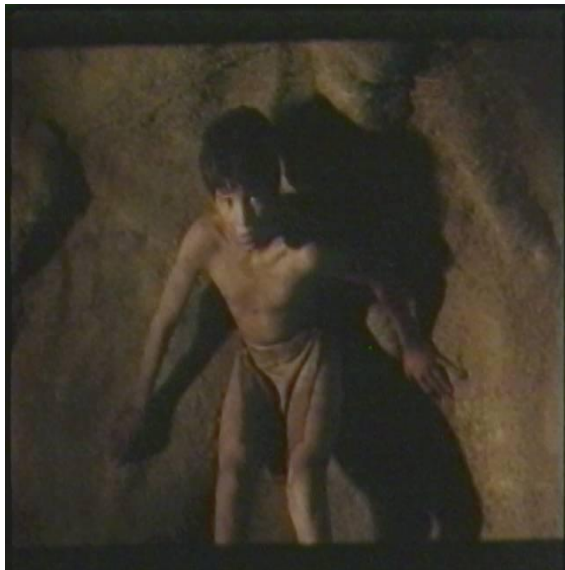
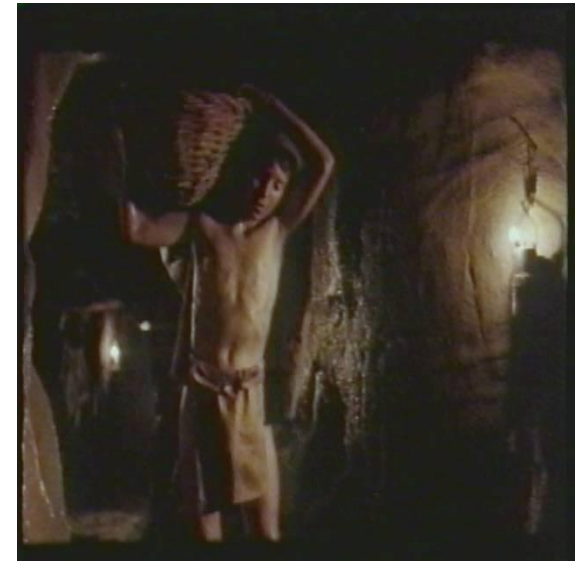
A sensual celebration of shadow and colour,
Grimaldi's "ACLA" exposes the endless cycle of
religious hypocrisy and poverty that continues
to sacrifice a new generation of children like
Acla. Unrated. Graphic language, nudity and
mature sexual themes [sic!]. Viewer discretion is
advised. In Italian with English subtitles.
Colour. Running time approximately 86
minutes.

Item #80040 \$59.95 "

Movieboys internet site review - an abridged
copy of the above

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and
Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film
Guide" or "TV Times Film & Video Guide
1995"]

¹ Are they kidding??



The above frame grabs from a series of 18 (source: **Movieboys** website) but the image quality is poor and they do not convey a great deal about the plot. See the image library for the full set.

No further information currently available. The film has never, to my knowledge, been exhibited in the UK, even at the London Film Festival, and the video/DVD can only be ordered from abroad. Forced child labour, or "*child slavery!*" as the hacks would have it, being such a hot issue in these times, it is surprising the film did not enjoy a wider release, and I'm not aware that it encountered any censorship problems in its own country (as did, for example, the cover version of "**SATYRICON**").

The employment of children in hard manual labour, under brutal squalid working conditions, is nothing new, of course, and was common practice in Britain itself scarcely a century ago, yet wealthy nations delight now in climbing on their high horse about such economic realities in the poorer two-thirds of the world. A recent delegation of working third world children to a Scandinavian conference on the evils of child labour pleaded for a more balanced and sensitive posture, but their words fell on deaf ears.

In "**ACLA**", the tabloid screech of "*child slavery!*" is perhaps more than usually appropriate, if he is indeed sold to his new master (they called that "apprenticeship" in Britain), but it's by no means clear why a 12-year old boy put to work in a sulphur mine beside his father and older brothers should be "tormented by the ever-present spectre of sexual abuse". I do not recall Roddy McDowall being comprehensively sodomised in the Welsh mines of "**HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY**".

Is the boy genuinely in fear of being raped by his master? Then why not use the word "rape"? Or is it only homosexual activity he fears? Sexual exploitation of bonded labour by slave-masters is also nothing new, and was common practice in the American south, despite the conviction among white plantation owners that negroes were "untermenschen", or an inferior race. So this should be nothing "unfamiliar" to American audiences! However, the suspicion does arise that the "sexual abuse" element has been arbitrarily tossed in, with the child-beating and other deprivations, to heighten Acla's status as The Victimised Child, just as homosexual rape scenes have become such a cliché of prison and Borstal movies. If that was the writer's intention, it is unworthy of his subject. And "Mature sexual themes"? Can anybody name me an immature one? This Family Values doublespeak - even on videos for the gay market! - is infuriating.

The same American video distributor carries an interesting catalogue of foreign-language titles directly relevant to the archive, among them Denmark's "**DU ER IKKE ALENE**" ("You Are Not Alone"), the Soviet Union's "**S.E.R.**" ("Freedom is Paradise"), the Netherlands' "**VOOR EEN VERLATEN SOLDAAT**" ("For a Lost Soldier") and Denmark's "**SMUKKE DRENG**" ("Pretty Boy"). See AWARD VIDEOS - TITLE LIST elsewhere in the archive, or write for a catalogue to Insider Video Club, P.O.Box 93399, Hollywood, California 90093.

Nothing else is known of Cusimano, who was probably too late for inclusion in *The Moving Picture Boy*.

See subject index under **FORCED CHILD LABOUR / CHILD SLAVERY** for much documentary material on the subject, but not too many feature titles, and under **CRUELTY / MALTREATMENT / NEGLECT, RUNAWAYS / STOWAWAYS**. For contemporary social conditions elsewhere, see **THE GREAT DEPRESSION / 1930s SETTINGS**, and - if homosexual rape amounts to more than pubertal anxiety in the film - see under **SEX & SEXUALITY** - which unfortunately must also include non-consensual acts.