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QUADERNI DEI RESTAURI  
THE FILMS RESTORED AT THE CINETECA NAZIONALE



# ecce bombo

DIRECTED BY NANNI  
MORETTI

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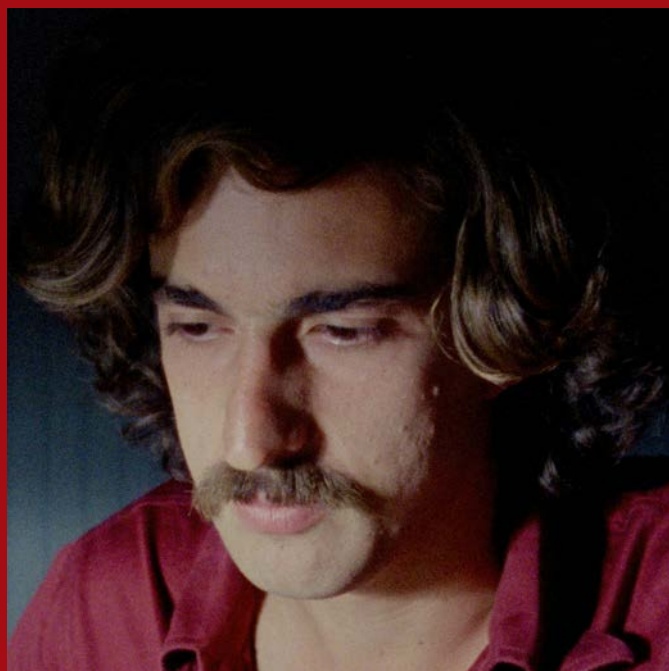
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# ECCE bombo



*editor*

Mario Sesti



“For me that sun... which we have waited for so long... that night... in Ostia and which then rose from the opposite side... for me it was a sign”

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“People have been saying since my early days as director that I have depicted an entire generation through my films.”



“In those years, I scarcely tolerated this interpretation, which was too ideological in my opinion and didn't take how I made my films into account.”

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## *Ecce Bombo* – A Morettology (1978/2024)

*Everything Nanni Moretti said about the film \* but you were afraid to ask*

“...I describe the milieu that I am familiar with and in which I live. The dramatic dimension is more emphasized in *Ecce Bombo*, whereas *I Am Self-Sufficient* was perhaps more melancholy. However, both have a substantial component of irony, with the male consciousness-raising groups, the tragicomic relationships with women [...] I admit, over the past few years, we have grown a certain capacity of questioning ourselves; there is less dogmatism than there used to be. From 1968 to the present, there were the groups, and then their crisis.” (1978)

“The youth that I have portrayed comes from an autobiographical experience. Mirko, Goffredo, and the others are my friends, they belong in my world, my generation. We live in the same political despair. But I believe in irony as an instrument of analysis and critical penetration. I try to soothe the pain of representation by adding a slant of humour. A balance that is not easy to achieve. I had to restrain my own natural inclination. Swerving to comedy would have been too easy. But I feared that shade of *qualunquismo* (i.e., the common Italian cynical vision of things, *translator’s note*).” (1978)

“Not even a review that made sense. [My films] have either been perceived as sheer comedies or discussed in terms of theatre, school, consciousness-raising, the movement of 1977, and, obviously, the youth. They were taken for naturalistic films. As if I had crouched down to spy on the youth behind a tree or with a videotape. I have never believed in improvisation. Not even trade magazines considered the issue of how I shoot.” (1979)

“Among the many things, it was mistaken for a film on the movement of 1977, but it had nothing to do with it, it was only a film made during that period. I am interested in reality, not in current events. Or else I would have set the film at university, with many extras, including some dressed as policemen... In short, it had nothing to do with it. It was the social, political, and personal position of the characters that somehow limited the

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area. On the other hand: to use one of those convenient mottoes that I carry around in debates, but there is always some truth about them, the more particular the film, the more international.” (1981)

“As far as this blessed Italian comedy goes: now that I own a house and I got the bills of the carpenter, the upholsterer, and the plumber, I realize why so many films were made, I won’t judge anymore, let’s forget it. [...] Rewatching *Ecce Bombo* [on Rai Tre], I didn’t like the same things I already didn’t, and for the same reasons: not because they are outdated.” (1983)

“Ten years ago, with four other men, I took part in one of the earliest male consciousness-raising groups. It was a reaction to feminism among other things: therefore, obviously we would discuss also about love, relationships with girls, couples. Even though all of us were in a crisis with respect to the politics of our time, which we all perceived as stifling, our analysis of the couple theme was always and very much ideological: the couple was approached as a ‘closed world’ that was strongly averse to external world and exchange; as a negative niche, as blindness and obtuseness... I have now realized that an analysis ‘beyond the couple’ can only be conducted by those who have experienced being in a couple and gone through it. Instead, for us and many others, this critical analysis was a shortcut: to go beyond, to avoid the couple, to defend ourselves from that work on life that being in a couple requires and that we were afraid to do.” (1984)

“Until I filmed *Ecce Bombo*, I didn’t even know what “Slate it!” meant. We would shoot without great preparations or idle time. I would do almost everything, with the help of Fabio Traversa. These friends would make a gift of their free time. I can’t say they had fun, but they let themselves be involved. If I saw myself as I was then, I would likely shiver, because I used to have this very annoying, obtuse grit that beginners have when they do a job they like (or discover a faith or an ideology). Perhaps it was inevitable, or necessary, and in that way, I managed to keep the others involved. [...] *Ecce Bombo* cost 180 million [liras, *translator’s note*] and made two billion [throughout the existence of Art. 28, the one that allows films with particular cultural and innovative requisites to apply for State financing, it was the highest-grossing film ever, *editor’s note*]” (1984)

“Even though I don’t perceive my films as comedies, I am pleased that people have fun watching them. I am neither like those who are ashamed of making people laugh nor like those who boast of making people laugh.” (1985)

“I would like to make the same film again and again, possibly make it ever better, and – which would be the tops – never get bored about it.” (1985)



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“I thought I had made a dramatic movie, and a partial one. I was interested in ‘washing the dirty laundry in public,’ being transparent, questioning and teasing oneself in front of the others, without fearing exploitation. What I found partial was my point of view (quite pessimistic) and the milieu of my characters (the left-wing, lower-middle class in the city of Rome). But then the film became more popular than expected and suddenly everyone wanted to identify with the film’s characters and mood. Perhaps, the dramatic quality in *Ecce Bombo* stems from the moment of widespread despair and confusion that, in the coming years, would lead some to isolation, some to terrorism, and others to the choice of big-time careerism.” (1986)

“If I think to my double debut, *I Am Self-Sufficient* and *Ecce Bombo*, it was like an incentive for young filmmakers, it’s fact. I feel like I opened small doors, unwittingly.” (1988)

“*Ecce Bombo* (the cry of a ragman who, I was told, used to hang around a school in Rome – the Giulio Cesare, *editor’s note* – and also appears in a film scene): I was undecided between dozens of titles [...]. One was ‘I’m fed up with fried eggs,’ then I opted for *Ecce Bombo* about which there was little consensus – it reminded of *Ecce Homo* and sounded blasphemous. If the film failed then it certainly would have been the title’s fault.” (2008)

“If *Ecce Bombo* failed, then we would have laid the blame on the title. ‘I’m fed up with fried eggs’ was one of the possible titles. And then ‘August Delirium’ and ‘Small Group.’ The consciousness-raising thing, I experienced it in actual fact. It was the only time in my life that I did something avant-garde. It was a small male consciousness-raising group that I joined in 1974. At each screening, even when there was a jovial and open-minded audience, when it came to the joke on Alberto Sordi... a chill swept over the theatre... as if I had cursed in church.” (2016)

“...I remember, after a private screening with the film editor and producer, I took a walk in Via Fabio Massimo with the latter who told me, ‘I am fond of this film the way you are with your problem children, the unlucky ones.’ I was convinced I had made a painful film, one for the ‘happy’ few. When it was released, I found out I had made a comedy film for everyone. Some said, your film is too much Italian; hold on, too much set in the Prati neighbourhood; more than that, too much Piazza Mazzini.” (2016)

“[in Cannes for *Ecce Bombo*] I remember I was wearing a yellow checkered jacket. No red carpet or black tie. The screenings took place on the promenade, the big hotels’ way. I would go around with my actors, Paolo Zaccagnini, Fabio Traversa, and another friend,

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totally oblivious to where I was or how important it was to be in Cannes, I didn't have the least idea." (2023)

"After *I Am Self-Sufficient* screened at Rome's film club Filmstudio, several producers turned up to submit film projects. After various meetings, I was undecided for some time between Franco Cristaldi and Mario Gallo. Then I opted for Gallo, it felt like there was a more familiar atmosphere there, more suitable for me. Gallo's production company was called 'Filmalpha,' but he had just co-founded another company, 'Alphabeta,' with three actors, Flavio Bucci, Michele Placido, and Stefano Satta Flores. Tired of being chosen by directors and of scripts conceived by others, these actors wished to reverse the mechanism: they wanted to choose their own characters and stories that suited them. A great idea, but the only film they produced was *Ecce Bombo*, in which none of them played because there weren't roles for them. Too bad, it was a good production concept. I didn't have any screen tests done for that film. Actually I had never done one, everything was new for me, I didn't have a clue about how useful those could be. And then the idea of examining actors embarrassed me (from the following film onwards, I began doing auditions and never stopped). Film agents used to come over donning large albums with large, black and white 18x24 photos; I would meet those that seemed the most interesting faces. One day, I paid a visit to my friend, the film director Peter Del Monte, and showed him some of these photos. Inside me, I had already chosen the actress who was to recite "I meet people, look around, do things," but he, as soon as he saw Cristina Manni's photo, said, 'She is the right face for your film!' Then I changed my mind and hired her. Lucky for me and for the character, because she turned out to be amazing, and suited for that role. Peter Del Monte equally suggested firmly that I shoot in sync sound, in spite of the established Italian tradition of dubbing films. (He himself had debuted a couple of years earlier with a dubbed film, *Irene, Irene*, a good, personal film, far from the film fashions of the period.) I loved the use of a fixed camera – which at that time I could call Brechtian and non-naturalistic – the way the Taviani brothers did. Therefore, on the set, starkly and exaggeratedly, I would forbid the camera operator zooms, pan shots, even small camera adjustments. I believe there's just two camera movements in the whole film, two reverse tracking shots. During principal photography, Lina Sastri, who played a young woman with schizophrenia, asked me explanations about her character, why she was ill, what happened to her before falling ill, before the story told in the film... I would tell her not to worry at all about those things, all that she had to do was play the dialogues, and the silences, the way I thought best. Nowadays, after all this time, I think I am a little closer to the fragilities and sensitivities of actors. In the film, there is a parody of an experience I did in 1974: a small male consciousness-raising group, which no one would do at the time. There were five of us, and we had three things in common. One: we came from doing politics in extra-parliamentary opposition groups. Two: we had given up pol-

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itics, disappointed by that experience. Three: we entertained love relationships with feminists. Those meetings of ours lasted just a few months. While I wrote and directed the film, I was aware that I was portraying a very small portion of youth. I knew that the characters and milieu that I was describing were part of a tiny, narrow reality. The film was unexpectedly successful, and everyone rushed to identify themselves with the characters and atmosphere seen in *Ecce Bombo*. Viewers far from the film's characters equally liked it: they were different in terms of social class, age, also political ideas. I wasn't absolutely concerned that a film that was ironical and critical towards the left-wing world could be exploited by the right wing – I was all for 'washing your dirty laundry' in public, and not within the family, ever since my earliest Super8 shorts. I have always been against the Stalinist double-standard policy, that is, we say what goes wrong in private, between us, while we have to appear as compact in public. People have been saying since my early days as director that I have depicted an entire generation through my films. In those years, I scarcely tolerated this interpretation, which was too ideological in my opinion and didn't take how I made my films into account. In other words, I felt I was neglected as director and used like a sort of standard bearer for the youths. Well, I've changed my mind. If I really managed to tell the story of a generation, their desires, their snags, and their fears, well, I consider myself lucky for that, it's a privilege and an honour. (original statement taken in 2024)

*Up to the present, the film's title has been written with both the upper-case 'b' in Bombo and the lower case: its director believes that the correct version is with the capital 'b;' however, we decided with him to leave both versions uncorrected in the texts of the time, but to adopt the capital 'b' in all the original ones in this book, with the idea that the latter is definitively accepted by the Italian language.*

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## *Ecce bombo* and the zeitgeist of 1968

Goffredo Parise

Artistic expression, regardless of its period, is always associated with some date: that of the work's inception. That date is nothing but the context, as we say today; not only of society, history, politics, customs and traditions, but rather, more importantly, 'the sense' of a given zeitgeist. So there are documents that, if they are authentic, bring along a new, exciting, at times exhilarating style: and this is culture; if they are inauthentic, they still are documents from that context, but they represent the other side of the coin, the inauthentic one, and therefore an old, disappointing, and depressing one. Moravia's *The Time of Indifference* and Pitigrilli's *Cocaine* are both documents from an era, portraits of an upper class at the rise of fascism, with the former being authentic and exhilarating (and therefore historical), and the latter inauthentic and depressing (therefore rhetorical).

It's not a matter of sincerity. All documents are sincere, including the inauthentic. It's a matter of feeling: a writer's authentic feeling is their own, individual, unique, and stands apart; inauthentic feeling instead, in that particular historical moment, is shared by everyone. This latter feeling could be qualified with one word, 'fashion;' authentic feeling could be qualified, still with one word, as 'rebellion.' This short preamble serves to explain how, when some time ago I have analysed the book of a young author through the lens of his style (but of his content too), I came to define it as an inauthentic document resulting from the 'context' of 1968 youth; and how, today, after watching a very good film by another young artist from the same 1968 'context,' I can define it an authentic document as opposed to the former, according to the same Pitigrilli-Moravia pattern mentioned above.

We have inauthentic and authentic representations again through these two new authors who debuted around 1968 instead of around 1922 (with reference to the zeitgeist, and not to precise dates). Rhetorical vs. historical representations. We have already discussed the book in this newspaper; the film has already been discussed by many – it's *Ecce bombo*, directed by a very young Nanni Moretti as his sophomore effort. Praise to film critics for acknowledging him as a new director in our film industry, as they did a while ago for an equally authentic work in a different context, i.e., Ermanno Olmi's *The Sound of Trumpets*, possibly an antithetical and elderly brother of *Ecce bombo*. The former

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represented that which the latter was to achieve. Not being a film critic, all I can do is relate my impression as an ordinary viewer like many others (and many more to come, as I wish to the director, especially among his contemporaries).

What novelty does this authentic artist, who survived the inauthenticity of 1968, bring to Italian cinema? Before anything else, he is bringing an atmosphere of reality, and therefore of realism. Objecting that reality and realism are not the same thing is easy, of course. However, after a decade of unrestrained, permanent verbal idealisation, reality feels like a chunk of bread after famine, that is, not only like something that is there, but something that you would like to be there the next day too.

As is known, the film tells the story of a group of young friends, bullocks revisited, in Rome, in our time, and of their doing nothing, or rather their trying to do what they are expected to do according to the 'context:' para-political meetings, consciousness-raising collectives, public interrogations, living and fighting with the parents; shy, muddled, and fuzzy relationships with some girls, one of whom is bipolar, another one a do-nothing but speak-a-lot – about nothing. Family life, with parents who have been divested of any authority, totally but also willingly; endless, time-wasting phone calls, etc.: with that 'etc.' actually being the reality in front of everyone's eyes when we walk in the streets and see young men and women, all dressed with the same jeans and sweaters. Here and there, phone calls to a free radio, advice, some more telephone, without a beginning or end. As I mentioned, it's about a group of young people in Rome, but strangely enough, this film that is so bare, so self-sufficient, so stripped of any spectacularism has the lightness of an international, and especially French, movie. It reminds us, with the greatest pleasure, of the internationalism, still alien to our cinema, that once characterized Godard, Truffaut, Tati, and the great Bunuel. *Ecce bombo*, like all Bunuel films did, does something that is apparently easy but in fact isn't, implemented so far only by the Spanish master, i.e., it winks at the audience. The film doesn't tell stories that the audience is expected to believe, that is, it doesn't require to identify *en masse*, but to be entertained, as if to say, look, after all, we're just making a film, nothing more. Internationalism in the sense that, in spite of the Roman dialect, in spite of the setting (some Roman outskirts), for the very first time there is no trace of provincial nationalism, the exacerbated feeling of belonging to an (Italian) place found in a number of films set in Rome or Italy. Here, the American market won't have to promote mozzarellas, spaghetti, pizzas, Sophia Loren, or Vesuvius, the eternal Italian postcards and mandatory dishes. There aren't particularly Italian characters in this sense, but disoriented people, young ones, whose minds have gone awry (including their language) for joining the zeitgeist of 1968, a landmark not of a beginning but certainly of an end. The end of the logic of association, of the function of school, of humanist culture (to avoid saying traditional, and therefore educational), of the father-son convention, and the family-State-religion-politics-ideology convention. For all these reasons, can we define the people in *Ecce bombo* as con-

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ventionally 'negative' characters? Not at all: luckily, they are neither positive nor negative. They are what an ongoing Voltairean utopia, still in its nascent state, seems to propose: the wonderful ignorance given by freedom, innocence, in any case. The international 'small world' that Nanni Moretti represented with his fine film is recognizable in the reality of the youth of a large part of our country as well as other countries. It is the answer of an absolutely authentic 24-year-old intellectual to the many anguished, and conventional, and old questions: "What are the youth coming to?" What could be a better and conscious action expressed by current culture in rebellion against the ideologies/demagogies of the old one? All is well spiced up with another rare quality in Italy: humour – as per common knowledge, it is the opposite and much more effective and cheerful and vital counterpart of comicality, alas, the sad, pessimist, and eternal heritage of our country. (*Corriere della sera*, April 15, 1978)

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# Coming out as ‘schizofrenzied’ in Macerata: notes after watching the movie

*A viewer’s letter to Lotta Continua*

Dear comrades, Nanni Moretti’s film, *Ecce Bombo*, is showing in Macerata these days. Somehow, I was impressed by the whole film, so I’m dropping these two lines. Ecce Bomboooo Ecce Nanni Morettiiii Ecce Bombo. I saw the movie, I liked it. At least we made fun of our own miseries, we the miserable, we, poor wretches. Ecce Moretti. It is neither allusive nor coincidental that he identified with a ragman. Ecce Bombo aka Nanni Moretti. The ‘rag-and-bone-man,’ as we would say here, maybe in Rome too. It is an impartial role. Beyond the rags, to put it that way. And in all that welter, mess of messes, living as ‘lewsahs’ (aka losers), he comes out on top. You judge whether he comes out of it well or bad. Olga, the schizoid element, the territory of the Great Desert, the body without organs, seems to make us experience the same as many, very many of us who have friends who are ill. An illness capable of self-censoring or rather removing and shattering the most immediate psychic needs. Olga may be a schizophrenic, or do we make her a schizophrenic? But then it occurs to me: this film seems to confirm a stereotype. I too have a friend who is ill. She ended up, it seems ‘accidentally,’ or due to her rotten luck, in an asylum. This situation makes me cringe: the film becomes an inconvenient eyewitness for many and at the same time a social representation of the fact. We realize that all around us female friends, women, girls are ill and end up in asylums. Some woman or female comrade may reply to me: what are you wondering about, asshole, woman pays on her skin for the male chauvinism of a whole society. The repression and phobia of this society, seeing woman free and critical in her choices, in her moving, and her acting. But I am not surprised, I just take notice; all that I have said makes me confused and deeply distraught. Is everyone running toward Olga or toward her schizophrenia? Meanwhile, on the street they get lost in new territories of insanity: those who stop to play ball, those who stuff themselves, in a contest to eat slices of watermelon, and those who still peep at prostitutes. “Olga can wait” re-echoes in the film. All, many little realities that fall within the ‘hypernormality’ of everyday life. Thus saving us from the the risk of losing our ‘normal’ organs of perception, lest we lose ourselves in that state of being ‘ill’ that seems to fall from the sky. The drama of our existence is deflected; we divert it. We involve it in facts repeated to the point of boredom, that are obsolete, worth-

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less. And yet we feel attracted and gratified, rewarded by a safety we would risk losing and thus finding ourselves with Olga's illness. What about Nanni Moretti? Yes, he is the last and perhaps the only one who stands in front of Olga; the two of them alone, in the half-light, looking at each other, shocking us. May be this too, besides self-mocking, a self-gratifying act and a search for safeness placed in the collective imagination of cellulose? (*sic*: probably 'of celluloid,' *editor's note*.) He, Nanni Moretti, is the first and only one who refuses to visit Olga; he "can't be with those who are ill," he says at one point. He, Nanni Moretti, is the only one capable of understanding, or instead he is the one who chooses the same condition as Olga. I emphasize chooses and not lives. The Sieve halts the Others, in other everyday insanities; only he stands before Olga, her schizophrenia, or that of both. Nanni Moretti makes an innate mistake. They make you, they make us, they want to make us *schizo*, a condition that goes beyond the euphemism of generic 'being ill,' and becomes a terrible and devastating pain. One cannot identify with those who are defined as schizophrenic. But perhaps we are all, at this (particular) time, *schizofrenzied*, chasing after spaces that some consider impassable, and touching 'first-mind' incommunicable communications, etc. Irony does not admit schizophrenia - or vice versa? I end this reflection here; I am tired. I would like to hear other opinions and ideas about the film or what I've just written.

Macerata, May 16, 1978  
Erreffe

(*Lotta Continua*, 23.05.1978)





“I was convinced I had made a painful film, one for the ‘happy’ few.”



“When it was released, I found out I had made a comedy film for everyone.”

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# CONVERSATIONS



“Moretti then was a 25-year-old young man and, on one hand, proved to be capable of poking fun at his own world from inside, and on the other hand, of watching it with detachment from outside, with unheard-of clarity.” (Riccardo Milani)

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## “Only Moretti and Gaber have managed to look so deeply into the left”

*A conversation with Riccardo Milani  
by Mario Sesti*

I saw *Ecce Bombo* when I was still in high school, in a moment when I was much more interested in what happened outside of the school than within. I have always been impressed by the fact that Moretti’s film and the ‘Moro case’ are virtually simultaneous. The way in which the film belonged to us by questioning ruthlessly a whole generation made people feel totally involved. Truth be told, only he and Gaber got to the bottom of a critique of the left that concerned us all.

*At the same time, Ecce Bombo is a very funny film.*

It is indeed. I have always thought that the cinema of Nanni Moretti, except for *The Son’s Room*, has managed to mix comedy and criticism, the capacity of being amusing and thought-provoking, film after film, in a unique, personal way. *Ecce Bombo* was an amazing example of this capacity: Moretti then was a 25-year-old young man and, on one hand, proved to be capable of poking fun at his own world from inside, and on the other hand, of watching it with detachment from outside, with unheard-of clarity.

*In that period, he said he thought he had made a film that criticized the narrow milieu in which he used to live.*

Actually, I believe that *Ecce Bombo*, possibly today even more, shows very well the responsibilities of a generation that did not rise up to the occasion of the problems it faced. A part of it, unlike Moretti, took itself terribly seriously, in the belief that murderous rage could be the instrument to make a political project come true – the more extreme, the purer. Or else you weren’t enough pure. The destiny of those years weighted enormously on the coming ones as well as on those we are living now.

*What cinema did you like at the time?*

Let me tell you, I was expelled by film clubs because I loved comedy. Then you can understand what seeing *Ecce Bombo* meant for me – a film with which, at last, someone portrayed that generation with an irreverent approach and a lucid ruthlessness.

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*It is also a film that showed the existence of conventional language and idioms to its own generation, exposing the latter's unrealistic attitude but also fragilities.*

Of course. Because he knew that language well and that it would cast a light on the nature of that world. "Meeting people, looking around" has never been a good recipe for getting anything done, for nobody. Nor is for young people today; and to some extent, the generations of today almost overlap with the previous.



male consciousness-raising



preparing dunces...



...for their A levels

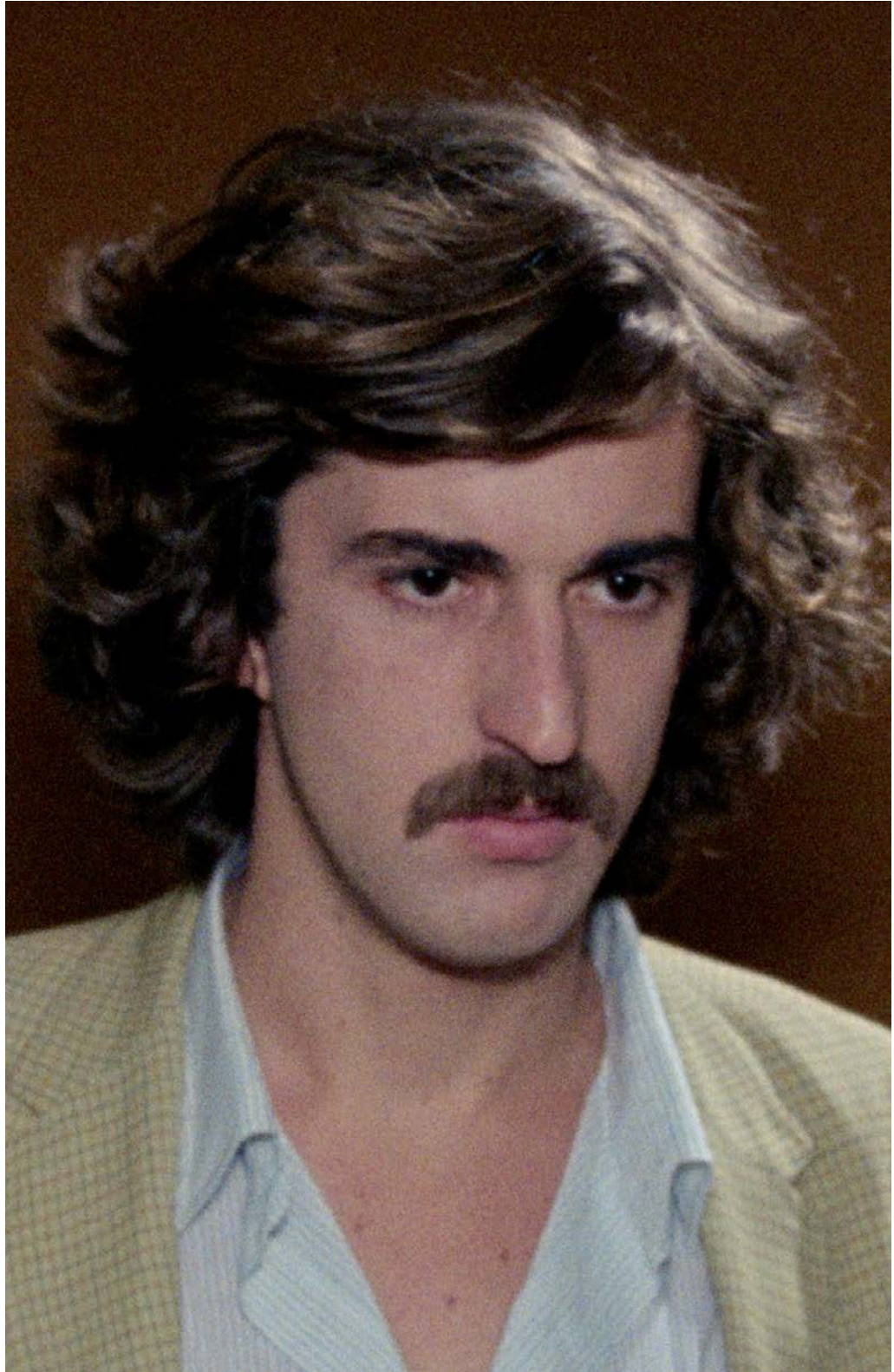




footage from the film before and after the restoration

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COMPILATION 1 • SNAPSHOTS



“Well, I’ve changed my mind. If I really managed to tell the story of a generation,  
their desires, their snags, and their fears...”

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## Marzia Gandolfi

(film critic)

In the beginning was Michele Apicella, the alter ego of the actor and film director who talks about himself to talk about other people. The exhibited presence of the 'I' helps Nanni Moretti avoid the Catch-22 dilemma formulated by Godard, "making political films" or "making films politically." On the fine line between militant and formalist paths, he goes looking for "a brighter tomorrow" in Ostia and finds new cinematic answers to old questions. Sure, the director works within the tradition of engaged art, but his replies to the issue of commitment are more cinematic than political. With *Ecce Bombo*, he was convinced he was making a dramatic movie, but everyone found it funny because the couple crisis, existential malaise, education, the end of militance, critique of ideologies, the state of language and degradation of Italian, idleness, even melancholy experienced in a group are conveyed through jokes, unrestrained derailments, lyrical digressions, musical detours, permanent dislocation, and puns in order to observe and criticize the impasse of politics. Cinema replaces the latter and becomes a poetical and critical, at times irritating, almost always humorous precision tool. Moretti plays the roles of a cinematic character, a film director, professor, priest, father, son, witness to the Italy of the past and of the present, and an active and di/stressed observer. From the experimental theatre in *I Am Self-Sufficient* he switches to the consciousness-raising group in *Ecce Bombo*, registering the usual diehard individualism at work in the Italian social body – it was impossible to make the 1968 collective utopias come true. Michele's sister and her friends occupy the school one week before the end of classes with the only objective of anticipating the holidays. The self-managed restaurant for the students or the open-air rock music festival are emptied of all subversive potential, reduced by Moretti to media epiphenomena for the benefit of a television that he already deemed powerful and harmful. Astonishingly relevant today, *Ecce Bombo* is a meditation on how it is difficult for young people to take part in the world, find an access to the world of grownups that is even remotely satisfying. Like in a poorly written film, society assigns the roles, including that of 'the young,' within a norm that is not at all inviting. Michele would like to put a spell on his life, but like Nanni Moretti he can neither sing nor dance; he will do so in a near future for the passionate eyes of Jennifer Beals. Moretti is as harsh with the previous

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generation, who was not able to fight fascism, as he is with his own, whose representatives are childishly cruel in harassing a young woman on the phone or implementing amorous strategies to seduce one that is married. He observes with unrelenting clarity, as demonstrated by the surprising final sequence: a sudden burst of altruism to greet Olga (Lina Sastri) implodes, with the *bullocks* à la Moretti quickly forgetting her, overwhelmed by their different impulses. Only Michele, in the end, joins Olga, silently standing in front of her, acknowledging his incapacity to communicate with her. Forty-six Roman, lazy summers later, Italy is even worse and Moretti is still suffering, on different notes. But, all in all, he remains as 'pop' and uncompromising as his myths, like Keaton, hanging over Michele's remade and unmade bed. Film is an art, and an industry, that has always highlighted the present; but some films should remain available long after their release. Works whose scope does not expire in one viewing, they become shared points of reference, a sort of language, just like *Ecce Bombo*, which in 1978 put Nanni Moretti's cinematic project in focus: to be at the centre of the frame, occupying every shot and every scene, to let the off-screen world – an Italy in a political and moral crisis – take centre stage. This happened long before Berlusconi ascended to power and against a backdrop of the destabilising threat of far-left terrorism. Rewatching *Ecce Bombo* now - when Michele Apicella is no longer, Nanni Moretti plays Nanni Moretti but also Berlusconi and, in his own way, the Pope - puts the film in a new perspective, that is, nearly at the origins of a filmography which was to emancipate him from his own persona or to 'stand by' him, as he seems to suggest, somewhat enigmatically, that he is playing with the latter (*Mia madre*).

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## Paolo d'Agostini

(film critic)

To watch *Ecce Bombo* with the eyes of today. Not an easy feat if you shared the same impression as the many other moviegoers at the time of its release, in Rome, on March 8, 1978. Eight days later, Aldo Moro was kidnapped and the Red Brigades massacred his escort. How come a very small film, even though no longer amateur and so erratic as the very young filmmaker's earlier debut *I Am Self-Sufficient*, became and still is an icon? At the time, Nanni Moretti opposed a starkly rebellious response against those who highlighted the film's sociological dimension rather than the aesthetical-poetical, but also technical-professional dimension. He remained strongly reluctant to accept this vision and still hostile to what he perceives as a reductive emphasis on the personal-generational consonance. People said and wrote, and generally thought: poorly constructed, structured, written, directed, and acted, the film is mostly a cross-section of the world of disillusioned youth a decade after the fateful 1968. The majority would point out that the film focused on a very partial microcosm, that was urbanite, lower-middle class, student age group, not to mention Roman or even limited to some neighbourhoods of the capital. Capturing the equally contradictory and stimulating crux made of self-deprecating irony and smugness, some would concede that the expression of that small world bore the traits of universality. Those who trusted the emerging talent glimpsed that he could be able to provide the audience of his contemporaries with the coming-of-age novel of their era. Judging through a cognizance spoiled by the passing of time, and therefore by the maturity reached by those who watch today after watching then, it is now fairly spontaneous to take notice that – despite the apparent pessimism or scepticism – the film looks like a treasure chest full of fine feelings. The characters seem to believe in nothing, to be adrift, and in a deep crisis of values? And yet the film revolves around the wait for a rising sun (the pivotal scene – which can easily be labelled as 'Felliniesque' – at the beach with the peddler shouting the surreal titular phrase). What's more, departing from the fragmented narrative structure made of unrelated 'tableaux' (someone used the term "comic strips"), all seems about the lack of communication. And yet everyone speaks a lot to each other (the rhetoric of consciousness-raising, a result of feminism); and if one thinks of the current atomisation generated by the flood of new tools for non-

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communication, then *Ecce Bombo* is like an act of infinite faith in the power of sharing. There is one more qualifying aspect, even though at the time the film director was unaware of this. Notwithstanding the well-known, unfair tirade against *qualunquismo* and Sordi, the film and its director are not only children of Fellini (the ‘*Bullocks* pattern’ is all over the place) but also and undoubtedly children of the monumental tradition of Italian film comedy. Moretti didn’t know he could make people laugh. It wasn’t the result he was seeking, and he rejected and spurned this talent. Hopefully, in time he has made his peace with it.



“The film was unexpectedly successful...”

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## Paolo Di Paolo

(*writer*)

I've been researching in a newspaper library, a 20<sup>th</sup>-century setting. And I found out that the day on which *Ecce Bombo* was released, it did in a single movie theatre. It was March 8, 1978; eight days later, the Red Brigades were to kidnap Aldo Moro. The sophomore effort of Nanni Moretti, who had debuted as film director with *I Am Self-Sufficient* two years earlier, premiered with a single print in a Roman cinema in Piazza San Lorenzo in Lucina. It was Women's Day, and female students demonstrated in Piazza Navona; unemployed women by Santa Maria Maggiore. Because of the leaden atmosphere, the central police station was tight-fisted when it came to sit-in permits. Perhaps, even the group of young 'creative' communists depicted in *Ecce Bombo* would have been watched with suspicion. A 25-year-old Moretti returns to cinema, picking up the thread of the story where he left off. And he restarts from his places, the streets of the Prati neighbourhood, where he grew up: "When *Ecce Bombo* was released, some said, your film is too much about Rome; hold on, too much about North Rome; hold on, too much about the Prati neighbourhood; more than that, too much Piazza Mazzini. This happened because I lived there, and there I hung around with my friends."

The alter ego Michele Apicella moves between fountains, benches, familiar urban spaces, but he is growingly upset. "I am made the wrong way!" he says, and this is just one of the phrases that Moretti has unwittingly introduced in an emotional dictionary of the community. Forty years ago, he would have accepted anything but to be called 'generational.' Today, he may suffer it better. And anyway, a film like this has passed over the limits of age, being quoted and reworked even by Fabio Rovazzi. An old Moravia, who was checking out the young 'comic' (with Moretti convinced of having made a sad film!) with curiosity, soon understood it: "It takes root in the hinges of history like a corrosive rust." Rewatching it, I believe it stays corrosive; it remains like a generational stamp, but projected onto a kind of uber-time of grownup youth with its anxieties, its élans, and its almost-lost illusions. A miracle: a man born in 1953, who is currently defined a boomer, foresees Generation X, the Millennials to come, not to mention the rampant, susceptible Generation Z. Leopardian, elegiac, with something desperate inside. A bitter, self-scraping bottom behind the display of ribald narcissism that, over the years, has toned down into tenderness. Some of which – far away, almost imperceptible – was already there.

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## Gabriele Niola

(film critic)

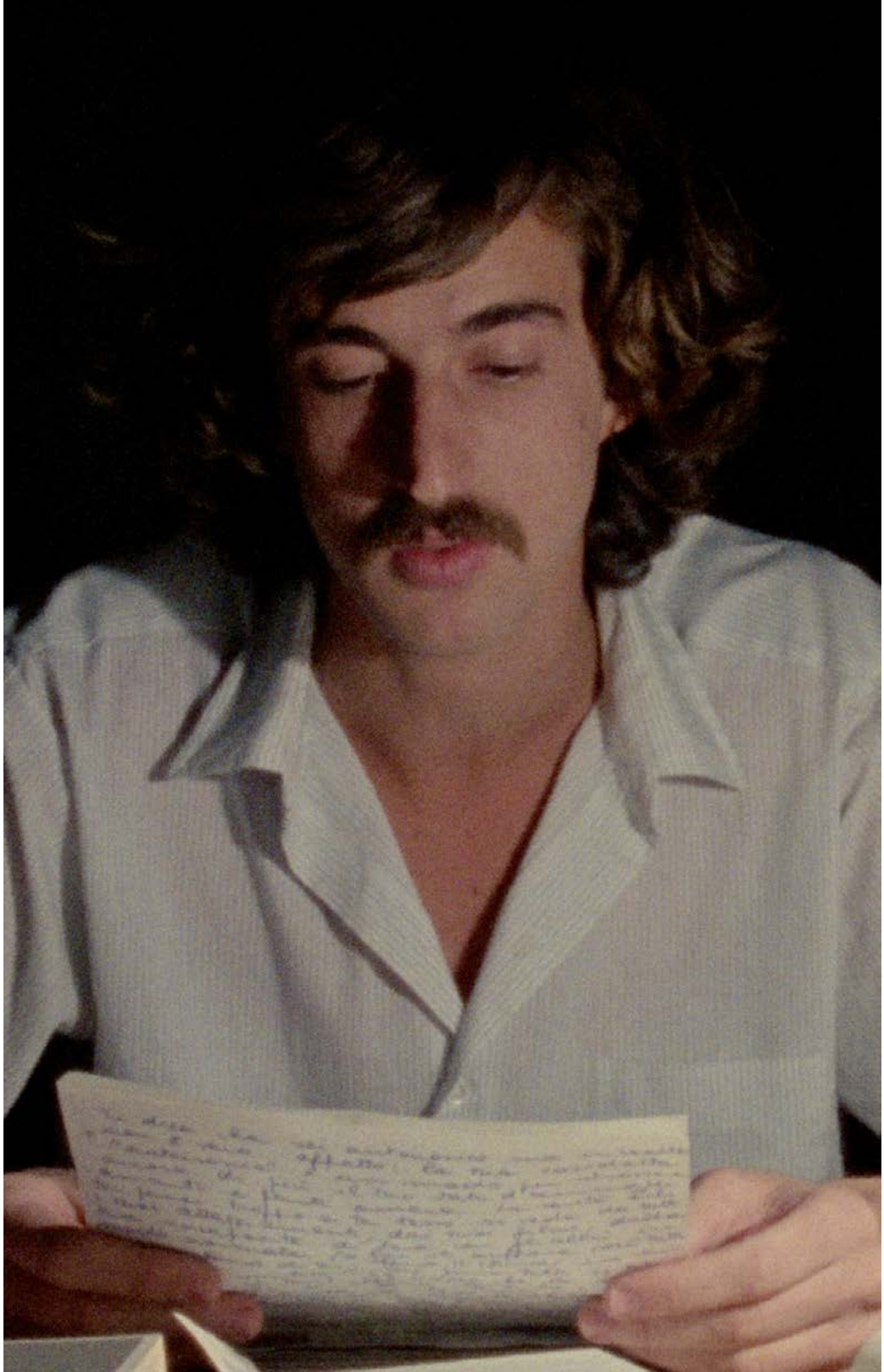
The most difficult thing to imagine if one wants to see *Ecce Bombo* in a historical perspective and consider its impact, without having experienced those years, is the fact that the young were an important issue. For everyone! A demographic that was so large and crucial that politics felt it necessary to talk about and for them, the industry of culture to produce for them (not just one kind but several kinds of music, TV, films, or literature, on different levels of marketability and experimentation), and society to consider them as a subject for debate. Departing from this ubiquity of youth-related issues, it does not sound too weird that a film written, directed, and played by one of them – under-thirty and absolutely in line with the spirit of his times (or at least a part of the many souls of that spirit) – could become so successful starting from scratch. From one movie theatre, a small one, in one city. Nanni Moretti was 25 when *Ecce Bombo* was released, and perhaps not coincidentally, from a present-day perspective, Michele Apicella - with his world and the issues that the film deals with - looks like a 35-year-old. This is what we discuss when we discuss *Ecce Bombo*, and this is a problem. We discuss about being capable of finding an audience spontaneously, of being liked, of influencing habits (and language!), and of managing to achieve something more difficult than representing a category of people (even the most listless actors can do that): representing their way of thinking, becoming a delegate of the mass. Unthinkable, this power today, with cinema that has lost part of its hold on the under-30 (not to mention Italian cinema!); but this shouldn't be the dominant critical approach to the film, transforming it into a discourse on society, on the influence of *Ecce Bombo*. This transformation means a transition from critique and analysis to celebration. *Ecce Bombo* is not an impeccable film, it's not the best work directed by Nanni Moretti, nor is it the best Italian debut of those years. But if you look at its (financial and cultural) success, it's unrivalled. To approach it as a society phenomenon means to kneel before it and renounce to question it. On the other hand, it's true that much of 'morettismo,' the peculiar style that was to give substance to Moretti's best films of the 80's, takes shape here for the first time. In *Ecce Bombo*, Moretti measured up with episodic narration and a rigorous use of shots; above all, in the last shot, a personal mode of working with images comes together. But all that fills up those images

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is still lacking. *Ecce Bombo* is a generational film filled with winning insights seemingly deprecating the generation it represents (while exhibiting its flaws and silliness, it actually praises its commitment, devotion, spirit, and – indirectly – its capacity for self-criticism); but it is also an immature film in terms of narrative, that is exhausted in its first level of meaning. This is proved by the fact that with more or less the same arsenal of instruments and film grammar (plus a use of music that was very different from coeval films), Moretti will go on to make *Bianca*, *The Mass Is Ended*, and *Red Wood Pigeon*, i.e., films that are not only bolder, which is normal as they belong to a later stage, but also more accomplished. The ideas found in those later films are not only the response to a desire of proving to be different and ‘other’ from the rest, or the most straightforward manner to demonstrate how close they were to that age group, but the means to convey a thought that departs from itself and says something universal.

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## COMPILATION 3 • CRITICS' VIEWS



“...well, I consider myself lucky for that, it’s a privilege and an honour.”

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## Anthology

“Moretti made a difficult film. *Ecce bombo* begins imitating a Roman story of young people, straggling but vigilant, forced into swampy intimacy by the impossibility of a truly and authentically productive relationship with themselves, with others, with women, and with power. Juggling a wealth of meditated quotations (from early Bertolucci’s cinema of inwardness, to Rohmer’s geometric composure, to Carmelo Bene’s baroque tirades), the film’s tone becomes increasingly sombre, the structure more complex, while the control of the narrative material is firm. The connecting thread is a continuous caricature of (existential) intimacy and inner reality (in social terms - the family, the couple, the city, ideology). The narrative is not a sequence of tableaux (as in *I Am Self-Sufficient*) but a thoughtful, burdensome accumulation of situations, wreaking havoc on the established order and eventually leading to the serene gaze of the impure wiseman: the morale. [...] Against the demagoguery of much Italian comedy, and political/civil action cinema, *Ecce bombo* exhibits a malleable body, ready for multiple games of interpretation on the part of the viewer.”

(Roberto Silvestri, *Il Manifesto*, March 9, 1978)

“The discomfort of the young is portrayed by Nanni Moretti, the most intelligent and subtlest, most affectionate and disenchanting, most ironic and melancholic chronicler and poet that the cinema of the present, and not only Italian, has offered us. Are the old structures, or categories, family, school, work, welfare, worn out? They are, but the trouble is that the new ones have worn out in the bud, says Moretti with subdued energy. [...] A mystified dictionary of contemporary stupidity, *Ecce bombo* is, in its own way, a classic; the work of a young master who seems, more than any of his peers, to be able to interpret and narrate the society of young people and, against the wordy conformism of the national mass-media, identify its deficiencies on the one hand, and needs on the other.”

(Paolo Valmarana, *Il popolo*, March 9, 1978)

“A comedy of manners rather than plot, which therefore cannot really be summarized, it offers us a poignant and, if you will, even troubling glimpse of today’s middle-class

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youth, doomed to boredom or unemployment, in the eclipse of feelings. A youth that has no future nor has a recent past, because it cannot identify in its parents (the age group of 50-year-olds: the one that rebuilt Italy with the results we have before our eyes). [...] Moretti is a wordsmith and a comedian who plays with fixity. And this fixity, which at first glance might be considered a shortcoming, actually responds to the meagre possibilities of movement given by the world he knows and portrays. That is, to an expressive existence. If a term of comparison were possible, we should refer to the Woody Allen of *Annie Hall*, always keeping in mind, however, that Allen has a theatrical and literary background, whereas Moretti is a raw 'film animal.'"

(Callisto Cosulich, *Paese Sera*, March 9, 1978)

"Rather than to literary or cinematic precedents, the film draws on a *Peanuts*-type structure (but, in France, Moretti's characters have reminded people of the comic strip series by Claire Brétecher, 'The Frustrated'). The film consists of the agglomeration of several more or less short self-contained 'strips' or flashes, often ending in a dazzling manner. Each contributes to the description of those middle-class youths 'parked' in large cities. [...] Moretti captures with a very fine ear the language, behaviours, and neuroses of a phase of political runoff. [...] There is also a scene, amusingly emblematic, of young people waiting for dawn in Ostia; but then we learn that the sun has risen somewhere else, where they did not expect it. Perhaps Nanni Moretti thinks the same thing will happen for the new generations: daylight will come while they are waiting for something else. The film's ending, with the mute and astonished protagonist in front of the girl with schizophrenia, certainly is not a happy one: it seems rather a warning sign about a turning point beyond which the dissociated person is no longer funny and becomes a stranger to life. [...] *Ecce bombo* is a film that is both sophisticated and unarmed, tantalizing with its irresistible humour and alarming from a sociological standpoint. It is the work of a new talent in Italian cinema. So we'll finally stop saying that after Bellocchio no one else has turned up."

(Tullio Kezich, *La Repubblica*, March 9, 1978)

"A few years ago *Anna* by Alberto Grifi, now *Ecce bombo* by Nanni Moretti: these are not extraordinary films but they are fair, made by people who know today's reality, live it, know how people talk, move, think, dress. Films that, in this reality, tell a story that serves to make us reflect on this reality, to make us understand it a little better. That's all. [...] *Ecce bombo* is manufactured with remarkable intelligence and modernity; it is culturally up-to-date with what is happening in literature and the arts; it avoids definition and 'the message.' Fresh and ruthless, watchful and desolate. It takes us usefully through a very current situation: the impotence, emptiness, bewilderment that affect people when they are stripped of any possibility of doing politics in the first person: yesterday, Moravia's 'indifferent ones;' today, Moretti's young people."

(Nanni Balestrini, *L'Espresso*, March 26, 1978)

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“What is *Ecce bombo* about? It’s about nothing or almost nothing, and this seems to be the hallmark of its expressive authenticity. A group of young men and women who are together because they are the same age, live in the same neighbourhood, go to the same school, and belong to the same family, try to be together in a more organic, more social, more voluntary, more conscious way, but in vain. [...] The Michele of *Ecce bombo* differs from the Michele of *The Indifferent Ones* mainly in one detail: he and his friends seem to be unable to live except in groups; whereas the Michele of my novel was always alone and basically attributed his despair to the fact that he wasn’t able to share it with others. He was wrong, it turns out; *Ecce bombo* proves that one can be desperate in a group as much as, and even more than, alone.”

(Alberto Moravia, *L’Espresso*, April 9, 1978)

“The sincerity of *Ecce bombo* is absolute: in reproducing the bewilderments of a generation that flirts with its own despair, and in asking us to absolve itself because it is ironically conscious of its destiny of pain. A critical and self-critical work, the film is to be understood as the author wishes, as ‘a funny film that hurts.’ [...] His description of this alienated landscape, accomplished by reinventing buried gestures and affections, without ever getting under the skin for fear of emptiness, is in fact so true that it can never be betrayed by cinematic fiction. Whether it repeats the scraps of words with which the characters try to cover themselves, whether it evokes the rituals of indolence and protest, or it grasps their dismay in a piece of music.”

(Giovanni Grazzini, *Corriere della Sera*, March 23, 1978)

“There must be something wrong in this unanimous infatuation with a young man who, with an inseparable mix of cunning and naiveté, manages to simultaneously make his peers and his parents happy, offering them an image of the former (and a judgment of their condition) that coincides precisely with the image that their fathers, all these years, from ‘68 to the present, have always hoped they could form of them (as well as with the way they have always tried to judge them). [...] Nanni, you who show us that these blessed children of ours, rather than desperate perverts, are only, after all, harmless dick-heads; *bravo* Nanni, who show us that these blessed parents of ours, rather than corrupt scoundrels, are only, after all, good people who are going round the bend... Thus, a good guy who makes a movie that is not even a movie, but a collection of gags, is about to be promoted by the bad conscience of a guilty and repentant, depressed and penitential, austere and expiatory country to the role of the Great Exorcist whose advent in our hearts – God only knows how long – we have all been waiting for.”

(Ruggero Guarini, *L’Espresso*, March 26, 1978)

“Faced with Nanni Moretti’s film, the critics’ accolade, audiences paying and laughing, Guarini is outraged. He is wrong. He should, rather, recognize himself in the storytelling,

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irony, and stomping of Nanni Moretti. Rejoice that, even in the youngest generation, there is someone who defends the necessity of some ‘sectarianism of intelligence.’ That, before dividing the world into young and old, men and women, exploiters and exploited (all necessary and in some cases even useful distinctions!), divides it with the watershed of stupidity vs. the ability to think.”

(Paolo Flores d’Arcais, *L’Espresso*, March 26, 1978)

“I don’t know what my fathers think of this film, but the laughter of my companions throws me into despair. The failure of our provincial revolutionary dream concocted in the bars of Piazza Navona is no laughing matter, not like this, at least. Throughout the film, I feel like a hand is tapping on my shoulder: we are empty, now, but still fun to be with. [...] Moretti has hit the nail on the head. But what good did it do me to laugh, learning that the new generation doesn’t understand sisters, mothers, partners? [...] Moretti’s women are even more downgraded, from the role of object to acting as stooges in the comic skits of a leading character who cannot bring himself to get the bitterness he feels out of his mouth. Woman, I am again an unknown and subordinate universe in the hands of a male who throws me into the cauldron of his games. Nanni, is this what male consciousness-raising has served you for? We gave you a tool, and in addition to not knowing how to use it, you poke fun at it?”

(Maricla Tagliaferri, *L’Espresso*, March 26, 1978)

“But a young man came. Nanni Moretti does not claim to make exhaustive films about the ‘youth of today,’ as they used to say. He makes films about himself and the friends he knows best, who in language and behaviour are very similar to other young people; even the more ‘politicized,’ more aware of their new historical role, who Moretti seemingly neglects (but he doesn’t). His young characters react, astonished at the responsibility of their state, with a will to isolation and boredom: in addition to their own sadness, they also take on and carry the sadness of grownups. Moretti resists this sadness by mocking the sacredness of the young, who already have commonplaces, who still have ancient feelings. Moretti does not even want to make films in the sense commonly understood; he wants to write essays in images: and therefore his films are funny, that is, different.”

(Ettore Scola, *L’Espresso*, March 26, 1978)

“Sure, one cannot help but appreciate Nanni Moretti’s more mature attitude toward the topics, situations, and characters throughout *Ecce bombo*. Far from the confusion found in his first Super8 little short, there is clarity in his gaze, and the design is quite compact and coherent. True, the film is packed with problems barely touched upon as well as with a dense range of possible reflections; nor does it spare biting satire. However, although the director offers mostly himself as the target of his own irony, he actually seems to po-

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sition himself a thousand miles away from the world represented: he triggers a blatant distancing device whereby bewildered young people unable to communicate, neurotic siblings, unhappy couples, desperate parents and powerless teachers, organizers of private radio and television stations are viewed with a patently 'detached' eye, and perhaps with little participation."

(Piero Sola, *Bianco e Nero*, 4, April 1978)

"*Ecce bombo* is an elliptical film because, first of all, it lacks a real story which the narrative revolves around, and then because the sketches through which it develops its theme are anomalous as well, being generally focused only on their moment of humorous and satirical poignancy. Within each of these flashes, however, communication is dense, precisely thanks to jokes that are essential and to the framework within which they are delivered. [...] One is left in doubt whether to accept *Ecce bombo* as an indictment brought by a young man against the vacuity and crises of his own generation, or rather as a symbol of this same crisis. Which does not detract from the fact that, however one interprets the film, the maturity Moretti shows in handling his subject matter is surprising."

(Carlo Felice Venegoni, *Cinema 60: mensile di cultura cinematografica*, no. 121, May-June 1978)

"Moretti's film was defined a 'self-portrait of a generation': and, if at times it elicits a smile with that slow-moving action with Keaton-esque pace and surrealist references, there is a background of lucid, bitter, and resigned despair that exceeds the level of 'ridicule' [...]. The character of the young schizophrenic woman - whom only Michele has the courage to approach - is the symbol of a perverse dissociation between potential and enactment; of a youth wasted by a blameworthy slapdash attitude of adults, guilty of a myopic indulgence that is, in practice, a surrender and a refusal of responsibility."

(Mirella Tominetti, *Avvenire*, April 25, 1984)

"In *Ecce bombo*, Nanni Moretti creates a compelling and often hilarious portrayal of the existential dilemmas faced by a group of young Italians. His film is marked by a distinctive blend of humour and melancholy, capturing the disillusionment and the search for meaning that characterize the era. Moretti's character, played with a quirky charm, navigates through personal and political crises with a unique blend of sarcasm and vulnerability. The film's introspective style, coupled with its sharp social commentary, makes *Ecce bombo* a significant work in Italian cinema."

(Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*, May 5, 1980)

"Nanni Moretti's *Ecce bombo* is a film that oscillates between comedy and poignant reflection, portraying the idiosyncratic lives of its characters with an almost documentary

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realism. Moretti's direction is marked by a subtlety that allows the characters' inner lives to unfold organically, without the need for heavy-handed exposition. The film's humour is often dry and ironic, yet it never loses sight of the deeper emotional currents that drive the story. Moretti's performance is particularly striking, combining a naturalistic acting style with moments of profound introspection. This film is a testament to Moretti's skill in creating cinema that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally resonant".

(Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*, May 17, 2005)

"Nanni Moretti's *Ecce bombo* is a film that seamlessly weaves together humour and social commentary, presenting a vivid snapshot of Italian youth in the late 1970s. Moretti's screenplay is both witty and introspective, exploring themes of identity, alienation, and the search for authenticity in a rapidly changing world. The film's narrative structure is unconventional, often blurring the lines between reality and fantasy, which adds to its unique charm. Moretti's direction is confident, with a keen eye for detail and a strong sense of pacing. The film's soundtrack, featuring a mix of eclectic music, further enhances its atmosphere, making *Ecce bombo* a standout work in Moretti's filmography."

(John Anderson, *Variety*, May 15, 1980)



the frontal image composition, which includes the main character in all shots, reminded many of comic strips

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# DOCUMENTS

## WORDS ARE IMPORTANT [from the dialogues of *Ecce Bombo*]

From everyday language (“I get around... I see people... I do things...”) to the jargon of politics (the phrase “Shall I be noticed more if...” has strikingly been used by all political forces, even recently, if they want to make fun of some absent adversary or ally on an official event), the film’s dialogue lines have become uniquely popular: here follows a short anthology, including suspension points, of the most famous dialogues in Italian cinema.

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*MOTHER* How’s that Silvia?

*MICHELE* Silvia, not ‘that Silvia,’ mum. We’re lucky to be in Rome and not in Milan, where they call people ‘that Silvia,’ ‘that Giorgio,’ ‘that Pannella,’ ‘that Giovanni.’ Take a shit! Not ‘toik a sheet.’ Cunt, not ‘coont.’

*MOTHER* Michele, please!

*MICHELE* But it’s not dirty words! This is our language, we, the young, speak like this.

*FATHER* You’re such an idiot ... these are the results... of a repressive education. Imagine what you could have become if you had received a more... modern education.

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*MICHELE ON THE PHONE* No. I really don’t feel like it. And then I have sort of an appointment with my friends at the bar. Listen, what kind of a party is it? It’s not like, at ten p.m. you’re all dancing... Ring Around the Rosie... and I’m dumped in one corner of the room? No, no, if you’re dancing, I’m not coming. No, I’m not coming. You mean, I should come? Shall I be noticed more if I do come, and stay on my own... or if I don’t come at all? Ok then, I’m coming, I’ll be by the window, in profile, against the light, and you’ll all tell me, ‘Michele, come along with us,’ and I, ‘yes, you go along, I’ll join

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you in a jiffy.' I'm coming. I'll meet you there. No. I don't feel like coming. No. yes, goodbye. See you. Good night.

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- MIRKO* For me that sun... which we have waited for so long... that night... in Ostia and which then rose from the opposite side... for me it was a sign, an invitation to understand. In my opinion, in this period, we are doing it wrong almost... more or less everything. We are a little bit annoyed, a little bit disappointed, a little bit tired. We stopped doing active politics, we feel happy because we got rid of this burden... we're trying to have fun. I'm a little fed up also because I'm not having fun. We have to be able to do something here. Not, like now, that nobody is minding their own business and ... changes nothing about others.
- MICHELE* Right!
- MIRKO* I think we are getting everything wrong, in our relationships with women. And between us. In our study. At work. I would prefer that we talked... really. To try and change ourselves, be different in our behaviour from our grandparents, be – but truly, in everyday things – revolutionary. As an inaugural speech, I believe that's more than enough.
- VITO* In order to be together... we could make a basketball team, or a magazine, open an alternative barbershop, we call ourselves with a date: June 15... September 20... July 14.
- MICHELE* But the dates are all taken!
- VITO* And so from basketball we take the initial cry, the one that they all do together.
- MIRKO* Michele, you break the ice... tell us about yourself
- MICHELE* ... about your life!
- MIRKO* ... about your life!
- MICHELE* No!
- MIRKO* Why not?
- MICHELE* Because.
- MIRKO* Shouldn't we discuss important things?
- MICHELE* Yes.
- MIRKO* And you don't want to?
- MICHELE* Cesare has so many important things to say, I'm sure.
- GOFFREDO* Michele, you are being aggressive.
- MICHELE* Why shouldn't I be aggressive, I beg your pardon?



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*FLAMINIA* (On the phone) Hello?  
*MICHELE* Hi, how are you? Yes, look... no .... I'm a little bit stuck, yeah, I wanted to say if... hi, how are you? ... was it possible to fall in love with me? I wanted to ask if we could meet to fall in love with me? I am in love with you. I wanted to see you, to talk to you. I'm kind of stuck, you intimidate me a lot, yes.

*MICHELE* ...I have to tell you something.  
*FLAMINIA* Tell me!  
*MICHELE* ...but I'm embarrassed.  
*FLAMINIA* First you say you have to tell me something, then you don't.  
*MICHELE* It's worse.  
*FLAMINIA* What do you mean it's worse?  
*MICHELE* It's worse, I'm not happy with the way I am. I have thought about this thing, instead of letting it go... you continue like this so I don't ...

*FLAMINIA* What is this thing?  
*MICHELE* Nothing, but I felt like making love to you.  
*FLAMINIA* See!, you said it, you made such a fuss.  
*MICHELE* I didn't say it because I thought it was non-viable.  
*FLAMINIA* You could have said it right away.  
*MICHELE* I was embarrassed.  
*FLAMINIA* Now that you've said it, are you embarrassed?  
*MICHELE* I was because I thought it was non-viable as a hypothesis. But is it?  
*FLAMINIA* Well... I think so.  
*MICHELE* Well, I think so... no, I don't know.  
*FLAMINIA* If you had said it right away, we might well have done it. But now... I don't understand, you've made all this fuss, I don't understand if there's something else going on.

*MICHELE* What is going on?  
*FLAMINIA* I don't know, I'm asking you if there is a reason.  
*MICHELE* The reason is in itself. And then I feel good with you.  
*FLAMINIA* No, not at all. We met once, and one hour after, you would have run away. Our communication is already poor, let alone making love.

*MICHELE* I don't know if it has anything to do with it, you know? Whatever, we've talked about it so much by now.  
*FLAMINIA* I don't understand the real reason, though?  
*MICHELE* I've told you.  
*FLAMINIA* If there's a reason then I don't see why yes, if there's no reason I don't see why not.

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*MICHELE* How: yes and no, I don't understand.  
*FLAMINIA* If there is a reason you asked me to make love. If there is, we don't, if there isn't, I don't see why we shouldn't.

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*MICHELE* Yeah, maybe wait a little bit, not right away. Listen, you know what I was thinking... Mirko. ...I am sad... however, I am theatrical, vital. You are sad and sleazy.

*MIRKO* In my opinion... in our talking ... the whole experience of petty bourgeois characters resurfaces. We could get it published by the Savelli publishing house... it often does this kind of thing.

*MICHELE* What I like of the relationship with a woman is, falling in love, courtship, the first time you make love, or rather the preparations for the first time, and when you break up and there are memories left and the desire to meet and then... not knowing what to say anymore.

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*MICHELE* How long since we've met last time. A long time.

*CRISTINA* A long time. Since the end of school.

*MICHELE* Since the end of school! But we didn't used to hang around then, I didn't see so many people.

*CRISTINA* I liked you a lot.

*MICHELE* What?...

*CRISTINA* I liked you...

*MICHELE* I liked you too.

*CRISTINA* Do you remember Renato? He went to live in a farmhouse in Umbria. Of course, he suffers a strong cultural isolation... but he owns sixty sheep... Then he talks to the farmers, he works, he is fine. He left with other people from the city. Me, a life like this... I don't know if I could ever manage. But it is fascinating... beautiful. It feels good. Peaceful. Listen do you want to visit... Caterina one of these days? She lives nearby. She had a baby three months ago. She's very nice, and it's been a long time since she saw you and she would be happy...

*MICHELE* Listen, what job... I forgot, what do you do?

*CRISTINA* Well, I am interested in many things... film, theatre, photography, music.... reading.

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*MICHELE* And concretely?  
*CRISTINA* I don't know, what do you mean?  
*MICHELE* What do you mean, you don't know what your job is?  
*CRISTINA* Nothing in particular.  
*MICHELE* Well, how do you make a living?  
*CRISTINA* But I told you. I get around... I see people... I move around... I do things...  
*MICHELE* What about rent?  
*CRISTINA* Uh... I live with my brother so I don't pay it.  
*MICHELE* Well, and the clothes?  
*CRISTINA* Uh... I have a friend, for example, who goes to London and I tell him to... bring me things, clothes...  
*MICHELE* All right, food?  
*CRISTINA* I'm often invited over.  
*MICHELE* This cigarette here?  
*CRISTINA* I met a friend this morning and he gave me two packs of these... Bye!  
*MICHELE* What do you mean bye, are you leaving?  
*CRISTINA* No, I'm glad to be here... to see you.

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*PATRON* Give them an inch, they'll take a mile, that's the truth... We Italians were good for grazing sheep ... then we wanted to have an industrial country. An industrial country, uh! We Italians ... that's the way we are ... reds, blacks, all the same in the end.  
*MICHELE* Who is it that is talking? Who is it? Reds and blacks are all the same? Are we ... in an Alberto Sordi movie?  
*PATRON* I wish!  
*MICHELE* Are we in an Alberto Sordi movie?  
We are in an Alberto Sordi movie!  
*BARMAN* Bye!  
*MICHELE* Bravo, bravo! You deserve... Alberto Sordi!  
You deserve Alberto Sordi!

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## *Ecce Bombo* like you've never seen it before

*Notes on the film restoration*

by Sergio Bruno

*Ecce Bombo*'s 4K restoration is part of a plan, drawn up by the CSC – Cineteca Nazionale in collaboration with Sacher Film, whose objective is the rescue of some titles from Nanni Moretti's filmography. Launched in 2022 with the restoration of *Sweet Dreams*, the project envisages that the restoration process takes place at the Cineteca Nazionale Digital Lab, under Moretti's supervision. Therefore, the film director has followed all the restoration phases for this film as well, from choosing the source film elements up to the project's completion. The restoration of *Ecce Bombo* was particularly complex because the original footage was on a 16mm negative, i.e., the support Moretti used for filming in 1978. For its characteristics, this type of film support requires a specific methodological approach, especially if the restoration is entirely digital. The original negative's texture and fragility influenced not only the types of interventions but also their distribution in time and modalities. On the first physical inspection, the film stock appeared warped, with stains due to humidity and scratches running throughout the entire length of the film. Moreover, there were white stains, cement traces in the splices, torn footage right in the middle of the frame, and changes in colour. Considering the type of stock, which could cause problems with the film grain and lack of definition during scanning, we conducted several tests in 2K and 4K, then we opted for the 4K not just to obtain a higher-quality conservation master, but also because the negative offered good general visuals throughout most of the film length. However, the definition of some scenes was not optimal, depending not only on how they were shot at the time but also on the current conditions of the film stock. In fact, during the scanning, especially in correspondence with scene changes we detected picture deformations and instability which caused unnatural out-of-focus effects. We tried to resolve these intervening manually on the damaged frames. It is interesting to note that at the time of the theatrical release, when the 16mm stock was blown-up to 35mm, the original aspect ratio was lost. Wishing now to restore the original aspect ratio, i.e., 1.66, Moretti, with the assistance of Digital Lab technicians, has intervened scene after scene, so that the restored version finally features the film's original aspect ratio.

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We exercised the same care when we tried to restore the photographic tone sought by the film director and by the cinematographer, Giuseppe Pinori. This part was facilitated disposing of a 4K scanning, therefore a very high level of information. The restoration of the soundtrack posed the same problems as the picture negative. As is generally known, the film was shot in sync sound; with digital restoration, this represents one of the greatest hurdles before achieving the final result. To this end, several tests of digitalization from different film elements (negatives, prints, etc.) were executed to identify the best source for the original sound. However, some of these elements were duplicates printed after the film's release. Along with Moretti, we decided to use the soundtrack negative as it proved to be the best source despite several flaws derived from both the recording and the film stock's material condition. Obviously, as the sound was recorded in sync, uneven levels of sound from one scene to another or within the same scene are a normal occurrence. However, this is one of the film's peculiarities, therefore it was not altered following the film director's instructions throughout the restoration.



“...and everyone rushed to identify themselves with the characters and atmosphere seen in  
*Ecce Bombo*”

