

Amici per la Pelle

("Friends for Life" – lit: "Friends to the Skin")

Italy : 1955 : dir. Franco Rossi : Cines

: 100 min

prod: : scr: Franco Rossi, Leo Benvenuti, Piero De Bernardi, Ugo Guerra
& Giandomenico Giagli : dir.ph.: Gabor Pogany

Geronimo Meynier; Andrea Sciré

Vera Carmi; Carlo Tamberlani; Luigi Tosi; Paolo Ferrara; Marcella Rovena; Dina Perbellini

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	≠	M	☺	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2067c	3.5	7	3	1,374	3	-	-	-	-	No	unseen



Two young hussies play their cat-and-mouse games. Left Geronimo Meynier, right Andrea Sciré

Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Despite external differences two adolescent boys form a friendship in which it's precisely the introvert who has to keep rescuing the other, with his bravado, from trouble. To be tough like him he invents a girlfriend for himself. Getting out of that lie is the start of the end of their friendship. Understated and sharply observed film is constructed from small details without romanticism or

sentimentality, and draws from that its compelling credibility. ***"

Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide review:

"A motherless schoolboy goes to stay in the stable environment of his friend's family. However, when the two youngsters quarrel, the boy leaves for the Middle East with his businessman father, a decision which proves to



Stills can be very misleading. This one suggests a level of meaning in the glance exchanged which probably wasn't present in the scene. But then it would be fair to say that most intense boyhood friendships remain oblivious of / in deep denial about the sexual chemistry in such relationships, so the inference is perhaps warranted all the same.

Source: NFT Bulletin

be a painful wrench for both youngsters. This compassionate and sensitive study of the closed world of childhood, tinged with an adult's sentimentality, has two remarkable juvenile leads."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"A slow and sensitive film about the friendship of two young schoolboys which is mainly to be recommended to those who like slow and sensitive films about the friendship of schoolboys. **"

The International Encyclopedia of Film incidental note:

"...Franco Rossi, a director who has always been strictly a professional cameraman, did however make one film which won him recognition at home and abroad: **"AMICI PER LA PELLE"** (1955)."

World Cinema – a Short History incidental note:

"Other talents revealed in the late fifties [included] ...Franco Rossi (born 1919), who never repeated the success of his **"AMICI PER LA PELLE"** (1955)."

NFT bulletin – April 1976 – review:

"Childhood and its relationships has long fascinated film makers, but few films about young people have even approached Rossi's little masterpiece. His film concerns two boys, the handsome, extrovert Mario and the sensitive Franco. Although they attend the same school they come from different backgrounds. Franco is a diplomat's son - an only child, Mario is part of a busy and happy family. The boys start as enemies, but become friends, with trials and heartaches."

NFT bulletin – May 1978 – review:

"A "macho" version of the spiritual **"LES AMITIÉS PARTICULIÈRES"**. For all its earthly approach an unerotic love story, deeply moving and emotionally true. Franco and Mario meet as "enemies", become friends until the vulnerable Franco is betrayed by the handsome extrovert. The climax to the movie is a state of awareness achieved by Mario, who, realising the tragedy, overcomes his nature. Their parting is necessary, but they remain "friends for life". The central performances are miraculous and Rossi investigates the closed world of childhood and memory with compassionate romanticism. A minor masterpiece."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Companion to Italian Cinema", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Andrea Sciré:

"Franco Rossi's **"AMICI PER LA PELLE"** - known to the English-speaking public as **"FRIENDS FOR LIFE"** - is a remarkable, deeply-felt study of a schoolboy friendship: emotionally intense, but completely without sensuality. The extrovert Mario, son of a ceramic artist, befriends a new boy who arrives at his school: Franco, the shy, serious son of a diplomat. Theirs is a relationship of opposites, with Franco hopelessly vulnerable to Mario's bouncy insensitivity. What finally shatters it is an act of spite by Mario, betraying a secret

about Franco's dead mother after his intellectual friend has, somewhat improbably, beaten him in a long-distance race.

Geronimo Meynier (born 5th July 1941) is brilliant as the attractive, affectionate but shallow Mario. Meynier went on to become a leading young actor in Italy in the Sixties. He was in "**AMORE E CHIACCHIERE**" (57), "**IL COCCO DI MAMMA**" (57), "**RAGAZZI DELLA MARINA**" (58), "**VACANZE D'INVERNO**" (59), "**IL MAGISTRATO**" (59), "**LA GRANDE GUERRA**" (It/Fr 59) and many more, including Renzo Rossellini's Italian episode of

"**LOVE AT TWENTY**" (Fr/It/Jp/De/Pl 62) and "**GIULIETTA E ROMEO**" (It/Es 64 - as Romeo). He has now retired.

But Andrea Sciré's sweet-natured Franco carries the real charge of "**AMICI PER LA PELLE**". It's a sad study in disillusionment, and his is a face that registers pride, diffidence and pain with perfect truthfulness. Sciré, rumoured to be a distant scion of the Bonaparte dynasty, never made another film."



Source: indeterminate

No further information currently available. "Minor masterpiece" with "miraculous performances" it may be, but we can rely on the mainstream film guides to ignore it altogether, while their pages are flooded with derivative Hollywood junk. Platonic homosexual love between school-age boys was, I daresay, difficult terrain for 1950s Italy, (it would have been difficult terrain anywhere). On the other hand, perhaps **homosociality** of this kind could only be countenanced when between two boys generally deemed "too young" to know what they're about. You might call them "latency period" love affairs. But if you were to write a story – of any description – involving two boys called Geronimo and Andrea, people would snort derisively at such wildly improbable names.

Apart from "[LES AMITIÉS PARTICULIÈRES](#)", other titles to skate briefly over this thin ice have included "[THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND](#)" (Australia), "if..." (UK) and "**DU ER IKKE ALENE**" ("You Are Not Alone" - Denmark). More overt teenage homosexuality has since - just about - become a valid talking point in TV soaps and movies of the week, although often still in terms of family trauma, the desires generally unconsummated, and the "teens" in

question safely past the legal starting gate. Perhaps even overtly gay adolescents (as in the surprisingly good short American film "**TREVOR**", or the Channel 4 series "**Queer as Folk**") are now perceived as less of a threat, provided they come clearly labelled, like anorexics.

American cinema's closest encounter with this kind of intense emotional bonding between boys may have been "**STAND BY ME**" (86), in which the relationship between River Phoenix and "sensitive" Wil Wheaton extends to manly hugs, soul-searching confidences, and tearful interludes, but thankfully without the script labouring to emphasise that both boys are resolutely heterosexual. The emotional sincerity between them stands as a valid form of love in its own right, independent of sexuality. Gossip has it, however, that during the shooting schedule, when the four principal actors were camping out together, Phoenix made overtures to Wheaton of a rather less diffident kind. Reality gives the lie to art.

Laying that aspect aside, tenderness and intense devotion is, perhaps surprisingly, more commonly expressed in the cinema between boys and grown men than between boys themselves (which relationships are surely more common). One further example, however, would be Philip Leacock's "**REACH FOR GLORY**" (63), in which the very exclusiveness of the friendship between the two boys precipitates them towards the story's tragic conclusion. Although unseen as yet, nonetheless this is an important title by the criteria of the archive, and hence **Recommended**.

Holmstrom judges Sciré's age as 13, to Meynier's 14.

See subject index under [SCHOOL](#) (or possibly **BOARDING SCHOOL / PUBLIC SCHOOL**), **RECOMMENDED TITLES** and **SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS** for other close relationships that stop short of exchanging body fluids, but convey an intensity of feeling beyond the norm.