



Bicycle Thieves (BFI Film Classics)

By Robert S. C. Gordon

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Bicycle Thieves (BFI Film Classics) By Robert S. C. Gordon

Bicycle Thieves (*Ladri di biciclette*, 1948) is unarguably one of the most important films in the history of cinema. It is also one of the most beguiling, moving and (apparently) simple pieces of narrative ever made. The film tells the story of one man and his son, as they search fruitlessly through the streets of Rome for his stolen bicycle; the bicycle which had offered the possibility of escape from the poverty and humiliation of long-term unemployment.

One of a cluster of extraordinary films to come out of post-war, post-Fascist Italy - loosely labelled 'neorealist' - *Bicycle Thieves* won an Oscar in 1949, topped the first *Sight and Sound* poll of the best films of all time in 1952 and has been hugely influential throughout world cinema ever since. It remains a necessary point of reference for any cinematic engagement with the labyrinthine experience of the modern city, the travails of poverty in the contemporary world, the complex bond between fathers and sons, and the capacity of the camera to capture something like the essence of all of these.

Robert S. C. Gordon's BFI Film Classics volume shows how *Bicycle Thieves* is ripe for re-viewing, for rescuing from its worthy status as a neorealist 'classic'. It looks at the film's drawn-out planning and production history, the vibrant and riven context in which it was made, and the dynamic geography, geometry and sociology of the film that resulted.

ROBERT S. C. GORDON is Reader in Modern Italian Culture, Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge, UK.



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Bicycle Thieves (BFI Film Classics) By Robert S. C. Gordon Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #419487 in Books
- Brand: Brand: British Film Institute
- Published on: 2008-11-15
- Released on: 2008-11-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.51" h x .31" w x 5.42" l, .50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 96 pages

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Review

'Robert S.C. Gordon excels at what this BFI series does so well - condensing and clarifying the film's essential elements and values - making it one of the best in the canon.' - Empire

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