

# The Weekend Murders (Concerto per pistola solista)

Italy | 1970 | 98 minutes

## Credits

<b>Director</b>	Michele Lupo
<b>Screenplay</b>	Sergio Donati/Massimo Felisatti/Fabio Pittorru
<b>Photography</b>	Guglielmo Mancori
<b>Music</b>	Francesco De Masi
<b>Cast</b>	
<b>Barbara Worth</b>	Anna Moffo
<b>Isabelle Carter</b>	Ida Galli
<b>Sgt. Aloisius Thorpe</b>	Gastone Moschin
<b>Anthony Carter</b>	Peter Baldwin

## In Brief

A delightful Agatha Christie-inspired English country house set comedy giallo with a nice central performance from Gaston Moschin as the village bobby who's smarter than he looks. And for once the butler didn't do it, as he is the first to die. But if he didn't, who did? The parade of suspects includes giallo regulars Giacomo Rossi-Stuart and Evelyn Stewart

Released internationally by MGM, this 1970 giallo from the underrated Michele Lupo marks his only contribution to the genre. It is a shame because, while certainly not the most serious example of the form, it is a well-made and thoroughly entertaining film that deserves wider recognition and availability.

Drawing obvious inspiration from Agatha Christie, the plot sees the members of an aristocratic family gather for the reading of Sir Henry's will. Amongst those assembled are the beautiful, brittle Isabelle (Ida Galli, here credited as Eveline Stewart) who is estranged from her father and recently lost the child she was carrying; the prim and proper Aunt Gladys (Marisa Fabbri; the maid in *Four Flies on Grey Velvet*) and her emotionally confused, practical-joke playing son, Georgie; and playboy Ted Collins (Giacomo Rossi Stuart), complete with sports car and new wife who, for added scandalousness, also happens to be black.

Following a shooting party that seems to allude to Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* in its bunny carnage and more general theme that "everyone has their reasons," the will is read.

With the exceptions of Sir Henry's old friend Sergeant Thorpe (Gaston Moschin), to whom he leaves his prized azaleas, and Barbara Worth (opera singer turned actress Barbara Moffo), who cared for him in his final days and is left pretty much everything else, they are disappointed.

As the family discuss the situation left them by "the damned miserable rotten cheating old bastard," as Ted puts it, Thorpe discovers the body of the butler in the greenhouse – "For once nobody will be able to say the butler did it!"

Superintendent Grey from Scotland Yard is called in to investigate, only to prove less effectual than the dim-looking Thorpe when an attempt is made on Barbara's life and Ted is found dead, the victim of a faked suicide...

With a key aspect of the filmmakers' strategy throughout being to draw attention to and play with cliché – we can also note, for instance, the sequence where Georgie, clad in giallo killer black coat and gloves and wearing a stocking mask, stalks the maid only for her to summarily unmask and disarm him – the film *The Weekend Murders* most obviously resembles is *Five Dolls for an August Moon*, coincidentally released in the same year.

But while Bava's film is certainly the better-known riff on Christie, I would submit that it is not the better film.

Adverse production circumstances combined with Bava's



# The Weekend Murders

avowed disinterest in the source material and its conventions – the array of suspects and red herrings; the isolated setting; genteel Englishness; the “locked room” situation etc. – resulted in a film that has its moments of brilliance – one thinks of the spilled balls whose roll down the stairs reveals another corpse – but does not hang together terribly well. Here, by contrast, one senses that Lupo had a solid script to start from; a cast and crew he was comfortable with; and sufficient time and resources to realise his vision. Thus, for example, whereas the zooms in *Five Dolls...* frequently have an element of the purely functional to them, in terms of saving on camera setups or simply trying to keep things visually interesting for the spectator, those here emerge as more of an integral part of the whole, being deployed as conscious rhetorical devices that underscore (or perhaps more critically overstate) key points in the narrative.

The same can be said of Francesco De Masi's score here as compared with Piero Umiliani's in Bava's film. Much as I love Umiliani, his work in *Five Dolls...* is simply there, the vocal refrain of “five dolls” notwithstanding. Here, however, the bizarre rendition of Tchaikovsky's famous Piano Concerto Number One, complete with gunshots referencing the Italian title *Concerto per pistola solista* / *Concerto for a Pistol Soloist*, over the in medias res opening sequence, provides a sense of integration from the outset. (Gianni Ferrio's use of the same piece in *The Bloodstained Butterfly* accomplishes something similar, with its segue from Tchaikovsky's opening bars into an easy listening lounge theme perhaps signifying something of the difference between its tortured pianist protagonist and the more blasé world in which he finds himself.)

All told, an enjoyable way to spend 98 minutes.



- Keith Brown

EDINBURGH  
FILM  
GUILD

The Giallo