Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"In a way, the title tells all in this incisive, expertly directed and acted drama: Judge Noiret must determine whether murderer Galabru is insane or faking. Fascinating from start to finish. Shot in Panavision. ***"

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"At the end of the nineteenth century [actually it says "at the end of eighteen hundred"] girls and boys are being raped and murdered by an unknown criminal who invokes God ["die zich op God beroept"]. A country judge, who uses his status to give his own perversion an acceptable form - gets steadily stronger suspicions about the killer's identity. True events lead to a psychological duel in a portrait of a politically turbulent period, strikingly accomplished in every respect by all concerned. ***"

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"In nineteenth-century France, a rural judge tries to ascertain whether a serial killer is insane or merely trying to pull the wool over the law's eyes. ***"

20th London Film Festival ('76) programme review:

" "THE JUDGE AND THE ASSASSIN" is a carefully calibrated, socially conscious work which evokes complex, contradictory reactions... Tavernier purposely challenges the audience with one of the most plausible candidates for capital punishment ever conceived in the person of a genuine madman who roams about sodomising, disembowelling and murdering pubescent male and female shepherds in 1893 provincial France."
Paralleling this are the efforts of a distinguished Lourdes judge to see the murderer apprehended and brought to justice... the killer is viewed as a genuinely handicapped mental case in need of sympathy and cure, not routine punishment, while the cultivated judge emerges as a moral hypocrite of potentially greater danger to society than a lone psychopath. Provocative ambivalence is further inspired by the excellent characterisations of Milhe Noiret as the jurist and, as the killer, Michel Galabru. Scr: Jean Aurenche & Bertrand Tavernier, from an original scenario by Jean Aurenche & Pierre Bost; dir.ph: Pierre-William Glenn. Shown at the 1976 Los Angeles, Melbourne, Sydney and Cannes film festivals. 

Todd McCarthy, Hollywood Reporter

No further information currently available. Intriguing, and a very welcome corrective to the ultra-reactionary tendencies of our own time, when the death penalty has been reintroduced with a vengeance across the States, and ever more draconian regimes for "sex offenders" are the order of the day on both sides of the Atlantic. Since Fritz Lang's "M - EIN STAD SUCHT EIN MORD" in 1931, lust-killers of children have been handled very sparingly in the cinema. Gert Frobe played a similar character in "ES GESCHAH AM HELLICHTEN TAG" ('58) and Kurt Raab in "ZÄRTLICHKEIT DER W™LFE" ('73), while Rolf Sch•bel's 1984 documentary "NACHRUF AUF EINE BESTIE" ("Requiem for a Beast") employed taped interviews in an effort to demonise a convicted child-killer who died on the operating table during forcible castration.

But the film which approximates closest to this would be Sidney Lumet's "THE OFFENCE" ('73), which was imbued with some of the same ambivalence between police interrogator (Sean Connery) and suspected child-rapist (Ian Bannen), whom he ultimately beats to death. A whole torrent of American TV movies since the 1980s, however, have sought to obscure any distinction between lust-killers, child-rapists and common or garden p•dophiles, promoting a political climate which denies debate and necessitates the severest sanctions for all cases. Well-publicised instances of wrongful conviction (eg: Stefan Kisko, the Broadwater Farm "killers") have done nothing to stem the hysteria which attaches to such crimes, as most recently in the Dutrout scandal in Belgium. Any film which calls into question a self-righteous thirst for vengeance must be regarded as a welcome plea for due circumspection.

See subject index under HISTORY and SEX & SEXUALITY for other lust-killer scenarios.

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