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And Soon The Darkness

(British-Color)

Warner-Pathe release of an AMI presentation of an Associated British production. Produced by Albert Fennell and Brian Clemens. Directed by Robert Fuest. Original story and screenplay, Clemens and Terry Nation; camera (Technicolor), Ian Wilson; editor, Ann Chegwidde; music, Laurie Johnson; sound, Bill Rowe; sets, Philip Harrison; wardrobe, Roy Ponting; asst.-directors, Ken Baker, Alain Bonnot. Previewed at Century Private Theatre, London, July 8, 1970. Running time: 100 minutes.

Jane Pamela Franklin
Cathy Michele Dotrice
Paul Sandor Eles
Gendarme John Nettleton
And also Clara Kelly, Hanna-Maria Pravda, John Franklyn, Claude Bertrand, Jean Carmet.

London — First of production chief Bryan Forbes's "New Deal" program for the EMI-Associated British set-up turns out to be a dampish squib and will probably be a happier bet as a dualler, with reasonable b.o. prospects among undiscerning audiences. Directed by Robert Fuest, it's a suspense-thriller, with sex and crime leavening, which lacks the bite and surprise highspots needed to turn it into a chilly, exciting nail-biter.

Scriptwriters Brian Clemens and Terry Nation and director Fuest have flung everything into the works. Mystery, red herrings, suspicious French peasants, eerie noises, a chase, etc., all pervaded by the memory of a sex crime that took place two or three years earlier in the area. But the thing plods. It would have needed a Hitchcock to bring some sophisticated bite and surprise into the proceedings, and Fuest lacks the Master of Menace's witty, subtle and grisly touch.

Story concerns two young British girls pedalling through a dull, flat, deserted part of France on vacation. One's a pert miss (Michele Dotrice), her chum is a more down - to - earth girl (Pamela Franklin) worried by her chum's desire to sun-bathe, ogle the local lads and generally throw a spanner into the timetable of the holiday. After a tiff, the two separate. Miss Franklin, lonely and remorseful, returns to find Miss Dotrice. But she is missing. The film mainly concerns the trouble Miss Franklin gets into while trying to solve the problem of what happened to her friend.

It results in action that nearly scares the pants off Miss Franklin — almost literally, for she is just saved in time from rape by the local gendarme when trying to flee from a good guy (Sandor Eles), who glowers menacingly enough for it to be natural for the girl to assume that he's a villain. It's that sort of contrived picture. Meanwhile, various red-herring French peasants loll and leer and behave suspiciously and it ends up with Miss Dotrice discovered as a dead end (presumably) raped corpse (watch that official of the law!) and every indication that the same problems may plague two other girl tourists in the fade-out. It's doubtful whether the French Tourist Board will care for this angle.

Direction throughout is rather too contrived and obvious. Ian Wilson's Technicolor lensing is okay but he hasn't much scope with the part of France chosen for the action. Other technical credits are up to scratch.

Miss Franklin has a busy role and goes through the gamut of emotions with her usual skill, while Miss Dotrice has a pert, minx-like quality in this role. Eles registers strongly as a misjudged young villain and John Nettleton contrives the switch from benevolence to "heavy" satisfactorily. John Franklyn, Hanna-Maria Pravda, Claude Bertrand and Clara Kelly chip in with roles designed to mislead the customers. Dusty, arid French atmosphere is conveyed excellently and helps towards the doom-laden gloom, but overall there's a learing, sinister feeling about this piece which is more repellent than intriguing.

Rich.