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# films

by Andrew Sarris

**"ADELAIDE"** seems to have come and gone without creating much of a stir, and I am mildly surprised that it didn't do better. I saw it about a year ago in Paris when alienation was in the air; here, there, and everywhere. Jean-Daniel Simon's first film seemed *au courant* with the ambience, almost too much so at first, but gradually I found myself responding to the film's cool, absurd humor, the casual heartlessness of the sex, the placid cruelty of a charming cast anchored by Ingrid Thulin and Jean Sorel and made buoyant by newcomer Sylvia Fennec. I don't

know the Gobineau story from which Jean-Pierre Petrolacci adapted his screenplay, and I am unfamiliar with the milieu, both topographical and scientific. I'm not even sure what happens in the end or why, and now that the film is gone, I may never get around to figuring it out. I should have seen it again on its current run and given it another chance to reveal its mysteries and ambiguities. But I never seemed to get around to it. In fact, I felt a slight, not altogether unpleasant chill every time I passed the Festival Theatre where it was playing to empty houses. That is to say that its chill was enough to keep me out of the theatre, but not enough to make me alter my favorable first impression. I think the distributors made a mistake in not releasing it here last year. Films should never be held up. They come out of a certain time when certain conventions are understood, and once the time is past the conventions lose much of their relevance. Ideally, "Lola Montes" should have been seen back in December 1955, and though I believe it is better late than never for "Lola," it may be better never than late for "Adelaide." Dommage. Sylvia Fennec's shining face is something to savor in these freckled and fragmented times.