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El Arreglo

(The Arrangement)
(SPANISH-COLOR)

San Sebastian, Sept. 19.

A Fuentealamo production, written and directed by Jose Antonio Zorrilla. Camera (Eastmancolor), Andres Berenguer; exec producer, Jose Maria Ramos; editor, Jose Salcedo; sets, W. Burman; direct sound, George Stephenson. Reviewed at Cine Miramar (San Sebastian), Sept. 18, '83. Running time: 110 MINS.

Cris Eusebio Poncela
Mari Cruz Isabel Mestres
Ana Mamen del Valle
Leo Pedro Diez del Corral

Also: Francisco Portes, Felicidad Blanc, Pilar Alcon, Carmen Rossi, Mery Leyva, Marta F. Muro, Jose L. Barcelo, Emilio Fernet, Avelino Canovas, Angel Roman, Elisenda Ribas et al.

(Not to be confused with Argentine film with same title, directed by F. Ayala and reviewed in the June 15, 1983 issue of Variety.)

There has recently been a rash of Spanish films about detectives, police inspectors and the Civil Guard, starting with Jose Luis Garci's "El Crack." "El Arreglo" is the latest effort in this vein, but remains a minor Spanish pastiche of the well-known genre.

The plight of the maverick police inspector hot on the trail of an international political plot, as his boss gives him 48 hours to solve a host of mysteries and murders, has become a filmic set piece. This Spanish version adds nothing new. Plot has so many twists and is so confusing that it would defy even a sleuth to make sense of the disjointed episodes and wordy explanations.

Eusebio Poncela as the inspector, who occasionally trembles and has fits that leave him unconscious, is unconvincing as the tough cop he's supposed to be; he has more the air of a student or intellectual than a tough flatfoot. On screen, he is never made to physically confront his adversaries. At most, he'll point a gun at them, as though he were play acting. Nor do we ever see him use the knife he straps to his leg at the beginning of the film. It's all bluff.

Plot concerns a political assassination engineered by a Latin American government which has even set up an elaborate torture chamber to extract confessions. A new girlfriend for the cop is thrown in to provide some romantic interest, but remains equally shadowy. There are also a few political asides, referring to police operations in the period before the Socialists came into power, but most of pic has the inspector tripping about Madrid, talking to suspects and occasionally ducking his would-be killers.

Item was nonetheless quite well received here and might do okay biz in the local market; it is unlikely to generate any interest abroad.

— Besa.

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