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Special Treatment
~~Posebna Tretman~~
(Special Therapy)
(YUGOSLAV-COLOR)

6-21-80

Cannes, May 17.

A Centar Film/Dan Tana Film Production; world sales, Yugoslavia Film, Belgrade. Features cast. Directed by Goran Paskaljevic. Screenplay, Dusan Kovacevic, Filip David, Paskaljevic; camera (color), Aleksandar Petkovic. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (Competition), May 16, '80. Running time: 90 MINS.

Cast: Ljuba Tadic (Dr. Ilich), Dusica Zegarac, Milena Dravic, Danilo Stojkovic, Petar Kralj, Milan Srdoc, Radmila Zivkovic, Bora Todorvic, Predrag Bijelic.

Goran Paskaljevic has been noted as a comer for some time now — his first feature pic, "Beach Guard in Winter" (1976) and "The Dog That Liked Trains" (1978), bowed at the Berlin Film Fest, while a 16m pic for tv, "The Days Are Passing" (1979) was one of the talked-about films at last year's Pula Film Festival. Now his "Special Treatment" is in the sweepstakes at Cannes, a film that presents this young graduate of the Prague Film School (FAMU) as a filmmaker to watch closely on the international scene.

"Special Therapy" is about treating alcoholism, but it's much more: this is a sardonic, often hilarious satire on the human species and that unpredictable animal's penchant for grandiose schemes, like miraculous cure-alls for ails of heart and soul.

A specialist at a drying-out clinic, Dr. Ilich (Laubo Tadic, the Belgrade Shakespearean thesp in one of his best film roles), feels he can cure his herd of alcoholics via physical training (running in circles and flapping the arms like grounded birds), munching on apples, soaking up Wagner's music ("Tristan und Isolde" and "Ride of

the Walkuere"), and performing psychodramas (dramatizing a scene at a railroad station, in which all the patients interpret their own past back-sliding). He is so convinced of his special therapy that he is ready and willing to demonstrate its effectiveness at a nearby brewery.

Off the busload of patients go with the doctor and his young son to the brewery to do their stuff. Along the way it becomes clear that one is a hopeless, but comical, relapse, another is an ex-prostitute, a third has a "capo" mentality in watching over the others, and a fourth is a mother of two children with a tragic separation from her family behind her. It also becomes clear that Dr. Ilich has more than a few skeletons in his own closet, is in truth a tyrant, and soothes his own nerves with secret snorts now and then.

The "special therapy" begins to backfire almost from the beginning. At a wayside ~~inn~~ one patient swipes a bottle of hard liquor and, using a syringe, injects the apples with doses of kickapoo juice. Then, at the brewery, the patients go secretly on a binge while the doctor is succumbing to weaknesses of the flesh with a lonely lady manager (whose boss is only interested in pleasures of the stomach).

As for the brewery, efficiency has been cut down by swigging on the job, so the psychodrama performance before the company workers is viewed as the solution to increase production. In addition, the brewery's badge of distinction is a giant, three-story-high glass of beer before the entrance.

To say more is to give away the side-splitting ending, during which the doctor's pretentious walls of resistance come crumbling down. Ace thesp performances and top credits make this a winner on the domestic scene. With proper handling it could get legs for offshore run in Yank art houses. —Holl.