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La Dentelliere

(The Lacemaker)

(FRENCH-SWISS-COLOR)

Verity - 5-25-77
Cannes, May 24.

Gaumont release of Citel Films — Action Films — FR3 — Janus Films production. Features entire cast. Directed by Claude Goretta. Screenplay, Pascal Laine, Goretta from the book by Laine; camera (Eastmancolor), Jean Boffety; editor, Joelle Van Effentere; music, Pierre Jansen. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (competing), May 16, '77. Running time, 110 MINS.

Pomme Isabelle Huppert
Francois Yves Beneyton
Friend Florence Giorgetti
Wife Anne-Marie Durringer
Artist Michel De Re

The film is a lacey, gentle probing of an ill-assorted couple. The 19-year-old girl is somewhat too withdrawn and the boy is a reserved student. Film manages to take a literary theme and treat an inarticulate character with feeling.

However, the flashes of neurosis, in the girl's constant eating and inability to react to most things or accept a more normal intercourse with people, foreshadows her eventual breakdown after a hapless experience with the student.

Perhaps the film excises reaction and life to make the beginning plodding though it then takes on a probing, revealing insight into the delicate characters. Isabelle Huppert is extraordinary as the childish girl living with a doting mother and working as an assistant hairdresser.

A girlfriend is a more aggressive sensual girl living with a rich man. When the former is dumped by the man the girls go on vacation. The friend finds a man and the girl drifts alone until she meets a young student. They at first spar and then finally meet again.

They finally fumblingly court and she makes love for the first time. They move in together in Paris but her lack of education, her inability to make contact with him finally has him driving her out, leading to her breakdown and admission to an asylum where she takes up making lace doilies and taking imaginary voyages.

Yves Beneyton is helpful as the timid but too demanding student who finally dismisses her rather than trying to adapt, learn from and live with her. He asked for too much of a change, too unfeelingly so that the girl could not give. The prattling intellectual politico talks of the students is well brought off.

Claude Goretta has directed with tact but perhaps sometimes used scenes that seemed fraught with tension and possible menace rather than revealing character facets, as his making her close her eyes and leading her to a cliff precipice and then having her opening them.

But these literary devices are part of the tactful treatment. Not an easy film, due to its measured pacing and playing, it still could find audiences with the right handling on its probing of the fragility of relations, the still existing class and educational hangups and an attempt to delve into human relationships sans the violence, eroticism and overwrought dramatics so prevalent in pix with this theme of youthful love and adaptation.

All playing is effective and it is tastefully produced with good technical qualities. Could be a dark horse for one of the lesser prizes such as acting. —Mosk.