

Document Citation

Title	Varjoja paratiisissa
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Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1987 Feb 25
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Varjoja paratiisissa (Shadows in paradise), Kaurismäki, Aki, 1987

Varjoja paratiisissa (Shadows In Paradise) (FINNISH-COLOR)

Varjoja — 2/25/87

A Finnkino release of a Valtaleffa Film production. Written and directed by Aki Kaurismäki. Camera (Eastmancolor), Timo Salminen; editor, Raija Talvio; no further credits available. Reviewed at Nordic Film Festival, Helsinki, Jan. 22, 1987. Running time: 73 MINS.

Nikander Matti Pellonpää
Ilona Kati Outinen
Ilona's girlfriend Kylli Kõngäs
Nikander's friend Sakari Kuosmanen
Also with: Esko Nikkari, Jukka-Pekka Palo.

Helsinki — "Shadows In Paradise" borrows its title from an Erich Maria Remarque novel about war-time refugees. Writer-helmer Aki Kaurismäki has fashioned an ultra-subdued little comedy love story about a couple of society's lower-ladder characters wandering in a lost manner over the coldly indifferent urban landscape of Finland's capital city. It is strictly fluff, but has some funny insights and it transmits the muted anger and pain of its protagonists neatly. Limited offshore tv sales would appear item's likely future.

Nikander of the sad and sallow

face is a garbage truck driver with an absolutely empty private life. He gets to know Ilona, the less-than-pretty supermarket cashier, by accident, and neither of the two seems able to follow through on the opportunities offered by their meeting. She is fired and takes revenge by stealing, running away with Nikander to a rural hotel, where they take single rooms. He takes the stolen goods back to the supermarket and Ilona moves in with him without making it an affair.

There are some timid approaches between the two, some hemming and hawing, but both seem unable to cope with anything as imposing as romance, let alone love. Obviously they are to be seen as intimidated by a world not of their own making, but they are shadows longing for light and at long last Nikander pulls himself together and the two are seen off on their "honeymoon to faraway shores" — actually a day-trip by boat to Estonia across the bay from Helsinki.

Matti Pellonpää and Kati Outinen lend quiet sympathy to their roles. Picture has a fine narrative rhythm, and Aki Kaurismäki treats his characters without condescension throughout. —*Kell*.