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Calamari Union (FINNISH-B&W)

Rimini, Sept. 23.

A Villealfa Film Productions Oy/Aki Kaurismäki production; world rights, Jörn Donner Productions Oy, Helsinki. Directed by Aki Kaurismäki. Screenplay, Kaurismäki; camera (b&w), Timo Salminen; editor, Kaurismäki, Raija Talvio; music, Casablanca Vox; sound, Jouko Lumme; production manager, Jaakko Talaskivi. Reviewed at European Film Fest, Rimini, Italy. Sept. 23, 1985. Running time: 80 MINS.

With: Markku Toikka, Kari Vaananen, Osmo Hurula, Matti Pellonpää, Mato Valtonen, Saku Kuosmanen.

"Calamari Union" features young men joining together on a quest to cross the dirty, dangerous city and reach a beautiful suburb by the sea. "The Warriors" did it as an actioner with liberal doses of fantasy, but substitute antispetic Helsinki for the subways of New York, and a bunch of hammy buddies for gang warfare, and you're left with an amateurish, unfunny comedy.

Seventeen young Finns, all wearing dark glasses and all named "Frank," gather to plan their escape from the slums to the mythic suburban peace of Eira. They commandeer an empty subway train. When they get off, one of them is shot for no reason. His companions don't react; they just give him a last smoke and watch him die, then keep going.

Splitting into smaller groups, they go their separate ways through the city. All the Franks appear onstage as a rock band and sing to an adoring crowd about how "bad" they are. Two Franks finally make it to the shore, which turns out to be covered with dead fish. They end up fighting over a rotten rowboat.

The dialog consists of arch, pretentious non sequiturs. Derivative use of film noir visual style and low-down blues and R&B is supposed to be funny in wholesome Helsinki, but only serves to remind the audience of all the feeling missing from the film. Mediocre technical credits and really shocking misogyny played for laughs round out a dismal vanity production.

—Brom.