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# Revival Of 'Ludwig II' Paces Paris' Gerick Films

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By LENNY BORGER

Paris, Aug. 30.

The complete 245-minute version of Luchino Visconti's 1972 feature, "Ludwig II" has been pacing the local art film summer revival circuit, scoring regal results for distrib Gerick Films, three-year old subsidiary of the Olympic indie theatre chain.

Playing five theatres in the French capital (two of them Olympic screens), and only two showings daily, the historical epic has been seen by 78,000 filmgoers in a mere six weeks and continues to sell an average 7,000 tix per stanza.

"Ludwig II," which traces the long decline in flamboyant madness of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, is generally known to film audiences in a three-hour, English language cut imposed by Visconti's producers. It was only in recent years that the late director's editor, Ruggero Mastroianni, could retrieve the rights and re-

mount the pic as originally conceived, and with an Italian soundtrack. Restored version was first shown at the Venice film fest in 1980.

Jean Hernandez, who runs Gerick (with Marc Labrousse) explained that local producer Robert Dorfmann, who has domestic rights to "Ludwig," sold the uncut version to French tv, for probable airing in 1984 in miniseries format: four weekly installments of an hour each. Dorfman proposed that Gerick revive film theatrically. Hernandez accepted, on condition that it was the four-hour version.

## Visconti's Status

Hernandez cites several factors in the pic's remarkable success, notably the near-legendary status of Visconti in France and the already legendary subject of the film, which has attracted other noted artists and filmmakers, like Hans Jurgen Syberberg (whose

"Ludwig, the Virgin King" is regularly programmed in art cinemas here).

He also said that the mid-July release was especially propitious to the film. "A four hour picture implies a certain availability for spectators that's rare during the normal film season," said Hernandez. "Besides, the major local distributors help create the climate for an unusual release through their own unadventurous habits; their new pictures are generally of mediocre quality and their revivals invariably centre on the same crop of safe titles."