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L'Attenzione
(Attention)
(ITALIAN-COLOR) *Variety 5/8/85*

Rome, May 7.

A Belvaggia Film release, produced by Francesco Casati and Sergio Martinelli for Selvaggia Film productions. Stars Ben Cross and Stefania Sandrelli. Directed by Giovanni Soldati. Screenplay by Leone Colonna and Soldati with the collaboration of Rodolfo Sonego, based on a novel by Albert Moravia, camera (color), Silvano Ippoliti; art director Marco Dentici; editor, Nino Baragli; music, Pino Donaggio. Reviewed at Esparia Cinema, Rome, April 11, 1985. Running time: 85 MINS.

Alberto Ben Cross
Livia Stefania Sandrelli
Monica Amanda Sandrelli

"Attention" (aka "The Lie") has ingredients for a torrid drama of sexual passion and repressed emotions; unfortunately, it is just too slow, heavy-handed and unfocused to supply the kick it's supposed to. It's interesting mainly for the appearance of Ben Cross as an Italian journalist married to Stefania Sandrelli, whose unchained sex appeal is still a drawing card at the national b.o. Another oddity to pique the public's curiosity is the appearance of Sandrelli's daughter Amanda, getting her feet wet in the role of mother's rival to dad's affections. Offshore chances look misty.

All begins with the meeting of Livia (Stefania), then a lusty young barmaid, and dashing reporter Alberto (Cross) many years before. For Livia, their first passionate union has now turned into a worse than routine marriage, with Alberto off to China for six months at a time and only the distraction of her high fashion atelier to keep her mind off him. All her efforts to get him back, even for one night, prove in vain. What's wrong?

The answer is not hard to find, as Alberto visibly fights down his craving for delicious teenage daughter Monica, an urge that grows stronger by the scene. Livia decides to take desperate measures. Unbeknownst to her husband, she begins arranging rendezvous for him with young girls, while she listens in tortured frenzy in the next room, wishing it were her. Things take a wrong turn, however, when Monica lets herself be drawn into the scheme and (to mother's horror) makes an open bid to become Alberto's lover.

Apart from the kinky casting, the Sandrellis work with perfect conviction as the sultry mother-daughter

rivals. Newcomer Amanda shows signs of budding talent as an actress and almost as much allure as mère Stefania, who is now much at home in the role of the irresistably mature woman. Cross seems much less certain about what he is doing in the film; between a totally passive role and Italian dubbing, not much of his charisma comes across.

One of the weakest sides of the pic is its lack of courage in confronting the brass tacks of the central incest issue: info that Monica isn't Alberto's flesh and blood is tossed in just before the going gets heavy. Similar teasing is accorded Livia's much-hinted-at lesbian attraction to the girls who work for her and the ambiguous pleasure she takes in becoming her husband's procurer. A little more directness from young helmer Giovanni Soldati would have been welcome. — Yung.