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El Anacoreta 11/2/77 (The Anchorite) (SPANISH-FRENCH-COLOR)

Madrid, Jan. 11.

An Incine and Hispano Fox Films copro with Arcadie Productions, presented by Alfredo Matas. Directed by Juan Estelrich; screenplay, Juan Estelrich, Rafael Azcona; camera (Eastmancolor), Alejandro Ulloa; editor, Pedro del Rey; sets, Jacques Chambert. Reviewed at Cine Azul (Madrid), Jan. 3, '77. Running time: 106 MINS.

Cast: Fernando Fernan Gomez, Claude Dauphin, Charlo Soriano, Martine Audou, Jose Maria Mompin, Maribel Ayuso, Angel Alvarez, Ricardo Lillo.

"The Anchorite" is a minor anecdote which has been drawn out into an overlong, talky, dull film. Sometimes it looks like scripter Rafael Azcona and Juan Estelrich are going to make some incisive point, but then suddenly they go on a different tack and try to alleviate the dullness with a bit of flat humor or destape, the latter being a recent phase of Spanish films in which female nudity is discreetly paraded about. Neither can redeem a hopelessly artificial and at times pretentious script.

The "Anchorite," played semi-whimsically by Fernando Fernan Gomez, has locked himself in his bathroom in an apartment in the center of Madrid, and, after duly furnishing it with a couch, table, and typewriter, has been living there for 11 years. Aside from clipping newspapers and magazines and filing them away, he also puts cryptic, philosophical and erotic messages into aspirin bottles and, since Madrid is an inland city and he can't cast them into the sea, he flushes them down the toilet, figuring that eventually they'll reach the ocean.

After 11 years one of them is found by a gorgeous, 23-year-old girl who is being kept by a millionaire. As a whim she comes to visit the anchorite. Her aim is to lure him away from his bathroom and typewriter. She moves in for a while, to the dismay of her elderly sugar daddy and the anchorite's wife and lover and a doting maid. Just when he's ready to give in and leave and find a respectable job, she suddenly realizes that he would lose all his charm in the "real" world. She exits through the door, his goldfish exits through the toilet bowl, and the anchorite through the window to his death.

Maybe there's parable in it all somewhere. Maybe the scripters should reread Anatole France, who is alluded to severally. —Besa.