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ALFRED

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A Sandrews release (in Sweden) of a Sandrews production, in association with Volvo and Swedish Television Kanal 1 Drama, with participation of the Swedish Film Institute. (International sales: SFI, Stockholm.) Produced by Katinka Farago.

Directed, written by Vilgot Sjöman, based on Kenne Fant's biography "Alfred Bernhard Nobel." Camera (color/B&W), Esa Vuorinen; editor, Darek Hodor; music, Karin Rehnqvist; production design, Gunilla Allard; costume design, Ann-Marie Broms; sound (Dolby), Bo Persson, Klas Engström, Stefan Ljungberg. Reviewed at Sandrews preview theater, Stockholm, Sept. 7, 1995. Running time: 113 MIN.

Alfred Nobel Sven Wollter
Bertha von Suttner Rita Russek
Sofie Hess Judit Danyi
Paul Barbe Feodor Atkine
Georges Fehrenbach Yves Jacques
Auguste Philippe Beglia
Olivie Jelena Jangfeldt
Jakubovitch Immanuel

Nobel Jarl Kulle

Also with: Heio von Stetten, Isabella von Stromberg, Robert Gustafsson, Sif Ruud, Per Myrberg, Ivar Wiklander, Viveka Seldahl, Johannes Sjöman.

(Swedish, English, French and German dialogue)

This biopic of Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite and founder of the Nobel prize, is far from explosive. A long-term project of vet director Vilgot Sjöman (still best known for his provocative "I Am Curious" pix of the '60s), this serious — and mostly boring — film is unlikely to pull large audiences, either in Sweden or overseas.

Nobel earned a fortune thanks to his inventions, chief of which was dynamite. A lot of the coin went into a fund from which the Nobel Peace Prize is bestowed each year. Per pic, this achievement was closest to Nobel's heart, due to his bad conscience about the devastation caused by dynamite and other weapons.

Sjöman (who started on the film as the scripter) has chosen to tell Nobel's story through his relationships with women. There were only two: the Austrian Bertha von Suttner (Rita Russek), whom he loved but never had an affair with; and the young Sophie Hess (Judit Danyi), who openly cuckolded him.

However, neither of the relationships as depicted in the movie has any passion or drama to interest an audience. Ditto Nobel himself, a role into which even Sven Wollter, one of Sweden's favorite actors, can't breathe life.

Nobel's other activities — and his life in general — are thinly detailed, to a point where it looks as if the filmmakers assume some kind of advance knowledge by auds (a definite mistake). Still, visually it's a treat, with no expense spared and locations spread across Sweden, France and Austria. All tech credits are above par.

—Gunnar Rehlin