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London Festival Reviews

Castaway (BRITISH-COLOR)

12/10.86
A Cannon Films release of a Cannon Screen Entertainment production in association with United British Artists. Produced by Rick McCallum. Executive producers, Peter Shaw, Richard Johnson. Directed by Nicolas Roeg. Stars Oliver Reed, Amanda Donohoe. Screenplay, Allan Scott, based on the book by Lucy Irvine; camera (Fujicolor), Harvey Harrison; editor, Tony Lawson; music, Stanley Myers; sound, Paul le Mare; production design, Andrew Sanders; assistant director, Michael Zimbrich, Waldo Roeg, Lee Cleary; costumes, Nic Ede. Reviewed at the London Film Festival, Nov. 13, 1986. Running time: **118 MINS.**

Gerald Kingsland	Oliver Reed
Lucy Irvine	Amanda Donohoe
Nun	Georgina Hale
Young Nun	Frances Barber
Jason	Tony Richards
Rod	Todd Rippon
Ronald	Len Peihopa
Janice	Virginia Hey
Schoolteacher	Sarah Harper
Shop Manager	Stephen Jenn
Lara	Sorrel Johnson
Man in pub	John Sessions
Mike Kingsland	Paul Reynolds
Geoffrey Kingsland	Sean Hamilton
Manager	Arthur Cox

London — For a film so rich in cinematic style and shot in glorious locations, Nicolas Roeg's most accessible film to date is remarkably lacking in a storyline, despite towering performances by the two topliners.

"Castaway" looks unscathed despite many changes of production companies since project's inception almost two years ago—first United British Artists, then Thorn EMI and finally Cannon—and admirably demonstrates how boring desert island life must be. Prospects are good for those interested in beautiful scenery and naked bodies.

Newcomer Amanda Donohoe (previously in "Foreign Body") spends most of the pic displaying the absence of bikini marks on her body (palm trees always seem to obscure the vital parts of Oliver Reed as Gerald Kingsland), and she copes well with a character whose motives and methods for going to the tiny desert island remain dubious.

Picture this: London is cold, wet and miserable, and the tv and newspapers are full of doom, gloom and despondency. What else does a girl do but answer an ad from a man looking for a wife to take to a tropical island for a year?

She works in a boring tax office while he spends a lot of time in swimming pools and looking wistfully at goldfish. As she says when they decide to go to the island, "It's amazing this ... it's the ultimate blind date."

The unlikely pair—she takes him to bed but isn't really interested in him—are dropped off on the tiny island of Tuin, in the Torres Strait between Papua New Guinea and Australia, with great intentions of creating an idyllic life. Of course they have managed to forget vital medical supplies.

The sea is deep blue, the sand clean and white, and the atmosphere undeniably romantic, and as they settle down to their first night in the small tent, Reed makes a move towards her, only to receive a slap. That sets the scene for the rest of the film—sexual tension on a desert island.

"Castaway" is based on two nonfiction books—Lucy Irvine's version, also called "Castaway," and Gerald Kingsland's "The Islander"—and tries to tread a path

between the two conflicting versions of their sojourn. Pic was shot in sequence, and Roeg's problem is telling an essentially straight story.

His previous pics, like "Don't Look Now" and "Bad Timing," were complex narratives with flashbacks cleverly interwoven. With "Castaway," the story is straightforward and creates a feeling that he is restraining his directorial talents and relying more on the locations (shot in the Seychelles) and the actors.

Reed gives the performance of his career as a sexually frustrated middle-aged man in search of sun and sex, and is admirably complemented by Amanda Donohoe as the determined but fickle object of his lust.

Photography is excellent (especially underwater scenes by Mike Valentine that Jacques Cousteau would have been proud of), and as the couple's supplies dwindle and the insects start biting, impressive special effects show horribly swollen ankles, undernourished bodies, and open wounds.

Sexual tension is the center and catalyst of the film, but at a running time of almost two hours you feel there should be a bit more to the story. Roeg is an overcriticized talent, but though "Castaway" is a great ad for the tropical Seychelles, it won't be remembered as a classic.

—Adam.