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Variety 6/29/83
Klakier
(The Applause-Getter)
(POLISH-COLOR)

Cannes, May 31.

A Film Polski Production, Warsaw, Film Unit Silesia; world rights, Film Polski, Warsaw. Features entire cast. Directed by Janusz Kondratiuk. Screenplay, Kondratiuk, Wlodzimierz Preyss; camera (color), Zygmunt Samosiuk; sets, Andrzej Przedworski, Czeslaw Siekiera; music, Krzysztof Mayer; editing, Jaroslaw Ostankowko; sound, Leszek Wronko; production manager, Henryk Parnowski. Reviewed at Cannes Film Fest (Market), May 17, '83. Running time: 90 MINS.

Cast: Zuzanna Lozinska (Gertrude), Michael Bajor (Fred), Wlodzimierz Borunski (Gusty), Wlodzimierz Musial (Bobojajne), Wlodzimierz Preyss (the Monkey's Owner), Joanna Szczepkowska (Pola), Leszek Teleszynski (Georgie).

Janusz Kondratiuk made a name for himself two decades ago by contributing the script for Roman Polanski's short film, "Mammals" (1962). He also wrote and directed "Shave, Please" (1966), an Oberhausen prizewinner and a short feature with black humor connotations.

His "The Applause-Getter" (or "The Claqueur") (1982) unspooled in the Cannes film mart, is packed with enough absurd wit to bear the writer-director's stamp. A troupe of would-be actors on a tour of the provinces feature a once great actress in the top billing, the woman now deaf, dumb, and senile. In order to keep the production alive, the young impresario doubles as local "claqueur" or "applause-getter" to assure the elderly actress that she's not playing before empty or disapproving houses. This leads to a gimmick to bring in the crowds: he spreads the rumor that the elderly actress just may die at one of the next performances — right on the stage before the audience! Of course, it's S.R.O. crowds thereafter.

Kondratiuk throws in a pinch of bare flesh to beef the plot up a bit, and there is the usual run of backstage jokes as the amateur entrepreneur battles his critics and competitors. The comedy ends with the expected twist on the very gimmick that has kept the show alive.

Worth a fest slot on the season's circuit, "The Applause-Getter" scores as the best Poland has to offer these days of shuttered studios and drama in the streets — an amusing, tongue-in-cheek comedy.

—Holl.