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# MESTEM CHODI MIKULAS

**(ST. NICHOLAS IS IN TOWN)**

**(CZECH REPUBLIC)**

A Czech Television/Mirage production. (International sales: Telexport.) Produced by Helena Sykorova, Karel Skorpik. Directed by Karel Kachyna. Screenplay, Jan Prochazka, Iva Prochazkova, Kachyna. Camera (color), Vladimir Smutny; editor, Jiri Brozek; music, Petr Hapka; sound (Dolby), Pavel Jelinek. Reviewed at Alpe Adria Cinema Festival, Trieste, Italy, Jan. 19, 1994. Running time: **85 MIN.**

Doctor ..... Jiri Abrham

Head nurse ..... Eliska Balzerova

Alenka ..... Alena Mihulova

With: D. Douda, K. Hrachovcova.

**V**eteran Czech helmer Karel Kachyna, whose long-banned "The Ear" made a splash at Cannes two years ago, churns out a fairly pedestrian hospital drama in "St. Nicholas Is in Town." Made for TV, pic is at least professionally directed with some lively characters and could interest offshore TV buyers for the Christmas season.

Story takes place in a children's ward on Christmas Eve. A spunky 12-year-old boy is the leader of the ward, cheering up a homesick little girl and sneaking cigarettes in the bathroom. A young nurse has a crush on Dr. Jiri Abrham, who's drunk most of the time.

Adding a surreal note are three kids who roam the streets dressed up as St. Nicholas, an angel and the devil. For a few crowns, they visit people's homes, like Santa Claus. The boy borrows the St. Nick costume to surprise the ward.

Kachyna demonstrates a Spielberg-like knack for choosing cute blond kids who steal the show from the adults. Cast does a fine job of fleshing out the stereotyped characters. Abrham is amusingly unrepentant as the wastrel doctor who is capable of finding a hiding place for a bottle of booze in the barest hospital room. His affairs with the two nurses are obvious, without being offensive to family auds. Shooting is elegantly pro throughout.

—Deborah Young

*Variety*

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