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Variety **Antonieta** 11/10/82
(FRENCH-MEXICAN-
SPANISH-COLOR)

Madrid, Oct. 28.

A Gaumont (France), Conacine (Mexico), Nuevo Cine (Spain) coprod. Directed by Carlos Saura. Features entire cast. Screenplay, Jean Claude Carriere, Carlos Saura, based on novel by Andres Henestrosa; camera (Eastmancolor, Panavision), Teo Escamilla; editor, Pablo del Amo; exec producers, Samuel Menkes, Benjamin Kruk, Pablo Buelna; music, Jose Antonio Zavala. Reviewed at Cine Palafox, Madrid, Oct. 28, 1982. Running time: 104 MINS.

Cast: Isabelle Adjani, Hanna Schygalla, Ignacio Lopez Tarso, Carlos Bracho, Gonzalo Vega, Diana Bracho, Hector Alterio, Bruno Rey, Victor Junco, Maria Montano, Edward Clark.

This is the first time that Spanish helmer Carlos Saura has tried his hand at a major international production using someone else's script. The direction, as virtually always with Saura, is topnotch; the production values are excellent, the sets are beautiful and the lensing impeccable. But the film is lifeless, dull and anti-climactic.

"Antonieta" has a Gallic pretentiousness to it, a schoolmasterly bent which precludes any drama or pathos that the eponymous heroine might have aroused. Instead of concentrating on what might have been a catchy story, scripters Jean Claude Carriere and Saura serve up a hodgepodge mini-lesson on Mexican history during the first two decades of our century:

Worse still, he resorts to skipping back and forth between modern times and the 1920s, thereby breaking all continuity. Near the end of the film he goes one step further by having Antonieta, who supposedly died in 1931, mingling with the modern-day writer who is researching her life and who watches her commit suicide in Notre Dame.

Story is rather thin and sketchy. A Parisian author (played by Hanna Schygulla) is doing some research on a book about famous femme suicides. She hits upon the case of a Mexican girl who shot herself in Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral. The writer is duly intrigued and without further preamble hops a plane to Mexico City, just like that (remember, it's a Mexican coproduction). She pokes about the city like any tourist, and looks up a few people who once knew Antonieta. Old historical film clips are shown to her and she's lectured on the bewildering sequence of political events, parts of which are acted out in the garb of the 1920s.

Antonieta, it seems, wrote a book of love letters to several admirers; she was also involved in the tumultuous Mexican politics of the day. Aged 31, she ultimately fled to

(Continued on page 92)

Film Reviews

(Continued from page 38)

Antonieta

Paris, where she ended her life. But the film never makes clear just what her problem was, nor does it ever get under the skin of any of the characters. There are some vaguely critical swipes taken at old-time Mexican politics, and there's also the usual snide anti-American scene, but it all remains disjointed and seemingly pointless.

Isabelle Adjani is pretty but utterly expressionless and doll-like throughout the film; Schygulla, sans Fassbinder, seems to have lost all of her allure. She plods colorlessly through the frames, a load of excess baggage in the needlessly bi-temporal plot. Item presumably will get international release through Gaumont, but commercial outlook is dubious. —Besa.