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Amici, Miei, Atto 2

(All My Friends 2)

(ITALIAN-COLOR)

Rome, Jan. 20.

A Gaumont release, produced by Luigi and Aurelio De Laurentiis for Filmauro. Stars Philippe Noiret, Ugo Tognazzi, Gastone Moschin, Adolfo Celi and Renzo Montagnani. Directed, by Mario Monicelli. Screenplay, Leo Benvenuti, Piero De Bernardi, Tullio Pinelli and Monicelli; camera (Eastmancolor), Sergio D'Offizi; editor, Ruggero Mastroianni; art director, Lorenzo Baraldi; music, Carlo Rustichelli. Reviewed at Garden Cinema, Rome, Jan. 20, 1983. Running time: 120 MINS.

Giorgio Perozzi Philippe Noiret
Count Lello Mascetti Ugo Tognazzi
Prof. Sassaroli Adolfo Celi
Giambaldo Melandri Gastone Moschin
Necchi Renzo Montagnani
Alice Mascetti Milena Vukotic

Seven years after helming "Amici Miei," a well-crafted comedy based on an idea by Pietro Germi just before his death, Mario Monicelli brings a second "act" to the screen with virtually the same cast, writers, and technicians. All attempts to duplicate the phenomenal success of the original, which topped Italo b.o. charts in the '75-76 season, are annulled by a dullish script and the general re-run quality of the follow-up. Pic is big box-office and now leading all but one of this year's comedy hits. Export potential is mainly in Italo comedy markets.

Like the first version, pic counts heavily on its five principals to carry the anecdotal story along to its arbitrary cut-off point. The five, all appealing middle-aged actors with solid careers behind them, play close buddies living in Flor-

ence who have a bent for practical jokes. Ugo Tognazzi is a penniless count living in squalor with his wife and unattractive daughter, who gets pregnant out of wedlock. Philippe Noiret, the newspaper man who was killed off at the end of Act I, is resuscitated here for the sake of script necessities and the French market; most episodes take place in the past to keep him in scene.

As the surgeon, Adolfo Celi plays some nasty tricks on a doddering moneylender who is convinced he needs a double kidney transplant. Gastone Moschin falls for a religious freak and ends up interpreting Jesus in a highly profane passion play. Renzo Montagnani, only new face in the film, plays a cuckolded bar owner.

Though the situations are yawningly old, first-rate thesping from all hands makes pranks come alive briefly, like match flames. But the bitter-sweet aftertaste and malicious barbs that occasionally distinguished its predecessor (and all the better comedies of Pietro Germi and Monicelli) come off looking forced and unconvincing (Tognazzi winding up in a wheelchair at pic's end).

To its credit, pic sidesteps the current fad for spicing dialog with words teenagers snigger at and easy laughs from dialect jokes. Its nothing-sacred stance takes aim at everything from religion to children, contortionists to medicine, often skirting vulgarity but aspiring to a more mature form of humor. More's the pity it was made with so little invention. —Yung.