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Pickpocket

(FRENCH)

Paris, Jan. 12.

Lux release of Agnes Delahaye production. With Martin Lassalle, Pierre Leymarie, Pelegri, Pierre Etaix, Marika Green. Written and directed by Robert Bresson. Camera, L. H. Burel; editor, Raymond Lamy. At Mercury, Paris. Running time, 80 MINS.

Michel Martin Lassalle
Jacques Pierre Leymarie
Inspector Pelegri
Accomplices Pierre Etaix
Jeanne Marika Green

This is a strangely austere study of a pickpocket. Director-writer Robert Bresson eschews all adventurous aspects and tries to depict the spiritual side of a kleptomaniac. He shows the young man believing he is far enough above society to continue this work and stop when he wants to. Arrest and the discovery of love finally lead to his first human feelings and the possibility that he will give up stealing.

Pic tells its story through the hero writing his memoirs, commenting on them, and then showing the actual happenings. This makes it lack the familiar picturesque qualities, though depiction of the pickpockets at work has a deft documentary flair. It looms an offbeater with mainly arty theatre chances abroad.

Bresson, who made "Diary of a Country Priest" and "A Condemned Man Escaped," again uses non-actors to get exactly what he wants in trying to denote the inner workings of his characters. They speak flatly and without emotion, just walking through their roles phlegmatically sans the accepted limning of their parts. The result is a probing affair that shows the spirit of a pickpocket but rarely makes a statement on the whys or wherefores of it all.

Film is technically excellent with a forceful feeling for wedding images and sound, thus creating almost an extreme reality in its progression. This is another off-beat, unusual pic by Bresson may win film prizes and specialized critical kudos. But it may prove difficult commercially abroad except for arty and specialized spotting.

Alask.