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COLOGNE FEST

ABRACADABRA

(BELGIAN-FRENCH-LUXEMBOURGIAN)

A PDG & Partners production, Les Prods. Dussart, FR3 Films & SAMSA production in cooperation with RTL-TV & Canal Plus. (Intl. sales: Mainstream, Paris.) Produced by Pierre Drouot, Dany Geys. Co-produced by Catherine & Bertrand Dussart, Jani Thiltges. Directed, written by Harry Cleven. Camera (color), Remon Fromont; editor, Susanna Rossberg; music, Robbie Kelman, Brian James; sets, Yvan Bruyère; costumes, Nathalie du Roscoat; sound, Dominique Warnier, J.P. Loublier. Reviewed at Cologne Film Festival, Sept. 26, 1992. Running time: 90 MIN.

Phil	Philippe Volter
Martha	Clémentine Célaré
Chris	Thierry Frémont
Naze	Thierry van Werveke
Rex	Jean-Henri Compère
Lucie	Sabrina Leurquin

A strong script and excellent performances distinguish this promising first feature that will bring helmer Harry Cleven deserved attention. A fest circuit natural, "Abracadabra" could conjure up respectable b.o. with intellectual Euro auds.

Phil (Philippe Volter), a petty criminal and amateur magician, is allowed out of prison for the weekend to attend his mother's funeral. Repentant and ready to go straight, he initially resists the temptation to pull off one final, sure-thing heist with his two brothers.

Wonderfully conceived and masterfully acted, the brothers are as different in disposition as they

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are devoted to one another. Chris, crippled since childhood, is fun-loving, docile and simple-minded, while Naze is volatile, impulsive and dangerous — and eager to win Phil's approval.

Scenes merge with a remarkable fluidity as Phil's brothers go all out to make his furlough memorable by getting him fed, drunk and laid. Gradually, it becomes apparent that sober Phil shares some of the more negative qualities of his brothers.

Slow to develop is the love story: Martha, the woman Phil still loves, married a local butcher after losing touch with Phil. All seems lost until a moving and humorous episode when Phil reclaims her love in front of her shop's customers.

Several plot twists later, the two make a break for it, and the film briefly loses its groundedness and goes over the top. By the end, things are firmly back on course.

All leading actors deliver commendable perfs, as does Sabrina Leurquin as a tart who grants sexual favors and coffee for money. Production design and camerawork are also good, although most of the pic is shot through a yellow filter which becomes distracting.

— Rebecca Lieb