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Author(s)	Gene Moskowitz
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Lancelot Du Lac
(Lancelot of the Lake)
(FRENCH-COLOR)

Cannes, June 4.

CFDC release of Mara Films - Laser Production - ORTF - Gerico Sound production. Features entire cast. Directed and written by Robert Bresson. Camera (Eastmancolor), Pasqualino De Santos; editor, Germaine Lamy; music, Philippe Sarde. Produced by Jean-Pierre Rassam and Jean Yanne. Reviewed at Cannes Film Fest (non-competing), May 23, '74. Running time, 85 MINS.

Lancelot Luc Simon
The Queen Laura Duke Condominas
Gauvain Humbert Balsan
Modred Patrick Bernard
Lionel Arthur De Montalembert

An austere, compelling, hypnotic and extremely-stylized film dealing with the King Arthur legend and the star-crossed love of Lancelot and Queen Guinevere that led to the destruction of this early militant Christian movement.

Robert Bresson, that personalized, independent filmmaker, who has long eschewed using professional actors and gone his own way in an industry searching for the sensational and obvious, here makes his most ambitious and most intensely private film to date.

Bresson uses dialog delivered without any alteration or expression, plus the repetitive cacophony of background sounds and men clanking in their everpresent armor. The nights are only lit by candles and oil lamps and it creates a sort of timeless, twilight world where ritual and rite have obscured passions and where violence, instead of reason and emotion, has taken over.

Film begins with the quest for the Holy Grail, which supposedly collected the blood of the dying Jesus and was considered of supernatural power. The Knights of the Round Table begin to loot, murder and fight among themselves but none find it. It appears it had been spirited away to Jerusalem by the youngest knight, Parsifal.

The others filter back defeated, especially the mightiest, Lancelot, whose first defeat this is. He comes back to the King, a decimated Round Table and his love for the Queen. Though they, Lancelot and the Queen, try to stop it a last rendezvous has them falling into each other's arms and spied on by a jealous, cowardly but ambitious knight, Modred.

But as clay is restored, Lancelot performs prodigiously at a jousting tournament only to wander off wounded. Then the King is told of their love and the Queen is imprisoned. Lancelot returns, after being treated by a peasant woman

and delivers the Queen.

The King and his men come and finally Lancelot delivers the Queen. Arthur will take her back, for no adultery has been proved. But Modred and his group decimate Arthur and his men and Lancelot and his who join to help the King.

The last scene has these clanking men falling together in a final rattle of metal as Lancelot dies murmuring the name of the Queen. Bresson has insisted on many scenes looking down on participants, as in the joust, and others. But despite his quirks, the film has a plastic beauty, a taking seriousness and an embodied look at man's spirituality being lost that have it appropriate for any time. Naturally calling for intelligent handling, it is still a work that should find its local and worldwide way on its sheer beauty and workmanship.

The subtle hues, the statuesque bearing of the actors, the formal beauty merge for a film that should definitely have been shown at the fest as a competitor despite its refusal to make any concessions. It is a film that should emerge a classic but is now a pic for all seasons and all audiences. —*Mosk.*