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Variety

The Alien

(De Plaats van de Vreemdeling)

3-26-80 (DUTCH-DOCU-COLOR-16m)

Hollywood, March 7.

A Movies Filmproductions B.V. production. Directed by Rudolf van den Berg. Camera (color), Theo van de Sande; editor, Ton de Graaf; music, Louis Andriessen. Reviewed at the Century Plaza Theatre, L.A., March 6, '80. (No MPAA Rating). Running time: 89 MINS. (English Subtitles)

A strange, lethargic, rather out of focus documentary, "The Alien" begins by asking all the tough questions about what it means to be a

NS Variety 3-26-80

st Reviews

om page 24)

Jew: is there a race, distinct identity, unique history and culture involved in being a member of the religion? How do the current politics of the Israeli state jibe with the ideals and needs of Jews around the world? Coming up with cogent answers is even tougher, which is something the film has trouble doing. Outlets for it are extremely limited, and American Jews, not to mention Zionists, are bound to be displeased.

Opening section asks the questions and presents a brief picture of the Jew as the eternal displaced person, oppressed in most societies historically and victims of the world's most horrendous holocaust only 40 years ago.

Once cameras move to the Holy Land, however, film's thesis goes astray, as a mixed bag of interviews with soldiers, inhabitants of the bleak West Bank and Golan Heights and Palestinians creates a Tower of Babel of politics which is virtually impossible to sort out, given the imprecise directorial strategy. Perhaps the confusion of the film accurately represents the dire state of Middle Eastern politics today, but film is not helpful in delineating the issues, serving more as a depressant than a stimulant to further thought.

A recurring dinner party among Jewish Dutch intellectuals articulates many sides of the issue, but concrete evidence on view in Israel just blurs it again. Film aspires to heavy meaning, but emerges as a hodgepodge of points of view, feebly assembled. —Cart.