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ALBERT SOUFFRE

(ALBERT SUFFERS)

(FRENCH)

An AMLF release of a Les Films Alain Sarde/Spitz Prods./Renn Prods. co-production with participation of Canal Plus, CNC, Sofiarp, Investimage 3. Produced by Alain Sarde, Albert Koski. Executive producer, Catherine Mazières. Directed, written by Bruno Nuytten. Camera (color), Eric Gautier; editor, Jeanne Kef; music, Pixies; sound, Jean Minondo, Philippe Hessler; costumes, Virginie Viard; set design, Stefan Lubrina; casting, Tatiana Vialle. Reviewed at AMLF screening room, Paris, Aug. 6, 1992. (In Mifed market.) Running time: 105 MIN.

Albert Julien Rassam
Jeanne Estelle Skornik
Jérôme Jean-Michel Portal
Charles Collin Obomalayat
Jo-Ann Kristen McMenamy

Helmer Bruno Nuytten takes the rowdy, aggressive approach to twentysomething angst in "Albert Souffre," a post-punk-inflected assault on the senses. Energetically lensed adventures of five interlocking characters will probably click with Gallic viewers over 25, but pic will be a harder sell for older auds.

Nuytten enlisted mostly first-time actors and technicians to make the retroactive "first" film he feels he should have made before tackling "Camille Claudel." "Albert Souffre" is just as relentless and wearing as the elaborate big-budget biopic but utterly contemporary.

Albert (Julien Rassam) suffers from too much energy, not enough affection and no career orientation. Some viewers may suffer from ringing ears and quiz-zical expressions after being bombarded with so many decibels (courtesy of a dozen cranked-up Pixies songs) and the free-wheeling protagonist's antics. He gathers ambient sounds and dictates his experiences into a tape recorder when he's not distracting more disciplined individuals from their appointed tasks.

Pic will be touching and exhilarating to those who take irksome imp Albert to heart; those who don't will endure the frequently obnoxious, irresponsible careening of a self-centered brat who cajoles everyone he meets into coming out to play.

Bordeaux hotel-dweller Jérôme (Jean-Michel Portal) is boning up for a crucial exam, as is his adorable g.f. Jeanne (Estelle Skornik). From Paris, Albert shows up the night before and, in the course of a weekend, will betray his friend, inspire the hotel's African desk clerk, meet a new love and begin to grow up. To its credit, pic feels like one long binge with the nonstop velocity of a continuous weekend.

In his maiden outing, Rassam is majestically annoying as Albert, who has an inability to grasp much of anything that isn't orbiting around his own navel. Other thespians are all convincing. In one brief shot, Portal exhibits a modified jockstrap after suffering an injury to his testicles.

Albert and Jérôme occasionally communicate in their own postsurrealist language which is translated with nonsensical subtitles. Subtitles are amusingly provided for Yank model-turned-actress Kristen McMenamy even when she's speaking French.

Tech credits are good, with special praise for thoughtful, evocative use of sound.

— Lisa Nesselson