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L'Arme a Gauche

(Arm at the Left)

(FRENCH)

Paris, July 13.

CCFC release of Cite Films-TC Productions-Intermondia-Agata-Vides production. Stars Lino Ventura, Leo Gordon, Sylva Koscina. Directed by Claude Sautet. Screenplay, Charles Williams. Fouli Elia, Sautet from a novel by Williams; camera, Walter Wottlitz; editor, Jacqueline Thiedot. Previewed in Paris. Running Time, 100 MINS.

Captain	Lino Ventura
Morrison	Leo Gordon
Mrs. Osborne	Sylva Koscina
Pablo	Alberto Mendoza

The arm in the title is a firearm and this is an adventure-gangster pic that is a very big cut above average. It plays the game fairly but never forces the suspense or action. Production has finely felt characterization, neat scripting and adept playing and, above all, it has expert detailed direction.

Playoff looms for this abroad with some specialized and arty chances also via its knowing rendition of a familiar but still evergreen tale of an adventurer besting the bad guys in a tight spot. And love aspects are also held to an intelligent, acceptable minimum.

Director Claude Sautet obviously loves and knows that fine aspect of American lore, but adapts and assimilates to give a fresh, vital and acceptable pic of this genre on his own. He did his first pic about five years ago, "Classe Tous Risques" (Underwrite All Risks), also a gangster film raised above the average by a fine fee for friendship and a keen narrative style. Why he took so long to make another only reflects on the industry. His type of snap, precision and dash in direction is sorely needed here.

A French ship captain is called to some Caribbean isle to buy a ship. But it turns out it is for gun-runners and the ship is hijacked, and he gets blamed. The owner, a beautiful American widow, comes down and the captain agrees to help her find the ship when he is cleared. They track it down, and the captain finally gets the girl.

Lino Ventura, usually prone to overplaying his good guy roles here is wisely held down and has force and dignity as a wanderer who can not quite make it with society. Yank actor Leo Gordon, who has played many a heavy in Hollywood pix, is excellent as the head man who is brutal and menacing.

Sylva Koscina is charmingly frisky as the woman in this production. Others are fine. But it is the men's world that counts in this as the work of shifting the load of guns to get the ship righted is rightly exploited.

This is crisply lensed and paced, has a neat counterpoint and dramatic music score. It is that kind of well-made pic that never gets banal or cynical, and emerges highly entertaining. In short, a nice filmic commodity which with proper handling, is sure to have this playing off profitably. Mosk.