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Avanti Popolo **(ISRAELI-COLOR-16m)**

23.7.86 — *Variety*

A Raphi Bukaeë-Kastel Films release. Produced, written and directed by Raphi Bukaeë. Stars Suheil Hadad, Salim Daou. Camera (Agfacolor, 16m), Yoav Kosh; editor, Zohar Sela; music, Uri Ofir; sound, Itamar Ben-Yaakov, Dani Matalon, Ronny Berger, Shmuel Ettinger; art director, Ariel Glazer; makeup, Irith Elazar. Reviewed at the Jerusalem Film Festival, June 28, 1986. Running time: 84 MINS.

With: Suheil Hadad, Salim Daou, Danny Roth, Danny Segev, Tuvia Gelber, Michael Koresh, Shalom Shmuelov, Barry Langford, Dan Turgeman, Mukhammad Manadre.

Jerusalem — Appearing without previous publicity, Raphi Bukaeë's first film is a pleasant surprise. A student featurette extended through several grants and a lot of private sacrifice into a feature-length picture, it has a most unexpected theme for an Israeli film. Its protagonists are two Egyptian soldiers caught in the middle of the Sinai desert at the end of the Six Days War, trying to find their way back to the Suez Canal, through the dunes and around the Israeli patrols.

In a series of incidents and encounters, Bukaeë's picture shows the absurdity of war and offers a series of intelligent personal profiles along the way. The tone is understated, there is no attempt at preaching or reaching any political conclusions, only the melodramatic last sequence departing from this admira-

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ble restraint.

The script does not try avoid the usual patterns suggested by this kind of story but manages to solve dramatic situations in an unexpected and usually humorous manner. Thus, the moment when the two Egyptian soldiers stumble upon a stranded jeep with a dead Scandinavian UN soldier in it develops into a comic scene. Likewise, the encounter with a bloodthirsty tv reporter ends up in slapstick and the suspicions of an Israeli patrol are allayed by one of the Egyptians, an actor by profession, when he give them a soulful rendition (in English) of Shakespeare's Shylock monolog about all humans being flesh and blood, whatever their race or color.

The film's title uses a line from the anthem of the Italian Socialists, a universal tune picked by both the Egyptian tandem and the Israeli patrol they meet in the second part of the film, and exploited for a Taviani Bros.-style scene of fraternity.

While not all sequences are equally successful and script could stand some corrections as to rhythm and credibility, the film comes through as a simple, human, warm and modest story, effective because of its unpretentiousness.

Salim Daou, playing the frustrated actor in uniform, walks away with most of the scenes, both funny and touching in a natural way, but he has strong support from a cast whose rough-edged performances fit in well with the movie's unadorned style. Considering the shoestring budget and the lack of experience on the part of some of the technical crew, the results are more than satisfactory. Kastel Films, getting a coproduction credit, came in at the last moment to salvage the project which was stuck with most of the material in the can and no money to wrap it up.

No distribution has been secured as yet, neither for home nor international release, but there is no doubt that this anonymous entry turned out to be one of the favorites of the Jerusalem Film Festival.—*Edna*.