

London première of a Swiss film

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over from America and thinks that Howard Hughes is in good health. Mr. Wagner told me, however, that the eccentric millionaire had as yet made no plans to leave and appears to be remaining at the Inn on the Park indefinitely.

A MILLION POUNDS WORTH OF FREE PUBLICITY

A million pounds worth of free publicity is, of course, good publicity for the hotel. The coverage which was given to Mr. Hughes in every part of the world was worth millions of pounds of entirely free advertisement. Mr. Wagner is justifiably proud that his premises should have been recommended by one of the world's most reputable merchant banks. After all, Mr. Wagner not only manages the Inn on the Park, but has also designed it.

However, the London branch of the Four-Seasons international group of hotels can survive without such publicity: The Inn on the Park recorded a 95 per cent occupancy factor during 1972.



The Swiss flag flutters gloriously above Mr. Wagner's hotel entrance.

LONDON PREMIÈRE OF A SWISS FILM

A Swiss film was recently shown in the West End for the first time. After having enjoyed considerable success in Paris, Alain Tanner's *La Salamandre* came to the Academy Cinema, Oxford Street, and immediately won good acclaim from several national papers.

There is no Swiss cinema industry and very few films have been produced that can be regarded as Swiss. Two examples are *Heidi* and *Sept Hommes en Or*, the latter relating an exciting gold heist in the vaults of the Swiss Credit Bank in Geneva. To our knowledge, this film was never shown abroad.

La Salamandre is representative of actual Swiss production. Known in French as "Cinema d'auteur", it is actually intended for a Festival audience or a rather initiated public. With another of Tanner's successes *Charles mort ou vif*, this appears to be the first of his films to have broken in the commercial circuit. Made on a shoestring budget (approximately 200,000 francs) and unknown actors with names betraying Genevese origins, *La Salamandre* could prove the stepping stone to more ambitious and technically involved works. *La Salamandre* was shot in black and white with a 16 mm. camera and its image was blown up.

The technical amateurism of the film does not in any way diminish its fine qualities. Its success should allow Tanner to obtain financial backing for yet greater works and become, who knows, Switzerland's Bergman.

The plot is simple and adapted to the small means available to its cineast-director. A journalist named Pierre receives a proposal by a television producer to write a story on an unresolved case: a straying young girl named Rosemonde living in the care of her uncle is accused by him of having attempted to murder him with a military rifle, but the case had been dropped for lack of evidence. Pierre is asked to investigate the case and write a story. However, as he is tied up with a series of articles on Swiss investments in Brazil, he asks his friend Paul, a builder with a yen for writing, to help him to shape the story. After some hesitation, Paul accepts the deal and both launch on a voyage with Rosamonde from which they emerge more involved than they bargained for.

With its simple and sincere script, *La Salamandre* reveals the life of a disorientated young girl, roosting in her existential vacuum and erring from job to job. The film depicts the difficulty of

living and being in Switzerland in the 20th century. Tanner makes few concessions. He views his country with distance and irony. The setting is Geneva in Winter. Far from the mountain pastures and the dazzling snow usually associated with our country. The trams of Geneva, which somehow play an important role in the sets, come and go in the background. It is rainy and there is sludge in the streets. A weakness of the film lies in its effort to imitate intellectual French productions,

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