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4 Scorpio

'Scorpio' Mean Spy Tale

★ ★

"Scorpio" is a spy movie that tries to transcend the dutifully ordinary twists of its plot and tell a tale of a squalid world in which nothing — not friendship nor love nor life—has any value. It is so relentless in rendering meanness that it leaves a bitter aftertaste.

Director Michael Winner did a nice anatomy of a professional assassin in his 1972 film, "The Mechanic." And he did it simply by showing the man at work, with very little talking.

BUT IN "SCORPIO," the script of David Rintels and Gerald Wilson is an obstacle course of exposition over which the characters pick their way with a carefulness that slows down the pace so essential to this genre of picture.

As the hired gun, Alain Delon must spend so much time playing with cats, arranging flowers and analyzing himself that it is a

wonder he manages to catch up with his prey.

HE DOES in part because Burt Lancaster, a CIA agent who has been too long in the cold for the liking of his superiors, takes as much time out from running to reminisce about the good old days when spies used their eyes and minds instead of computers.

Neither man, nor Paul Scofield as a Russian agent nor John Colicos as the CIA chief, can justify his essentially petty life and their talk doesn't redeem their shabbiness.

Even as he lies gut-shot, Lancaster delivers a death aria: "It's not winning or losing that matters; it's that you keep on playing." He might have said "talking" and "Scorpio," at the Rivoli, Eastside, Trans-Lux 85th St. and Red Carpet Theaters, might have talked less.

—Jerry Oster

"Scorpio", a United Artists release in Color. Produced by Walter Mirisch and directed by Michael Winner from a screenplay by David W. Rintels and Gerald Wilson based on a story by Rintels. Presented at the Rivoli, Eastside Cinema, Trans-Lux 85th St. and Red Carpet Theaters. Running time: 1 hour, 54 minutes. MPAA rating: PG (All admitted—parental guidance suggested).

THE CAST:

Cross	Burt Lancaster
Laurier	Alain Delon
Zharkov	Paul Scofield
McLeod	John Colicos
Susan	Gayle Hunnicutt
Filchcock	J. D. Cannon
Sarah	Joanne Linville
Pick	Melvin Stewart