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Soc 4-01.4 "Agent 8 3/4"
St. Britain

'Agent 8 3/4' and 'Underworld Informers' Shown Together

THE two British arrivals yesterday on a circuit double-bill, both of them stealthy scrambles, couldn't be more opposite in treatment. "Agent 8 3/4," sure enough, is still another take-off on the James Bond yarns, starring Dirk Bogarde as a rather dim-witted civilian airily whisked to Prague for some British Intelligence snooping. The other half of yesterday's bill was "Underworld Informers," not nearly as flat as that title sounds.

The two titles, in fact, most precisely peg the tone and content of each feature. We'll take little No. 2. The bigger, more expensive one—Mr. Bogarde's vehicle—is a slick, bland shuffling of drolery and suspense, not especially new, at least by now, nor really funny. Most of the real fun comes from the mouth of Robert Morley, as the Intelligence chief.

The scenery itself steals the show. Most of the film takes place in what would certainly appear to be Prague

The Casts

AGENT 8 3/4, screenplay by Lukas Heller; directed by Ralph Thomas; produced by Betty E. Box; released by Walter Reade-Stirling, Inc., through Continental Distributing. At neighborhood theaters. Running time: 98 minutes.

Nicolas Whistler Dirk Bogarde
Vlasta Simenova Sylva Koscina
Colonel Cunliffe Robert Morley
Simenova Leo McKern
Josef Roger Delgado

AND

UNDERWORLD INFORMERS, screenplay by Alun Falconer, based on a novel by Douglas Warner; directed by Ken Annakin; produced by William McQuitty and released by Continental Distributing. At neighborhood theaters. Running time: 105 minutes.

Chief Inspector Johnnoe Nigel Patrick
Charlie Ruskin Colin Blakely
Maisie Margaret Whiting
Berlie Hoyle Derron Nesbitt
Leon Sale Frank Finlay
Jim Ruskin John Cowley
Superintendent Bestwick Harry Andrews
Mary Johnnoe Catherine Woodville

itself, which is splendidly picturesque in excellent color. The scenery also includes Sylva Koscina, who appeared in "From Russia With Love." Leo McKern, as her father, is also an alumnus of Bond films. The whole thing, under Ralph Thomas's nimble guidance, is frightfully arch and coy, except the chase finale.

On the other hand, "Under-

world Informers' is as grimy, head-on and direct as a locomotive—a cheap one, granted. This low-budget melodrama, starring Nigel Patrick, is basically pulp-fiction stuff, telling how a framed Scotland Yard sleuth clears out a nest of London underworldlings.

This unimportant film has three solid attributes: the scroungy ambiance of a sleazy, back-alley world, a suspenseful story line that gathers up all the characters into a churning whirlpool, and two nifty performances by Colin Blakely, as a revengeful junk dealer, and Margaret Whiting, as a flinty prostitute. There's a marvelous bit involving a curious cat and a crucial key that Hitchcock would drool over. The director, Ken Annakin, has done a good job.

They're all good, in fact, good and tough in this straight forward little picture that at least makes no pretenses.

HOWARD THOMPSON: