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"Ugetsu"

(Harrison & Davidson)

Japanese

96 Min

Cast: Machiko Kyo, Masayuki Mori, Kinuyo Tanaka, Mitsuko Mito, Sakae Ozawa.

Credits: A Daiei Film Production; Produced by Masaichi Nagata; Directed by Kenji Mizoguchi; Screen play by Matsutaro Kawaguchi and Yoshikata Yoda; Adapted from the classic stories of Akinari Ueda.

An inspired and haunting Japanese-language production, dealing with the exploits of two wayward husbands and their wives in the war-torn Nippon of four centuries ago, is impressively unreeled in "Ugetsu." In all categories, this is an excellent motion picture. Its action, mood and fantasy should bring art house patrons in overwhelming number to every class situation where the picture is booked. Novelty appeal ("Ugetsu" is the second Japanese film to be commercially shown in the U.S.), scenes of harsh violence and sex should account for considerable drawing factors in a general audience. Additional box office lures are to be found in the picture's copping of a 1953 Venice International Film Festival grand prize and the fact that "Ugetsu" was produced by the same firm that made "Rashomon," the first Japanese picture shown in this country. English titles are excellent.

"Ugetsu" will transport any audience through a complete range of emotional experience. Supporting the story line is an excellent musical score which serves to bring out every dramatic twist. The main character, a potter, is shown as he abandons his wife for a temptress, who turns out to be a ghost. The potter's assistant, meanwhile, forsakes his trade for the glory of soldiering. When both men have had enough of their meanderings, they return to their craft. Only the potter's wife has been killed and his assistant's wife reduced to prostitution. All ends well, however, as the spirit of the dead wife remains to comfort the potter.