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Akai Tenshi
(Red Angel)
(JAPAN)

Nurse among defeated, sex-hungry Japanese soldiers. Grim, far-out yet handsomely produced.

Tokyo, Oct. 15.

Daiel Motion Picture Company production and release. With Ayako Wakao, Shinsuke Ashida, Yusuke Kawazu, Ranko Akagi, Ayaka Ikegami, Jotaro Senba, Daihachi Kita. Directed by Yasuzo Masumura. Produced by Ikuo Kubodera, original story by Yorichika Arima, screenplay by Ryoza Kasahara, photographed by Setsuo Kobayashi, sound by Kimio Tobita, lighting by Shozo Izumi, art by Tomo Shimogawara, music by Sei Ikeno, editing by Tatsuji Nakashizu. Previewed in Tokyo. Running Time, 105 MINS.

Nurse Nishi Ayako Wakao
Army Surgeon Okabe Shinsuke Ashida
Private Orihara Yusuke Kawazu
Nurse Iwashima Ranko Akagi
Nurse Tsurusaki Ayako Ikegami

Director Yasuzo Masumura, who made "The Hoodlum Soldier" and a number of other fine films, here turns his attention to a novel by Yorichika Arima about Japanese army nurses during the latter years of the China campaign. Morale is very low, the war is being lost, the hospitals are packed. Nurses

wakao, fresh from training school, is immediately assaulted by a ward of sex-starved soldiers (very explicitly shown) and, perhaps because of this experience, comes to realize that her role of sister of mercy covers more ground than the medical profession usually imagines.

There is, for example, Private Kawazu, who has lost both of his arms and during his nightly rub-down asks the nurse for a very special favor indeed. She, having arms and hands, complies and then, feeling sorry for him, takes him off to a hotel where for an afternoon—hands or not—they enjoy themselves and he is given further reason to live. Just the opposite occurs, however. After this afternoon of bliss he kills himself and Nurse Wakao thinks it is her fault.

She does not let this deter her from her mission however. Next she turns her attentions to the head surgeon. She has asked him for a blood-transfusion for the soldier who originally raped her and he agrees to use the precious serum only if she will come to his quarters that evening. She agrees but is surprised that nothing whatever occurs to her. The reason is that he is a morphine addict and that this has unmanned him. At the climax of the film, however—during an enemy attack, with certain death looming, she pulls him to her, ties him up, and after he has come out of cold-turkey makes him prove to himself that he is indeed a man after all.

The Chinese are attacking during all of this, however, and they kill almost everyone. Almost because after the smoke has cleared Nurse Wakao gains consciousness, finds the bodies of her friends and lovers, and wanders away into the distance—and very probably into further sequels to this popular, criticized and money-making picture.

Films boast some very fine scenes. The general tone is dark and the general atmosphere is one of pain and suffering. The hospital scenes (amputations, chest probings, stomach wounds) are explicit, and the love scenes between nurse and armless soldier are done with restraint and candor. The sex (with its unconscious overtones of "Candy") works against general believability and there is calculated prurience in some of the sequences. Yet beyond the lurid sensationalism there is "sincerity."

Nurses organizations have protested. Indeed it is doubtful that the scene where the nurse provides manual-mercy could be shown in many countries.

Chie.

Oct. 19, '66