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Wednesday, August 29, 1984

Angelan Sota/Angelas Krig
(Angela's War)
(FINNISH-COLOR)

Helsinki, Aug. 23.

A Jörn Donner production and release (Helsinki) in coproduction with Trebitsch International (Hamburg) and co-financed by the Finnish Film Foundation, Finnish TV-1, Swedish TV-2. Written and directed by Eija-Elina Bergholm. Based on novel by Jörn Donner. Camera (Eastmancolor), Kari Sohlberg; editor, Irma Taina; music, Esa Helasvuo; production design, Pekka Hilkamo; executive producer, Jörn Donner; production management, Jaakko Talaskivi. Reviewed at the Nordia Theater, Helsinki, Aug. 22, 1984. Running time: **97 MINS.**

Angela Anders Ida-Lotta Backman
Thomas Schmidt Mathieu Carriere
Gabriel Jörn Donner
Jakob Anders Kim Gunell
Goldberg Erland Josephson
The Professor Matti Oravisto
Karin Berggren Birgitta Ulfsson

The hurt and conflicting emotions of the Finnish people at the end of World War II were far more complex than those of the other Scandinavian countries that had had German soldiers on their soil. For a while, Finland and Germany had actually been allies in fighting the Russians.

When the Russians won after all and the Finns tried to make a separate peace with them in 1943, Finland not only did not regain her lost Karelian territories but had to try to force the remaining German forces out of Lapland, an operation that was not accomplished until the Germans surrendered to the Allies in April-May 1945.

From having been seen by the world as shining paragons of patriotic vigor and virtue during their lone fighting of the invading Soviet forces in the winter war of 1939, the Finns now emerged with a reputation soiled by their collaboration, albeit forced, with the Germans.

With such a historical background, writer-filmmaker Jörn Donner had almost too much material to cope with in his novel "Angela's War," and in turning book into feature film, writer-director Eija-Elina Bergholm could easily have used both epic scope and an epic budget. Less has had to suffice, which leaves her film rather staccato and out-of-breath at times, but there is enough setting up of staging — areas for great emotion and held-back suspense — to make

"Angela's War" a fest-worthy item (slotted for Venice competition appearance on Sept. 4), which should also see international sales in carefully nursed situations before it reaches its tv-programming destiny.

The larger wartime events are used to put Angela's love affair with a German army captain into a sensitive perspective that mirrors her own stubborn maintaining of her right to love the German and the wide range of reaction recorded by her wealthy bourgeois family, an elderly Jewish gentlemen and the friend-admirer of herself and of the Finn she originally had a love affair with but who is later reported dead as a war casualty.

Satire is used here as well as sharp social commentary, and there is also the mostly mute regarding of the whole scene and its *Dramatis Personae* by Angela's young brother, obviously an Alexander inspiration from Ingmar Bergman's "Fanny And Alexander."

There is good and strong playing in the Angela role by Ida-Lotta Backman, while Erland Josephson, Matti Oravisto, Birgitta Ulfsson and Jörn Donner himself get only the briefest opportunities to indicate the shadings they might have added to their secondary roles. German-speaking French actor Mathieu Carriere (Gudrun Landgrebe's prostie partner in "A Woman In

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Angelan Sota/Angelas Krig Flames") hardly seems to be burning with any glow of passion to match Angela's when their nurse-patient relationship in the Lapland field hospital turns into at first heated bedding-down together and later into a lasting but doomed love affair. He has, however, a rather Leslie Howardian intellectual/sensitive look that makes it reasonable enough that Angela succumbs to his initial appeal to her love and pity.

Further developed, "Angela's War" would seem to have made excellent extended melodramatic fare, and film also seems to have the potential tv miniseries running in its veins. As it stands, however, audiences will have to contend themselves with intriguing hints at what might have been a truly great love-amidst-war story. All production credits are of the first order.

— Kell.