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Screen: Avant-Gardists

2 American Premieres at the New Yorker

By BOSLEY CROWTHER

DAN TALBOT'S New Yorker Theater broke out a series of new independent films yesterday with the American premiere showings of Chris Marker's "The Koumiko Mystery" and Peter Goldman's "Echoes of Silence," both straight from the ranks of the avant-garde.

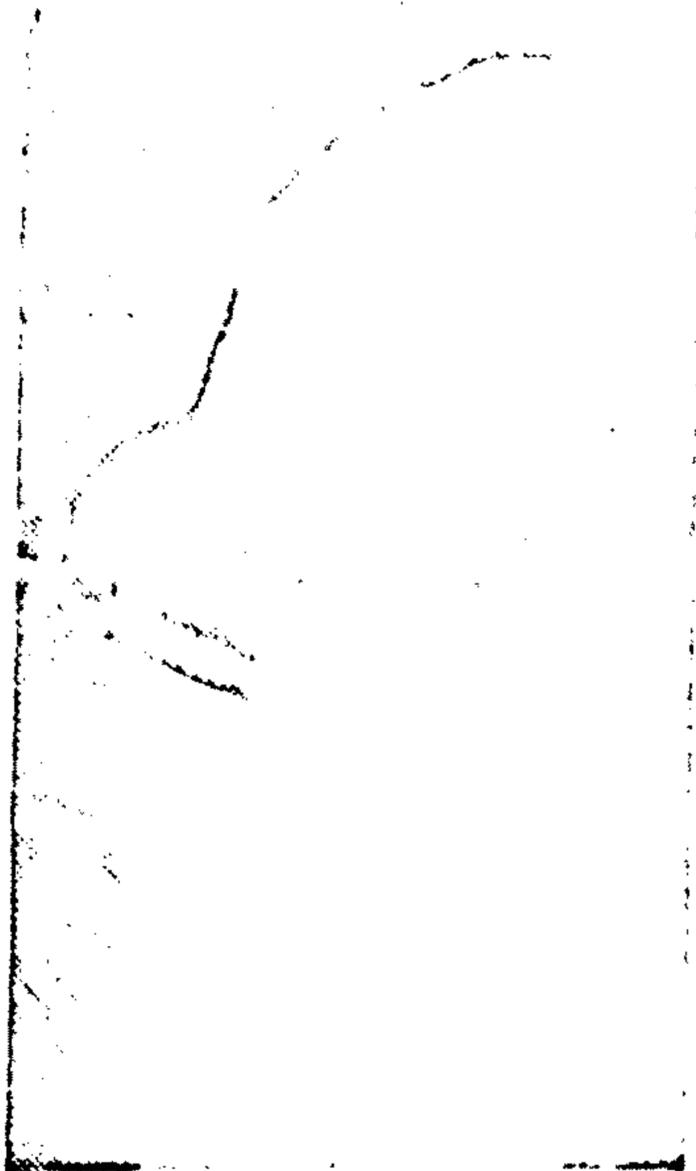
Of the two, Mr. Marker's wistful study of a pretty Japanese girl whom he met and examined with questions and camera while covering for French television the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 1964 is more colorful and comprehensible, and its smiling, almond-eyed star is certainly more agreeable to look at than the gaggle of shabby Greenwich Village characters that populate Mr. Goldman's film. But the latter is more penetrating as a job of snooping around with the camera, and it manages to bring a shapeless subject to a point of poignant farewell.

The focal figure in Mr. Goldman's exploration is a sad-faced fellow named Miguel who is constantly looking for girls around the beer joints (and once at the Metropolitan Museum), but is always frustrated with them when he gets them up to his pad. Likewise, a couple of other fellows and two evident Lesbians are observed from time to time at their lethargic and pitiable quests for diversion.

It is not a pleasant picture. The environment is tawdry and sad, and the people—well represented by amateur actors—have hunger and fear in their eyes. But Mr. Goldman has put it together without dialogue, with only crude, hand-letter title-cards to introduce the haphazard episodes, and with a total reliance on music—an interesting variety—to stimulate the ear.

Photographed in a usually heavy-shadowed black-and-white moving-camera style, it gropes for a sense of sorrow that now and again comes through.

Mr. Marker's shorter picture, in splendid color, has a cheerful lilt and swing as it bounces around Tokyo on the trail of this amiable, inarticulate girl, Koumiko Muraoka, or ducks away from time to



Koumiko Muraoka

The Casts

THE KOUMIKO MYSTERY (Le Mystère Koumiko); written, directed, photographed and edited by Chris Marker; produced by Solracima/Anno. In collaboration with Experimental Section of French Television; presented by New Yorker Films. Running time: 47 minutes.

Koumiko Koumiko Muraoka
and

ECHOES OF SILENCE; written, directed and photographed by Peter Goldman; produced by Mr. Goldman and presented by the Film-Makers Distribution Center. At the New Yorker Theater, Broadway and 88th Street. Running time: 74 minutes.

Miguel Miguel Chacour
Viral Viral Armand
Robert Jean-François Gobbi
Stasia Stasia Golber
Astrid Astrid Sorensen
Blanche Blanche Zelinka
Jacquella Jacquella Lampson
and

Ellen Marcus, Maria van Eyck, Matavish, Bill Brach, Irwin Shapiro and John Pope

time to look at colorful things in the city and ponder the conglomeration of races and cultures on the fringes of the Olympic Games.

At one point, it even does a copy of that lovely umbrella-in-the-rain sequence from the French film, "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg," with the familiar musical theme.

Although Mr. Marker makes a lot of trying to solve Koumiko's "mystery"—goes through a lengthy business of questioning her (in French) as to what she wants of life, there is actually very little revelation of her nature, either in pictures or in words. All she finally reveals is that she's pretty, exotic, exciting. And so in Tokyo.