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The Boxer

(JAPANESE-COLOR)

Variety — 11-16-77
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Toei Company release and production. Features entire cast. Directed by Shuji Terayama. Screenplay, Shiro Ishimori, Rio Kishida, Terayama; camera (Eastman-color), Tatsuo Susuki; music, J.A. Seazer. Reviewed at Paris Film Fest, Nov. 8, '77. Running time: 95 MINS.

Cast: Bunta Sugawara, Kentaro Shimizu.

Shuji Terayama was a sports-writer, then theatre avant-guardist and copped attention at fests with some surrealistic pix of anarchic attacks on accepted social values. Now he makes a more straightforward film about lower echelons of the boxing game. It does have some kinky asides on the milieu of these boxers and some astute psychological insights into fighter moods and needs.

But otherwise it is his most accessible pic and has a surface resemblance to "Rocky," with more developed characters though likewise fairly shrewdly sentimental.

A fighter on his way up suddenly stops in the midst of a fight he is winning and gets badly beaten and quits. He leaves his wife and child and lives along with a mangy dog. His eyesight slowly weakens. A young man, lower on the economic totem pole and who has a slight limp, keeps after the ex-fighter until he talks him into managing him.

The fighter beings to win again but then loses one and has a stormy relationship with his moody manager. One day he even seduces the manager's teenage daughter.

The big finale fight is solidly done.

There are some insights into the usual lower class need to find something to rise with, usually in sports or show biz, but this time around not with the usual Terayama surprises and inventions. Well acted and solidly narrated. —Mosk.