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DR. AKAGI (KANZO SENSEI)

Director: Shohei Imamura • Japan 1998 128 minutes

Cast: Akira Emoto, Kumiko Aso

The best of Imamura's late films, a big, brilliant restatement of his favourite themes, DR. AKAGI is set during the final days of the Pacific War. The eponymous doctor, nicknamed Dr. Liver because he is forever diagnosing patients with hepatitis, Akagi is a typical Imamura outcast (and perhaps a reflection of Imamura's autobiography; his father was a country physician). In bow tie and straw boater, the determined doc bands together with a drunken monk, a morphine-addicted surgeon, and a nurse who switch-hits as a prostitute, to try to save the townspeople from disease. (The film has interesting echoes of Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People.") Big-hearted, very funny, and hazardous as hell, DR. AKAGI is full-tilt Imamura. From its opening, in which American bombers serenade a bout of bought sex, to its jaw-dropping finale, involving a whale, a water nymph, and a mushroom cloud, AKAGI soups up its raucous audacity with bursts of anachronistic jazz and grotesque comedy. A film which seems to subsume all else of Imamura, from ENDLESS DESIRE through THE PROFOUND DESIRE OF THE GODS, DR. AKAGI "confirms for anyone who saw THE EEL that here is one of the world's great humanists" (Bob Graham, *San Francisco Chronicle*).

Tuesday, March 13 8:30 p.m.

