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Ai No Borei
(Phantom Love)
(JAPANESE-FRENCH-COLOR)

Variety

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Cannes, May 23.

Argos Films release of Oshima Productions Ltd.-Argos Films production. Features entire cast. Directed by Nagisa Oshima. Screenplay, Oshima from the book by Itoko Nakamura; camera (Eastman-color), Yoshio Miyajima; editor, Keiichu Uraoka; art director, Jusho Toda; music, Toru Takemitsu; production coordination, Shibata Org. Inc. Reviewed at Cannes Film Fest (Competing), May 20, '78. Running time: 108 MINS.

Seki Kazuko Yoshiyuki
Toyoji Tatsuya Fuji
Gisaburo Takahiro Tamura
Hotta Takuzo Kawatani
Boss Akiko Koyama
Toichiro Taiji Tonoyama

Nagisa Oshima's previous pic, "In the Realm of the Senses," called "Corrida of Love" in Japanese, created polemics, seizures and law suits and was judged both pornographic or, depending on one's viewpoint, one of the great erotic films in its depiction of two lovers destroying themselves by their own creation of a world of sex. This new one is more about the destructive forces of passion in a more rigid world where the supernatural seems a part of everyday life.

Oshima has not opted for planted psychological symbols in this tale where a married woman and her younger lover murder her husband. They are not afflicted by remorse and conscience but more by an acceptance of a time when phantoms existed, later to be replaced by learned studies in human behaviour.

Film thus remains fantastic but diversified in character and treatment, giving deeper insights into this doomed couple. The woman is still lovely at 40 and married to an older rickshaw driver. A young man, half her age, is in love with her. But he comes to her as a child as well as a suitor, bringing cakes and demanding complete passion and even protectiveness.

Oshima has only simulated sexual adhesion which is often oral and sometimes child-like with the man insisting she shave her private parts. Now he tells her they must kill her husband for he will suspect something. Latter is given to drinking. She gets him drunk and she and the lover strangle him together, each pulling on the end of a cord.

Then they dump him into a deep, abandoned well. She tells people he has gone to work in Tokyo. Story takes place in a rural village and is based on a real event in 1895. Not to arouse suspicion, they cannot see each other often. The dead man begins to appear to the wife and even invades the dreams of two villagers, especially the murdered man's grown daughter.

Another murder brings a police inspector to the village and the wife and the lover are finally found in an embrace in her house as the police arrest them. Hung from trees and brutally whipped by bamboo poles until they confess, they are hustled off for payment of their crimes.

The late Kenji Mizoguchi used ghosts in his "Ugetsu" and in "The Crucified Lovers." But his was a lyrical, poetic treatment while

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Oshima's is cool and finely observed, creating a climate where the fantastic and the tragic exist side by side.

Like its predecessor film was made with French coproducer Anatole Dauman who has world rights except for Japan. It was shot in Japan but all rushes were done in France as were the editing, scoring and finishing of the pic.

"Senses" played in the Director Fortnight at Cannes in '76 and emerged the most projected film of the event. Now the new one is competing at the Cannes Film Fest. It does not have the polemic drive of "Senses" yet is likely to create similar critical pros and cons. Its brilliant, visual drive, its fine playing, its haunting overtones should have this a specialized film that could find selective audiences everywhere with the right handling.

French title, and world title outside Japan, is "The Empire of Passion." It marks Oshima as one of the more unusual directors on world scene today. —Mosk.