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MACARTHUR'S CHILDREN

(PG)

(ORION CLASSICS)

Color/1.66

115 Mins.

Cast: Takaya Yamauchi, Yoshiyuki Omori, Shiori Sakura, Masako Natsume, Shuji Otaki, Haruko Kato, Ken Watanabe.

Credits: Directed by Masahiro Shinoda. Produced by You-No-Kai and Masato Hara. Screenplay by Tsutomu Tamura. From the novel by Yu Aku. Cinematography by Kazuo Miyagawa. Production design: Yoshinobu Nishioka. Music by Shinichiro Ikebe. Editor: Sachiko Yamaji.

Difficult Japanese film exploring the emotional aftermath of World War II. Should fare well in the art market and in urban and university areas, but there's little chance of breaking into the mainstream. **85-103**

The newest film from director Masahiro Shinoda is a demanding study of the emotional and physical turmoil which swept the Japanese people in the wake of World War II. Written by Tsutomu Tamura from an acclaimed novel by Yu Aku, it begins on August 15, 1945, the day of Japan's official surrender to General Douglas MacArthur. The film uses the microcosm of a small island whose inhabitants, including returning soldiers, must confront the shame of defeat, the confusion of an uncertain future, and the clash of their own, now somewhat invalidated, culture and traditions (for instance, all historical references to the previously all-powerful Emperor have to be altered in textbooks) with the soon-to-be-dominant American influence. Wisely, Shinoda universalizes his themes to a certain extent by adopting the point of view of children, on whom the impact of a forcibly changing life is poignant. In the midst of the adults coping with their new life, the children learn how to play baseball and form a team, with homemade equipment and uniforms, and in the climatic, symbolic sequence, challenge the occupying American soldiers to a game.

Despite the fine acting (particularly by Masako Natsume as a schoolteacher) and crisp color photography by Kazuo Miyagawa, the film is leisurely paced and, as usual with Japanese films in the American marketplace, the bevy of characters, the subtleties of Japanese culture and the clash of acting styles (naturalistic vs. theatrical) will tend to confuse many domestic viewers. Still, Shinoda, one of the best of the sixties' controversial "New Wave" Japanese directors, has made inroads into the American art market—his most recently released films here were *The Ballad of Orin* (1977) and *Demon Pond* (1979).

—David Bartholomew