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AUDIE BOCK FILM CENTER

1966

HIT AND RUN

(HIKINIGE), 1966, 94 min., b/w.,
CinemaScope

Production: Toho Company **Screenplay:**
Zenzo Matsuyama **Cinematography:**
Rokuro Nishigaki **Art Direction:** Satoshi
Chuko **Music:** Masaru Sato

Cast: Hideko Takamine, Yasuhiro Komiya,
Eitaro Ozawa, Yoko Tsukasa, Kaoru
Hirata, Daisuke Kato, Jin Nakayama,
Toshio Kurosawa, Natsuko Kahara et al.

Widow Kuniko Bannai (Takamine) works
to support herself and her five-year-old
son, Takeshi (Komiya) by cleaning tables
at a Chinese restaurant in Yokohama.

Takeshi is killed by a hit-and-run driver,
and Kuniko feels her life destroyed. The
car had been driven by Mrs. Kinuko
Kakinuma (Tsukasa), the wife of the
president of Yamano Motors (Ozawa),
who had been out with her young boy-
friend, Ogasawara (Nakayama) at the
time. She confesses about the accident
to her husband when blood is found on
her car, and Kakinuma persuades their
chauffeur to take the blame. Kakinuma's
attorney also persuades the widow's
younger brother Koji (Kurosawa), a petty
gangster, to take a one-million yen set-
tlement (less than \$2800) out of court.
The chauffeur is sentenced to probation
and a 30,000 fine. Furious at the out-
come, the widow hears an old woman
who saw the accident say "women
drivers are no good" and realizes there
has been a cover-up. She gets maid
work at the Kakinumas' home through a
referral service and ingratiates herself
with their live-in maid, Fumie (Kahara).

Her plan is to take the life of the
Kakinumas' son, Kenichi (Hirata) as the
just punishment the legal system denied
her because she is poor. Instead she
becomes fond of the little boy and
decides to kill his mother. Disconnecting
the gas heater in her room one night,
the widow is sure she has committed
murder when the young wife is found
dead the next day. In fact it was suicide
by sleeping pills, due to anxiety over her
boyfriend's departure.

Like the earlier *Street Without End*, this
film attempts to deal with some broad
social issues in a way that is not typical
of Naruse. The left-leaning script by
actress Takamine's husband is a well-
crafted melodrama, but somehow seems
ill-suited to both his wife's subtle talents
and the director whose tendency is to
blame life itself for the human condition,
rather than assigning guilt to individuals
or the rich. Nevertheless, *Hit and Run*
succeeds in illustrating two important
contemporary phenomena: the danger of
the automobile (but in no different a way
than the 1934 *Street Without End*, and
the immunity of the rich from justice. In
pursuing the second aim, the drama
becomes a psychological contest
between the widow obsessed with
revenge and the young wife who is over-
come by her own neuroses. As Naruse
moves away from plotlessness and into
exercises in the melodrama form in his
later films, this film marks an extreme of
psychological exploration that does not
fully succeed. On the level of the script,
it is not quite believable that the same
woman who could be sold out com-
pletely by her own brother could then
devise such an elaborate scheme for
revenge as to use a false name and cre-
dentials to become part of the careless
young woman's household.