

SARAH'S WAR



Recha Jungmann as Sarah



Offering collateral for a business loan



Sarah is caught shoplifting



Private property owner finds trespasser



Officer Judas

Sarah's War – 30 minutes, black and white, starring Recha Jungmann. Script, Direction, Camera, Sound, Editing by Lothar Spree. Production by Recha Jungmann. Acknowledgements: Toronto Filmmakers Co-op, Patrick Spence-Thomas, Costello Productions, and Detten Schleiermacher.

– A. Ibrányi-Kiss

Sarah's War is a fascinating political film done in allegorical style. Starting with the premise, "Violence is inevitable. The question is whom to strike?" it progresses to the final thesis, "Violence is inevitable. The question is with whom to unite?"

The film takes place during the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Sarah (played by Recha Jungmann) is a middle-class woman in her thirties, living with her six-year-old son, separated from her husband Billy. Shortly after the separation, Sarah realizes she will have to start making money. She also discovers that she's living in an oppressive society. For while she was still married, "The lady was not alone. She had a husband who knew how to quote . . ." Although Sarah meets several people who try to teach her what's wrong while quoting Mao's scriptures, Sarah learns nothing.

She takes up shoplifting, because "... for the first time in her life, Sarah didn't feel she was screwed." But when caught, the humiliation leaves her scarred. She tries capitalism and becomes a prostitute – setting up her own business with her own capital. Sarah quickly and desperately graduates to armed robbery during which she kills an innocent, blond bank teller. She winds up in jail after attempting kidnap, blackmail and killing a policeman. And it is in prison, finally, that Sarah starts learning from another inmate. This, however, is only one superficial story line, since both Sarah's son and husband play important parts in this multi-levelled film thesis.

The film's structure incorporates voice-over narrative in a coldly objective monotone, as well as statements written in blackboard style. It is through Sarah's "case history" that political theories are expounded and scrutinized. Never is the audience allowed to get emotionally involved with the characters. When

Sarah's son is hit by a car, he is shown bandaged and lying on a stark floor. As soon as the emotional impact hits, the narrative pulls back to put the situation into perspective. In this case, the debate is with Franz Fanon's statement, "There are no innocent bystanders . . ." which is counterpointed by the following parable: Sarah's son was hit by the car because the driver was upset over problems with his wife and family. Who should Sarah punish, asks the narrator, the man or his family? Unanswered questions abound. . . . In one sense, Sarah is the family which caused the driver to be so upset. She has indirectly caused the death of her estranged husband – Billy commits suicide. While Officer Judas looks for the disappeared corpse, Sarah cries, "I hated him but I didn't wish him dead! It's not my fault. . . . I'm going to include him in my revenge!"

Revenge as a poor basis for revolution is one of the main themes in *Sarah's War*. The film strongly argues the impossibility of radical and meaningful change when the only criteria the avenging have is their oppression.

How can you design and build a free society when you have only oppressive systems to relate back to? This problem is also applied to the women's movement. Written and directed by a man, *Sarah's War* is surprisingly sensitive to the basic issues raised by feminists. Now that abortion, day-care and equal pay are almost as accepted as motherhood and hockey, it's time to get down to the important matters. Obviously, the film cannot depict a future which is only hinted at, but it deals with the newly emerging phenomena of women as victims forcing men to be martyrs to our fight for independence. We are caught in times of change, and we don't know how to deal with it. We know that *what is* is wrong, but we have very little idea about *what can be*. (Possibly our grand-

daughters will enjoy the fruits, right now we're all in labor.) And it is this painful time of evolution and the prices paid for it that *Sarah's War* probes so intelligently.

It is the future which is the large unknown in this equation. Billy is dead, Sarah imprisoned, and their son becomes a problem in school. He is fighting. It seems Lothar Spree has more hope for this generation since rebellion starts so much earlier. One can assume that Sarah accepted things as they were, however reluctantly, until she reached her thirties. This partially explains why her struggle is abortive. Yet, a strong note of optimism pervades the ending since she *does learn* in prison. The last shot we see of Sarah is of a serene woman listening intently to her fellow inmate and teacher.

Sarah's War is simultaneously a lesson in the politics of filmmaking. Since he could generate no seed money, Lothar Spree took his teaching salary and enlisted the help of his friends and went ahead with the project. First they made the film and now they're exploring the possibilities of making back some of the costs. This hard work and dedication included the entire crew. (For example, Recha Jungmann was also Production Manager as well as the lead.)

Hopefully, *Sarah's War* is the first in a greatly needed series of political films – questioning, debating, thinking. And hopefully, these films will get to be seen by audiences although they probably will never play in local neighborhood movie houses.

Conversation with Lothar Spree

Who did you make Sarah's War for?

I made that film for people who have a political understanding. I didn't make it for television audiences. I made a political statement as you make political statements, which are very often non-directed, to shock people. In a financial and production sense, that film was really done in conscious isolation. After running around for years trying to get the money for it. . . . If it's good – forget about that. If it doesn't get distribution – that's alright. I made the film I wanted to.

Sometimes, Sarah's War is too full. Too much is going on – too many different levels. It can be hard to understand.

I can explain everything in the film, one way or another. But I don't think that should be done. You should only get as much out of the film as you get. Some things are intended to be mind-boggling. But it's a non-visual mind-boggle. What I tried to do, and I think I succeeded, was a non-perceptive film in

visual terms. To get it all happening inside. That was one of the basic starting points of that experiment.

Those arguments, "It's not a film, it's a slide show. There's too much verbal information and not enough visual information." They constantly come up with my film. That is the point of it. You don't get caught in *Sarah's War* – you have to pay attention. If you don't want to – that's alright. But there is that possibility of going deeper and deeper into the film. I agree that the first level has to be good enough. I'm not saying you have to go seven levels deeper and then you'll really like it. I'm completely aware of that, but any film should have several levels. At least more than one.

I think you can see a good film a number of times without getting bored. In that way, the film is something like the way you think – images rolling through your brain – not only visually. The film itself is based on counterpoint – it is supposed to be a counterpoint to what is happening inside your head when you see it.

It can be very unpleasant to see the film.

You said your film was Canadian. In what sense did you mean that, besides that it was obviously made here?

I really think it's a Canadian film in the context of Canadian politics. The question of violence is a very screwed-up one. There is underlying violence in all this apathy. I wanted to make the point that violence is inevitable. It's necessary to fight on. We had that. It existed in '68, '69, '70 but right now it's calmed down.

But violence is not change by any means. What would really be change is doing it without violence! Yet you say it's inevitable.

Violence is inevitable. I don't say it's necessary. Although, if you want to achieve effective change, I don't think there's any way of doing that without violence.

But it doesn't work!

That's not the point. But there is this wrong image of revolutionaries armed with guns and bombs and threatening the public. It's a joke! If you compare it to the armaments and the threat of the system. All you can do is fight. That's what Sarah does. She keeps on fighting even if it's pretty senseless. But somehow, for some reason, she fights on.

Was there any specific reason for choosing a woman as your lead character?

The only political intensity which

exists is in Women's Lib. Whether you agree with it or not. The reason for that is the recognition of the direct relationship between personal life and political situations. The highest awareness of that exists in women right now. As for the 'left' – they are not leftists at all! They are very concerned with the Third World and colonialism and abstracts, but the recognition of their own lifestyle is lacking. Especially the 'new left' – they're fighting for the liberation of the world and leading a life which is very often unliberated. Unconscious. Imperialism is a very abstract thing – everybody is against that! But to recognize your own influence and how you yourself are influenced by it – women are much closer to that than political organizations. Because of their position, they are forced to recognize that connection. That's one reason why I picked a woman.

But there are many isolated males, and I count myself among them, who are aware of that connection. But we see the futility of joining political groups. We'd rather work as individuals and change awareness.

All you can do as an individual is fight for that awareness, changing yourself and counting on everyone else to do the same. If everybody would do that, the problem would be solved. The question is – not only don't they do it, in a very real sense they can't do it!

An example with women: there is this very common situation of housewives complaining to their husbands. She sits at home all day and actually lives her life through him! And he says, "Why don't you do something?" What? What should she do? Knit a stitch here or there? Write poems? What she wants from life is already part of the problem.

I made a film once about a rock group. They were working class kids and they had to make a decision whether they want to become professionals or whether they want to stay workers. That brought up the question, "What do you want out of life?" All of them answered pretty well the same things. First of all money, secondly women, and thirdly fame. When you dug into it – they didn't give a shit about money! It was important, but. . . . They didn't want to have women – they wanted *one*. And fame – that was only some form of recognition. Actually, they wanted uniformity. Unless you change those values, it's impossible to formulate what you actually want. Unless you start getting into it – there's no vocabulary for what you really expect from life. It starts already there. Because it's hard for the fantasy of the imagination to imagine change. ●

YOU CAN'T SHOOT PERFECT COLOR MOVIES without THIS GREAT KIT!

By the Author of THE FIVE C'S OF CINEMATOGRAPHY

TEXT • TOOLS • CINE ACCESSORIES
All Technical Data in Feet and Metric

Incredible Value! ONLY \$20!

WRITE FOR DESCRIPTIVE BROCHURE

Californians add 6% Sales Tax. Foreign Orders add \$1 per book for postage, handling. NO C.O.D.'s! NO BILLING!



CINE/GRAFIC PUBLICATIONS • BOX 430 • HOLLYWOOD, CA 90028

TO ALL WOMEN FILMMAKERS

HEAR YE HEAR YE

Women & Film is in the process of putting together the research material compiled during the organization of our Women & Film Festival 1973-74.

The end product will be an Access Catalogue offering information on Women FilmMakers and distribution sources for their films.

We would appreciate your sending us any further information you would like to see included in this catalogue, particularly pertaining to recently produced films.

Thank you for your cooperation . . .
and best of luck in your current
film project. Amities . . .



Women & Film
437 Sherbourne St
Toronto
(416) 964-9562

RENTAL • SERVICES

Camera, Sound and Lighting Equipment
Film Crews
Editing
Neg Cutting
Daily and Weekly Rates

CRYSTAL FILM PRODUCTIONS CO. LTD.

1121 Kipling Ave. Islington

Telephone 231-8888

**Canada's
Only
Film
Bookshop**

**Cine
Books**

Largest
selection of current
cinema books in
the world
covers all subjects
CATALOGUE \$1.00

**692a
Yonge St.
Toronto 5
964-6474**

TECHNIQUE OF LIGHTING FOR TELEVISION AND MOTION PICTURES

by *Gerald Millerson*

Gerald Millerson is a chartered engineer, with a background of some twenty years of studio lighting with the B.B.C. His wide experience of all types of production, coupled with the training of lighting students, has resulted in this long-needed work.

EFFECTS AND EXPERIMENTS IN PHOTOGRAPHY

by *Paul Petzold*

Photographic effects can be produced at any stage of the photographic process—this book investigates them all. It is a book of ideas as well as practical methods. It is not only concerned with established tricks and their variations, it will suggest intriguing areas of exploration to the imaginative photographer, artist and designer.

\$10.50

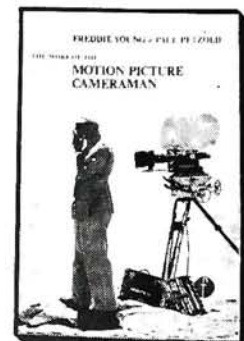
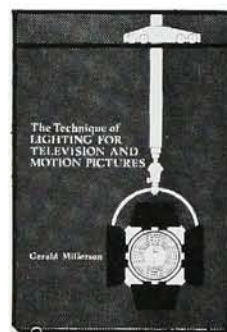


TECHNIQUE OF FILM AND TELEVISION MAKE-UP FOR COLOUR AND BLACK & WHITE

by *Vincent J-R Kehoe*

In this fully-revised second edition of a standard work, compatible systems of make-up are fully explored. These are the systems so necessary when make-up has to be photographed in black-and-white and colour simultaneously.

\$17.50

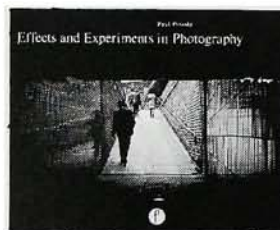


THE WORK OF THE MOTION PICTURE CAMERAMAN

by *Freddie Young & Paul Petzold*

This is the first comprehensive work by one of the world's greatest film cameramen. It will serve as an authoritative source of information on camera technique in large scale feature productions.

\$14.75



Telephone & Mail Orders Accepted — Order Now

3 firsts from CANON

1. New Canon Sound Scoopic 200. All the advantages of the Scoopic 16 plus simultaneous sound recording. Automatic gain control. Single-system recording sound-on-magnetic—as you shoot.

2. Canon Scoopic 16. First 16mm movie camera with a built-in zoom lens, fully automatic exposure system and our special No-Slip Handgrip. Makes hand shooting easier, surer than ever.

3. Canon Super-Macro Zoom Lens. 12-120mm f2.2 zoom lens. Exclusive use of fluorite elements corrects aberration, astigmatism, coma. Focus to within $\frac{3}{8}$ " of front component.

For more facts, write us. You haven't seen the latest in 16mm equipment until you've seen these firsts from Canon.

Exclusive in Canada from
MACKENZIE EQUIPMENT CO. LTD.
26 Duncan Street, Toronto.
(416)-364-2266.



alpha cine

alpha cine

alpha cine

alpha cine

alpha cine

SERVICES INCLUDE

35mm Colour Negative/Positive

35mm & 16mm Bell & Howell Colour Additive Printers

35mm & 16mm Reduction Printing

Hazeltine Colour Film Analyser

35mm & 32mm Printing

16mm Negative/Internegative/Positive

16mm Ektachrome Processing and Printing

16mm Black & White Negative/Positive and Reversal

Special developer for Sound Tracks

Edge Numbering 16mm & 35mm

ALPHA CINE SERVICE LTD.

1195 Richards Street, Vancouver 2
British Columbia
Canada

Telephone (604) 688-7757

*THE LAB BASED ON SERVICE
& QUALITY*

Telex 04-507757