Flaherty’s collaboration of Nanook. Certainly, he realized the essential racism of the central conflict. In the end, it’s the effects that rankle. Samuel’s new tape, Red Star Over the Western Press: Africa: Algeria, 1954-1962, quickly falls into this trap. Work like Samuel’s makes you realize that Brecht really wasn’t so much robust by his interpreters. He was mugged.

Red Star is based on, from Franz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth, which documented the horrors of French imperialism in Algeria, and the North African nation’s struggle for independence. Fanon’s book was to the French presence in Africa what Arthur Koestler’s Darkness at Noon was to Stalinism: its most caustic literary scourge, an indictment of the colonial liberators which turned so easily into state-sanctioned terrorism. Unfortunately, what Samuel does to Fanon’s work rates as an act of terrorism itself.

Samuel then suggests that Fanon’s words to actors who act more than they act. Then he interposes these acted segments with his own armchair interviews with academics on the subject of media bias. There’s also some very powerful newscast footage of the Algerian rebellion from 1954 to 1962. And footage of the aftermath of race riots in Newark and Detroit. And some vaguely defined connections made between the Algerian situation of the 50’s and the “Zionization of Palestine.” In short, there’s an overabundance of material, perhaps meant to match the purposefully (and pointlessly) vague tone. There’s nothing wrong with excess as a strategy, and no sophisticated viewer would ever say that a work of art need follow only one line. But excess and eclecticism together can too easily undermine any attempt to convey a coherent message.

The problem seems to be that Samuel isn’t quite sure who or what his target is. Is he attacking imperialist oppression (the French in Algeria, Afrikanners in South Africa, whites in Detroit), or is he real object the Western media’s representation of that oppression and the resulting resistance movements? And what the hell is the Western media do? The text crawl and print pictures come out of the Eastern and southern hemispheres avoid the biases of European and North American news? Or is it the hegemonic rule of some odd, undefined entity? Samuel doesn’t like the CBC any more than he likes Charles de Gaulle.

Fair enough. But the problem with the tape is that Samuel never fully addresses the issues he brings up; he throws to together ideas without developing their implications. What does Zionism have to do with French colonialism? What does ‘O Canada’, the soundtrack in a casualty of the text crawl, have to do with the Algerian war? Isn’t it simplistic to reduce all forms of nationalism to one horrific conclusion? And why do we spend so much time watching two white academics (McGill graduate student David Hogarth and Carleton film professor Will Straw) talking about the Western media’s treatment of ‘Third World’ revolution?

Ironically, Straw indirectly points out one of the tape’s contradictions. “The systems of bias,” he observes, “are partly the desire to go to authoritative voices.” Hogarth and Straw do function as sources of authority within the tape, despite Samuel’s rather callow attempt to subvert Hogarth’s words by overlaying Algerian atrocities over his image as he talks. And their “expert” analyses of media ideology are more penetrating than anything Samuel and his video-effects generator can manage.

In the end, it’s the effects that rankle. More often than not, they simply don’t work; usually, they’re lame. The breakdown of image clarity through slow motion and freeze-frame is sometimes interesting, but having a text-crawl change colour, then turn sideways so the text becomes the imposing
**Ousama Rawi's**

**The Housekeeper**

In the book trade, an author like Ruth Rendell is what is known as a "good read". As one of several designated successors to Agatha Christie as the Queen of the English Mystery, she has a loyal following and a good critical reputation. Unfortunately, what makes a good read does not always make a good view, as this adaption of Rendell's A Judgement in Stone (under which title it was it was shown in a somewhat longer version at the 1986 Festival of Fests) is testimony.

Veteran camerographer and director of commercials Ousama Rawi makes his feature debut with The Housekeeper. He has a high-profile cast, headed by his wife Rita Tushingham and Jackie Burroughs, and he has Rendell's darkly compelling story of a repressed English servant who becomes a killer largely because she cannot read. Yet, in spite of the fact that the film has some intriguing points, it is largely a failure. Its commercial successes were not helped by Cineplex-Odeon's less than enthusiastic promotion and the dull ad copy that gave the plot away ("she cooks, she cleans, she kills.")

Growing up in a working-class neighborhood in '50s London, Eunice (Aisha Tushingham) is a quiet, withdrawn woman with a sweet tooth, still living at home with her abusive father. One day she finds she can take no more of him and smothers him with a pillow (no great loss there). Eunice manages to conceal the crime, and, on her aunt's suggestion, takes a job as a housekeeper in America — the location is unspecified, but it looks a lot like Keene, New Hampshire.

George and Jackie Coverdale are initially delighted by their super-efficient, workaholic English servant. He (Ross Petty) is a well-to-do doctor (in the novel he was a manufacturer) and she (Shelley Peterson) is an aspiring hostess. They also have two children in their late teens from their previous marriages.

George's daughter Melinda (Jessica Steen) and Jackie's son Bobby (Jonathan Crombie).

Although Eunice seems to fit into the Coverdales' lives, her handicap, and her obsessive desire to conceal it, soon leads to a series of mishaps which arouse George's suspicions. Also comes into contact with Joan Smith (Jackie Burroughs), the wife of the local postmaster, and another unstable personality. It is Eunice's relationship with Joan, an ex-prostitute-turned-religious fanatic, that leads to the story's fatal climax.

Although the ending is changed, the screenplay sticks quite close to Rendell's novel. It could lend itself rather well to the type of radical analysis that Robin Wood and his associates in Cineaction specialize in. The Coverdales are almost archetypally bourgeois, while Joan and Eunice are equally archetypally proletarian, and both are oppressed and repressed. The violence at the end can therefore be almost foreordained.

But such attempts to attach such weighty themes to the Housekeeper are forced, because of the flaws which Ousama Rawi allows to show in the film. To be sure, there is ample precedent for treating a psychopathic character sympathetically, Hitchcock is the touchstone, in such films as Shadow of a Doubt, Vertigo and Psycho, and in the '70s he was followed by films as varied as Sisters, Taxi Driver and the 'bad seed' pictures like Carrie. The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane and Holy Terror. But The Housekeeper cannot stand with them.

Though Rita Tushingham struggles gamely with the role of Eunice, she often degenerates into a series of acts and expressions. The hallucinations which Eunice experiences under stress are especially poorly done. The opening sequences of Eunice as a child have a certain crude vigor, but the effect is dissipated by the quick cut to a Victorian clôche. Neither Ross Petty nor Shelley Peterson seem to be able to see that playing superficial characters is different from playing superficially. Jackie Burroughs, on the other hand, is encouraged to go over the top in portraying Joan's madness.

Tom Kneebone, as Joan's ineffectual husband, has a change of pace from the breezy Noel Coward characters he is best known for, but the part is very secondary. As the step-siblings more than platonically devoted to each other, Jessica Steen and Jonathan Crombie are adequate, but their subplot, which was quite understated in Rendell's book, is here quite distracting.

The fate of The Housekeeper — three less than spectacular weeks in Cineplex-Odeon's smaller Toronto houses — suggests that the thriller is not a genre in which Canadians excel. Rawi's work certainly shows kinship with such films of the '70s as The Disappearance of Trees and Tomorrow Never Comes. Blood Relatives and Jigsaw. On the other hand, The Silent Partner and Pouvoir In Time show what can be done; all it takes is some imagination.

**J. Paul Costabile**


**Starring**


**Running time** 90 minutes.

**THE HOUSEKEEPER**


**Starring**


**Running time** 90 minutes.

**If only it were Rita Tushingham — the hammy housekeeper**

**Barbara Boyden's**

**Those Roos Boys and Friends**

The names of Len and Charlie Roos don't exactly come tripping off the tongues of Canadian film archivists or those of us passionately devoted to the early days of movies. Indeed, Barbara Boyden, the director/pro­ducer of today's premiere documentary, was unaware that she had stepped into family footsteps in her choice of profes­sion. But, having learned that her uncles were intrepid newsreel cameramen and between the two brothers the Roos boy trail for five years to come up with a delightful personal glimpse of a rough-and-tumble life in the infancy of film.

Oh my, they were a right pair, those Roos boys. Len and Charlie took a lot of portraits — Buffalo Bill, Chief Sitting Bull, and those cute ones where you put your face over a cut-out body. Len was a real go-getter — taking those old photo cards, developments, and a moving picture news, hobnobbing with the young Prince of Wales, going to Australia — and forever telling everyone how smart he was.

Charlie was made at least 16 one-reel comedies for his own company, Atlas (formed in 1915), with titles such as Parsons Slips a Cog and Boom and Go. He roped in his small son as an actor, and Billy Boyden, Len's son, found a screen about his adventures as a tiny thespian with sister Dorothy. Betty Boyden, Len Roos's daughter (and the filmmaker's Mum) talks about the difference between the two brothers: Charlie was very kind and home-loving while Len wanted to impress and take all the credit.

Len and Charlie Roos made Self Defence, "the war's first feature" seen in Canada and the USA, and this is the only war feature made in Canada during the First World War — see D. Turner's Index of Canadian Feature Films 1913-1985 review ed. —. It was shot in Galt in 1916, and depicted "the invasion of Canada by the Hun's.

Charlie also made a number of agricultural films, (Buttermaking in New Ontario, Stumping in New Ontario), recording the raising of the largest barn in Ontario in 1929 and, somewhere in the early 1920s, was manufacturing tyres and treads! Bud joined his father Charlie in making talking pictures and, among other things, they filmed contests to find stars, while still turning out industrial. There's some fascinating footage of a documentary on Lockwood Shoes and a parade of a show where Cabinet Minister arreglo, turning his Williamsburg, Ontario, hometown into the Canadian Lourdes.

Len Roos won to Australia in 1924 and is remembered Down Under for his snappy clothes, especially trekking into the Outback in his plus-fours! He was invited back to that country in 1926 and with an American director, Norman Dawn, took over the silent film, Term of his Natural Life, with Len as director of photography. Clips from this film include some tinted shots, and snip...