

bars of the French tricolour, is just hokey.

So meet the new Brecht. Despite Samuel's revolutionary intentions, **Red Star** remains divorced from true political action. Enthralled by technology, today's Brechts find solace in hitting their audiences over the head with clunky formal devices — all in the aim of liberating history from the shackles of realism.

Cameron Bailey •

RED STAR OVER THE WESTERN

PRESS A Julian Samuel Films Ltd. Production p./d./ed./ researched Julian Samuel *dramatic sequences* — cam. Michael Keeffe sd. Debra d'Entremont other sd. Radio McGill, Kerry Fantie, Steve Wilson m. Motility by Michael Horwood, Edith Piaf, François Hardy, *titles* Montage Eclair *contributions* by J. Doray, Matthew Sanger, Natasha Mukerjee, President Johnson, General de Gaulle, Arshad Shah, Bilal Ahmad, Harold Weaver, Bruce Ferguson, Mohammad Rezi Pahlevi, Christine Parlour, Dave Hogarth, Tom Waugh, Jacques Soustelle, Will Straw, Brendan Weston, Colin Tomlins, Richard Flint, Prim Video, National Film Board of Canada, Alpha Video and Film, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Universal Newsreel, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., Algerian Embassies: Ottawa, London, Washington, National Film Television and Sound Archives, Ottawa, Plastine Information Centre, Ottawa *funding* The Canada Council, The People of South Lebanon, The Institute of Palestine Studies, Washington D.C. *rental* Julian Samuels Films Ltd (514) 284-0431

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 Kleinberg, Ontario.

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. She 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 archetypically bourgeois, while Joan and Eunice are equally archetypically 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 tics 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. Most of the other characters veer into cliché. 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**, **Tomorrow Never Comes**, **Blood Relatives** and **Jigsaw**. On the other hand, **The Silent Partner** and **Pouvoir Intime** show what can be done; all it takes is some imagination.

J. Paul Costabile •

THE HOUSEKEEPER A Rawfilm Inc./Schulz Productions Presentation. A Castle Hill Release d. Ousama Rawi p. Harve Sherman Based on the novel "A Judgment in Stone" by Ruth Redell sc. Elaine Waisglass line p. Jim Cole exec. p. David Pady. Ousama Rawi, Harve Sherman d.o.p. David Herrington ed. Stan Cole m. Paul Zaza l.p. Rita Tushingham, Ross Petty, Shelley Peterson, Jonathan Crombie, Jessica Steen, Jackie Burroughs, Tom Kneebone, Peter MacNeill, Donald Ewer, Joyce Gordon, Aisha Tushingham *running time* 96 minutes

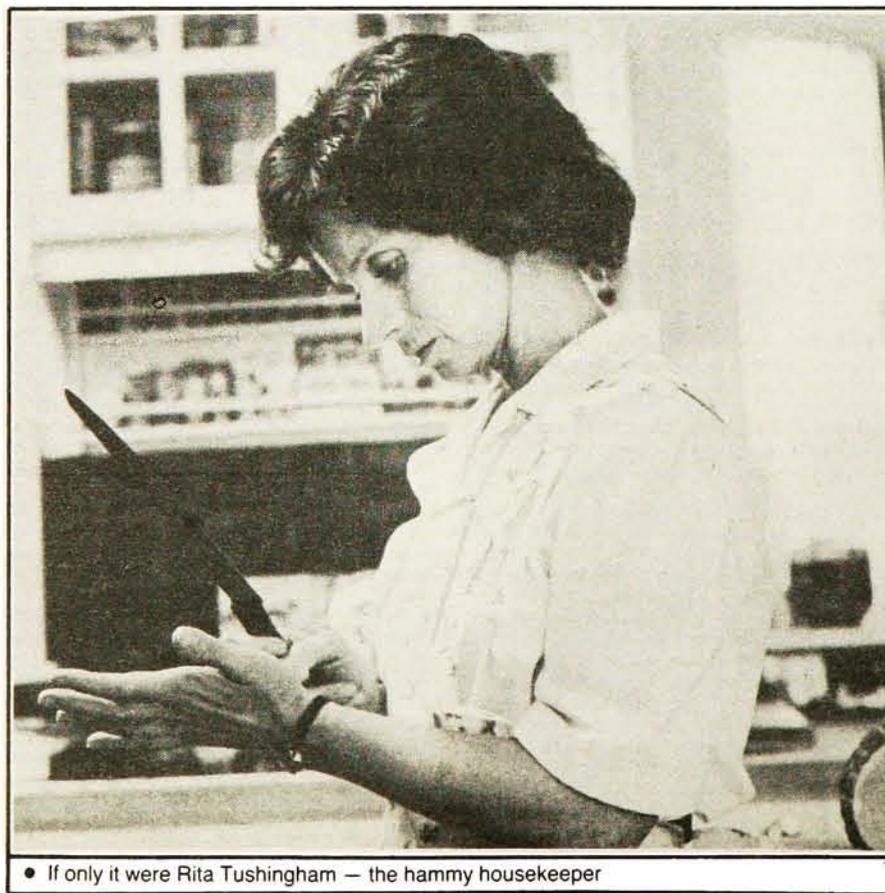
Ousama Rawi's

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 adaptation of Rendell's **A Judgment in Stone** (under which title it was shown in a somewhat longer version at the 1986 Festival of Festivals) is testimony.

Veteran cinematographer 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 chances 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 Parchman (Aisha Tushingham) is ridiculed and humiliated by her schoolmates because she suffers from dyslexia and is unable to learn to read. Some 35 years later, Eunice (Rita 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



• 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 trippingly 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 this captivating 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 filmmakers, she followed the Roos boys' trail for five years to come up with a delightfully personal glimpse of a rough-and-tumble life in the infancy of film.

Oh my, they were a right pair, those Roos boys! Charlie, the older, 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 goer — taking daredevil shots for the moving picture news, hobnobbing with the young Prince of Wales, going to Australia — and forever telling everyone how smart he was.

Charlie Roos made at least 16 one-reel comedies for his own company, Atlas (formed in 1913), with titles such as **Parsons Slips a Cog** and **Booming Fifi**. He roped in his small son as an actor, and Bud Roos today reminisces on 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" says the narration (indeed, the *only* war feature made in Canada during the First World War — see D.J. Turner's *Index of Canadian Feature Films 1913-1985* reviewed on p.). It was shot in Galt in 1916, and depicted "the invasion of Canada by the Huns."

Charlie also made a number of agricultural films, (**Buttermaking In New Ontario**, **Stumping in New Ontario**), recorded 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 industrials. There's some fascinating footage of a documentary on Lockewedge Shoes and Dr. Mahon Locke who practised foot manipulation, turning his Williamsburg, Ontario, hometown into the Canadian Lourdes.

Len Roos went 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, **For the Term of his Natural Life**, with Len as director of photography. Clips from this film include some tinted shots, and snip-