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CATERPILLAR

A FILM BY KOJI WAKAMATSU

Japan / 2010 / 85 min. / 1.85:1 / Dolby SR

A Lorber Films Release
from Kino Lorber, Inc.
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SYNOPSIS

Winner of a Silver Bear award (Best Actress - Shinobu Terajima) at last year's Berlin Film Festival, *Caterpillar* tells the story of a village woman who is given the grueling task of looking after (and fulfilling the sexual needs of) her quadruple-amputee husband, a decorated soldier tortured by memories of his war crimes.

Taking place during the Second Sino-Japanese War and based on a banned short story by writer Edogawa Rampo, Wakamatsu's latest film is a powerful indictment of right-wing militarist-nationalism – and a deeply affecting reminder of the pressures put on Japanese women during war and peacetime.

Part of a series of works that re-visit the country's fascist past, *Caterpillar* satirically deploys Japanese propaganda and successfully demystifies the glorification of the country's wartime past.

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CAST

Shigeko KUROKAWA - Shinobu TERAJIMA
Kyuzo KUROKAWA - Shima OHNISHI
Kenzo KUROKAWA - Ken YOSHIZAWA
Tadashi KUROKAWA - Keigo KASUYA
Chiyo KUROKAWA - Emi MASUDA
The village chief - Sabu KAWAHARA
The wife of the village chief - Maki ISHIKAWA
The Headquarters officer - Daisuke IIJIMA
Chinese woman #1 - Maria ABE
Chinese woman #2 - Mariko TERADA
Chinese woman #3 - Yasuyo SHIBA
Japanese soldier - Ryo MUKUTA
Yayoi - Taneko
Toshiko - Naoko ORIKASA
Villageman #1 - Sanshiro KOBAYASHI
Villageman #2 - Takaaki KANEKO
Military officer #1 - Go JIBIKI
Military officer #2 - ARATA
KUMA - Katsuyuki - SHINOHARA
The voice of the radio - Ichiro OGURA

A Wakamatsu Production, Inc. and Skhole Corporation Production

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CREW

Director and Producer
KOJI WAKAMATSU

Co-producer
Noriko OZAKI

Screenplay
Hisako KUROSAWA
Deru DEGUCHI

Line Producer
Takahito OBINATA

Cinematographer
Tomohiko TSUJI
Yoshihisa TODA

Musical Director
Mamoru KO

Music
Sally KUBOTA
Yumi OKADA

Editor
Shuichi KAKESU

Art Director
Hiromi NOZAWA

*Official Competition Berlin Film Festival 2010
Silver Bear for Best Actress for Shinobu TERAJIMA*

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ABOUT KOJI WAKAMATSU

BIOGRAPHY

Koji Wakamatsu (born 1 April 1936, in Wakuya, Miyagi, Japan) moved to Tokyo at the age of 17 and after a series of small jobs became a yakuza. Following a fight, he was sent to prison where he learned that power leads to repression and brutality. After his release, he wrote a book about his experience and found in filmmaking a way to expose the abuse of power. In 1959, he worked in television and four years later shot his first film. He was granted total artistic freedom as long as sex and violence predominated.

His "pinku eiga" (erotic Japanese films) attracted a lot of attention and step by step he realized that eroticism was necessary to the development of his political discourse; thus the original constraint had become a necessity. In 1965 he created his own production company Wakamatsu Production and directed *Secrets behind the Wall*. The film was submitted to Berlin Film Festival that same year and was nominated for the Golden Bear. Its controversy led to a diplomatic incident between Germany and Japan; Wakamatsu's camera had thus become an active political weapon exposing the faults of a hypocritical government and the mouthpiece of the identity crisis of young people (*Go Go Second Time Virgin*, *Sex Jack*).

In the 1960s-1970s, Wakamatsu's films, shot frenetically (around ten films a year) with a simplistic touch in their bare staging that was reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard, but with sexual excesses and brutality that were typical of exploitation films, are virulent anarchist manifestos that maddened Japanese authorities and also got him banned from American, Russian and Chinese territories. In 1971 Wakamatsu gained international notoriety at Directors' Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival with *Violated Angels* (1967) and *Sex Jack* (1970).

Five years later he joined Nagisa Oshima's *The Realm of Senses* on the latter's request as the executive producer. His latest film, *United Red Army*, was selected at Berlin Film Festival in 2008 (Forum section) and won the NETPAC and the FIPRESCI awards. In 2010, Koji Wakamatsu returns to Berlin International Film Festival in the Official Competition with *Caterpillar* and receives the Silver Bear for Best Actress for Shinobu Terajima.

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Koji Wakamatsu – SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

Secrets Behind The Wall (1965, b&w, 75') Berlin Film Festival 1965
The Embryo Hunts in Secret (1966, b&w, 72')
Violated Angels (1967, b&w, 56') Cannes Film Festival Directors' Fortnight 1971
Season of Terror (1969, b&w/color, 78')
Violent Virgin (1969, b&w/color, 66')
Running in Madness, Dying in Love (1969, color, 72')
Naked Bullet (1969, b&w/color, 72')
Go Go Second Time Virgin (1969, b&w/color, 65')
Violence Without a Cause (1969, b&w/color, 72')
Sex Jack (1970, b&w/color, 70') Cannes Film Festival Directors' Fortnight 1971
Shinjuku Mad (1970, b&w/color, 66')
The Woman Who Wanted To Die (1970, b&w/color, 71')
Red Army / PFLP: World War Declaration (1971, b&w, 80')
Ecstasy of The Angels (1972, b&w/color, 89')
Pool Without Water (1982, color, 103')
Landscape of a 17-Year-Old (2004, color, 89')
United Red Army (2008, b&w/color, 190')
Caterpillar (2010, b&w/color, 85')

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In war, human beings are violated, chopped up and burnt by other human beings. Humans violating other humans. Humans chopping up other humans. Humans burning other humans.

Is there such a thing as a just war? Before the arrival of billowing mushroom clouds, falling incendiary shells or large-scale massacres, there were brightly lit houses filled with men, women, the aged and children— human beings. It was there that they ate and slept, ate and slept; living their routine lives.

What is the meaning of war? What is the meaning of people killing people for the sake of their country? Where in the world can we find a just war?

Don't forget the stench of blood that covered the earth! Don't forget the smell of burnt flesh! We must not forget, for this is what war is.

Over 140,000 people died in the Hiroshima Atomic bomb attack.

Over 70,000 people died in the Nagasaki Atomic bomb attack.

984 class B¹ and C² war criminals were sentenced to death.

Over 100,000 died in the Bombing of Tokyo.

Over 20 million died in the Asian continent.

Over 60 million died in World War II.

They are not isolated or sporadic events, but are part either of a government policy (although the perpetrators need not identify themselves with this policy) or of a wide practice of atrocities tolerated or condoned by a government or a de facto authority. Murder; extermination; torture; rape and political, racial, or religious persecution and other inhumane acts reach the threshold of crimes against humanity only if they are part of a widespread or systematic practice. Isolated inhumane acts of this nature may constitute grave infringements of human rights, or depending on the circumstances, war crimes, but may fall short of falling into the category of crimes under discussion."

¹ War crimes. War crimes are "violations of the laws or customs of war"; including "murder, the ill-treatment or deportation of civilian residents of an occupied territory to slave labor camps", "the murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war", the killing of hostages, "the wanton destruction of cities, towns and villages, and any devastation not justified by military, or civilian necessity."

² Crimes against humanity. Crimes against humanity, as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court Explanatory Memorandum, "are particularly odious offenses in that they constitute a serious attack on human dignity or grave humiliation or a degradation of one or more human beings."

INTERVIEW WITH KOJI WAKAMATSU

What was the genesis of the film?

I had the idea for this new film while I was shooting *United Red Army*. I felt that, in order to understand the youngsters of the 60s and 70s, you should first describe their parents' era, the time of the Pacific War. Describing a war doesn't just mean describing the shooting and the battles. The people who are most affected by war are the women and children, who don't even fight. Those in power fooled the citizens into believing that this war was on behalf of their country, and they manipulated them into rushing into the war. They themselves stayed at a safe distance and were still alive after the war.

I thought that the youngsters in *United Red Army* were born the way they were precisely because their parents had lived through such an era. So I'd already decided at the time of shooting to describe their parents' era, the Pacific War, and the people of that time.

In what way is the film different from Edogawa Rampo's novel The Caterpillar, which is about a WWII veteran, who returns home as a quadriplegic?

I was inspired by this image in the novel of the disabled war veteran, who's lost all his limbs, and his relationship with his wife. Apart from that, the timesetting is different, and so is pretty much everything else. What I wanted to describe from that initial image was the idea that, for human beings, life means sex, eating and violence. Moreover, I wanted to describe how human nature can be destroyed by war. Charlie Chaplin showed us through his cinema that for killing three people you'll be hanged, whereas you'll be a hero if you kill ten thousand. That's war!

In Johnny Got His Gun (1971), American novelist and director Dalton Trumbo tells the story of a World War I soldier, who lost his arms, legs, and face after being caught in the blast of an exploding artillery shell. Have you seen that film?

Yes, I've seen it. I saw a human being completely deprived of freedom by war, and I felt how cruel it was that he couldn't even choose to die. But I don't think it had any influence on me. Compared to that, at least Kyuzo could choose his own death.

Where did you get the archives images from?

I borrowed them off a person who had got them from the United States National

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Archives and Records Administration. After the war, minor Japanese war criminals were put on trial and punished in various places in Japan. They were also executed under the pretext that it was for the good of their country. But among these there were many Koreans, who had been brought from the Korean peninsula, which was a Japanese colony at that time. They too were put on trial as Japanese war criminals, and were also executed.

Some South and North Koreans, initially accused of being war criminals but later acquitted, were released. They are still ignored by the Japanese government today, and have had no post-war reparation because they aren't Japanese. From this point of view, the war still hasn't finished. Nothing has been resolved.

Where did you shoot the film?

The film was shot in Nagaoka and around in Niigata prefecture, in the Chubu region (northwest of Tokyo), where there exists typical Japanese landscapes preserved from fifty years ago with traditional wooden straw roof houses surrounded by rice terraces.

It was in that rural part of the country known for its high-quality rice where the farmers used to cultivate the rice to feed soldiers during the war and the village people were fully dedicated to the Emperor. I wanted to shoot in that area, not as much for aesthetic or scenic reasons, than for historical reasons –and maybe also because I grew up in a similar village!

Tell us more about the character played by Katsuyuki Shinohara, the character that eats flowers and doesn't do anything like the others.

He's me. He's the me who has been strongly criticised as an aho, an "idiot", as a "national disgrace", as a "sewer". But by the side of the sewer there blooms a single flower. That's why I made Katsuyuki eat a flower and so on. In this film his character pretends to be an idiot and goes against the current of plunging into this war. He sticks to his belief of "refusing to do what he hates". I think he's probably the most courageous character.

What about the casting of Shinobu Terajima and Shima Ohnishi?

As for casting Ohnishi, I'd decided to use him for my next film during the shooting of United Red Army. To play a soldier without limbs, you have to use your eyes a great deal. Ohnishi is very expressive with his eyes. As for Terajima, she really suits those Japanese farmer's trousers, monpe. Also, she's my favourite actress, because she has the courage to act without make-up, even though she's a huge star. I wasn't sure if such a great actress would accept to appear in a film whose

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director has been the object of such criticism. But when I plucked up the courage to ask her, she accepted.

There are two stories in Caterpillar: the story of a hero that lost his limbs in a war and the story of a husband and wife. What's the relationship between the two stories?

Japanese society is basically a man's society. Men have shamelessly used violence on their wives, they've considered their wives as mere outlets for their sexual desires and as machines for producing children. In Japanese society, this kind of relationship between men and women used to be considered normal. Even today, a member of parliament can make statements based on this mindset, that "women are machines for producing children".

I wanted to describe how the relationship between a husband and wife could change into other forms in this society as a result of war. In short, I wanted to describe the way human beings live, by grouping the state, the nation and everything together. By doing this, I thought I could describe how war is nothing more than Silling. Wars for justice, wars for national profit, wars on behalf of democracy... such things don't exist. Men kill other men, that's war!

How many people have been killed in the name of justice?

After going through the 20th century, which was a century of war, the same situation is still prevailing in the 21st century. There are no justifiable wars. That's what I wanted to describe.

Is the way women are described in your films (initially being abused but then taking the upper hand) a metaphor somehow?

There's no clear metaphor. It's an image in my head. My films are born inside my head, where all sorts of things are jumbled up. There's myself, my friends, my country, my mother and father, whom I observed while I was growing up...My father was violent to my mother when he was drunk. All these things are in a disorderly mess in my brain. I can't explain it logically, of course. If I could, I'd be a novelist. I wouldn't need much money or any staff, and it'd be a lot easier. But as I can't express all this in words, I use images and noises, including music. That's all.

You are known as a guerrilla-style filmmaker (making single shots, no rehearsals, shooting and editing in a very short time etc)...

When you do lots of rehearsals, the actors' tension eases off. If you kill

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somebody, you don't practice it lots of times, do you? You just concentrate on that one thing. This is the same. When you're looking out for a single chance, you don't need a rehearsal.

What influence does a limited budget have? Do you think a big budget would have changed anything about Caterpillar?

To manage within a limited budget is the Wakamatsu way. Merely having lots of money doesn't guarantee you'll shoot something good. Nevertheless, every day during the shooting I wished I had a bigger budget. For example, I could have had more extras in a line if I'd had a bigger budget, and so on.

But because you can't do that you have to rely on actors' expressions, and you can express these things well. When you have money, you rely on it. But it won't necessarily produce good work. We finished the shooting in twelve days, although we'd planned for two weeks. It took about thirteen hours to edit the film, because we changed it three times. The script took at least three months, shaping our ideas and establishing the concept.

Your stance as a film director has been changing, from defending the armed struggle in the 1970s to criticising it in United Red Army, and becoming strictly anti-war in Caterpillar. Can you explain the change so far and your plans for the future?

Actually, in the 1970s I believed that we could change the world through armed struggle. But after that, certain ideas started germinating in my mind. Japan and other Asian countries won't solve their problems through an armed struggle, and maybe the last effective armed struggles happened at the time of Ché Guevara and Castro.

Furthermore, after doing research and thinking about various things while shooting *United Red Army*, I finally realized that it's impossible to change anything through armed struggle. I came to the thinking that things could only be solved through the power of the human spirit, and not by military force. I don't hold with these former militants, who used to call for armed struggle and a "simultaneous world revolution", but who now just use their notoriety to defend their own positions. All they do is spout theories, without accepting how times have changed.

As for what I'm going to portray in the future, it'll probably be just about men and women. I'm thinking about describing the nastiness of human beings, the sordid part of relationships. On the other hand, I'm interested in the story of Otoya Yamaguchi, a 17-year-old who stabbed the president of the Socialist Party

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of Japan to death, and then killed himself. He was just a boy who thought he was making the world better, and he died for it. When all's said and done, I think I'll just go on describing human beings.

Why, and for whom, do you make films?

Why? I make them because I want to make them – for myself, as well as for anybody who watches my films and feels a hatred for war. And it's also to make a living. The starting point is when I get angry. There are things that make me angry, so I simply express my feelings by using this device called a film.