

FILM REVIEW

Water

(Canada)

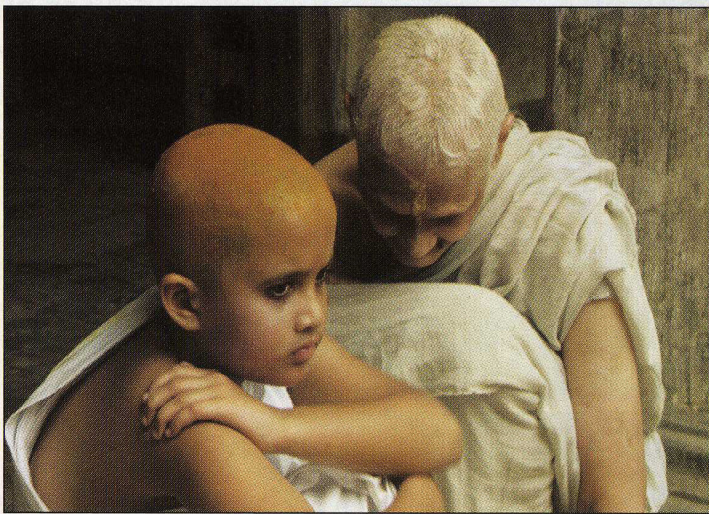
A Mongrel Media release (in Canada)/Fox Searchlight release (in U.S.) of a David Hamilton production. (International sales: Celluloid Dreams, Paris.) Produced by David Hamilton. Executive producers, Mark Burton, Ajay Virmani, Doug Mankoff, Hamilton.

Directed, written by Deepa Mehta. Camera (Kodak color, widescreen), Giles Nuttgens; editor, Colin Monie; music, Mychael Danna; songs composed by A.R. Rahman; lyrics by Sukhwinder Singh; production designer, Dilip Mehta; art director, Sumant Jayakrishnan; costume designer, Yusuf; assistant director, Dylan Gray. Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Gala, Opening Night), Sept. 8, 2005. Running time: 117 MIN.

Shakuntala Seema Biswas
Kalyani Lisa Ray
Narayan John Abraham
Chuyia Sarala
Madhumati Manorama
Patiraji, aka "Auntie" Vidula Javalkar
Gulabi Raghuvir Yadav
Sadananda Kulbushan Kharbanda
Rabindra Vinay Pathak

With: Gerson da Cunha, Ronica Sajnani, Meera Biswas, Waheeda Rehman, Buddhi Wickrama, Rinsly Weeraratne, Irangane Serasinghe, Hermantha Gamage, Ronica Sajnani, Rishma Malik, Sanoja Bibile, Dolly Ahluwalia Tewari, Daya Alwis, Delon Weerasinghe, Seema, Francisca Mudanayake, Mulchand Dedhia, Isuru Navodya, Niroshan Wijesinghe, Vasanth Nath, Mohan Jhangiani, Zul Vilani (voice).

(Hindi dialogue)



Sarala, foreground, plays a young widow in Deepa Mehta's "Water."

By **EDDIE COCKRELL**

Deftly balancing epic socio-political scope with intimate human emotions, all polished to a high technical gloss, Deepa Mehta's "Water" is a profoundly moving drama about an 8-year-old Hindu widow sent to live in an Indian ashram with other widows who, in strict adherence with Hindu texts, are condemned to the same outcast fate. Final pic in helmer's thematically linked but dramatically unrelated "Elemental Trilogy" (1996's "Fire," 1998's "Earth"), this deeply satisfying film will flow from plum opening-

night slot at Toronto fest to upscale arthouse berths beginning Nov. 4 in Canada via Mongrel Media. Fox Searchlight can expect a similar welcome Stateside.

Incredibly, the pic shows no signs of being the second pass at production following a 2000 shutdown in the wake of on-set riots sparked by Hindu fundamentalists who objected to the film's portrayal of child widows' being prostituted. Rather, it appears that this strife, which prompted recasting and reshooting on locations in Sri Lanka under a fake production title, has toughened Mehta's focus.

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