

The Japan Foundation Touring Film Programme 2012

Whose Film Is It Anyway?

A Season of Japanese Films by Contemporary Japanese Auteurs

10 February – 28 March 2012 : 7 venues in 7 cities in the UK



I Just Didn't Do It, Dir Masayuki Suo, Japan, 2007

Following last year's successful *Back To the Future: Japanese Cinema since the mid-90s* season, this year's Japan Foundation touring film programme looks at narrative creativity in Japanese cinema, showcasing directors both young and emerging, such as **Miwa Nishikawa** and **Takatsugu Naito**, and the more established, such as **Masayuki Suo** (the director best-known for *Shall We Dance*).

In recent years, Japanese cinema has been dominated by generic spin offs of media such as TV shows and *manga*, to generate an audience based on a pre-existing market. The nine films that have been chosen for this season however clearly demonstrate in fact the wealth of original writing and creativity evident in recent Japanese cinema.

Having successfully forged and retained their own identities within what is one of the largest film markets in the world, these directors reject the "safe" formulaic film model and instead choose to pursue their own methods of expressing themselves through film. Audiences will be able to hear the individual directors' voices, whilst also being exposed to characteristics and techniques of some of the best examples of auteur directors from Japan.

The film season is produced and organised by The Japan Foundation, and supported by the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

Programme:

The Dark Harbour (*Futoko*)

When recording a video message for a matchmaking party, solitary fisherman Manzo makes an unusual discovery.

Dir: Takatsugu Naito, 2009, 101 mins, English subtitles

Dear Doctor

A young medical graduate opts for a job in a remote mountain village, where everything is not as it seems.

Dir: Miwa Nishikawa, 2009, 127 mins, English subtitles

I Just Didn't Do It (*Soredemo Boku Wa Yattenai*)

The story of a young man accused of groping a woman on a crowded Tokyo train, and his battle with the Japanese legal system.

Dir: Masayuki Suo, 2007, 143 mins, English subtitles

About Her Brother (*Ototo*)

Depiction of a complex relationship between a black sheep of a brother and his long-suffering sister.

Dir: Yoji Yamada, 2010, 126 mins, English subtitles

A Stranger of Mine (*Unmei Janai Hito*)

In one long Friday evening, Takeshi Miyata, a straight-arrow businessman, will encounter a number of people who have intertwining fates.

Dir: Kenji Uchida, 2005, 98 mins, English subtitles

Sleep (*Nemuri Yusurika*)

The desperate story of a family who have sacrificed everything to bring to account the rapist who changed all their lives.

Dir: Katsumi Sakaguchi, 2011, 96 mins, English subtitles

All Around Us (*Gururi No Koto*)

The journey of a married couple after a miscarriage, and how they each begin to come to terms with its reality.

Dir: Ryosuke Hashiguchi, 2008, 140 mins, English subtitles

Bad Company (*Mabudachi*)

Teenager Sadamoto is torn between a desire to please his father and a need to rebel against him, as his middle school teacher

Dir: Tomoyuki Furumaya, 2001, 98 mins, English subtitles

Heart, Beating In The Dark (*Yamiutsu Shinzo*)

A multi-layered work, this film is half-sequel half-remake, and is the story of a couple on the run after killing their baby.

Dir: Shunichi Nagasaki, 2005, 104 mins, English subtitles

[NOTE: Please see appended for extended synopses]

Directors' Appearance

- Masayuki Suo will appear at the 2 screenings of **I Just Didn't Do It** at ICA, introducing the work and taking Q&A (3:30pm on 11th February, 4:00pm on 12th February)
- Katsumi Sakaguchi will appear at the ICA screening of **Sleep** (6:30pm on 16th February), and also at the Showroom screening (17th February), and will take Q&A on both occasions.
- Masayuki Suo will be holding a talk at the Japan Foundation London on 9 February, and Katsumi Sakaguchi will be holding a talk on 13 February. Details to follow www.jpff.org.uk.

Notes to editors:

Tour dates:

10-16 February

ICA Cinemas

The Mall

London SW1Y 5AH

Box office: 020 7930 3647

Book online: www.ica.org.uk

17-23 February

Showroom Workstation

15 Paternoster Row

Sheffield S1 2BX

Box office: 0114 275 7727

Book online: www.showroomworkstation.org.uk

24 February – 1 March

Filmhouse Edinburgh

88 Lothian Road

Edinburgh EH3 9BZ

Box office: 0131 228 2688

Book online: www.filmhousecinema.com

28 February – 27 March (Tuesdays)

Glasgow Film Theatre

20 Rose Street

Glasgow G3 6RB

Box office: 0141 332 6535

Book online: www.glasgowfilm.org/theatre

2 – 5 March

Queen's Film Theatre

20 University Square

Belfast BT7 1PA

Box office: 028 9097 1097

Book online: www.queensfilmtheatre.com

14 – 25 March

Watershed

1 Canon's Road

Bristol BS1 5TX

Box office: 0117 927 5100

Book online: www.watershed.co.uk

23-28 March

Broadway

14-18 Broad Street

Nottingham NG1 3AL

Box office: 0115 952 6611

Book online: www.broadway.org.uk

The Japan Foundation

The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and became an Independent Administrative Institution in 2003. We promote international cultural exchange between Japan and the rest of the world, and provide financial support for a range of international cultural exchange programmes. Our activities are financed by annual subsidies from the Japanese government, capital gains accrued from the management of our original endowment fund, and contributions and donations from the private sector.

We work principally in the fields of Arts and Culture, in Japanese language education and in Japanese studies. The Foundation's activities are coordinated through our headquarters in Tokyo as well as through our offices, language centres and cultural centres in over 20 countries outside of Japan.

The Japan Foundation London is the Foundation's only office in the UK, and one of the first overseas offices to be established, opening in 1972, and gaining a language centre in 1997.

The Japan Foundation Touring Film Programme

The Japan Foundation Touring Film Programme was founded in 2004, and is organised by the Japan Foundation.

Visiting Directors

- Director **Masayuki Suo** is perhaps best known for his two Japan Academy Prize-winning films, *Sumo Do, Sumo Don't* (1992) and *Shall We Dance* (1996). Included in this programme is the film *I Just Didn't Do It* (2006), which has won multiple awards including Best Director at Yokohama Film Festival 2008. Suo will be hosting a Q&A session after screenings of his *I Just Didn't Do It* at the ICA on February 11th and 12th.
- **Katsumi Sakaguchi** is a Japanese director, cinematographer and writer with a background in documentary filmmaking. Just as his documentary *Natsu no Inori* about a nursing home for atomic bomb victims is hard-hitting, so too is his film *Sleep*, which blends his documentary style with narrative creativity. Sakaguchi will be hosting a Q&A session after the screening of his work *Sleep* on 16th February.

Useful links:

- Japan Foundation Film Website: <http://www.jpffilm.org.uk/>
- Japan Foundation Website: <http://www.jpf.org.uk/>

For more information and images please contact:

Douglas Robertson
The Japan Foundation London
douglas.robertson@jpf.org.uk

End of notes

Extended Synopses

The Dark Harbour (Futoko)

Dir: Takatsugu Naito, 2009, 101 mins, English subtitles

Lonely fisherman Manzo (Shinya Kote) lives in a small seaside community, living and working alone. He longs for a relationship, and maybe even a wife, and so when a sign is posted advertising a matchmaking party with city women, the men all prepare videotapes for the dating service.

Manzo borrows a camcorder and tries his luck, but his rehearsed speech doesn't go quite to plan – when he is showing the tape to potential dates, he discovers that there is a woman and her son living in one of his closets. Upon this discovery, rather than kicking them out he encourages them to stay, and begins to develop a relationship with them...

This film was a great success for newcomer director Takatsugu Naito, showing at the Rotterdam Film Festival 2009, where it was nominated for a Tiger Award.

Dear Doctor

Dir: Miwa Nishikawa, 2009, 127 mins, English subtitles

Graduating from a Tokyo medical college, Soma (Eita) elects to take a position in a remote mountain village, with a largely elderly population, and there assists the local doctor Ito (Tsurube Shofukutei).

Everything goes smoothly, until a serious medical problem arises. A widow in the village is diagnosed with stomach cancer, which is probably inoperable, and wants to conceal this from her adult daughter who works in a medical centre in Tokyo. Ito is able to keep this secret for her, because he has one of his own...

Director Miwa Nishikawa, who has novelised several of her works herself, is an auteure in the truest sense, and definitely a director for the next generation of Japanese cinema. A protégé of Kore-eda Hirokazu, Nishikawa received recognition from the Japanese Film Academy for Best Screenplay in 2010 for this work, also winning the prize for Best Director at both the Hochi and Blue Ribbon Film Awards.

I Just Didn't Do It (Soredemo Boku Wa Yattenai)

Dir: Masayuki Suo, 2007, 143 mins, English subtitles

A young man, Kaneko Teppei (Ryo Kase) is arrested for allegedly groping a woman on a train, and forced to sign a statement not in his own words. Suddenly thrust into the Japanese legal system he must choose whether to settle the matter out of court, or to fight the charges.

Following the young Teppei through his experience with Japanese justice, this intricately crafted, earnest drama is another triumph for director Masayuki Suo (director of the successful *Shall We Dance*), with this film going on to receive numerous prizes, notably several Japanese Academy Awards, and both Best Director and Best Screenplay at the Kinema Junpo Awards in 2008.

Extra: Director Masayuki Suo will be visiting the ICA to take questions after both screenings.

About Her Brother (Ototo)

Dir: Yoji Yamada, 2010, 126 mins, English subtitles

The depiction of a complex relationship between a black sheep of a brother, and his long-suffering sister.

Ginko (Sayuri Yoshinaga) is increasingly frustrated with her younger brother Tetsuro (Tsurube Shofukutei), who has never really grown up, and dreams of becoming a famous singer. His drunken appearance at the wedding of Ginko's daughter is the last straw for her, but she can't quite bring herself to sever ties with him, in part blaming herself for his shambolic life. Can the sibling bond between them ultimately supersede their differences?

Director Yoji Yamada, a household name in Japan, presents a truly heart-warming human drama, with real family dynamics and thoroughly well-developed characters. Released to much critical acclaim, this film was nominated for 11 Japanese Academy awards in 2011.

A Stranger of Mine (Unmei Janai Hito)

Dir: Kenji Uchida, 2005, 98 mins, English subtitles

Takeshi Miyata (Yasuhi Nakamura) is a straitlaced business man, and this film follows him over the course of one long Friday evening, where he meets many people, all who have intertwining fates. After six months, he is still getting over

his girlfriend Ayumi (Yuka Itaya), and when his childhood friend, the now detective Yusuke Kanda, telephones about Ayumi, he has to find out what is happening.

The two meet, and Miyata learns that his ex-girlfriend is getting married. The detective invites a random solitary diner to join the two men, before making a hasty exit and leaving the two alone. The diner, Maki (Reika Kirishima), whose engagement was called off the day before, returns with Miyata to his apartment, but soon Ayumi appears wanting some of her things. Yakuza intrigue too plays a role in this gripping feature.

Director Kenji Uchida's debut work was a triumph, winning numerous awards for his writing including the SACD Screenwriting Award at Cannes in 2005, along with several others.

Sleep (Nemuri Yusurika)

Dir: Katsumi Sakaguchi, 2011, 96 mins, English subtitles

This film illustrates sorrow, hope, and human dignity through the life of a family.

Kotono (Miyuki Komagata) was raped at 15, and as a consequence became pregnant, giving birth to daughter Natsume (Mariko Hirano). 17 years later, Kotono who has lost her voice, and Natsume, and also their disabled grandaunt Kai, abandoned their own familiar house, and live in a van like nomads, that the only purpose for the family is to find the rapist who destroyed their lives. One day, they are told by their private detective that the rapist was found. Natsume tried to meet him alone to see if this was really the person who raped her mother...

Sakaguchi's background as a documentary filmmaker is certainly evident throughout, and Mark Adams at ScreenDaily praises this film as being "shot in a dark as realistic manner, [...] an impressively subversive and grim tale, but also well-made and disturbingly watchable."

Extra: Director Katsumi Sakaguchi will be visiting both the ICA and Showroom to take questions after the screening.

All Around Us (Gururi No Koto)

Dir: Ryosuke Hashiguchi, 2008, 140 mins, English subtitles

The journey of a married couple after the death of a child, and how they each begin to come to terms with its reality, this film follows the lives of Kanao (Lily Franky) and his wife Shoko (Tae Kimura).

Shoko, who works for a publishing company, was a bit of a control freak. While Kanao, who has become a courtroom sketch artist, is placid. After Shoko lost her most-wanted, she is gradually losing her balance. Kanao, meanwhile, tries simply to accept her just as she is. This is the story of their relationship over ten years, as they try to overcome their problems together.

In this gem of a film, Hashiguchi tries to explore how humans are able to have hope in difficult circumstances, presenting the pains and struggles of a married couple, in a way that is at once sweepingly panoramic and microscopically intimate. Starting in 1993, and set over the following ten years, this film reflects the parallel world of Japanese society, tracing the real social problems that Japan faced at the time. Recognised at the Japanese Academy Awards 2009, auteur Hashiguchi also won Best Screenplay with this film in 2009, at the Mainichi Film Concours.

Bad Company (Mabudachi)

Dir: Tomoyuki Furumaya, 2001, 98 mins, English subtitles

Torn between his desire to please his father, and the need to rebel against him, this film follows the young Sadatomo (Yamato Okitsu), a middle-school student. His father is a strict dictatorial middle school teacher, who believes all people are either 'normal', 'delinquents' or 'scum'.

Sadatomo and his two best friends tire of school, often bunking classes and sometimes shoplifting for amusement. When caught lifting merchandise from a local store, Kobayashi is outraged, and informs his son and his friends that they now fall into the category of 'scum'. As punishment, all three boys are made to write an essay explaining why what they did was wrong. Sadatomo's essay is entered for a competition and wins, while his two friends continue to be punished. Sadatomo becomes increasingly angry with his father's pride in his winning essay, his happiness being based on his son's shame and sorrow...

Bad Company had its World Premiere at Rotterdam Film Festival 2001, where Tomoyuki Furumaya received both the Jury Prize and the International Critics' Prize "For a heartfelt reflection on socialization at the expense of individuality, a keen insight into children's minds."

Heart, Beating In The Dark (Yamiutsu Shinzo)

Dir: Shunichi Nagasaki, 2005, 104 mins, English subtitles

A middle-aged man, Ringo (Takashi Naito), gets a call from his ex-lover, Inako (Shigeru Muroi). They are going to have a reunion after 23 years.

A young couple, Toru (Shoichi Honda) and Yuki (Noriko Eguchi), arrive at an apartment originally owned by Toru's friend and now managed by the friend's divorced wife, Ritsuko (Kaori Mizushima). They are allowed to stay there just for one night. As they are running away from loan sharks, the small space is going to be a place to bring brief peaceful moments.

After meeting each other at Ringo's electric appliance/repair shop, Ringo invites Inako to his apartment. Inako hesitates to visit there, but Ringo reveals he is living alone; his is in the process of filing a divorce and the only daughter is living with her mother.

When Toru leaves the room for a while, Yuki senses something in the room. She tells the experience to Toru, who does not believe it. Then some minor thing leads to set off Toru's impulse to have a rough bout of sex with Yuki, as if to shake off something from their minds.

On the next day, Toru and Yuki steal Ritsuko's car and head for a beach. Ringo and Inako are also driving towards the ocean. The 4 parallel lines cross on the beach and they talk with each other. And in the next morning, an incident happens...

Based on the 1982 film of the same name, which was considered at the time to be one of the best films to come out of Japan in that decade, this 2005 version was widely hailed as one of the most challenging films to come out of Japan that year.