



**Japanese Cinema for Busy People** is a series of 5 weekly seminars that aim to introduce Japanese film by offering a wide and interesting range of topics. The series is not intending to trace the history of Japanese film, but rather either through attending the whole series or by taking part in individual sessions, it is envisaged that people will understand the art form from the perspectives of its development, individual genres or issues and circumstances concerning Japanese film. The series is hoped to be complementary to the current BFI season Two Masters of Japanese cinema: Kaneto Shindo and Kozaburo Yoshimura, and any future screenings or seasons and help arouse interests in future research on its subject amongst newcomers.

**Dates:** 13th, 20th, 27th June, 4th, 11th July - **Every Wednesday**

**Venue:** The Japan Foundation

Russell Square House, 10-12 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EH

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**Week One:** Wednesday 13 June 2012 – 6.30pm

**Title:** Beyond Rashomon: A Golden Age of Japanese Cinema, but for Whom?

**Speaker:** Jasper Sharp (Writer and Film Curator)

Japanese cinema's "discovery" in the West is often traced to Kurosawa Akira's *Rashomon*, which in 1951 received the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival and the Academy Honorary Award for the most outstanding foreign language film released in the United States. In the following years, the world was introduced to works by such renowned masters of the cinematic art as Mizoguchi Kenji, Ozu Yasujiro, Kinugasa Teinosuke and Inagaki Hiroshi.

However, the term 'Ôgon jidai' was not coined to refer to a 'Golden Age' for overseas viewers. Instead, it describes the flourishing of a film culture marked by a boom in domestic admissions and production that effectively began with the departure of the Allied Occupation in 1952 and which lasted for the rest of the decade.

Rather than mirroring Hollywood's Golden Age, Japanese cinema assimilated its technical innovations of colour and the new widescreen film formats of CinemaScope and VistaVision as well as practices such as overseas location shoots, international co-productions arrangements and targeting specific audience demographics, while also expanding into foreign markets. It needed to too, as the major Hollywood studios like Paramount, Fox and Universal flooded into the country, establishing offices there, battling for the screens of one of the world's most lucrative film markets.

This presentation will look beyond the handful of filmmakers known in the West to focus specifically on the technological and industrial developments of the decade. It will reveal that the situation of the Japanese film industry during the 1950s was less one of stasis, as the cosy, nostalgic connotations of the term 'Golden Age' suggest, than of ferment, in which the technical, commercial and related stylistic innovations developed within the national studio system would become a crucial aspect of a modern commercial cinema.

**Week Two:** Wednesday 20 June 2012 – 6.30pm

**Title:** Fidelity, High and Low: Japanese Cinema and Literary Adaptation

**Speaker:** Lauri Kitsnik (University of Cambridge)

Today, when adapted screenplay has become a standard in film production, it is well worth having a look back in time to see how the relationship between literature and film - at times fruitful, at times tense - has developed during various periods of Japanese cinema. Starting from the early sound film and focusing on the Golden Age of the 1950s, we will be looking at a number of ways how literary classics have been reinterpreted for the screen, producing some of the most celebrated but also lesser known cinematic masterpieces.

**Week Three:** Wednesday 27 June 2012 – 6.30pm

**Title:** The Meaning of Independence in Japanese Cinema: Production, Distribution and Exhibition

**Speaker:** Julian Ross (University of Leeds)

Independence is often claimed yet what it exactly means is rarely explored. For some a call for artistic freedom, a rejection of studio capitulation, and for others an only option, this talk will discuss the meaning of independence in the context of Japan's film history and investigate the different incarnations of *jishu eiga* as an approach and an attitude, with results that vary from avant-garde expressions to escapist entertainment. From Kaneto Shindo's pioneering *Kindai Eiga Kyokai*, the emergence of support systems like the Art Theatre Guild and the proliferation of independent cinema in more recent years, the talk will examine alternative networks of distribution and modes of exhibition as much as methods of production whilst investigating what exactly is gained and lost with the decision to turn independent.

**Week Four:** Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012 – 6.30pm

**Title:** Collaboration or Exploitation? The Relationship between Japanese Directors and their Stars

**Speaker:** Tony Rayns (Writer, Film Critic and Programmer)

Tony Rayns will assess the working creative relationships which were formed between Japanese filmmakers including Kenji Mizoguchi and Yasujiro Ozu, and their stars. In this lecture he will attempt to outline the views and contractual bounds behind the star system in Japan, and how working with recurring actors can be both fruitful and restraining in film production. *(Further information to be confirmed)*

**Week Five:** Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012 – 6.30pm

**Title:** What's Happening Now in Japanese Cinema?

**Speaker:** Dr Rayna Denison (Lecturer in Film and Television Studies - University of East Anglia)

Japanese cinema has been making a quiet comeback over the past decade. While many people outside Japan will know the blockbuster peak of this phenomenon – the films of Hayao Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli (*Spirited Away*, *Ponyo*) – the iceberg of film production hidden from view within Japan deserves much greater attention. Popular films in Japan now are big business - they are usually part of bigger social phenomena (real-life stories, manga and television drama adaptations, cute celebrity animals) and they can gross \$100million or more at the domestic box office. This talk investigates the history behind the rise of this new "big hit" cycle of Japanese filmmaking. It asks why these films are so successful and why, despite their domestic success, they often remain hidden from (English) view.

This course is free but booking is essential –  
you are welcome to attend as many or as few talks as you like.

To register, please e-mail [event@jpf.org.uk](mailto:event@jpf.org.uk) with your name and the session you would like to attend.  
Places will be limited – please book early to avoid disappointment.

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This series is organised in association with BFI

For more information about the **Two Masters of Japanese Cinema: Kaneto Shindo & Kozaburo Yoshimura** season please [click here](#)



The Japan Foundation, London – 10-12 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5EH [www.jpf.org.uk](http://www.jpf.org.uk)