



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Michael Lieberman, Film Presence, michael@filmpresence.com, 646-415-9158

Shannon Jowett, Japan Society, sjowett@japansociety.org, 212-715-1205

Asako Sugiyama, Japan Society, asugiyama@japansociety.org, 212-715-1249

JAPAN CUTS: Festival of New Japanese Film Announces Full Slate of NY Premieres

Expanded 9th Edition Boasts Nearly 30 Features, Dozens of Shorts, Classic Restorations and Most Special Guests Ever

July 9-19, 2015, at Japan Society

"The annual survey of contemporary Japanese pop cinema veers from the berserk to the profoundly emotional, often in the course of the same movie" -The Wall Street Journal

"Appropriate to its name, Japan Cuts slices a cross section of a fecund film culture... a potpourri representing a goodly chunk of Japanese cinematic output." -The Village Voice

"Japan Cuts' full lineup of fresh or rare Japanese films is, on its own, always something to talk about, and never something to miss." -Twitch

New York, NY - North America's largest festival of Japanese cinema, **JAPAN CUTS: Festival of New Japanese Film** celebrates nearly a decade of bringing the best blockbusters and independent cinema from the island nation of Japan to the shores of Manhattan with an expanded ninth edition. From July 9-19 Japan Society's renowned summer film festival presents 28 features never before seen in New York (over half of which making their North American debut), plus dozens of new shorts, and 15 special guests from Japan, NYC, and beyond-the most in the festival's history. Audiences will gain access to visiting filmmakers and star performers in in-depth Q&A's, as well as during the festival's signature themed parties rocking Japan Society's historic theater and waterfall atrium.

JAPAN CUTS' ninth edition boasts one of its most fresh and diverse lineups yet, including 2 World Premieres, 3 International Premieres, 14 North American Premieres, 3 U.S. Premieres, 4 East Coast Premieres, 1 New York Premiere, and 1 special sneak preview, with a shorts program featuring numerous World Premieres and works new to the NYC film scene.

The festival kicks off on Thursday, July 9 with special guest director Yu Irie-known for indie music comedies-turning the spy genre up to eleven in the breathtaking thriller **JOKER GAME**, making its North American Premiere. Irie then presents the festival's **Opening Night Film**, his soulful punk comedy **HIBI ROCK: Puke Afro and the Pop Star** having its North American Premiere, followed by a rowdy rock-themed **Opening Night Party**.

JAPAN CUTS is proud to present actress **Sakura Ando** with the **CUT ABOVE Award for Outstanding Performance in Film**, presenting her latest great performances in two new films for the festival's **Centerpiece Presentation**. Shingo Wakagi's elegant **Banana Yoshimoto**

adaptation *Asleep* makes its North American Premiere, and Masaharu Take's fantastic slacker-to-boxer pathos-drenched comedy *100 Yen Love* is presented in its North American Premiere, followed by the **PUNCH LOVE Party**.

Ando first appeared on the independent film scene in 2007 in breakout supporting roles in films by Sion Sono, Yu Irie and Kiyoshi Kurosawa. Through her increasing leading roles, she has become recognized as one of the most highly respected actresses in the industry, recently ranked as the 8th Best Japanese Actress of all time by *Kinema Junpo* tied with legendary actress Kinuyo Tanaka. She was also awarded the 88th Kinema Junpo Award and 24th Japan Film Critics Awards' Best Actress prize for her roles in *100 Yen Love* and *0.5mm* (which had its World Premiere at JAPAN CUTS 2014), and nominated for Best Actress at the studio-driven 38th Japanese Academy Awards for her role in *0.5mm*.

The festival's **Closing Film** is perhaps one of the most memorable Japanese titles of the decade: Juichiro Yamasaki's *Sanchu Uprising: Voices at Dawn*, being shown for the first time outside of Japan. Director Yamasaki appears at the festival to present this remarkable independent period film, which offers a valuable fable for the political consciousness of the contemporary moment.

In a nod to Japan Society's rich history of discovering a wide spectrum of cutting-edge cinema, the ever-evolving JAPAN CUTS festival expands this year with highlight sections of programming: **Feature Slate**, **Documentary Focus**, **Classics: Restorations & Rediscoveries** and **Experimental Spotlight**.

The **Documentary Focus** section features works pushing the limits of film form and examining contemporary life in Japan, including the first screening in a Western country of Haruhiko Daishima and Koshiro Otsu's look back on the Sanrizuka struggle, *The Wages of Resistance*, making its North American Premiere. Acclaimed director Hisako Matsui (guest of JAPAN CUTS 2012 with *Leonie*) joins to present the International Premiere of *What Are You Afraid Of?*, an in-depth look at the history of feminism in Japan.

Classics: Restorations & Rediscoveries presents newly restored favorites and forgotten classics, initiating this section with the much-anticipated East Coast Premiere of the 4K restoration of Nagisa Oshima's early masterpiece *Cruel Story of Youth*. A must-see for animation fans, the just completed 4K restoration of Eiichi Yamamoto's *Belladonna of Sadness* will be presented as a special sneak preview—seen like never before for the first time at Japan Society.

Marking entirely new territory for JAPAN CUTS, the inaugural **Experimental Spotlight** program brings together the vibrant avant-garde film and video communities of New York and Tokyo. Organized as a collaboration between Japan Society, New York's **Mono No Aware**, and Tokyo's **[+] (Plus)**, it features shorts by artists between their creative spheres (many joining in-person), as well as the work of participants in a **Direct Filmmaking/Animation Workshop** led by Mono No Aware to be held at Japan Society June 21.

In addition to the tentpole Opening, Closing, and Centerpiece titles, the **Feature Slate** holds a rich selection of dynamic independent and studio titles. Of particular note is the World Premiere of *This Country's Sky*, written and directed by prolific screenwriter and critic Haruhiko Arai. Arai joins to present this film, which marks his return to the director's chair since the acclaimed 1997 *Body and Soul*, also unveiling the North American Premiere of Hiroshi Ando's *Undulant Fever*, on which he worked as screenwriter. Internationally known *This Country's Sky* actress Youki Kudo (first coming to notoriety in the U.S. through Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train* and alongside Ethan Hawke in *Snow Falling on Cedars*) will also join for the premiere. On the opposite end of the spectrum, JAPAN CUTS 2015's second World Premiere is the ambitious sequel to *Neko Samurai* (audience favorite at JAPAN CUTS 2014, selling out in a matter of days), *Neko Samurai 2: A Tropical Adventure*.

While her films have long been a festival favorite for their plays on genre and gender, celebrated director **Yuki Tanada** makes her long awaited first visit to JAPAN CUTS with the North American Premiere of *Round Trip Heart* starring former AKB48 idol Yuko Oshima, which sees Tanada's return to directing her first original screenplay since the 2008 *One Million Yen Girl*.

The lineup presents many additional twists on genre, including the North American Premiere of Kei Morikawa's *Makeup Room*, an inventive comic drama set entirely in the prep space outside an AV porn set, and the U.S. Premiere of Ryuichi Hiroki's *Her Granddaughter*, a touching romance that begins with a less than "meet cute." The East Coast Premiere of Yuya Ishii's *The Vancouver Asahi* and New York Premiere of Setsuro Wakamatsu's *Snow on the Blades* see the debut of exemplary sports and period swordplay action-dramas, while the North American Premiere of Takahisa Zeze's *Strayer's Chronicle* (starring Masaki Okada and Shota Sometani, special guest at JAPAN CUTS 2011) features a tour-de-force reworking of the mutant sci-fi action epic.

The festival features two outstanding dramas that focus on outsider stories in a country popularly believed (from in and outside Japan) to be entirely homogeneous. First, a favorite guest of JAPAN CUTS, veteran independent director **Masashi Yamamoto** returns with the North American Premiere of the widely praised *The Voice of Water*, about a woman embroiled in a religious organization in Tokyo's Korean community. Mipo O's ravishing *The Light Shines Only There*, about a tortured romance on the wrong side of the tracks in Hakodate, was Japan's entry in the 2015 Academy Awards and makes its highly anticipated East Coast Premiere here.

The 2015 edition also highlights strong rural stories, including the U.S. Premiere of Nobuhiko Obayashi's masterpiece *Seven Weeks*, the North American Premiere of Suzuki Matsuo's urban exodus comedy *A Farewell to Jinu*, and the North American Premiere of the Tochigi Prefecture filmmaking collective FOOLISH PIGGIES' surreal deadpan comedy *And the Mud Ship Sails Away*.

JAPAN CUTS' reputation for premiering the work of numerous exciting new young directors continues in 2015, from the North American Premiere of acclaimed documentarian Daishi Matsunaga's feature debut *Pieta in the Toilet*, to Kei Horie's brilliant fantastical teen romance *Forget Me Not* in its U.S. Premiere. The North American Premiere of Sho Tsukikawa's *I Alone* represents one of this year's biggest discoveries in a rebellious tale of youth and middle-aged rebellion, while the North American Premiere of Lisa Takeba's *Haruko's Paranormal Laboratory* sees the maturity of one of the most entertaining and cutting social critics Japanese cinema has seen for many years (her *The Pinkie* was a hit at JAPAN CUTS 2014). Finally, the East Coast Premiere of *Out of My Hand*, shot in Liberia and New York by Japan-born **Takeshi Fukunaga**, represents a new and assured voice in international film. Fukunaga will attend the festival with writer/producer **Donari Braxton**.

Discussing the 2015 lineup, JAPAN CUTS Programmer Joel Neville Anderson, returning for his second consecutive festival, notes a trend in Japanese cinema represented here towards the rebellious edge of contemporary Japan. "A palpable anti-establishment energy emerges," writes Anderson in his Program notes. "There are films by young directors like *100 Yen Love* or *HIBI ROCK* that exhibit a restless energy or punk spirit, and then titles such as *Sanchu Uprising: Voices at Dawn*, *The Vancouver Asahi*, *Out of My Hand*, and *I Alone* which demonstrate a political consciousness and historical knowledge of struggles for social justice and against corruption in and outside Japan's borders. Connecting these to films by seasoned filmmakers such as *The Wages of Resistance*, *What Are You Afraid Of?* and *Seven Weeks*, there's the suggestion of waves of filmmakers interested in social engagement and cultural critique—different from the generation of post-bubble 1990s filmmakers, often said to be primarily inward-looking. I think those elements together show something important about the state of film culture in Japan today... this rebellious energy is newly tangible while also precarious and

unpredictable, suggesting new waves of talent that JAPAN CUTS will continue to present in the coming years and decades.”

Tickets: \$13/\$10 Japan Society members, seniors and students, except for the July 9 screening *Hibi Rock: Puke Afro and the Pop Star* and the July 16 screening of *100 Yen Love*: \$20/\$15, including after parties. Patrons who purchase more than 5 tickets for at least 5 different films receive \$2 off of each ticket (this special offer is available only in person at the box office or by telephone, not with online purchases, and is not valid for the July 9 screening of *Hibi Rock: Puke Afro and the Pop Star* and July 16 screening of *100 Yen Love*). General admission tickets may be purchased in person at Japan Society, by calling the box office at 212-715-1258, or at www.japansociety.org. The box office will be closed July 4-7 in observance of the July 4th holiday weekend.

JAPAN CUTS 2015 SCREENINGS

All films are in Japanese with English subtitles unless otherwise noted.

FEATURE SLATE (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

100 Yen Love (Hyaku En no Koi)

Thursday, July 16 at 8:45 pm

****North American Premiere - CENTERPIECE PRESENTATION**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with actress Sakura Ando, with CUT ABOVE Award Ceremony, Followed by PUNCH LOVE Party!**

Japan. 2014. 113 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Masaharu Take. With Sakura Ando, Hirofumi Arai, Miyoko Inagawa, Saori Koide, Yozaburo Ito.

Play video games with your nephew when he gets home from school, pick up junk food at the local ¥100 *konbini* (convenience store), and pass out reading manga. Such is the life of Ichiko Saito (played by the luminous Sakura Ando), a 32 year-old living at home with her parents and recently divorced sister. When their working class home gets too small for both sisters, her mother pushes Ichiko into the world and she gets a job at the nearby *konbini*. She befriends a gruff amateur boxer (Hirofumi Arai), but cruel reality soon pushes her to don the gloves herself. As Derek Elley of *Film Business Asia* writes, “Ando triumphs in [this] quirky tale of a social misfit’s transformation,” exceeding all expectations in a physical performance of absurd comedy and deep pathos.

“The best performance of [Ando’s] so-far brilliant career” -Mark Schilling, The Japan Times

And the Mud Ship Sails Away (Soshite Dorobune wa Yuku)

Saturday, July 11 at 12:30 pm

****North American Premiere**

Japan. 2013. 88 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Hirobumi Watanabe. With Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Ayasa Takahashi, Kaori Iida, Satoshi Haneishi, Misao Hirayama.

Indignant slacker Takashi (Kiyohiko Shibukawa) has an attitude. Unfortunately there’s no one but his ancient grandmother (Misao Hirayama, the director’s 96-year-old grandmother) and pleasant friend Shohei (Kaori Iida) to hear his apathetic wisecracks in the small city of Otawara. One day Yuka (Ayasa Takahashi) appears and announces herself to be his half-sister by their deadbeat father. It doesn’t take long to size up her near-middle-aged unemployed sibling, charging him to take action that sets the film off on a fantastical turn. Prolific character actor Shibukawa shines as lead in this surprising deadpan comedy from Tochigi Prefecture collective FOOLISH PIGGIES—part Jim Jarmusch, part Federico Fellini.

“Everything here feels cannily attuned to a wry, singular if not always explicable comic sensibility.” -Dennis Harvey, Variety

Asleep (Shirakawa Yofune)

Thursday, July 16 at 6:30 pm

****North American Premiere - CENTERPIECE PRESENTATION**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with actress Sakura Ando**

Japan. 2015. 91 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Shingo Wakagi. With Sakura Ando, Arata Iura, Mitsuki Tanimura, Guama, Yoshiaki Takahashi.

Photographer and filmmaker Shingo Wakagi adapts Banana Yoshimoto's story from her 1989 compilation of the same name in a spare and elegant style reminiscent of Jun Ichikawa's *Tony Takitani*. Sakura Ando shines as Terako, a young woman having an affair with middle-aged Iwanaga (Arata Iura), whose wife is in a coma following a traffic accident. Caught in a depressive dreamlike stasis, Terako sleeps excessively, waiting for Iwanaga's calls following the suicide of her friend (Mitsuki Tanimura), who had the unconventional livelihood of accompanying sleeping strangers in bed without sex for money. An aesthetic delight, *Asleep* pushes our understanding of intimacy and pleasure, nudging us to wake up.

Opening Film at 2015 Osaka Asian Film Festival

A Farewell to Jinu (Jinu yo Saraba ~ Kamuroba Mura e)

Friday, July 17 at 6:30 pm

****North American Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 121 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Suzuki Matsuo. With Ryuhei Matsuda, Sadao Abe, Takako Matsu, Fumi Nikaido, Toshiyuki Nishida.

Former bank clerk Takeharu (Ryuhei Matsuda in a raucous comic turn) thought he was strange when he moved to a remote village in Japan's northeastern Tohoku region after developing an inexplicable "money allergy." However, as he avoids society and attempts to live a peaceful rural life without currency, Kamuroba village's bizarre characters draw him out of his shell in this increasingly surreal madcap comedy. However when a nearby town leader attempts to overthrow the handyman bus driver mayor, Takeharu must prove his attachment to Kamuroba and its people. Based on the manga series *Kamuroba Mura e (To Kamuroba Village)* by Mikio Igarashi.

Opening Film at 2015 Yubari International Fantastic Film Festival

Forget Me Not (Wasurenai to Chikatta Boku ga Ita)

Sunday, July 19 at 1:30 pm

****U.S. Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 94 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Kei Horie. With Nijiro Murakami, Akari Hayami, Yoshikazu Nishikawa, Yutaro Watanabe, Hikaru Osawa.

Biking over to the local video store, high schooler Takashi Hayama (of Naomi Kawase's *Still the Water*) runs into fellow teenager Azusa Oribe (formerly of the idol group Momoiro Clover), shaking each other out of their own little worlds. They see more and more of each other as days go by, beginning the awkward process of dating. However none of the other students at Takashi's school recall Azusa, and she reveals a strange and unbelievable secret to him: everyone she meets forgets her very existence, including her closest friends and family. Takashi devises his own system of reminders using photos and notes, however can he escape a fate that awaits us all, to be forgotten? Based on the original 2006 novel by Mizuho Hirayama, Kei Horie's *Forget Me Not* is a brilliant and surprisingly moving illustration of the youthful crisis of loving someone with all your heart when your own identity feels like it's falling apart.

*"Defies easy categorization, veering confidently between fantasy, drama, and youth romance."
-Patryk Czekaj, Twitch*

Haruko's Paranormal Laboratory (Haruko Choji Gensho Kenkyujo)

Sunday, July 12 at 6:30 pm

****North American Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 76 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Lisa Takeba. With Aoi Nakamura, Moeka Nozaki, Sayaka Aoki.

Since childhood, lonely oddball Haruko has wanted nothing more than to experience a “real paranormal phenomenon.” Haruko’s wish finally comes true when her TV set unexpectedly comes to life in the form of a handsome, TV-headed humanoid who quickly becomes the object of her fascination and romantic affections. Lisa Takeba’s follow-up to *The Pinkie* (JAPAN CUTS 2014) is an irreverent pop art whatsit that gleefully throws convention out the window in order to test the limits of her weirdly charming sensibilities, slyly using absurdist comedy to poke fun at contemporary Japanese culture.

“Beneath the psychedelic veneer, [Haruko] is a subtle acerbic jab at society’s dependence on technology, the dangers of one-way passive ‘communication,’ and a cynical view of celebrity culture and art.” -Yuan-Kwan Chan, Meniscus Magazine

Her Granddaughter (Otoko no Issho)

Sunday, July 12 at Noon

****U.S. Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 119 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Ryuichi Hiroki. With Nana Eikura, Etsushi Toyokawa, Osamu Mukai, Sakura Ando, Tomoya Maeno.

Seeking a new beginning and the solace of the countryside after a failed affair, Tsugumi quits her job and moves to her recently deceased grandmother’s sun-soaked childhood home. Before she can settle in, however, a handsome, gray-headed stranger named Kaieda suddenly appears with his own key, staying in the annex of the same house. Initially put off by his pushy, crude behavior and awkward advances, Tsugumi slowly and cautiously opens up to him—and then she finds out what really connects them to each other. This understated, moving drama was adapted from the popular manga by Keiko Nishi.

“One of Hiroki’s most well-rounded and watchable commercial efforts.” -Don Brown, The Asahi Shimbun

Opening Film, followed by OPENING NIGHT Party!

***HIBI ROCK: Puke Afro and the Pop Star (Hibi Rokku)* - OPENING FILM**

Thursday, July 9 at 9:00 pm

****North American Premiere**

****Intro and Q&A with director Yu Irie, followed by OPENING NIGHT Party!**

Japan. 2014. 110 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yu Irie. With Shuhei Nomura, Fumi Nikaido, Naoto Takenaka, Tomoya Maeno.

Based on the popular manga series by Katsumasa Enokiya, the director of *8000 Miles - SR: Saitama no Rapper* is back with a raucous tale of a young man, Hibinuma (Shuhei Nomura), who moved to Tokyo dreaming of becoming a rockstar. With no money or prospects, he and his bandmates live and work at an underground venue. Things look up when a naked Hibinuma is kicked off the stage by a rambunctious girl (Fumi Nikaido, *JAPAN CUTS* 2014 guest) who shows him how to really rock. To his dismay, the mystery girl turns out to be national pop idol Saki Utagawa, prompting a pop vs. punk crisis. Get amped for this rowdy physical comedy with a lot of heart!

“Totally mental!” -Third Window Films

I Alone (Kono Yo De Ore/ Boku Dake)

Sunday, July 12 at 4:15 pm

****North American Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 109 min. Blu-ray, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Sho Tsukikawa. With Makita Sports, Sosuke Ikematsu, Shiro Sano, Masako Chiba, Ryusuke Komakine.

A common horoscope brings a timid middle-aged salaryman and high school delinquent to the center of a political scandal, in which a corrupt incumbent mayor seeks to crush the candidacy of his reformer opponent. This wild anti-establishment tale blends a punk ethos with absurdist

comedy as the unlikely pair finds their existence given new meaning when they work to return a kidnapped baby. Along the way they must fight not only the assault of the mayor's neoliberal redevelopment of the town, but his bribed police force and yakuza. Under director Sho Tsukikawa's taut direction, *I Alone's* mad roller coaster ride plot and outraged self-determination all ring emotionally true, making this one of the year's biggest discoveries.

Director Sho Tsukikawa winner of the Louis Vuitton Journeys Award (judged by Wong Kar-wai, Sofia Coppola and Gustavo A. Santaolalla)

JOKER GAME (Joka Gemu)

Thursday, July 9 at 6:30 pm

****North American Premiere**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Yu Irie**

Japan. 2015. 108 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yu Irie. With Kazuya Kamenashi, Kyoko Fukada, Yusuke Iseya, Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Keisuke Koide.

Lieutenant Colonel Yuki (Yusuke Iseya) established the mysterious D Agency, an independent unit of the Japanese army on the eve of WWII. Rejecting army academy graduates, he instead recruits street-smart hustlers or degenerates, training them to be masters of manipulation, international operatives counteracting the war-mongering colonialist efforts of imperial army leadership. One such antihero agent under the name Jiro Kato (Kazuya Kamenashi) goes on a harrowing mission to uncover secret documents, battling forces from within and without his own ranks. Chameleon director Yu Irie, known for indie music comedies, turns the spy genre up to eleven in this breathtaking thriller.

Based on the bestselling novel by Koji Yanagi, winner of the Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for New Writers and the Mystery Writers of Japan Award

The Light Shines Only There (Sokonomi nite Hikari Kagayaku)

Wednesday, July 15 at 9:30 pm

****East Coast Premiere**

Japan. 2014. 120 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Mipo O. With Go Ayano, Chizuru Ikewaki, Masaki Suda, Kazuya Takahashi, Hiroko Isayama.

This film about love on the fringes of society begins with former mountain quarry dynamiter Tatsuo (Go Ayano) wasting away in the seedy bars and the numbing clamor of pachinko parlors below. Meeting friendly young parolee Takuji (Masaki Suda), he's invited for a meal at the family's ramshackle home by the beach where he meets Takuji's older sister Chinatsu (Chizuru Ikewaki). Initiating an intense romance amidst their alcoholism and prostitution, together they lick deeper wounds of guilt, dependence, and abuse. Mipo O's revelatory film is set in Hakodate, a northern port city in Hokkaido where Yasushi Sato, author of the 1989 novel upon which it's based, was born and raised.

18+ This film is unrated, but may only be viewed by persons 18 years of age and older

Japan's entry for Best Foreign Language Film at 2015 Academy Awards; #1 of Kinema Junpo's Best Japanese Films of 2014

"A fierce character study." -Deborah Young, The Hollywood Reporter

Makeup Room (Meiku Rumu)

Friday, July 10 at 8:45 pm

****North American Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 86 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Kei Morikawa. With Beni Ito, Aki Morita, Nanami Kawakami, Riri Kuribayashi.

Drawing from his own experiences, seasoned adult video director Kei Morikawa adapted his witty comedy originally written for the stage into a delightfully titillating feature. Starring real-

life adult video actresses, comedic exchanges and tender moments tumble into one another as actors and crew run in and out of the dressing room of a porn shoot-a shoestring budget *Day for Night* of the Japanese adult video world. Anchored by non-AV actress Aki Morita's assured performance as the level-headed makeup artist, the film embraces its clever conceit of never once leaving the dressing room.

18+ This film is unrated, but may only be viewed by persons 18 years of age and older

Grand Prix winning film at 2015 Yubari International Fantastic Film Festival

"Genuinely funny, touching and cleverly realized" -Patryk Czekaj, Twitch

"...a fresh, briskly entertaining approach" - Mark Schilling, The Japan Times

Neko Samurai 2: A Tropical Adventure (Neko Samurai 2: Minami no Shima ni Yuku)

Saturday, July 18 at 8:45 pm

****World Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 85 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Takeshi Watanabe. With Kazuki Kitamura.

Everyone's favorite grumpy samurai and cute white cat are back! Once feared as "Madara the Devil," master swordsman Kyutaro Madarame (Kazuki Kitamura) returns home from Edo a lowly *ronin*, living with his mother-in-law. When she tells him of an opportunity to work as sword instructor on the island of Shikoku, he sets off on a journey with his feline companion Tamanojo. When a ninja heads them off he should know things are not what they seem. Former Assistant Director to Takashi Miike, Takeshi Watanabe helms this ambitious follow-up co-written by star Kitamura (recipient of JAPAN CUTS' 2014 CUT ABOVE Award), who envisioned the film's wild story.

Out of My Hand

Saturday, July 11 at 5:00 pm

****East Coast Premiere**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Takeshi Fukunaga and writer/producer Donari Braxton**

USA/Liberia. 2015. 87 min. DCP, in Liberian English with English subtitles. Directed by Takeshi Fukunaga. With Bishop Blay, Zenobia Taylor, Duke Murphy Dennis, Rodney Rogers Beckley, David Roberts.

Hokkaido-born, Brooklyn-based filmmaker Takeshi Fukunaga takes his camera to Liberia, casting mostly non-professionals (all native to the country) in order to deliver an impressively assured first feature. After a labor strike loses steam and defeated rubber tree tappers go back to work to continue the cycle of poverty and frustration they initially protested, Cisco desperately seeks a way out as a cab driver in New York City. But he soon discovers there are some things he can't escape, and before Cisco can build a new future for himself he must first confront the ghosts of his war-torn past. *Out of My Hand* is the second narrative feature film ever shot in Liberia by a foreign production.

Panorama Section of 2015 Berlin International Film Festival, U.S. Fiction Competition at Los Angeles Film Festival

Pieta in the Toilet (Toire no Pieta)

Tuesday, July 14 at 9:00 pm

****North American Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 120 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Daishi Matsunaga. With Yojiro Noda, Hana Sugisaki, Lily Franky, Saya Ichikawa, Rie Miyazawa.

Inspired by "Godfather of Manga" Osamu Tezuka's last diary page, this fraught and tender story marks the fiction debut for acclaimed documentary filmmaker Daishi Matsunaga. Hiroshi (Yojiro Noda, lead singer of popular Japanese rock band RADWIMPS in his first acting role) is an

introverted painter once full of promise. While working as a window cleaner, he falls suddenly ill and the doctor requires him to bring a family member for his test results. Not wanting to involve his family, Hiroshi pays a headstrong highschooler Mai (Hana Sugisaki), who he meets in the waiting room, to play his sister. Told that his days are numbered, Hiroshi struggles with his fate while Mai asks him, "Shall we go die together, then?"

World Premiere at 16th Jeonju International Film Festival

Round Trip Heart (Romansu)

Friday, July 10 at 6:30 pm

****North American Premiere**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Yuki Tanada**

Japan. 2015. 97 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yuki Tanada. With Yuko Oshima, Koji Okura, Yoshimi Nozaki, Masataka Kubota.

The limited express "Romancecar" railway service links Tokyo's Shinjuku Station with tourist destinations such as Odawara, Enoshima, and Kamakura, every day carrying train attendant Hachiko Hojo back and forth (an excellent Yuko Oshima, in her first starring role since departing the idol group AKB48). In her mid-twenties, Hachiko excels in her job serving meals and refreshments onboard the train. However a comic encounter with a sleazy movie producer passenger (character actor Koji Okura in a winning lead role) leads to her discovery of both the gorgeous Hakone of Kanazawa prefecture and a new awareness of past memories that have prevented her from fulfilling her own path. Directing her first original screenplay since the 2008 *One Million Yen Girl*, Yuki Tanada once again shows herself to be one of the most thrilling directors in Japan in this touching road movie.

"With her films manifesting a unique wit and a genuine warmth and affection for her characters, [Tanada] is one of the most exciting arrivals on the scene" -Jasper Sharp, Midnight Eye

Sanchu Uprising: Voices at Dawn (Atarashiki Tami)- CLOSING FILM

Sunday, July 19 at 6:00 pm

****International Premiere**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Juichiro Yamasaki**

Japan. 2014. 117 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Juichiro Yamasaki. With Naohisa Nakagaki, Kano Kajiwara, Shoichi Honda, Yota Kawase, Hotaru.

1726, Sanchu, Okayama Prefecture: farmers negotiate with the feudal domain in order to seek exemption from rising taxes before infighting leads to suppression by the samurai class, and the farmers band together for battle. It's a moment of injustice, setting the stage for bravery and sacrifice. However those daring characters remain largely offscreen in Juichiro Yamasaki's brilliant film. Instead, the cowardly protagonist Jihei (Naohisa Nakagaki) weighs the risks of rebellion and its aftermath, a tale resonating with our contemporary moment. In this rare independent *jidaigeki* (period piece), Kenta Tawara's beautiful digital B&W photography channels and refigures luminaries of classical Japanese cinema, boasting rapturous animated sequences by Tomomichi Nakamura and an experimental score by Ayako Sasaki.

Indie Forum, 2015 Osaka Asian Film Festival

Seven Weeks (Nononanananoka)

Saturday, July 11 at 7:30 pm

****U.S. Premiere**

Japan. 2014. 171 min. Blu-ray, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Nobuhiko Obayashi. With Toru Shinagawa, Saki Terashima, Takako Tokiwa, Yumi Adachi, Tokie Hidari.

In Ashibetsu, Hokkaido on March 11, 2:46 PM, Mitsuo Suzuki (Toru Shinagawa) takes his last breath at a ripe age of 92. His dispersed family members arrive during his last moments-all quirky, selfish and human in their own way. When a strange and striking woman (Takako Tokiwa) arrives asking if she was too late, questions are asked and a feverish history begins to unravel

spanning Mitsuo's long life. Director Nobuhiko Obayashi (of cult-classic *HAUSU* fame) burns through 171 minutes with his unmistakable visual sensibility full of vibrant colors and rhythmic editing that pounds with life and fierce energy.

"Seven Weeks pulses with more hot-blooded vitality and audacity than most films by [Obayashi's] younger compatriots" -Don Brown, The Asahi Shimbun

Snow on the Blades (Zakurozaka no Adauchi)

Tuesday, July 14 at 6:30 pm

****New York Premiere**

Japan. 2014. 121 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Setsuro Wakamatsu. With Kiichi Nakai, Hiroshi Abe, Ryoko Hirose, Kichimon Nakamura.

In this beautifully lensed *jidaigeki* (period piece), based on the events of the Sakuradamon Incident of 1860, a sincere samurai named Kingo Shimura is faced with the immense shame of failing to protect his lord, who is assassinated in a surprise ambush. In order to restore his honor, Kingo is tasked with finding and killing the remaining assassins. Meanwhile, Japan begins to undergo significant changes, shedding samurai values as the Edo period ends and Western influences start to take hold. After a tortured 13-year search, Kingo finally finds the one remaining assassin—but, as he unsheathes his sword for vengeance, is he still the same man he once was?

Adapted from a short story by Jiro Asada (When the Last Sword is Drawn, The Stationmaster / Railroad Man)

Strayer's Chronicle (Sutoreiyazu Kuronikuru)

Sunday, July 19 at 3:30 pm

****International Premiere**

Japan. 2015. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Takahisa Zeze. With Masaki Okada, Shota Sometani, Riko Narumi, Yuina Kuroshima, Mayu Matsuoka.

In the 1990s the Japanese government carries out experiments altering human evolution, producing two groups of babies inheriting unique mutant superpowers. Now reaching their twenties, the two groups use their abilities for different purposes: justice and chaos. However when they learn the truth of their origin they must band together to fight an apocalyptic destiny. Director Takahisa Zeze—who first came to fame in erotic cinema as one of the “Four Devils of Pink”—is a venerable auteur of independent and commercial genre films, here imbuing this sci-fi action thriller featuring Japan's hottest young stars with his politicized themes of nomads on the margins of society in the vein of *X-Men*. Based on Takayoshi Honda's best-selling novel.

Director Takahisa Zeze winner of the FIPRESCI (International Federation of Film Critics) and NETPAC (Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema) Prizes for Heaven's Story at the 2011 Berlin International Film Festival.

This Country's Sky (Kono Kuni no Sora)

Saturday, July 18 at 6:00 pm

****World Premiere**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Haruhiko Arai and actress Youki Kudoh**

Japan. 2015. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Haruhiko Arai. With Fumi Nikaido, Hiroki Hasegawa, Youki Kudoh.

Acclaimed screenwriter and filmmaker Haruhiko Arai dusts off his director's hat following his 1997 *Body and Soul* to turn a passion project of 30 years into a reality. An adaptation of Yuichi Takai's prize-winning 1983 novel of the same name, *This Country's Sky* is a nuanced drama set in Sugunami, Tokyo towards the destitute final years of WWII. Satoko (Fumi Nikaido) is a 19 year-old girl falling passionately in love with her older married neighbor (Hiroki Hasegawa), who has been spared combat due to his failing the military physical examination. Even away from the battlefield, as they grow closer their feelings are caught up in the violence of war.

Based on the 1983 novel by Yuichi Takai, winner of the 1984 Tanizaki Prize

Undulant Fever (Umi wo Kanjiru Toki)

Saturday, July 18 at 3:15 pm

****North American Premiere**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with screenwriter Haruhiko Arai**

Japan. 2014. 118 min. HDCAM-SR, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Hiroshi Ando. With Yui Ichikawa, Sosuke Ikematsu, Madoka Sakai, Kumi Nakamura, Sakiko Takao.

When Kei Nakazawa's original novel was published in 1978, it became an immediate bestseller with over 600,000 copies sold. It scandalized Japanese readers of the time not only for its penetrating view of female sexuality and desire, but also because the author was just 18-years-old. Haruhiko Arai and Hiroshi Ando's erotically charged adaptation retains the late 1970s period, in which young high schooler Emiko (Yui Ichikawa) encounters senior Hiroshi (Sosuke Ikematsu) where she's cutting class in their newspaper club room. Emiko loves Hiroshi, however he makes it clear he's only interested in sex. She assents, beginning a years-long tortured romance that only grows more intense when their roles are reversed.

18+ This film is unrated, but may only be viewed by persons 18 years of age and older

Based on Kei Nakazawa's 1978 novel Umi wo Kanjiru Toki (When I Sense the Sea), winner of the Gunzo Newcomer's Award

The Vancouver Asahi (Bankuba no Asahi)

Saturday, July 11 at 2:30 pm

****East Coast Premiere**

Japan. 2014. 132 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yuya Ishii. With Satoshi Tsumabuki, Kazuya Kamenashi, Ryo Katsuji, Yusuke Kamiji, Sosuke Ikematsu.

In Vancouver of the 1930s there was a bustling Japantown with a local baseball team called the Vancouver Asahi formed by a group of young men born in Canada to Japanese immigrant parents. Working hard to make ends meet and enduring racism, the men still manage to find the time to play the sport they love... even though they lose every time. When Reggie (Satoshi Tsumabuki) is chosen to be the new captain, he and his friend ace pitcher Roy (Kazuya Kamenashi) devise a new tactic that begins to work. The team's morale is high but the dark clouds of WWII are creeping in. Based on the true story of The Vancouver Asahi, director Yuya Ishii (*The Great Passage*) brings this little-told story roaring to life.

Winner of the audience award at the Vancouver International Film Festival

"An old-fashioned entertainment in the best sense. In a word, thrilling." -Tony Rayns, Vancouver International Film Festival

The Voice of Water (Mizu no Koe wo Kiku)

Friday, July 17 at 8:45 pm

****North American Premiere**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Masashi Yamamoto**

Japan. 2014. 129 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Masashi Yamamoto. With Hyunri, Shuri, Jun Murakami.

The latest from writer-director Masashi Yamamoto (*Three☆Points*, JAPAN CUTS 2011), a leading light of Japan's independent film scene, is an impressively multi-layered drama revolving around religious cults, strained family relationships, fractured identities, and the yakuza. Minjung, a young Korean-Japanese woman, draws a small but fervent following as the puppet leader of God's Water, a cult in which she is said to communicate with a water oracle in order to heal the pain of the damaged and lonely. When her following starts to pick up and her

estranged father enters the picture, things start to unravel, prompting Minjung to seek out her roots and ultimately find herself.

Official Selection, 2015 Berlin International Film Festival Forum Section

“A penetrating glimpse into the workings of a religious cult in Tokyo's Korean community” - Maggie Lee, Variety

DOCUMENTARY FOCUS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

The Wages of Resistance: Narita Stories (Sanrizuka ni Ikiru)

Saturday, July 18 at 12:30 pm

****North American Premiere**

Japan. 2014. 140 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Haruhiko Daishima, Koshiro Otsu.

The site where Tokyo's major flight hub Narita International Airport lies is in fact the agricultural area Sanrizuka. Narita's construction was decided by the Japanese government in the 1960s to support a burgeoning economy, selected due to the farmers' relatively brief generational connection to the land. While some were bought off, many poor farmers refused, and their resistance gained the attention of the radical student movement. For over a decade they fought divisive land expropriation schemes, physically resisting brutal riot police. Those that remain are the subject of this film, living and farming just outside the gates, looking back on the struggle as planes fly overhead. Shot and co-directed by renowned cinematographer Koshiro Otsu, who filmed Shinsuke Ogawa's documentaries on Sanrizuka, his stunning early footage appears along with an elegiac score by Otomo Yoshihide.

Opening Film of 2014 Taiwan International Documentary Festival

“The Wages of Resistance invites us to consider the profits and losses of all attempts to resist state power, no matter where they are or when they happened.” -Markus Nornes, author of Japanese Documentary Film: The Meiji Era Through Hiroshima

What Are You Afraid Of? (Nani wo Osoreru)

Wednesday, July 15 at 6:30 pm

****International Premiere**

****Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Hisako Matsui**

Japan. 2015. 120 min. Blu-ray, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Hisako Matsui. With Mitsu Tanaka, Chizuko Ueno, Kimiko Tanaka, Tomoko Yonetsu, Keiko Higuchi.

A (her)story told through the very people involved in the women's liberation movement beginning in Japan in the 1970s. Filled with personal accounts of why they joined the movement and ideas about work that is still left to be done. Female director Hisako Matsui (*Leonie*, JAPAN CUTS 2012) draws out episodes from these torch-bearing women, touching on a wide range of subjects from gender inequality, marriage, social structures, women's studies and journalism to aging. A testament to feminism in different forms, the film serves as both a powerful introduction to those unfamiliar with the history and a celebration of the women who paved the way and continue to work for a better future.

CLASSICS: REDISCOVERIES & RESTORATIONS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Belladonna of Sadness (Kanashimi no Beradonna) (4K restoration)

Friday, July 10 at 10:30 pm

****Special Sneak Preview**

Japan. 1973. 89 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Eiichi Yamamoto. With Aiko Nagayama, Takao Ito, Tatsuya Nakadai.

Never before released in the U.S., JAPAN CUTS presents a sneak preview of the just-completed 4K restoration of forgotten animation masterpiece *Belladonna of Sadness*. It is the third and

last of the adult-oriented Animerama trilogy produced by the “Godfather of Manga” Osamu Tezuka and directed by his longtime collaborator Eiichi Yamamoto (*Astro Boy*). Based on the book *Satanism and Witchcraft* by French writer Jules Michelet, young and innocent Jeanne is ravaged by the local lord and makes a pact with the Devil himself. The Devil-voiced by legendary actor Tatsuya Nakadai (*Ran, The Human Condition*)-appears in phallic forms and, through Jeanne, incites the village into a sexual frenzy. In a new restoration using the original camera negatives, this erotic and psychedelic trip of a film springs to life.

18+ This film is unrated, but may only be viewed by persons 18 years of age and older

“A must-see for fans of Japanese animation.” -Electric Sheep

Cruel Story of Youth (Seishun Zankoku Monogatari) (4K restoration)

Sunday, July 12 at 2:15 pm

****East Coast Premiere**

Japan. 1961. 96 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Nagisa Oshima. With Miyuki Kuwano, Yusuke Kawazu, Yoshiko Kuga.

Rebel auteur Nagisa Oshima’s groundbreaking second feature gets a 4K restoration makeover (supervised by cinematographer Takashi Kawamata) that breathes new life into the film’s vibrant colors and unhinged widescreen photography. A critical and commercial success upon its release, this consistently unforgiving tale of a disenfranchised teenage couple’s doomed relationship set among seedy Tokyo backstreets, bars and bedrooms still manages to feel unnervingly contemporary. A seminal classic of youthful unrest and revolt, *Cruel Story of Youth* introduced 28-year-old Oshima to the world as the cinematic revolutionary he would continue to be throughout the rest of his career.

“The restored 4K print explodes onto the screen, its once faded colours now a heady retro rainbow.” -The Brisbane Asia Pacific Film Festival

EXPERIMENTAL SPOTLIGHT (ORDER OF SCREENING)

Mono No Aware x [+] (Plus)

Sunday, July 12 at 8:45 pm

****Featuring introduction with filmmakers Steve Cossman, Akiko Maruyama, Tomonari Nishikawa, Joel Schlemowitz, Ted Wiggan, followed by a reception**

Avant-garde film and video practice emerges from vibrant cultures of experimentation and collaboration. This program represents work produced around and selected by two exemplary organizations: the New York-based Mono No Aware, and Tokyo-based [+] (Plus). Some of the featured films and videos emphasize elements of collaboration and transnational exchange, and influence between artists, spaces, and technologies in Japan and the U.S. Juxtaposing works by artists loosely associated with the creative networks of Mono No Aware and [+] produces a visually and aurally stimulating 90+ minutes of unexpected connections and discoveries. Organized by Japan Society, Steve Cossman of Mono No Aware and Takashi Makino of [+].

Mono No Aware Direct Filmmaking/Animation Workshop Films. 2015. Approx. 8 min. 16mm.

Various 16mm works from the participants of Mono No Aware’s Direct Filmmaking/Animation Workshop held at Japan Society on June 21.

RELAY, Steve Cossman. 2014. 11 min. Super 8mm to HDV. A moving-image document of the visual environment created by artist Ei Wada that emphasizes his grassroots approach to instrument making and reflects his concepts about performance as art. **New York Premiere.**

Koropokkuru, Akiko Maruyama. 2015. 5 min. 16mm. A moving portrayal of an ineffable force that can be humanlike or embody itself within displayed objects. Inspired by concepts from the Koropokkuru folktale within Japanese Ainu culture and *The Invisible Man*. **World Premiere.**

Louis Armstrong Obon, Joel Schlemowitz. 2015. 14 min. Super 8mm and HD to HDV. A portrait of Japanese jazz musicians Yoshio and Keiko Toyama as seen through their annual summer pilgrimage to the grave of Louis Armstrong in Flushing, Queens. **World Premiere.**

EMBLEM, Rei Hayama. 2012. 16 min. 16mm to HDCAM. Video footage for the research of Japanese endangered species of raptors is turned into a decorative fiction film through the conversion process between video and film. **New York Premiere.**

Stella Nova, Ted Wiggin. 2015. 4 min. 16mm. Red blue green, circle square triangle, dog star man. The life and death of a star. **World Premiere.**

Emaki/Light, Takashi Makino & Takashi Ishida. 2011. 16 min. 35mm & 16mm to HDCAM. Drawing on film by Takashi Ishida; edit and telecine by Takashi Makino; music by Takashi Ishida & Takashi Makino. **U.S. Premiere.**

sound of a million insects, light of a thousand stars, Tomonari Nishikawa. 2014. 2 min. 35mm. 100 ft of 35mm negative film was buried under fallen leaves about 15 miles away from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station from the sunset of June 24, 2014 to sunrise the following day.

DUB HOUSE Experience in Material No.52, Kei Shichiri & Ryoji Suzuki. 2012. 16 min. 35mm. Strict but exquisite evocation links two artistic disciplines and two visions of light and darkness. Architecture and film meet in the cinema. **North American Premiere.**

GUEST SPOTLIGHTS

Sakura Ando (*100 Yen Love, Asleep*)

****Recipient of the CUT ABOVE Award for Outstanding Performance in Film**

Sakura Ando appeared on the independent film scene in the late 2000s, rapidly establishing a reputation as a brave and unpredictable performer across comedy and drama with her debut in Eiji Okuda's *Out of the Wind* and breakout supporting roles in Sion Sono's *Love Exposure*, Yuki Tanada's *Ain't No Tomorrows*, Yu Irie's *8000 Miles 2: Girls Rapper*, and Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Penance*. With physically and emotionally demanding performances she has distinguished herself in increasing lead roles such as in Yong-hi Yang's *Our Homeland* and is recognized as one of the most highly respected actresses in the industry, recently ranked as the 8th Best Japanese Actress of all time by *Kinema Junpo*. She was nominated for Best Actress at the studio-driven 38th Japanese Academy Awards for her role in the independent *0.5mm*, and awarded the 88th *Kinema Junpo* Award for *100 Yen Love* and *0.5mm*.

Haruhiko Arai (*This Country's Sky, Undulant Fever*)

Haruhiko Arai is a venerable force in Japanese independent cinema as prolific screenwriter and publisher and editor of the influential *Eiga Geijutsu* magazine. His writing credits include collaborations with the greatest directors in Japanese cinema from the 1970s to today: Koji Wakamatsu's *Hika*, Tatsumi Kumashiro's *A Woman with Red Hair*, Rokuro Mochizuki's *Minazuki*, Ryuichi Hiroki's *Vibrator* and *It's Only Talk*, Junji Sakamoto's *KT*, as well as further collaborations with luminaries such as Chusei Sone. He joins this year to present the World Premiere of *This Country's Sky*, and Hiroshi Ando's *Undulant Fever* as screenwriter.

Takeshi Fukunaga (*Out of My Hand*)

Takeshi Fukunaga is an award-winning filmmaker based in Brooklyn, New York. His first short film *The Hole In the Sky* (2007) earned a student award from the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures. His work has been screened in many venues ranging from Anthology Film

Archives and The National Arts Club to DUMBO Arts Festival and Tokyo Fashion Week. His short documentary, *The Sword Maker* (2011) was selected as Staff Pick on Vimeo and has gained over 1.3 million views online. In 2013, he co-founded TELEVISION with Donari Braxton.

Yu Irie (*HIBI ROCK: Puke Afro and the Pop Star, JOKER GAME*)

After successful short films and work in V-Cinema, Yu Irie's 2009 cult hit *8000 Miles - SR: Saitama no Rapper* won Grand Prize in the Yubari International Fantastic Film Festival's Off-Theatre competition. He immediately followed this up with *8000 Miles 2: Girls Rapper*, flipping the central characters' gender while managing a larger budget. He's continued to tackle projects of increasing scale and complexity. While he wears his cinephilia and love of music on his sleeve, as Tom Mes of *Midnight Eye* notes, "Irie's style is all his own," leading exciting new independent and big-budget projects.

Youki Kudoh (*This Country's Sky*)

Youki Kudoh's border-crossing career took off receiving Best Newcomer Award at the 1985 Yokohama Film Festival for her role in Gakuryu (Sogo) Ishii's *The Crazy Family*, soon followed by Shinji Somai's *Typhoon Club* (1985). She broke onto the international scene in Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train* (1989) alongside Masatoshi Nagase as a couple on a Blues pilgrimage in Memphis. With further breakout roles in *Picture Bride* (1995) and *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1999), Kudoh continues to distinguish herself as a fantastic talent in *Blood: The Last Vampire* (2000), *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005) and *The Limits of Control* (2009).

Hisako Matsui (*What Are You Afraid Of?*)

Beginning her career as a writer and editor at several popular magazines, in 1979 Hisako Matsui established an actors' agency, and a decade later founded her own production company, Essen Communications. There she produced numerous TV dramas and documentaries, making her feature directorial debut in 1998 with the award-winning *Yukie*. She presented her film *Leonie* at JAPAN CUTS 2012, based on the life of Leonie Gilmour, mother of sculptor Isamu Noguchi, which was shot on location all across Japan and the U.S.

Yuki Tanada (*Round Trip Heart*)

Studying video production at Image Forum in Tokyo, Yuki Tanada wrote, directed, and starred in *Moru*, winning grand prize at the 2001 Pia Film Festival. Following this with a documentary on folk singer Wataru Takada in 2003, her erotic gender-reversal *Moon and Cherry* (2004) launched her popularity abroad. Her many features show a masterful direction of actors and subtle visual style, demonstrating a range of penetrating observations from *One Million Yen Girl* (2008), honored with the Directors Guild of Japan New Directors Award, to *The Cowards Who Looked to the Sky* (2012) and *Mourning Recipe* (2013).

Masashi Yamamoto (*The Voice of Water*)

Yamamoto first debuted *Carnival in the Night* (1983) at the Berlin Film Festival and later gained attention for *Robinson's Garden* (1987). His 1999 *Junk Food* was screened in the United States during a research fellowship in New York City, and he has since broadened his Japanese and Western audiences. Yamamoto was last at JAPAN CUTS with *Three☆Points* in 2011.

Juichiro Yamasaki (*Sanchu Uprising: Voices at Dawn*)

Born in Osaka and educated in Kyoto, Juichiro Yamasaki is engaged in tomato farming in his father's hometown of Maniwa, Okayama, the setting of *Sanchu Uprising*. His 2011 debut feature *The Sound of Light* premiered at the Tokyo International Film Festival, the Bright Future section of the International Film Festival Rotterdam, and won the Nippon Visions Award at Nippon Connection. Yamasaki's film screening and production group [cine/maniwa] won the Grand Prix of the Okayama Prefectural Art-Cultural Prize as well as the Fukutake Cultural Encouragement Prize.

EXPERIMENTAL SPOTLIGHT GUESTS

Steve Cossman (*Relay*) is founder and director of Mono No Aware, a non-profit cinema arts organization. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn as a director, curator, visual artist, educator and activist.

Akiko Maruyama (*Koropokkuru*) is a filmmaker and educator who uses 8mm film, 16mm film, handmade film, stop-motion animation and HD video. Originally from Fukuoka, Japan, she holds a BFA in Film/Video from Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

Tomonari Nishikawa (*sound of a million insects, light of a thousand stars*) is a filmmaker, curator and educator from Nagoya, Japan whose work has screened at many international film festivals since 2003. He currently teaches in the Cinema Department at Binghamton University.

Joel Schlemowitz (*Louis Armstrong Obon*) is an experimental filmmaker based in Brooklyn who works in 16mm film, shadowplay, and stereographic media. He teaches experimental filmmaking at The New School and is Resident Film Programmer and Arcane Media Specialist at the Morbid Anatomy Museum.

Ted Wiggin (*Stella Nova*) makes short films and software for animation. His films attempt to show rational systems that transcend their own logic. He lives in New York and works at Hornet Inc.

~

JAPAN CUTS gives cinephiles their first (and sometimes only) chance to discover the next waves of film from Japan today, showing the diversity and vitality of one of the most exciting world cinemas. Since its launch in 2007, the festival has attracted nearly 40,000 filmgoers and presented over 200 feature films, many never-before seen in the U.S. The first annual JAPAN CUTS was one of the most successful single events in the Society's 2007-08 centennial celebration. Noted for its "rich and varied selection of recent Japanese films" (*The New York Times*), JAPAN CUTS has premiered several films that have gone on to garner international acclaim, including: *0.5mm*, *About Her Brother*, *Buddha*, *Confessions*, *Death Note*, *Fish Story*, *Gantz*, *Haru's Journey*, *Kamome Diner*, *Love Exposure*, *Milocrorze*, *The Mourning Forest*, *Ninja Kids!!!*, *Sawako Decides*, *Sukiyaki Western Django*, *Sway*, *Sketches of Kaitan City*, *The Tale of Iya*, *Killers*, *United Red Army*, *Vacation*, *Why Don't You Play in Hell?* and *Yasukuni*. Every year JAPAN CUTS features a number of post-screening parties, and exclusive Q&As with filmmakers and actors. Past festivals have included appearances by Koji Yakusho, Masami Nagasawa, Kenji Kohashi, Sora Aoi, Tatsuya Fujiwara, Yoshimasa Ishibashi, Shusuke Kaneko, Naomi Kawase, Kazuki Kitamura, Masahiro Kobayashi, Kazuyoshi Kumakiri, Kentaro Moriya, Fumi Nikaido, Miwa Nishikawa, Naoko Oigami, Natsuki Seta, Shota Sometani, Sion Sono, Tomorowo Taguchi, Gen Takahashi, Toshiaki Toyoda, Hitoshi Yazaki, and Isao Yukisada.

The **Japan Society Film Program** offers a diverse selection of Japanese films, from classics to contemporary independent productions. Its aim is to entertain, educate and support activities in the Society's arts and culture programs. Japan Society has actively introduced Japanese cinema to New York's international audiences since the 1970s, presenting works by the era's then-new giants such as Shohei Imamura, Seijun Suzuki, and Hiroshi Teshigahara upon their first release, and groundbreaking retrospectives on now canonical figures such as Kenji Mizoguchi and Yasujiro Ozu. The Film Program has featured retrospectives of great directors, thematic series and many U.S. premieres, and toured some series to other U.S. venues. While Japan Society's repertory film programming gained new momentum and institutional support in the 70s as a full-fledged program, the first screening at Japan Society was actually in 1922, a four-reel film of then Crown Prince Hirohito's 1921 visit to Europe. For more, visit <http://www.japansociety.org/film>.

Founded in 1907, **Japan Society** is a multidisciplinary hub for global leaders, artists, scholars, educators, and English and Japanese-speaking audiences. At the Society, more than 100 events each year feature sophisticated, topically relevant presentations of Japanese art and culture and open, critical dialogue on issues of vital importance to the U.S., Japan and East Asia. An American nonprofit, nonpolitical organization, the Society cultivates a constructive, resonant and dynamic relationship between the people of the U.S. and Japan. More at <http://www.japansociety.org>.

Japan Society is located at 333 East 47th Street between First and Second avenues (accessible by the 4/5/6 and 7 subway at Grand Central or the E and M subway at Lexington Avenue). For more information, call 212-832-1155 or visit www.japansociety.org.

###

JAPAN CUTS is generously sponsored by UNIQLO and Sapporo USA Inc. Sony SRW-5800 HDCAM-SR Studio VTR is provided courtesy of Sony Electronics Inc. Transportation is generously supported by Japan Airlines, the exclusive Japanese Airlines sponsor of Film Programs at Japan Society. Additional transportation is generously supported by United Airlines. The opening night festivities are generously supported by The Globus Family. Japan Society's Film Programs are generously supported by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Endowment Fund. Additional season support is provided by The Globus Family, Kenneth A. Cowin, Mr. and Mrs. Omar H. Al-Farisi, Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Catanzaro, Laurel Gonsalves, David S. Howe, James Read Levy, Geoff Matters, and Dr. Tatsuji Namba.

SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

Thursday, July 9

6:30 pm - JOKER GAME*
9:00 pm - HIBI ROCK: Puke Afro and the Pop Star + Opening Night Party*

Friday, July 10

6:30 pm - Round Trip Heart*
8:45 pm - Makeup Room
10:30 pm - Belladonna of Sadness

Saturday, July 11

12:30 pm - And the Mud Ship Sails Away
2:30 pm - The Vancouver Asahi
5:00 pm - Out of My Hand*
7:30 pm - Seven Weeks

Sunday, July 12

Noon - Her Granddaughter
2:15 pm - Cruel Story of Youth
4:15 pm - I Alone
6:30 pm - Haruko's Paranormal Laboratory
8:45 pm - Experimental Spotlight*

Tuesday, July 14

6:30 pm - Snow on the Blades
9:00 pm - Pieta in the Toilet

Wednesday, July 15

6:30 pm - What Are You Afraid Of?*

9:30 pm - The Light Shines Only There

Thursday, July 16

6:30 pm - Asleep*
8:45 pm - 100 Yen Love + PUNCH LOVE Party*

Friday, July 17

6:30 pm - A Farewell to Jinu
8:45 pm - The Voice of Water*

Saturday, July 18

12:30 pm - The Wages of Resistance: Narita Stories
3:15 pm - Undulant Fever*
6:00 pm - This Country's Sky*
8:45 pm - Neko Samurai 2: A Tropical Adventure

Sunday, July 19

1:30 pm - Forget Me Not
3:30 pm - Strayer's Chronicle
6:00 pm - Sanchu Uprising: Voices at Dawn*

*Director and/or actor intro and Q&A

