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

Dynamic 10th Edition Bursting with Nearly 30 Features, Over 20 Shorts, Special Sections, Industry Panel and Unprecedented Number of Special Guests

July 14-24, 2016, at Japan Society

*"No other film showcase on Earth can compete with its culture-specific authority—or the quality of its titles." -Time Out New York*

*"[A] cinematic cornucopia." "Interest clearly lies with the idiosyncratic, the eccentric, the experimental and the weird, a taste that Japan rewards as richly as any country, even the United States." -The New York Times*

*"JAPAN CUTS stands apart from film festivals that pander to contemporary trends, encouraging attendees to revisit the past through an eclectic slate of both new and repertory titles." -The Village Voice*

New York, NY — [JAPAN CUTS](#), North America's largest festival of new Japanese film, returns for its 10th anniversary edition July 14-24, offering eleven days of impossible-to-see-anywhere-else screenings of the best new movies made in and around Japan, with special guest filmmakers and stars, post-screening Q&As, parties, giveaways and much more.

This year's expansive and eclectic slate of never before seen in NYC titles boasts 29 features (1 World Premiere, 1 International, 14 North American, 2 U.S., 6 New York, 1 NYC, and 1 Special Sneak Preview), 21 shorts (4 International Premieres, 9 North American, 1 U.S., 1 East Coast, 6 New York, plus a World Premiere of approximately 12 works produced in our Animation Film Workshop), and over 20 special guests—the most in the festival's history.

Kicking off the festival with a rocking celebration, the **Opening Film** is the North American Premiere of *Mohican Comes Home*, a heartwarming, offbeat comedy about a punk rocker who heads back to the country with his girlfriend by JAPAN CUTS alum **Shuichi Okita** (*The Woodsman and the Rain*, JAPAN CUTS 2012). The director will be in attendance along with star and former AKB48 idol **Atsuko Maeda** for a post-screening Q&A, followed by the **Opening Night Party**.

As previously announced, this year's recipient of the **CUT ABOVE Award for Outstanding Performance in Film** is the venerated actor **Lily Franky**, who will appear for the North American Premiere of the **Centerpiece Presentation** title ***The Shell Collector***, an enigmatic and sensual second feature by emerging auteur **Yoshifumi Tsubota**. The screening will be followed by a Q&A and beach-themed **Underwater Dream Party** with members of the cast and crew in attendance. One of Japan's most sought-after actors, Franky's appearance follows a string of memorable performances in films by Japan's biggest and brightest directors including Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Like Father, Like Son*, for which he was awarded the Japan Academy Prize for Best Supporting Actor, among a number of other prestigious awards.

In the **Closing Film** slot, JAPAN CUTS is proud to present the North American Premiere of arthouse director **Satoko Yokohama's** ***The Actor***. Anchored by Ken Yasuda's irresistible lead performance, ***The Actor*** is a reflexive comedy that pays tribute to the quotidian characters of the film industry with an unpredictable postmodern twist. Director Yokohama will appear at the post-screening Q&A.

The **Feature Slate** offers an exciting and thought-provoking lineup that represents the rich diversity of contemporary Japanese cinema, from independents to blockbusters, introducing emerging new talents alongside the latest by revered directors and festival favorites. More than half of the films will be screening in North America for the first time, and all are new to NYC. This year JAPAN CUTS broadens its impact and resonance by inviting many new filmmakers, as well as celebrating returning stalwarts the festival has seen become masters of their craft.

Among the Feature Slate's many in-person highlights is influential auteur **Sion Sono**, who was a guest at the very first edition of JAPAN CUTS, and will return to premiere his long-gestating passion project ***Love & Peace*** as well as the black-and-white sci-fi ***The Whispering Star***, starring **Megumi Kagurazaka**, who will also be in attendance. The celebrated director of *The Light Shines Only There* (JAPAN CUTS 2015), **Mipo O**, will also make a rare appearance to introduce the New York Premiere of her latest heart-rending drama ***Being Good***.

Playwright and filmmaker Shiro Maeda is back with his second feature, the North American Premiere of ***Kako: My Sullen Past***, a tale of radical politics and teen angst starring Kyoko Koizumi and Fumi Nikaido. Also a previous guest of the festival, Hitoshi Yazaki returns with the North American Premiere of ***A Cappella***, a dark romance set amidst the countercultural movements of 1969, and the legendary **Masao Adachi** will introduce the North American Premiere of ***The Artist of Fasting*** via video from Japan. (Forbidden to leave the country by authorities, this is the radical filmmaker's first film in nearly a decade). For anime and manga fans, director **Hitoshi One** will join to present the North American Premiere of his innovative ***Bakuman***, the story of two aspiring *manga-ka* (comic book artists) that is sure to set the new standard for live-action manga adaptations.

Fresh off a big win for his recent film *Harmonium*, receiving the Un Certain Regard Jury Prize at Cannes, Koji Fukada's ***Sayonara*** makes its North American debut at JAPAN CUTS, the first film to feature an android performing in the lead cast, in a haunting story of post-nuclear disaster in a near-future. Yoji Yamada also joins the lineup with the U.S. Premiere of postwar melodrama ***Nagasaki: Memories of My Son***, scored by the

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immensely influential musician, producer and composer **Ryuichi Sakamoto**, who will introduce the screening. Also included in this year's record-breaking guest lineup is director **Eiji Uchida**, who will be joined by stars **Denden** and **Kanji Furutachi** for the North American Premiere of ***Lowlife Love***, a comically cringe-worthy satire of the lecherous underbelly of Japan's film industry.

**Classics: Flash-back / Flash-forward** re-works the festival's restoration showcase in celebration of JAPAN CUTS' 10th anniversary, presenting filmmakers' influential works from the past (all on 35mm!) alongside their contemporary creations. The festival will reintroduce Gakuryu (Sogo) Ishii's visionary 1982 ***Burst City***, which borrowed from the original *Mad Max* to become a harbinger of Japan's cyberpunk movement, as well the New York Premiere of Ishii's latest, ***Bitter Honey***, an emasculating inversion of a male writer's fantasy love affair with a goldfish (played by Fumi Nikaido). One of the biggest discoveries this year is the North American Premiere of Junji Sakamoto and Naomi Fujiyama's ***The Projects***. Audiences will be able to flash-back to their original collaboration, ***Face*** [2000], a wildly transgressive take on the "fallen woman" genre epitomized by Mizoguchi. Ryosuke Hashiguchi's groundbreaking 2001 dramedy ***Hush!***, about a gay couple asked to father a child by an offbeat stranger, will be paired with the New York Premiere of the filmmaker's ***Three Stories of Love***, winner of the 2015 Kinema Junpo Awards for Best Japanese Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best New Actor.

The **Documentary Focus** section is also significantly expanded for this year's 10th edition, with four outstanding portraits of artists whose work ripples out to the larger context of contemporary life in Japan. Titles include a **special sneak preview** of acclaimed director **Tatsuya Mori's** ***FAKE***, about the media scandal behind composer Mamoru Samuragochi, Japan's "digital-age Beethoven," and Arata Oshima's (Nagisa Oshima's son) North American Premiere of ***The Sion Sono***, about the titular filmmaker. (Filmmaker Mori will be in attendance for a Q&A moderated by the esteemed documentarian **Kazuhiro Soda**). Two rigorous self-portraits from Japanese punk legend Michiro Endo, ***Mother, I've Pretty Much Forgotten Your Face***, and artist Yuko Nakamura, ***A Room of Her Own: Rei Naito and Light***, round out the program—Endo's film will be introduced by poet **Mizuki Misumi**.

With **Experimental Spotlight: Anime Vanguard**, the festival continues its commitment to independent artistic visions in cinema by offering a program of vibrant short-form animations. Award-winning filmmaker **Onohana** will present a number of her playfully poetic works alongside other short pieces by Mirai Mizue, Masanobu Hiraoka, Sawako Kabuki, Atsushi Wada, Yoko Yuki, and Ryo Hirano. Preceded by completed works made by participants from the **MONO NO AWARE Hand-Drawn Animation Film Workshop** (held at Japan Society on June 18).

Continuing this year's theme of exploring the present, past, and future of Japanese cinema, the festival introduces a free **Panel Discussion**, "Japanese Film Culture In & Out of Japan," featuring film industry professionals sharing their thoughts on the current state of Japanese cinema. Distinguished panelists include Pia Film Festival director **Keiko Araki**, award-winning filmmaker **Kazuhiro Soda**, and Harvard University professor and former Nippon Connection program director **Alexander Zahlten**.

Between screenings in the auditorium in Japan Society's landmark Manhattan building, audiences are invited to drop into the **Microcinema** installed in the Murase Room on the

first floor, where a decade-spanning selection of shorts by up-and-coming filmmakers will be screening on loop.

In their curatorial statement, festival programmers Aiko Masubuchi, Kazu Watanabe, and Joel Neville Anderson note: "Since its founding in 2007, the festival has offered a unique window on contemporary Japanese cinema and a direct line to Japanese film culture through its invited filmmakers and stars, many of whom have gone on to earn fans amongst festival audiences all over the world. With this landmark 10th edition, JAPAN CUTS celebrates a decade of the best new Japanese cinema and bolsters its commitment to exploring Japan's dynamic film culture and entertaining New York audiences now and for years to come as the premier venue for Japanese film in North America.

**Tickets:** \$14/\$11 seniors and students/\$10 Japan Society members. \$20/\$17/\$15 for the July 14 screening of *Mohican Comes Home* and July 21 screening of *The Shell Collector* including after parties. Special offer: purchase tickets for at least 5 different films in the same transaction and receive \$2 off each ticket. Offer available only at Japan Society box office or by telephone at (offer not available online and not valid for the July 14 screening of *Mohican Comes Home* and July 21 screening of *The Shell Collector*). Order tickets at [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org) or call or visit the Japan Society box office, Mon.-Fri. 11 am to 6 pm and weekends during the festival, 212-715-1258.

## JAPAN CUTS 2016 FULL LINEUP

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

### FEATURE SLATE (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

#### [A Cappella](#)

Fri., July 22 at 9:30 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro with producer Risa Toyama**

*Japan. 2016. 132 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Hitoshi Yazaki. With Riko Narumi, Sosuke Ikematsu, Takumi Saito, Nina Endo, Wakana Matsumoto.*

Radicalized amidst the countercultural movements of 1969, Sendai high schooler Kyoko goes from leading feminist interruptions of her school's sexist uniform policies to helmeted protest actions. Bruised from a clash with riot police, Kyoko takes refuge in A Cappella, a serene coffee shop with baroque music played from records on request, where she meets bohemian college students Wataru and Yunosuke. The older aesthetes' nihilism challenges her activist ideals, and she falls for Wataru. As Kyoko spends her days with Wataru, Yunosuke and his girlfriend Ema, this love square tumbles into an uncertain future of political conviction and sexual identity. A celebrated director of works of daring intimacy such as *Strawberry Shortcakes* (2006) and *Sweet Little Lies* (2010), Hitoshi Yazaki renders Mariko Koike's novel with a nostalgia touched by erotic desperation and the imminent horror of our neoliberal present.

*Adapted from Naoki Prize winning author Mariko Koike's 1990 novel*

#### Closing Film

#### [The Actor](#)

Sun., July 24 at 7 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Satoko Yokohama**

*Japan. 2015. 123 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Satoko Yokohama. With Ken Yasuda, Kumiko Aso, Shohei Uno, Hirofumi Arai, Shota Sometani.* Takuji Kameoka has made a career out of masterful performances for the silver screen and he would be a household name—if it weren't for the fact that his filmography consists entirely of bit parts. As the prospect of a breakout role in a foreign arthouse director's newest work appears, so too does the possibility of winning the heart of *izakaya* owner Azumi Murota. In her hotly anticipated follow-up to the breakout *Bare Essence of Life* (aka *Ultra Miracle Love Story*, JAPAN CUTS 2010), director Satoko Yokohama adapts Akito Inui's original novel, crafting this quietly daring tribute to the workaday human magic underlying the gleam of cinema. Ken Yasuda, known for TEAM NACS and many voice performances for Studio Ghibli, is irresistible in the film's title role, while Yokohama regular Kumiko Aso shines just as brightly.

*"Yokohama's little salute to the Japanese film industry" -Kaori Shoji, The Japan Times*

**[The Artist of Fasting](#)**

Sat., July 23 at 4:30 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Video introduction with director Masao Adachi**

*Japan. 2015. 105 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Masao Adachi. With Hiroshi Yamamoto, Taizo Sakurai, Sho Ryuzanji, Shoichi Honda, Hiroko Ito.*

After a decade-long hiatus, legendary filmmaker and political firebrand Masao Adachi returns with a characteristically transgressive, critical new film that adapts Kafka's short story "The Hunger Artist" for the modern era. An anonymous man sits down in the middle of a shopping arcade and refuses to eat, speak or move. He is soon visited by a throng of onlookers who project their own meaning onto his assumed act of protest or claim to speak on his behalf. An absurdist satire that unfolds in episodic fashion with avant-garde interludes, Adachi's film uses its fable-like narrative framework to approach controversial topics and historic atrocities while leaving room for ambiguity. Even well into his 70s, Adachi's unique brand of political cinema remains as radical and confrontational as ever.

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

*"Adachi is a true revolutionary artist, a filmmaker whose unshakable political beliefs have shaped his vision of cinema as an intense engagement with its audience and with its time." -Haden Guest, Harvard Film Archive*

**[Bakuman](#)**

Sun., July 17 at 7 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro with director Hitoshi One**

*Japan. 2015. 119 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Hitoshi One. With Takeru Satoh, Ryunosuke Kamiki, Nana Komatsu, Shota Sometani, Lily Franky.*

High schoolers Moritaka "Saiko" Mashiro (Takeru Satoh) and Akito "Shujin" Takagi (Ryunosuke Kamiki) have one burning desire—to make it into *Weekly Shonen Jump*, the most widely-read, influential manga magazine in Japan. Although the novice writer/illustrator team show exceptional promise, the competition is fierce. They battle for the top against a legion of talented artists—including Niizuma (Shota Sometani), an eccentric genius *manga-ka* their same age—all of whom are ultimately judged by *Jump's* discerning

chief editor (Lily Franky). Based on the popular manga of the same name, *Bakuman* is an earnest tribute to the artistic process that sets a new standard for live-action manga adaptations. Featuring innovative motion graphics and CG animation and a propulsive soundtrack by rock band Sakanaction.

*Winner, 2016 Japan Academy Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Music, Outstanding Achievement in Film Editing and Most Popular Film.*

### [Being Good](#)

Fri., July 22 at 6:30 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Mipo O**

*Japan. 2015. 121 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Mipo O. With Kengo Kora, Machiko Ono, Chizuru Ikewaki, Kazuya Takahashi, Michie Kita.*

Suburban Hokkaido schoolteacher Tadashi (Kengo Kora) can barely make his pupils sit still, so when he suspects a student is being mistreated at home, he's unsure of what to do.

With her husband abroad, Masami (Machiko Ono) has taken on full-time parenting responsibilities, including punishing her daughter, a growing concern for her acquaintance Yoko (Chizuru Ikewaki). Accosted as a shoplifter after forgetting to pay for groceries, Akiko (Michie Kita) is elderly and alone when an autistic child may be in need of help.

Based on Hatsue Nakawaki's omnibus novel, these intertwining interventions may suggest a populist follow-up to Mipo O's *The Light Shines Only There* (JAPAN CUTS 2015), however *Being Good* is an even more harrowing drama, fearlessly gazing at generations of abuse, the precarious structures of Japanese society, and the glory and horror of taking responsibility for another's life.

*"Emphatically one of the best films to emerge from Japan this year, and in recent memory."* -Don Brown, The Asahi Shimbun

*NETPAC Award, 2015 Moscow International Film Festival*

### [Bitter Honey](#)

Fri., July 15 at 6:30 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

*Japan. 2016. 82 min. Blu-ray, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Gakuryu Ishii. With Fumi Nikaido, Ren Osugi, Yoko Maki, Kengo Kora, Masatoshi Nagase.*

Akako, a shape-shifting goldfish in the form of a coquettish nymphet clad in diaphanous red dresses (Fumi Nikaido), naively plays the role of erotic muse and adoring pet for an aging writer seeking greatness (Ren Osugi). Things quickly get complicated for the odd couple, however, when the writer's deceased former student/lover (Yoko Maki) enters the picture as a ghost and helps Akako realize her own desires, activating her agency and frustrating the one-sided male fantasy the writer is so keen to continue. Miles away from the punk-inspired material that distinguished his early career, director Gakuryu (Sogo) Ishii displays the versatility of his talent by transforming this strange supernatural fable adapted from Saisei Muro's novel into a heavily stylized, sensual comic fantasy full of visual wit and seamless, unpredictable shifts in tone.

*"It's hard to overstate the importance of [Ishii] for Japanese cinema."* -Nippon Connection retrospective, 2013

### [Emi-Abi](#)

Sun., July 24 at 4:30 pm

**\*\*World Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Kensaku Watanabe**

*Japan. 2016. 88 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Kensaku Watanabe. With Ryu Morioka, Tomoya Maeno, Haru Kuroki, Hirofumi Arai, Mari Yamachi.*

Up-and-coming *manzai* stand-up comedy duo Emi-Abi has lost consummate funny man Unno (a surprisingly touching Tomoya Maeno) to an accident, leaving conceited straight man Jitsudo (Ryu Morioka) to contend with his diminished career prospects as a bland, pretty face entertainer. Guided by his manager Natsumi (Haru Kuroki), who demonstrates stronger comedy chops than her own star, Jitsudo comes to learn the circumstances of his friend's passing, as well as the life-and-death stakes of a career in comedy. Demonstrating a careful balance of tone across tragedy and deadpan and gross-out humor, writer/director Kensaku Watanabe expands *Emi-Abi's* hilarious premise into a strikingly assured meditation on artistic rivalry and self-actualization.

*Director Kensaku Watanabe awarded Japan Academy Prize for Best Screenplay for Yuya Ishii's The Great Passage*

### [Flying Colors](#)

Sun., July 24 at 12:30 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

*Japan. 2015. 117 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Nobuhiro Doi. With Kasumi Arimura, Atsushi Ito, Shuhei Nomura, Tetsushi Tanaka, Yo Yoshida.*

This smash-hit comedic drama stars newcomer Kasumi Arimura as Sayaka, a ditzy high school material girl who is unexpectedly encouraged by an overly-optimistic and unconventional cram school teacher (Atsushi Ito) to apply for admission to one of the toughest universities in Japan—a prospect that her friends and family initially laugh off. Inspired to reach her goal and prove a point, Sayaka completely throws herself to the task at hand, burying herself in textbooks and sacrificing her social life along the way. Based on a true story, Nobuhiro Doi's whip-smart direction effortlessly hits all the sweet spots in delivering what could easily be considered Japan's winking response to *Legally Blonde*.

*Winner, 2016 Japan Academy Prize for Rookie of the Year (Kasumi Arimura)*

### [I Am a Monk](#)

Sat., July 23 at 12 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

*Japan. 2015. 99 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yukinori Makabe. With Atsushi Ito, Mizuki Yamamoto, Junpei Mizobata, Gaku Hamada, Miyuki Matsuda.*

After the sudden death of his grandfather, 24-year-old bookstore clerk Koen (Atsushi Ito) cautiously accepts his inherited role as abbot of the Eifuku-ji Temple in Imabari City, Ehime Prefecture, 57th stop along Shikoku's famous 88 temple pilgrimage. As he learns the ropes of monkhood – from memorizing ritual prayers to buying the right set of head clippers – the film offers an inside look at the day-to-day life of a monk (including after-hours drinking and baseball practice), humorously bringing to relief the relatable, earnest human beings behind the traditional robes and shaved heads. An often moving and poignant coming-of-age story, *I Am a Monk* uses Koen's bumpy journey toward self-

realization to ask universal questions about life's purpose while ultimately leaving all possibilities open.

*Based on an autobiographical essay "Boku wa Bosan" by Missei Shirakawa*

### [Kako: My Sullen Past](#)

Sun., July 24 at 2 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

2016. 120 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Shiro Maeda. With Kyoko Koizumi, Fumi Nikaido, Kengo Kora, Itsuji Itao, Mochika Yamada.

Ah, the wistful summers of near adulthood—or, for high schooler Kako (the ever-amazing Fumi Nikaido), drudging through the humid months of caring for her young niece at her family's sleepy restaurant in Kitashinagawa, Tokyo. However that all changes when her aunt Mikiko (Kyoko Koizumi), thought to have died 18 years ago in an explosive accident, suddenly returns, bringing with her rumors of anti-government terrorist plots, international intrigue and maternal drama. A follow-up to *The Extreme Sukiyaki* (JAPAN CUTS 2014) by acclaimed playwright, novelist and screenwriter Shiro Maeda, winner of the 52nd Kishida Drama Award and 22nd Yukio Mishima Prize, *Kako: My Sullen Past* finds Maeda in full control of his cinematic instrument, channeling his characteristic dialogue and parodic cynicism through his wonderful cast and engrossing tale of radical politics and quotidian angst.

*"Maeda has succeeded in capturing the values and lifestyles of a generation unfettered by the burden of finding meaning in life."* -Performing Arts Network Japan

### [Ken and Kazu](#)

Sat., July 23 at 2 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

Japan. 2015. 98 min. Blu-ray, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Hiroshi Shoji. With Shinsuke Kato, Katsuya Maiguma, Kisetsu Fujiwara, Shuna Iijima, Haruki Takano.

The long-awaited feature film debut by newcomer Hiroshi Shoji based on his eponymous 2011 short. Ken (Shinsuke Kato) and Kazu (Katsuya Maiguma) are small-time drug dealers and partners in crime operating out of a car repair shop under the watchful eye of a local yakuza boss. When Ken's girlfriend becomes pregnant he makes plans to go straight, but Kazu has other ideas. Working on a shoestring budget, director Shoji manages to deliver a thrilling jolt of realism to the often overfamiliar yakuza genre. He amplifies the intensity of the actors' performances by shooting largely in close-up with tightly framed compositions, creating a nerve-wracking sense of danger and instability that is sustained from the film's first punch to its final sigh.

*Official Selection of the 41st International Film Festival Rotterdam.*

### [Love & Peace](#)

Sat., July 16 at 7:30 pm

**\*\*NYC Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Sion Sono**

2015. 117 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Sion Sono. With Hiroki Hasegawa, Kumiko Aso, Toshiyuki Nishida, Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Makita Sports.

Decades in the making, *Love & Peace* returns to director Sion Sono's most persistent themes: purity, passion and cult power. A chilling, candy-colored fantasy of the nuclear age, this story of a coward turned Bowie-esque rock god is a frantic meditation on artistic integrity and political responsibility at a time when Sono's own career is mutating beyond the Japanese stadium. Office clerk Ryoichi's dreams have been squelched by fear, however a fateful meeting with a turtle sends him toward stardom. Provocatively named "Pikadon," after the Japanese descriptor of the atomic bomb's brilliant light (*pika*) and blast (*don*), the turtle returns just in time.

*"The hardest working man in Japanese cinema, prolific cult auteur Sion Sono's latest surreal offering feels like a genre-warping mash-up of Godzilla, Toy Story and Miracle on 34th Street."* -Stephen Dalton, The Hollywood Reporter

### [Lowlife Love](#)

Fri., July 15 at 8:30 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Eiji Uchida, star Denden**

*Japan. 2016. 105 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Eiji Uchida. With Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Denden, Shugo Oshinari, Maya Okano, Chika Uchida, Kanji Furutachi.*

Director Eiji Uchida's follow-up to *Greatful Dead* (JAPAN CUTS 2014) is a relentlessly cynical black comedy that takes a look under the rug of the Japanese film industry, where scheming lowlife producers, filmmakers and actors get by through exploitation and intimidation. The biggest lowlife is Tetsuo (Kiyohiko Shibukawa), who made a minor indie hit many years ago but has since then coasted by shooting cheap pornos for cash and halfheartedly running an acting workshop where he sexually harasses newbie actresses. When two talented new students sign up for his workshop, however, one with an exciting original script and the other with star potential, Tetsuo sees an opportunity and makes plans for his comeback.

*Official Selection, 2016 Film Festival Rotterdam*

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

### [The Magnificent Nine](#)

Sat., July 16 at 12 pm

**\*\*U.S. Premiere**

*Japan. 2016. 129 min., in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yoshihiro Nakamura. With Sadao Abe, Eita, Satoshi Tsumabuki, Karen Iwata, Yuko Takeuchi Ryuhei Matsuda.*

Things seem hopeless for the residents of a poor post-town in 18th century Japan who suffer from land taxes and an oppressive law requiring them to bear the costs of transporting goods for their lord. That is until an ingenious idea is introduced that could turn their fortunes around—lend money to their financially strapped lord and redistribute the interest to the townspeople. Pulling together every resource they have, an unlikely group of nine small business owners and farmers set the plan in motion, risking their own heads for the sake of the town's survival. Based on a true story, this inspiring period comedy helmed by versatile director Yoshihiro Nakamura (*Fish Story*, JAPAN CUTS 2009) is a celebration of the power of collective action in response to tyranny.

Based on the novel *Mushi no Nihonjin* by Michifumi Isoda

Opening Film, followed by OPENING NIGHT PARTY!

[Mohican Comes Home](#)

Thurs., July 14 at 7 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Shuichi Okita and star Atsuko Maeda**

*Japan. 2016. 125 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Shuhei Okita. With Atsuko Maeda, Ryuhei Matsuda, Akira Emoto, Masako Motai, Yudai Chiba.*

After years of trying to make it in Tokyo as a punk singer, deadbeat Eikichi (Ryuhei Matsuda) decides to go back to his island home in Hiroshima along with his wide-eyed, clumsy girlfriend Yuka (Atsuko Maeda) to share the news that she is pregnant. Though Eikichi's old-school father (Akira Emoto) initially reacts badly, he soon calls the entire town over to celebrate his grandchild—only to collapse in pain during the party. Along with his family, Eikichi tries his best to make his bedridden father happy, with hilarious results. With a nod to *Carmen Comes Home* (1951), director Shuichi Okita (*The Woodsman and the Rain*, JAPAN CUTS 2012) masterfully cuts a slice of life out of this perfect intersection of comedy and drama that leaves the heart as breezy and warm as the island air.

*"An endearingly loud dramedy which reminds one that not all Japanese family dramas are gentle and restrained." -Maggie Lee, Variety*

[Nagasaki: Memories of My Son](#)

Sun., July 17 at 4:15 pm

**\*\*U.S. Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Introduction with composer Ryuichi Sakamoto**

*Japan. 2015. 130 min. Blu-ray, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yoji Yamada. With Sayuri Yoshinaga, Kazuya Ninomiya, Haru Kuroki, Tadanobu Asano, Kenichi Kato.*

August 9, 1948. Nagasaki, Japan. An aging midwife named Nobuko (Sayuri Yoshinaga) is visited by the ghost of her son Koji (Kazuya Ninomiya), whom she lost to the atomic bomb. From then on Koji visits his mother frequently to reminisce and catch up on lost time. Their biggest topic of conversation is Koji's kind-hearted fiancée Machiko (Haru Kuroki), who regularly visited Nobuko over the three years since Koji's death. Machiko and Koji both seem unable to fully accept Koji's death, but Nobuko slowly encourages them to move on. Yoji Yamada's moving, star-studded film is a complementary response to playwright Hisashi Inoue's seminal work *The Face of Jizo*, about a father-daughter relationship in the aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing, and the master director's self-proclaimed attempt at making "the most important film in his life."

*Winner of 11 awards at the 2016 Japan Academy Prize including Best Picture, Best Screenplay, Best Lead Actor and Best Lead Actress.*

[The Projects](#)

Tue., July 19 at 6:30 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

*Japan. 2016. 104 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Junji Sakamoto. With Naomi Fujiyama, Ittoku Kishibe, Michiyo Okusu, Renji Ishibashi, Takumi Saito.*

Whether it's someone mixing burnables and recyclables or noise from a neighbor's domestic spat, there's always something occupying the residents of a housing project in the suburbs of Osaka. However Hinako (Naomi Fujiyama) and Seiji (Ittoku Kishibe) couldn't care less. Having moved in just six months ago after the closure of their herbal medicine shop, the old couple is reluctantly putting their life back together. But when Seiji disappears, the apartment rumor mill churns: divorce, murder, dismemberment? As the story spins out of control, and a mysterious man with a parasol puts in a tall order of natural remedies, the truth turns out to be even more fantastic than gossip. Ranging from incisive comedy of errors to absurdist adventure to moving late life romance, *The Projects* is one of the biggest surprises of the year.

*Reunites stage actress and comedian Naomi Fujiyama with director Junji Sakamoto 15 years after her starring debut in the smash hit Face.*

### [A Road](#)

Wed., July 20 at 6:30 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

*Japan. 2015. 85 min. HDCAM, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Daichi Sugimoto. With Daichi Sugimoto, Yuta Katsukura, Rika Sugimoto, Masato Ikariishi, Yoji Kondo.*

Prompted by a film school assignment to capture an episode of his life on video, Daichi (played by director Daichi Sugimoto) searches his memory for a moment when he felt most like himself. He settles on his childhood hobby of catching lizards, something that used to bring him the kind of pure joy he finds missing from his life as a young adult now entering his college years. With this simple premise, first-time filmmaker Sugimoto creates a refreshingly inspired take on a contemporary coming-of-age story that gracefully blends documentary footage within an autobiographical narrative feature. An earnest exploration of the possibilities of cinema to capture, preserve, and represent the truth of personal experience.

*Grand Prize, Pia Film Festival Award Competition 2015*

**Preceded by:**

***Born With It***

**\*\*New York Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro with director Emmanuel Osei-Kuffour, Jr.**

*Japan. 2014. 16 min. Directed by Emmanuel Osei-Kuffour, Jr.*

Young Keisuke moves from Tokyo to rural Japan where, for the first time, he encounters classroom prejudice due to his dark skin. Unsure how to respond, he turns to his mother for answers.

### [Sayonara](#)

Sun., July 17 at 1:45 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

*Japan. 2015. 112 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Koji Fukada. With Bryerly Long, Hirofumi Arai, Geminoid F, Makiko Murata, Nijiro Murakami.*

One of the most highly regarded Japanese directors on the international scene, Koji Fukada finds a near-future Japan in the midst of a national evacuation brought about by a nuclear disaster in *Sayonara*. Tanya (Bryerly Long), a South African raised in Japan suffering from a terminal illness, is at the bottom of the departures list. She spends her

days with her friend Sano and lover Satoshi, however her constant companion is android caregiver Leona (Geminoid F). Created by robotics expert Hiroshi Ishiguro, Geminoid F reprises her role with Long, both featured in the play by Oriza Hirata on which the film is based. While the post-disaster scenario is ambiguous, it clearly references Japan's March 11, 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster. Addressing politically charged taboos, *Sayonara* asks the question "Can life as we know it survive nuclear catastrophe?"

*Adapted from Oriza Hirata's stage play Sayonara II*

### [The Shell Collector](#)

Thu., July 21 at 7 pm

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

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Yoshifumi Tsubota and star Lily Franky, with CUT ABOVE award ceremony, followed by the Underwater Dream Party!**

*Japan. 2016. 89 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yoshifumi Tsubota. With Lily Franky, Shinobu Terajima, Sosuke Ikematsu, Ai Hashimoto, Akira Fukuhara.*

Living alone along the white sand and turquoise waters of Okinawa is a blind professor (Lily Franky) who spends his days collecting and writing about seashells. His solitude is interrupted when a woman (Shinobu Terajima) washes up unconscious on the shore. Restored to health, the young woman is stung by one of the professor's poisonous shellfish and unexpectedly cured of a rare disease. News about the shellfish's healing power spreads quickly and soon everyone seeks out the professor's cure, including his estranged son (Sosuke Ikematsu). Director Yoshifumi Tsubota delivers a hypnotically beautiful, impressionistic dream of a film that ponders the connection between man and nature. Featuring stunning location cinematography by Akiko Ashizawa and a spare, haunting score by Billy Martin (of Medeski Martin & Wood).

*Adapted from the story by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Anthony Doerr*

### [Three Stories of Love](#)

Mon., July 18 at 6:30 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

*2015. 140 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Ryosuke Hashiguchi. With Atsushi Shinohara, Toko Narushima, Ryo Ikeda, Daisuke Kuroda, Chika Uchida, Lily Franky.*

Named the best Japanese movie of 2015 by *Kinema Junpo*, this immensely rich and expertly crafted original drama by groundbreaking writer/director Ryosuke Hashiguchi centers on the lives of three heartsick characters suffering because of love: Atsushi, a gifted bridge inspector whose wife is murdered in a random attack; Toko, a housewife trapped in a suffocating, loveless marriage; and Ryo, a successful, but emotionally unfulfilled lawyer secretly pining for a childhood friend. Much like the unforgettable character of Atsushi, who can instinctively identify bridge damage by delicately tapping on the tower foundations with a hammer, Hashiguchi is able to identify the emotional damage of his fragile, lonely characters with a seemingly effortless touch, tapping in on their moments of quiet desperation to speak volumes about the loneliness of modern life.

*"Three Stories of Love is the best film I've seen all year." -Mark Schilling, The Japan Times.*

Winner, Kinema Junpo Awards for Best Japanese Film, Best Director, Best Screenwriter, and Best New Actor (Atsushi Shinohara)

### [The Whispering Star](#)

Sat., July 16 at 4:45 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Sion Sono and star Megumi Kagurazaka**

*Japan. 2016. 100 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Sion Sono. With Megumi Kagurazaka, Kenji Endo, Yuto Ikeda, Koko Mori.*

Sion Sono's first feature with his newly established independent production company is the realization of a script he wrote two decades ago but reworked to reflect the present. Humanoid delivery woman Yoko Suzuki (Megumi Kagurazaka) makes her rounds through space, landing on isolated planets and meeting near-extinct human beings along the way. Whispering to Yoko is the child-like voice of her spaceship's operating machine. Neither understands why humans have the need to send each other seemingly insignificant objects that take years to be delivered. Shot in black and white, Sono's beautifully crafted sci-fi setting is reminiscent of the films of Russian master Andrei Tarkovsky. The empty landscapes that Yoko visits were filmed in the evacuated zones of Fukushima, featuring many people that Sono interviewed while making his post-3/11 film, *The Land of Hope* (2012).

*"Sion Sono... can always be counted on for something extraordinary, and The Whispering Star is one of his most imaginative films yet." -Giovanna Fulvi, Toronto International Film Festival*

### DOCUMENTARY FOCUS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

#### [FAKE](#)

Sat., July 23 at 7 pm

**\*\*Special Sneak Preview**

**\*\*Featuring Intro and Q&A with director Tatsuya Mori, moderated by filmmaker Kazuhiro Soda**

*Japan. 2016. 109 min. (Japan version). DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Tatsuya Mori. With Mamoru Samuragochi, Takashi Niigaki, Tatsuya Mori.*

Born to atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima, Mamoru Samuragochi, a self-taught classical composer with a degenerative condition causing deafness, was celebrated as a "Japanese Beethoven" for the digital age. However, just prior to the 2014 Winter Olympics, where Samuragochi's *Sonatina for Violin* was to accompany figure skater Daisuke Takahashi, part-time university lecturer Takashi Niigaki revealed that he had served as the composer's ghostwriter for 18 years, that Samuragochi couldn't notate music and, in fact, could hear perfectly. As Samuragochi's recordings were pulled and performances cancelled, Niigaki enjoyed success on TV talk shows. Filmmaker Tatsuya Mori finds Samuragochi holed up in his small Yokohama apartment with his wife and cat, ready to tell his side of the story. A mesmerizing character study skewering media duplicity and constructions of ability/disability, in which Samuragochi's career has collapsed, taking fact and fiction with it.

*"The entreaty 'you'd better not film this' seems to be a signal for [Mori] to zoom in even closer on his subject." -International Documentary Film Amsterdam on Tatsuya Mori's A2*

### [Mother, I've Pretty Much Forgotten Your Face](#)

Wed., July 20 at 8:45 pm

**\*\*International Premiere**

**\*\*Featuring Intro with poet Mizuki Misumi and percussionist Takashi Itani**

*Japan. 2016. 103 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Michiro Endo. With Michiro Endo, Mizuki Misumi, Takao Morishima, Takehara Pistol, Yoshihide Otomo. Pig heads, intestines, megaphones: all these and more have been thrown into crowds of loyal fans following the influential punk band THE STALIN or any of number of Michiro Endo's other bands since 1980. Taking a step in front of the camera, however, Endo offers a very different kind of encounter in this inspiring self-portrait. *Mother, I've Pretty Much Forgotten Your Face* follows the artist, a native of Nihonmatsu, Fukushima, on the 2011 nationwide solo tour celebrating his 60th birthday, which was interrupted by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Traveling, performing and talking with fellow musicians and activists, Endo reflects on the past and future of Fukushima, the legacy of Hiroshima, his upbringing and his feelings about his mother, communicated in the song from which the documentary is named.*

*“A partial but engaging picture of a galvanizing artist and human being... it harnesses one of the main reasons Endo has remained vital while other punks have fallen by the wayside: It rocks.” -Don Brown, The Asahi Shimbun*

### [A Room of Her Own: Rei Naito and Light](#)

Sun., July 17 at 12 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

*Japan. 2015. 87 min. Blu-ray, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Yuko Nakamura. With Rei Naito, Ran Taniguchi, Hina Yukawa, Keiko Oyama, Nobuko Numakura, Kyoko Tanaka.*

On an island in the Seto Inland Sea, the Teshima Art Museum integrates the serene seaside environment with an architectural structure by Ryue Nishizawa and the artwork "Matrix" by Rei Naito. The remote museum's single installation suspends light, air and droplets of underground water in constant play, defining a unique, meditative space barred from filming. An innovative portrait in which the mysterious artist refuses to appear onscreen, Yuko Nakamura's documentary explores five women's interactions with the dynamic space of "Matrix" in unprecedented access to the site while delving into Naito's body of work, beginning with her projects in Hiroshima. Foregrounding a deep connection with tangible and intangible elements of human experience and generations of Japanese women, Nakamura's film takes full advantage of the cinematic medium to confront Naito's artworks and the existential themes they evoke.

*“Highlighting the two-year communications between Naito, an artist who has never revealed her creating processes to the outside world, and director Yuko Nakamura, this film shows the quest of five women, all invariably enchanted by Naito's art, as they explore her artistic world based on the question of whether it is in itself a blessing to be alive.” -Aichi International Women's Film Festival*

### [The Sion Sono](#)

Sat., July 16 at 2:30 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

*Japan. 2016. 97 min. DCP, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Arata Oshima. With Sion Sono, Shota Sometani, Fumi Nikaido, Megumi Kagurazaka.*

The ever-evolving Sion Sono, who burst onto the Japanese film scene with *I Am Sion Sono!!* in 1984, has made a name for himself in world cinema as a multiple award-winner, festival favorite and provocateur. Directed by Arata Oshima, son of rebel filmmaker Nagisa Oshima, who had praised Sono's early work before his passing, this documentary gives insight into the man, the poet, the painter, the scriptwriter, the husband and the boy who will eventually grow up to be the Sion Sono. Lineage, history and the past meeting the present are themes in this film in which Oshima connects the dots in Sono's creative life by taking the camera to the site of his upbringing and following the production of his most recent film *The Whispering Star*, also screening at this year's JAPAN CUTS.

*"It goes without saying that the director of Heya, Strange Circus and Love Exposure is one of the most influential Japanese filmmakers of recent decades."* -Berlinale Forum program notes

#### CLASSICS: FLASH-BACK TO FLASH-FORWARD (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

##### [Burst City](#)

Sat., July 23 at 10 pm

*Japan. 1982. 117 min. 35mm, in Japanese with live English subtitles. Directed by Gakuryu Ishii (as Sogo Ishii). With Machizo Machida, Michiro Endo, Shigeru Izumiya, Shigeru Muroi, Shinya Ohe.*

Sogo (Gakuryu) Ishii's hugely influential film kicked off the Japanese cyberpunk movement of the late 1980s by taking *Mad Max's* futuristic, dystopian biker gang aesthetic and smashing it together with the frenetic energy and antiauthoritarian sneering of the contemporary Japanese punk scene while foregrounding a hyper-inventive, groundbreaking visual style heavy on fast cutting, alternating film speeds, and concert documentary shooting. The loose, frenzied plot revolving around a violent confrontation between several gangs of punk musicians, yakuza, bikers and cops over the attempted construction of a nuclear power plant quite literally erupts into an explosive finale. A peerless punk cinema manifesto, *Burst City* remains as vibrant today as it did when it roared new life into Japanese cinema over 30 years ago.

*"A seminal and visionary work... [Burst City] can be regarded as the starting point of contemporary Japanese cinema, making it one of the most important films in that cinema's history."* -Tom Mes, Midnight Eye

##### [Face](#)

Tue., July 19 at 8:45 pm

*Japan. 2000. 123 min. 35mm, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Junji Sakamoto. With Naomi Fujiyama, Michiyo Okusu, Etsushi Toyokawa, Ittoku Kishibe, Jun Kunimura.*

An independent cinema sensation at the time of its release, *Face* is a ripped-from-the-headlines tale of middle-aged seamstress Masako, set free from the emotional abuse and isolation of her family's dry cleaning business in a shocking act of violence. Painfully shy and clumsy, she is an unlikely fugitive from the law when the nationwide manhunt for her is interrupted by the 1995 Kobe Earthquake. Masako's life on the lam brings her in contact with a host of lonely characters, who see the face of this sympathetic killer change from humiliation to self-assurance. With *Face*, Junji Sakamoto sharpened his keen balance of violence and humor, moving from masculinist heroics to this unruly take on the fallen

woman genre anchored by stage actress and comedian Naomi Fujiyama in her mesmerizing star debut.

*"Sakamoto's subtly subversive [Face] delves so deeply into the heart of a killer on the lam that by the end of the movie you are rooting for the murderer to continue eluding the law and achieve a measure of self-fulfillment that seemed unthinkable at the beginning."* -Stephen Holden, The New York Times

### [Hush!](#)

Mon., July 18 at 9:30 pm

Japan. 2001. 135 min. 35mm, in Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Ryosuke Hashiguchi. With Seiichi Tanabe, Kazuya Takahashi, Reiko Kataoka, Yoko Akino, Manami Fuji.

When Ryosuke Hashiguchi's first feature *A Touch of Fever* hit Japanese cinemas in 1993, the young filmmaker burst doors open for independent Japanese cinema by generating a huge box office success while simultaneously creating space for public discourse on gay life in Japan, virtually absent from mainstream movie screens until then. With *Hush!*, Hashiguchi continued to mine the complex theme of individual freedom in conflict with restrictive social pressures through gay characters, this time focusing on adults instead of adolescents. Soon after Naoya (Kazuya Takahashi) and Katsuhiko (Seiichi Tanabe) start to settle into a relationship, a slightly unhinged young woman (Reiko Kataoka) asks Katsuhiko to father her child. From this simple premise Hashiguchi develops a deeply human story told with honesty and humor about three people doing their best to do the right thing.

*Official Selection, 2001 Cannes Film Festival (Director's Fortnight)*

*Winner, Best Film, Best Actor (Seiichi Tanabe), Best Director at 2003 Yokohama Film Festival*

*Winner, Best Actress (Reiko Kataoka) 2002 Kinema Junpo Award*

## SPECIAL SECTIONS

### [Experimental Spotlight: Anime Vanguard](#)

Sunday, July 17 at 9:30 pm

**\*\*Featuring Intro with Onohana**

An exciting selection of experimental animated works from Japan never before screened in New York City, representing a broad range of contemporary avant-garde practice. The titles range from 3-14 minutes, adopting the full breadth of styles in new animation: from visual music to raunchy music videos, digital processes to analogue filmmaking, and from minimalist atmospheric shorts to narratively rich miniature epics. All evoke completely unique worlds. *18+ These films are unrated, but may only be viewed by persons 18 years of age and older.*

*Mono No Aware Hand-Drawn Animation Workshop Films 2016. Approx. 8 min. Digital.*

Various works from the participants of Mono No Aware's Hand-Drawn Animation Workshop held at Japan Society on June 18. World Premiere.

*AGE OF OBSCURE, Mirai Mizue and Onohana. 2015. 4 min. Digital.*

A grand collision of Mizue's signature visual music forms and Onohana's mesmerizing impressionistic illustrations, featuring music by Twoth. North American Premiere.

*Ouch, Chou Chou, Onohana. 2016. 12 min. Digital.*

Onohana's expansive imagination and visual style here recounts the touching saga of a cabbage and pea's friendship across bullying and interdimensional travel. North American Premiere.

**Land**, Masanobu Hiraoka. 2013. 4 min. Digital.

Shape shifting animal and geometric forms stun in this piece with music and sound by Aimar Molero. New York Premiere.

**MASTER BLASTER**, Sawako Kabuki. 2014. 4 min. Digital.

Coital psychedelia featuring the music of Shinsuke Sugahara, a wild imaginary of physical intimacy. New York Premiere.

**The Great Rabbit**, Atsushi Wada. 2012. 7 min. Digital.

"If you believe in the Rabbit, it means that you'll believe anything. If you don't believe in the Rabbit, it means that you wouldn't believe anything." New York Premiere.

**lost summer vacation**, Yoko Yuki. 2015. 3 min. Digital.

The mystical happenings of a tropical island are pictured in an animated scroll. North American Premiere.

**Don't tell Mom**, Sawako Kabuki. 2015. 4 min. Digital.

A naughty musical sex-ed film for siblings. New York Premiere.

**HOLIDAY**, Ryo Hirano. 2011. 14 min. Digital.

Delirious, deeply romantic tale of love and loss featuring a girl, golden nude, and akahara imori newt in a gondola resort. New York Premiere.

**TENSAI BANPAKU**, Mirai Mizue. 2015. 4 min. Digital.

The mutating forms of Tensai Banpaku, or "Genius Expo" create a stunning abstract orchestra. New York Premiere.

**ZDRAVSTVUITE!**, Yoko Yuki. 2015. 6 min. Digital.

"On a summer day a strange man who teaches Russian at the beach took me to a town." East Coast Premiere.

**such a good place to die**, Onohana. 2015. 3 min. Digital.

Forms shift like a landscape of memory in this enchanting work featuring music by Tatsuki Tsushima. North American Premiere.

## PANEL DISCUSSION

### [Japanese Film Culture In & Out of Japan](#)

Wed., July 20 at 4 pm

For the past 10 years, JAPAN CUTS has been introducing new Japanese films to New York audiences amidst numerous shifts in film culture as well as production, distribution and exhibition practices in Japan and beyond. What are the social, economic and political pressures that help determine the types of films that get made in Japan and how they are sold abroad? How has the international perception of Japanese cinema changed in recent years? What are the efforts being made and what more can be done to increase its exposure? This panel of diverse film industry veterans is assembled to address these questions and to consider the role of festivals like JAPAN CUTS - as well as distribution companies, academia, technology and beyond-in determining the direction of Japanese cinema.

*This event is free. Seating is limited. Customers will be accommodated on a first-come, first-served basis. Approx. 60 min.*

Panelists:

**Keiko Araki** is the Festival Director for Pia Film Festival (since 1992); focusing on the discovery and nurturing of new filmmakers, PFF is the longest running film festival in Japan (founded in 1977).

**Kazuhiro Soda** is an award-winning filmmaker based in New York known for his observational method and style of documentary production, and the author of many books published in Japan.

**Alexander Zahlten** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University, and was Program Director for Nippon Connection Film Festival in Frankfurt, Germany from 2002 to 2010.

## **JAPAN CUTS 2016 MICROCINEMA**

### **New Directions in Japanese Cinema (NDJC)**

**July 14-24, screening daily from starting at 11 am**

An outstanding program supporting the development of a vibrant film culture in Japan, New Directions in Japanese Cinema (NDJC) gives up-and-coming filmmakers the opportunity to produce a professional quality thirty minute short, shot on 35mm film. In recognition of their recent 10th anniversary, JAPAN CUTS offers a selection 10 highlights from 2006-2015. The JAPAN CUTS Microcinema is installed in the Murase Room on the first floor of Japan Society. All films 30 minutes in length, and are projected in digital video, in Japanese with English subtitles.

#### **Hana, Kujira, and Her Father**

2015. Directed by *Takahiro Horie*. With *Mei Kurokawa, Yoshiyuki Morishita, Yuji Nakamura*. A pro wrestler trains to slug her deadbeat dad, but when she finds him he claims amnesia. International Premiere.

#### **Endrollers**

2014. Directed by *Kohei Yoshino*. With *Takahiro Miura, Denden, Masahiro Kuno*. An aging man makes increasingly preposterous demands to Nakamoto who is still new to his job as a funeral coordinator. North American Premiere.

#### **Buy Bling, Get One Free**

2013. Directed by *Kosuke Takaya*. With *Wataru Kora, Takashika Kobayashi, Rumi Hiragi*. A satirical comedy that pokes fun at the fashion-obsessed. Think Harajuku meets *Zoolander*. North American Premiere.

#### **Turning Tides**

2012. Directed by *Teruaki Shoji*. With *Hanae Kan, Ryoya Fujita, Tomomitsu Adachi*. Two unlikely friends reject pressures of the cynical adult world and explore fantasies of renewal. North American Premiere

#### **I AM HERE**

2011. Directed by *Yukihisa Shichiji*. With *Reina Aoi, Anna Aoi, Hajime Inoue*. Twins Manami and Misora could always feel each other's presence no matter how far apart they are. Until one day, when Misora suddenly disappears... International Premiere.

#### **Boys**

2010. Directed by *Daishi Matsunaga*. With *Naoya Shimizu, Takuya Yoshihara, Chika Uchida*. A tenderly brutal portrayal of two high school boys bullied at school and their struggle to reach out for human connection. Director of *Pieta in the Toilet* (JAPAN CUTS 2015). North American Premiere.

#### **HOLE IN WONDERLAND**

2009. Directed by *Nao Shimizu*. With *Yurine Hanada, Shunsuke Sawada, Hiromi Miyagawa*. A sweet childhood story approaching robot toys and the rituals of death. North American Premiere.

#### **A LYING WOMAN'S DAYBREAK**

2008. Directed by Madoka Kumagai. With Yuko Miyamoto, Reiko Saito, Ryosuke Watabe. Yuriko's languid life as a piano teacher is suddenly disrupted by the curse of being labeled a "cheating bitch." North American Premiere.

#### **SEISMIC GIRL**

2007. Directed by Kenta Tatenai. With Satoshi Yamanaka, Aona Kawai, Noriko Eguchi. Men are weak but earthquakes are strong in this love triangle comedy involving a catfish. International Premiere.

#### **LINE**

2006. Directed by Hiroyuki Nakao. With Eri Fuse, Ryuhei Ueshima, Masanobu Katsumura. Hilarious comedy ensues when a middle-aged couple attempts to steal from the safe of an insurance company president. International Premiere.

### **SPECIAL GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE**

#### **Lily Franky (*The Shell Collector*)**

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

Lily Franky is a Japanese actor, illustrator, essayist, and author of the best-selling autobiographical novel *Tokyo Tower: Me and Mom, and Sometimes Dad*, which was adapted into a film in 2007. Since beginning his acting career in 2001, he has distinguished himself as one of the most highly sought-out, versatile actors in Japanese cinema, often playing scene-stealing supporting characters. He is best known to international film audiences for his memorable performance in Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Like Father, Like Son* (2013), for which he won multiple awards including the Kinema Junpo Award and Japan Academy Prize for Best Supporting Actor. In addition to *The Shell Collector*, his first leading role since Ryosuke Hashiguchi's *All Around Us* (JAPAN CUTS 2009), Franky can be seen in *Bakuman* and *Three Stories of Love*.

#### **Denden (*Lowlife Love*)**

Venerable character actor Denden first appeared in Yoshimitsu Morita's *Something Like It* in 1981 and has since acted in over 100 films and TV shows. His impressive career includes turns in Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Cure* (1997) and Takashi Shimizu's *Ju-on* (2000), among many others. He is best known for his role in Sion Sono's *Cold Fish* (2010), for which he won multiple awards including the Kinema Junpo Award and Japan Academy Prize for Best Supporting Actor.

#### **Megumi Kagurazaka (*The Whispering Star*)**

With breakthrough roles in Sion Sono's 2011 films *Cold Fish* and *Guilty of Romance*, model and actress Kagurazaka revealed an ability to portray complex characters charged with delicate, ecstatic energy. Kagurazaka has continued this versatility, often collaborating with Sono, her husband, including standout roles in *Himizu*, *The Land of Hope*, *Why Don't You Play in Hell?*, *Love & Peace*, and a brave lead as the android heroine of *The Whispering Star*.

#### **Atsuko Maeda (*Mohican Comes Home*)**

Maeda shot to mega-stardom as one of the most prominent members of AKB48. Since graduating from the idol group in 2012, she has become an in-demand actress, starring in TV dramas as well as working with some of Japan's most well-respected film directors such as Ryuichi Hiroki, Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Hideo Nakata, Nobuhiro Yamashita, portraying against type characters complicating her previous girl group star image while demonstrating fantastic talents as a performer.

**Mizuki Misumi** (*Mother, I've Pretty Much Forgotten Your Face*) ([hyperlink](#))

One of the vibrant artists appearing in Endo's documentary, Kagoshima native Misumi is a poet known for her performances, published collections, and music albums. She was awarded the *Gendaishi Techo* (Modern Poetry Notebook) Award in 2004, received the 10th Chuya Nakahara Prize for her first book of poetry *Overkill*, and her following collection received the Rekitei Prize for Young Poets and the Southern Japan Literature Award.

**Tatsuya Mori** (*FAKE*)

Born in Hiroshima, Mori is a filmmaker and writer renowned for the award-winning *A* (1998) and *A2* (2001), on Aum Shinrikyo and the aftermath of the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attacks. His 2011 film *311* is a collaborative documentary about the aftermath of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake. Winner of the Kodansha prize for nonfiction, Mori has published over 30 best-selling books on social issues and the media.

**Mipo O** (*Being Good*)

From Mie Prefecture, O studied at Osaka University of Arts, later working under Nobuhiko Obayashi. After her *Harmony* received the Digital Short Grand Prix Award at Tokyo International Fantastic Film Festival, she directed her first feature *The Sakai's Happiness*, which won the Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award. Her recent *The Light Shines Only There* (JAPAN CUTS 2015) was Japan's Best Foreign Language Film entry for the 2015 Academy Awards.

**Shuichi Okita** (*Mohican Comes Home*)

Born in Saitama, Okita began his career making short films, eventually winning the Grand Prix at the 7th Mito Short Film Festival for his short *Sharing a Hotpot* (2002), later moving on to feature films. His breakthrough feature *The Woodsman and the Rain* (2011), starring Koji Yakusho, was the centerpiece presentation at JAPAN CUTS 2012 and won numerous awards including the Special Jury Prize at the 24th Tokyo International Film Festival.

**Hitoshi One** (*Bakuman*)

A veteran TV director, One made his feature debut with the popular romantic drama *Love Strikes* (JAPAN CUTS 2012) and followed up with sex comedy *Be My Baby* (aka *The Vortex of Love*) in 2013. A visually dynamic filmmaker with a gift for comedy, One quickly found an international audience at festivals such as Udine Far East Film Festival, Nippon Connection, and Fantasia, among others. *Bakuman* is his third feature.

**Onohana** (Experimental Spotlight)

From Iwate, Onohana's Tokyo University of the Arts' Department of Animation thesis received the Noburo Ofuji Award at the Mainichi Film Concours, and her works have debuted throughout Japan and internationally, including TOKYO ANIMA!, Seoul International Cartoon & Animation Festival, FANTOCHE, and Ottawa International Animation Festival. A skilled and versatile animator, her works evoke fantastical worlds of imagination and landscapes of the mind.

**Emmanuel Osei-Kuffour, Jr.** (*Born With It*)

Born and raised in Houston, Texas to a Ghanaian immigrant family, Osei-Kuffour fell in love with the storytelling sensibilities of Japanese cinema upon his first visit. For the past 6 years he lived in Japan working as a director/producer, with premieres in international

festivals such as Cannes and Toronto. Now in Los Angeles, he is working on his first feature, to take place in the U.S. and Japan.

**Ryuichi Sakamoto** (*Nagasaki: Memories of My Son*)

A world-renowned composer, producer and musician, Sakamoto began his career as a founding member of pioneering techno-pop supergroup Yellow Magic Orchestra. His first film score for Nagisa Oshima's *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (in which he also acted) brought immense critical acclaim, followed by an Academy Award win for his score to Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor*. He recently scored Alejandro González Iñárritu's *The Revenant* with Alva Noto.

**Sion Sono** (*Love & Peace, The Sion Sono, The Whispering Star*)

A poet and provocateur, Sono began his career making experimental 8mm films, eventually leading to a Pia Film Festival fellowship used to make his first 16mm feature *Bicycle Sighs* (1991). Since his breakthrough 2001 *Suicide Circle*, Sono has remained one of the most visible, prolific Japanese filmmakers working. He was a guest at the first JAPAN CUTS in 2007 with *Exte: Hair Extensions*, returning in 2009 for the New York premiere of *Love Exposure*.

**Yoshifumi Tsubota** (*The Shell Collector*)

Born in Kanagawa, Japan, Tsubota started creating under the influence of his father, a manga artist and illustrator. His experimental film *Big Spectacles* received the Grand Prix at the 2000 Image Forum Festival. His first narrative feature film, *Miyoko*, premiered in the Tiger Competition of the 2010 International Film Festival Rotterdam. Tsubota maintains a career working as a production designer and director of commercials and music videos while writing novels.

**Adam Torel** (*Lowlife Love*)

Torel is a film producer, programmer and the Managing Director of Third Window Films, the UK's leading distributor of Asian contemporary cinema, through which he has helped bring greater international attention to filmmakers such as Sion Sono, Tetsuya Nakashima and Shinya Tsukamoto, among others. In addition to *Lowlife Love*, he has producing credits for Sono's *The Land of Hope* and Yosuke Fujita's *Fuku-chan of FukuFuku Flats*.

**Eiji Uchida** (*Lowlife Love*)

A prolific writer/director known for his genre-inflected films, Uchida is best known for his unique slasher/black comedy *The Greatful Dead* (JAPAN CUTS 2014), which screened in 30 countries worldwide and received critical acclaim at film festivals including the Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival, Fantastic Fest, Raindance and more. With 13 features credited to his name since 2004, the tireless filmmaker is already at work on his next project.

**Kensaku Watanabe** (*Emi-Abi*)

Born in Fukushima, Watanabe joined producer Genjiro Arato's office in 1990, and worked as an assistant director for Seijun Suzuki's *Yumeji*, making his writer/director debut with *The Story of Pupu* in 1998, followed by *Chinchiromai*, *Loved Gun*, *Invisible War*, and *Cheer Cheer Cheer!*. He produced and also played a lead role in Hiroshi Okuhara's *Wave* (NETPAC Award, 2002 Rotterdam International Film Festival), and appeared in Satoko Yokohama's 2011 short *Midnight Jump*. He received the Japan Academy Prize for Best Screenplay for Yuya Ishii's 2013 *The Great Passage* (JAPAN CUTS 2014).

### **Satoko Yokohama** (*The Actor*)

Awarded Best Film in Osaka's CO2 Open Competition for her Film School of Tokyo thesis, Yokohama's debut feature *German + Rain* (2007) received the Directors Guild of Japan New Directors Award and Osaka's Grand Prix. Bursting onto the international scene with *Bare Essence of Life* (aka *Ultra Miracle Love Story*) set in her native Aomori, she continued to amaze with outstanding shorts (*Granny Girl*, *Midnight Jump*, *A Girl in the Apple Farm*) and now *The Actor*.

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Founded in 2007, **JAPAN CUTS** gives cinephiles their first (and sometimes only) chance to discover the next waves of film from Japan today. The festival traditionally presents a range of titles from the biggest of Japanese blockbusters, raucous genre flicks, peerless independents, arthouse gems, radical documentaries and avant-garde forms, along with unique collaborative programs put together with the cooperation of other international organizations. Special guest actors and filmmakers join the festivities for Q&As, award ceremonies, and the wild themed parties and receptions audiences have come to expect, with live music, food and drink.

Japan Society has actively introduced Japanese cinema to New York's international audiences since the 1970s, presenting works by the era's 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. Special guests such as Akira Kurosawa, Machiko Kyo, Toshiro Mifune, Robert De Niro, Francis Ford Coppola, and Hideko Takamine had already been part of Japan Society's events before JAPAN CUTS' inception in 2007.

Since then the festival has attracted nearly 45,000 filmgoers and over 250 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*, *100 Yen Love*, *About Her Brother*, *Buy a Suit*, *Confessions*, *Death Note*, *Fish Story*, *Kamome Diner*, *Love Exposure*, *Milocrorze: A Love Story*, *The Mourning Forest*, *Ninja Kids!!!*, *Sawako Decides*, *Sukiyaki Western Django*, *Sway*, *Sketches of Kaitan City*, *The Tale of Iya*, and *United Red Army*.

The **Japan Society Film Program** offers a diverse selection of Japanese films, from classics to contemporary independent productions, including retrospectives, thematic repertory film series, and U.S. premiere screenings. Its aim is to entertain, educate, and support activities in the Society's arts and culture programs.

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.

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](http://www.japansociety.org).

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## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

\*Guest intro and/or Q&A

### Thursday, July 14

7:00 PM - Mohican Comes Home\* +  
Opening Night Party

### Friday, July 15

6:30 PM - Bitter Honey  
8:30 PM - Lowlife Love\*

### Saturday, July 16

12:00 PM - The Magnificent Nine  
2:30 PM - The Sion Sono  
4:45 PM - The Whispering Star\*  
7:30 PM - Love & Peace\*

### Sunday, July 17

12:00 PM - A Room of Her Own: Rei Naito  
and Light  
1:45 PM - Sayonara  
4:15 PM - Nagasaki: Memories of My Son\*  
7:00 PM - Bakuman  
9:30 PM - Experimental Spotlight\*

### Monday, July 18-

6:30 PM - Three Stories of Love  
9:30 PM - Hush!

### Tuesday, July 19

6:30 PM - The Projects  
8:45 PM - Face

### Wednesday, July 20

4:00 PM - Panel Discussion  
6:30 PM - A Road preceded by Born With  
It\*  
8:45 PM - Mother, I've Pretty Much  
Forgotten Your Face\*

### Thursday, July 21

7:00 PM - The Shell Collector\* +  
Underwater Dream Party

### Friday, July 22

6:30 PM - Being Good\*  
9:30 PM - A Cappella\*

### Saturday, July 23

12:00 PM - I Am a Monk  
2:00 PM - Ken and Kazu  
4:30 PM - The Artist of Fasting  
7:00 PM - FAKE\*  
10:00 PM - Burst City

### Sunday, July 24

12:30 PM - Flying Colors  
2:00 PM - Kako: My Sullen Past  
4:30 PM - Emi-Abi\*  
7:00 PM - The Actor\*