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Media Contacts:

Genevieve Jacobson, 312-919-0005 [genevievejacobson@gmail.com](mailto:genevievejacobson@gmail.com)

Shannon Jowett, 212-715-1205 [sjowett@japansociety.org](mailto:sjowett@japansociety.org)

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

**Expansive 11th Edition Surges with Over 30 Boundary Breaking Films Across Diverse Programming Sections, Featuring Awardee Joe Odagiri with Numerous Special Guests Plus Wildly Themed Parties**

**July 13-23, 2017, at Japan Society**

*"Pound-for-pound one of the most consistently rewarding film festivals on the planet, JAPAN CUTS grows more vital with every passing year... One of the city's major annual events." - IndieWire*

*"Celebrated for its high standards and its eclectic slate." - Film Journal International*

New York, NY - JAPAN CUTS, North America's premiere showcase for new Japanese cinema, returns for its 11th installment July 13-23 to serve up a slice of the best and boldest films from Japan never before seen in NYC with special guest filmmakers and stars, post-screening Q&As, parties and more. Boasting a thrilling slate of epic blockbusters, shoestring independents, radical documentaries, mind-bending avant-garde, newly-restored classics and breathtaking animation, Japan Society's renowned summer film festival promises a bounty of cinematic discoveries for film fans and pop culture enthusiasts alike.

For its eleventh edition, [JAPAN CUTS 2017](#) presents its most far-reaching and iconoclastic lineup to date, including 28 feature films (3 International Premieres, 10 North American Premieres, 6 U.S. Premieres, 6 East Coast Premieres, 3 New York Premieres) and 6 short films, brought to life by rare, in-person access to creators of the work through Q&As and signature parties that allow connections beyond the screen.

Festivities start off with a bang on Thursday, July 13th, ushered in by special guest director and JAPAN CUTS veteran Yoshihiro Nakamura (*Fish Story*), who introduces the **Opening Night Film MUMON: The Land of the Stealth**, making its U.S. Premiere. Known for his masterful genre blenders, *MUMON* is Nakamura's modern take on the traditional *jidaigeki* (period drama), full of fantastical ninja moves that uphold genre standards, yet imbued with a unique sense of eccentricity and playfulness. Director Nakamura appears in a post-screening Q&A, followed by a rollicking **Opening Night Party** held in Japan Society's historic theater and waterfall atrium.

As previously announced, JAPAN CUTS is proud to present this year's recipient of the **CUT ABOVE Award for Outstanding Performance in Film** to **Joe Odagiri**, the remarkably talented box office golden boy and matinee idol of Japan. **Odagiri** receives the award before the **Centerpiece Presentation** screening: the East Coast Premiere of Nobuhiro Yamashita's critically acclaimed drama *Over the Fence*. A baseball themed Home Run Party follows the screening in celebration of the film and the performance that anchors it. Demonstrating the breadth of his talent and penchant for taking on difficult roles, Odagiri also participates in a

Q&A following the U.S. Premiere screening of Kohei Oguri's *FOUJITA*, about the life of the complex titular painter.

The festival's **Closing Film** offers a poignant and indelible deviation from traditional Japanese war dramas: Sunao Katabuchi's *In This Corner of the World*, winner of the Japan Academy prize for Animation of the Year. A deeply moving coming-of-age story about a persevering young woman, *In This Corner of the World* captures civilian life under the catastrophic tide of World War II with a tone that is at once mournful, optimistic, and enchantingly heart-swelling. The film's prolific producer (having previously worked on *Patlabor*, Satoshi Kon's masterpieces, and many other titles) **Taro Maki** attends for the post-screening Q&A.

For ten years, **JAPAN CUTS'** richly diverse slates have offered audiences a window into the breadth and depth of contemporary Japanese cinema. This eleventh installment of **JAPAN CUTS** presents a wide-ranging selection of films across each programming section that reveal the multiplicity of identities and layers of culture that shape Japanese film today—including international co-productions and adaptations, new LGBTQ cinema, female directors, and deeply relevant histories of WWII and nuclear trauma.

This year's **Feature Slate**, which includes the tentpole Opening, Closing, and Centerpiece titles, spotlights revered auteurs and emerging new talents alike. International arthouse directors and masters of their craft, **Sion Sono** and **Kiyoshi Kurosawa**, return this year with new films. While Kurosawa extends boundaries by traveling outside of his home country to make *Daguerrotype*, a French language international co-production, Sono's latest, *ANTI-PORNO*, revisits and subverts a staple of Japanese genre filmmaking: Nikkatsu Roman Porno. **Daisuke Miyazaki's** bold second feature *Yamato (California)* about an aspiring young rapper grappling with her own emerging identity and Japan's complicated relationship with the U.S., makes its U.S. Premiere with Miyazaki and star **Hanae Kan** (*Nobody Knows*) for a post-screening Q&A. In addition, Kan also appear to present the North American Premiere of Takuro Nakamura's outstanding slow-burning LGBTQ melodrama *West North West* with fellow star **Sahel Rosa**.

Another festival highlight is the North American Premiere of *Love and Goodbye and Hawaii* by up-and-coming filmmaker **Shingo Matsumura**, recipient of the **JAPAN CUTS Award** during the 2017 Osaka Asian Film Festival, selected and presented by the **JAPAN CUTS** programming team. Matsumura reverses the standard romantic comedy plot line to tell a superbly executed story of self-discovery about an ex-couple that decides to continue living together. Rising talent Matsumura introduces *Love and Goodbye and Hawaii* and participate in a post-screening Q&A.

**Classics: Rediscoveries & Restorations** returns with a selection of rarely-screened titles that have been recently restored and remastered. *The Ondekoza* is a visually striking and sumptuously colorful documentary by master director Tai Kato, who has yet to be discovered in the U.S. Following its World Premiere at Venice Film Festival in the Cannes Section, *The Ondekoza* features a stunning 4K restoration of Kato's last work making its U.S. Premiere. Also slated is *Once Upon a Dream* by experimental filmmaker Kei Shichiri, who last appeared at **JAPAN CUTS** with his film *DUBHOUSE* in 2015. Presented with an all-new sound and image remastering, this hidden gem of avant-garde cinema makes its International Premiere at **JAPAN CUTS**. Venerated auteur **Seijun Suzuki**, who recently passed away at the age of 93, closes the Classics showcase with a digital remaster of his forgotten gem *Zigeunerweisen*—a landmark film in the late director's career and the first film in his Taisho Trilogy—making its North American Premiere.

The **Documentary Focus** emphasizes **JAPAN CUTS'** commitment to non-fiction cinema, premiering three documentaries that tap into various aspects of race, gender, and

globalization in Japan and the U.S. ***Resistance at Tule Lake*** by NYC-based filmmaker **Konrad Aderer** shines a light on the untold history of Japanese-American dissidents in internment camps during WWII, elucidated by Aderer in a Q&A following the East Coast Premiere. Filmmaker **Megumi Sasaki** introduces and participates in a Q&A for the North American Premiere of ***A Whale of a Tale***, which tackles the hotly debated subject of dolphin hunting in Taiji, Japan eight years after the release of *The Cove*. **Kyoko Miyake's** Sundance hit ***Tokyo Idols***, dives into the pervasive and problematic subject of idol culture in Japan, making its East Coast Premiere with a video introduction by the director.

Two vibrant feature films in **Experimental Spotlight** demonstrate the wild possibilities of the cinematic form with visual playfulness and avant-garde flair, from the fantastical musical environment of Sora Hokimoto's feature debut ***Haruneko***, to the dream-like Okinawan quest ***Hengyoro (Queer Fish Lane)*** by pioneering veteran Go Takamine. The **Shorts Showcase** presents daring narrative short films by up-and-coming and well-established filmmakers from Japan, offering surrealistic love triangles, metafilmic inspiration, laundry anxiety with an assassin, and breathless lovers. Additionally, two animated shorts play before select feature films: *Summer's Puke is Winter's Delight* by Sawako Kabuki prior to *ANTI-PORNO*, and *Spread* by Yoko Kuno before *Satoshi: A Move for Tomorrow*.

In their curatorial statement, festival programmers Aiko Masubuchi, Kazu Watanabe, and Joel Neville Anderson note: "Cinema emerging from a specific region is tied to its traditions of cultural identity, artistic creation and modes of production, yet moving images are fluid and circumvent borders, revealing a tension between insurgent film culture and a fixed idea of national cinema during precarious moments of change. This eleventh edition of JAPAN CUTS reveals a cinema contending with crisis and breaking boundaries of form and content, complicating traditional gender roles and sexuality, addressing traumas of war and racism, uncovering buried histories and revealing the potential for social resistance. Highlighting artistic achievement as well as featuring works that catch the zeitgeist of the global cultural moment and the state of cinema in and around Japan, JAPAN CUTS offers a dynamic venue to discuss art and culture, inviting festival participants to come away inspired to create what's next."

**Tickets:** \$14/\$11 seniors and students/\$10 Japan Society members. \$20/\$17/\$15 for the July 13 screening of *MUMON: The Land of Stealth* and July 20 screening of *Over the Fence* including after parties. **Special offers:** Five-Film Pass: purchase tickets for at least 5 different films in the same transaction and receive \$2 off each ticket (July 13 screening of *MUMON: The Land of Stealth* and July 20 screening of *Over the Fence*). All-Access Pass: 1 ticket to every film in the festival: \$330/\$243/\$214. 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 2017 FULL LINEUP

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

### FEATURE SLATE (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

#### [Alley Cat](#)

Sat., July 15 at 4:15 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

2017. 129 min. DCP. Directed by Hideo Sakaki. With Yosuke Kubozuka, Kenji Furuya, Yui Ichikawa, Hiroshi Shinagawa, Erisa Yanagi.

A depressed ex-boxer (Yosuke Kubozuka) self-medicating for the injuries that ended his career finds a stray cat that brightens his day, but she is snatched up by a comical grungy mechanic (Kenji Furuya). Calling each other by the competing names they gave the cat, Maru and Lily, the odd pair is abruptly sucked into a political conspiracy with Saeko (Yui Ichikawa) and her son at the center. Witnessing another injustice in which the economic and social elite prey on the vulnerable, the two strays set off on the road to redemption, or at least peaceful cat ownership.

### [ANTI-PORNO](#)

Sat., July 22 at 10:30 pm

**\*\*East Coast Premiere**

2017. 78 min. DCP. Directed by Sion Sono. With Ami Tomite, Mariko Tsutsui, Fujiko, Sayaka Kotani, Tomo Uchino.

Part of Nikkatsu's Roman Porno Reboot Project celebrating the 45th anniversary of the genre that infamously saved the studio, *ANTI-PORNO* is a uniquely subversive take on Nikkatsu's softcore sex label by festival favorite Sion Sono. Pacing a vibrantly-colored art studio that looks like something out of a Jodorowsky film, celebrity novelist, artist and *enfant-terrible* Kyoko (Ami Tomite) terrorizes everyone around her, especially her eager-to-please assistant Noriko (Mariko Tsutsui), whom she sadistically (and quite literally) keeps on a leash. Just as Kyoko's cruelty reaches its peak, however, the film takes an unexpected about-face that, in true Sono-style, breaks down cinematic barriers in order to tackle the subjects of art, misogyny and freedom with boundless energy and unbridled passion.

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

*"Sono's effort is easily the most ambitious entry yet in the series of re-imagined softcore entertainments."* -James Marsh, South China Morning Post

Preceded by:

*Summer's Puke is Winter's Delight*

2016. 3 min. Directed by Sawako Kabuki.

### [At the Terrace](#)

Sun., July 16 at 6:45 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

2016. 95 min. DCP. Directed by Kenji Yamauchi. With Kei Ishibashi, Kami Hiraiwa, Ryuta Furuya, Kenji Iwatani, Hiroaki Morooka, Takashi Okabe, Atsushi Hashimoto.

A pompous company director and his attention-hungry wife host an evening soiree at their extravagant home. As the party winds down, a mixed group of remaining guests gathers on the terrace and continue drinking. After an innocuous comment is made about how lovely one guest's arms look, however, the party takes a turn towards farce as the guests' thinly-veiled jealousy, carnal desires and overwhelming insecurities become exposed. A Buñuelian satire of bourgeois social propriety, this whip-smart ensemble comedy skewers Japan's professional class with uncomfortably perceptive insight. Adapted from director Kenji Yamauchi's stage play *Trois Grottesque*, winner of the prestigious Kishida Drama Award in 2015.

*World Premiere, 2016 Tokyo International Film Festival*

[Daquerrotype](#)

Tues., July 18 at 8:15 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

2016. 131 min. DCP, in French with English subtitles. Directed by Kiyoshi Kurosawa. With Tahar Rahim, Constance Rousseau, Olivier Gourmet, Mathieu Amalric, Malik Zidi.

Jean (Tahar Rahim) takes a job assisting Stéphane (Olivier Gourmet), a reclusive photographer obsessed with the *daguerreotype*, a 19th century process that requires subjects remain painfully still as their images are captured on a silver plate. Begrudgingly taking commissions for fashion shoots to get by, Stéphane's true passion is taking life-sized portraits of his daughter Marie (Constance Rousseau), who eerily resembles his deceased wife. Jean soon falls for the ethereal Marie, who fantasizes about a life away from her gloomy situation, and hatches a plan for escape. Master of horror Kiyoshi Kurosawa travels to the birthplace of photography and cinema for this French-language thriller that speaks to his deep-seated anxiety over modernity and artfully evokes influences in Japanese and European supernatural traditions.

*World Premiere, 2016 Toronto International Film Festival*

*"You'll need patience for it to work on you, but all effort's repaid tenfold, thanks to Kurosawa's murmur-soft, immaculate craft and a trio of gorgeous central performances."*  
-Robbie Collin, The Telegraph

[The Extremists' Opera](#)

Wed., July 19 at 8:45 pm

**\*\*International Premiere**

2016. 90 min. Blu-ray. Directed by Junko Emoto. With Saori, Arisa Nakamura, Yuki Sakurai, Suzuka Morita, Mayu Sakuma.

When theater director Naoko holds auditions for the first production of her newly established all-female theater troupe, she is mesmerized by Haru, who barges into the old garage where they rehearse. Naoko chooses Haru to be the lead as she leverages her power as director to pursue the romantic connection that fuels her voracious creativity. However as opening night approaches, jealous entanglements threaten the artistic and ideological aims of the project, as well as the relationship with Haru pulling Naoko from her womanizing ways. Based on her own semi-autobiographical novel [Kokan](#), cult theater director and actress Junko Emoto makes her directorial debut in this playful drama relishing the toil and passion of a struggling creative life on and off stage.

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

[FOUJITA](#)

Fri., July 21 at 6:30 pm

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

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with star Joe Odagiri**

2015. 126 min. Blu-ray, in French and Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Kohei Oguri. With Joe Odagiri, Miki Nakatani, Ana Girardot, Angèle Humeau, Marie Kremer. French and Japanese, modernist and traditionalist, artist and propagandist: Léonard Tsuguharu Foujita lived a life surpassing contradictions. Born in Tokyo, Foujita moved to Paris in 1913 at the age of 27 where he achieved fame for his nudes and cat paintings, befriending luminary contemporaries such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. By 1933 he returned to an increasingly nationalistic Japan and contributed militaristic art that promoted imperialistic expansion. This masterful, elliptical biopic by director Kohei Oguri (*Muddy River, The Sting of Death*) features a career highlight performance by Joe Odagiri, who perfectly conjures Foujita's eccentric appearance and mannerisms, illuminating the complicated artist's roaring desires and fluid ethical center amidst the excesses of bohemian life and bleak ambiguities of war.

*World Premiere, Tokyo International Film Festival*

*"Director Kohei Oguri is literally in a class by himself." -Tom Mes, Midnight Eye*

### Closing Film

#### [In This Corner of the World](#)

Sun., July 23 at 7:15 pm

**\*\*East Coast Premiere**

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with producer Taro Maki**

2016. 128 min. DCP. Directed by Sunao Katabuchi. With Non, Yoshimasa Hosoya, Daisuke Ono, Minori Omi, Natsuki Inaba.

Winner of multiple prestigious awards and named best Japanese movie of 2016 by the esteemed film publication *Kinema Junpo*, this much-acclaimed hand-drawn animation tenderly depicts the joys and sorrows of Suzu Urano, who begins her married life in the small coastal city of Kure in Hiroshima Prefecture. Set during WWII, the hardships and devastation of war creep in as life and the landscape around her become increasingly grim. As gentle and clear-eyed as Sunao Katabuchi's humanist animation, Suzu perseveres through life as a participant and victim to one of the most extraordinary events of the 20th century with vulnerability and zest, falling in love and stumbling along the way.

*Winner, 2016 Japan Academy Prize for Animation of the Year.*

*Winner, 2016 Kinema Junpo Award for Best Film, Best Director, Reader's Choice.*

#### [Love and Goodbye and Hawaii](#)

Sun., July 16 at 4:15 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with director Shingo Matsumura**

2017. 93 min. DCP. Directed by Shingo Matsumura. With Aya Ayano, Kentaro Tamura, Momoka Ayukawa, Aoi Kato, Risa Kameda.

Rinko (Aya Ayano) and Isamu (Kentaro Tamura) have been living together for three years in what seems like an idyllic situation, except for one detail: they broke up with each other months ago. Even so, despite misgivings from her friends, the setup is comfortable enough for Rinko not to feel pressured to change it. When an attractive graduate student takes an interest in Isamu, however, Rinko is forced to confront her remaining feelings for

him and the reality of their cohabitation. A unique twist on the romantic comedy, director Shingo Matsumura's finely-tuned film gently reveals deep emotional truths about love and relationships with subtlety and genuine empathy, delivered with pitch-perfect performances from his leads.

Winner, JAPAN CUTS Award, 2017 Osaka Asian Film Festival: Indie Forum.

### [Memoirs of a Murderer](#)

Sat., July 15 at 9:30 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

2017. 117 min. DCP. Directed by Yu Irie. With Tatsuya Fujiwara, Hideaki Ito, Toru Nakamura, Kaho, Shuhei Nomura.

When a mysterious man (Tatsuya Fujiwara) announces his book confessing to a series of decades-old gruesome murders shortly after the statute of limitations has passed, its publication incites a media frenzy. Performing outlandish gestures of apology to his victims' families while describing his crimes in proud detail, the self-professed killer's eccentric flouting of norms and slick pompadour draws fawning admirers and ignorant media commentators. Watching the case he failed to solve become bestselling celebrity vehicle, grizzled cop (Hideaki Ito) stalks this misanthrope-above-the-law before turning the media spotlight around on him. With bullets literally bursting through the camera lens, the versatile Yu Irie adapts Jung Byoung-Gil's gripping *Confession of Murder* (2012) and adds more twisted turns to the original Korean mystery thriller.

Opening Film, followed by the Opening Night Party

### [MUMON: The Land of Stealth](#)

Thurs., July 13 at 7:00 pm

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

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with director Yoshihiro Nakamura**

2017. 125 min. HDCAM. Directed by Yoshihiro Nakamura. With Satoshi Ohno, Satomi Ishihara, Ryohei Suzuki, Yusuke Iseya, Yuri Chinen.

Raised suckling poison arrows among the sparring Iga ninja factions, Mumon (Satoshi Ohno, of idol group Arashi) is a carefree 16th century mercenary. When the ninja council makes a power play to defeat the young Nobukatsu Oda struggling to step into his father's warlord shoes as they expand rule across the country, Mumon jumps into the fray to satisfy his new bride Okuni's (Satomi Ishihara of *Shin Godzilla*, *Attack on Titan*) demand he make good on his promises of wealth. Yet Mumon soon finds what is worth fighting for beyond money or nation. A longtime JAPAN CUTS favorite known for his offbeat dramas, Yoshihiro Nakamura (*Fish Story*, *Golden Slumber*) takes on the *jidaigeki* epic with his signature sense of play featuring a jazzy soundtrack and fantastical ninja tricks.

### [My Dad and Mr. Ito](#)

Sun., July 23 at 12:00 pm

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

2016. 119 min. DCP. Directed by Yuki Tanada. With Juri Ueno, Lily Franky, Tatsuya Fuji, Tomoharu Hasegawa, Sei Ando.

Director Yuki Tanada (*One Million Yen Girl*, *Round Trip Heart*) takes on the recent genre phenomenon of "age gap" romantic dramas, bringing her soulful style and feminist

perspective. After driving Aya's (Juri Ueno) sister-in-law up the wall, her cranky 74-year-old father (Tatsuya Fuji) moves in without warning. He promptly goes about criticizing 34-year-old Aya's lifestyle: no children, pounding beers after her part-time job at a bookstore, and of course her older live-in boyfriend Mr. Ito (Lily Franky). At 54, he's right in the middle of the father and daughter's lifespans, leading to awkward hilarity. Yet the situational comedy of Tanada's film deepens to become a sincere look at aging and communication amongst lovers and family.

*"Both funny and searing, the film addresses issues of family and the plight of Japan's aging, unwanted generation." -Rob Schwartz, Metropolis*

### [Neko Atsume House](#)

Sun., July 16 at 12:00 pm

**\*\*East Coast Premiere**

2017. 92 min. Blu-ray. Directed by Masatoshi Kurakata. With Atsushi Ito, Shioli Kutsuna, Kayoko Okubo, Tae Kimura, Tomorowo Taguchi.

Novelist Masaru Sakumoto (Atsushi Ito) is in a professional rut. Once a celebrated hotshot in the literary world, he is now forced to churn out a zombie-themed serial novel to make ends meet. Panicked by feelings of failure, he seeks out an old house in the countryside to find inspiration and jumpstart his creativity. Once he settles in, however, he notices that he has some curious, whiskered neighbors. Initially annoyed, he eventually finds the battle to attract their attention oddly satisfying. Based on the popular smartphone game, *Neko Atsume House* uses its very simple premise to create an entirely unexpected and creative comedic drama about artistic integrity and personal fulfillment—with plenty of *kawaii* cats!

*"Delightful, blood-pressure-lowering" -Mark Schilling, The Japan Times*

Centerpiece Presentation, followed by the Home Run! Party

### [Over the Fence](#)

Thurs., July 20 at 7:00 pm

**\*\*East Coast Premiere**

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with star Joe Odagiri, with CUT ABOVE award ceremony**

2016. 112 min. DCP. Directed by Nobuhiro Yamashita. With Joe Odagiri, Yu Aoi, Shota Matsuda, Yukiya Kitamura, Shinnosuke Mitsushima.

Third in a trilogy of film adaptations (following *Sketches of Kaitan City*, *The Light Shines Only There*) from Yasushi Sato's collection of short stories of hard-living in the northern port city of Hakodate, Nobuhiro Yamashita's humorous, minimalist aesthetic in *Over the Fence* may suggest a softer approach. Yet this tale of a divorcee enrolled in carpentry vocational school to receive unemployment checks beginning a relationship with a bar hostess becomes a powerful story of damaged creatures clinging to one another, revealing human bonds as both salve and irritant as they face addiction, depression, and past traumas. Boasting an inventive score and subtly masterful portrayals by Joe Odagiri and Yu Aoi, *Over the Fence* fakes a bunt before hitting it out of the park.

*Winner, 2016 Tama Cinema Awards for Best Film, Best Actor (Joe Odagiri), Best Actress (Yu Aoi).*

### [Satoshi: A Move for Tomorrow](#)

Sat., July 15 at 12:00 pm

**\*\*New York Premiere**

2016. 124 min. DCP. Directed by Yoshitaka Mori. With Kenichi Matsuyama, Masahiro Higashide, Shota Sometani, Ken Yasuda, Tokio Emoto.

This portrait of the brief but brilliant life of *shogi* prodigy Satoshi Murayama tells the story of a master player who knows his time is running out. An underdog from the start, he developed nephrotic syndrome as a child, yet excelled at the board game often referred to as “Japanese chess.” From Osaka and with an unpredictable playing style, he rose through the ranks of the game before being diagnosed with bladder cancer in 1997. Following surgery he went right back to playing and rejected drug treatment, battling the cool-headed champion Yoshiharu Habu from Tokyo in a famous “Habu in the east, Murayama in the west” match. In the title role, Kenichi Matsuyama physically transformed himself for a performance that earned him Best Actor at the 59th Blue Ribbon Awards.

*World Premiere, Tokyo International Film Festival, Closing Film.*

*“His story is that universal one of a legend in any field, those so pure they would dedicate their entire lives.” -Yuri Kageyama, Associated Press*

**Preceded by:**

***Spread***

2016. 1 min. Directed by Yoko Kuno.

### [Shippu Rondo](#)

Sat., July 22 at 12:00 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

2016. 108 min. DCP. Directed by Teruyuki Yoshida. With Hiroshi Abe, Tadayoshi Okura, Yuko Oshima, Tsuyoshi Muro, Keiko Horiuchi.

A secret biological weapon known as K-55 is stolen from a medical research lab by a disgruntled former employee who demands ¥300 million in exchange for its location. Unable to go to the police due to its illegal nature, research scientist Kazuyuki Kurabayashi (Hiroshi Abe) is tasked with recovering the anthrax-like weapon by the lab’s panicked director (Akira Emoto). Going off of a clue that K-55 is buried beneath snow, Kurabayashi heads to the nearest ski resort with his son on the pretense of a short vacation to begin his secret mission, enrolling the unwitting help of local ski patrol (Tadayoshi Okura and Yuko Oshima). A slapstick comedy thriller with heart, *Shippu Rondo* delivers big laughs amidst exhilarating chase sequences and dramatic twists and turns.

*Based on the 2013 novel by Keigo Higashino.*

### [Summer Lights](#)

Sun., July 23 at 2:30 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

2016. 82 min. DCP. Directed by Jean-Gabriel Périot. With Hiroto Ogi, Akane Tatsukawa, Yuzu Horie, Keiji Izumi, Mamako Yoneyama.

Primarily known for his evocative non-fiction short films that confront issues of war, human rights, and political struggle, award-winning French filmmaker Jean-Gabriel Périot expands his ongoing interest in histories of violence with his first narrative feature, shot in Japan with an all-Japanese cast. A native Japanese filmmaker living in Paris visits Hiroshima for a documentary project about the 70th anniversary of the atomic bomb. Shaken by the interviews he conducts with survivors, he wanders the nearby Peace Memorial Park where he bumps into an odd yet beguiling young woman. Together they journey from the city to the seacoast, uncovering traumas and personal histories about the city's painful past along the way.

*"A delicate treatment of one of the most crushingly tragic episodes in human history."* - Neil Young, The Hollywood Reporter

### [Teiichi: Battle of Supreme High](#)

Fri., July 21 at 9:30 pm

\*\*U.S. Premiere

2017. 118 min. DCP. Directed by Akira Nagai. With Masaki Suda, Shuhei Nomura, Ryoma Takeuchi, Shotaro Mamiya, Jun Shison.

Teiichi Akaba (Masaki Suda) has a singular dream: to crush the competition, become prime minister, and rule his own country. But first he just has to get through high school. An absurdist satire of Japan's elitist pathways to the seats of power, Akira Nagai's adaptation of Usamaru Furuya's manga finds Showa era blue-blooded teens battling for the student council presidency. Sabotage, bribery, ritual suicide, fisticuffs, and more than a few unspoken crushes charge the boys' all out warfare revealing the failures of hierarchical power systems and toxic masculinity. This achingly relevant, hilarious tale comes to a head when a working-class pro-democracy challenger questions the plutocrats' factional wrangle and Teiichi is forced to recall the pure passion that drove him to his totalitarian bloodthirst.

*"The boys [...] represent real-life types in Japanese politics, where gilded elites rule and factions engage in Byzantine intrigues and double-crosses, just as their fathers and forefathers did."*

-Mark Schilling, The Japan Times

### [The Tokyo Night Sky Is Always the Densest Shade of Blue](#)

Fri., July 14 at 8:30 pm

\*\*North American Premiere

2017. 108 min. DCP. Directed by Yuya Ishii. With Shizuka Ishibashi, Sosuke Ikematsu, Ryuhei Matsuda, Paul Magsalin, Mikako Ichikawa.

Shinji (Sosuke Ikematsu) is a day laborer working construction for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Blind in one eye and manically talkative, he accepts the label of being "weird" in order to cover up a deep sense of alienation. Mika (Shizuka Ishibashi) is a nurse who moonlights as a bartender at a girlie bar. Cool and detached, she ponders the meaninglessness of life as she walks Tokyo's streets, harboring disappointment and hurt from a recent breakup and the death of her mother. Having given up on so much, will

these two loners give each other a chance? Reinventing his visual style, the latest from celebrated writer/director Yuya Ishii (*The Great Passage*, *Sawako Decides*) is a poetic meditation on disenchantment and recovery.

*World Premiere, 2017 Berlin International Film Festival: Forum.*

### [West North West](#)

Sat., July 22 at 4:15 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with stars Hanae Kan and Sahel Rosa**

2015. 126 min. Blu-ray, in Japanese and Farsi with English subtitles. Directed by Takuro Nakamura. With Hanae Kan, Sahel Rosa, Yuka Yamauchi.

An exchange student from Tehran studying art, Naima (Sahel Rosa) instantly connects with the melancholy Kei (Hanae Kan) amidst the socially oppressive environment of a sterile Tokyo cafe. Despite the distance between Kei's nocturnal bartender schedule and punk attitude, and Naima's academic rigor and religious devotion, an attraction between the two friends blooms, quickly inflaming the jealousy and anti-Islamic prejudice of Kei's mercurial on-again, off-again model girlfriend Ai (Yuka Yamauchi). The uncertain corners of a romantic triangle spin through desire, love, and self-actualization in this slow-burning LGBTQ melodrama featuring memorable characters enlivened by Takuro Nakamura's sensual, atmospheric direction and bold performances.

*"West North West is about the search for direction in life and the impossibility of knowing where you're headed." -Justin Chang, Variety*

### [Yamato \(California\)](#)

Sat., July 22 at 7:30 pm

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

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with director Daisuke Miyazaki and star Hanae Kan**

2016. 118 min. DCP. Directed by Daisuke Miyazaki. With Hanae Kan, Nina Endo, Haruka Uchimura, Reiko Kataoka, Shuya Nishiji.

Frustrated teenager Sakura (the outstanding Korean-Japanese actress Hanae Kan, *Nobody Knows, West North West*) lives in the town of Yamato by U.S. Naval Air Facility Atsugi. When she's not brooding at home with her single mother and brother in close quarters separated only by a curtain, she seeks pleasure in solitude, flipping through her English dictionary and writing rhymes to develop her chops as a rapper. When Nina, the daughter of their mother's absent American boyfriend arrives for a visit, she begins to push Sakura's buttons to break out of her shell. Treading on the complicated physical and felt relationship between the U.S. and Japan, Daisuke Miyazaki's second feature is a nuanced coming-of-age drama illuminated by veteran camerawoman Akiko Ashizawa.

*World Premiere, 2016 Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, Montréal.*

*"Yamato is like a kick in the butt to the apolitical and inward-looking attitudes of Japan's film industry and domestic market." -Maggie Lee, Variety*

**CLASSICS: REDISCOVERIES & RESTORATIONS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)**

### [Once Upon a Dream](#)

Tues., July 18 at 6:30 pm

**\*\*International Premiere**

2007-2016. 79 min. Blu-ray. Directed by Kei Shichiri. With Tsugumi, Hidetoshi Nishijima, Koji Yamamoto, Saburo Otomo.

For the film's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, experimental filmmaker Kei Shichiri (*DUBHOUSE*, *JAPAN CUTS* 2015) presents an all-new sound and image remastering of his *tour de force* film (formerly translated as *Before the Day Breaks*). Based on a manga by Naoki Yamamoto, the film follows Aochi who sleeps and sleeps but never feels like she has slept enough. Shichiri, who explores the limits of sound and image in his diverse body of work, presents a highly evocative dramatic film in which humans barely appear on screen. The story is told through voiceover, sound and visions of dreams and landscapes. Over the years, the film has gained fans, including contemporary auteur Kiyoshi Kurosawa who compared the film to those by Jean-Luc Godard.

*"To express the instability of existence—this is exactly what I want to express in my animations and I respect Shichiri for giving it shape in such bold, experimental spirit."* - Koji Yamamura

### [The Ondekoza](#)

Sun., July 16 at 2:00 pm

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

1981. 105 min. DCP. Directed by Tai Kato.

The last work by master director Tai Kato (1916-1985), known best for his Toei yakuza films, is a visually striking and sumptuously colorful documentary about the influential Ondekoza taiko troupe from Sado Island, Japan. Following the physically intense training of the young Ondekoza members and intercut with performance footage shot with gusto within elaborate set-pieces, the film pushes the limits of documentary into the realm of feverish imagination. Upon its completion, Kato had said that it was the first time in his life he was able to make a film exactly the way he wanted. Previously released only at a very limited scale in Japan, this new 4K scan restoration in celebration of Kato's centenary will be a new discovery for many.

*World Premiere, 73rd Venice Film Festival, Classics Section.*

*"Watching a Kato picture is a pure pleasure."* -Kevin Thomas, Los Angeles Times

### [Zigeunerweisen](#)

Sun., July 23 at 4:15 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

1980. 145 min. DCP. Directed by Seijun Suzuki. With Yoshio Harada, Naoko Otani, Toshiya Fujita, Michiyo Okusu, Akaji Maro.

The late, great Seijun Suzuki (1923-2017), best known for his brilliant avant-garde subversions of the yakuza genre (*Tokyo Drifter*, *Branded to Kill*), re-established his filmmaking career in a completely new direction with the immense success of this independently produced metaphysical period drama. The first film in the so-called Taisho

Trilogy, the story revolves around a love triangle between a university professor, his former colleague-turned-vagabond and an elusive geisha, filled with ghostly occurrences and the haunting refrain of the Pablo de Sarasate composition from which the film is named. A critical and box office success, *Zigeunerweisen* swept the 1981 Japan Academy Prize and Kinema Junpo Awards with wins in major categories. Presented in a brand new digital remaster.

*Winner, 1981 Japan Academy Prize for Best Film, Best Director, Best Supporting Actress, Best Art Direction.*

## DOCUMENTARY FOCUS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

### [Resistance at Tule Lake](#)

Wed., July 19 at 6:30 pm

**\*\*East Coast Premiere**

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with director Konrad Aderer**

*2017. 78 min. DCP, in English. Directed by Konrad Aderer.*

A dominant narrative of the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans is that they behaved as a “model minority,” cooperating without protest and proving their patriotism by enlisting in the army. Konrad Aderer’s (*Enemy Alien*) documentary overturns this history, telling the story of the 12,000 Japanese Americans labeled “disloyal” who dared to resist the U.S. government’s program of mass incarceration at Tule Lake Segregation Center. Through the voices of contemporary descendants on pilgrimages to the concentration camp memorial site, rare stock footage and photographs, lawyers and historians, and invaluable oral history from those who lived through it, *Resistance at Tule Lake* brings to surface stories of dissent and noncooperation marginalized for seventy years—ever more vital today amidst new threats to the rights of immigrants and minorities.

*“Aderer’s emotional, wrenching interviews with the ‘internees’—some of whom were deported to Japan because of answers to ‘loyalty’ questionnaires—make clear the consequences of race, wartime hysteria and political expediency.” -Tomio Geron, CAAMFest*

### [Tokyo Idols](#)

Fri., July 14 at 6:30 pm

**\*\*East Coast Premiere**

**\*\* Video introduction with director Kyoko Miyake**

*2017. 88 min. DCP. Directed by Kyoko Miyake. With Rio Hiiragi.*

This revealing, thought-provoking new documentary by Kyoko Miyake traces the budding career of RioRio (the stage name of 19-year-old Rio Hiiragi), an aspiring pop singer climbing the ranks of stardom as an idol in Tokyo. One among 10,000 teenage girls considered idols, RioRio is part of a billion dollar industry and a unique, male-dominated *otaku* culture of obsession that has grown exponentially since the 1990s and gradually infiltrated mainstream Japanese popular culture. With a journalistic approach, Miyake uses RioRio’s journey (as well as that of her number one fan Koji, a 43-year-old former salaryman) as an opportunity to explore the multifaceted and often complicated issues of

gender dynamics, female sexuality, fame and consumerism in the internet age inherent to idol worship in Japan.

*World Premiere, Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Documentary Competition.*

“A lively inquiry that reveals more contradictions than consensus.” -Justin Lowe, The Hollywood Reporter

### [A Whale of a Tale](#)

Sat., July 15 at 7:00 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

**\*\*Introduction and Q&A with director Megumi Sasaki**

2016. 95 min. DCP, in English and Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Megumi Sasaki.

Entering the political fray of environmentalism versus tradition raging around the issue of dolphin hunting in Taiji, Japan since the 2009 release of *The Cove*, Megumi Sasaki's documentary is the finely balanced film essay the frayed topic has been waiting for. Instead of propping up images of animal slaughter or beleaguered fishermen, *A Whale of a Tale* focuses on points of contact and communication between the two sides, foreign activists devoting years to the cause and agricultural workers that have developed a first-name familiarity. Sasaki (*Herb & Dorothy*) collaborates with journalist Jay Alabaster to examine the historical and material conditions that contributed to local whaling practice and the pressures of globalism and localism that keeps this issue in ideological deadlock—at least for now.

*World Premiere, Busan International Film Festival.  
Tokyo Docs Awards 2015, Best Pitch Award.*

## EXPERIMENTAL SPOTLIGHT (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

### [Haruneko](#)

Sun., July 16 at 8:45 pm

**\*\*North American Premiere**

2016. 85 min. DCP. Directed by Sora Hokimoto. With Keisuke Yamamoto, Ryuto Iwata, Minako Akatsuka, Llon Kawai, Yo Takahashi

Deep in the woods is a cafe that serves as a waystation for people who have determined, for whatever reason, to die. Here you'll find The Manager (Keisuke Yamamoto) who, assisted by an elderly woman (Lily) and a young boy named Haru (Ryuto Iwata), will act as your host before taking you deeper into the forest where you dissolve into sound waves. In Sora Hokimoto's enigmatic directorial debut, produced by industry veterans Shinji Aoyama and Takenori Sento, avant-garde aesthetics, theatrical artifice, music, and humor mix to produce a spherical, tonal narrative reaching catharsis in movement and music on the border of life and death. Produced in the wake of the passing of his stage designer father and featuring a positively electric soundtrack, *Haruneko* is thoroughly alive.

*International Premiere, 2017 International Film Festival Rotterdam: Bright Future Award Competition.*

**Hengyoro (Queer Fish Lane)**

Sat., July 15 at 2:30 pm

**\*\*International Premiere**

*2017. 81 min. DCP, in Okinawan and Japanese with English subtitles. Directed by Go Takamine. With Susumu Taira, Saburo Kitamura, Misako Oshiro, Ryuichi Ishikawa, Katsuhiko Kawamitsu.*

The long-awaited latest feature from Okinawa's preeminent filmmaker Go Takamine (*Untamagiru*) is a free-wheeling impressionistic work set in a fantastical realm informed by reality, memories, indigenous folklore and theatre. X years after the oft-referenced but never elaborated upon "Shima pshoo" incident, aging Tarugani and Papajo are best friends who live in the Patai Village where those who failed to die continue to exist. When the two find themselves framed as thieves who stole an illegal substance from the local store, they set out on the road, chased by three dripping wet mysterious women. An utterly unconventional visceral feast.

*"I thought it would be great if one were to cut open this film, not just red but grey blood would flow." -Go Takamine*

**SHORTS SHOWCASE (IN SCREENING ORDER)**

Sat., July 22 at 2:15 pm

A program of wildly inventive and daring narrative short films from up-and-coming and well-established filmmakers from Japan varying in tone, style and genre. (Total running time approx. 84 min.)

***Birds (Working Title)***, Koji Fukada. 2016. 8 min. Digital.

This charming comedy by Koji Fukada (*Harmonium*) presents an awkward interaction between a wife, her husband and his lover that reaches an absurd climax. North American Premiere.

***We Are Shooting***, Raita Minorita. 2017. 26 min. Digital.

Among the most stressful and thankless work done on a film set is undertaken by the production intern. It is no different for the plucky Reiko, who is reminded that "Moviemaking is a warzone!" International Premiere.

***WHITE-T AND FEEBLE THINGS***, Yun Su Kim. 2017. 30 min. Digital.

Takara only wears spotless white T-shirts, but lately can't seem to keep any of them clean. Meanwhile, he meets a mysterious contract killer and struggles with insecurities about his girlfriend. International Premiere.

***Breathless Lovers***, Shumpei Shimizu. 2017. 20 min. Digital.

Suffering from heartbreak and asthma, 23-year-old Toshiyuki pushes the limits of his body to chase the ghost of his recently deceased boyfriend against the black-blue backdrop of Tokyo's cityscape. International Premiere.

**GUESTS**

**Joe Odagiri (*Over the Fence, FOUJITA*)**

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

After magnetic performances in television, award-winning actor Joe Odagiri made his breakout film performance in Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Bright Future* (2002). Earning Newcomer of the Year at the Japan Academy Prize for *Azumi* (2003), he soon made a reputation for taking on challenging and unexpected roles in Seijun Suzuki's *Princess Raccoon* (2005), Sang-il Lee's *Scrap Heaven* (2005), and Sion Sono's *Hazard* (2007), winning Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor at the Kinema Junpo Awards in 2006 and 2005. A major presence in Japanese film and TV, Odagiri he has taken on many ambitious international productions such as Ki-Duk Kim's *Dream* (2008), Zhuangzhuang Tian's *The Warrior and the Wolf* (2009), and Junji Sakamoto's upcoming Cuba co-production *Ernesto* (2017).

#### **Konrad Aderer** (*Resistance at Tule Lake*)

A filmmaker and journalist based in New York City, Aderer's independent documentaries focus on resistance arising in immigrant communities targeted by "national security" detention and profiling. His documentary *Enemy Alien* (2011), on the fight to free a post-9/11 detainee, was honored with a Courage in Media Award from Council for American Islamic Relations (CAIR). He has received grants from the Center for Asian American Media, New York State Council of the Arts, National Park Service, and others.

#### **Hanae Kan** (*Yamato (California), West North West*)

Born in Mishima City, Shizuoka in 1990, at the age of 10, Kan was selected for a role in Seijun Suzuki's *Pistol Opera* (2001). Soon after, she starred in Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Nobody Knows* (2004), which brought her international attention and exciting projects, including a leading role in SABU's *Dead Run* (2005). Her performance in Ikki Katashima's *Pure Asia* (2011) was honored in the Kinema Junpo Top Ten Awards.

#### **Taro Maki** (*In This Corner of the World*)

Maki is a film producer and the president of GENCO INC. He studied at Waseda University School of Law, and after graduation, worked at film production company Tohokushinsha. There, he worked on many television and feature animation films. Some of his renowned producing credits include Mamoru Oshii's *Mobile Police Patlabor the Movie* (1989), Satoshi Kon's *Millennium Actress* (2001) and *Tokyo Godfathers* (2003), the *Sword Art Online* TV series (2012, 2014), *Sword Art Online The Movie: Ordinal Scale* (2016) and Ryuhei Kitamura's *Downrange* (2017). In 2016, he produced *In This Corner of the World*, which ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the Kinema Junpo Awards.

#### **Shingo Matsumura** (*Love and Goodbye and Hawaii*)

Born in 1981, Matsumura creates his own independent films while working in freelance production. He made *Striking Out in Love* (2013) as his graduation project at Waseda University, which was invited to the A Window on Asian Cinema Section of the 18th Busan International Film Festival, and won the SKIP CITY AWARD at the SKIP CITY INTERNATIONAL D-Cinema FESTIVAL in 2013. *Love and Goodbye and Hawaii* is his second feature film.

#### **Daisuke Miyazaki** (*Yamato (California)*)

Born in Yokohama, Kanagawa in 1980, Miyazaki started making films while studying at Waseda University. After working on Leos Carax's *Meld* (2008) as an assistant production designer, he worked as an assistant director for filmmakers such as Kiyoshi Kurosawa and Kunitoshi Manda. His first feature film *End of the Night* (2011) travelled to numerous

international film festivals and became a domestic box office hit. In 2014 he was selected for the Berlinale Talents program where he met several filmmakers with whom he made the omnibus film *Five to Nine* (2015).

**Yoshihiro Nakamura** (*MUMON: The Land of Stealth*)

Nakamura began his career making 8mm films while studying at Seijo University in Tokyo and winning a prize at the 1993 Pia Film Festival. He went on to work as an assistant director for prominent filmmakers such as Juzo Itami and Yoichi Sai and found success as the scriptwriter for *Dark Water* (2002) and writer/director of *The Booth* (2005). Since then his films are regularly invited to international film festivals, including *Fish Story* (2009), *Golden Slumber* (2010), *The Snow White Murder Case* (2015) and *The Magnificent Nine* (2016), all of which have screened at JAPAN CUTS.

**Sahel Rosa** (*West North West*)

Born in Iran, after she spent her early childhood at an orphanage Rosa moved to Japan with her foster mother when she was 8 years old. She went to a special school for voiceover acting, and also graduated from a college for IT engineering. Now she is now a popular TV personality in Japan, and in addition to starring in *West North West* has appeared in films such as *Tokyo Island* (2010), *Pecoross' Mother and Her Days* (2013), *Furiko* (2014), and *The Virgin Psychics* (2015). Her dream is to build a new children's foster home in Iran.

**Megumi Sasaki** (*A Whale of a Tale*)

Prior to becoming a filmmaker, Sasaki was an anchor, reporter, and news director for NHK Television, Japan's public broadcasting network. Her first feature length documentary *Herb & Dorothy* (2008), about legendary New York art collectors Herb and Dorothy Vogel, won top honors at the Hamptons International Film Festival, Philadelphia Film Festival, SILVERDOCS, and others. In 2013, she directed a follow-up documentary titled *Herb & Dorothy 50X50*, which had nationwide theatrical distribution in the U.S. and Japan. *A Whale of a Tale* is her third feature length documentary.

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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. For more, visit [www.japansociety.org/film](http://www.japansociety.org/film).

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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 Q&A

### Thursday, July 13

7:00 PM - MUMON: The Land of Stealth\* +  
Opening Night Party

### Friday, July 14

6:30 PM - Tokyo Idols  
8:30 PM - The Tokyo Night Sky Is Always  
the Densest Shade of Blue

### Saturday, July 15

12:00 PM - Satoshi: A Move for Tomorrow  
2:30 PM - Hengyoro  
4:15 PM - Alley Cat  
7:00 PM - A Whale of a Tale\*  
9:30 PM - Memoirs of a Murderer

### Sunday, July 16

12:00 PM - Neko Atsume House  
2:00 PM - The Ondekoza  
4:15 PM - Love and Goodbye and Hawaii\*  
6:45 PM - At the Terrace  
8:45 PM - Haruneko

### Tuesday, July 18

6:30 PM - Once Upon a Dream

8:15 PM - Daguerrotype

### Wednesday, July 19

6:30 PM - Resistance at Tule Lake\*  
8:45 PM - The Extremists' Opera

### Thursday, July 20

7:00 PM - Over the Fence\* + Home Run  
Party

### Friday, July 21

6:30 PM - FOUJITA\*  
9:30 PM - Teiichi: Battle of Supreme High

### Saturday, July 22

12:00 PM - Shippu Rondo  
2:15 PM - Shorts Showcase  
4:15 PM - West North West\*  
7:30 PM - Yamato (California)\*  
10:30 PM - ANTI-PORNO

### Sunday, July 23

12:00 PM - My Dad and Mr. Ito  
2:30 PM - Summer Lights  
4:15 PM - Zigeunerweisen  
7:15 PM - In This Corner of the World