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## Japan Society Announces Full Lineup for the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual JAPAN CUTS: Festival of New Japanese Film

North America's largest festival of contemporary Japanese cinema presents a diverse slate of 42 films, with over 20 guest filmmakers and talent in person for daily post-screening Q&As, including CUT ABOVE awardee Shinya Tsukamoto

July 19-28 at Japan Society



New York, NY (June 11, 2019) - Japan Society announces the full lineup for the 13<sup>th</sup> annual **JAPAN CUTS: Festival of New Japanese Film**, North America's largest festival dedicated to presenting the best in contemporary Japanese cinema, set for July 19-28.

Premiering 26 features and 16 short films, the summer festival offers a deep dive into one of the world's most vital film cultures with a diverse selection across its **Feature Slate**, **Classics: Rediscoveries and Restorations**, **Documentary Focus**, **Experimental Spotlight** and **Shorts Showcase** sections. This year's lineup features 19 first-time filmmakers and 14 female directors (the most in the festival's history), including 10 International Premieres, 16 North American Premieres, 4 U.S. Premieres, 4 East Coast Premieres and 6 New York Premieres. In addition, over 20 guest filmmakers and talent from Japan will join the festival to participate in post-screening Q&As and parties.

“This 13<sup>th</sup> edition of JAPAN CUTS provides testament to the continued vitality of contemporary Japanese cinema with a wide array of films by emerging filmmakers who dare to take formal and thematic risks,” says Kazu Watanabe, Japan Society Deputy Director of Film. “They are paired with a roster of veteran directors who similarly began their career in the spirit of creative innovation and who continue to expand their vision in new directions. Together, they tackle stories about existential ennui, class conflict and social discrimination through a range of filmmaking practices that continually subvert expectations and expand our notion of what Japanese cinema is.”

The Opening Film on July 19 is the U.S. Premiere of *Dance With Me*, an office comedy-road trip-musical directed by *Waterboys* helmer **Shinobu Yaguchi** featuring a breakout performance by star **Ayaka Miyoshi**. As previously announced, the festival’s Centerpiece Presentation on July 24 is the East Coast Premiere of *Killing*, a subversive samurai drama and meditation on the nature of violence by internationally renowned cult director **Shinya Tsukamoto**, who will be presented with the 2019 **CUT ABOVE Award for Outstanding Achievement in Film** prior to the screening. The director will also introduce a special 35mm presentation of his 1998 black-and-white classic *Bullet Ballet* on July 25. The Closing Film on July 28 is the North American Premiere of director **Yuko Hakota**’s remarkable debut feature *Blue Hour*, a comedic drama about rural homecoming and reinvention starring festival guests **Kaho** (*Our Little Sister*) and **Eun-kyung Shim** (*Miss Granny*).

Other festival highlights include: the New York Premiere of *His Lost Name*, a drama about two lost souls who find themselves in a tenuous father-son dynamic and the long-awaited debut feature by Hirokazu Kore-eda’s protégé and assistant director **Nanako Hirose**; the North American Premiere of 22-year-old director **Hiroshi Okuyama**’s highly original debut feature *Jesus*, about a young boy’s encounter with a six-inch Christ, winner of the New Directors Award at the 2019 San Sebastian International Film Festival; the International Premiere of *NIGHT CRUISING*, a fascinating documentary about a congenitally blind man’s attempt to create a short film for the first time, with filmmakers and subject in person; the return of festival favorite and 2013 CUT ABOVE Award recipient **Toshiaki Toyoda** with his latest crowd-pleaser *The Miracle of Crybaby Shottan*, a biopic about a late-blooming shogi master; and the New York Premiere of the recently restored send-up of 1980s pop music *The Legend of the Stardust Brothers* by director **Macoto Tezka** (son of legendary manga artist Osamu Tezuka).

*Organized by Kazu Watanabe, Joel Neville Anderson and Amber Noé.*

Tickets go on sale to the general public Tuesday, June 18 at 11:00 am. Japan Society members receive early access starting Tuesday, June 11. Tickets are \$15/\$12 seniors, students and persons with disabilities/\$10 Japan Society members. Opening Film and Centerpiece Presentation tickets are \$21/\$18/\$16. Discount ticket offers are available. See below for complete information or visit [japansociety.org/JAPANCUTS](http://japansociety.org/JAPANCUTS).

### [JAPAN CUTS 2019 Festival Trailer](#)

Most filmmakers and talent available for interviews; please reach out to **Christian Barclay** [cbarclay@japansociety.org](mailto:cbarclay@japansociety.org) with all talent, screener and ticket requests. Full slate of films below.

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## JAPAN CUTS 2019 FULL LINEUP

All films screen digitally at Japan Society (333 E. 47th St., New York, NY 10017)  
in Japanese with English subtitles unless otherwise noted.

### OPENING FILM

***Dance With Me* (U.S. Premiere)**

**Directed by Shinobu Yaguchi, 2019, 103 min.**

**Friday, July 19 at 7:00 pm**

When an entry level Tokyo salarywoman with executive level aspirations wakes up from hypnosis performed by a shady carnival magician (played by Akira Takarada, of *Godzilla* fame), she suddenly can't help but break into song and dance whenever she hears music. Desperate to break the spell before an important meeting, she chases the evasive hypnotist across the country, singing and dancing herself into and out of trouble along the way. With his signature light touch and knack for ensemble comedy, director Shinobu Yaguchi (*Swing Girls*) delivers a winning office comedy-road trip-musical led by Ayaka Miyoshi's irresistible breakout performance. With Ayaka Miyoshi, Akira Takarada, Yu Yashiro, Takahiro Miura. **Followed by Q&A with director Shinobu Yaguchi and star Ayaka Miyoshi and the Opening Night Party.**

### CENTERPIECE PRESENTATION

***Killing* (East Coast Premiere)**

**Directed by Shinya Tsukamoto, 2018, 80 min.**

**Wednesday, July 24 at 7:00 pm**

The latest from internationally renowned cult director and 2019 CUT ABOVE Award recipient Shinya Tsukamoto (*Tetsuo: The Iron Man*) is a subversive samurai drama that the filmmaker has called a "scream" in response to the current state of the world. When a traveling swordsman (Tsukamoto) in mid-19th century Japan enlists a young ronin (Sosuke Ikematsu) for an anticipated war in Edo, the battle-untested recruit struggles to reconcile his pacifism with the demand to kill—a struggle that unravels into madness. A stark consideration of violence and honor handled with masterful artistry by one of contemporary Japanese cinema's most essential auteurs. With Sosuke Ikematsu, Yu Aoi, Ryusei Maeda, Shinya Tsukamoto. **Preceded by the CUT ABOVE Award ceremony and followed by a Q&A with director Shinya Tsukamoto and the Centerpiece Party.**

### CLOSING FILM

***Blue Hour* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Yuko Hakota, 2019, 92 min.**

**Sunday, July 28 at 9:00 pm**

Just past thirty, Sunada (Kaho) is a consummate Tokyo entertainment media professional (with the toxic love life and battered liver to prove it) directing television commercials that require more personality management skills than artistry. Discouraged by the inequitable pressures of a misogynist industry and her cycle of self-destructive behavior, Sunada road trips to her rural Ibaraki hometown with her free-spirited best friend Kiyoura (Eun-kyung Shim) where she reopens uneasy family relationships and unlocks repressed creative spirits. Director Yuko Hakota manages subtle fluctuations of reality with distinct comedic flair in this remarkable debut, announcing the arrival of a new force in Japanese cinema. With Kaho, Eun-kyung Shim, Denden, Kaho Minami. **Followed by Q&A with director Yuko Hakota and stars Kaho and Eun-kyung Shim.**

### FEATURE SLATE

*In Alphabetical Order*

***And Your Bird Can Sing* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Sho Miyake, 2018, 106 min.**

**Monday, July 22 at 9:00 pm**

A bookstore part-timer (Tasuku Emoto) who shares a cramped apartment with an equally lackadaisical friend (Shota Sometani) strikes up a low-stakes love affair with his co-worker (Shizuka Ishibashi) during a lazy summer in Hakodate. The three twenty-somethings happily stumble through low-key clubs and late-night *konbini* runs, but when carefree attachment shifts to romantic infatuation, their easy friendship destabilizes and prompts them to reach for something to hold onto. Sho Miyake's update of the 1982 novel by Yasushi Sato (author of *The Light Shines Only There*) offers a subtle critique of hipster culture while attaining the breezy style of the film's titular Beatles *Revolver* track. With Tasuku Emoto, Shizuka Ishibashi, Shota Sometani, Makiko Watanabe.

***Being Natural* (U.S. Premiere)**

**Directed by Tadashi Nagayama, 2018, 96 min.**

**Saturday, July 20 at 6:30 pm**

Kindhearted Taka (Yota Kawase) idly passes time playing bongos under the clear country sky and grilling meat with his local friends. However, his life of simple pleasures is threatened with the arrival of the Kurihara family—Tokyoites who fled the city in search of the “natural life” and become intent on converting Taka's traditional thatched roof house into a quaint cafe that serves organic food. Casting urban consumption of rural culture as a malevolent force expunging unwanted human elements and veering into xenophobic violence, Tadashi Nagayama's comedic follow-up to *Journey of the Tortoise* (2017) swirls toward a wild genre-bending conclusion. With Yota Kawase, Shoichiro Tanigawa, Tadahiro Tsuru, Kanji Tsuda, Natsuki Mieda. **Followed by Q&A with director Tadashi Nagayama and stars Yota Kawase and Natsuki Mieda.**

***The Chaplain* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Dai Sako, 2018, 114 min.**

**Sunday, July 21 at 5:15 pm**

The late, great Ren Osugi (*Hana-bi*) stars as a prison chaplain working on death row in this thought-provoking chamber drama—his final film as an actor and first as a producer. Visiting with a regular roster of inmates who await their final sentence—including a converted ex-yakuza and a philosophy-spouting mass murderer—the newly appointed clergyman gradually learns of their circumstances and is forced to confront his own understanding of life, death and salvation. Featuring unforgettable characters and a restrained visual style, Dai Sako's searching film takes on the rarely-addressed topic of Japan's death penalty in order to question the state of the country's soul. With Ren Osugi, Reo Tamaoki, Setsuko Karasuma, Kanji Furutachi.

***Demolition Girl* (East Coast Premiere)**

**Directed by Genta Matsugami, 2018, 88 min.**

**Monday, July 22 at 6:30 pm**

High school teen Cocoa (Aya Kitai) supports her gambling addict father and deadbeat brother with a part-time job selling sausages and secret work as a video fetish performer. Initially resigned to her small town life of limited possibilities and economic struggle, when the unexpected prospect of going to a Tokyo university is introduced, Cocoa suddenly sees a way out. Winner of the JAPAN CUTS Award at the 2019 Osaka Asian Film Festival, this original spin on a high school coming-of-age story by newcomer Genta Matsugami resists easy moralizing and overt sentimentality while celebrating the power of resilience and self-determination. With Aya Kitai, Hiroki Ino, Haruka Imou, Yura Komuro. **Followed by Q&A with director Genta Matsugami and star Aya Kitai.**

***Erica 38* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Yuichi Hibi, 2018, 103 min.**

**Thursday, July 25 at 9 pm**

Inspired by a true story, *Erica 38* stars actor and former pop idol Miyoko Asada as Satoko, an aging con artist who gradually swindles her way to wealth. Starting off with small-time pyramid schemes, Satoko is introduced to an experienced grifter who manages her through an investment scam with bigger takes, eventually leading her to reinvent herself in Thailand as a 38-year-old named Erica. Written and directed by the accomplished fine art photographer and filmmaker Yuichi Hibi, *Erica 38* is the first film produced by the late Kirin Kiki, who also appears in her final screen role as Satoko's mother. With Miyoko Asada, Shunsuke Kubozuka, Takehiro Hira, Kirin Kiki. *In English and Japanese and Thai with English subtitles.*

***His Lost Name* (New York Premiere)**

**Directed by Nanako Hirose, 2019, 113 min.**

**Tuesday, July 23 at 6:30 pm**

A small-town carpenter named Tetsuro (Kaoru Kobayashi) happens upon an unconscious young man (Yuya Yagira) on a riverbank who eventually says his name is Shinichi. The middle-aged widower sympathetically takes Shinichi in, offering a room in his home and apprenticeship in his woodshop. Before long, the pair soon develop a father-son dynamic—forcing Tetsuro's other carpenters and patient fiancé (Keiko Horiuchi) to adjust to the strange new situation—though long-held secrets threaten to undo everything. A protégé of Hirokazu Kore-eda and Miwa Nishikawa, director Nanako Hirose masterfully reveals the fictions that keep us together and lies that tear us apart in this sensitive debut drama. With Yuya Yagira, Kaoru Kobayashi, Keiko Horiuchi, Young Dais. **Followed by Q&A with director Nanako Hirose.**

***The Island of Cats* (U.S. Premiere)**

**Directed by Mitsuaki Iwago, 2018, 103 min.**

**Saturday, July 20 at 12 pm**

A country tabby in an island full of cats running wild, Tama would be living in paradise if he didn't have to worry after his human servant Daikichi (Shinosuke Tatekawa). A retired widower, Daikichi enjoys a quiet life of daily habits visiting local friends. When newcomer Michiko (Kou Shibasaki) moves to town and opens a cafe for the island's aging population, old habits make way for new culinary adventures for Daikichi (and Tama). This filmmaking debut by prominent wildlife photographer Mitsuaki Iwago is shot on Sakushima in Aichi Prefecture and features rapturous feline imagery seamlessly woven into a heartwarming story about community. With Shinosuke Tatekawa, Kou Shibasaki, Tasuku Emoto, Kaoru Kobayashi.

***Jesus* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Hiroshi Okuyama, 2018, 76 min.**

**Friday, July 26 at 6:30 pm**

A quiet boy named Yura moves with his family from Tokyo to the snowy Japanese countryside and gets enrolled in a Christian elementary school. Adjusting to the foreign religious rituals and iconography surrounding him there, Yura tries Christian prayer for the first time and a silent six-inch Jesus materializes before him. The tiny Christ seems to grant Yura's wishes, but when tragedy strikes, Yura starts to question his newfound faith. Winner of the New Directors Award at the 2019 San Sebastian International Film Festival, 22-year-old director Hiroshi Okuyama imbues wry humor, mystery and a childlike perspective in this highly original, oddball debut. With Yura Sato, Riki Ookuma, Chad Mullane, Hinako Saeki. **Followed by Q&A with director Hiroshi Okuyama**

**Preceded by**

***Tokyo 21<sup>st</sup> October* (East Coast Premiere)**

**Directed by Hiroshi Okuyama, 2018, 12 min.**

A chatty woman and her uninterested son eat conveyor belt sushi in this cutout animation short.

***Jeux de plage* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Aimi Natsuo, 2019, 77 min.**

**Saturday, July 27 at 3 pm**

Produced by Kiki Sugino (Hospitalité), director Aimi Natsuo's debut is an effervescent satire on sexual desire and social artifice. College friends Sayaka (Haruna Hori) and Yui (Juri Fukushima) visit Shonan Beach and meet Yui's old pal Momoko (Nanaho Otsuka), where they stay at a quaint seaside villa attracting artistically-minded passers-through. From shady film professor to horny musician and would-be Korean couple, desire and delusion swirl as attraction between Sayaka and Yui is complicated by the trio's dynamic. Immersed in the style of Éric Rohmer and featuring cameos from the Asian film scene, Natsuo's "beach games" are a deceptively profound delight. With Haruna Hori, Juri Fukushima, Nanaho Otsuka, Shinsuke Kato. *In English and Japanese, Korean, Thai with English subtitles.*

***The Journalist* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Michihito Fujii, 2018, 113 min.**

**Saturday, July 27 at 4:45 pm**

Yoshioka (Eun-kyung Shim) is a Tokyo reporter with truth-seeking zeal haunted by her father's destroyed journalism career and subsequent suicide. Meanwhile, Sugihara (Tori Matsuzaka) is a bureaucrat on a glide path to promotion who comes upon a shady government-funded school that could point to a historic cover-up. Together, they must decide what to do when doing the right thing feels like self-sabotage. Based on journalist Isoko Mochizuki's book, Michihito Fujii's thriller recalls *All the President's Men* in its depiction of journalism's civic duty, replete with bustling newsrooms, late night leak intercepts and whirring printing presses. With Eun-kyung Shim, Tori Matsuzaka, Tsubasa Honda, Amane Okayama. *In English and Japanese with English subtitles. Preceded by introduction with star Eun-kyung Shim*

***The Kamagasaki Cauldron War* (East Coast Premiere)**

**Directed by Leo Sato, 2018, 115 min.**

**Sunday, July 21 at 7:45 pm**

A boisterous comedy produced in beautiful color 16mm following the hard-knock characters stirred up by the theft of a cauldron used in yakuza ceremonial rites. Set in Kamagasaki—home to the working poor of Osaka under constant threat of erasure by local government—Leo Sato's dramatic debut follows his documentary *Nagai Park Elegy* (2009) on local people's struggle against forced displacement. Magnetic character actor Yota Kawase centers this delightful ensemble of professionals and amateurs, a timeless scrappy vision of radical humanism, rendering the neighborhood's day laborers, sex workers, union activists and street performers with empathy and respect. With Mari Ota, Yota Kawase, Kiyohiko Shibukawa.

**Preceded by**

***Takoyaki Story* (East Coast Premiere)**

**Directed by Sawako Kabuki, 2018, 2 min.**

Animated sensual delights of the titular octopus balls popularized by Osaka street vendors.

***Melancholic* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Seiji Tanaka, 2018, 114 min.**

**Friday, July 26 at 9 pm**

Despite having graduated from the prestigious Tokyo University, Kazuhiko (Yoshitomo Isozaki) is unemployed and living with his parents without any plans for the future. Everything changes, however, when he takes up a job at a local bathhouse and discovers that it is used by the yakuza as a convenient place for executions and corpse disposal. Winner of the Best Director Award at the 2018 Tokyo International Film Festival: Japanese Cinema Splash, this auspicious debut from writer/director Seiji Tanaka features an ingenious script full of unexpected shifts in genre and tone, effortlessly swinging between black comedy, coming-of-

age romance and crime thriller. With Yoji Minagawa, Yoshitomo Isozaki, Mebuki Yoshida, Makoto Hada.

***The Miracle of Crybaby Shottan* (New York Premiere)**

**Directed by Toshiaki Toyoda, 2018, 127 min.**

**Saturday, July 27 at 12 pm**

Festival favorite Toshiaki Toyoda (*I'M FLASH!*) takes on the true story of shogi (Japanese chess) player Shoji "Shottan" Segawa. Despite consistent dedication, Shottan (Ryuhei Matsuda) fails to go professional by the time he's 26, permanently forfeiting his chance according to the game's strict rules. When he makes a name for himself as an amateur years later, however, he makes an unprecedented bid to go professional at 35 and forever changes the game. Informed by Toyoda's personal shogi experience (he trained to go professional as an adolescent), this star-studded biopic of late-blooming self-realization is an inspirational study of perseverance against all odds. With Ryuhei Matsuda, Yojiro Noda, Shota Sometani, Jun Kunimura. **Followed by Q&A with director Toshiaki Toyoda.**

***Orphan's Blues* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Riho Kudo, 2018, 89 min.**

**Sunday, July 28 at 6 pm**

Suffering from undiagnosed memory loss, Emma (Yukino Murakami) comes upon an elephant drawing by a childhood orphanage friend named Yang and goes off in search of him. Her wayward journey leads her to a group of outsiders whose lives are all revealed to be traumatically linked to the same missing person, including his brother Van (Takuro Kawakami). As she unlocks troubling secrets in the sweltering countryside, Emma's memory simultaneously fades and her experiences become increasingly surreal. Winner of Pia Film Festival's 2018 Grand Prize, director Riho Kudo's debut is an arthouse drama marked by beautifully expressive cinematography and daring narrative experimentation. With Yukino Murakami, Takuro Kawakami, Nagiko Tsuji, Shion Sasaki.

***Randen: The Comings and Goings on a Kyoto Tram* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Takuji Suzuki, 2019, 114 min.**

**Sunday, July 28 at 12 pm**

Named after the beloved 110-year-old tram in western Kyoto City, *Randen* is a pleasantly low-key romantic drama that evokes the ancient city's folklore, movie production history and deep love of trains through three intersecting stories: a writer from Kamakura researches supernatural train stories and recalls memories of his wife in her hometown; a shy local girl helps a Tokyo actor rehearse his lines in Kyoto dialect; and a high school girl from Aomori falls in love with a geeky train otaku. A local labor of love directed by Takuji Suzuki, the film was made with the help of Kyoto film students and the support of people living along the Randen line. With Arata Iura, Ayaka Onishi, Satoko Abe, Hiroto Kanai.

***Red Snow* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Sayaka Kai, 2019, 106 min.**

**Tuesday, July 23 at 9:30 pm**

In a snowy coastal town in northern Japan, a persistent journalist (Arata Iura) reopens a decades-old unsolved case involving the disappearance of a young boy, a mysterious fire and a local outcast largely suspected of wrongdoing who was nevertheless found not guilty. When the victim's brother (Masatoshi Nagase) and the primary suspect's troubled daughter (Nahana) get involved, a maelstrom of long-repressed emotions and psychological traumas are reawakened. Written and directed by newcomer Sayaka Kai with a veteran cast, *Red Snow* is a tense and beautifully-shot mystery thriller that suggests the unreliability of memory in the pursuit of truth. With Masatoshi Nagase, Nahana, Arata Iura, Yui Natsukawa.

***Samurai Shifters* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Akiyo Fujimura, 2018, 98 min.**

**Sunday, July 21 at 12 pm**

In 17th century Japan, the Tokugawa shogunate ensures political dominance by forcing lords to move their clans from domain to domain. When the Echizen Matsudaira clan is called upon to make a particularly tough relocation, the undesired role of relocation officer falls to Harunosuke Katagiri (Gen Hoshino), a socially inept samurai librarian. Under the threat of forced harakiri, Harunosuke takes to the near impossible task with the help of a loudmouth swordsman (Issey Takahashi) and the former relocation officer's daughter (Mitsuki Takahata). Directed by Isshin Inudo (*The Floating Castle*), this hilarious samurai comedy resonates with contemporary salaryman culture in more than a few ways. With Gen Hoshino, Issey Takahashi, Mitsuki Takahata.

***Ten Years Japan* (New York Premiere)**

**Directed by Akiyo Fujimara, Chie Hayakawa, Yusuke Kinoshita, Megumi Tsuno and Kei Ishikawa, 2018, 98 min.**

**Saturday, July 20 at 9 pm**

Japan's entry in the "Ten Year International Project"—launched by the success of Hong Kong's *Ten Years* (2015)—is a similarly dystopian speculative fiction anthology film that ponders the country's near future. Executive produced by Hirokazu Kore-eda, the film features short works by five emerging filmmakers set in an imagined Japan ten years from now that touch upon a range of pressing issues, including: the aging population, digital surveillance, "Big Data," nuclear disasters and rising militarism. Varying in mood, style and artistic approach, the films in *Ten Years Japan* altogether offer fascinating insight into contemporary Japan's national psyche.

***WHOLE* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Bilal Kawazoe, 2019, 45 min.**

**Saturday, July 20 at 2:15 pm**

After dropping out of college abroad, Haruki (Kai Hoshino Sandy) returns home to an indifferent mother and an absent father in Japan. Struggling to connect with people around him, he soon runs into Makoto (Usman Kawazoe), a laborer with a strong Kansai accent and affable nature who also happens to be biracial. Though their backgrounds and personalities are vastly different, they quickly find kinship in their shared experience as "hafu." Handled with sincerity and subtle humor, *WHOLE* is a deeply personal drama about identity, isolation and the unique perspective of biracial Japanese living in one of the world's most homogenous countries. With Kai Hoshino Sandy, Usman Kawazoe, Aoi Ibuki, Meimei Kikuchi. *In English and Japanese with English subtitles. Followed by Q&A with director Bilal Kawazoe and stars Kai Hoshino Sandy and Usman Kawazoe.*

**Preceded by**

***Tokyo Kurds* (U.S. Premiere)**

**Directed by Fumiari Hyuga, 2018, 20 min.**

An intimate documentary following 18-year-old Ozan, one of the roughly 1,500 undocumented Kurds living in Tokyo.

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## **CLASSICS: REDISCOVERIES AND RESTORATIONS**

*In Alphabetical Order*

***Bullet Ballet***

**Directed by Shinya Tsukamoto, 1998, 87 min, 35mm.**

**Thursday, July 25 at 6:30 pm**

In this stylish black-and-white thriller written, directed, produced, edited, shot by and starring Shinya Tsukamoto, a commercial director (Tsukamoto) becomes obsessed with

acquiring a gun after his longtime girlfriend suddenly kills herself with one. Stalking Tokyo's back alleys in his all-consuming pursuit, he antagonizes local street gangs and pursues violence with nihilistic abandon. Presented on 35mm and hand-picked by Tsukamoto to accompany the JAPAN CUTS premiere of his latest film *Killing*, this late '90s Japanese cinema classic bears further testament to the integrity and brilliance of the filmmaker's uncompromising vision since he debuted the game-changing *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* thirty years ago. With Shinya Tsukamoto, Hisashi Igawa, Sujin Kim, Kirina Mano. **Followed by Q&A with director Shinya Tsukamoto.**

***The Legend of the Stardust Brothers* (New York Premiere)**

**Directed by Macoto Tezka, 1985, 100 min.**

**Saturday, July 27 at 7:15 pm**

When he was a 22-year-old film student, Macoto Tezka (son of pioneering manga artist Osamu Tezuka) decided to take on his first feature film by teaming up with musician Haruo Chikada and adapting his 1980 "imaginary soundtrack" concept album *The Legend of the Stardust Brothers* into a movie. The result is a campy Phantom of the Paradise-inspired send-up of '80s Japanese pop culture and the corporate music industry filled with celebrity cameos, infectious musical performances and seemingly endless costume changes. A complete flop upon release, the film has since been plucked from obscurity and restored with a new Director's Cut, making it ripe for rediscovery as a cult classic! With Shingo Kubota, Kan Takagi, Kyoko Togawa, ISSAY. **Followed by Q&A with director Macoto Tezka.**

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**DOCUMENTARY FOCUS**

*In Alphabetical Order*

***I Go Gaga, My Dear* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Naoko Nobutomo, 2019, 102 min.**

**Saturday, July 20 at 4:15 pm**

The first theatrical feature by veteran television director Naoko Nobutomo is a personal documentary chronicling the enduring love, resilience and struggles of her nonagenarian parents in Kure, Hiroshima as her mother's Alzheimer's-related dementia gradually worsens. With a great abundance of footage taken over several years, Nobutomo interweaves direct documentation with intimate home movies of her parents, including their support during her battle with breast cancer. A small film that was a surprise box office hit purely through word-of-mouth, *I Go Gaga, My Dear* opened in one small Sapporo cinema and eventually expanded to 70 screens nationwide for over three months.

***NIGHT CRUISING* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Makoto Sasaki**

**Sunday, July 28 at 2:30 pm**

*NIGHT CRUISING* follows congenitally blind musician Hideyuki Kato as he pursues the realization of an expansive sci-fi short called *Ghost Vision*, a film within its own making-of documentary. Working with a media production team and wide range of collaborators—including color experts, facial roboticists, hair stylists, voice actors, fight choreographers and VFX engineers—Kato directs the execution of his story about a non-sighted fighter and a telepath searching for a mysterious ghost in a future world. His pursuit becomes a deep interrogation of how sensory environments are perceived and rendered, offering new ways for viewers to think through their own assumptions about cinema and imagination. **Followed by Q&A with director Makoto Sasaki, producer Miyuki Tanaka and participant Hideyuki Kato.**

***A Step Forward* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Atsushi Kasezawa, 2018, 99 min.**

**Sunday, July 21 at 2:30 pm**

Yoichi Fujiyabu is a pastor working to rescue and rehabilitate suicidal individuals drawn to a cliff in Wakayama prefecture through an emergency hotline and unique employment program. Suicide in Japan is an overwhelming sociological issue, with the annual number regularly exceeding 20,000, however the film approaches it on a human level: reaching spiritual depths while also showing the frustration in attempting to build human systems that can pull people back from desperate acts. A student of the late influential documentary filmmaker Makoto Sato (*Self and Others*), director Atsushi Kasezawa approaches the subject with deserving sensitivity and urgency. **Followed by Q&A with director Atsushi Kasezawa.**

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## **EXPERIMENTAL SPOTLIGHT**

*In Screening Order*

### **Palm of the Hand Cinema**

**Saturday, July 27 at 9:45 pm**

Over the course of his long writing career, Yasunari Kawabata produced more than one hundred “palm of the hand stories”: pieces often under a page in length that adopt a brisk writing style. This collection of avant-garde moving image works approach the short form with tantamount innovation, featuring miniature subjects, handmade special effects and personal perspectives, crafting small-scale productions that speak to the full richness of sensory experience. *Total running time approx. 75 min.*

### ***Mountain* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Isamu Hirabayashi, 2017, 8 min.**

An overturned dung beetle confronts social exclusion and the promises of a benevolent mountain spirit in this delightful short pregnant with meaning.

### ***FLUFFICTION* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Yoshiki Imazu, 2018, 7 min.**

“Today we are going to introduce the magical kingdom of charming fluffy animals that is rapidly finding its way into our daily lives.”

### ***A Snowflake into the Night* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Yoko Yuki, 2018, 6 min.**

The interconnected natural world is rendered newly tactile through stop-motion animation in Yoko Yuki’s transcendent tale of changing seasons.

### ***Living in the Story* (New York Premiere)**

**Directed by Lynn Estomin, 2018, 15 min.**

A fast-moving documentary portrait of the late Japanese American artist Patrick Nagatani and his fantastical constructed photographs.

### ***100percentElectrical* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Yoko Yuki, 2017, 15 min.**

A trip to Thailand unwinds across multiple channels of media during a casual bathhouse conversation between the filmmaker and Foodman, who also provided music.

### ***The Dawn of Ape* (North American Premiere)**

**Directed by Mirai Mizue, 2019, 4 min.**

Mirai Mizue’s familiar amoeba-like cells cross with kinetic sketched lines and shapes in a colorful burst of energy suited for all audiences. Music by Twoth.

### ***A Japanese Boy Who Draws* (U.S. Premiere)**

**Directed by Masanao Kawajiri, 2018, 20 min.**

The anguish of a life bent on self-expression is found in this remarkable short named winner of Pia Film Festival's 2018 Gemstone Award (Nikkatsu Prize).

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## **SHORTS SHOWCASE**

*In Screening Order*

### **New Directions in Japanese Cinema 2018**

Since 2007, the Visual Industry Promotion Organization (VIPO) has supported the development of Japanese film through its New Directions in Japanese Cinema (ndjc) program, which cultivates talented young filmmakers through workshops and provides them the opportunity to produce 30-minute narrative shorts, shot on 35mm film. *Both screenings are free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.*

**ndjc, vol. 1**

**Monday, July 22 at 4:30 pm**

#### ***Cloudy, Occasionally Sunny* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Motoyuki Itabashi, 2019, 30 min.**

A busy career-woman (MEGUMI) and her mother (Miyoko Asada) have complex feelings upon learning that the estranged, abusive father of the family has been hospitalized with dementia.

#### ***Saaya's Box* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Mikiko Okamoto, 2019, 30 min.**

With the power of a magic box that makes things disappear, a little girl gets exactly what she wants: her mother's sole attention. She soon learns, however, that her little brother is important too.

#### ***Last Judgement* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Shinya Kawakami, 2019, 29 min.**

A young man who's failed the Tokyo University of the Arts exam five times is jealous of a talented high school artist who eventually helps him unlock his hidden potential.

**ndjc, vol 2.**

**Tuesday, July 23 at 5 pm**

#### ***Farewell Family* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Kohei Sanada, 2019, 30 min.**

During the one-year memorial of his late beloved father, a soon-to-be father (Hoshi Ishida) struggles to reconcile his feelings of loss and receives support from his mother, sister and wife.

#### ***Quiet Hide-and-Seek* (International Premiere)**

**Directed by Kan Yamamoto, 2019, 28 min.**

The mother (Mari Hamada) of young children disappears into the attic without warning to see how her self-centered, boutique bathroom-selling husband will react to her "running away."

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## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

### **The Current State of Film Restoration in Japan**

**Friday, July 26 at 4:30 pm**

While a robust market for rereleases has incentivized American studios to invest in its film assets, and European and other governments around the world have funded the

preservation of their film history, Japan is struggling to realize 4K restorations of even its most revered classics. In this informative discussion, a varied panel of industry professionals will speak about the current state of film restoration in Japan, introduce key concepts about the work itself and present ideas for making projects more viable in the future. The talk will include a before/after demonstration and a case study of the landmark restoration of Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* (1953), a collaboration between Kadokawa film studio and Martin Scorsese's Film Foundation at the New York restoration facility Cineric. *Free admission. Seating is limited and guests will be accommodated on a first-come, first-served basis. Approx. 60 min.*

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## TICKETING

\$15/\$12 Seniors & Students/\$10 Japan Society Members.

\$21/\$18/\$16 for July 19 screening of *Dance With Me* + Opening Night Party and July 24 screening of *Killing* + Centerpiece Party.

**3-Film Pass:** Purchase tickets for at least 3 different films in the same transaction and receive \$2 off each ticket (offer not valid for *Dance With Me* on July 19 or *Killing* on July 24).

**All-Access Pass:** \$210; one ticket for every film in the festival, including Opening Film and Centerpiece Film. (Offer only available to Japan Society members. Limited to 15 passes total.)

Order tickets at [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org) or call or visit the Japan Society box office, Mon.-Fri. 11 am to 7 pm and weekends during the festival, 212-715-1258.

**Tickets go on sale to Japan Society members June 11 and to the public on June 18.**

## **SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE**

\* Guest Q&A

### **Friday, July 19**

7:00 PM - *Dance With Me\** + Opening Night Party

### **Saturday, July 20**

12:00 PM - *The Island of Cats*  
2:15 PM - *WHOLE\** preceded by *Tokyo Kurds*  
4:15 PM - *I Go Gaga, My Dear*  
6:30 PM - *Being Natural\**  
9:00 PM - *Ten Years Japan*

### **Sunday, July 21**

12:00 PM - *Samurai Shifters*  
2:30 PM - *A Step Forward\**  
5:15 PM - *The Chaplain*  
7:45 PM - *The Kamagasaki Cauldron War\** preceded by *Takoyaki Story*

### **Monday, July 22**

4:30 PM - Shorts Showcase: *ndjc, vol. 1*  
6:30 PM - *Demolition Girl\**  
9:00 PM - *And Your Bird Can Sing*

### **Tuesday, July 23**

5:00 PM - Shorts Showcase: *ndjc, vol. 2*  
6:30 PM - *His Lost Name\**  
9:30 PM - *Red Snow*

### **Wednesday, July 24**

7:00 PM - *Killing* + Centerpiece Party\*

### **Thursday, July 25**

6:30 PM - *Bullet Ballet* (35mm Presentation)\*  
9:00 PM - *Erica 38*

### **Friday, July 26**

4:30 PM - Panel Discussion: Film Restoration in Japan  
6:30 PM - *Jesus\** preceded by *Tokyo 21<sup>st</sup> October*  
9:00 PM - *Melancholic*

### **Saturday, July 27**

12:00 PM - *The Miracle of Crybaby Shottan\**  
3:00 PM - *Jeux de plage*  
4:45 PM - *The Journalist\**  
7:15 PM - *The Legend of the Stardust Brothers\**  
9:45 PM - Experimental Spotlight: Palm of the Hand Cinema

### **Sunday, July 28**

12:00 PM - *Randen: The Comings and Goings on a Kyoto Tram*  
2:30 PM - *NIGHT CRUISING\**  
6:00 PM - *Orphan's Blues*  
7:00 PM - *Blue Hour\**

## **About Japan Society**

Founded in 1907, Japan Society in New York City presents sophisticated, topical and accessible experiences of Japanese art and culture, and facilitates the exchange of ideas, knowledge and innovation between the U.S. and Japan. More than 200 events annually encompass world-class exhibitions, dynamic classical and cutting-edge contemporary performing arts, film premieres and retrospectives, workshops and demonstrations, tastings, family activities, language classes, and a range of high-profile talks and expert panels that present open, critical dialogue on issues of vital importance to the U.S., Japan and East Asia. For more information, call 212-832-1155 or visit [japansociety.org](http://japansociety.org).

## **Credits**

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