



JAPAN
SOCIETY

333 East 47th St. New York, NY 10017



JAPAN CUTS



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SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY, JULY 10

6 PM ChaO
with Opening Night Reception

FRIDAY, JULY 11

6 PM The Real You
with Author Introduction & Book Signing

9 PM The Gesuidouz
with Introduction

SATURDAY, JULY 12

12:30 PM SHORT CUTS
with Director Introductions

3 PM Yasuko, Songs of Days Past

6:30 PM She Taught Me Serendipity
with Q&A and Reception

SUNDAY, JULY 13

12:30 PM Kowloon Generic Romance

3 PM Michiyuki - Voices of Time

5:30 PM A Girl Named Ann
with Actress Q&A

MONDAY, JULY 14

6 PM Teki Cometh

8:30 PM A Samurai in Time

TUESDAY, JULY 15

6 PM What Should We Have Done?

8:30 PM See You Tomorrow

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16

6 PM Cloud
with CUT ABOVE Presentation,
Q&A and Centerpiece Reception

THURSDAY, JULY 17

6 PM Serpent's Path (2024)
with Director Q&A

9:30 PM License to Live
with Introduction

FRIDAY, JULY 18

6 PM Japanese Avant-Garde Pioneers
with Director Q&A

8:30 PM Blazing Fists

SATURDAY, JULY 19

12:30 PM Promised Land

2:30 PM My Sunshine

4:30 PM So Beautiful, Wonderful and Lovely
with Director Q&A

6:30 PM Love Letter

9 PM Serpent's Path (1998)

SUNDAY, JULY 20

12:30 PM Gridman Universe

3 PM Kaiju Guy!
with Introduction

5:00 PM The Spirit of Japan
with Q&A and Reception

NORTH AMERICA'S LARGEST FESTIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE FILM RETURNS FOR ITS 18TH YEAR THIS SUMMER AT JAPAN SOCIETY.

Join us July 10-20 for 25+ curated films from across Japan featuring major award-winners, indie darlings, up-and-coming filmmakers, restorations, documentaries, experimental and short films and anime. *JAPAN CUTS Powered by GU* is a showcase of the latest in Japanese cinema, featuring both today's most popular actors and directors as well as tomorrow's pioneering talent. Become part of our passionate filmgoer community for premieres, parties and celebrity guests in the heart of America's biggest city!

ADMISSION INFORMATION

	Non-members	Members	Seniors & students
Screenings with Receptions	\$26	\$18	\$23
Screenings with Q&As	\$24	\$17	\$22
All Other Screenings	\$20	\$14	\$18
Short Films	\$10	Free	\$5

All-Access Pass
EXCLUSIVELY FOR MEMBERS

SOLD OUT



Prices are inclusive of fees, where applicable.
All screenings take place in-person at Japan Society located at 333 East 47th Street in New York, NY.

FESTIVAL GUIDE

SPECIAL GUESTS (Page 4-7)

JAPAN CUTS Powered by GU welcomes luminaries from the Japanese cinema scene to NYC. We're proud to provide rare interactions with Japanese filmmakers and actors at select screenings.

FEATURE SLATE (Page 8-12)

Popular favorites, acclaimed independent works and international film festival gems encompassing a wide range of genres and styles.

DOCUMENTARIES (Page 13)

Non-fiction work examining life, art and culture in Japan.

NEXT GEN (Page 14-15)

The festival's competitive slate offers hand-picked independent narrative features from emerging directors. The Next Gen Prize is presented by VIPO.

CLASSICS (Page 16)

Newly restored favorites and landmark classics.

SHORTS (Page 17)

Vibrant short works that examine new directions in experimental, documentary and narrative film.

SUPPORTERS (Page 18-21)

The festival would not be possible without the generous support of our patrons.

Special Guests



KIYOSHI KUROSAWA

CUT ABOVE Award Winner

APPEARING AT: CLOUD, SERPENT'S PATH (2024), LICENSE TO LIVE

JAPAN CUTS Powered by GU is honored to award legendary director Kiyoshi Kurosawa with this year's CUT ABOVE Award prior to the screening of our centerpiece film, *Cloud*. Kurosawa was born in July 1955 in Kobe, Japan, and he started directing 8mm independent films while in college. He made his commercial film debut in 1983 with

Kandagawa Wars. In 1997, his thriller *Cure* brought him international attention, and this was followed by further global success with *Serpent's Path*, *License to Live* and *Pulse*. His *Bright Future* was a Palme d'Or nominee at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival. In 2015, his film *Journey to the Shore* won Best Director in Un Certain Regards in Cannes. We are honored to present premieres of two of his newest works: *Cloud* and *Serpent's Path* (2024), along with a retrospective screening of *License to Live* on 35mm.



YUUMI KAWAI

Award Winning Actress

APPEARING AT: SHE TAUGHT ME SERENDIPITY, A GIRL NAMED ANN

Yuumi Kawai was born in 2000 in Tokyo. She began to receive acclaim and awards early in her career for films including *It's a Summer Film* (JC 2021) and *A Balance*. In 2024, she starred in *Desert of Namibia* which was presented at the Cannes Film Festival and won the FIPRES-CI Prize. She received the Japan Academy Film Prize's award for

Outstanding Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role for *A Girl Named Ann*, screening this year at *JAPAN CUTS*. Her additional recent work include *She Taught Me Serendipity* and *Teki Cometh*, both also screening at the festival this year, as well as *A Bad Summer*, *Renoir* and *Look Back* (JC 2024).



KEIICHIRO HIRANO

Original Author of The Real You

APPEARING AT: THE REAL YOU

Keiichi Hirano is an award-winning Japanese author whose debut novel *Eclipse* won the celebrated Akutagawa Prize when he was only 23. Renowned for his psychological insight and exploration of universal themes like identity, love and acceptance, his work spans literary fiction, essays and sci-fi. His novels have been widely

translated, and his *At the End of the Matinee*, *A Man* and *The Real You* have all been adapted into films. He has also published in Japan a critical study on Yukio Mishima and, most recently, the short story collection *Mt. Fuji*.



AMÉLIE RAVALEC

Director of Japanese Avant-Garde Pioneers

APPEARING AT: JAPANESE AVANT-GARDE PIONEERS

Amélie Ravalec is a London-based Parisian film director and producer, photographer, editor and colourist. Ravalec's films have been released theatrically worldwide with over 1200 screenings in cinemas, festivals, museums and cultural institutions in 50 countries. Her work has been acquired by networks including ARTE, Sky Arts

UK and ORF Austria and has received over a dozen international awards. Ravalec is the director and producer of films *Japanese Avant-Garde Pioneers*, *Sumarsólstöður*, *Labyrinth of the Unseen World*, *Japan Visions* (in post-production) and more. She is the author and designer of *Japan Art Revolution*, published by Thames & Hudson. Ravalec founded publishing company Lone Gentlemen Publishing, where she publishes limited-edition art and photography books and prints. She is also a record collector and DJ. She co-founded underground techno record label and events organization Fondation Sonore in 2011 with Gregorio Sicurezza and Brussels warehouse club The Lodge in 2014.



STEPHEN LYMAN

Executive Producer of The Spirit Of Japan

APPEARING AT: THE SPIRIT OF JAPAN

Lyman is one of the leading global experts on Japanese shochu. He has been working at Yamatozakura Distillery in Kagoshima Prefecture seasonally since 2013 and has now made shochu in Kagoshima, Fukuoka, Kumamoto and even Brooklyn. In 2018, he relocated from NYC to Fukuoka. On International Sake Day 2019 his first book, *The Complete Guide to Japanese Drinks*, was released worldwide by Tuttle Publishing and in 2020 was nominated for a James Beard Book Award. He is the co-host of the Japan Distilled podcast. *The Spirit of Japan* is his first documentary. Further in the film world, Lyman has produced five narrative fiction films including the 2006 Native American short film *Sunshine* which aired on PBS and is now part of the permanent collection at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.



JOSEPH OVERBEY

Director & Cinematographer of The Spirit Of Japan

APPEARING AT: THE SPIRIT OF JAPAN

Overbey is a Brooklyn-based cinematographer and motion picture colorist whose work celebrates the interplay of light, color and the human experience. With a diverse portfolio spanning narrative, documentary and experimental films, Overbey brings a distinctive aesthetic style shaped by a lifelong love of visual storytelling to his collaborations. As Director of Photography, Joseph has lensed several independent narrative and documentary films featured at prestigious festivals. His commercial work includes collaborations with notable clients such as ARTE, Communiqué Magazine and others.



SHOKO TAMAI

Director & Choreographer of Flow
APPEARING AT: SHORT CUTS

Tamai is an award-winning choreographer and dancer whose work fuses ballet, contemporary movement and martial arts to explore themes of human connection, mythology and environmental consciousness. She has performed with leading companies such as

the Metropolitan Opera Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Cirque du Soleil, Semperoper Dresden Ballet and Roma Ballet, gracing some of the world's most prestigious stages including the Royal Opera House in London, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Theatre Royal Glasgow, Lincoln Center and Jacob's Pillow. In 2024, Tamai directed her first dance film—a milestone that garnered critical acclaim across the international film festival circuit.



KAKO ANNIKA ESASHI

Director of End of Dinosaurs
APPEARING AT: SHORT CUTS

Kako Annika Esashi is a filmmaker whose work blends drama, satire and documentary to explore themes of home, in-betweenness and the contradictions of progress. Her short *End of Dinosaurs* won the Special Jury Prize at the PIA Film Festival and screened at the 2024 Tokyo International Film Festival. Born in the U.S., she has lived

and worked in Uganda, the Comoros and Japan, including working for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Esashi has crewed on eight narrative features and holds degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. She is currently developing a narrative film project in Tokyo and a documentary on post-fire recovery in Lahaina, Maui.



JUNICHIRO YAGI

Director of Kaiju Guy!
APPEARING AT: KAIJU GUY!

Junichiro Yagi, born in Gifu Prefecture in 1988, shot his first films during his school days. He went on to study directing at Nihon University College of Art before working as a talent manager and head of production for TV shows. His feature film *Minority Yakuza* was

nominated for Best Film at the 63rd Blue Ribbon Awards. He is visiting JAPAN CUTS for the first time to introduce his second feature film, *Kaiju Guy!*

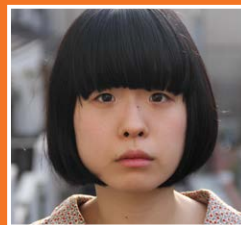


ROCKO ZEVENBERGEN

Actor in The Gesuidouz
APPEARING AT: THE GESUIDOUZ

An indie-film Vespucci, Rocko Zevenbergen is best known for his highly provocative cinematic debut *I Need You Dead!* and as the face of indie film company Bad Taste Video. Zevenbergen is also known for his work in collaboration with director Kenichi Umeta, in front of the

camera as Santarou in *The Gesuidouz* and behind the scenes on *Visitors (Complete Edition)* and the upcoming *I Fell in Love with a Z-Grade Director*. A rebel of independent cinema, Zevenbergen is a major advocate of experimenting with the medium and providing opportunities to aspiring artists who can't afford to pursue a traditional film degree.



MEGUMI OKAWARA

Actress in & Director of So Beautiful, Wonderful and Lovely
APPEARING AT: SO BEAUTIFUL, WONDERFUL AND LOVELY

Megumi Okawara was born in Tokyo in 1994. She began working as an actor and film director while still in college. Her style is characterized by her bird's-eye view of the characters' different situations and depicting them as humorous moments, and her unique writing style. Her previous directorial works include *I don't look for swim ring* (2012),

Sell mind (2014), *I Steam All* (2015), *HAHAGARU* (2016), and *Backflow Bamboo Cutter Story* (2016). In 2025, she directed her first feature film *So Beautiful, Wonderful and Lovely* which won the JAPAN CUTS Award in the Indie Forum category at the 2025 Osaka Asian Film Festival.

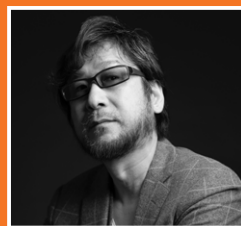


RII ISHIHARA

Actress in & Co-Director of The Tree of Sinners
APPEARING AT: SHORT CUTS

After a career in medical research and development, she began acting and has since appeared in over 50 films by many acclaimed directors. Her notable works include *Wild Virgins* (dir. Kenichi Umeta, Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival), *The Lump in My Heart* (dir. Shingo Matsumura, Tokyo International Film Festival) — a film

in which she played a key role and also served as a producer — and *Visitors (Complete Edition)* (dir. Kenichi Umeta, Slamdance Film Festival). Ishihara and composer Hiroyuki Onogawa co-direct films as a married couple. Their debut short *Flashback Before Death* won Best Short at Sitges Film Festival ('22) and Fantafestival ('23) and was nominated at 10 festivals, including JAPAN CUTS. Their latest work is a Korean omnibus horror drama, for which they directed a segment titled *Komoriuta*.



HIROYUKI ONOGAWA

Composer & Co-Director of The Tree of Sinners
APPEARING AT: SHORT CUTS

After graduating from university, he moved to France to study film music. He debuted as a film composer with Sogo (Gakuryu) Ishii's *August in the Water*. Since then, he has composed music for numerous films by Sogo Ishii, including *Labyrinth of Dreams* (1997, Berlin International Film Festival Panorama Section), *Gojoe* (2000, Toronto International Film Festival), and *Electric Dragon 80000V* (2001, Toronto International Film Festival).

He has also worked extensively with Koji Fukada, composing for films such as *Harmonium*, which won the Un Certain Regard Jury Prize at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, and *A Girl Missing* (2019, Locarno International Film Festival). Onogawa and actress Rii Ishihara co-direct films as a married couple. Their debut short *Flashback Before Death* won Best Short at Sitges Film Festival ('22) and Fantafestival ('23) and was nominated at 10 festivals, including JAPAN CUTS. Their latest work is a Korean omnibus horror drama, for which they directed a segment titled *Komoriuta*.



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BLAZING FISTS

(U.S. PREMIERE)

『BLUE FIGHT 蒼き若者たちの
ブレイキングダウン』
BLUE FIGHT AOKI WAKAMONO-
TACHI NO BUREIKINGUDAUN

Friday, July 18 at 8:30 PM

Dir. Takashi Miike, 2025, 119 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Danhi Kinoshita, Kaname Yoshizawa, Gackt, Anna Tsuchiya.

From iconoclastic director Takashi Miike and with a cast including pop stars Gackt and Anna Tsuchiya, *Blazing Fists* is the story of two men in a juvenile reformatory determined to redeem themselves through a fighting tournament, told with exuberant outbursts of Miike's hallmark action, humor and violence.



© 2025 "Chao" Committee

CHAO

『チャオ』 CHAO

WITH OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION

In collaboration
with GKIDS



Thursday, July 10 at 6 PM

Dir. Yasuhiro Aoki, 2025, 90 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Ouji Suzuka, Anna Yamada.

An idiosyncratic Andersen fairy tale set in the cyberpunk melange of near-future Shanghai, Yasuhiro Aoki's animated feature debut *Chao* is a fantastical spectacle with a deluge of heartfelt passion, produced over the course of seven years at the imaginative Studio 4°C.



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CLOUD

(NEW YORK PREMIERE)

『クラウド』 KURAUDO

CENTERPIECE FILM WITH
RECEPTION

Wednesday, July 16 at 6 PM

Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2024, 124 min, DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Masaki Suda, Kotone Furukawa, Amane Okayama.

Kiyoshi Kurosawa's third film in a prolific year, following the creative spurt of *Chime* and *Serpent's Path*, shapes up to be a slow-burn techno-thriller that takes aim at the internet's amplifying nature to radicalize the pettiest of grievances into real-world danger.



© 2024 "THE GESUIDOUZ" Film Partners

THE GESUIDOUZ

(U.S. PREMIERE)

『ザゲスイドウズ』 ZA GESUIDOUZ

WITH ACTOR INTRODUCTION

Friday, July 11 at 9 PM

Dir. Kenichi Ugana, 2024, 94 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Natsuko, Leo Imamura, Yutaka Kyan, Rocko Zevenbergen, Yuya Endo.

Musician Hanako believes she has one year left to live and embarks with her horror-themed punk band on a quest to write the world's best punk song... in a rural farming village. An offbeat, delightful and deadpan musical comedy from cult filmmaker Kenichi Ugana.



© 2024 "A Girl Named Ann" Film Partners

A GIRL NAMED ANN

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)

『あんのこと』 AN NO KOTO

WITH ACTRESS Q&A

Sunday, July 13 at 5:30 PM

Dir. Yu Irie, 2024, 113 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Yuumi Kawai, Jiro Sato, Goro Inagaki.

Yuumi Kawai won Best Actress at this year's Japan Academy Film Prize for her stunning performance in *A Girl Named Ann*, the story of a teenage dropout attempting to rebuild her life amid a world which sees her as only garbage. Written and directed by the lauded Yu Irie and inspired by a painfully true story.



Gridman Universe ©TSUBURAYA PRODUCTIONS
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GRIDMAN UNIVERSE

(NORTH AMERICAN
THEATRICAL PREMIERE)

『グリッドマンユニバース』

GURIDDOMAN YUNIBASU

Sunday, July 20 at 12:30 PM

Dir. Akira Amemiya, 2023, 118 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Hikaru Midorikawa, Yuya Hirose, Yume Miyamoto, Soma Saito, Junya Enoki.

Studio Trigger, one of the most explosive anime studios in Japan, reimagines Tsuburaya Productions' classic tokusatsu series *Gridman: The Hyper Agent* in an all-new big screen spectacle celebrating the *tokusatsu* and *kaiju* genres and injecting them with their trademark over-the-top, stylish action.



© 2024 Team KAIJU GUY!

KAIJU GUY!

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)
『怪獣ヤロウ!』 KAIJU YARO!

WITH DIRECTOR INTRODUCTION

Sunday, July 20 at 3:00 PM

Dir. Junichiro Yagi, 2024, 80 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.
With Gumpy.

Ichiro Yamada (Japanese comedian Gumpy) is ordered to produce a "local movie" to increase tourism in his sleepy city. However, Yamada proposes something else—a local *kaiju* movie. A delightful, heartfelt and rewarding comedy, *Kaiju Guy!* will make you roar.



© Jun Mayuzuki/Shueisha, KOWLOON GENERIC ROMANCE MOVIE Production Committee

KOWLOON GENERIC ROMANCE

(WORLD PREMIERE)
『九龍ジェネリックロマンス』
KURON JENERIKKU ROMANSU

Sunday, July 13 12:30 PM

Dir. Chihiro Ikeda, 2025, 120 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.
With Riho Yoshioka, Koshi Mizukami.

Reiko Kujirai (Riho Yoshioka), who works in the Kowloon Walled City, is in love with her senior, Hajime Kudo (Koshi Mizukami). When she stumbles upon a photograph—one that shows Hajime with a woman who looks exactly like her—the forgotten memories of her past, the mystery behind her duplicate self and the hidden truths buried within Kowloon collide. Jun Mayuzuki's acclaimed science fiction mystery manga comes to life!



© 2024 "MY SUNSHINE" Production Committee / COMME DES CINÉMAS

MY SUNSHINE

(NEW YORK PREMIERE)
『ぼくのお日さま』
BOKU NO OHISAMA

Saturday, July 19 at 2:30 PM

Dir. Hiroshi Okuyama, 2024, 90 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.
With Sosuke Ikematsu, Keitatsu Koshiyama, Kiara Nakanishi.

An aching film about an adolescent ice-dancing duo that captivates with a wistfulness for the wonders and pain of young love—and at the same time confronts the deeper subjects of Japan's attitudes towards masculinity and homosexuality.



© 2024 "The Real You" Production Committee

THE REAL YOU

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)
『本心』 HONSHIN

FEATURING AN INTRODUCTION BY
AUTHOR KEIICHIRO HIRANO AND
FOLLOWED BY A BOOK SIGNING

Friday, July 11 at 6:00 PM

Dir. Yuya Ishii, 2024, 122 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.
With Sosuke Ikematsu, Ayaka Miyoshi, Koshi Mizukami, Taiga Nakano.

Based on a novel by the Akutagawa-Prize winning Keiichiro Hirano. Following the death of his mother, Sakuya Ishikawa (Sosuke Ikematsu) creates a "Virtual Figure" from her memories in a sci-fi mystery injected with the same sharp satire as *Black Mirror*. Featuring an introduction by author Keiichiro Hirano and followed by a book signing.

The Real You is part of Japan Society's NYC Japanese Literature series and supported by a grant from the Toshiba International Foundation and All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd., the official airline partner of the series.

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A SAMURAI IN TIME

(NEW YORK PREMIERE)
『侍タイムスリッパ』
SAMURAI TAIMUSURIPPA

Monday, July 14 at 8:30 PM

Dir. Junichi Yasuda, 2024, 131 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.
With Makiya Yamaguchi, Norimasa Fuke, Yuno Sakura.

At the end of the Edo period, a flash of lightning sends a samurai into the present day. The biggest Japanese indie phenomenon since *One Cut of the Dead*, this low budget film was initially shown in only one theater, but through word-of-mouth grew into a sensation and ultimately took home Best Film at this year's Japan Academy Film Prize.



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SERPENT'S PATH

(EAST COAST PREMIERE)
『蛇の道』 HEBI NO MICH

Q&A WITH DIRECTOR
KIYOSHI KUROSAWA

Thursday, July 17 at 6:00 PM

Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2024, 113 min, DCP, Color, in French with English subtitles.
With Ko Shibasaki, Damien Bonnard, Mathieu Amalric, Hidetoshi Nishijima.

A higher budget remake of Kurosawa's 1998 straight-to-video effort, *Serpent's Path* is a fascinating variation on the original, supplanting Tokyo for the overcast banlieues of Paris. Eerily echoing its predecessor in its snaking narrative, Kurosawa's psychological experiment explores the haunting obsession of a man subsumed by the desire for retribution after his daughter is killed.



©2025 "She Taught Me Serendipity" Film Partners

SHE TAUGHT ME SERENDIPITY (U.S. PREMIERE)

『今日の空が一番好き、
とまだ言えない僕は』
KYO NO SORA GA ICHIBAN SUKI,
TO MADA IENAI BOKU WA

Q&A WITH YUUMI KAWAI
FOLLOWED BY A RECEPTION

Saturday, July 12 at 6:30 PM

Dir. Akiko Ohku, 2025, 127 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Riku Hagiwara, Yuumi Kawai, Aoi Ito, Kodai Kurosaki.

JAPAN CUTS' favorite Akiko Ohku explores the life of college student Konishi who forms a unique bond with classmate Hana (Yuumi Kawai). Sensory and sonically attuned, *She Taught Me Serendipity* inventively constructs an approximation of Konishi's psyche, and shines in its open-hearted confessions, soul-baring and poignant in their nature.



© 2023 TEKI PARTNERS

TEKI COMETH (NEW YORK PREMIERE)

『敵』 TEKI

Monday, July 14 at 6:00 PM

Dir. Daihachi Yoshida, 2024, 108 min., DCP, black and white, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Kyoza Nagatsuka, Kumi Takiuchi, Yuumi Kawai, Asuka Kurosawa.

A retired college professor lives a quiet life alone, until one day he finds a post on the internet about an approaching "enemy" and the world around him begins to melt into paranoia, dream, delusion and fantasy. Widely praised in Japan, *Teki Cometh* won Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor at last year's Tokyo International Film Festival.



© 2025 "Yasuko, Songs of Days Past" Film Partners

YASUKO, SONGS OF DAYS PAST (NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)

『ゆきてかへらぬ』

YUKI TEKA HERANU

Saturday, July 12 at 3 PM

Dir. Kichitaro Negishi, 2025, 128 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Suzu Hirose, Taisei Kido, Masaki Okada. Screenplay by Yozo Tanaka.

A resplendent Taisho-set historical drama penned by Seijun Suzuki scribe Yozo Tanaka (*Zigeunerweisen*) and directed by 80s auteur Kichitaro Negishi, *Yasuko* fixates on the tumultuous entwinement of modernist poet Chuya Nakahara, aspiring actress Yasuko Hasegawa, and literary critic Hideo Kobayashi.

Documentaries



©Circle Time Studio, 2025.

JAPANESE AVANT-GARDE PIONEERS

(NEW YORK PREMIERE)

『日本前衛派の開拓者』

NIHON ZEN'EI-HA NO KAITAKU-SHA

WITH DIRECTOR Q&A

Friday, July 18 at 6 PM

Dir. Amélie Ravalec, 2024, 100 min., DCP, color, in English and Japanese with English subtitles. With Nobuyoshi Araki, Tadanori Yokoo, Keiichi Tanaami.

Exploring the explosion of postwar radical art in the 1960s and the rise of Japanese avant-garde, *Japanese Avant-Garde Pioneers* is an enthralling glimpse into the outsider art of Japan's underground movements.



© 2024 Joseph Overbey

THE SPIRIT OF JAPAN

(WORLD PREMIERE)

WITH DIRECTOR Q&A & RECEPTION
CLOSING NIGHT FILM

Sunday, July 20 at 5 PM

Dir. Joseph Overbey, 2024, 48 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Tekkan Wakamatsu, Kazunari Wakamatsu, Ranko Wakamatsu.

The story of the Wakamatsu family, who have been distilling sweet potato shochu by hand at their Yamatozakura Distillery in Kagoshima Prefecture since the 1850s.

The Spirit of Japan is supported by Japan Society's Food events sponsors, BALMUDA and Kikkoman Corporation.

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WHAT SHOULD WE HAVE DONE?

『どうすればよかったか?』

DOU SUREBA YOKATTAKA?

Tuesday, July 15 at 6 PM

Dir. Tomoaki Fujino, 2024, 101 min., DCP, color, In Japanese with English subtitles.

Tomoaki Fujino's independent sleeper hit documents 20 years of his sister's life, who after exhibiting signs of schizophrenia in her early 20s, lived on without being treated due to his parents' denial of her illness. Heartbreaking, *What Should We Have Done?* actively explores and confronts the cultural disparities associated with mental illness in Japan.



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MICHİYUKI - VOICES OF TIME

(WORLD PREMIERE OF FINAL VERSION)

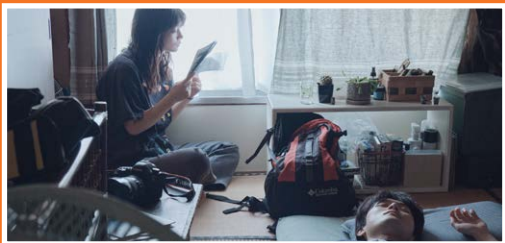
『道行き』

MICHİYUKI

Sunday, July 13 at 3 PM

Dir. Hiromichi Nakao, 2024, DCP, b&w, 79 min., in Japanese with English subtitles. With Daichi Watanabe, Kanjuro Kiritake, Hiromichi Hosoba.

Moving into an old house in the rural countryside, videographer Komai converses with its former owner Umemoto, drawing from personal memories to discuss histories, cartographies and the passage of time, reflecting upon the changing tides of tradition and progress within generational spans of the town's history.



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SEE YOU TOMORROW

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)

『ほなまた明日』

HONA MATA ASHITA

Tuesday, July 15 at 8:30 PM

Dir. Saki Michimoto, 2024, 99 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Makoto Tanaka, Ryota Matsuda, Risa Shigematsu.

A gentle coming-of-age drama, Saki Michimoto's slice-of-life debut involves itself in the life of gifted art school photographer Nao as she decisively steers herself to her dreams, facing the hard choice of leaving behind the familiar.



© 2023 Kazuichi Iijima / Shogakukan / Fantasia

PROMISED LAND

(NEW YORK THEATRICAL PREMIERE)

『プロミス・ランド』

PUROMISUTO RANDO

Saturday, July 19 at 12:30 PM

Dir. Masashi Iijima, 2023, 89 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Rairu Sugita, Kantaro.

Masashi Iijima's feature film directorial debut follows two *matagi* (traditional Japanese hunters) as they embark on a bear hunt in secret, preserving their custom despite a governmental ban. Told through long shots and minimal dialogue, this austere film allows the audience ample time to reflect on the conflict between tradition and progress in its wide stretches of silence amid snowy mountain vistas.



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SO BEAUTIFUL, WONDERFUL AND LOVELY

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)

『素敵すぎて素敵すぎて素敵すぎる』

SUTEKISUGITE SUTEKISUGITE SUTEKISUGIRU

WITH DIRECTOR Q&A

Saturday, July 19 at 4:30 PM

Dir. Megumi Okawara, 2025, 67 min, color, in Japanese with English subtitles.

With Megumi Okawara, Shin Namura, Naoko Miya.

Imbued with a sense of real youthful energy, *So Beautiful, Wonderful and Lovely* is a frenetic display of heartbreak filled with whimsical leanings, overflowing with creative ambition.

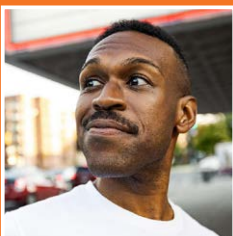
JURY



CHIAKI YANAGIMOTO is a Japanese-born, Los Angeles-based producer and director of Synepic Entertainment. Her first produced feature, *Samurai Avenger: The Blind Wolf* (2009), became a cult hit, launching her career with a series of festival-favorite genre films. In 2023, Chiaki made her directorial debut with *AUM: The Cult at the End of the World*, which premiered in the US Documentary Competition at the Sundance Film Festival. In 2022, Synepic launched SAKKA, a platform dedicated to bringing Japanese independent cinema to global audiences and supporting Japanese filmmakers on the world stage.



ROWENA SANTOS AQUINO teaches courses on documentary film history and theory and international cinemas and cultures in the Department of Cinematic Arts at California State University, Long Beach. Her research interests concern documentary film form, modes of testimony, and performance; the critical points where documentary and fiction film forms meet; and hydropoetics in film. She is currently co-authoring the first English-language monograph on the documentary filmmaking partnership and filmography of Hara Kazuo and Kobayashi Sachiko.



DESMOND THORNE is a filmmaker and film programmer living in NYC. He has previously programmed with NewFest: NY's LGBTQ Film Festival, and is currently a Film Programmer at Nitehawk Cinema in Brooklyn.

Classics



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LICENSE TO LIVE

『ニンゲン合格』NINGEN GOKAKU

WITH DIRECTOR INTRODUCTION

Thursday, July 17 at 9:30 PM

Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 1998, 109 min, Archival 35mm, Color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Hidetoshi Nishijima, Koji Yakusho, Shun Sugata.

Kiyoshi Kurosawa's fascinating 1998 reconstruction of Sam Peckinpah's *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* lifts the film's framework to chronicle a man's life (*Drive My Car*'s Hidetoshi Nishijima) after waking up from a 10-year coma. Irreverent, comic, and heartfelt, *License to Live* constitutes an early show of Kurosawa's remarkable adaptability and versatile range.



© Fuji Television Network, Inc.

LOVE LETTER

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF 4K RESTORATION)

『LOVE LETTER』

Saturday, July 19 at 6:30 PM

Dir. Shunji Iwai, 1995, 117 min., DCP, Color. With Miho Nakayama, Etsushi Toyokawa, Miki Sakai, Takashi Kashiwabara.

Iwai's achingly bittersweet epistolary breakthrough evokes an intoxicating romanticism of lost love, recollection and grief—all amid a picturesque setting in the blanche wintertide of Otaru. Beloved throughout Asia, *Love Letter* would capture the hearts of an entire generation, swept over by its sincerity and the late Miho Nakayama's eternal mountainside cry "O genki desu ka?"



© KADOKAWA 1998

SERPENT'S PATH

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF 4K RESTORATION)

『蛇の道』HEBI NO MICHI

Saturday, July 19 at 9 PM

Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 1998, 85 min, DCP, Color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Sho Aikawa, Teruyuki Kagawa, Yurei Yanagi.

Kiyoshi Kurosawa's 1998 V-Cinema production relays the muted horror of obsessive vengeance when a father attempts to avenge his daughter's brutal murder by kidnapping and torturing a suspected yakuza. A winding descent into a near-fanatical desire to avenge, *Serpent's Path* bleakly resigns to a goal which becomes ever more obscure.

JULY 12 AT 12:30 PM

Short Cuts



Flow © 2025 Shoko Tamai

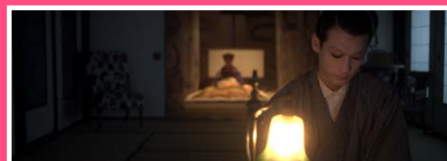
FLOW

(NEW YORK PREMIERE)

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY DIRECTOR SHOKO TAMAI

Dir. Shoko Tamai, 2025, 5 min., DCP, color, in English. With Dandara Amorim Veiga, Niara Hardister, Minami Ando, Xiaoxiao Cao, Isaiah Newby, Maxfield Haynes.

The word "taboo" comes from the French Polynesian word "tapua." It means sacred blood. *Flow* is an experimental short film that honors the taboo inside every woman, the cycle of the moon and the power of creation.



The Tree of Sinners ©2024 Hotel des Arts Inc.

THE TREE OF SINNERS

(NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE)

『罪人の木』ZAININNOKI

Dir. Rii Ishihara and Hiroyuki Onogawa, 2024, 25 min., color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Sumire, Masatoshi Kihara, Ann Nishihara, Rii Ishihara.

Husband and wife team Rii Ishihara and Hiroyuki Onogawa (composer of *August in the Water*) craft a surreal Taisho fantasy set in a remote mansion, where a maid is forbidden to enter the room of her master's sick wife. Visually arresting, the pair's second medium-length work is a beautifully dark fable.



END OF DINOSAURS

(U.S. PREMIERE)

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY DIRECTOR KAKO ANNIKA ESASHI

Dir. Kako Annika Esashi, 2024, 28 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Kako Annika Esashi, Shota Imai, Leica Sasafu.

A young community organizer, a free-spirited girl and a drag queen set out to challenge a dinosaur-ridden town's attempt at redevelopment. A delightfully quirky and poignant film from Japanese American filmmaker Kako Annika Esashi. Winner of the Special Jury Prize at the PIA Film Festival.



I AM NOT INVISIBLE ©2024 Yuki York

I AM NOT INVISIBLE

(U.S. PREMIERE)

Dir. Yuki York, 2024, 24 min., DCP, color, in Tagalog, English and Japanese with English subtitles.

Winner of the 2024 PIA Grand Prize, Yuki York's self-reflexive documentary is a personal essay, shot in an impoverished district of the Philippines, deemed "invisible" by York's on-screen text. Tracing York's roots, *I Am Not Invisible* asks local residents innocuous questions about their lives to better understand them, in turn offering to better understand York's own Filipino grandmother.

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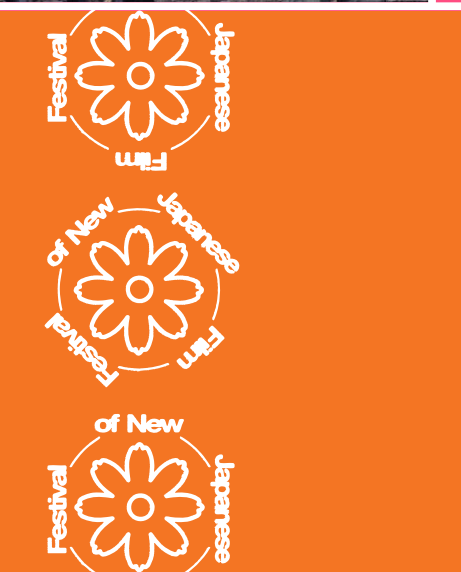
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