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## JAPAN SOCIETY ANNOUNCES FULL LINEUP FOR THE 16TH ANNUAL *JAPAN CUTS: FESTIVAL OF NEW JAPANESE FILM*

North America's largest Japanese film festival presents two weeks of diverse contemporary movies from Japan, including Opening Film *THE FIRST SLAM DUNK*, Centerpiece Film *UNDER THE TURQUOISE SKY* with CUT ABOVE Award Honoree Yuya Yagira, and a Special Tribute to Ryuichi Sakamoto

Featuring 5 International Premieres, 9 North American Premieres, 5 U.S. Premieres, 3 East Coast Premieres and 3 New York Premieres

July 26–August 6, 2023 · In-Person at Japan Society · New York, NY



*Under the Turquoise Sky* © Turquoise Sky Film Partners, IFI Production, KTRFILMS

**New York, NY (June 20, 2023)**—Japan Society announces the full lineup of the 16th annual *JAPAN CUTS: Festival of New Japanese Film*, the largest festival of its kind in North America, set for **July 26–August 6**. This year's edition will present 29 films and mark the first fully in-person JAPAN CUTS since 2019. This year's festival spans 12 days and features 24 feature-length films and five short films across Feature Slate, Next Generation, and Short Film Spotlight sections, as well as a special tribute to Ryuichi Sakamoto. Among the festival's lineup are five International Premieres, nine North American Premieres, five U.S. Premieres, three East Coast Premieres, and three New York Premieres. Additionally, JAPAN CUTS will welcome six special guests and host two parties during the course of the festivities.

Kicking off this year's festival, JAPAN CUTS is excited to present the East Coast Premiere of **THE FIRST SLAM DUNK** as its **Opening Film**. *THE FIRST SLAM DUNK* is the number one movie in the Japanese box office this year, and it is the first new feature-length film from the *SLAM DUNK* franchise in over 33 years, as well as manga creator **Takehiko Inoue's** directorial debut. JAPAN CUTS will present this very special screening in partnership with GKIDS and Toei Animation ahead of the film's upcoming nationwide theatrical release.

Leading this year's guests, JAPAN CUTS will present acclaimed actor **Yuya Yagira** with this year's **CUT ABOVE Award for Outstanding Achievement in Film**. Yagira was the youngest-ever winner of the Best Actor Award at the Cannes Film Festival for his lead in Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Nobody Knows* and has since starred in over 50 films and television series ranging from commercial blockbusters to art house gems. He will receive the CUT ABOVE Award from JAPAN CUTS in honor of his diverse career and especially for his lead role in ***Under the Turquoise Sky***, the **Centerpiece Film** at this year's festival. A remarkable international co-production from director **KENTARO**, *Under the Turquoise Sky* sees Yagira embark on a personal journey across the vastness of the Mongolian countryside. Both Yagira and KENTARO will make special appearances at the film's premiere screening and encore presentation.

"JAPAN CUTS is back!" says **Peter Tatara**, Director of Film at Japan Society, who organized this year's festival with Japan Society Film Programmer **Alexander Fee**. "JAPAN CUTS is one of Japan Society's most popular events and beloved in New York's cinema scene. After a pause during the pandemic, we couldn't be more proud for JAPAN CUTS to return with two weeks of exciting, thought-provoking and tear-jerking films. We're honored to share a captivating slice of Japan's cinematic world with New York!"

An additional highlight is the first in-person iteration of the festival's **Next Generation** competition, which offers a hand-picked selection of six independent narrative features directed by emerging directors. The festival's only juried section, Japan Society awards the **Obayashi Prize** to the most accomplished film as determined by a jury of industry professionals. This year's distinguished jurors are critic and essayist **Moeko Fujii**; **Dan Sullivan**, programmer at Film at Lincoln Center; and distributor **Pearl Chan** (Good Move Media, Kani Releasing).

Further, JAPAN CUTS offers two programs of SHORT CUTS which explores experimental, narrative and animated short-length films, including the directorial debut of **Sogo (Gakuryu) Ishii** composer **Hiroyuki Onogawa** and ***Silent Movie***, a versatile assortment of *benshi*-narrated silent films that includes an adaptation based on the screenplay of **Sadao Yamanaka's** first film.

And JAPAN CUTS is proud to present the 1985 documentary ***Tokyo Melody: A Film about Ryuichi Sakamoto*** in tribute to the legendary musician, composer and groundbreaking creative whose innovations in music, film and art remain unparalleled. Widely unavailable and rarely shown, the cult film—which offers an intimate snapshot of Sakamoto's genius—will screen on an imported 16mm print with renowned musician **Akiko Yano** and director **Elizabeth Lennard** present.

Described by *The New York Times* as "meticulously curated" and "an annual highlight of New York's film calendar," JAPAN CUTS brings the best and hardest-to-find contemporary films from Japan to New York City. From blockbusters, independent productions and anime, to documentaries, avant-garde works and short films, JAPAN CUTS offers an impressive look at the past 12 months of Japanese cinema. Japan Society is a 116-year-old nonprofit organization focused on connecting the U.S. and Japan, and its JAPAN CUTS is one of the organization's largest and most popular programs.

All films will be screened at Japan Society (333 E. 47th St., New York, NY 10017) and presented in Japanese with English subtitles unless otherwise noted.

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## JAPAN CUTS 2023 OPENING, CENTERPIECE & CLOSING FILMS



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### ***THE FIRST SLAM DUNK* (East Coast Premiere)**

**Wednesday, July 26 at 7:00 PM**

*Dir. Takehiko Inoue, 2022, 124 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Shugo Nakamura, Jun Kasama, Shinichiro Kamio, Subaru Kimura, Kenta Miyake.*

Winner of the Japan Academy Film Prize for Best Animation of the Year. *SLAM DUNK* is a beloved manga which was serialized from 1990-1996 and has sold over 170 million copies globally. *THE FIRST SLAM DUNK* marks original manga creator Takehiko Inoue's directorial debut and is the first new feature-length film from the iconic franchise in 33 years. The film follows Shohoku High School basketball team point guard Ryota Miyagi (Shugo Nakamura) as he takes the stage at the Inter-High School National Championship, and the pressure to challenge the reigning champions is on! Can Ryota and his teammates defeat the imposing Sannoh Kogyo High School? **Followed by Opening Night Party.**

### **Centerpiece Film**



© Turquoise Sky Film Partners, IFI Production, KTRFILMS

***Under the Turquoise Sky* (U.S. Premiere)**

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**Friday, August 4 at 7:00 PM - Director KENTARO and Actor Yuya Yagira Introduction and Q&A**

**Saturday, August 5 at 3:30 PM - Director KENTARO and Actor Yuya Yagira Introduction**  
*Dir. KENTARO, 2021, 95 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Yuya Yagira, Amra Baljinnyam, Akaji Maro.*

An international co-production bringing together a Japanese, Mongolian, French, Australian and Chilean team, *Under the Turquoise Sky* from director KENTARO follows the spoiled Takeshi (played by star Yuya Yagira) who is sent out to the Mongolian countryside by his wealthy grandfather (legendary actor Akaji Maro). Together with his Mongolian guide (Mongolian leading man Amra Baljinnyam), Takeshi's travels lead to stunning vistas, profound mysteries and personal growth. A lush road movie with touches of the surreal, *Under the Turquoise Sky* casts a spell with humbly beautiful directing, acting and cinematography. **August 4 screening is followed by the Centerpiece Party.**

**Closing Film**



© 2022 Tsutomu Takahashi / SHUEISHA, Tenmasou Production Committee

***The Three Sisters of Tenmasou Inn* (U.S. Premiere)**

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**Sunday, August 6 at 2:30 PM**

*Dir. Ryuhei Kitamura, 2022, 150 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Non, Mugi Kadowaki, Riku Hagiwara.*

In this supernatural tearjerker adapted from the manga by Tsutomu Takahashi, the waystation between life and rebirth is a traditional Japanese *ryokan* by the sea called Tenmasou Inn. When Tamae (Non) arrives there after a car accident leaves her body in a coma, she is greeted by Nozomi (Yuko Oshima), the inn's polite proprietress and laid-back Kanae (Mugi Kadowaki)—half-sisters that Tamae never knew she had. Despite protestations from the irascible matriarch Kyoko (Shinobu Terajima), the effervescent Tamae starts working at Tenmasou, taking time to process her liminal state while discovering the history she shares with her sisters, including their absent father.

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### TRIBUTE TO RYUICHI SAKAMOTO



*Ryuichi Sakamoto in Berlin, 1984 © Elizabeth Lennard*

***Tokyo Melody: A Film about Ryuichi Sakamoto***

**Tokyo melody: un film sur Ryuichi Sakamoto**

**Saturday, July 29 at 7:00 PM - Opening Comments and Director Q&A**

*Dir. Elizabeth Lennard, 1985, 62 min., 16mm, color; in Japanese, English and French with English subtitles. With Ryuichi Sakamoto, Akiko Yano.*

**Imported 16mm Print.** Filmmaker and photographer Elizabeth Lennard secures unprecedented access to Ryuichi Sakamoto during the recording of his 1984 album *Ongaku Zukan* in this brief-yet-insightful Franco-Japanese television co-production. A sampling of studio sessions and performances (including a piano duet with then-wife Akiko Yano), archival footage and talking head interviews, *Tokyo Melody* finds the eccentric artist at his creative peak, pushing the envelope to new sonic frontiers as he reflects on modern life, shifting technologies and his own creative processes. Lennard captures an awe-inspiring portrait of the extraordinary musician—one that taps into the very nature of the artist's *raison d'être* and remains a testament to Sakamoto's profound brilliance. **Opening comments by Akiko Yano; Screening followed by a Q&A with Director Elizabeth Lennard.**

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**FEATURE SLATE**  
*In Alphabetical Order*

**Best Wishes to All (North American Premiere)**

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**Thursday, July 27 at 9:00 PM**

*Dir. Yuta Shimotsu, 2023, 84 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Kotone Furukawa.*

What would you do for happiness? Director Yuta Shimotsu answers in his feature film debut. Executive produced by Takashi Shimizu (creator of *Ju On: The Grudge*) and starring Kotone Furukawa (Berlinale Silver Bear winner for Ryusuke Hamaguchi's *Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy*), *Best Wishes to All* follows a young woman's visit to her grandparents' home and discovery of what's brought them happiness—a revelation that will lead her to question her choices, sanity and reality itself. *Best Wishes to All* starts slow and builds to a frantic, manic and disturbingly satisfying end.

**Convenience Story (New York Premiere)**

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**Thursday, August 3 at 9:00 PM**

*Dir. Satoshi Miki, 2022, 97 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Ryo Narita, Atsuko Maeda.*

Stuck in a rut as a deadbeat screenwriter with a reputation for unoriginal "male fantasy films," Kato (Ryo Narita) struggles to find inspiration for his next script. That is, however, until a supernatural occurrence at a *konbini* transports him to an alternate dimension where he meets young, pretty Keiko (Atsuko Maeda) and her eccentric, classical music-obsessed husband (Ryo Iwamatsu). Will they provide the creative spark he needs? This latest offbeat fantasy from Satoshi Miki (*It's Me, It's Me*, JC2013) takes a playful jab at the filmmaking industry and its surreal absurdities, co-scripted by longtime *Japan Times* film critic and writer Mark Schilling.

**Father of the Milky Way Railroad (U.S. Premiere)**

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**Saturday, July 29 at 12:00 PM**

*Dir. Izuru Narushima, 2023, 128 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Koji Yakusho, Masaki Suda, Nana Mori.*

Virtually unknown as a writer in his lifetime, the poet and novelist Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933) is among Japan's most read and beloved authors of children's stories. This moving biopic—based on the best-selling, Naoki Prize-winning novel named after Miyazawa's most famous story—traces the genius writer's brief but amazing life through his relationship with his loving father Masajiro (Koji Yakusho), a successful pawnbroker and modern man of the Meiji era who struggles to keep up with his eccentric son's ambitions. A wonderfully heartfelt tribute to the "Hans Christian Andersen of Japan," played with gusto by Masaki Suda (*Teiichi: Battle of Supreme High*, JC2017).

**From the End of the World (U.S. Premiere)**

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**Saturday, August 5 at 9:30 PM**

*Dir. Kazuaki Kiriya, 2023, 135 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Aoi Ito, Katsuya Maiguma, Aya Asahina. Special cameo by Shunji Iwai.*



Kazuaki Kiriya's first feature film in eight years is the story of the final two weeks of the planet Earth and the young girl (Aoi Ito) who has the power to save it. The imaginative director of *Casshern* and *Goemon* returns to the big screen with a film ripe with his trademark daring visuals and a mind- and time-bending narrative. From the ancient past to the far future, *From the End of the World* is a science fiction feast both deeply intimate and epic in scale that traces the ley lines of dreams, destiny and a young girl's heart.

### ***Hand* (North American Premiere)**

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**Saturday, July 29 at 9:00 PM**

*Dir. Daigo Matsui, 2022, 99 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Akari Fukunaga, Daichi Kaneko.*

Since her youth—and not-so-subtly informed by her own father—25-year-old Sawako (Akari Fukunaga) has had a deep curiosity about older men. Sawako's observations and liaisons are humorous and amusing even as her fascination manifests into a scrapbook of candid photos of unassuming older "happy" men. Adroitly adapting Nao-Cola Yamazaki's novel of the same name, *Hand* engages headfirst with female desire, male fragility and self-discovery through the eyes of its witty and mild-mannered protagonist. Belonging to a string of new *pinku* productions celebrating 50 years of Nikkatsu's *Roman Porno*, Daigo Matsui's charming erotic tale stays true to the softcore label's legacy (most notably, a requisite sex scene every 10 or so minutes) while refreshingly modernizing its roots. **This film is unrated but not recommended for audiences under 18 years of age due to strong sexual content.**

### ***I Am A Comedian* (North American Premiere)**

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**Saturday, July 29 at 3:30 PM**

*Dir. Hyuga Fumiari, 2022, 108 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Daisuke Muramoto.*

After winning a 2013 *manzai* competition with his partner (performing together as Woman Rush Hour), standup comedian Daisuke Muramoto begins using his act to address politically verboten social issues such as nuclear disasters and Zainichi Korean discrimination. Before long, the pair's television opportunities disappear—a consequence of the widely understood but unwritten rule that comedians making political comments in Japanese media are simply "not tolerated." In this intimate documentary, director Fumiari Hyuga (*Tokyo Kurds*, JC2019) follows Muramoto for three years as he continues to challenge the status quo as a comedian while facing the added challenges of his father's disapproval and a worldwide epidemic.

### ***I Am What I Am* (North American Premiere)**

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**Friday, July 28 at 6:00 PM**

*Dir. Shinya Tamada, 2022, 105 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Toko Miura, Atsuko Maeda.*

Thirty-year-old Kasumi (Toko Miura in her first starring role since *Drive My Car*) works at a call center and lives at home with her family, often pestered by her worrisome mother who desperately wants her to get married, even going so far as to set up an *omiai* or arranged marriage interview to marry her off. The reality is that Kasumi cannot harbor romantic feelings for others. Aided by her cheerful and equally outsider friend Maho, played by the ever-charming Atsuko Maeda, Kasumi simply desires to live without the rigid gender roles and expectations that dictate how young women should submit themselves to constructed ideals of love and

marriage. An anti-rom com by any measure, *I Am What I Am* is a liberating departure from the conceit that romantic love equates happiness and a life fulfilled.

**MONDAYS: See you “this” week! (North American Premiere)**

MONDAYS / このタイムループ、口口に口づかせないと口わらない

**Sunday, August 6 at 12:00 PM**

*Dir. Ryo Takebayashi, 2022, 83 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Wan Marui, Makita Sports.*

Live. Work. Repeat. Akemi Yoshikawa (Wan Marui) pulls an all-nighter to finish an important project for a client, only to find herself working on this same project again and again. Akemi soon understands she's stuck in a time loop, and the only way out is to convince all her co-workers and boss (played by the prolific Makita Sports) of the time-bending situation they're in. A zany, fast-faced comedy filled with twists, turns and PowerPoints.

**Plastic (International Premiere)**

**Friday, July 28 at 9:00 PM**

*Dir. Daisuke Miyazaki, 2023, 104 min, DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With An Ogawa, Takuma Fujie, Kyoko Koizumi.*

Decades after the breakup of their favorite band Exne Kedy and the Poltergeists (a fictional project by artist Kensuke Ide and producer You Ishihara of Yura Yura Teikoku fame), music obsessives Jun and Ibuki (An Ogawa, *Heaven Is Still Far Away*) bond over their mutual love for the '70s glam rock band, falling deeply in love in the process. But as difficulties arise in their dreams and priorities, the couple break apart. The surprise announcement of an Exne Kedy reunion, however, brings promise of a new tomorrow. The latest from director Daisuke Miyazaki (*Tourism*, JC2018), *Plastic* is a life-affirming jolt to the system, celebrating the cosmic power of music, and the joys of growing up and falling in love in a charming and heartfelt coming of age tale.

**Single8 (New York Premiere)**

**Sunday, July 30 at 2:30 PM**

*Dir. Kazuya Konaka, 2022, 113 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Yu Uemura, Akari Takaishi.*

After seeing *Star Wars* for the first time in the summer of 1978, high schooler Hiroshi (Yu Uemura) can't stop thinking about the film's famous opening shot of a Star Destroyer entering the frame. This obsession eventually leads him to propose making a film with his classmates for their summer festival group project, a sci-fi love story called "Time Reverse." But will his crush Natsumi (Akari Takaishi) accept the lead role? A nostalgic, feel-good comedy that hearkens back to director Kazuya Konaka's salad days as a student filmmaker, *Single8* celebrates youth, creativity and the life-changing possibilities of cinema.

**The Fish Tale (East Coast Theatrical Premiere)**

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**Saturday, August 5 at 12:00 PM**

*Dir. Shuichi Okita, 2022, 139 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Non, Yuya Yagira, Kaho.*

Director Shuichi Okita (*Mori, The Artist's Habitat*, JC2018) paints a whimsical portrait of very real celebrity fish expert Masayuki Miyazawa (called Meebo in the film). *The Fish Tale* follows Meebo's ichthyological obsession from the rough waters of their initial years as an outcast to a rising tide of friends, family and celebrity. Inspirationally, actress Non is cast in the lead male



role, and her outsider energy enchants every frame of the film. Quickly, heartfelt and oddball, Non delivers a joyous performance that makes it impossible not to get caught in the net of Meebo's fish fixation.

### ***The Legend & Butterfly* (North American Theatrical Premiere)**

レジェンド&バタフライ

#### **Sunday, July 30 at 5:30 PM - With Director Introduction and Q&A**

*Dir. Keishi Otomo, 2023, 168 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Takuya Kimura, Haruka Ayase.*

A sweeping historical romance created to celebrate Toei's 70th anniversary, *The Legend & Butterfly* casts megastars Takuya Kimura as Oda Nobunaga and Haruka Ayase as his wife, Nohime. While Oda Nobunaga is one of Japan's most well-documented historical figures, virtually no information about Nohime remains, and *The Legend & Butterfly* fills this mystery with a turbulent, thoroughly modern romance. A *Sengoku* era take on the expression "behind every great man lies a great woman," *The Legend & Butterfly* sees over 30 years of defining moments in Japanese history driven by powerful, private moments between Nobunaga and Nohime.

**Followed by a Q&A with Director Keishi Otomo.**

### ***Wandering* (U.S. Premiere)**

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#### **Tuesday, August 1 at 9:00 PM**

*Dir. Sang-il Lee, 2022, 150 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Suzu Hirose, Tori Matsuzaka.*

A sprawling account of the alleged kidnapping of a nine-year-old young girl by a university student and the years-long repercussions of the event, *Wandering* delves into the gray area of the circumstances in question. 15 years after their initial encounter, Sarasa runs into her accused captor Fumi, bringing forth a deluge of memories and recollections. Based on the novel by Yu Nagira, *Wandering* dwells on challenging ethical and moral complexities with director Sang-il Lee (*Villain, Rage*) offering no easy answers in this compelling, thought-provoking drama. **Recommended for mature audiences.**

### ***Winnie* (North American Premiere)**

#### **Wednesday, August 2 at 9:00 PM**

*Dir. Yusaku Matsumoto, 2023, 127 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Masahiro Higashide, Takahiro Miura, Hidetaka Yoshioka.*

In this thrilling procedural based on true events, Masahiro Higashide (*Asako I & II*) plays real-life computer programmer Isamu Kaneko, inventor of the peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing program *Winnie*, released in 2002. After *Winnie* users are arrested for illegally uploading games and movies, Kaneko is apprehended by the Kyoto Prefectural Police department under dubious circumstances with the charged crime of intentionally "proliferating piracy" and abetting the violation of copyright laws. Recognizing the implication of Kaneko's unjust arrest on Japan's future computer engineers, Toshimitsu Dan (Takahiro Miura), a lawyer specializing in cybercrime, takes on the unprecedented case.

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**NEXT GENERATION**  
*In Alphabetical Order*

This sole competitive section of the festival features a hand-picked selection of independently produced narrative feature films by emerging directors who offer a glimpse into the future of Japanese cinema. One film within the section—determined as the most accomplished by a jury of film industry professionals—will receive the “Obayashi Prize” in honor of the late filmmaker Nobuhiko Obayashi (1938-2020).

***Amiko* (North American Premiere)**

こちらあみこ

**Tuesday, August 1 at 6:00 PM**

*Dir. Yusuke Morii, 2022, 104 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Kana Osawa, Arata Iura, Machiko Ono.*

This remarkable debut from director Yusuke Morii is set in the mountainous vistas of a provincial coastal town brimming with day-to-day excitements for oddball grade-schooler Amiko, whose endless imagination fixates on insects, schoolyard crushes and even the mole on her mother’s chin. Despite her good intentions, Amiko is often misunderstood, remaining at odds with family and classmates who find her strange and whimsical ways off-putting. Featuring a truly captivating breakthrough performance by newcomer Kana Osawa—one that recalls the tour-de-force resilience of Tomoko Tabata in *Moving*—and a score by popular folk musician Ichiko Aoba, *Amiko* is charged with a palpable sense of childhood wonderment that consistently finds new and surprising ways of seeing the world, even in the face of tragedy and misfortune.

***J005311* (International Premiere)**

**Thursday, July 27 at 6:00 PM**

*Dir. Hiroki Kono, 2022, 93 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Kazuaki Nomura, Hiroki Kono.*

Winner of the Grand Prize at the 2022 Pia Film Festival, this impressive bare-bones debut feature by actor-turned-director Hiroki Kono (*Special Actors*, JC2020) follows 26-year-old salaryman Kanzaki (Kazuaki Nomura) as he attempts to leave Tokyo for an unidentified location hours away. Unable to go by taxi, he solicits the help of a petty thief (Kono) to drive him in exchange for ¥1 million in cash—a mysterious offer with grim implications. A deeply affecting minimalist road movie that makes daring use of long takes, handheld camera work and silence—written, directed, edited and co-starring Kono—*J005311* is low-budget independent filmmaking par excellence.

***People Who Talk to Plushies Are Kind* (U.S. Premiere)**

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**Saturday, August 5 at 6:30 PM**

*Dir. Yurina Kaneko, 2023, 109 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Kanata Hosoda, Ren Komai, Yuzumi Shintani.*

An adaptation of the Ao Omae novella of the same name, *People Who Talk to Plushies are Kind* is a warm and comforting alternative to the typical youth film. Concentrating on a trio of college students, *Plushies* tracks their extracurricular immersion into the student-run Plushies Club. A safe haven for withdrawn and sensitive youths who prefer the company of stuffed animals, the students find differing qualities in the reflective space as director Yurina Kaneko confronts issues of masculinity, gender and acceptance in contemporary society.

***Saga Saga* (PREMIERE STATUS International or U.S.)**

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**Wednesday, August 2 at 6:00 PM**

*Dir. Aimi Natsuto, 2023, 114 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Rena Matsui, Sae Okazaki, Sara Kurashima.*

After a brief stint as an actress in Tokyo, 28-year-old Kyoko (Rena Matsui) returns to her hometown in Saga Prefecture, Kyushu. Before long she meets Nahoko (Sae Okazaki), an eccentric young woman who introduces herself as a fan but is secretly stalking Kyoko. She also meets Anna (Sara Kurashima), a high school student under the care of her deceased mother's best friend, whom Kyoko unwittingly learns is her half-sister. What connects these three lonely women, they soon discover, is more than just coincidence but a shared history of family trauma. An elegant, ambitious and complex sophomore feature by writer/director Aimi Natsuto (*Jeux de plage*, JC2019).

***Sanka: Nomads of the Mountain* (North American Premiere)**

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*Dir. Ryohei Sasatani, 2022, 77 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Rairu Sugata, Naru Komukai.*

A stirring 1960s-set coming-of-age drama that confronts societal progress and development in Japan's mountainous regions, *Sanka: Nomads of the Mountain* focuses on the life of young Norio, a Tokyo transplant who has come to live in his grandmother's village. Living under the shadow of his strict and demanding father, Norio befriends a group of Sanka, a wandering people, who reside in the foothills beyond his home. Beautifully shot and bolstered by compelling performances, *Sanka's* human drama delivers a melancholic and moving reflection on the societal conflicts and turmoil prevalent in postwar Japan, while also depicting the struggles of a nomadic tribe when its way of life is threatened by the onset of modernity.

- Winner of the JAPAN CUTS Award at the 2022 Osaka Asian Film Festival

***When Morning Comes, I Feel Empty* (International Premiere)**

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**Thursday, August 3 at 6:00 PM - With Director Q&A**

*Dir. Yuho Ishibashi, 2022, 76 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Erika Karata, Haruka Imou, Kazuma Ishibashi.*

A delicate and gentle drama, Yuho Ishibashi's sophomore effort softly envelops the viewer into the day-to-day life of part-time *konbini* worker Nozomi, charmingly played by *Asako I & II's* Erika Karata. Living a simple, carefree life, Nozomi's preoccupations include tending to home repair, awkwardly chatting with younger coworkers under the humdrum of convenience store Muzak and stocking shelves—as well as the occasional late shift. A chance encounter with a former junior high classmate reconnects her to the world and, through subtle intimations, Nozomi's past unfolds, detailing her professional career as an overworked corporate assistant. A sensitive exploration of vying for one's own happiness, *When Morning Comes, I Feel Empty* is a deeply humanizing affirmation that a fulfilling life can exist outside of societal pressure and expectation.

**Followed by a Q&A with Director Yuho Ishibashi.**

- Winner of the JAPAN CUTS Award at the 2023 Osaka Asian Film Festival

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**SHORT CUTS**

*In Chronological Order*

## SHORT CUTS Program 1 - Thursday, July 27 at 3:30 PM

### **Flashback Before Death (North American Premiere)**

*Dir. Rii Ishihara and Hiroyuki Onogawa, 2022, 30 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Rii Ishihara, Masatoshi Kihara, Hanae Seike.*

The directorial debut of composer Hiroyuki Onogawa—best known for his collaborations with Sogo (Gakuryu) Ishii starting with *August in the Water* (1995)—and his wife Rii Ishihara, *Flashback Before Death* is a cryptic and eerie short composed of disassociated flashbacks that follow a young man's return home in 1930s Japan.

### **Silent Movie (International Premiere)**

サイレントム□ピ□

*Dir. Masamichi Kawata, Satoru Hirohara, and Hiroshi Gokan, 2022, 56 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Ichiro Kataoka, Hiroaki Kawaguchi, Ikuhiko Aoyama.*

Nine students and three alumni from Tokyo University of the Arts' Film Department create 11 silent films spanning samurai tales, mysteries, thrillers, animation and even giant monsters. See the next generation of filmmakers play with cinema's past. All films narrated by renowned *benshi* storyteller Ichiro Kataoka.

## SHORT CUTS Program 2 - Friday, July 28 at 3:30 PM

### **Detouring Blue (New York Premiere)**

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*Dir. Ryo Kimura, 2023, 24 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Saori Mori, Mai Hikagedate, Ami Kamimura.*

In the dark of the Tokyo night, two women talk about their past, their youth and their dreams. Beautifully shot and told with vivid colors, *Detouring Blue* looks at the wistfulness of the past, the weight of the present—and if who we were can ever be who we are today.

### **Okamoto Kitchen (East Coast Premiere)**

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*Dir. Gerald Abraham, 2023, 12 min., DCP, color, in English. With Cristina Vee.*

A crowd-funded anime from LA's very real Japanese fusion comfort food truck Okamoto Kitchen, *JAPAN CUTS* is proud to present the start of this global project blending Japanese and Western talent to create a unique cross-cultural flavor. Featuring character designs by Takuya Saito, animation by anime studio Magic Bus, music by Layla Lane and starring voice actress Cristina Vee.

### **Setagaya Game (International Premiere)**

セタガヤゲ□ム

*Dir. Go Ohara and Ken Ohara, 2022, 40 min., DCP, color, in Japanese with English subtitles. With Reiji Takahashi, Akari Natsume, Sho Iizaka.*

Big action on a little budget, brothers Go and Ken Ohara bring together years of stunt and action directing experience to tell the tale of Takeru (Reiji Takahashi) and the deadly game he's forced to play. The clock is ticking for him to save a life, but is the game really what it seems?

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## TICKETING

\$18 Non-Members, \$16 Seniors & Students & Persons with Disabilities, and \$14 for Japan Society Members for general screenings. \$22 Non-Members, \$20 Seniors & Students & Persons with Disabilities, and \$17 for Japan Society Members for Opening Night and Centerpiece Screenings and Parties. **Special Offer:** \$300 All-Access Pass includes one ticket to each film and is only available for Japan Society Members; Order tickets at [www.japansociety.org/film](http://www.japansociety.org/film).

**Tickets on sale now to Japan Society members. Tickets will go on sale to the general public on June 27. For more information, please follow Japan Society Film on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Letterboxd](#).**

**Press Screeners and Talent Interviews available. Press Contact: Sylvia Savadjian**  
**[Sylvia.Savadjian@gmail.com](mailto:Sylvia.Savadjian@gmail.com)**  
**Allison Rodman, Director of Communications at Japan Society**  
**[Arodman@japansociety.org](mailto:Arodman@japansociety.org)**

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## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Guest Intro or Q&A \*  
Post-Screening Party \*\*

### Wednesday, July 26

THE FIRST SLAM DUNK (Opening) - 7:00 PM\*\*

### Thursday, July 27

SHORT CUTS Program 1 - 3:30 PM  
J005311 - 6:00 PM  
Best Wishes to All - 9:00 PM

### Friday, July 28

SHORT CUTS Program 2 - 3:30 PM  
I Am What I Am - 6:00 PM  
Plastic - 9:00 PM

### Saturday, July 29

Father of the Milky Way Railroad - 12:00 PM  
I Am A Comedian - 3:30 PM  
Tokyo Melody: A Film about Ryuichi Sakamoto - 7:00 PM\*  
Hand - 9:00 PM

### Sunday, July 30

Sanka: Nomads of the Mountains - 12:00 PM  
Single8 - 2:30 PM  
The Legend & Butterfly - 5:30 PM\*

### Tuesday, August 1

Amiko - 6:00 PM  
Wandering - 9:00 PM

### Wednesday, August 2

Saga Saga - 6:00 PM  
Winny - 9:00 PM

### Thursday, August 3

When Morning Comes, I Feel Empty - 6:00 PM\*  
Convenience Story - 9:00 PM

### Friday, August 4

Under the Turquoise Sky (Centerpiece) - 7:00 PM\* \*\*

### Saturday, August 5

The Fish Tale - 12:00 PM  
Under the Turquoise Sky (Encore) - 3:30 PM\*  
People Who Talk To Plushies Are Kind - 6:30 PM  
From The End of the World - 9:30 PM

### Sunday, August 6

MONDAYS: See you "this" week! - 12:00 PM  
Three Sisters of Tenmasou Inn (Closing) - 2:30 PM

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## About Japan Society

Japan Society is the premier organization connecting Japanese arts, culture, business and society with audiences in New York and around the world. At Japan Society, we are inspired by the Japanese concept of *kizuna* (絆) –forging deep connections to bind people together. We are

committed to telling the story of Japan while strengthening connections within New York City and building new bridges beyond. In over 100 years of work, we've inspired generations by establishing ourselves as pioneers in supporting international exchanges in arts and culture, business and policy, as well as education between Japan and the U.S. We strive to convene important conversations on topics that bind our two countries together, champion the next generation of innovative creators, promote mutual understanding and serve as a trusted guide for people everywhere who seek to more fully appreciate the rich complexities and abundance of Japan. From our New York headquarters, a landmark building designed by architect Junzo Yoshimura that opened to the public in 1971, we look forward to the years ahead, which will be defined by our digital and ideational impact through the *kizuna* that we build. Our future can only be enhanced by learning from our peers and engaging with our audiences, both near and far.

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*Transportation assistance is provided by Japan Airlines, the official Japanese airline sponsor of Japan Society Film. Housing assistance is provided by the Kitano Hotel, the hotel sponsor of Japan Society Film.*

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