

# JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL

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# WELCOME TO THE JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL 09

Thanks to your support, last year's Festival was a huge success, with sell-out shows at all three venues. The Festival was a collaborative project between the Embassy of Japan and access>CINEMA with the support of many others.

This year, we are trying many new things to make the Festival even better and build on last year's success. We have increased the number of locations, opening the Festival in Galway. We are also bringing the Festival to the University of Limerick, and hope to include a number of special cultural events in addition to the screenings.

Highlights in the programme include the Oscar<sup>®</sup> winning *Departures*, the intriguing *A Stranger of Mine* and *Ponyo*, the latest animation from the award winning Miyazaki. Book early to avoid disappointment!

We are hoping to introduce more Japanese films to Ireland through future events. We would be happy to receive your suggestions and comments.

Enjoy and Domo Arigato

Embassy of Japan & access>CINEMA

**Kenji Uchida** (born 1972) studied Film at the State University in San Francisco. In 1998 he returned to Japan, where he wrote and directed the film *Weekend Blues* and won the TBS Planning Award and Brilliant Award at the 24th Pia Film Festival (PFF). In 2004 he won the 14th PFF scholarship

which enabled him to make his first feature-length film, *A Stranger of Mine*. The film screened at Critics' Week in the Cannes Film Festival of 2005 where it won several prizes including the Young Critics Award. His second feature *After School* (08) was released in Japan last year.



## A STRANGER OF MINE

UNMEI JA NAI HITO

STARRING: Yasuhi Nakamura, Reika Kirishima, Sou Yamanaka, Yuka Itaya

DIRECTOR: Kenji Uchida | 2004 | 98 minutes | Cert: 12A

Three tragicomic stories are seen through the eyes of three characters, as if linked by a statement made by one of them: It happened because my happiness was dependent on someone else.

Inconsolable 30-year-old Miyata has been suddenly abandoned by his girlfriend, just after he had set them up a nice little love nest. His friend Kanda is fed up with working as a private detective; although he tries to advise Miyata on what to do about his life, he is losing control of his own. And Maki's boss Asai is having problems with his criminal organisation. The men's stories are linked by disillusioned Maki who abandons

her fiancé before their wedding and now finds herself unexpectedly involved in the mechanisms of cause and effect, set in motion by professional con woman Ayumi.

As the story develops, we gradually begin to see a connection between seemingly simple and independent episodes as the film surprisingly discloses unforeseen relationships and contexts.—44th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

WINNER SPECIAL JURY PRIZE:  
YOKOHAMA FILM FESTIVAL 2006

**Hiroiyuki Kitakubo** (born 1963) first entered the field of animation when he was 15 years old and worked as an animator on the television series *Urusei Yatsura* (88) and *Akira* (88). In 1985 he directed his first work, *Pop Chaser*

for the series *Cream Lemon* and also co-directed *Black Magic M-66* (87). His other directing credits include *Rojin Z* (91) and the popular manga artist Tatsuya Eguchi's *Golden Boy* (95).



### BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE

WITH THE VOICES OF: Saemi Nakamura, Youki Kudoh, Joe Romersa  
 DIRECTOR: Hiroiyuki Kitakubo | 2000 | 48 minutes | Cert: Club\*

A unique chance to watch the original anime version, which was remade into a feature film in 2009.

In the fall of 1966, tensions run high on the U.S. Air Force base in Japan on the eve of the Vietnam War. After a series of suspicious suicides in a nearby town, an additional threat has infiltrated the military compound: vampires.

A covert team of government agents committed to the elimination of vampires dispatch a mysterious young woman named Saya who, in the guise of a schoolgirl, must uncover the origin of the demonic plague, eliminate the ghastly beasts and stop their reign of terror before time runs out. She is the last remaining original.

WINNER ANIMATION:  
 JAPAN MEDIA ARTS FESTIVAL 2000

**Yojiro Takita** (born 1955) joined Hiroshi Mukai's Shishi Productions as an assistant director in 1976, making his directorial debut in 1981 with *Chikan Onna Kyoshi* and going on to helm some twenty adult films. His first commercial feature *Komikku Zasshi Nanka Iranai!* (86) was received warmly at the New York Film Festival and his subsequent *Imography* includes *The Yen Family*

(88), *We are Not Alone* (93), *The Exam* (99) and *Secret* (99), as well as the special effects fantasies *Onmyoji: The Ying-Yang Master* (01) and *Onmyoji 2* (03). He received widespread critical acclaim in 2003 for his historical drama *When the Last Sword is Drawn*. His more recent films include *Ashura* (05), *The Battery* (07) and *Departures* (08).



### DEPARTURES

OKURIBITO

STARRING: Masahiro Motoki, Tsutomu Yamazaki, Ryoko Hirose, Kimiko Yo  
 DIRECTOR: Yojiro Takita | 2008 | 131 minutes | Cert: Club\*

The surprise winner of this year's Academy Award<sup>®</sup> for Best Foreign Film, *Departures* tells the story of a concert cellist named Daigo who undergoes a transformation following the death of his father and the dissolution of his Tokyo orchestra. Because he spent a fortune on a new cello for his now-defunct ensemble, Daigo retreats, guilt-ridden, to his picturesque hometown in northern Japan to look for work, with his obedient wife Mika in tow. He responds to an ad for a company called Departures, thinking it's a travel agency, but discovers that the company caters to morticians who perform encofnments highly stylized and meticulous ceremonies to prepare bodies for burial or cremation.

Daigo has mixed feelings about working in an industry that carries such taboo in Japan, but he can't refuse the salary. Soon, he finds pride in helping grieving family members cope with the loss of their loved ones, but he still can't find the courage to admit to Mika what he does for a living.

Inspired by Japanese author Shinmon Aoki's mortician memoir, *Cofnman*, *Departures* is a tonally eccentric, lushly scored, moving, and funny drama that uses the rituals of death to foster a greater appreciation of life.  
 — *Seattle International Film Festival 2009*

WINNER BEST FILM: JAPANESE ACADEMY AWARDS 2009 + BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM: 81ST ANNUAL ACADEMY AWARDS<sup>®</sup>

**Mamoru Oshii** (born 1951) originally planned to become a priest but later he turned away from the church. After working in Japanese television, Oshii's first animated feature was *Urusei Yatsura 1: Only You* (83). Since then he has made over twenty feature and short anime films including *Urusei Yatsura 2: Beautiful Dreamer* (84), *Patlabor: The Movie* (89), *Patlabor 2*

(93), *Avalon* (01) and *The Sky Crawlers* (08). The sequel to *Ghost in the Shell*, *Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence* (05) was the first Japanese animated feature film ever to compete for the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. He is also a screenplay writer and is considered to be the father of Japanese philosophical anime.



GHOST IN THE SHELL 2.0

KOKAKU KIDOTAI

WITH THE VOICES OF: Akio Otsuka, Atsuko Tanaka, Koichi Yamadera

DIRECTOR: Mamoru Oshii | 1995 | 82 minutes | Cert: Club\*

The return of Mamoru Oshii's visionary science-fiction anime in which a prototype virtual agent takes the form of a computer virus, causing havoc within the cybernetic network.

Ground-breaking in its blending of traditional cel and computer animation and a touchstone for a great deal of the sci-fiction cinema that followed it, Oshii's film has never

looked or sounded better than in this remastered, recoloured HD print which features 90 altered or enhanced scenes plus a new soundtrack and a re-recorded voicetrack by the original actors.—*Institute of Contemporary Arts*

WINNER BEST SCREENPLAY:  
YOKOHAMA FILM FESTIVAL 1997

**Satoshi Miki** (born 1961) started out as a writer for TV variety shows, before moving into directing first for the stage and then television drama. His first two feature films as director *In the Pool* and *Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers* were consecutively released in cinemas in the year 2005.

Over the past 3 years he has emerged as one of Japan's most popular new directors, unleashing a barrage of belly laughs in films like *Damejin* (06), *The Insects Unlisted in the Encyclopedia* (07) and *Adrift in Tokyo* (07) with their tangential story arcs and gag-a-minute pacing. *Instant Swamp* is his most recent film.



INSTANT SWAMP

INSUTANTO NUMA

STARRING: Kumiko Aso, Morio Kazama, Ryo Kase

DIRECTOR: Satoshi Miki | 2009 | 120 minutes | Cert: Club\*

Out of a job and dumped by her latest crush, Haname (Kumiko Aso) has only her pet rabbit to keep her company. Then she receives a mysterious letter from a man claiming to be her father, and sets out to find the truth—encountering mohawked punks, a suitcase full of dirt, and the legendary kappa water spirit along the way.

In his latest poignant comedy, director Satoshi Miki keeps his wit dry even in the swamp of everyday life.—*Hong Kong Summer International Festival 2009*

**Tetsuya Nakashima** (born 1959) developed his fast and inventive filmmaking style directing award-winning commercials, and music videos for J-pop artists like Chara and Momoko Bito. While he made his debut with *Happy-Go-Lucky* (97), it was with his

sophomore film *Beautiful Sunday* (98) that audiences really took notice of him. *Kamikaze Girls* (04) is his adaptation of Novala Takemoto's cult novella about the Lolita subculture in Tokyo. His other films include *Memories of Matsuko* (06) and *Paco and the Magical Book* (08).



**KAMIKAZE GIRLS**

SHIMOTSUMA MONOGATARI

STARRING: Kyoko Fukada, Anna Tsuchiya

DIRECTOR: Tetsuya Nakashima | 2004 | 102 minutes | Cert: 12A

As exciting for its beautifully specific and honest portrayal of teenage girls and their friendships as it is for its dazzling visual and narrative style, *Kamikaze Girls* is a glorious blend of kitsch, grit, humor and uplift that borrows freely from various Japanese subcultures and films such as *The Outsiders* and *Kill Bill* to tell the picaresque story of an emotionally repressed teenager with an active fantasy life who learns to open herself up to friendship.

Momoko is the daughter of a failed Yakuza who trafficked in illegal merchandise. Run out of town, Momoko's father takes her to live in the country with her senile

grandmother, where she dedicates herself completely to needlepoint and amassing little-girl dresses. Momoko needs money to support her shopping habit, so she decides to advertise her father's old merchandise in a biker magazine.

Soon she is paid a visit by Ichigo, a tough biker girl, who expresses herself mostly via grunts and head-butts. Momoko is horrified by Ichigo. But Ichigo is oddly attracted to Momoko, and obstinately pursues her friendship. *Kamikaze Girls* captures the appeal of the fashion subcultures of aesthetes and misfits.—*Los Angeles Times*

WINNER GRAND PRIZE:  
JAPAN MEDIA ARTS FESTIVAL 2004

**Hayao Miyazaki** (born 1941) studied politics and economics and then worked as a graphic designer on many popular television and feature films. He is generally regarded as the most important animation filmmaker in Japan. Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2002)

has broken every box office record in Japan and won many international awards including an Oscar<sup>®</sup> in 2003. Miyazaki was awarded with the Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2005 Venice Film Festival. *Ponyo* is his latest film.



**PONYO**

GAKE NO UE NO PONYO

WITH THE VOICES OF: Cate Blanchett, Matt Damon, Noah Lindsey Cyrus

DIRECTOR: Hayao Miyazaki | 2008 | 101 minutes | Cert: G

Visually, it's extraordinary; imaginatively, it's daring. Once again Hayao Miyazaki is playing in a league of his own with *Ponyo*, a sweet, gentle, moving, and always delightful Japanese take on the classic Little Mermaid fable.

In this highly-creative take on Hans Christian Andersen's fable, *Ponyo* is a unique little fish who escapes from her sorcerer father's underwater home and is found by Sosuke, who lives on the top of a cliff in a small seaside village. Sosuke's father, Koichi is the captain of a freighter and spends most of his life at sea; his mother Lisa works at a day care centre for the elderly, and Sosuke attends its school. *Ponyo*'s love for Sosuke makes

her want to become human, but her desires carry all sorts of risks, especially for the residents of Sosuke's town, young and old alike. Ultimately, her mother, the Queen of the Sea, will have to intervene and little Sosuke will have to prove his mettle if *Ponyo* is to live happily ever after.

—Fionnuala Halligan, *Screen Daily*

+ TARA BRADY, HOT PRESS FILM CRITIC, WILL INTRODUCE THE SCREENING OF *PONYO* IN DUBLIN ON SATURDAY NOVEMBER 21

PLEASE NOTE: FILM IS DUBBED IN ENGLISH

**Masayuki Suo** (born 1956) started his film career as an assistant director before finding acclaim as the screenwriter and director of the award-winning *Sumo Do, Sumo Don't*

(92). His other credits include *Ijo no hitobito: Densetsuno nijino sankyodai* (93) and *I Just Didn't Do It* (06).



**SHALL WE DANCE?**

SHALL WE DANSU?

STARRING: Koji Yakusho, Tamiyo Kusakari, Naoto Takenaka

DIRECTOR: Masayuki Suo | 1996 | 119 minutes | Cert: 12PG

This entertaining Japanese comedy opens with a dreamy shot of Blackpool's Tower Ballroom, but it's back in suburban Tokyo that Masayuki Suo's film really begins.

A salaryman (Yakusho) is locked in routine until curiosity gets the better of him: each evening, from the train, he sees a beautiful woman gazing out of the window of a ballroom dancing class, and one night he plucks up the courage to go in. As lessons progress, his secret cannot remain hidden for long — dancing has entered his bloodstream and he'll never be the same again. All he needs now is the girl.

While the film's balancing act, between the love interest in fragile beauty Tamiyo Kusakari and the call of the protagonist's domestic ties, is ultimately contrived, unlike Hollywood tosh, it never feels blatantly manipulative. The salaryman's reserve carries a significant charm, and although the overly careful pacing at times threatens to dull our involvement, director Suo still knows when to throw in the comic zzz. The real star of the show is Naoto Takenaka as the office colleague transformed into a rumba tornado. —*Time Out Film Guide*

**WINNER BEST FILM: JAPANESE ACADEMY AWARDS 1997 + BEST FILM: YOKOHAMA FILM FESTIVAL 1997**



**TOWN HALL THEATRE, GALWAY**

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 31**

Ponyo	14.00
Kamikaze Girls	16.00

**SUNDAY NOVEMBER 01**

Shall We Dance?	14.00
A Stranger of Mine	16.30
Departures*	20.15

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK, LIMERICK**

**MONDAY NOVEMBER 02**

Kamikaze Girls	19.00
Blood: The Last Vampire*	21.00

**TUESDAY NOVEMBER 03**

Instant Swamp*	18.00
Ghost in the Shell 2.0*	20.00

**KINO ARTHOUSE CINEMA, CORK**

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 13**

A Stranger of Mine	20.00
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**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 14**

Shall We Dance?	19.00
Kamikaze Girls	21.30

**SUNDAY NOVEMBER 15**

Ghost in the Shell 2.0*	14.30
Departures*	16.30

**CINEWORLD, DUBLIN**

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 20**

Departures*	18.30
Kamikaze Girls	21.00

**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 21**

Ponyo	16.00
Shall We Dance?	18.00
Departures*	20.30

**SUNDAY NOVEMBER 22**

Ponyo	16.00
A Stranger of Mine	18.00

PLEASE NOTE: all films are in Japanese with English subtitles with the exception of *Ponyo*

\* These films are unclassified therefore are subject to club conditions, ie open to 18 years+ only

