



夜空はいつでも最高密度の青色だ

Yozora ha itsu demo saikou mitsudo no aoiro da

The Tokyo Night Sky Is Always the Densest Shade of Blue

Yuya Ishii

Producer Takatoshi Aruga, Tomoo Tsuchii, Kimutaka Goka.
Production companies Little More (Tokio, Japan), Film-Makers (Tokio, Japan), TV Tokyo (Tokio, Japan). **Written and directed by** Yuya Ishii. **Director of photography** Yoichi Kamakari. **Editor** Shinichi Fushima. **Music** Takashi Watanabe. **Sound design** Hirokazu Kato. **Sound** Kengo Takasuka. **Production design** Syun Sasaki, Daichi Watanabe.

With Shizuka Ishibashi (Mika), Sosuke Ikematsu (Shinji), Tetsushi Tanaka (Iwashita), Ryuhei Matsuda (Tomoyuki), Paul Magsalin (Andres), Mikako Ichikawa (Mika's Mother), Ryo Sato (Ryo), Takahiro Miura (Makita).

Colour. 108 min. Japanese.

Premiere February 13, 2017, Berlinale Forum

World sales Pia Film Festival

Mika works as a nurse by day; by night she entertains covetous men at a girls' bar. Shinji is blind in one eye and ekes out a living as a construction worker. Young and grown-up at the same time, they both lead a lonely existence, but somehow their paths keep miraculously crossing under the Tokyo sky. Can loneliness be experienced together?

Director Yuya Ishii shows Japanese society as being caught in a sheer struggle for survival. *Yozora ha itsu demo saikou mitsudo no aoiro da* is a touching ramble through the inner lives of two uncertain people in the middle of Tokyo, a city being brutally crushed by globalisation. People alienated from their roots, families falling apart, financial strife, suicides, earthquakes – yet the film handles all of its themes with both lightness and candour. Inspired by poetry, full of enchanting visual ideas and recurring music, Ishii takes us with him on a lyrical journey undertaken by outsiders who have lost everything. All they can therefore do now is win – in love.

Ansgar Vogt

“The biggest thing is the ‘mood’ of life in Tokyo today”

The story of your film is inspired by the poems of Tahi Saihate. What exactly inspired you?

Yuya Ishii: I had the feeling that in her poetry Ms Saihate was trying to touch on the emotional state, the ‘mood’, of young people living in the big city today. Because it’s poetry, the notion of it is obviously more important than whatever story it tells. I was interested in, and felt there was significance to, taking that approach to making a movie about present-day Tokyo.

The images from her poetry that particularly influenced me were those of ‘foreboding’ and ‘death’. And what came to me right away as I read her poetry was the image of a man who is something of an outcast because he is not allowed to see half the world. The character of a man who is not able to form an accurate picture of the world, and who has to work hard dawn to dusk just to get by, came quickly. The man is the same as me, and as most people who live in Tokyo.

The paths of your two main characters, Mika and Shinji, cross at various times...

While I was writing the script, I was thinking a lot about ‘the possible’ and ‘the impossible’: about the possibility of love and hope existing, or the impossibility of their existing. That was the source of their happening to encounter each other so much in a huge city.

Whereas the man is someone who is not able to see half the world, the woman is someone who wants to see only half. This is because of her past and her upbringing. She has a respectable job, but she can’t make ends meet, and she’s forced, in a way, to sell her femininity. While lots of women are making great strides in advancing into society, this ‘sale of femininity’ isn’t a metaphor for anything: it’s the reality I see.

Your film offers a variety of unique visual ideas, including animation sequences.

All of the ideas were there in the script. Because I was writing the script from poems, it was important that I have a strong sense of the images I wanted. I felt that I wanted to have the movie be a jumble of different things. When you watch television, you get screen titles, split-screen, CG effects, and animation all thrown in together. Walking the streets of Tokyo you get the same sense of chaos, a jumble of different elements. This is the way of the world now, and I wanted to capture that in this film.

Your film depicts social issues such as families breaking apart, wages too low to live on, frequent suicides. What are the biggest challenges in contemporary Japanese society?

The biggest thing is the ‘mood’ of life in Tokyo today. Even though people feel empty and hopeless, at the same time there’s a feeling of anticipating something as well. I wanted to describe a situation in which, while people are afraid of natural disasters, and there’s a general air of social malaise, people are also still trying somehow to be fully alive.

Why do you communicate the serious issues in your story with lightness and charm?

Whatever it is you’re writing, I think there’s an absolute need for humour. For me humour is a way of resisting a situation,

not just something to laugh at. I think particularly in these times it’s important to try to look with imagination and love at people and society in a multifaceted way. I don’t want to tell the story just about polar opposites like ‘good-evil’, or ‘sad-happy’.

What is the significance of Mika’s turtle?

I’ve used the turtle to represent an environment in which you’re walled in, but in which to some degree you have all the necessities of life. I mean to say that it’s the same for those of us living in Tokyo.

What is the significance of the street musician who appears once in a while?

She represents the sort of person whom nobody wants to face, even though what she says is exactly right. How many people are like that? We tend to ignore, or reject, people we find inconvenient. Society is getting more and more that way.

Interview: Ansgar Vogt, January 2017

The poet Tahi Saihate

Born in 1986 in Kobe, Japan, Tahi Saihate has received numerous literary awards for modern poetry. The poetry collection that *Yozora ha itsu demo saikou mitsudo no aoito da* is based on was published in 2016 and has sold 27,000 copies so far, an exceptional number for a book of modern poetry.



Yuya Ishii was born in 1983 in Saitama Prefecture, Japan. He completed his studies at Osaka University of the Arts with his graduation film, *Bare-Assed Japan*. Since then, Yuya has been working as a screenwriter and director. He lives in Tokyo.

Films

2002: *Love Japan*. 2005: *Bare-Assed Japan*, *Cicadas are Crying*. 2006: *Tokyo no sora no kumo ha natade coco*, *Hangyaku Jiro no koi/Rebel*, *Jiro’s Love*. 2007: *Of Monster Mode*, *Girl Sparks*. 2009: *To Walk Beside You*. 2010: *Kawa no soko kara konnichi wa/Sawako Decides* (112 min., Berlinale Forum 2010). 2011: *A Man with Style*, *Mitsuko Delivers*. 2013: *The Great Passage*. 2014: *Our Family*, *The Vancouver Asahi*. 2017: *Yozora ha itsu demo saikou mitsudo no aoiro da / The Tokyo Night Sky Is Always the Densest Shade of Blue*.