



The Hunter's Diary

獵人日記

1964/123min/Black and White/English Subtitles

Director: NAKAHIRA Ko

Cast: NAKAYA Noboru, TOGAWA Masako, KITAMURA Kazuo

Filmhouse screening information:

Fri 18 Mar	The Voice of Sin	5.45 pm
Sat 19 Mar	Kiba: The Fangs of Fiction	5.45 pm
Sun 20 Mar	The Lone Ume Tree The Hunter's Diary	3.20 pm 5.35 pm
Mon 21 Mar	Life: Untitled	6.00 pm
Tue 22 Mar	Eternally Younger Than Those Idiots	5.45 pm
Wed 23 Mar	Aristocrats	5.45 pm
Thu 24 Mar	Will I Be Single Forever?	6.00 pm

In 1956, the Japanese studio system was at its height, remarkable for the sheer number of films produced as well as for both commercial success and critical acclaim. The 552 films released in Japan that year included OZU Yasujiro's *Early Spring (Soshun)*, NARUSE Mikio's *Flowing (Nagareru)*, and MIZOGUCHI Kenji's *Street of Shame (Akasen Chitai)*, the final film by the director who died that year), as well as major works by such luminaries as IMAI Tadashi, GOSHO Heinosuke and YOSHIMURA Kozaburo. In addition to the output of these critically esteemed directors, the Japanese cinema produced countless entertainment films and genre pieces, enthusiastically received by a faithful mass audience.

Perhaps surprisingly against this backdrop, one film initiated a transformation of Japanese cinema. Filmed on location, employing such then-startling camera techniques as aerial shots, and backed by jazz and Hawaiian-style music, *Crazed Fruit* starred a young, fresh cast, and was helmed by NAKAHIRA Ko, making his directorial debut. The film was produced by Nikkatsu, a studio which had only recently re-entered production after more than a decade serving solely as a distributor. With established directors and stars largely tied up at major studios, Nikkatsu courted the youth market, and employed younger actors and directors. *Crazed Fruit* made a star of ISHIHARA Yujiro, who with his bad-boy demeanour would become the studio's hottest property. NAKAHIRA himself was just 30 at the time of the film's release - unusual in a time when would-be directors could expect to serve a long apprenticeship (he had worked, nevertheless, as assistant director to such distinguished figures as KUROSAWA Akira and KAWASHIMA Yuzo). The film proved the most striking example of a genre that briefly flourished in the late 1950s: the so-called *taiyozoku* ("sun-tribe" film) focusing on the disaffection and nihilism of post-war bourgeois youth. Its sexual and violent content were controversial in its day, and its loose, free, hard-hitting style seemed revolutionary. For OSHIMA Nagisa, who was to emerge in the following decade as one of the major talents of the Japanese New Wave, it was a film in which "sensitive people could hear the wails of a seagull heralding a new age in Japanese cinema." François Truffaut too was impressed.

Yet the striking qualities of NAKAHIRA's early film have arguably enabled Western cinephiles to overlook the richness of his later career. NAKAHIRA, who claimed that films should create "images, not pictures", worked prolifically over two decades, and made contributions to numerous genres. *Four Seasons of Love (Shiki no aiyoku, 1958)* was a satiric reworking of the home drama, depicting a family in a state of disintegration. *Crimson Wings (Kurenai no tsubasa, 1958)*, again starring ISHIHARA, was an aerial action and suspense film, shot in colour and widescreen. *That Guy and I (Aitsu to watashi, 1961)*, yet another ISHIHARA vehicle, was a return to the territory of the youth film; made in the wake of the widespread protests against the renewal of the ANPO Security Treaty with the United States, it displayed a sharp awareness of the political volatility of its era.

1964 was a particularly remarkable year for NAKAHIRA. If *Crazed Fruit* had anticipated the various New Waves and enthused Truffaut, *Monday Girl*

Dates & Venues:

4 – 13 February
ICA, London

5 – 22 February
Phoenix, Leicester

5 February – 26 March
Firstsite, Colchester

6 – 27 February
Eden Court, Inverness

6 – 27 February
Watershed, Bristol

8 – 23 February
Depot, Lewes

9 – 27 February
Storyhouse, Chester

12 February – 1 March
**Cambridge Film Trust,
Cambridge**

13 February – 2 March
Aberystwyth Arts Centre

13 February – 27 March
**Hyde Park Picture House,
Leeds**

13 February – 27 March
**Chapter Arts Centre,
Cardiff**

15 February – 3 March
HOME, Manchester

16 February – 16 March
**Brewery Arts Cinema,
Kendal**

21 February – 31 March
**Tyneside Cinema,
Newcastle**

26 February – 20 March
**Queen's Film Theatre,
Belfast**

28 February – 28
March

**Macrobert Arts
Centre, Stirling**

1 – 30 March

**Warwick Arts Centre,
Coventry**

2 – 15 March

**Dundee
Contemporary Arts,
Dundee**

2 – 30 March

**Exeter Phoenix,
Exeter**

4 – 6 March

QUAD, Derby

7 – 28 March

Cinema City, Norwich

7 – 28 March

**City Screen
Picturehouse, York**

8 – 31 March

**Showroom Cinema,
Sheffield**

12 – 20 March

**Belmont Filmhouse,
Aberdeen**

15 – 29 March

**Plymouth Arts
Cinema, Plymouth**

18 – 24 March

**Broadway,
Nottingham**

18 – 24 March

Filmhouse, Edinburgh

(*Getsuyobi no Yuka*), with KAGA Mariko as the transgressive heroine, was a clear homage to the French New Wave, echoing Jean-Luc Godard and Agnès Varda. *Flora on the Sand* (*Suna no ue no shokubutsugun*) was a startlingly erotic film for its time. *Whirlpool of Flesh* (*Onna no uzu to fuchi to nagare*) was an experimental film about an unhappily married couple. And *The Hunter's Diary* (*Ryojin nikki*), screening in this programme, was an important contribution to the thriller genre. A serial seducer neglects his wife, but finds himself suspected of murder when his lovers begin to die...

The Hunter's Diary, like *Flora on the Sand* and *Whirlpool of Flesh*, starred NAKAYA Noboru (1929-2006), a distinguished actor little known in the West (his most famous films internationally are *Kwaidan* and *Lady Snowblood*). But arguably the key creative presence, apart from the director, was TOGAWA Masako (1931-2016), who not only played the wife, but also furnished the plot of the film, which was adapted by screenwriter ASANO Tatsuo from her novel. TOGAWA had a diverse career as a singer, actress, author and nightclub owner, running the celebrated underground club *Aoi heya* ("The Blue Room"). Her literary career, which earned her comparisons with P.D. James, took off in the early 1960s. Her first novel, later translated into English as *The Master Key*, appeared in 1962 (its original title, *Oinaru gen'ei*, derives from the Japanese rendition of the title of Jean Renoir's classic 1937 war film, *La Grande Illusion*). The book scooped the Edogawa Ranpo Prize, awarded to an unpublished work of mystery fiction. TOGAWA followed up with *The Hunter's Diary* (the book is known in English as *The Lady Killer*). Published in 1963, it became a bestseller, and was nominated for the Naoki Prize, awarded annually to "the best work of popular literature in any format by a new, rising, or (reasonably young) established author." NAKAHIRA's film adaptation followed soon afterwards.

1964 was not only a striking year in NAKAHIRA's career; it was in a sense a watershed year for Japan. The *shinkansen* bullet train opened, initially between Tokyo and Osaka; Tokyo hosted the Olympic Games; and Japan joined the OECD - the club of democratic, free market nations. Yet 1964 also marked, in a sense, the end of the studio era of Japanese cinema. Audience figures were plummeting as viewers shifted to television; and within a few short years, many of Japan's major studios, including Nikkatsu, would find themselves in serious financial peril. In the later years of his career, NAKAHIRA worked at other studios, or independently; and he made a number of films abroad. During the late 1960s, he directed for Shaw Brothers in Hong Kong, where he remade some of his own films, including *Crazed Fruit*; he worked on the screenplay of a South Korean remake of his *Crimson Wings*; and his final film, *Variation* (*Hensokyoku*, 1976), was shot on location in France. The independently produced *A Soul to the Devil* (*Yami no naka no chimimoryo*), scripted by the respected screenwriter and director SHINDO Kaneto, played in competition at Cannes in 1971. While it is hard to predict how NAKAHIRA's career would have developed in the challenging commercial environment of the later 1970s and 1980s, his premature death in 1978, of stomach cancer, is greatly to be regretted.

In 2003, retrospective screenings in Japan were accompanied by various events: at *Aoi heya*, TOGAWA, then in her seventies, reminisced about her collaboration with NAKAHIRA on *Hunter's Diary* in front of an eager audience of cinephiles. Retrospectives have since been held in Germany and in Brazil, and it is to be hoped that NAKAHIRA's output, in its full breadth and depth, will continue to find wider audiences outside Japan.

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