



The Lone Ume Tree

梅切らぬバカ

2021/77min/Colour/English Subtitles

Distributor: Happinet Phantom Studios Corporation

Director: WAJIMA Kotaro

Cast: KAGA Mariko, TSUKAJI Muga, WATANABE Ikkei

The Lone Ume Trees depicts the poignant and somewhat bittersweet life of "Chu-san". Chu-san is fifty years old, lives with his elderly and charming mother, works in a community workshop, and loves horses. Chu-san is also autistic and has severe learning and language difficulties.

Autism refers to a spectrum of developmental conditions which exist in about 2 per cent of the population worldwide. Autism is caused by differences in brain function, possibly related to multiple factors of complex genetic composition and early brain development. Autism in individuals is characterised by challenges in developing capacities for social interaction and communication, as well as an insistence on sameness, which may include individuals sticking to routines or rituals, and becoming uncomfortable or even panicked when their routines are disrupted. Autistic people often have hypersensitivities to particular sounds, feelings, or sights, which also impacts their adaptation to everyday life. Autism is also a highly heterogeneous condition, meaning that no two autistic people have the exact same condition. While many individuals with autism suffer from severe challenges in learning and language, many others experience no such challenges, and may excel in acquiring languages, specialist knowledge, advanced mathematical or programming skills, or many other talents.

Autism has long been seen as a 'disorder'. However, the recent emergence of the neurodiversity movement, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe, has caused the popular perception of autism to shift. People are beginning to see those with autism as people with brain functioning different from the majority of the population, who might struggle to live in a world optimised for the majority non-autistic, or 'neurotypical', people. At the same time, autism often co-occurs with other diseases and disorders, such as gastrointestinal issues, seizures, and learning difficulties, and these require medical, educational, and social support.

In Japan, the situation for autistic people, and those with other developmental disabilities, has been improving over the last fifteen years. There have been new laws set in place requiring reasonable adjustments for those conditions in education and the workplace, in order to ensure equal accessibility for all. However, we would have to admit that the situation is still far from perfect, with autistic people and their families dealing with under-resourced support systems, as well as persistent stigma and

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

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

prejudice. Scientists are also working hard to find more and better ways to support autistic people and improve their quality of life. Many films and TV programmes, including this film, are also emerging in the Japanese art and entertainment scenes. Hopefully these artworks, in addition to the recent Tokyo Paralympic Games, which increased the visibility of many sporting stars with disability, will help society see autistic people, as well as those with other disabilities, as people first and foremost, rather than just seeing them as their disability.

The director and actors made a fantastic film where Chu-san is depicted as an individual and authentic person. Just as we see all the complex aspects of Chu-san's neighbour, Shigeru, who has a dysfunctional relationship with his family, we see and love all aspects of Chu-san in this film.

Professor Atsushi Senju

**Director of Research Centre for Child Mental Development
Hamamatsu University School of Medicine**

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