



**JAPAN 2021 100 YEARS OF JAPANESE CINEMA**

# **Muddy River**

## **(Doro no kawa)**

*+ intro by season co-programmer Alexander Jacoby*  
*(Saturday 12 December only)*

Kôhei Oguri's debut is a deliberately nostalgic evocation of the world of classical filmmakers such as Ozu and Shimizu. Set in Osaka in 1956 and beautifully shot in monochrome by Shôhei Andô, *Muddy River* subtly dramatises a childhood friendship in a working-class milieu. This delicate work secured an Oscar® nomination for Best Foreign Film and propelled the career of one of the most uncompromisingly independent of modern Japanese filmmakers.

**bfi.org.uk**

Made independently, and taken up for Japanese distribution only after a series of special previews, *Muddy River* is a plucky attempt to reactivate the well-known *shomingeki* genre (dramas of everyday people) made internationally famous by Ozu, Naruse, Gosho, Shimazu and others. Although not up to these standards, this first feature reveals a sensitive cinematic imagination and a plain narrative style which is never in danger of inflating its material.

Shooting in sharp black-and-white, Oguri economically situates his characters in a lived-in environment – the hot, crowded little restaurant and the sleazy river bank with its mysterious houseboat moored on the mud. The film's viewpoint veers intriguingly between the children and their elders – we share the children's secrets and games (both boys are good except for some excessively winsome smiles) and learn with the adults that Kiichi's mother is a prostitute, who sets sail again when discovered by Nobuo (a fact not entirely clear to the boy himself).

Structured almost as a series of vignettes, some scenes (such as the children's supper party) have a quietly effective resonance, while others (the visit to the dying first wife) are somewhat sentimentalised. Over all, hangs the shadow of an economically debilitated post-war Japan still troubled by the scars and sacrifices of the Second World War. Just as confident is Oguri's eye for the right set-up (usually static, with the camera some distance from the action), with the cutting tempo slowly increased and more camera movement introduced in the film's moving coda, as Nobuo rushes along streets and the river bank in pursuit of the friends now disappearing from his life. In this finale, character and setting are brought together in the film's most complete statement of an underlying concern with experience lost and found.

**John Gillett, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1983**

MUDDY RIVER (DORO NO KAWA)

Director: Kôhei Oguri  
Production Company: Kimura Productions  
Producer: Motoyasu Kimura  
Co-producer: Hiroshi Fujikura  
Production Assistants: Mitsuo Yoshimura, Hiroshi Watabiki, Masanobu Yamamoto, Hiroko Horiyama  
Assistant Directors: Akira Takashi, Eiichi Asada, Hiroshi Sasaki  
Screenplay: Takako Shigemori  
Original Novel by: Teru Miyamoto  
Director of Photography: Shôhei Andô  
Lighting: Tadaaki Shimada  
Assistant Photographers: Kenjiro Matsukawa, Tokunori Kikumura, Satoshi Watanabe  
Editor: Nobuo Ogawa  
Assistant Editor: Yasushi Shimamura  
Art Director: Akira Naitô  
Set Designers: Shoichi Yasuda, Kazuhiko Ishida  
Make-up: Gisho Okamoto  
Music: Kuroudo Mori  
Sound Recording: Hideo Nishizaki, Hiroyuki Hirai  
English subtitles: Donald Richie, Tadashi Shishido

Cast

Nobutaka Asahara (Nobuo)  
Takahiro Tamura (Shinpei)  
Yumiko Fujita (Sadako)  
Minoru Sakurai (Kiichi)  
Makiko Shibata (Ginko)  
Mariko Kaga (Kiichi's mother)  
Gannosuke Ashiya (horse-cart man)  
Reiko Hatsune (tobacco-shop woman)  
Keizo Kanie (policeman)  
Yoshitaka Nishiyama (warehouse guard)  
Taiji Tonoyama (man on festival boat)  
Masako Yagi (Shinpei's ex-wife)  
Akira Matsuda  
Jun Suzuki  
Satoru Asao  
Isamu Kojima  
Takashi Minami  
Remi Kitagawa  
Mihoko Shimonishi  
Yoko Koga  
Naoki Nishikawa  
Keiichi Murato  
Akitsugu Moriyama  
Ryu Hagakure  
Shuichiro Nakano

Japan 1981  
104 mins

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Muddy River (Doro no kawa)

Sun 12 Dec 11:50 (+ intro by season co-programmer Alexander Jacoby);  
Thu 23 Dec 20:40

The Demon (Kichiku)

Sun 12 Dec 14:50 (+ intro by season co-programmer Alexander Jacoby);  
Sun 19 Dec 16:00

The Man Who Stole the Sun (Taiyô wo nusunda otoko)

Sun 12 Dec 18:00; Thu 16 Dec 20:10

Tampopo

Mon 13 Dec 18:00 (+ intro by Catherine Wheatley, King’s College London);  
Fri 17 Dec 20:45; Tue 28 Dec 15:10

Philosophical Screens: Tampopo

Mon 13 Dec 20:15 Blue Room

After Life (Wandafuru raifu)

Mon 13 Dec 20:40; Wed 29 Dec 14:20

Funeral Parade of Roses (Bara no sôretsu)

Tue 14 Dec 14:30; Mon 27 Dec 15:50

Silence Has No Wings (Tobenai chinmoku)

Wed 15 Dec 18:00

Woman of the Lake (Onna no mizûmi)

Wed 15 Dec 20:50

Death By Hanging (Kôshikei)

Fri 17 Dec 18:00

The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On (Yuki Yukite, Shingun)

Sat 18 Dec 11:40; Mon 27 Dec 18:20

Straits of Hunger (aka A Fugitive from the Past) (Kiga kaikyô)

Sat 18 Dec 14:30

Woman of the Dunes (Suna no Onna)

Sat 18 Dec 17:30

Moving (Ohikkoshi)

Sat 18 Dec 20:35; Wed 29 Dec 20:30

The Long Darkness (Shinobugawa)

Sun 19 Dec 12:40

Pale Flower (Kawaita hana)

Sun 19 Dec 18:20

Fire Festival (Himatsuri)

Mon 20 Dec 17:50; Mon 27 Dec 13:20

Suzaku (Moe No Suzaku)

Tue 21 Dec 17:45; Thu 30 Dec 21:00

Shall We Dance? (Shall we dansu?)

Tue 21 Dec 20:30; Thu 30 Dec 17:40

In the Realm of the Senses (Ai no corrida)

Wed 22 Dec 18:20

Love Letter

Wed 22 Dec 20:50; Tue 28 Dec 12:10

Tokyo Drifter (Tôkyô nagaremono)

Thu 23 Dec 18:30

Black Rain (Kuroi ame)

Tue 28 Dec 18:15

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