



**SEEN & HEARD**

# 37 Seconds

## **Writer-director HIKARI on '37 Seconds'**

*Firstly, in light of this being your first feature film, what was it like transitioning from the short film medium into the world of features, and why did you decide to make this story, in particular, your first foray into feature filmmaking?*

I didn't know what would be ahead of me; I should have listened to what my teachers said when they told me that in case a short film does well, you should have a feature script ready.

I would say 'OK sure!' but I wasn't ready to make anything. When my first short film, *Tsuyako*, received such a positive response at film festivals around the world, I realised how powerful this medium is and how people were moved by what they were seeing. I thought, 'OK, this is great, I can do something with it.'

When I wrote *37 Seconds*, I already knew this was going to be the movie because I knew exactly how I wanted to shoot it and how the story was going to unfold.

*What was it about the differently abled and their experiences that made you want to tackle that issue cinematically?*

In Asia, people don't want to talk about differently abled people having sex; it's not even a discussion.

I felt like much of the time they were disregarded in society, and I thought that was very problematic. The more I interviewed people with disabilities, the more I saw that they seemed to be thinking, 'Well I'm in a wheelchair, so therefore I'm not going to be able to be in love' – it's important to let the audience know that that's how they feel.

If people can understand how difficult it can be to go through these things, and can be encouraged to give some kind of support, we can make a more peaceful world.

*It's so rare to see a differently abled character being portrayed by an actor who faces those challenges in real life. Could you tell me a bit about casting the wonderful Mei Kayama who plays the lead character, Yuma and how her cerebral palsy shaped 37 Seconds?*

Originally I was planning to make a love story, but also a story about sexual awakening and living an independent life. Those elements are there but initially the protagonist was going to be paralysed.

I went into casting with my mind completely open because I had no idea who I would meet, and when I found Mei she was just a surprise. She was nothing like I had imagined; she looked so innocent and so young too.

I was like, 'It's a sex story, does it work with her? She looks like she's 15 years old...' but after talking to her and really seeing what she could do, I thought she definitely had the part.

So when I cast Mei I had to ask myself what the story was going to be – 'Do I change it? Do I go with it?' – and that led to me interviewing her and reshaping the story from there.

*The portrayal of the experience of someone with cerebral palsy, particularly in a big city such as Tokyo, is so accurate in the film. I was wondering what your research for that aspect of the film involved?*

When I was working on the script, several times I got myself a wheelchair and I went around town. I am from Osaka, and I found it to be a little bit more wheelchair friendly and the people to be more open and helpful than in Tokyo. Whenever I would bump into something or struggle there would always be someone saying, 'Are you okay? Do you need help?' I thought that was so sweet, but at the same time I would have to say thank you to so many people, and at times the attention became a little overwhelming.

*You've really hit the nail on the head, because that's the contradiction in feelings that so many disabled people have. Obviously I want people to be aware, to help out and to know that it can be tough sometimes, but at the same time it can be frustrating constantly thanking people, telling them that I'm fine and that I don't need their help.*

Yes, 'I don't want to hurt your feelings but I'm fine!' Although, when I tried the same thing in Tokyo it was the opposite: nobody helped me and the train was particularly hard. Sometimes you try to get on the train, and because there are too many people you can't get on and you're just left waiting. So that was frustrating. I had to experience it to see what it's really like and how people would really treat me in those situations.

*I've heard you speak before about negative attitudes towards differently abled people in Japan. Are you hoping this film can change the perception of disability for people who view it negatively in Japan and elsewhere?*

We recently had it confirmed that the film will receive a PG-12 rating in Japan, meaning that pretty much anyone of any age can see the film as long as their parents are okay with it.

Educating people at such an early age that we're all the same is so important, and I hope that when people watch our movie, they see that it's about a girl who's trying to make it work in the life she's living, whether she's disabled or not.

She obviously has unique challenges to face, but at the same time you can do anything you want, right? So I really wanted to plant that into young people's minds early on.

*Finally, is there anything about 37 Seconds that we haven't covered already that you'd like to put out there and let people know?*

I really hope that when people watch the film, they see that it's really not just a film about a girl with a disability; really, it's about us. Boys, girls, old, young, it doesn't matter; it's about us and how we can do whatever we want to do – there's no limitation. We are the only people who limit ourselves.

**George Rogers, BFI NETWORK, [network.bfi.org.uk](http://network.bfi.org.uk), 29 March 2019**

**George Rogers is a student filmmaker, a graduate of the BFI Film Academy and a freelance film journalist. As a wheelchair user, George hopes to promote the representation of differently abled people in the film industry.**

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## 37 SECONDS

*Director:* HIKARI

*Production Company:* Knockonwood

*Executive Producers:* Daisuke Sumitomo, Katsuhiko Tsuchiya

*Producers:* Shin Yamaguchi, HIKARI, Peter Maestrey

*Casting:* Sawako Ohzu

*Written by:* HIKARI

*Directors of Photography:* Stephen Blahut, Tomoo Ezaki

*Editor:* Thomas A. Krueger

*Art Director:* Takayuki Uyama

*Costume Designer:* Meg Mochizuki

*Music:* ASKA

## Cast

Mei Kayama (*Yuma Takada*)

Misuzu Kanno (*Kyoko Takada*)

Shunsuke Daito (*Toshiya*)

Makiko Watanabe (*Mai*)

Yoshihiko Kumashino (*Mr Kuma*)

Yuka Itaya (*Fujimoto*)

Japan 2019

115 mins

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## SEEN & HEARD: DARING FEMALE COMING-OF-AGE FILMS

### Skate Kitchen

Tue 1 Mar 20:40; Sun 13 Mar 20:45

### Divines

Wed 2 Mar 20:50; Tue 15 Mar 20:50

### Jinn

Sat 5 Mar 17:45; Tue 8 Mar 21:00

### 37 Seconds (37 sekanzu)

Sat 5 Mar 20:30; Sat 12 Mar 20:45

### Water Lilies (Naissance des pieuvres)

Sun 6 Mar 18:45; Mon 14 Mar 20:50

### Marie Antoinette

Tue 8 Mar 18:10 (+ intro by Hannah Strong, Little White Lies Digital

Editor and author of *Sofia Coppola: Forever Young*); Sun 13 Mar 18:00

### Somersault

Fri 11 Mar 20:50; Mon 14 Mar 18:10

## IN THE EYES OF A SILENT STAR: THE FILMS OF ASTA NIELSEN

### In the Eyes of the Law (Nach dem Gesetz)

Tue 1 Mar 20:50; Mon 7 Mar 18:15

### Hamlet

Wed 2 Mar 18:15; Sat 5 Mar 17:00 (+ Intro by Prof Judith Buchanan)

### Earth Spirit (Erdgeist)

Sat 5 Mar 12:10 (+ intro by Season Curator Pamela Hutchinson); Wed 9 Mar 20:50

### The Decline (AKA Downfall) (Der Absturz)

Sat 5 Mar 14:30 (+ intro by season curator Pamela Hutchinson); Tue 15 Mar 18:20

### The Joyless Street (Die freudlose Gasse)

Sun 6 Mar 17:40 (+ intro by BFI Inclusion Team Coordinator, Miranda Gower-Qian); Wed 16 Mar 18:00

### Impossible Love (Unmögliche Liebe)

Wed 9 Mar 18:20; Tue 15 Mar 20:45

## THE CAMERA IS OURS:

### BRITAIN'S WOMEN DOCUMENTARY MAKERS

#### From Beside the Seaside to the English Inn: Restoration Programme 1 + intro by BFI curator Ros Cranston

Thu 3 Mar 18:15

#### For Sama + intro by director Waad Al-Kateab + Children of the Ruins

Thu 3 Mar 20:30

#### The Camera Is Ours: Study Day + Independent Miss Craigie + Q&A with director Lizzie Thynne and producer Hollie Price

Sat 5 Mar 12:00-17:00

#### From the Sea to the Land Beyond

Sat 5 Mar 18:15

#### Seniors Free Archive Matinee: White Riot + discussion

Mon 7 Mar 14:00

#### Cow

Tue 8 Mar 20:40

#### The Hermit of Treig + Q&A with director Lizzie MacKenzie

Fri 11 Mar 18:10

#### From Birth-Day to Something Nice to Eat: Restoration Programme 2 + intro by BFI curator Ros Cranston

Mon 14 Mar 18:15

#### Hostile + director Sonita Gale in conversation with journalist Jon Snow

Tue 15 Mar 18:00

## NEW RELEASES

### La Mif (The Fam)

Continues from Fri 25 Feb

### Rebel Dread

From Fri 4 Mar

### Ali & Ava

From Fri 11 Mar; Tue 15 March 14:00 Seniors' matinee + discussion

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

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