



NEW RELEASES

Love Life (Rabu raifu)

Love Life (Rabu raifu)

Directed by: Kōji Fukada

©: Love Life Film Partners, Comme des Cinémas
Production Companies: Nagoya Broadcasting
Network, Chipangu, Comme des Cinemas,
Asahi Shimbun, Elephant House, S.D.P.,
Lotus Wise Partners

In association with: MK2 Films, Art House Films

Executive Producers: Yuhiro Matsuoka,
Yoshito Oyama, Masa Sawada

Producers: Yasuhiko Hattori, Masa Sawada,
Yuko Kameda

Written by: Kōji Fukada

Original Idea: Kōji Fukada, Yuko Kameda

Director of Photography: Hideo Yamamoto

Edited by: Kōji Fukada

Editor: Sylvie Lager

Art Director: Daichi Watanabe

Wardrobe Mistress: Hanaka Kikuchi

Original Music: Olivier Goinard

Sound Design: Nicolas Moreau

Sound Operator: Manabu Kagara

Re-recording Mixer: Olivier Goinard

Sound Editor: Romain Cadilhac

Cast:

Fumino Kimura (*Taeko*)

Kento Nagayama (*Jiro*)

Atom Sunada (*Park*)

Hirona Yamazaki (*Yamazaki*)

Tetta Shimada (*Keita*)

Natsume Mito

Keiichi Azuma

Masahide Osada

Akari Fukunaga

Yoshiki Urayama

Atsushi Ogata

Japan-France 2022©

123 mins

Digital

A BFI release

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk

SIGHT AND SOUND

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

Kōji Fukada on 'Love Life'

Across the past 15 years, Kōji Fukada has steadily become one of the most celebrated independent filmmakers working in Japan. Many of his films are characterised by a family unit's illusion of stability being completely overturned by one major event, which he has explored through very different tonal registers: his second feature, *Hospitalité* (2010), is largely played for laughs, while *Harmonium* (2016), perhaps his most internationally renowned film, takes a haunting detour into thriller territory.

Fukada's latest feature as writer-director, *Love Life*, operates somewhere between the two extremes of those earlier films. While the plot-instigating tragedy is truly horrific, its melodrama narrative unfolds at a gentle pace, with plenty of moments of tension-breaking levity.

Directly inspired by 'Love Life', a song by singer and composer Akiko Yano, the film follows Taeko (Fumino Kimura) and her husband, Jiro (Kento Nagayama), who live with her young son, Keita (Tetta Shimada). When an accident occurs at a birthday party, the superficially peaceful existence the couple had built comes to an abrupt end, something only exacerbated by the reemergence of Taeko's Korean ex-partner and Keita's father, Park (Atom Sunada).

Deaf and now homeless, Park, who had suddenly disappeared many years ago, becomes the focus of Taeko's attention and emotional attachment, instead of the man she has since married.

Have you spoken with Akiko Yano about the inspiration provided by her song?

Kōji Fukada: She said that once her song is released, it belongs to the listeners and they're free to interpret it however they like. I sent her the script and she had no objections to it, although she did say that she'd never imagined a story like this coming from that song. I remember feeling that our worldviews overlap in a way. The song 'Love Life' starts with this beautiful phrase: 'I can love you even though we're far apart.' In the film, it's being used as a song about love, but it also talks about being apart and being lonely. That people are lonely is a worldview I'm comfortable with, and she also said she sings about love as a way of overcoming loneliness.

How did two main characters communicating in Korean sign language most affect your writing and directing?

It wasn't always going to be sign language. I had the idea that the child would die and his father would come back. And this love triangle would begin between the mother, the husband and the ex-husband. But I wanted to get more tension into that relationship, by having a shared language between Taeko and her ex-husband that her current husband doesn't understand.

I decided to use sign language because when I was working on the screenplay I had an opportunity to meet a lot of deaf people through the Tokyo International Deaf Film Festival. I was invited to give a workshop, and all the participants were deaf. I realised that rather than asking whether I should have a deaf character in my new film, I should be asking myself why I had never had a deaf character in any of my previous films. So I decided that Park was going to be deaf, played by a deaf actor, and that I would use sign language.

KOJI FUKADA

Hospitalité (Kantai)

Fri 1 Sep 18:20; Thu 14 Sep 20:40

Au revoir l'été (Hotori no Sakuko)

Mon 4 Sep 20:35; Mon 2 Oct 17:55

Harmonium (Fuchi ni Tatsu)

Wed 6 Sep 20:30; Sun 1 Oct 18:20

Love Life (Rabu raifu)

From Fri 15 Sep

NEW RELEASES

Passages

From Fri 1 Sep

Past Lives

From Thu 7 Sep

A Year in a Field

From Fri 22 Sep

The Old Oak

From Fri 29 Sep

RE-RELEASES

Tokyo Story (Tōkyō monogatari)

From Fri 1 Sep

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop. We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

With Love Life and Drive My Car (2021), as well as non-Japanese works like CODA (2021), it seems as though films with prominent uses of sign language are receiving more far-reaching attention.

I was really surprised when I heard that [Ryusuke] Hamaguchi was going to have a deaf character in *Drive My Car*. I've not asked him why he decided to, but I can only imagine that he felt as I do: that there was something missing in just making films in which characters communicate via a single language. Rather than more films now having deaf characters and coming to attention, I think it's baffling why they haven't been there in the past. Finally, they are getting more attention and there are more opportunities now for [such] minorities in film. I can only hope that increases going forward.

I found it compelling that the deaf character isn't portrayed as an infallible saint in Love Life, as can sometimes be the case in stories about hearing-impaired people.

I'm glad you've picked up on that because you're right. If you have a deaf character in a film, the chances are they've been pure, angelic and doing their best, struggling on despite their disability. Whereas here, I've tried to show a deaf character as being no different from any other character. They have their own troubles. They lie.

When I have hearing roles in films, no one ever asks, 'Why is this character hearing?' But as soon as there's a deaf character, it's, 'Why is there a deaf character? Did they need to be deaf? Is it reflective of some issues in society?' I really hope that, in the future, we won't need a reason; that in 10, 20 years' time, that question 'Why have you got a deaf character?' will just be meaningless.

Concerning the Japanese film industry, could you speak about the aims of the non-profit organisation you've established with Hirokazu Koreeda and other filmmakers?

Things are very tough for cinema in Japan. Independent cinemas suffered a lot through Covid, and even before that, there's very little money for culture in Japan. With independent films – films where there's a high degree of authorship like with my own and Koreeda's – it can be really hard to raise money, as opposed to countries like France and Korea where they do have that kind of support and subsidies and grants for moviemaking.

What we would like to see is an organisation to support film in Japan, maybe like the BFI in the UK, CNC in France, or KOFIC in Korea. We are trying to encourage [Japanese] cinemas to put just a few percent of the ticket price towards support for moviemaking. We've got a long way to go.

Interview and text by Josh Slater-Williams, bfi.org.uk, 11 September 2023