



## NEW RELEASES

# Perfect Days

### Perfect Days

A film by: Wim Wenders

©: Master Mind Ltd

Production Company: Master Mind

In collaboration with: Spoon, Wenders Image

World Sales: The Match Factory

Executive Producer: Kōji Yakusho

Produced by: Koji Yanai

Producers: Wim Wenders, Takuma Takasaki

Line Producer: Yusuke Kobayashi

Unit Production Manager: Motoki Masuda

Production Supervisor: Keiko Ono

Creative Coordinator: Momo Lee

Location Manager: Ko Takahashi

Post-production Supervisor: Dominik Bollen

Post-production Producer: Mathilde Barchmann

1st Assistant Directors: Yuta Suzuki,

Takuma Hayashi

Script Supervisor: Mizuo Kudo

Casting Director: Masunobu Motokawa

Casting: Emi Fukuda

Written by: Wim Wenders, Takuma Takasaki

Director of Photography: Franz Lustig

Visual Effects Supervisor: Kalle Max Hofmann

Editor: Toni Froschhammer

[Dream Installations] Edited by:

Clémentine Decremps

Production Designer: Towako Kuwajima

Art Director: Rakuko Kobayashi

Dream Installations: Donata Wenders

Set Decorator: Miho Matsuda

Costume Designer: Daisuke Iga

Hair & Make-up Artist: Katsuhiko Yuhmi

Title Design: Ryosuke Uehara

Music Supervisor: Milena Fessmann

Dream Sound Design: Matthias Lempert

Production Sound Mixer: Rin Takada

Re-recording Mixer: Matthias Lempert

Cast:

Kōji Yakusho (*Hirayama*)

Tokio Emoto (*Takashi*)

Arisa Nakano (*Niko*)

Aoi Yamada (*Aya*)

Yumi Aso (*Keiko*)

Sayuri Ishikawa (*Mama*)

Tomokazu Miura (*Tomoyama*)

Min Tanaka (*homeless*)

Japan/Germany 2023

123 mins

Digital

A MUBI release

## NEW RELEASES

**Evil Does Not Exist** *Aku wa sonzai shinai*

From Fri 1 Mar

**Getting It Back: The Story of Cymande**

From Fri 1 Mar

**Perfect Days**

From Fri 1 Mar

**Do Not Expect Too Much from the End of the**

**World** *Nu astepta prea mult de la sfârșitul lumii*

From Fri 8 Mar; Sat 9 Mar 18:15 + Q&A with

director Radu Jude

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The 21st-century fiction filmmaking career of Wim Wenders has been exasperating for fans of the early work of wonderment and charm that made him a pillar of the New German cinema in the 1970s and 80s. What a delightful surprise, then, that *Perfect Days* is his best and most winning fiction film since *Wings of Desire* (1987), both an example of late style evolving out of a return to first principles and, more simply, of Wenders adapting the documentary approach, which has rarely failed him, to a fictional subject.

The film follows the daily routine of Hirayama (Kōji Yakusho), a middle-aged cleaner for The Tokyo Toilet, a private contractor which manages newly redesigned facilities in the Shibuya ward. Hirayama has reduced his life to a routine worthy of a Paul Schrader protagonist, except that he seems free of the angst essential to Schrader's subjects. He rises in his tiny apartment (lit in early morning purples and greens reminiscent of the lighting style of the late Robby Müller, the cinematographer for Wenders' early triumphs), does his bathroom grooming, mists his plants and, crucially, as he steps out he looks up at the sky cheerily, as if greeting the new day.

A coffee from the vending machine opposite his door acquired, he gets in his work van and chooses which audio cassette he will put on. It is one of this film's achievements that, although three of his choices, played at different points, might be considered on the nose – first, 'The House of the Rising Sun' by The Animals (in a film set in Japan); second, a Lou Reed song you know, from the film's title, is inevitable; and third, a Nina Simone finale whose familiarity would normally hurt – none of them are, because there's a delicacy at work here, a naivety that comes off mainly because of Yakusho's exquisite portrayal of Hirayama (done, I'm told, without rehearsal).

Hirayama's day continues with him cleaning, always removing himself when interrupted by people caught short. He has a sandwich lunch in the same garden, where he uses an analogue camera to photograph the canopy of trees, and nods at a young woman who treats him with suspicion. In the evening, he visits a *sentō* bathhouse and eats at his regular bar-cafe where the owner says 'For a hard day's work' when he lays the food before him. After reading Faulkner or Highsmith in bed, he dreams in black and white of shifting, overlapping, dissolving images from nature, the effectiveness of which are enhanced by the film's 1:33:1 ratio.

Although the daily routine establishes the film's tone and themes, its minimal script (by Takasaki Takuma and Wenders) was adapted from short stories: one dealing with attempts by Hirayama's dilatory junior colleague Takashi (Tokio Emoto) to woo Aya (Aoi Yamada), a girl beyond his means (whose look faintly echoes Nastassja Kinski's in *Paris, Texas*, 1984); another about Niko (Arisa Nakano), Hirayama's young niece, turning up at his tiny apartment after a row

## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

**Preview: Frank Capra: Mr America** + Q&A with director Matthew Wells

Fri 1 Mar 18:15

**Preview: Doctor Who: The Celestial Toymaker** (Animated)

Sat 2 Mar 12:00

**Busting the Bias presents Special People** + Q&A with director Justin Edgar and actors Dominic Coleman & David Proud

Sat 2 Mar 15:50

**Funday Workshop: Robot Dreams**

Sun 3 Mar 10:15

**Funday Preview: Robot Dreams**

Sun 3 Mar 12:00

**Preview: La Chimera**

Sun 3 Mar 17:30

**Preview: Origin**

Mon 4 Mar 17:50

**Preview: High & Low – John Galiano**

Mon 4 Mar 20:40

**Kinoteka Polish Film Festival Opening Night**

**London Premiere: Green Border** Zielona granica + Q&A with director Agnieszka Holland

Wed 6 Mar 19:00

**Woman with a Movie Camera International**

**Women's Day Preview: Banel & Adama** + Q&A

with director Ramata-Toulaye Sy

Fri 8 Mar 18:10

**Woman with a Movie Camera International**

**Women's Day Preview: Elaha**

Fri 8 Mar 20:45

**TV Preview: Inside No. 9: The Final Series** + Q&A

with Reece Shearsmith, Steve Pemberton and executive producer Adam Tandy

Mon 11 Mar 18:15

**Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI IMAX**

Mon 11 Mar 18:15

**TV Preview: Mandy** + Q&A with Diane Morgan

Tue 12 Mar 18:10

with her bourgeois mother; a third concerning the romantic fate of the hostess/singer of a restaurant he frequents at weekends. A man of few words, Hirayama is more an observer of these mini dramas than a participant. Central to his attitude to life is *komorebi*, the Japanese word for the shimmering of light and shadow created by leaves swaying in the wind, something that exists once, only at that moment. He sees uniqueness in every event.

This reaching for a workaday wisdom is aided by the constant accretion of telling detail. I know nothing about Shinto, though I understand the cleaning of toilets is thought to be an important discipline for those studying Buddhism. It's important, too, that in his pleasures, Hirayama sticks to analogue culture, because, in terms of the simple capturing of everyday life, cellphone video can be said to have stolen the director's thunder. In his 1991 book *The Logic of Images* Wenders wrote, 'I want my films to be about the time in which they are filmed, and to reflect the cities, landscapes, objects and people involved in them.' His key enthusiasm was for real life as found in front of the film camera. But as soon as we could all film everything using our phone cameras, the importance of the record being captured in analogue media needed to be justified. The argument here seems to be that the imperfections of audio cassettes and emulsion film enhance *komorebi*. If that's the thought it takes to bring Wenders back to the effective delicacy of this portrait, I'm all for it.

Nick James, *Sight and Sound*, March 2024

## SIGHT AND SOUND

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