



Mishima A Life in Four Chapters

Director: Paul Schrader

©: M Film Company

Production Companies: American Zoetrope,

Lucasfilm Ltd., Filmlink International

Executive Producer/Presented by: George Lucas,

Francis Ford Coppola

Producers: Mata Yamamoto, Tom Luddy

Line Producer: Yosuke Mizuno

Associate Producers: Leonard Schrader,

Chieko Schrader, Alan Mark Poul

Production Accountants: Kaname Hayase,

Hiroko Uchida, Kuzuko Nishikawa,

Kuniko Sato, Jean Autrey

Production Co-ordinator: Hiroki Tomohara

Production Manager: Atsushi Takayama

US Production Manager: Whitney Green

Location Co-ordinator: Susumu Ejima

Executive Production Assistant: Akiko Hitomi

Production Assistants: Kenichi Horii,

Takao Shibaki, Keiko Sakurai

Action Director: Kanzo Uni

1st Assistant Director: Koichi Nakajima

2nd Assistant Directors: Takayoshi Bunai,

Yasuo Matsumoto, Hisashi Toma

Script Supervisor: Chiyo Miyakoshi

Casting: Nobuaki Murooka

Screenplay: Paul Schrader, Leonard Schrader

Japanese Scriptwriter: Chieko Schrader

Based on novels by: Yukio Mishima

Script Research: Akiko Hitomi

Script Consultant: Jun Shiragi

Director of Photography: John Bailey

Camera Operator: Toyomichi Kurita

1st Assistant Camera: Yuichi Tamura

2nd Assistant Camera: Kazuhiro Nozaki

Key Grip: Jim Finnerty

Gaffer: Kazuo Shimomura

Still Photographers: Yoshinori Ishizuki,

Kitaro Miyazawa

Edited by: Michael Chandler

Editor (Tokyo): Tomoyo Oshima

Assistant Editors: Jennifer Weyman-Cockle,

Kathleen Korth

Production Designer: Eiko Ishioka

Executive Art Director: Kazuo Takenaka

Art Department: Yoshiyuki Ishida,

Shunichiro Shoda, Kyoko Heya, Yasushi Ono,

Yasue Ito

Set Decorator: Kyoji Sasaki

Set Artist: Akira Mizuno

Historical Art Consultant: Kappei Uehara

Property Master: Yoichi Minagawa

Construction Co-ordinator: Kazuo Suzuki

Costume Designer: Etsuko Yagyu

Wardrobe Assistants: Toshiaki Manki,

Katsumi Harada

Make-up Artists: Yasuhiro Kawaguchi, Masayuki

Okubi, Noriyo Ida

Title Design: Christopher Werner

Title Animation: Bruce Walters

Title Calligraphy: Sharon Nakazato

Opticals: Modern Film Effects

Negative Cutting: D. Bassett & Associates,

Tome Minami

Filmed in: Panavision

Prints by: Technicolor

Original Music Composed/Arranged by:

Philip Glass

Solo Violin/Concert Master: Elliot Rosoff

Moviedrome: Bringing the Cult TV Series to the Big Screen

Mishima

A Life in Four Chapters

'What is a cult film? A cult film is one which has a passionate following but does not appeal to everybody. Just because a movie is a cult movie does not automatically guarantee quality. Some cult films are very bad. Others are very, very good. Some make an awful lot of money at the box office. Others make no money at all. Some are considered quality films. Others are exploitation.' From 1988 to 2000 *Moviedrome* was presented by Alex Cox and then Mark Cousins. Across that time, more than 200 features were shown, and generations of movie fans and filmmakers would be informed and inspired by the selection, alongside the wit and wisdom of the introductions that preceded each screening. *Moviedrome* was a portal into the world of weird and wonderful cinema. This two-month season features some of the most notable titles screened and wherever possible they are preceded by the original televised introduction.

Nick Freand Jones, season curator and producer of *Moviedrome*

Alex Cox: *Mishima* is in Japanese. It is not, however, a Japanese film. The distinction was made very clear at the Cannes Film Festival, where the celebrated Japanese director Oshima said: 'I was told that this was a controversial film. It is not controversial. It is merely bad.'

The movie was shot in Japan with American money and directed by Paul Schrader – creator of such tortured protagonists as Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* and Nastassja Kinski in *Cat People*. It is the story of the last day in the life of the Japanese playwright and novelist Yukio Mishima, seen in parallel from the perspective of three of his stories.

Mishima's death took place in 1970, and was hugely controversial. He was a right-wing adept of *bushido*, the rigorous *samurai* code; unlike the cowboy *samurai* of Kurosawa, he was desperately loyal to the Emperor. He spent his time writing and drilling the cadets of his own private army, called the Shield Society. He was disliked by the accommodating establishment which arose in Tokyo after the Second World War; he was also gay. On 25 November 1970 he raided the Eastern Army Headquarters in Tokyo, tied up and harangued a general of whom he disapproved and committed suicide via the traditional form of *seppuku*. Mishima is thus in many ways a touchy subject in Japan, and it's hardly surprising certain people got upset when a foreigner decided to make a film about him.

Apparently Mishima's heirs were able to exercise certain controls over the content of the film: hence its complicated structure and relative restraint around the sexual theme. *Mishima* illustrates a problem with the biopic: it's always a mistake when there are heirs around, worse when the character in question is still living. When Bob Fosse made *Star 80*, he wanted Harry Dean Stanton to play Hugh Hefner, the pipe-smoking, black-sock-wearing proprietor of *Playboy*. Hefner, however, had final approval of the actor who was to play him and decided that Cliff Robertson would be a more appropriate thespian. In the same way, *Mishima* suffers from a slightly reverential approach to its subject – much like the film *The Doors*, whose director apparently really believed the old bullshit story about Jim Morrison being the reincarnation of an old Indian mystic. Sure he was. And he's still alive too, working as a carpenter in San Diego, along with Mishima and Elvis.

Music Conducted by: Michael Riesman
Music Produced by: Kurt Munkacsi
Music Recording Engineer: Dan Dryden
Sound Designer: Leslie Shatz
Production Recordist: Shotaro Yoshida
Boom Persons: Masashi Kikuchi, Soichi Inoue
Re-recording Mixers: Leslie Shatz, Tom Johnson
Sound Editors: Tom Bellfort, Jerry Ross, Giorgio Venturoli
Bodybuilding Instructor: Mitsuo Endo
Unit Publicist: Fusako Kawasaki
Narrator: Roy Scheider
Cast:
 November 25, 1970
 Ken Ogata (*Yukio Mishima*)
 Masayuki Shionoya (*Morita*)
 Junkichi Orimoto
 (*General Mashita*)
 Hiroshi Mikami, Junya Fukuda, Shigeto Tachihara
 (*cadets*)
flashback
 Naoko Otani (*mother*)
 Go Riju (*Mishima, age 18-19*)
 Masato Aizawa (*Mishima, age 9-14*)
 Yuki Nagahara (*Mishima, age 5*)
 Kyuzo Kobayashi (*literary friend*)
 Yuki Kitazume (*dancing friend*)
 Haruko Kato (*grandmother*)
Temple of the Golden Pavilion
 Yasosuke Bando (*Mizoguchi*)
 Hisako Manda (*Mariko*)
 Naomi Oki (*1st girl*)
 Miki Takakura (*2nd girl*)
 Imari Tsuji (*madam*)
 Kôichi Satô (*Kashiwagi*)
Kyoko's House
 Kenji Sawada (*Osamu*)
 Sachiko Hidari (*Osamu's mother*)
 Reisen Lee (*Kiyomi*)
 Setsuko Karasuma (*Mitsuko*)
 Tadanori Yokoo (*Natsuo*)
 Yasuaki Kurata (*Takei*)
 Mitsuru Hirata (*thug*)
Runaway Horses
 Toshiyuki Nagashima (*Isao*)
Runaway Horses
 Hiroshi Katsuno (*Lieutenant Hori*)
 Naoya Makoto (*Kendo instructor*)
 Hiroki Ida (*Izutsu*)
 Jun Negami (*Kurahara*)
 Ryo Ikebe (*interrogator*)
other cast
 Toshio Hosokawa (*'Rokumeikan' producer*)
 Hideo Fukuhara (*military doctor*)
 Yosuke Mizuno (*'Yukoku' producer*)
 Eimei Ezumi (*Ichigaya aide-de-camp*)
 Minoru Hodaka (*Ichigaya colonel*)
 Shoichiro Sakata (*Isao's classmate*)
 Alan Mark Poul (*American reporter*)
 Ren Ebata, Yasuhiro Arai, Fumio Mizushima
 (*reporters*)
 Shinji Miura (*pavilion acolyte*)
 Yuichi Saito (*student*)
 Sachiko Akagi (*thug's girlfriend*)
 Tsutomu Harda (*Romeo*)
 Mami Okamoto (*Juliet*)
 Atsushi Takayama (*interrogation policeman*)
 Kimiko Ito (*grandmother's nurse*)
 Kojiro Oka (*1st MP*)
 Tatsuya Hiragaki (*1st actor*)
 Shinichi Nosaka (*policeman*)
 USA-Japan 1985©
 120 mins
 Digital 4K

Moviedrome transmission date: 8 September 1991

That said, there is much to praise in *Mishima*. It has outstanding music by Philip Glass, and it's a very unusual film, about a character unknown outside literary circles. It provides a glimpse into a culture which still regards the military arts as the highest form of study, although over the last 50 years it's managed to apply them to the world of manufacturing and international commerce, with incredible results. It's also a culture that does not regard suicide as failure, but rather an acceptable and decent culmination to a satisfactory life. Hence Kurosawa's own attempt at suicide in the seventies. Hence, also, his brother's death: his brother was a silent-film narrator; he killed himself when the talkies arrived.

The big question for me with *Mishima* was, can the director speak Japanese or not? The answer is yes – but when they started shooting he directed in English via three interpreters, because he could speak Japanese, but not think in it.

Alex Cox's original introduction for *Moviedrome*. Also published in *Moviedrome: The Guide 2* (BBC, 1993). With thanks to moviedromer.tumblr.com

'I came to Mishima,' Paul Schrader has said, 'because he was the type of character I might have invented if he had not existed.' In a sense, he has invented him already, and Mishima merely embodies the last in a long line of Mishima prototypes: heroes driven to destruction by their thirst for redemption; narcissists compelled to shatter the wall of mirrors that separates them from reality; fantasists eager to substantiate themselves by constantly recreating themselves. *Taxi Driver's* Travis Bickle is probably Mishima's most direct antecedent – with his diary, his guns, his tortured sexuality and his attempt at self-affirmation in a political *acte gratuit*. But Schrader has become the poet laureate of the type: the crazed outsider who doesn't shun the system so much as long to create a finer, purer, nobler one – one created, in fact, in his own image. Schrader has given a strange Calvinist complexion to the old American individualist, and given us a live-wire, 'hot' version of the modern, affectless, alienated hero.

Mishima is, if nothing else, a singular case of cultural projection, osmosis and wish fulfilment. It is convincingly Japanese in language, detail, cultural and filmic reference, yet never for a moment does it seem anything but Western in thought and stylistic attack. (The question of whose projection it is might be the most fascinating aspect of the film: Schrader working his way in towards an alien mind and culture, or Mishima working his way out towards one.) Nothing, at any rate, could be further from Schrader's admiration for the refinement and simplicity, the Zen attributes, of Ozu's cinema ('Because of Ozu's normal emphasis on unity rather than disunity ... he is not really the advocate of either the old or the young, but the advocate of traditional Oneness': *Transcendental Style in Film*) than this multi-dimensional assault on both reality and the psychology of his central character. In this, cutting between a dramatised recreation of Mishima's coup at Eastern Army Headquarters, black-and-white episodes from his early life, and highly stylised excerpts from three of his novels, Schrader has obliged his subject. He has carried out that work of demolition and transformation which Mishima hoped would be the effect of his writing, breaking down the primary reality of 'Words, which could change the world, and the world, which has nothing to do with words.'

Richard Combs, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, October 1985