

From Tokyo, Japan - Asia's biggest international short film festival and accredited by the Academy Awards®:

The Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia Held

**「UNLOCK CINEMA | Short Films, Infinite Possibilities」**

**in Hollywood to celebrate 25th anniversary**

**with JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles**

Screened 6 short films including ones by Wim Wenders, Ryusuke Hamaguchi, & George Lucas Award winner "The Bridge"

**Takuma Takasaki, screenwriter & producer of "PERFECT DAYS" and Tetsuya Bessho, festival president appeared in person**

Event Report and Digest Video are released today

"Achieving with short films what full-length films cannot."



Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia (SSFF & ASIA), one of Asia's biggest international short film festivals accredited by the Academy Awards®, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are developing a base to promote and spread Japanese culture and as a platform for human resource development through Japan-US exchange. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the SSFF & ASIA and the 5th anniversary of JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles this year, we hosted one day film festival "UNLOCK CINEMA - Short Films, Infinite Possibilities" as this year's theme, at TLC Chinese Theatre.

To kick-off the event, Ms. Yuko Kaifu, president of JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles, appeared and introduced the film festival, stating that she was very happy to hold SSFF & ASIA in Los Angeles for the second time after the Covid pandemic. She also expressed her sympathies to the people in Japan who were affected by the Noto Peninsula earthquake that occurred in January, and also offered condolences to the victims, the safety of the region, as well as their restoration and reconstruction. "In addition to natural disasters, there are also many unfortunate events happening around us, such as wars and climate change. However, films can be healing and empowering. Films also connect people. It provides empathy and teaches us about different visions and cultures. It is so meaningful to be able to introduce Japanese films here in Los Angeles."

Archive Video of Talk Event <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOja8jTrkBQ>

After the opening talk, six short films including "Some Body Comes into the Light" by Wim Wenders, who is attracting attention around the world with his award-winning feature "PERFECT DAYS" shot in Japan and "Heaven is Still Far" by director Ryusuke Hamaguchi, who has garnered attention from around the world because of the Academy Awards as well as three major film festivals worldwide were screened. "The Bridge" which won the SSFF & ASIA 2023 Grand Prix, George Lucas Award was also screened.

For the talk session, Ms. Sandrine Cassidy, Senior Director of Festival, Distribution & Talent Development at the University of Southern California, served as MC with guests Mr. Takuma Takasaki, screenwriter and producer of "PERFECT DAYS," and film festival president Testuya Bessho.



## What are BRANDED SHORTS:

Following the introduction of Bessho and the film festival, Mr. Takasaki, juror of Branded Shorts, was introduced to the audience. Mr. Takasaki, who has worked as a creative director at the advertising agency Dentsu, is also a juror for SSFF & ASIA's BRANDED SHORTS competition, which focuses on corporate branded movies. As producer & writer for "PERFECT DAYS," he was also the nominated for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film. He is currently drawing worldwide attention at the moment and was asked to participate in this event.

Mr. Takasaki said that since around 2016, when "BRANDED SHORTS" started, people had moved away from TV so there was no longer a place for commercials to be seen so I went back to the basics of visual storytelling.

BRANDED SHORTS is already in its 6th year, and each year the visual expression and creativity of the films submitted vary widely. However, what they all have in common is the world of "images" and "films" made by creators. It will be very interesting to see how BRANDED SHORTS will evolve in the future." When asked by Ms. Cassidy how the judging process is carried out and at what he looks for, he answered, "I look to see if the film has emotion and moves my heart."

## Like a sibling relationship: Wim Wenders' short film and feature film "PERFECT DAYS"

Next, the topic moved to the relationship between the feature film "PERFECT DAYS" and the screened short film "Some Body Comes into the Light," both directed by Wim Wenders. When asked about the fact that Wenders' short film served as the source for his full-length work, Mr. Takasaki explained that, "The main character of PERFECT DAYS is a toilet cleaner in Tokyo. Originally, we started working with director Wim Wenders on the idea of making a short film set in a toilet. However, while we were filming, more and more episodes or scenes were filmed and we decided to turn it into a full-length movie."



In addition, when we were creating a scenario based on researching public toilets in Tokyo, we noticed that the homeless people in some areas, so Wim Wenders and I decided to include these areas in the story. When we talked about who to cast in the role of a homeless person, I wanted to cast a Japanese traditional buyō dancer and actor Min Tanaka.

Director Wenders originally thought that Min Tanaka, who is widely known as a dancer in Europe, would not play the small role of a homeless person. The dance scene, which was filmed over a full day on the final day of filming had such a strong impact during the editing stage that it had to be cut from the film, but director Wenders felt so strongly about the dance performance on camera, came up with the idea to make a short film out of this scene.

Mr. Takasaki further explained that, "Although the short film and the feature film "PERFECT DAYS" are completely different types of films, they have the same origin and are like brothers." Bessho also expressed his impressions of "Some Body Comes into the Light" saying, "It was a very dense piece of work," and when he previously talked with Min Tanaka, he said, "My own dance cannot be seen on screen in the feature, but you can see what director Wim Wenders wanted to see and what he wanted the audience to see and the director's passion for the scene was expressed through the short film.



# A quarter century of film festivals and student film productions. Changes, trends, and a vision of the future.

The MC, Ms. Sandrine Cassidy also asked Bessho about the changes he has observed over his 25 years of the film festival.

Bessho said, "Of course the production environment and the stories that are told are changing as society changes and technology develops, but in recent years, we have seen the diversity of values and new ideas that transcend genres are increasing. With the development of technology and the emergence of Web3.0 and NFT's, a creator's economy is beginning to emerge. At SSFF & ASIA, we would like to continue to support creators and films that expand the possibilities of visual expression. To date, for SSFF & ASIA 2024, we have received 71 films with an AI theme or in which AI is used in production, and 21 short films related to NFT's"

Bessho asked MC Ms. Cassidy, who sees firsthand the films created by students at the University of Southern California (USC), whether there are any changes or trends that can be seen due to the development of Web 3.0 or other technologies.

Ms. Cassidy said, "Over the last 25 years I've seen a lot of diversity, a lot of self-expression." There are many students who use experimental methods and technologies, and the US film industry in particular is seeing notable movements in XR, VR, AI, etc., and this is also having an impact." She told the audience how a USC project that utilized AI technology was screened at the SXSW's Experimental Film Competition and also at the Venice Film Festival. Last year, a VR gaming project was started, and it was introduced at the Toronto International Film Festival, showing that students are also taking on new challenges by making full use of new technologies. On the other hand, "Students think of short films as something that allows them to simply pursue their own expression without thinking about commercial aspects. That's why I think short films are wonderful."

## The exciting thing about short films is that you can be purely creative.

Finally, when asked, "What is the future of short films?" Mr. Takasaki answered, "I think the point of short films is how to enjoy things that you can't do with feature films." I think you should do something you can't do if you have two hours. The most interesting part is that you can get away from the constraints of development and business, etc., and be purely creative. It would be great to be in a place where you can look at the finished film and hear what your heart wants to express. I think that films created in this way will end up being compelling, and will enhance the culture of short films."

Digest Video: [https://youtu.be/q-jYljF\\_ZIw](https://youtu.be/q-jYljF_ZIw)

<Screening Titles>



**SSFF & ASIA 2023 Grand-Prix = George Lucas Award Winner**

**『The Bridge』 Director : Izumi Yoshida /22:30/Poland /Animation /2022**

The film's inspired by events of the year 1920 that'd brought two nations closer: Poland and Japan. The story is told from a 10-year-old boy's perspective, showing the history of orphans who lost their families and had to rush into manhood to fight for their lives.

**Izumi Yoshida** : Izumi Yoshida (born in 1989). Lodz Film School graduate. Since 2017 she's been lecturer at Art School in Lodz. Her first film "Kinks" that were nominated in many festivals and won many awards including Split Film Festival and Animator. In 2019 she's been Polish Film Institute's expert in animation film domain.



**SSFF & ASIA 2022 Official Competition Japan Category nomination**

**『Gratitude』 Director : Eita Nagayama /20:55/ Japan /Drama /2022**

A man wanders alone, separated from his family, in search of a place to die. He runs away from the massage therapist who is supposed to comfort him and drives deep into the mountains in a stolen car. He abandons the car and walks further into the forest where he meets a strange young man.

**Eita Nagayama** : Born in 1982, he is 39 years old. He has won numerous film awards, including the Japan Academy Award, the Elan d'or Award, and the Blue Ribbon Award. Although he has made independent films, this is his first full-scale film as a director.



**『MASKAHOLIC』 Director : Hiroki Horanai/ 15:00/Japan/Suspense·Mystery/2020**

When Kumi wears a mask, she looks a lot like a famous actress Maiko Eriya. One day, a photo of Kumi is published in a magazine as Maiko. A friend eggs on Kumi to disguise as Maiko and starts an Instagram account. As Kumi keeps posting on suggestive photos on Instagram, the account is suspected as a secret account of Maiko and it goes viral. Then, Kumi is summoned to come to Maiko's agency and...

**Hiroki Horanai** : Born in Japan, 1985. Aspired to become a director after watching James Cameron's "Titanic." In addition to winning the SSFF & ASIA Cinematic Tokyo category for "Tokyo Comet" in 2018, "GHOSTING" ("At that moment, I wanted to cry -CINEMA FIGHTERS project-"), "Samurai Swordfish" and others. <https://kantoku-dcrx.jp/staff/horanai-hiroki/>



Left: ©2016 KWCP

**『Heaven is Still Far Away』 Director : Ryusuke Hamaguchi/38:00/Japan/Drama/2016**

Yuzo, a mosaic engineer for porn videos, lives under the same roof as Mitsuki, a high school student with whom he leads a peculiar life. One day, Yuzo receives a phone call from Mitsuki's sister.

**Ryusuke Hamaguchi** : After graduating from the University of Tokyo with a Bachelor of Art in Aesthetics in 2003, he worked as an assistant director for film and TV industry for several years. Then, Hamaguchi studied at the Tokyo University of the Arts and got the degree of Master of Film in 2008. His graduation film PASSION was well received by the professors including renowned director Kiyoshi Kurosawa, and was officially selected in the Zabaltegi Section of San Sebastian International Film Festival as well as Tokyo FILMeX competition. Hamaguchi gained international recognition with HAPPY HOUR (2015) which received Special Mention for the screenplay at the Locarno International Film Festival. He then followed with ASAKO I & II (2018) which was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. In 2021, he released two films, WHEEL OF FORTUNE AND FANTASY and DRIVE MY CAR, for the latter he has received Best Screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival as well as two Academy Awards nominations, for Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay, making him the third Japanese director to be nominated for an Oscar for Best Director.



**The 90<sup>th</sup> Academy Award Animated Short Film Competition nomination †**

**『Negative Space』 Director : Ru Kuwahata /Max Porter/5:30/France·Japan/Animation/2017**

Even though Sam's father is hardly ever home because he is often away on business trips, he is able to connect with his son by teaching him how to pack a suitcase.

**Ru Kuwahata & Max Porter**: Max Porter and Ru Kuwahata are a filmmaking duo based in Baltimore, USA. Collaborating for over a decade as "Tiny Inventions", they have directed short films, TV commercials, music videos and comics. Produced by Ikki Films and Manuel Cam Studio in France, "Negative Space" is their fourth professional film.



Left: ©2023 MASTER MIND Ltd  
Right: ©Photo by Peter Lindbergh

**『Some Body Comes into the Light』 Director : Wim Wenders /9:00/Japan/Experimental/2023**

A beautiful session between dancer Tanaka Min and director Wim Wenders that illustrates something before we started speaking with words.

**Wim Wenders** : Born 14 August 1945, Wenders is a German filmmaker, playwright, author, and photographer. He is a major figure in New German Cinema. Among the honors he has received are prizes from the Cannes, Venice and Berlin film festivals.

## <[UNLOCK CINEMA | Short Films, Infinite Possibilities] OUTLINE>

■ Date :

Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024

■ Venue :

TCL Chinese 6 Theatre  
(6925 Hollywood Blvd, Hollywood, CA 90028, United States)

■ Time :

6:00 pm Doors Open

6:30pm – 6:15 pm Opening

6:45pm - 8:45pm Screening

- "The Bridge" (2022) Directed by Izumi Yoshida
- "Gratitude" (2022) Directed by Eita Nagayama
- "Heaven is Still Far Away" (2016) Directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi
- "MASKAHOLIC" (2021) Directed by Hiroki Horanai
- "Negative Space" (2017) Directed by Ru Kuwahata / Max Porter
- "Some Body Comes into the Light" (2023) Directed by Wim Wenders

8:45pm – 9:15pm Talk Event

■ Admission : \$10.

■ Archive Video of Talk Event

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOja8jTrkBQ>

■ Digest Video: [https://youtu.be/q-jYljF\\_ZIw](https://youtu.be/q-jYljF_ZIw)



Tetsuya Bessho, an actor and member of the American Actors Guild (SAG), founded the American Short Short Film Festival in 1999 with the aim to introduce short films, which he had discovered in the United States, as a new visual genre to Japan. In 2001, the name was changed to Short Shorts Film Festival (SSFF), and in 2004 it was certified as an Academy Award-recognized film festival.

Also, in the same year, "Short Shorts Film Festival Asia (Co-hosted by SSFF ASIA: Tokyo)" was born with the aim of disseminating new visual culture from Asia and nurturing up-and-coming young filmmakers. We are holding a film festival under the collective name "SSFF & ASIA".

In 2018, to commemorate the film festival's 20th anniversary, the Grand Prix award became the George Lucas Award, named after director George Lucas. In January 2019, the "Short Shorts Film Festival in Hollywood" was held to commemorate the festival's 20th anniversary. Also in 2019, four competitions, and from 2022, five competitions, including the Animation Competition, have acquired the right to be eligible for nomination at the following year's Academy Awards® in the short film category. SSFF & ASIA will continue to support young creators through the film festival.

<https://shortshorts.org/index-en.php>

### [PRESS INQUIRY]

Committee for Short Shorts : Fuyumi Tanaka [press@shortshorts.org](mailto:press@shortshorts.org)

Stills are available at :

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1k5\\_qkx-eqQdgMpWxjnIZPeI5beRovgIf?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1k5_qkx-eqQdgMpWxjnIZPeI5beRovgIf?usp=sharing)