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**Sērā-fuku to kikanjū**
**セーラー服と機関銃**

**Original Theatrical Version:**
**19 December 1981**
**Runtime: 112 minutes**

**Complete Version (*kanpeki-ban*):**
**10 July 1982**
**Runtime: 131 minutes**

## CAST

**Hiroko Yakushimaru** Izumi Hoshi
**Tsunehiko Watase** Makoto Sakuma
**Yuki Kazamatsuri** Mayumi Sandaiji
**Makoto Satō** Sekine
**Rentarō Mikuni** Hajime Sandaiji (Fatso)
**Masaaki Daimon** Masa
**Shinpei Hayashiya** Hiko
**Toshiya Sakai** Akira
**Shingo Yanagisawa** Tomo'o
**Tatsuya Oka** Tetsuo
**Ken Mitsuishi** Shūhei
**Akira Emoto** Detective Kuroki
**Kazuo Kitamura** Hamaguchi
**Minori Terada** Hagiwara

## CREW

Directed by **Shinji Sōmai**
Assistant Directors **Kōji Enokido, Takeo Moriyasu, Yasuyuki Ōtani,** and **Kiyoshi Kurosawa**
Screenplay by **Yōzō Tanaka**
From the original novel by **Jirō Akagawa**
Produced by **Kei Ijichi**
Executive Producers **Haruki Kadokawa** and **Hidenori Taga**
Edited by **Akira Suzuki**
Director of Photography **Seizō Sengen**
Music by **Katz Hoshi**
Art Direction by **Yoko'o Yoshinaga**

# SAILOR SUIT AND MACHINE GUN: OR, SŌMAI AND HIROKO

BY AARON GEROW

As evidenced first by its title, Shinji Sōmai's *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* is a captivating exploration of incompatibilities, of opposing terms and the liminal spaces in between them. It is the combination of not just a high school girl with violent yakuza, but realism with the fantastically absurd, the teenage virgin with adult sexuality, the high and the low, and ultimately life with death. Perhaps standing above all these is the tension between the film's arthouse tendencies—particularly Sōmai's masterful use of the long take—and its existence as a box-office-topping idol film starring the immensely popular 17-year-old star Hiroko Yakushimaru. As with the film's other incompatibilities, however, this tension is best not resolved by privileging one side over the other. The pleasure of Sōmai's cinema comes from roving through the impossible combination of such opposites.

It is tempting to sell Shinji Sōmai—one of Japan's greatest directors not known abroad—by aligning him to art cinema, but his story is more complex. It is likely true that the gatekeepers who decided what Japanese cinema would show abroad in the 1980s ignored his work because five of his first six films were either idol pictures, teen movies, or softcore porn. With a background as an assistant director both for Nikkatsu *Roman Porno* movies and for such cinematic and artistic giants as Shūji Terayama and Kazuhiko Hasegawa (a good number of those behind the camera on *Sailor Suit* also worked on Hasegawa's legendary *The Man Who Stole the Sun* [*Taiyō o nusunda otoko*, 1979], including Kiyoshi Kurosawa, who was fourth assistant director on Sōmai's film), Sōmai had a quite varied background but happened to debut in 1980 with *Tonda Couple* (*Tonda kappuru*, aka *Dreamy*



ARROW VIDEO

*Fifteen*), an adaptation of a manga that was Yakushimaru's first starring role. *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* was Kadokawa's strong effort to sell its homegrown idol and was released less than 18 months later, on December 19th, 1981, as the A-feature in a double bill with *The Blazing Valiant* (*Moeru yūja*), an action flick starring Hiroyuki Sanada. Not only did the film top the 1982 box office, but police were even called to some of Yakushimaru's film-release events when fans got out of hand.

The pamphlet for the film sold at the theaters (still a custom for all major releases) made it clear this was Hiroko's film, even sticking her name between the two lines of the title on the cover. The contents not only foreground her, they seem to emerge from her, as the first few pages essentially are Yakushimaru's voice commenting on the film, including Sōmai's already famous long takes. The theme of many of the essays, penned by such figures as Nobuhiko Ōbayashi—who directed her previously in *School in the Crosshairs* (*Nerawareta gakuen*, 1981)—and the photographer Kishin Shinoyama, was that through this movie, Yakushimaru had grown up and become a true actress. Declaring that the sailor suit school uniform still fit her best, producer Haruki Kadokawa wrote in the pamphlet that Hiroko exhibited the beauty of that "off-season" "no-man's land" between ages 16 and 18.

The narrative, based on a story by the playful mystery novelist Jirō Akagawa, establishes the framework for this liminal existence. From the premise that real yakuza involved in illegal dealings (obfuscated in the film) would allow a 17-year-old girl to become their boss, to Sandaiji's maniacal forms of torture and human experiment, the film's story often veers into the absurd. Yet from its corporeality to sense of space, there is something curiously real about the film. The normal high school girl Izumi Hoshi is the virgin under constant bodily threat by unknown yakuza who whisk her away from school, by a yakuza boss who strips in front of her, or by gangsters who threaten to sell her into prostitution. Simultaneously she is also Hiroko, a newly anointed top idol during a 1980s idol boom that was tied to a "moratorium generation" that seemingly refused to grow up.



That was epitomized by *shōjo*, or teenage girl culture, which celebrated those years before adulthood and normative adult heterosexuality, and which contributed to many cultural phenomena from Hello Kitty to girl's comics (*shōjo manga*). Making Hiroko an adult, and an actress more than an idol, meant narrating a tale of Izumi growing up. So throughout, she is confronted not just with adult responsibility—leading a gangster mob in a war over heroin—but also with the possibilities of adult sexuality, especially in the figure of Mayumi, who is played by the *Roman Porno* veteran Yuki Kazamatsuri. Existing in a script penned by Yōzō Tanaka, who also wrote for *Roman Porno* and for Seijun Suzuki, Izumi is a *shōjo* dunked—up and down?—into an adult world.

Yet *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* is not "From Sailor Suit to Machine Gun." There is not a progression from one state to another, but a contradictory if not paradoxical co-existence of incompatible states. Our first view of Izumi has her in her sailor school uniform, but she is singing "The Woman of the Casbah," a 1955 song originally sung by Kunieda Eto about a prostitute shedding tears for her lover in the Foreign Legion during the Algerian War. It is a passionate love song that Mayumi also sings, but in the first of many temporal reversals in the film, Izumi sings this old song before meeting the woman whom the detective says was herself a prostitute. Izumi thus exhibits sexual and asexual, *shōjo* and adult tendencies from the start. The song helps establish the themes of rain and flowing water (already introduced in the previous rain-drenched scene) that run throughout the film—and the soundtrack—and are tied to Izumi through her name, which means "water spring." But the fact we see her first in one of several extreme high angle shots underlines that Izumi is a collection of a myriad of incompatibilities. That bird's eye view is linked to her other name—Hoshi, which means "star"—and introduces another set of dominant themes: of high and low (from Hamaguchi's skyscraper office to Sandaiji's underground lair) and the motions in between. That it is Izumi who most literally goes up and down in the film—especially when Sekine's crane repeatedly

plunges her in water—underlines her function as a mobile term between opposites. We in fact first see her up close literally assuming the position of a bridge (in gymnastics), which literalizes the fact that Izumi, in addition to prompting reversals (to us, her face is initially upside-down), exists to bridge such incompatibilities as *shōjo* and adult, virgin and sexual, high and low.

That makes Izumi somewhat of a cipher. Literally substituting for her dead father as gang boss, she is a substitute in a movie that begins with a comical replacement (a vet for a doctor!) and continues with other substitutions (rain for tears, etc.), fake identities, and costume play. Mirrors often function in the film to complicate identity, especially with the long take at the bar, where it takes us time to learn that what we first viewed was in fact a reflection in a mirror. In the continuation of the shot at the crematorium, Izumi tells her friends that to her father she was daughter, wife, and mother, and throughout the film we will see Izumi sliding into various roles, most often that of a mother to her Medaka underlings, especially Mei. She even assumes the position of a bodhisattva (Jizō Bosatsu/Ksitigarbha—appropriately the bodhisattva of traveling) at the start of the legendary long take in Shinjuku. Izumi does appear to possess the perhaps divine power to soften the most corrupt hearts, as even the murderous Kuroki confesses his affection for her before dying. Yet as a vessel encompassing opposites, Izumi is also seemingly an angel of death, as every adult male who comes to like her—especially Hiko and Mei who become physically close to her—soon suffers a violent death.

What is Izumi at the conclusion? In one sense, she has returned to the start, playing with her buddies at her high school as if nothing happened. But she also has her first kiss—albeit with a dead man—and even does a turn as Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch* (1955). Wearing her school uniform but with bright red high heels, both grown up and still a child, Izumi/Hiroko walks in front of the Shinjuku Isetan department store, passing real people who actually did not know this was a film shoot, while also playing at shooting imaginary machine guns. Reality and



artifice thus also mix, as the film concludes with many of its contradictions and incompatibilities still in place.

It is important that the film ends with a long shot, long take, since that is what most approximates on the level of style Izumi/Hiroko's own encompassing of contradiction. Sōmai was renowned for his long takes, but his approach to the form differed from that of Kenji Mizoguchi, Japan's most famous practitioner of that style. Whereas Mizoguchi's long takes worked through the tension between realism and artifice, between aesthetic distance and emotional reaction, Sōmai's worked through different tensions. His detachment, evident in *Sailor Suit* in an independent camera spying from outside windows, is less aesthetic and more self-conscious (culminating in the Hamaguchi office full of film memorabilia and projections of old Toei *jidaigeki*). That may explain how the long takes of Japanese cinema from the 1990s on, which I have called the "detached style," owe much more to Sōmai than to Mizoguchi. Yet that distance operates in Sōmai as it does in the extreme long shot of Izumi and Sakuma framed on a rooftop burning the gang's belongings amidst an everyday world that cares nothing of their pain, a shot that enables, as Takefumi Tsutsui has argued, the combination of different spaces and times in the same frame. From different kinds of behavior (Izumi crawling on all fours while Mayumi sits), to different spaces (the Buddhist temple versus the loud streets), to even different times (from Kuroki talking to Izumi on the phone to her being there in the same room), Sōmai's long takes gain their vitality from how they manage to frame differences—what should not have been able to co-exist—within the same frame. The shots themselves embody contradiction in their very form, as Sōmai's long takes combine both the realism garnered through the shot's integrity of time and space and the artifice of their spectacular elaboration, often shooting performances like in *Typhoon Club* (*Taifū kurabu*, 1985), or having the camera itself perform (such as with a fish-eye lens).

This synthesis within contradiction is mapped out in *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* on the body of Izumi/Hiroko. The long takes not only visually represent her own

embracing of incompatibilities, they render her both real (the actual body walking among unsuspecting people in Shinjuku) and artificial (the set of images from Monroe to machine guns that she performs). Ōbayashi in the pamphlet called it a "realism of fiction." In one sense, *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* is a document of the body of Hiroko Yakushimaru confronting the contradictory demands on her as both idol and actress, one that even resulted in scarring her body (famously, a shard of glass from the exploding bottles in the machine gun scene cut her cheek). It would be wrong to say that Sōmai's art shines despite her presence, because not only does Izumi/Hiroko become manifest through the long take, her contradictions fuel and define the power of those long takes.

Contradiction, or more properly the space between contradiction, becomes the pleasure of this film, if not Sōmai's cinema. Interestingly, Sandaiji defines pleasure (*kaikan*) as the mixture of the fear of death and the energetic shuddering of the lively body, setting the stage for Izumi's own experience of pleasure as she faces death (uttering the word "kaikan" that became a buzzword for 1982). The pleasure of Sōmai's cinema is similar, since so many of both his narratives and his long takes have embodied the balance—always a theme in his films—between not just artifice and reality, high and low, adult and child, but also fundamentally between life and death and between the motion and stillness—evident especially in *Typhoon Club* and *PP Rider* (*Shonben raidā*, 1983). Like with Hiko, death does not infrequently arrive at the end of Sōmai's long takes. This could push films like *Moving* (*Ohikkoshi*, 1993) into the realm of the mythic, but while always simultaneously maintaining its opposite of the everyday.

*Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* is a magnificent film not because Sōmai transcends its subject or genre, but because it engages with both the myth and reality of its star, becoming ultimately both absurd and real, mature and childish, art and entertainment. It delves into the highs and lows of life and death with the contradictory pleasure only Sōmai's cinema can offer.



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# SAILOR SUIT AND KADOKAWA

## BY ALEXANDER ZAHLTEN

In the beginning there was laughter and ridicule. When in 1975 Kadokawa Publishing, a mid-size book publisher in Japan, announced that it would begin producing movies, the film world along with critics and journalists saw a disaster in the making. The industry had been in perennial crisis since the early 1960s, with annual film attendance falling by half between 1960 and 1965 alone. Two of the six large film studios had gone bankrupt and another, Nikkatsu, had narrowly escaped that fate by switching almost exclusively to producing sex films just three years earlier. How could a book publisher harbor illusions about *entering* that kind of business at such a time, and without prior film experience to boot?

Just over ten years later, Kadokawa had produced six of the ten highest-grossing films in Japanese film history. It had transformed how the larger film and media industry operated. It created some of the biggest stars of its time, as well as giving a new generation of directors and scriptwriters entry to mainstream success. *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* was a central part of that story, as was its star, Hiroko Yakushimaru. Kadokawa (today as Kadokawa Holdings) is still a definitive force in the media industry of Japan today, having introduced another set of monumental changes in the 1990s. Central to the immense shifts Kadokawa introduced in the 1970s and 1980s was a controversial, provocative, flamboyant businessman determined to ignore established practices and whom a prominent critic once called a “cancer that has eaten away at Japanese cinema for years”: Haruki Kadokawa.[1]

Kadokawa was an eccentric and a provocateur. He was a prize-winning *haiku* poet who claimed to converse with aliens and to have the ability to control video recorders with his mind. He loved to denigrate the “old way of doing things” in both the publishing and film industry, yet built his own Shinto shrine and performed rituals there regularly.

He had a highly contentious relationship with film critics of the time and would occasionally bar some of them from press screenings. That persona was part of the Kadokawa Film brand, and it was part of the sense that Kadokawa Film was *different*, something exciting and outside the box—at least for contemporary audiences.

*Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* was part of a shift in Kadokawa Film's strategy in the early 1980s, and it was wildly successful. Mobile police units had to be called in when over a thousand fans tried to rush the Umeda Toei film theater where Yakushimaru was scheduled to deliver a stage greeting before the screening, and the event was cancelled. The film, shown in a double bill with the Toei studio produced *The Blazing Valiant* (*Moeru yūja*, 1981) that few people were interested in, became one of the most successful titles of the year. Along with the omnipresent (at least in 1981) theme song sung by Yakushimaru herself, the film cemented her position as the superstar of the moment. It ushered in a new stage in Kadokawa Film and indeed film in Japan.

The initial strategy that characterized Kadokawa's foray into film in the mid-1970s, and which he claimed to have invented, was what Haruki Kadokawa called the "media mix." The idea of the media mix indeed caught on like wildfire across the media industry in Japan, but it would be more precise to say that Kadokawa gave something that had been simmering for a long time a name and sold it as part of the Kadokawa brand. The deliberate tie-up of various media had in fact already received a giant boost when the anime *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan atomu*) went on air on January 1st, 1963. Produced for more than its broadcast alone could recoup, Tezuka Productions had to plan in the additional revenue from manga sales, advertising tie-ups, toy sales, and so on, creating the basis for media mix in Japan.[2]

But Haruki successfully marketed media mix as a Kadokawa innovation. The basic Kadokawa strategy was clear from the beginning: Kadokawa produced films based on novels in its lineup, then released them along with the complete lineup of the author's works and a soundtrack with strategically placed pop songs. It was a strategy he later claimed to have come upon by accident when he purchased the rights for the translation to Erich Segal's novel *Love Story* for just $250, only to see the novel become a massive bestseller when the film and its soundtrack became wildly popular in Japan. Later, many other media channels would join this triad. Kadokawa also mobilized massive advertising campaigns the likes of which were unseen in Japan until that point.

*Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* appeared at a turning point in Kadokawa's approach. At first the company had relied on a blockbuster strategy, producing a small number of films with massive budgets and marketing them as larger-than-life media mix spectacles. The culmination of this was the 1980 film *Virus* (*Fukkatsu no hi*), directed by Kinji Fukasaku, who much later became much better known internationally for *Battle Royale* (2000). A science-fiction film about a virus that wipes out most of the world population, it was shot partially in international locations and with a cast that featured prominent international actors such as George Kennedy, Edward J. Olmos, and Olivia Hussey alongside Japanese stars Masao Kusakari and Sonny Chiba. Part of Kadokawa's dreams of conquering international markets and with an enormous budget, *Virus* made its money back, but barely.

Kadokawa realized that he was betting the company with each production cycle. Anticipating heightened demand for "content" with the coming of satellite TV, he decided to switch to producing a greater number of mid-budget films. But how to hold the Kadokawa media mix together without the spectacle of huge blockbusters? The solution was in the creation of Kadokawa stars, but stars that would be very different from others of the day. The first of these, and the biggest, was Hiroko Yakushimaru, followed by Tomoyo Harada and the much less popular Noriko Watanabe.

## KADOKAWA: GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF THE NEW

The extreme storm of popularity around Yakushimaru was endlessly discussed in Japanese media at the time, and much of it centered on her "otherworldly" appeal. It

was often remarked that Yakushimaru was a fascinating presence but did not fit the established beauty norms for pop idols at the time—in comparison she was, in public and jarring ways, evaluated as short, stout, boyish, and with a curious, waddling walk. The critic and activist Hidemi Suga proposed—with barely hidden misogyny—that Yakushimaru had an almost religious and monstrous raw power, much like Godzilla, and that those films that attempted to bend her to more conventional ideals of beauty were failures. Even the famous shot in *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* of Yakushimaru sitting on the lap of a huge bodhisattva statue can be seen as the film's comment on this discourse (and a nod towards another idol declared to have religious power a few years earlier, when a book proclaimed that "Momoe Yamaguchi is a Bodhisattva").

Kadokawa strictly controlled Yakushimaru and the other Kadokawa stars' images, rarely allowing interviews and making them more distant to the audience rather than allowing insights into their private life, which was the more common strategy at the time. The aim was to make them memorable presences but empty ciphers that can be attached to any story or commodity (for the endless advertising contracts). They were deliberately kept ambiguous; initially pre-pubescent when they became stars, Yakushimaru and Harada were often remarked upon as being boyish or gender-ambiguous, they were young enough to seem unfixed from life, free-floating empty signs that were extremely mobile and did everything (act, sing, model, write poetry and prose, etc.) and nothing. That Haruki was marketed as the mastermind controlling his idol creations shows that the patriarchal gender dynamics were a part of this operation, even as the idols were supposedly levitating outside of social or semiotic strictures.

All of this dovetailed with a specific politics of this era, implicitly marketed by Kadokawa as a company as part of its brand, and a certain gender discourse in Japan at the time. From the beginning Kadokawa Film claimed that it was doing something radically new, that Kadokawa film was different: stylish, exciting, spectacular, and above all cosmopolitan and not at all like "Japanese cinema," which Haruki often claimed bored him. It positioned itself as of the future, not backwards-looking like Japanese cinema—conveniently forgetting that the anxiety about being "behind" was itself a very old discourse in the film world of Japan. Kadokawa Film was of the world, not narrowly defined as Japanese. As the Kadokawa producer Toshiaki Tokutome said at the time, "An American scriptwriter, a German technician, Chinese actors, and shot in Esperanto… Kadokawa may at some point become the first company in Japan to produce such a film." Kadokawa styled Yakushimaru to be the same as the company—a free-floating entity, not tied to the ballast of conventions, time, or national identity, an always ongoing glittering, sparkling and supremely consumable experiment.

That this was part of the Kadokawa Film appeal at a time when public sensibilities in Japan moved rapidly from the politicized 1960s to the frenzied consumer culture of the 1980s is not surprising. In crystallizing that discourse in Yakushimaru and Harada, Kadokawa Film's strategies also drew on what Tomiko Yoda has called the "girlscape" that 1970s media culture was becoming. Wherever one looked, the media figure of the young girl represented an almost futuristic freedom, roaming exploration and pure possibility, a cosmopolitan sensibility often channeled through consumption. Similar aspects of the gendering of consumption and modernity can be found in the 1920s, with the figure of the flapper internationally or the *mōga* (or "modern girl") in Japan. It was not that this image commodity was intended for young female fans, but that the figure of the girl represented in this way something to aspire to for everyone—from middle-aged salarymen to schoolchildren.

Kadokawa Films of the time clearly reflect this appeal to being outside of history, in the realm of pure cosmopolitan possibility. It is within exactly this logic that Tomoyo Harada's first hit film was *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (*Toki o kakeru shōjo*, 1983), about a schoolgirl who becomes temporally unfixed and hops between different time planes. *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* also carries this discourse, showing a world in which a female high school student can become a yakuza boss. The famous final shot is emblematic in this regard. Yakushimaru wanders through the city, constantly

roleplaying and transitioning from a schoolgirl to mimicking an office employee on a cigarette break to a mock gunfight with some children and finally taking the famous pose of Marilyn Monroe on top of a subway grate in *The Seven Year Itch* (1955). Within one extended take Yakushimaru takes on a multitude of identities.

Critics and filmmakers at the time were very aware of, and often critical of, these discourses. As one of the script doctors for *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* once mentioned to me, the scene in which Yakushimaru/Izumi witnesses Sakuma having sex with Mayumi was meant to show that the character was confronted with the need to grow up and become an adult and deal with the complications of adult life—not to remain in the fantasy role-playing world of the high school girl yakuza boss storyline. It was a deliberate attempt to counter the spectacular and exuberant consumer-culture-is-freedom narrative of Kadokawa.

That intervention arguably was drowned out by the popularity of the Kadokawa model. Over time, however, the Kadokawa stars aged and departed the realm of pure possibility. The trajectory of Yakushimaru's films reflect how the character is transitioned into "adult" life and mundane issues like education, work, and social norms. In *Detective Story* (*Tantei monogatari*, 1983) Yakushimaru's character experiences a first romantic kiss—though *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* prefigures this—and in *Main Theme* (*Mein tēma*, 1984), her first sexual experience. Similar to Harada, Yakushimaru's popularity declined with the loss of fantastic mobility and an increasing integration into a recognizable social world. By the late 1980s, both of their contracts had been cancelled and Kadokawa Film was experiencing financial issues.

Kadokawa Film had a comeback of sorts in the early 1990s, though it was cut short by Haruki Kadokawa's arrest for cocaine trafficking in 1993. His estranged brother Tsuguhiko took over the company and transformed it once again, retooling it for a platform economy relying much more on video games, manga, anime, and utilizing fan labor for a very different approach to the media mix.



Kadokawa Film, and Haruki himself, were often blamed for what many saw as the decline of Japanese film after the 1960s. In reality, Kadokawa provided young directors like Shinji Sōmai, Nobuhiko Ōbayashi or Yoshimitsu Morita and young scriptwriters like Shōichi Maruyama or Haruhiko Arai a space to work and experiment with little interference and decent budgets, when most of their other options were low-budget sexploitation films (Ōbayashi being a bit of an exception). As a result, Kadokawa films were often an unusual mix of bold cinematic experiment and highly commercial pop cinema—fascinating films that so far mostly remain bafflingly unknown outside of Japan, and *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* is one prime example.

In hindsight, then, Haruki's model seems less revolutionary than it did to contemporaries and than he claimed. He indeed thumbed his nose at the major studios, declared everything they did boring and parochial, and defied conventional industry wisdom, frequently and provocatively putting down Japanese film as "green tea over rice" while he preferred "beefsteak." But he went on to direct a number of films himself and now looks more like a cinephile that for a time at least allowed the industry to recapture a general audience—before the second Kadokawa media mix under Tsuguhiko fully acknowledged the fragmentation of consumers among media channels and genres.

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[1] "'Kadokawa' Tataki, Soshite Yurimodoshi" ("Kadokawa" Bashing and the Backlash), *Eiga Geijutsu* 370 (winter 1994), pp. 5–26.
[2] See Chapter 6, "Warrior Business: Tezuka's Anime Revolution in Context 1961–67" in Jonathan Clements' *Anime: A History* (London: BFI, 2013).

# HIROKO YAKUSHIMARU AND KIYOSHI KUROSAWA IN CONVERSATION

*This conversation between Hiroko Yakushimaru, the star of* Sailor Suit and Machine Gun, *and Kiyoshi Kurosawa, the internationally acclaimed director of such works as* Cure *(1997),* Pulse *(2001),* Tokyo Sonata *(2008), and* Wife of a Spy *(2020), who right at the beginning of his career worked on the film as an assistant director to Shinji Sōmai, took place in the Kadokawa Corporation's offices in Tokyo on Wednesday April 21st, 2021 and was recorded exclusively for Arrow Films.*

**Kiyoshi Kurosawa:** I don't perfectly recall what Japanese culture was like at the time of the film's release in the early 80s, but I can say for sure that this movie was unique in that it went against the cultural trends of the day, or at least against the trends of Japanese cinema.

It starred Ms. Yakushimaru, so it was hugely popular and a big hit, of course, and it can be held up as a prime example of the highly influential Kadokawa Film's output back then. And yet it was an extremely auteurist film. It's more than just popular entertainment. This extraordinariness makes it fascinating, and it's really interesting to speculate how young Japanese people today, or indeed overseas viewers, would understand the movie if they watched it with no context, because it's a movie that transcends the cultural background of the period in which it was released, and one that could only have been made by Shinji Sōmai.

**Hiroko Yakushimaru:** Absolutely. It's impossible for me to assess objectively how this movie would be received. But I'm so pleased to be here with you today, Mr. Kurosawa, because there are a few things I want to ask you about.



There are people who are my age and a little younger who grew up loving movies, and then end up in the movie business themselves. Then they hear from people who worked as assistant directors and such on *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* about how mean Shinji Sōmai was to me and how scary he was. So they all ask me questions about the movie, and you can tell they're really fascinated by it.

They all go, "What? Really? I can't believe that kind of thing went on." It really seems to surprise them. You'd never see such brutality on a shoot these days.

**KK:** Is that right?

**HY:** Then when they get to perform with me in something, and they see that despite receiving all that abuse I'm just dopey old me, they feel relieved. I've been told that before.

**KK:** Right. It was a unique shoot. That was the first time I'd been an assistant director for a major production like that, and it was the only one for a while after. I then went on to work as an assistant director on several small movies, but since that was all I knew, I had no other major shoots to compare it with. I never realized just how unusual it was. But once I became a director and I had to manage my own shoots, then it became clear that it wasn't normal.

Ms. Yakushimaru here was really put through the wringer. She bore the brunt of the Sōmai style, if you will, and was put into all kinds of predicaments, but she wasn't the only one, either. The other actors too, like Ms. Kazamatsuri, had to put up with a lot. We assistant directors were asked to do some ridiculous things as well, but it really was great fun. I remember at the start of the movie, you're in a bridge position.

**HY:** That's right.

**KK:** I was holding you up right up until the camera started rolling.

**HY:** Were you?

**KK:** Yeah. That was my job. I didn't know when they were going to start filming or from what angle, nor did I know when I was supposed to let go. It was all very chaotic. Why were you doing a bridge, anyway?

**HY:** I'm not sure.

**KK:** It was a mystery.

**HY:** Even to the person doing it.

**KK:** Mr. Sōmai told me to do it, so I supported you with all of my strength, but I had no clue what we were going for. If you had asked me what the point of it was, I doubt if I would have been able to give you an answer. Mr. Sōmai was over with the camera a long way away, so we couldn't hear him. The shoot probably only worked out because you took stuff like that on the chin and just got on with the job, Ms. Yakushimaru.

I remember that in breaks between filming, we would look at the rush prints of what we'd just shot. We did that with this scene. We would all watch it together, though I don't think the actors watched it, actually.

**HY:** Right.

**KK:** Everyone, including the producers, watched the dailies, and they all went, "Wow!" I was the same, and I remember this well because the producer, Kei Ijichi, was by my side once as we watched a rush print. After it finished, he looked at me and said, "Amazing, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," was my response. That was sort of what kept us going through the shoot. We could tell that we were making something great, so we were happy to oblige any absurd demands. Knowing that we were a part of a movie that was unlike anything



we'd ever seen before motivated us to keep pushing on. If what we saw on the rush print had been a load of garbage, I don't think anyone would have stuck around. He anticipated that, and so he knew that was how he could get us to accept these crazy things. That's Sōmai magic for you.

**HY:** For sure.

**KK:** But you had already worked with Mr. Sōmai on *Tonda Couple*, Ms. Yakushimaru, so I think you were somewhat mentally prepared for his method of doing endless test shots without actually rolling, or how he would ask you to do strange movements that you'd never expect based on what was in the script. You were kind of used to that.

**HY:** I was. Though whereas on *Tonda Couple* there were a few other kids, meaning his attention was spread between us, I was the sole focus with *Sailor Suit*. I guess that was 40 years ago now.

**KK:** Yes.

**HY:** I would wonder what on earth it was exactly that Mr. Sōmai wanted from me, but what I did know was that the experienced actors, who I really looked up to, would stay with me right to the end.

**KK:** Yes, yes.

**HY:** There was no way I was going to whine in front of them, so the only thought in my head was that they were here for me, so I need to do this, regardless of whether or not I actually can. But, 40 years later, I wonder if maybe we could have done it differently! (laughs)

**KK:** Right.

**HY:** I was about three years into my movie career.

**KK:** Well, I don't really know why Mr. Sōmai did the things he did, but I have a suspicion. I pleaded to be an assistant director on *Tonda Couple*, but I was off working for another director, Kazuhiko Hasegawa, at the time. I was told I couldn't be on that shoot, but I watched the dailies from *Tonda Couple*. They were incredibly long—we're talking three or four hours.

So as I watched this, I thought, wow, he's demanding some outrageous things out of Ms. Yakushimaru. I wasn't sure how Mr. Sōmai had ended up taking this approach to filmmaking, but after seeing this, I was convinced that through doing this on *Tonda Couple*, he realized it meant he could get great results and draw spectacular performances out of his actors. He then took that conviction with him into his subsequent projects, I think.

**HY:** On Sōmai shoots, you were never complimented for your performance or told "Well done," were you?

**KK:** No.

**HY:** But I wondered how I could get the director to compliment me and give the okay to start rolling. So when we did the scene where I'm cycling down the hill and my brakes don't work, I crashed into the wall over and over again.

**KK:** Yes, where you crash. That was astonishing.

**HY:** He told me that I was naturally athletic, and because I'd finally managed to get a compliment out of him, I was willing to crash as many times as he wanted me to. It was like that whatever-it's-called syndrome. It was a dangerous dynamic.

**KK:** Right. He had a kind of charisma about him that could persuade you to do these things. A natural virtue.

**HY:** A virtue?



**KK:** That was something mysterious about him. Everyone would complain about what we were doing, but for whatever reason you wanted to do it to please him. I think maybe it's got something to do with him being the youngest child. He had lots of older brothers and sisters.

**HY:** Right.

**KK:** Which meant he was really good at fawning on people and getting his way. Moreover, as you know, he had this very macho appearance, which belied this nature of his. I don't know to what extent Mr. Sōmai was aware of how he had a way of charming people into doing things, but it was certainly one of his weapons as a director, and he used it well.

I experienced this on *Sailor Suit*. Well, it probably happened a few times, but this is just one example. It was the scene in which Ms. Yakushimaru's character gets back to her apartment, and as she goes inside, Ms. Kazamatsuri is there. There really wasn't much to it—we were shooting on a film set, but we must have gone through that scene 100 times. After around the 20th or 30th time, Mr. Sōmai went off somewhere. "Do it another 50 times," he said.

"Okay, boss." What else could I do as an AD? So I just kept telling them to do it over every time, while Mr. Sōmai is nowhere to be seen. But both Ms. Yakushimaru and Ms. Kazamatsuri diligently stuck with it.

**HY:** I suppose doing it over and over again so many times it kind of gave birth to something... I wonder what that was. I guess we kept going because it hadn't arrived yet.

**KK:** I was in no position to give a cool analysis of your performance, Ms. Yakushimaru, but it didn't change that much. I thought that was amazing, given how many times you did it. Thinking back now, you kept a solid performance all the way through from

the first one right up to the 100th one. Someone who really stuck with me though was Mr. Sakai, Toshiya Sakai [who plays Izumi's friend Akira].

**HY:** Yes.

**KK:** He changed the deeper into it he got. His performance started out pretty natural, but after doing the same thing 10 or so times, he'd lose track of what he was even doing and it started getting shaky. After 20 or 30 times, he'd completely forget his lines and he'd stiffen up. This continued until around the 100th time, at which point he'd overcome some mental block and his acting became very lifelike, totally different from before. This was what Mr. Sōmai was waiting for. The scene they did this for was the one when Mr. Sakai's character has been hurt and, as Ms. Yakushimaru's character is treating him, they end up embracing. I was impressed by how Ms. Yakushimaru endured all of those rehearsals for the sake of Mr. Sakai's performance.

And ultimately, it was definitely good. You could tell it was great, and so naturally that's the point that we started shooting the scene. But, you know, he was pretty good at the start, too. The first two or three rehearsals he did were nice and fresh, not bad at all. We could have used them. However, we would never start rolling at that point. Film would not be used. I saw that on Mr. Sōmai's shoots, you rehearse 100 times, and then film once the actors have got this terrific thing worked out. But 20 or 30 times leads to garbage. Everyone is different, though. I've decided to give my actors the okay within three rehearsals. I don't have the magnetism to get away with making people rehearse a scene 100 times.

**HY:** That sounds about right.

**KK:** I stick to three. If you go over 10 rehearsals, it all starts falling apart. And then you won't have anything useable until the 100th time. That's what I learned making this movie.



**HY:** Speaking of going over things countless times, I happened to hear a story about the scene where I'm being made to stand on a landmine.

**KK:** Yes, I remember that.

**HY:** As I recall, we rehearsed from nine in the morning right through to 12 at night. So we only started rolling at midnight, I think. We then shot dozens of takes through the small hours, but I later heard a plausible rumor that they actually ended up using the first take, anyway. Could that be true?

**KK:** Oh, that kind of thing happens all the time. It's not just a Mr. Sōmai thing. If the first take is clearly really good, the director has to make the decision to stop there. But when it seems great but you can't quite be sure, you do another, and it's not quite as good. Then, just to make sure that your first try really was so great, you keep filming a few more takes which turn out to be inferior. You're now certain that you really aren't going to beat the first one.

I don't do dozens of takes—generally only two or three, and very occasionally five, six, maybe seven times. If I get to take number eight or something, I have to go, "Okay, good job, that was a great one." Meanwhile, all the actors and crew can probably tell that I'm secretly planning on using the first one. That's a somewhat frequent occurrence.

**HY:** But everyone who's worked with you always says how wonderful your shoots are. They say of all the people who've directed them, it was so easy to understand what you wanted to achieve, and that your passion shines through.

**KK:** People say that about me?

**HY:** They do.

**KK:** That's lovely. Thank you.

**HY:** Colleagues of mine who I greatly admire talk about how much they enjoy being part of your productions.

**KK:** You're too kind. Thank you, really. I'm not just being humble; it's not that I have some kind of special ability. I just try very hard to get the best out of the actors and crew so that everyone's happy with what we've done in as short a time as possible. It's a given that I can't do it in the same way as Mr. Sōmai. Doing 100 rehearsals followed by dozens of takes is just not something I could ever do. If I didn't adopt a more compact style, I wouldn't be able to make the most out of everyone's talents. I realized that through being on Mr. Sōmai's set.

**HY:** I suppose it's not very common to spend so much time focusing so intensely on a single actor.

**KK:** No, it's not.

**HY:** Right. From time to time, I find myself on a shoot where they do spend a long time giving guidance to the actors, and everyone pulls together until the director is happy because he's drawn something from us. I find it exciting to witness that.

But sometimes it does change after the 10th time, and sometimes it doesn't. It's like you said earlier, Mr. Kurosawa, if you go past a certain number, it can all fall apart. Then it can leave a bad taste in the mouth if it ends there.

**KK:** That's true. However, and I don't know to what extent this was a conscious decision on Mr. Sōmai's part, but I think because you were still so young and new to acting, he wanted to train you up and give you experience, maybe. This is only speculation on my part, but it wouldn't surprise me, what with Mr. Sōmai coming up through Nikkatsu's studios.

**HY:** Yes.



**KK:** That's the way they did things back in the studio days, it seems. They looked after their veteran actors very well, whereas they wanted to toughen up the young kids so they became accustomed to how trying shoots can be. It wasn't hazing or anything, they just wanted them to know that it's not so easy to get the okay from the director. There was a tradition of instilling all of these kinds of things in new performers, which perhaps had stuck with Mr. Sōmai. I know you weren't a total newcomer, Ms. Yakushimaru, but *Tonda Couple* was your first starring role, right?

**HY:** That's right.

**KK:** I thought so.

**HY:** Yes.

**KK:** So you were more or less new to being the lead actress.

**HY:** I think you could say I was as green as grass.

**KK:** You were terrifically young, and maybe it started with him feeling a sense of duty of sorts to treat the shoot as if it were his own studio. So he got the new actors to do things over and over, to break them in, perhaps. But then, as he was doing this, he saw that it was making for brilliant performances. I doubt that he was expecting you to change so noticeably over this process or that it would lead to him getting such great stuff on film, so I imagine he was thrilled with the results.

So after that, he really focused on young actors, and mostly women, in his future work. Though the actors weren't all so young in his later movies. This way in which he would fixate on a teenage actor and get them to do all these weird things as if training them up would go on to establish itself as the Sōmai style, I think. I mean, in the few *Sailor Suit* scenes in which you don't appear, Ms. Yakushimaru, such as ones with Mr. Watase or Mr. Mikuni, he'd give the go-ahead so readily. I would think,

"Is that it?" This method of his applied almost exclusively to rookies like you, Toshiya Sakai, or Yuki Kazamatsuri.

**HY:** That's true.

**KK:** So the disparity was clear to see.

**HY:** You could do a scene hundreds of times, and be lucky to get a thumbs-in-the-middle for it. It was mostly thumbs down. It's as you said, he had the charm to make you keep going. It went too far, though, almost. He put immense pressure and responsibility on the shoulders of the whole crew.

**KK:** He did.

**HY:** Like with that scene in Shinjuku where the two of us are riding on the motorbike.

**KK:** That was a tough one.

**HY:** The crew had to form a kind of human wave to stop the traffic.

**KK:** I was one of the people in charge of stopping traffic. I had no idea when the bikes were coming. I couldn't see where you were shooting the start of the scene before you get on the motorbike. I just had to wait for the signal on the walkie-talkie to stop the traffic, whether the lights were green or red. This was before we had cell phones. So I was standing by, ready to stop all the cars at any moment for hours on end. I kept asking if they would arrive soon, then would be told that they weren't there yet. We started after the sun had set, and I think we finished before sunrise. I remember being told that they had finally started filming, then hearing the roar of the bikes in the distance. I frantically went to halt the cars in the road, and I was still utterly clueless as to what the scene was like. I was surprised when I watched the rush prints later and saw what it was all for.



**HY:** If any of the drivers had just ignored you and not stopped, there could have been a big accident.

**KK:** Yes, exactly.

**HY:** And that must have meant extra pressure, on top of making sure the shoot went smoothly.

**KK:** It did. I was young too, so I kind of just thought, this is how it is. But like how you mentioned how you had to crash your bicycle in *Tonda Couple*, Ms. Yakushimaru, it was quite a dangerous situation.

**HY:** Absolutely. So it wasn't just me; the crew members got caught up in it all as well. They also dangled one of them from the crane and dropped them in the cement.

**KK:** You mean that scene with the long shot of you being dunked in the cement?

**HY:** That's the one.

**KK:** They did that to me beforehand.

**HY:** They dunked you in it?

**KK:** They dunked me.

**HY:** And the concrete was still thick then, too. Like it could make your whole body stiffen up.

**KK:** It's true. We were worried if it was really safe to do, so I tested it out.

**HY:** It's horrible, isn't it? It gets in your ears, your eyes, everywhere.

**KK:** Yeah. Afterwards, I went to shower and get as much of it off as I could. Then they asked me if it was okay, and I was compelled to say, "Huh? Oh, yeah, it's fine."

And those words condemned you to that dreadful ordeal.

**HY:** Oh, mine wasn't that bad. It had been diluted a bit by then. If anything, it was too watery.

**KK:** You might be right.

**HY:** I think it was less thick, anyway. But anyway, when I'm doing rehearsal after rehearsal, I feel like I have to break through some kind of wall so that we're ready to roll. So I always try to do things a little differently each time. Like I'm trying to work out what it will take for us to get the green light.

It's nothing more than just trying to react to the other actors' lines and emotions in new, fresh ways, though. Only recently, a director said to me, "Can I ask you one thing? Why do you never do a scene the same way twice?"

**KK:** I see.

**HY:** "It's probably an old habit I have from when I worked with Mr. Sōmai," I responded. "We would do hundreds of rehearsals without getting the go-ahead, so I got it into my head that I had to change things up."

"Okay, I understand," said the director. He probably liked what I did the last time and wanted me to do the same again, so he wondered why I kept changing it.

**KK:** Interesting. I see. So you're the kind of actor who never does the same thing twice.

**HY:** I am.

**KK:** That sounds like hard work.

**HY:** Sometimes there'll be a shoot where they have no problem at all with it, but other times they go, "No, no! That wasn't like the last one!" and I get all flustered. (laughs)

**KK:** I suppose that in Mr. Sōmai's case, he liked scenes that were all done in one shot, so it didn't really matter all that much if it was different every time. But normally they like to be able to stitch together parts from different takes, and they can't do that if you're in a different place each time. It creates problems with continuity.

**HY:** That's true.

**KK:** I'm told that when you're starting out as an assistant director, you learn a great deal each time the clapperboard claps for each take. You see how the crew change the camera set-up between each take and how they work out how to put the different shots together. But I didn't get that, because most scenes were one shot.

**HY:** Just one shot...

**KK:** Nothing was edited together. It wasn't just a little different every time, it was completely different, because there was no second shot. So I didn't learn anything from that. That's the kind of shoot it was.

Well, as we've discussed, this was proper action performing. The stars in the film were required to do action-movie stuff in most scenes in these films, such as crashing the bicycle in *Tonda Couple* or doing the bridge pose in the crematorium in *Sailor Suit*. There are no subtle facial expressions to convey states of mind, or little nuances in the characters' tones of voice in Sōmai movies. So, while I think that they're worlds apart from Hollywood action movies, I felt that Mr. Sōmai's work starts as 100% action, which then leads to something else emerging. He got his actors to do action. They repeated all kinds of actions over and over again as their performance gradually changed, before it eventually settled on something totally unexpected that nobody could have imagined by reading the screenplay. I think

there are hardly any scenes where someone is just sitting and staring at something as they slowly deliver their lines that are supposed to convey a specific emotion.

They had to recite the dialogue that was written on the script, but there was always so much motion as they did it, which must have been very trying for the actors. Whereas normally they could sit still and speak so they could carefully say their dialogue and emphasize what they needed to, here they had do so while doing all these crazy movements. I think the fascination produced by this contrast, and the unreal tension it created, is the greatest characteristic of Sōmai's films. However, it was demanding for the people involved. The actors had to recite long passages from the script that they'd memorized as they performed all of these actions, all while trying to think how to put emotion into it and tie everything together so it made sense. I suspect that was the most difficult thing about them, but it's also the best thing about those movies.

**HY:** You're right. Just like how you were saying the one-shot approach affected you, when I first met Mr. Sōmai, I was still very new to the job, so I sort of assumed that this was how all movies were made.

I got so comfortable with the one-shot style, and it became deeply imbued in me. It was actually much harder getting out of that mindset, but I think Mr. Sōmai's methods really agreed with me and my pace.

**KK:** Since the original novel was a take on yakuza movies, the film definitely has elements from that genre. But while some traditional yakuza movies, of which Toei was the main producer, were still being made in that period of the early 80s, the genre was almost dead, I think.

So, maybe you have to call it a parody, with the only actor who's really convincing as someone you'd see in a yakuza movie being Tsunehiko Watase. I'm not exactly sure of the reasoning behind the choice to cast him, but Mr. Watase was one of Toei's yakuza stars, a household name who had been in *Battles Without Honor and Humanity* [*Jingi naki tatakai*, 1973], *Bullet Aesthetics* [*Teppōdama no bigaku*, 1973], and more. So, by the time *Sailor Suit* came out, he had already appeared in so much, and like it or not, his presence on screen lends the movie a certain amount of the old Toei yakuza atmosphere. But other than Mr. Watase, nobody came from that kind of background, meaning they mostly don't come across like gangsters.

The same applies to the members of the Medaka Family and their costumes. Then there's Mr. Mikuni's character, Fatso, who's the boss of another yakuza gang. They're just not the kinds of people you'd see in the old yakuza movies. Kazuo Kitamura, Minoru Terada, and Makoto Satō, none of them have a whiff of the yakuza about them. Mr. Emoto played a detective, I think, though. At that time, all the old Toei yakuza actors were still around, I believe, but they weren't cast. So maybe they were going for a parody of those films, or maybe something totally different, like a gangster comedy. But I think this wasn't so much Mr. Sōmai's intention as it was the aim of the costume department and the art department. They were working on the premise that this was an idol movie, so maybe they wanted to lose the whole feel of yakuza movies, a genre that had all but vanished at the time. This was undoubtedly the strategy of the producers. Mr. Watase was the only person giving a serious portrayal of the traditional kind of yakuza, and I think he may even have had tattoos. In that sense, he was there to express both the tragedy of the Medaka Family, and represent the old gangsters who were facing extinction. That probably contributes to the strange sense of sorrow that permeates the whole film.

As such, it has nothing to do with yakuza movies other than Mr. Watase. The film is a fantasy of sorts; it's like a comic-book world come to life. In that sense, it was something really novel. I don't think this was what Mr. Sōmai was going for, but it ended up not being a yakuza movie at all. Rather, it's a teen idol movie based on a book that was produced by Kadokawa, a leading figure in that genre. There was an explosion of those movies in the 80s, and this was the epitome of that, right there at the start.

**HY:** I'm learning so much.

**KK:** You're too kind.

**HY:** I've never really thought of it as a yakuza movie or an idol movie. What even is an idol movie?

**KK:** I'm not sure. I've kept using the term, but I don't know myself.

**HY:** I guess it's got a unique protagonist with a strong personality, the kind you don't often see, and audiences enjoyed that. And it was seen by people of all different ages. There are some bold scenes in it, which gave children a glimpse of the adult world. It did well not to get an adults-only rating.

**KK:** Right, right. There's some extreme stuff in it.

**HY:** Indeed.

**KK:** When we were on the shoot, I didn't give it too much thought when we did scenes like that. I just did my job. But there are so many parts of the film that are really out there for an idol movie.

**HY:** It's the kind of movie that must have confused parents when they accompanied their kids to see it. At the end of the movie, my hair is really short. I went to the salon several times, having it cut shorter with every visit, but Mr. Sōmai still wasn't happy, and that was the result.

**KK:** In the very last scene, right?

**HY:** Yes. Where I look like a scrubbing brush.

**KK:** Yeah, I remember that, too. The only place to go after that was a buzz cut. I was concerned.



**HY:** You're right, it was seriously short.

**KK:** Yeah. I'm sure Mr. Sōmai liked that kind of thing, but it's terrible. I wondered, can we really end an idol movie like this?

**HY:** I actually wore a sailor uniform at my real school, but short hair doesn't go well with a sailor suit.

**KK:** True.

**HY:** I was so embarrassed that I wore a hood over my head to school once, but it only made me stand out more. (laughs)

**KK:** That's a terrible situation to be in.

**HY:** I got teased at school.

**KK:** That must have been hard.

**HY:** But I also had great friends and wonderful teachers at school, so I think it provided me with an excellent balance to my work life.

**KK:** Brilliant. That's great.

Mr. Sōmai used a kind of tone. It could be very unpleasant to be on the receiving end of it, and he would lambast you mercilessly, but he did it so much that you grew accustomed to it. You kind of brushed it off. He didn't come across as sadistic, surprisingly, nor did he do it to put people down. He appeared quite indifferent. He was really good at that. He wasn't shy about giving us assistant directors a piece of his mind, but it was nothing, really.

He looked quite frail at a glance. That worked to his advantage. I guess because he appeared quite frail, you'd just let him say what he had to say. Then, as he

was explaining what you'd done wrong, he'd say, "And do this, too." Then before you knew it, he'd tricked you into doing all these other difficult tasks, yet you just thought, so be it. You wouldn't get angry. That was something very clever about him.

**HY:** Right. He used to treat me so harshly as if I didn't deserve to be there, and called me "brat," but after a while I stopped caring and thought of it as a cute nickname he had for me.

**KK:** Ha, ha, ha!

**HY:** I'm afraid this might not be of too much concern to the people watching the movie, but this is the lasting legacy of that months-long shoot in my life.

The way I was worked so hard, and the assistants and technicians were yelled at on the set would be unthinkable these days. But when I come across those people again now, and we call each other by our old nicknames and I see how they didn't quit, but went on to become well respected figures in their field, it fills me with joy and pride.

**KK:** Right. I've just talked about things as I've recalled them—I hope that's okay.

**HY:** Thank you very much.

**KK:** It was my pleasure. It was an honor to talk with you like this, Ms. Yakushimaru.

*Transcript translation by Lewis Williams.*



# SHINJI SŌMAI FILMOGRAPHY

## セーラー服と機関銃

## 13 JANUARY 1948–9 SEPTEMBER 2001

### AS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (SELECTED WORKS)

*Lesbian World 2: Fondling* (dir. Chūsei Sone) • 続・レスビアンの世界　―愛撫― • *Zoku resubian no sekai: Aibu* • Nikkatsu, 4 June 1975

*100 High School Girls: Secret Motel Report* (dir. Chūsei Sone) • 女高生１００人　（秘）モーテル白書 • *Jōkosei 100-nin: Maruhi moteru hakusho* • Nikkatsu, 23 August 1975

*Campus Erotica: Late Bloom* (dir. Kazunari Takeda) • キャンパス・エロチカ　熟れて開く • *Kyanpusu erochika: Urete hiraku* • Nikkatsu, 7 July 1976

*The Grass Labyrinth* (dir. Shūji Terayama) • 草迷宮 • *Kusa meikyū* • Jinryokuhikōki-sha (distr. Toei), produced in 1978, released 12 Nov 1983

*The Man Who Stole the Sun* (dir. Kazuhiko Hasegawa) • 太陽を盗んだ男 • *Taiyō o nusunda otoko* • Kitty Film Corporation (distr. Toho), 6 October 1979

### AS DIRECTOR

*Tonda Couple* • a.k.a. *The Terrible Couple*, *Dreamy Fifteen* • 翔んだカップル • *Tonda kappuru* • Kitty Film Corporation (distr. Toho), 26 July 1980 • Director's cut released on 12 March 1983

*Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* • セーラー服と機関銃 • *Sērā-fuku to kikanjū* • Kitty Film Corporation / Kadokawa Haruki Jimusho (distr. Toei), 19 December 1981 • Alternate "Complete Version" (*kanpeki-ban*) released on 10 July 1982

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*The Catch* • a.k.a. *The Big Catch* • 魚影の群れ
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*Love Hotel* • ラブホテル • *Rabu hoteru*
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*Typhoon Club* • 台風クラブ • *Taifū kurabu*
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*Lost Chapter of Snow: Passion* • a.k.a. *Fragments in the Snow: Passion*
• 雪の断章　情熱 • *Yuki no danshō: Jōnetsu* • Toho, 21 December 1985

*Luminous Woman* • 光る女 • *Hikaru onna*
• Young Cinema 85 Consortium (Yangu shinema 85 kyōdō jigyō-tai) / Daiei /
Directors Company (distr. Toho), 24 October 1987

*Tokyo Heaven* • 東京上空いらっしゃいませ • *Tōkyō jōkūirasshaimase*
• Directors Company / Shochiku, 9 June 1990

*Moving* • お引越し • *Ohikkoshi* • Yomiuri Telecasting Corporation (distr. Herald Ace
/ Argo Project), 20 March 1993

*The Friends* • a.k.a. *The Summer Garden* • 夏の庭 • *Niwa no natsu*
• Yomiuri Telecasting Corporation (distr. Herald Ace), 9 April 1994

*Wait and See* • a.k.a. *Ah, Spring* • あ、春 • *A, haru*
• Eisei Gekijō / Shochiku (distr. Shochiku), 19 December 1998

*Kaza-hana* • a.k.a. *Umbrella Flower* • 風花 • *Kazahana*
• Be WILD Co. / TV Asahi (distr. Cinequanon), 27 January 2001



## ABOUT THE TRANSFERS

Both versions of *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* are presented in the film's original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with original mono audio, plus a remixed 5.1 soundtrack for the Theatrical Version. The High-Definition masters were produced and supplied by Kadokowa, with additional grading and restoration by Arrow Films at R3Store Studios. An instance of optical censorship occurs during the sex scene at the 61-minute mark. This is present in the original materials and is consistent with Japanese censorship practices from the period.

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Jasper Sharp**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**
QC **Aidan Doyle** and **Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**
Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **Fidelity in Motion, David Mackenzie**
Artist **Michael Lomon**
Design **Scott Saslow**

## SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, William Allum, Thomas Beswick, Akira Emoto, Kōji Enokido,
Aaron Gerow, Masaki Karatsu, Tatsuya Kimura, Chika Kinoshita, Kiyoshi Kurosawa,
Chiyo Mori, Kayoko Nakanishi, Haruka Sakumi, Junko Sasaki, Lewis Williams,
Hiroko Yakushimaru, Shoko Yoneda, Alexander Zahlten

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