

Takashi MIIKE

A highly prolific and controversial Japanese filmmaker, Takashi MIIKE was born on August 24, 1960 in Yao, Osaka, Japan. Under the guidance of renowned filmmaker Shohei IMAMURA (a two-time Palme d'Or winner at Cannes), Miike graduated from the Yokohama Vocational School of Broadcast and Film.

Miike's first films were television productions, but he also began directing several high-quality direct-to-video releases. His theatrical debut came in 1995 with Shinjuku Triad Society, and its success gave him the freedom to work on more ambitious projects. One of the most successful Japanese directors currently working, he has also garnered a strong cult following in the West that is growing rapidly as more of his films become available in translated form on DVD.

Some of Miike's most popular films include Audition, the Dead or Alive trilogy, Ichi the Killer, Gozu, Izo, and Big Bang Love, Juvenile A.

Miike has achieved international notoriety for depicting shocking scenes of extreme violence and bizarre sexual perversions. Many of his films contain graphic and lurid bloodshed, often portrayed in an over-the-top, cartoonish manner. Much of his work depicts the activities of criminals, and he is known for his black sense of humor and for pushing the boundaries of censorship as far as they will go.

A talented filmmaker who dabbles in a variety of genres, in 1998, Miike was picked as one of the ten non-English directors most likely to succeed by TIME magazine. He has won almost two dozen awards in his short career, including Best Asian Film at the 2001 Fant-Asia Film Festival for Visitor Q, Best Film at the Sitges Catalan International Film Festival in 2003 for Gozu and 2004 for Izo, the Special Jury Prize at the 2004 Gerardmer Film Festival for The Happiness of the Katakuris, and both the FIPRESCI Prize and KNF Award at the 2000 Rotterdam International Film Festival for Audition. Additionally, he was the only Japanese director selected to participate in Showtime's "Masters of Horror" series, although his film, Imprint, could not be shown because the content was too extreme for even cable television's relaxed standards.

At the time of writing, Big Bang Love, Juvenile A had been chosen as an official selection at the following film festivals: the Berlin Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival, the New York Asian Film Festival, the Fantasia Film Festival, Dead Channels: The San Francisco Festival of Fantastic Film, Outfest: Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, and the Atlantic Film Festival.

Masa NAKAMURA

Nakamura is a regular contributor to Takashi Miike's scripts. To date, he has written eight scripts for Miike since 1996:

Sukiyaki Western Django (2007)
Big Bang Love, Juvenile A (2006)
Dead or Alive 2: Birds (2000)
Young Thugs: Nostalgia (1998)
Andromedia (1998)
The Bird People in China (1998)
Young Thugs: Innocent Blood (1997)
The Way to Fight (1996)

Ikki KAJIWARA

Kajiwara was born September 4, 1936 and died January 21, 1987. He was a novelist and comic writer with a career spanning back to the late 1960s. His real name was Asaki Takamori, and his pen name was Asao Takamori; he used multiple names in order to write for two magazines at the same time.

His subjects included sports themes, especially the boxing world.

Kajiwara was an executive producer of a documentary on karate in 1976 called Fighting Black Kings.

Hisao MAKI

Maki is a writer and actor who has served both roles in the bulk of his films. Seven of his nine acting credits are films that he has written or co-written. He is Ikki Kajiwara's younger brother and also commonly known under their pseudonym Ato Masaki.

Masahito KANEKO

Big Bang Love, Juvenile A is Masahito Kaneko's debut film as cinematographer, as well as his first work on a feature film. His expert use of over-saturated colors adds a new stylized dimension that has never been seen in a Miike film.

Nao SASAKI

Big Bang Love, Juvenile A's visual style was overseen by first-time art director Nao Sasaki. The theater-like sets utilize rich colors in contrast with the blackness which represents the prison walls. Whether it's a pyramid, the recurring butterfly, or the abstract set itself, the unique style of the film is a tribute to Sasaki and his team.

Sasaki's second film is Takashi Miike's Sukiyaki Western: Django (2007), an update of the 1966 spaghetti western Django.

Ryuhei MATSUDA

Ryuhei Matsuda was born into an acting family on May 9, 1983 in Tokyo, Japan. At age six, Matsuda's father, Yusaku, a popular and well respected Japanese actor best known in the west for his appearance in Ridley Scott's Black Rain, died of cancer soon after that film was released.

Ryuhei's own career began at age fifteen when he was approached by director Nagisa Oshima to take on his father's profession and star in a film. This led to his first role, a samurai in Oshima's 1999 film Gohatto (Taboo). Studying kendo and training for two months in preparation for the role, Matsuda earned Best New Actor awards from five different organizations.

Matsuda continued to gain critical acclaim for his roles in Blue Spring, (2001) 9 Souls (2003) and Cutie Honey (2004). He first worked with Miike on Izo (2004).

His mother, Miyuki Matsuda, has also worked with Miike on one of his most notorious films, Audition (1999).

Masanobu ANDO

Masanobu Ando was born May 19, 1975 in Kanagawa, Japan. He got his first acting job at the age of 18 in Rex: kyoryu monogatari (Rex: A Dinosaur's Story).

In just his second film, Kizzu ritan (Kids Return), Ando received several Best New Actor awards from various festivals, including "Newcomer of the Year" from the Japanese Academy, the national film awards of Japan.

Perhaps his best-known role was in 2000's Battle Royale as the psychotic Kazuo Kiriya, the only participant in the battle royale who actually wanted to be there.

Ando and Big Bang Love costar Ryuhei Matsuda first worked together in 2003's Showa kayo daizenshu. Since that time, they have co-starred in 2005's Gimi heben (Gimme Heaven) and 2006's Akumu Tantei (Nightmare Detective).

He teams up with Miike for a second time in 2007's Spaghetti western influenced Sukiyaki Western Django.

Renji ISHIBASHI

Ishibashi was born August 9, 1941 in Tokyo, Japan. His prolific acting career began with a bit part in Kinji Fukasaku's 1964 gangster film, *War, Pigs and People*. Since that time he has appeared in over 150 films, including 16 directed by Takashi Miike.

Ishibashi has won numerous awards for his acting, the most notable of which is the 1990 Japanese Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for the film *Ronin-gai*.

Kenichi ENDO

Endo was born in Tokyo, Japan on June 28, 1961. Since 2000, he has appeared in 19 of Miike's films, including 2008's *God's Puzzle*.

Endo is perhaps best known for his distinctive voice. He narrates commercials, previews and several Japanese movie trailers a year, including international releases such as *The Matrix*.

Ryo ISHIBASHI

Ishibashi was born July 20, 1953 in Fukuoka, Japan. He is an international celebrity, best known around the world for his roles in the classic Japanese Horror films *Suicide Club* (2002) and *Audition* (1999). He is also recognized in America for his role as Nakagawa in the American remake of *The Grudge* (2004) and *The Grudge 2* (2006).

Before becoming an actor, Ishibashi formed the band ARB (Alexander Ragtime Band). Making their debut in 1978, ARB recorded over a dozen albums until they broke up in 1990. Recently, Ishibashi has resumed his musical activity and re-formed ARB with an album, "Real Life" in 1998.

He is married and has three children with Mieko Harada (who played Lady Kaede in Akira Kurasawa's 1985 film *Ran*, in which the quiet swish of her kimono across the floor is as ominous as Darth Vader's breathing -- whenever you hear it, very bad things are about to happen). Since Ishibashi began acting in 1986, he has been honored with three Best Actor awards, two Best Supporting Actor awards, and a Best New Actor award from various institutions in Japan.

Kiyohiko SHIBUKAWA

Kiyohiko was born on July 2, 1974 in Gunma Prefecture, Japan. After a successful modeling career, he began acting in the popular television drama *Keizoku* and shortly followed that with the acclaimed 1998 film "Porno Star". He previously worked with Miike on *Ichi the Killer* (2001).

Kubozuka SHUNSUKE

Born on November 6, 1981, Shunsuke trained at the prestigious Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in Los Angeles. His breakthrough role came in the 2004 television drama *Be-bop High School*, in which he played the lead. *Big Bang Love* marks his first Miike film.

Big Bang Love, the film:

Big Bang Love premiered in the US at the New York Asian Film Festival on June 28, 2007. Its literal translation is 4.6 Billion Years of Love. The official English title is *Big Bang Love, Juvenile A*.

Big Bang Love, the screenplay:

Big Bang Love was adapted by Masa Nakamura from the manga “Shonen A ereji” by Ikki Kajiwara and Hisao Maki under the common pseudonym Ato Masaki. The manga’s title translates to “Elegy for Boy A.”

“Big Bang”

“4.6 Billion Years” is roughly the age of the Earth according to most geologists. This age is based on geological analysis of ancient minerals, and astronomers’ and planetologists’ estimates of the age of the solar system.

“The Big Bang” refers to the “birth” of the universe, and the “Big Bang Theory” holds that the universe came into existence in a huge explosion.

“Juvenile A”

The term “Boy A” (or, in this case, “Juvenile A”) is derived from the practice of court systems not revealing the identity of child defendants, instead referring to them as “Boy A,” or “Girl B.”

Pop Culture

There are other instances of “Boy A” appearing in media. Boy A is the title of a novel written by Jonathan Trigell in 2004, which was adapted into a feature film in 2007.

The book is about a child criminal released into society as an adult. It parallels many famous cases, most notably the Sakakibara case in Japan.

Seito Sakakibara was the false name of a 14-year-old boy who murdered an 11-year-old boy and a 10-year-old girl. Because of legal procedures, he is officially known as “Boy A.”

The Title's Significance

The literal translation, and the English translation both suggest Miike wanted to explore the themes of fate and circumstance in his characters. This, along with the “butterfly effect,” puts Miike’s principal characters in a situation they have no control over. The coincidence of their being in the same prison at the same time for the same charges furthers the notion that these two souls were destined to be here together since the beginning of time. The literal translation “4.6 Billion Years of Love” suggests that though it’s taken such a long time, the love has always been there, and now these two have crossed paths as intended long ago. The English translation coincides with the “butterfly effect” motif as in a chain reaction, cause-effect relationship. The “Big Bang” that created our universe set about the events that will lead to these characters’ meeting, and small events throughout time have influenced and led to this moment.

The Butterfly Effect

The film contains numerous butterfly motifs. This may be a reference to the “butterfly effect,” the more common term given to the concept of “sensitive dependence on initial conditions” within Chaos Theory. The concept holds that in complex dynamic systems (such as the weather, or the orbit of planets), even a tiny change in the initial conditions, such as tiny atmospheric perturbation caused by the flap of a butterfly’s wings, can cause a great change in the final outcome. So lack of precise knowledge of the initial conditions of the system (which butterflies were flapping their wings) is what makes long-term weather prediction so difficult. The notion first appeared in Ray Bradbury’s 1952 time-travel short story “A Sound of Thunder,” but the use of the term “butterfly effect” is credited to mathematician/meteorologist Edward Lorenz. Lorenz originally used a seagull to describe the flapping of wings that could alter weather, but later changed it to a butterfly.

Light Year

A light-year is one of the longest measures of distance used today. By definition it is the distance light travels in a vacuum in one year. The exact measurement of a light-year depends on which year one uses to calculate.

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) recommends using the Julian year. A Julian year consists of exactly 365.25 days. This differs with the Gregorian year which is most widely used today. A Gregorian year's duration is 365.2425 days, or 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes and 12 seconds.

Using the recommended Julian year in the calculation, a light-year is equal to 5,878,625,373,183.61 miles.

The light-year is often used to measure the distance to stars. The preferred unit of measurement of such distance is the parsec. A parsec is approximately equal to 3.262 light-years, and is defined as the distance from the Earth to a star which has a parallax angle of one arc-second; if you measure the position of the star six months apart, with the earth on opposite sides of its orbit, you can construct a very, very, very skinny triangle, with the base being the diameter of the earth's orbit. If the small tip of the triangle has an angle of 1 arc-second (1/3600 of a degree), then the star is 1 parsec away.

The Japanese Ghost

Along with a myriad of notable images that populate the world of Big Bang Love, a female ghost (the warden's dead wife) also haunts the juvenile center. She has the typical appearance of most ghosts in Japanese films, notably the antagonists in Japanese horror movies currently influencing American horror today. The broad term for these ghosts are yurei. The types of ghosts that inhabit the Japanese horror films are known as onryo.

Yurei

Yurei are Japanese ghosts. The name combines yuu which means faint or dim, and rei which means soul or spirit. As in the Western world, they are thought to be spirits unable to attain a peaceful afterlife. According to the traditional Japanese belief system, all humans have a spirit/soul known as a reikon. When a person dies, the reikon leaves the body and enters a form of purgatory, where it remains until proper funeral and post funeral rites have been carried out. If all is done properly, the reikon can join its ancestors, becoming a protector of the living family. But if a person dies in a sudden or shocking manner such as murder or suicide, or if the proper rites are not performed, the reikon may transform into a yurei. A yurei can continue to exist on Earth until the rites are carried out, or until the emotional pain that ties it to the physical world has been resolved.

The physical appearance of yurei originally was described as indistinguishable from their living human form. As time passed and Japanese artistic culture became more complex, particularly in the world of Kabuki (a form of Japanese theatre known for its exaggerated drama and elaborate make-up), yurei needed a signature look to automatically announce their presence on stage.

Thus, Yurei now have the following signature elements:

- * White burial kimono
- * Long, black, disheveled hair. In kabuki theater, wigs were used for actors to portray the long hair, which was believed to continue growing after death. This kabuki trait has been passed on to modern yurei.
- * Dangling, lifeless arms and hands hanging down by its sides. Yurei typically lacked legs and feet, which was a trait from Edo Period (1603-1868) ukiyo-e prints, which is the main genre of Japanese wood-block painting. This carried over to kabuki and was portrayed through a long kimono, or hoisting the actor in the air.
- * Yurei are frequently accompanied by a pair of floating flames or will o' the wisps (known as hitodama in Japan), which are ghostly floating lights that hover over damp ground.

Onryo

The ghost in Big Bang Love is the most common and popular version seen today. Known as onryo, these yurei are able to return to the physical world in order to seek vengeance against those who wronged them. While there are male onryo, (mostly in kabuki) the majority are female. The classic explanation is that the women

were powerless and mistreated in life, mostly by their male lovers, but gain power in death and are able to return.

Because of the nature of their existence, which is solely for revenge, they are most prominent in horror films. An onryo's vengeance is rarely carried out against those who initially harmed them, but rather on unfortunates who happen to be involved with the guilty parties. Famous tales of onryo have the male perpetrator escaping any vengeance at all, while others are punished by the onryo. This may explain their frequent appearances in popular horror, as a force that attacks at random and cannot be stopped is a truly powerful threat.

The most recognizable yurei, the onryo appear in basically the same form as yurei, but a few details have been altered over time, such as the floating and the flames. The most distinguishable forms of onryo have the white kimono, the long black hair, and white face.

The most famous onryo in the western world would arguably be Sadako from Ringu (1998). She was repackaged as Samara in The Ring (2002), and brought onryo to the public eye all over the world.

Along with these two, other notable films with an onryo include:

Kwaiden (1964)
Rasen (1998)
Shikoku (1999)
Ju-on (2000)
Honogurai mizu no soko kara (2002)
One Missed Call (2003) (directed by Takashi Miike)
The Grudge (2004)
Dark Water (2005)

In the making of documentary, there are additional scrolling Japanese subtitles that we decided not to subtitle on the film because they would have caused information overload, so we are presenting them here. Also included are some notes about films mentioned by the cast in the documentary.

Witness: Matsuda Ryuhei (as Ariyoshi)

Matsuda Ryuhei: made his debut in Gohatto ('99, directed by Oshima Nagisa), for which he won several newcomer awards. Subsequently he had a series of starring roles: Aoi haru ('02, directed by Toyoda Toshiaki), Ren-ai shashin Collage of Our Life ('03 directed by Tsutsumi Yukihiko), Koi no mon ('04 directed by Matsuo Suzuki). Also in other Miike works: IZO, and Yasha ga i-ke, a stage production ('04).

Witness: Ando Masanobu (as Kazuki)

Ando Masanobu: had a smash debut in Kids Return ('96 directed by Kitano Takeshi); he too won many newcomer awards. Subsequently, his roles in Sato; ra-re: Tribute to a Sad Genius ('01 directed by Motohiro Katsuyuki), Red Shadow ('01 directed by Nakano Hiroyuki), and 69 Sixty Nine ('04 directed by Sang-il Lee) have been brilliant.

Witness Shibukawa Kiyohiko (as Tsuchiya)

Shibukawa Kiyohito: after a modeling career, he attracted attention as Kee in the '98 TV drama Keizoku. He also starred in Porno Star ('98 directed by Toyoda Toshiaki), Wasabi ('02 directed by G. Krawczyk), Sekai no owari ('05 directed by Kazama Shiori), and with Miike, Koroshiya 1 ('01).

Witness: Kubozuka Shunsuke (as Yukimura)

Kubozuka Shunsuke: while in college he transferred to the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in L.A., where he studied acting. His debut was a starring role in the '04 TV drama Be-bop High School, and he also

starred in the film *Hibi* (directed by Takahashi Banmei). His newest work is *Saishu-heiki kanojo* ('06 directed by Suga Daikan).

Witness: Endo Ken-ichi (as the assistant inspector)

Endo Ken-ichi: has starred in a wide variety of roles, from straight-laced to perverse. Every role he played impressed upon us the power of his presence. His representative works are: *Kin-yu fushoku retto (jubaku)* ('99 directed by Harada Masato), *Azumi* ('03 directed by Kitamura Ryuhei); works by Miike are: *Visitor Q* ('00), *Yokai dai-senso* ('05). He has also narrated movie previews for such films as for *The Matrix*. Not a day goes by without all of Japan hearing his voice in a commercial.

Witness: Ishibashi Ryo (as the prison warden)

Ishibashi Ryo: was the lead vocalist of the legendary rock band A.R.B. Riding the coattails of his encounter with Matsuda in *A Romance* ('86 directed by Matsuda Yusaku), he turned his attention to acting. Subsequently, starting with the Miike work *Audition* ('00) and *Kids Return* ('96 directed by Kitano Takeshi), as well as roles in Hollywood films, he became known world-wide.

Witness: Ishibashi Renji (as the inspector)

Ishibashi Renji: is one of the exemplary, protean actors of Japan. His starring roles have been countless, but his performance in *Ronin gai* ('90 directed by Kuroki Kazuo) showed his true colors. With Miike he worked in *Chugoku no tojin* ('98), *Araburu tamashii tachi* ('02), etc. He has recently embarked on a quest to hone his comic skills, broadening his horizons. His close relationship with Matsuda Yusaku is well known.

Script by NAKAmasarumURA (Nakamura Masaru)

NAKAmasarumURA: first worked with Miike Takashi in *Osaka saikyo densetsu: kenka no hanamichi* ('96), and subsequently, they have released several tag-team efforts such as: *Chugoku no tojin* ('98), *Andromedia* ('98). His scripts, written from the unique 'God's point of view,' are always a challenge to actors. Another of his representative works is *Dragon Head* ('03 directed by Iida Joji).

Witness: Maki Hisao (co-author of the book)

Maki Hisao: is a playwright and karate master of the Maki Dojo. He shares the collaborative penname Masaki Ato with his elder brother Kajiwara Ikki, under which they have published many original dramas. Foremost among his originals are: *Waru*, *Seikimatsu no mesu Silver*, *Kemono michi*, etc.

Before this, I worked with Mr. Miike... in a play called "Yasha ga i-ke." At that time Mr. Miike said that he was...

Yasha ga i-ke: '04, directed by Miike Takashi, original work by Izumi Kyoka, adaptation by Nagatsuka Keishi, art director Aida Makoto. Starring: Takeda Shinji, Tabata Tomoko, Matsuda Ryuhei, Matsuyuki Yasuko, Endo Kenichi, Hagiwara Masato, Tanba Tetsuro, et al.

"IZO was like that."

IZO: '04 script by Takechi Shigenori. Cast: Nakayama Kazuya, Beat Takeshi, Matsuda Ryuhei, Momoi Kaori, Ogata Ken, Miki Ryosuke, Ishibashi Renji, Endo Ken-ichi, et al.

"...like Agitator, or Graveyard of Honor, you see that they're really stoic."

Araburu tamashii tachi: '02, original work and screenplay by Takechi Shigenori. Cast: Kato Masaya, Takenaka Naoto, Matsukata Hiroki, Ibu Masato, Miki Ryosuke, Ishibashi Renji, et al. *Shin jingi no hakaba*: '02, original

work by Fujita Goro, screenplay by Takechi Shigenori. Cast: Kishitani Goro, Miki Ryosuke, Arimori Narimi, Osawa Mikio, Yamashiro Shingo, Tanba Tetsuro, et al.

“I just did a film called Ichi the Killer with Mr. Miike.”

Koroshiya 1: '01 original work by Yamamoto Hideo, screenplay by Sato Sakichi. Cast: Asano Tadanobu, Omori Nao, Tsukamoto Shin-ya, SABU, ALIEN SUN, et al.

I worked with Ando in Director Kitano's “Kids Return.”

Kids Return: '96 director, screenplay, editor: Kitano Takeshi. Cast: Ando Masanobu, Kaneko Ken, Morimoto Leo, Oka Mitsuko, Ishibashi Ryo, Osugi Ren, et al.