

MAY 2026

# CANNES MARKET NEWS

JAPAN SPECIAL



MARCHÉ DU FILM  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



# JAPAN

COUNTRY OF HONOUR

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
FOR JAPAN,  
COUNTRY OF HONOUR 2026



METI

JETRO

# WELCOME TO JAPAN, COUNTRY OF HONOUR AT THE MARCHÉ DU FILM

## MAY 13

**11:30 - 12:30**

Cannes Next | AI & Advanced Science  
Transforming Cinema: Japanese Showcase  
of Innovation | Presented by Evison  
— Palais Stage (Palais -1) & Online

**20:30**

Marché du Film Opening Night  
— Plage des Palmes / Invitation Only

## MAY 14

**10:30–11:30**

The Future of Japanese IP in Global  
Adaptations | Presented by Executive  
Committee for Japan, Country of Honour  
2026, Ministry of Economy, Trade and  
Industry (METI) and the Japan External Trade  
Organization (JETRO)  
— Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

**12:00–13:00**

The Global Impact of Japanese Intellectual  
Property | Presented by Executive Committee  
for Japan, Country of Honour 2026, Ministry  
of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and  
the Japan External Trade Organization  
(JETRO)  
— Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

**14:30–17:30**

Co-Production Days | France-Japan  
Co-Production Meetings  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Pre-booking required

**18:00–19:30**

Spotlight Asia | Case Study: *ALL OF A SUDDEN*  
by Ryusuke Hamaguchi  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Producers Network badge holders or by invitation

**19:00–21:00**

Japan Film Night | Hosted by Tokyo  
International Film Festival and TIFFCOM  
— Invitation Only

## MAY 15

**10:00–11:00**

The Incentives and Production Services for  
Filming in Japan | Presented by Executive  
Committee for Japan, Country of Honour  
2026, Ministry of Economy, Trade and  
Industry (METI) and the Japan External Trade  
Organization (JETRO)  
— Palais Stage (Palais -1) & Online

**11:00–11:45**

Japan IP Market | Manga & Anime:  
Publishers and Broadcasters Driving Success  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Pre-registration required

**11:30 - 12:30**

The New Era of Japanese LBE:  
Redefining Cultural Heritage and  
Global IP Through XR Introduction |  
Presented by CinemaLeap  
— Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

**12:00–13:50**

Goes to Cannes | Tokyo International Film  
Festival  
— Palais K Screening Room

**15:00-17:00**

Japan IP Market | 1 to 1 meeting IP holders  
& XR producers  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Pre-registration required & Invitation only

**17:30-19:00**

Japan IP Market | Japan IP market Opening  
Cocktail  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Invitation only

## MAY 16

**9:30-11:50**

Japan Special Screening Day |  
*BLACK RAIN*  
— Lerins 3

**10:00–11:00**

Japan IP Market | Opening Keynote  
by Tetsu Fujimura (Filosophia)  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Pre-registration required

**11:00–12:00**

Japan IP Market | Pitches  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Pre-registration required

**12:00-13:50**

Japan Special Screening Day |  
*HER BROTHER*  
— Lerins 3

**13:00-14:30**

Japan IP Market | Networking Lunch  
for IP Holders & Guests  
— Plage des Palmes / Invitation Only

**13:00–15:30**

JAPANESE PRODUCERS UNDER  
THE SPOTLIGHT  
- Presentation and Networking  
— Japan Pavilion / Pre-registration required

**14:00-16:20**

Japan Special Screening Day | *THE EEL*  
— Lerins 3

**15:00-17:00**

Japan IP Market | 1 to 1 Meeting  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Pre-registration required

**15:30–16:30**

The Power of Place: Made in Japan |  
Presented by AFCI and JFC  
— Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

**16:30-19:50**

Japan Special Screening Day | *KWAIDAN*  
— Lerins 3

**17:00–18:00**

Film Financing in Japan: Where We Are,  
and What Comes Next | Presented  
by K2 Pictures, in collaboration with  
MUFG Bank and Nishimura & Asahi  
— Palais Stage (Palais -1)

## MAY 17

**09:00–10:30**

Producers Network | Japan, Country  
of Honour  
— Producers Club (Lérins) / Access is reserved for  
Producers Network badge holders only – on a first-  
come, first-served basis (subject to seat availability)

**10:00 - 11:00**

Cannes Animation | Cinema, Storytelling,  
and the Rise of Global Anime | Presented by  
Crunchyroll & Sony Pictures Entertainment  
— Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

**10:00–11:50**

Cannes Animation | Anecy Animation  
Showcase. (By Marché du Film & Anecy  
International Animation Film Festival -  
Two Japanese projects to be presented).  
— Palais K Screening Room

**10:00-18:00**

Japan IP Market | 1 to 1 Meeting  
— Art Explora (Cannes Port, Jetée Albert-Edouard) /  
Pre-registration required

**15:30–16:00**

Cannes Animation | Toei Animation:  
Scaling a Global Animation Strategy  
— Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

**16:00–16:30**

Cannes Animation | The Global Appeal  
of Japanese Anime and the Creative Forces  
Behind It  
— Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

**16:30–17:00**

Cannes Animation | From Japan to the World:  
Expanding the International Distribution  
Potential of Japanese Animation  
— Main Stage (Riviera) & Online



FOR THE LATEST  
SCHEDULE, VISIT  
THE MDF WEBSITE

Open to Marché du Film badge holders unless specified



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### Managing editor

François-Pier Pelinard-Lambert

### Editor in chief

Vincent Le Leurch  
(vincent.leleurch@lefilmfrancais.com)

### Copy Editor

Debbie Lincoln  
(debbie.lincoln@btinternet.com)

### Reporters

Liza Foreman  
(liza.foreman@gmail.com)

Julian Newby  
(Boutique Editions Ltd/  
jnewby@boutiqueeditions.com)

### Advertising Director

Sylvie Marceau

### International Sales / Advertising

Sarah Cagneaux  
(sarah.cagneaux@lefilmfrancais.com)

+33 770 46 54 72

### Artistic Director

Bruno Lesauvage  
(blesauvage@noos.fr)

### Photographer

Éric Bonté/1000images

### Database Manager

Jimmy Jouve

### Marketing Manager

Caroline Paquet

Published by LFF Media.

Editorial, Advertising:  
241 Boulevard Pereire,  
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### Director of Publication

Réginald de Guillebon

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**YODA Tom**  
(Vice Chair of the Executive Committee,  
Executive Director, Foreign Film  
Importer-Distributors Association  
of Japan, Chairman Emeritus of  
the Board, GAGA CORPORATION),  
**SHIINA Yasushi**  
(Vice Chair of the Executive Committee,  
Vice President, Unijapan/CEO, TIFFCOM),  
**ISHIGURO Norihiko**  
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Chairman and CEO, Japan External Trade  
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# TAKAICHI Sanae

PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

I am truly delighted to celebrate the upcoming Marché du Film 2026. The Marché du Film has long been a driving force in the film industry, serving as the world's premier marketplace for film-related business. This achievement is a testament to the dedication and efforts of everyone involved over the years. It is in this context that I am particularly pleased that Japan has been selected as the "Country of Honour" for the first time this year. Through my own experiences at international conferences, I have often heard foreign leaders speak of their grandchildren who adore Japanese characters or their children who enjoy singing Japanese music. These moments have made me acutely aware of the powerful role Japanese content plays in enhancing our diplomatic presence. I believe this is due to the high regard in which

Japanese creative works are held worldwide. Japan has great potential in the film industry, with high-quality anime content production capabilities, filming locations that evoke the globally increasing interest in "samurai" culture, and a strong pool of directors with uniquely Japanese sensibilities who are significant contenders for prestigious awards such as the Palme d'Or. Under the Takaichi Cabinet, the Japan Growth Strategy Headquarters has positioned "content" as one of its 17 strategic areas, and we are promoting the development of Japan's content industry. The Cannes Film Festival and the Marché du Film represent invaluable platforms which showcase the culture, daily life, and values cherished by people in the countries portrayed through the medium of film. With Japan participating as the "Country of Honour" this year,



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I hope this will foster even greater exchange and dialogue, deepening mutual understanding among nations. Once again, I earnestly hope for the continued mutual development of the global and Japanese film industries, and I hope that Marché du Film 2026 will be a fruitful venue for meaningful encounters and creative inspiration for all. ■

# AKAZAWA Ryosei

MINISTER OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on the grand opening of the Marché du Film 2026. I look forward to its continued success this year as one of the world's leading film markets. Furthermore, I am delighted that Japan has been selected as the Country of Honour at this distinguished international trade fair. The Government of Japan has decided to implement a large-scale, multi-year incentive, beginning this year, to support the attraction of major international audiovisual productions for location shoots in Japan. Through this initiative, we hope to create compelling works that showcase Japan's rich and diverse seasonal landscapes. We also actively support the promotion of Japanese works worldwide through participation in international trade fairs and strategic publicity activities. Japan's designation as the Country of Honour forms an integral part of this effort. To mark this occasion, we have prepared a variety of programs,



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including conferences focused on the adaptation of Japanese intellectual property into audiovisual content, location promotion, and animation, as well as screenings and networking events. Through these initiatives, I hope that Japan's Country of Honour designation will serve as a valuable opportunity to further highlight many outstanding Japanese works and creators on the global stage. In closing, I sincerely wish for the success of Marché du Film 2026 and the further development of film industries in Japan and around the world. ■

# ONODA Kimi

MINISTER OF STATE FOR "COOL JAPAN" STRATEGY

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on the holding of the Marché du Film 2026. For Japan, the Marché du Film has served as an important opportunity to shine a global spotlight on the country's outstanding film and animation professionals. We are therefore truly pleased and honored that Japan has been chosen as the Country of Honour for this distinguished event. Film, as a comprehensive art form that encompasses music, fine arts, cuisine, and various other elements, is not only central to the content industry but also plays a vital role in conveying Japan's history and culture to the world. Moreover, Japanese films, both live-action and animation, have received high acclaim internationally. Their universal and philosophical narratives, which transcend age and borders, together with their striking visual expression, continue to reach new heights. I sincerely hope that this occasion will also provide an opportunity for you to experience the richness and diversity of Japanese animation. We hope that as many people as possible will encounter Japan's



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outstanding visual works, leading to expanded opportunities for international screening and to the effective utilization of its remarkable intellectual property. The Government of Japan will also continue its efforts to further enhance the international competitiveness of the content industry, including the film sector, through initiatives such as talent development, improvement of the production environment, and facilitation of overseas distribution. In conclusion, I sincerely hope that the Cannes International Film Festival and the Marché du Film will continue to serve as meaningful platforms for the world of cinema. ■

## SAKOMOTO Junichi

CHAIR OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
CHAIRMAN, FEDERATION OF JAPANESE FILMS  
INDUSTRY, INC.  
REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTOR AND CHAIRMAN,  
SHOCHIKU CO., LTD.

It is a profound honour for Japan to be selected as the Country of Honour at the Marché du Film 2026 in Cannes, marking a significant milestone for the Japanese film industry. Japanese cinema has evolved by carefully preserving the unique aesthetics and spirituality established by our predecessors. Today, our contemporary works embrace fresh perspectives that reflect the transformations of our society, coexisting with a rich variety of expressive techniques including animation. We believe that this very diversity is the true strength and driving force of Japanese cinema today. Throughout this showcase, we are proud to present the broad spectrum of Japanese film, ranging from traditional values to modern sensibilities. Through engagement with film professionals from around the globe, we look forward to the birth of new partnerships and the creation of innovative collaborative opportunities. We invite you to experience firsthand the allure and depth of Japanese cinematic culture. We look forward to welcoming you with the utmost hospitality.



## YODA Tom

VICE CHAIR OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FOREIGN FILM  
IMPORTER-DISTRIBUTORS ASSOCIATION  
OF JAPAN.  
REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTOR,  
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS OF THE BOARD,  
GAGA CORPORATION.

Welcome to the World of Japanese Cinema. Japan is deeply honoured to be selected — for the first time — as the Country of Honour at the Marché du Film 2026, the premier industry market of the Cannes International Film Festival. Japanese cinema has a rich and storied history at Cannes, with five Palme d’Or films to its name, yet for decades, our industry flourished within Japan, nurturing a vibrant culture largely for domestic audiences. Today, creative content has become one of Japan’s most vital global enterprises, with Japanese films and animation captivating audiences worldwide with an energy unlike anything seen before. There is no greater joy for us than knowing that the stories born from our endeavours can travel across oceans and touch hearts everywhere. We see this recognition as a wonderful opportunity — to share the breadth and diversity of Japanese cinema with the world, and to bring our filmmakers, especially the younger generation, into conversation with their international peers. I believe that encountering different cultures opens our hearts to one another. My hope is that Japanese cinema can play a gentle but meaningful part in bringing people together — across all borders, backgrounds, and generations. Discover Japanese cinema at Cannes this year — and please come experience Japan for yourself.



## SHIINA Yasushi

VICE CHAIR OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
VICE PRESIDENT, UNIJAPAN / CEO, TIFFCOM.

It is a great honour for Japan to be selected as the Country of Honour at the Marché du Film 2026 in Cannes, an outstanding film market with a long history and a rich tradition. Under the theme of “Tradition, Innovation, and the Future of Japanese Cinema: Beyond Boundaries,” we will introduce the latest films, animations, and IPs from our country and open a window onto our culture through a series of conferences, screenings and the Producers Network, receptions and exhibitions. We hope that our programs of events will help to deepen your understanding of Japanese cinema and culture. I believe that you will find great opportunities to build partnerships with individuals and organizations from Japan during the Marché du Film 2026. As we look forward to engaging with our international colleagues, it is my sincere hope that the many encounters made here will lead to new projects and films and ultimately develop into long-lasting and productive partnerships.



## ISHIGURO Norihiko

MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
CHAIRMAN AND CEO, JAPAN EXTERNAL  
TRADE ORGANIZATION (JETRO).

It is a great honour for Japan to be the Country of Honour at the Marché du Film in Cannes, one of the most important film industry platforms in the world. On behalf of Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), also a member of the Country of Honour Executive Committee, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those whose dedication and cooperation have made this historic opportunity possible. Japan’s film industry—while deeply rooted in distinctively Japanese sensibilities, artistic excellence, and rich storytelling traditions—continues to evolve through international co-productions, new business models, and close collaborations in the animation and digital industries. This Country of Honour programme is a valuable opportunity for Japanese cinema to share its rich, creative heritage with the world, further strengthen international collaborations and mutual understanding, and expand its global reach. Through this initiative, JETRO is committed to promoting sustainable international partnerships to support the medium- and long-term growth of Japan’s film industry and enhance its international presence and standing on the global stage.



# Executive Committee for Japan Country of Honour 2026

## SHIMATANI Yoshishige

MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
PRESIDENT, MOTION PICTURE PRODUCERS  
ASSOCIATION OF JAPAN, INC.  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD,  
TOHO CO., LTD.

It is a profound honour for Japan to be selected as the Country of Honour at this prestigious occasion. Japanese cinema—shaped by our nation’s unique culture, rich history, and breathtaking natural beauty—is distinguished by its remarkable diversity. Our film industry has a long-standing legacy of producing masterpieces that have earned widespread acclaim from global audiences across both live-action and animation. Today, Japanese cinema is more vibrant than ever. In fact, our domestic box office in 2025 reached an all-time record high. Through this Country of Honour showcase, I am confident that you will experience the magnificent trajectory of Japanese film history and witness the even greater strides we are poised to make in the years ahead. Japan is also strengthening its support systems to facilitate international location shoots within our borders. We look forward to welcoming more global partners to choose Japan as the stage for their film productions. In a world increasingly marked by division and conflict, it is my sincere hope that the inherent power of Japanese cinema will help bridge divides and offer a measure of healing to people everywhere.



A regular at the Cannes Film Festival since the early 1950s, the country honoured at the Film Market has achieved the highest accolade thanks to Teinosuke Kinugasa, Akira Kurosawa, Shōhei Imamura (twice) and Hirokazu Kore-eda, whilst also contributing to the international recognition of Nagisa Ōshima, Naomi Kawase, Kiyoshi Kurosawa and Takeshi Kitano.

BY JEAN-PHILIPPE GUERAND

# Japan and Cannes

## A Love Story

**W**hen the first edition of the Cannes Film Festival finally took place after seven years of planning, from 20 September to 5 October 1946, at the municipal casino, the official selection featured 44 feature films and 68 short films. In keeping with high-level diplomacy, no fewer than 11 films shared the Grand Prix, but none represented the Asian, African or Oceanian continents, whose still sporadic film production struggled to find an export market. It was not until Jinkichi Ohta's documentary *The Life of Rice*, presented in the short film competition in 1951, that Japan made a modest mark on the international festival scene, among a selection comprising no fewer than 50 titles. The following year, however, the Land of the Rising Sun entered the competition with no fewer than three films that would not really make their mark on cinema history: *Man in the Storm* (*Arashi no naka no haha*) by Kōzō Saeki, *Nami* by Noboru Nakamura and *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*) by Kōzaburō Yoshimura, for which cinematographer Kōhei Sugiyama won the award for cinematography and visual composition. Japan is now firmly on the cinematic map, and the festivals at Cannes, Venice and Berlin will only serve to amplify this phenomenon. Japanese cinema has now been invited to join the big leagues. All that remains is to find foreign distributors to establish its international reach.

### 1950s

1953 confirmed the growing influence of Japanese cinema, with Teinosuke Kinugasa's *Saga of the Great Buddha* (*Daibutsu kaigen*), Kaneto Shindō's *Children of Hiroshima* (*Gembaku no ko*) and Minoru Shibuya's *The Moderns* (*Gendai-jin*) among the 35 films in competition. The following year saw Teinosuke Kinugasa's *Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*) win the Grand Prix, selected from 43 entries, including two other Japanese productions: *Love Letter* (*Koibumi*), the directorial debut of actress Kinuyo Tanaka, and *An Inlet of Muddy Water*

(*Nigorie*) by Tadashi Imai. The following year marked another pivotal moment with the selection of *The Crucified Lovers* (*Chikamatsu monogatari*), though Kenji Mizoguchi left the Croisette empty-handed and would never be invited back. Also featured were Seiji Hisamatsu's *Onna no koyomi* and Keigo Kimura's *The Princess Sen* (*Sen-hime*). 1956 marked the Cannes debut of another giant of Japanese cinema, Akira Kurosawa, with *I Live in Fear* (*Ikimono no Kiroku*), accompanied by Kōji Shima with *The Phantom Horse* (*Maboroshi no Uma*), and Minoru Shibuya with *Christ in Bronze* (*Seidō no Kirisuto*). The delegation returned empty-handed.

At the 10th edition of the festival, Sadao Imamura's *The Roof of Japan* (*Shiroi sanmyaku*) won the prize for best fictional documentary, whilst Tadashi Imai's *The Rice People* (*Kome*) was also included in the official selection.

The 1958 edition welcomed its first Japanese jury member with the journalist and writer Tomiko Asabuki, a renowned translator of French authors such as Simone de Beauvoir and Françoise Sagan. The only film in the official selection was *Snow Country* (*Yukiguni*) by Shirō Toyoda. In 1959, just as Alain Resnais was causing a sensation with *Hiroshima, My Love* (*Hiroshima mon amour*), in which the lead male role was played by the Japanese actor Eiji Okada, the American delegation had it withdrawn from the competition. Filmmaker Teinosuke Kinugasa, meanwhile, received a Special Mention from the jury for *The Snowy Heron* (*Shirasagi*). 1960 saw another Japanese national, Hidemi Ima, take a seat on the jury. Kon Ichikawa's *The Key* (*Kagi*) received a Special Jury Prize,



Naomi Kawase



Kiyoshi Kurosawa

In the Realm of the Senses

with Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'avventura*. The following year, Kon Ichikawa's *Her Brother* (*Otōto*) received a special mention from the Higher Technical Commission. As a final mark of recognition, the official jury of 1962 was chaired by Tetsurō Fururaki, a poet and ambassador who was the first president not to be a native French speaker and remains the only representative of his country to have held this position in the festival's entire history. Kiriō Urayama's *Foundry Town* (*Kyūpora no aru machi*) was in competition, and Susumu Hani's *Bad Boys* (*Furyō shōnen*) featured in the selection for the first Critic's Week.

### 1960s

The 1963 jury welcomed a new Japanese member in the form of producer Kashiko Kawakita, who played a key role both in the emergence of the Japanese New Wave and in the promotion of Western auteur cinema in her country. The verdict of this edition saw the Special Jury Prize awarded to Masaki Kobayashi's *Harakiri* (*Seppuku*) and Hiroshi Teshigahara's *Pitfall* (*Otoshiana*) selected for Critics' Week. The following year saw a repeat of this success with another Special Jury Prize for *Woman in the Dunes* (*Suna no onna*), also from Hiroshi Teshigahara, who represented Japan in the competition alongside Kon Ichikawa's *Alone on the Pacific* (*Taihei'yō hitoribotchi*), whilst the Palme d'Or for short films was awarded to Nobuko Shibuya's *The Price of Victory* (*Chōsen*). 1965 saw another Special Jury Prize awarded to Masaki Kobayashi for *Kwaidan* (*Kaidan*), whilst Kon Ichikawa's documentary *Tokyo Olympiad* (*Tōkyō Orinpikku*) was screened out of competition. At the following edition, the Francophile writer Tetsurō Fururaki returned to the jury chaired by Sophia Loren, whilst the Japanese selection was reduced to a short film by Eiji Murayama, *Nō*.

In 1967, the only Japanese film in the running, *The Bell* (*Kane*) by Yukio Aoshima, was presented by Critics' Week. The following year, *Kuroneko* (*Yabu no naka no kuroneko*) by Kaneto Shindō featured in the selection of an edition that was cut short after nine days and had no awards ceremony.



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The era that began in 1969 was marked by the launch of the Directors' Fortnight, which reflected the emergence of the Japanese New Wave by selecting one of its leading figures, Nagisa Ōshima, with *Death by Hanging* (*Kōshikei*) and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* (*Shinjuku dorobō nikki*). Masaki Kobayashi's *Hymn to a Tired Man* (*Nihon no seishun*), however, featured in the Official Selection, marking its third appearance in competition.

## 1970s

The following year offered little more than a short film at the Directors' Fortnight, *Love* (*Ai*) by Takahiko Iimura. There was a new resurgence in 1971 with Kō Nakahira's *A Soul to Devils* (*Yami no naka no chimimoryo*) in competition and, at the Directors' Fortnight, *The Ceremony* (*Gishiki*) and *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* (*Tōkyō sensō sengo hiwa*) by Nagisa Ōshima. The following year, with Japanese critic Naoki Togawa on the jury, Masahiro Shinoda's *Silence* (*Chinmoku*) was in competition. The Directors' Fortnight, meanwhile, presented Kijū Yoshida's *Confessions Among Actresses* (*Kokuhakuteki joyūron*), Toshio Matsumoto's *Demons* (*Shura*), Hiroshi Teshigahara's *Summer Soldiers* (*Samā sorujā*), Shūji Terayama's *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* (*Tomato Kecchappu Kōtei*) and Nagisa Ōshima documentary short film *Diary of Yunbogi* (*Yunbogi no nikki*). The 1973 line-up is hardly any less impressive: out of competition, the documentary *Visions of Eight* includes a segment by Kon Ichikawa, *The Fastest*, whilst the Directors' Fortnight included *Coup d'Etat* (*Kaigenrei*) by Kijū Yoshida and in the Critics' Week *The Water Was So Clear* (*Gaki zōshi*) by Yōichi Takabayashi. The following year was limited to a single entry in competition, Masahiro Shinoda's *Himiko*, whilst in 1975, Shūji Terayama presented both *Pastoral: To Die in the Country* (*Den-en ni shisu*) in competition and his short film *Butterfly* (*Chōfuku-ki*) at the Directors' Fortnight. He screened another the following year, *Labyrinth Tale* (*Meikyū-tan*), but the highlight of that edition took place at the opening of the Directors' Fortnight with

Nagisa Ōshima's *In the Realm of the Senses* (*Ai no korida*), which was screened 12 times instead of the five originally planned.

The sole Japanese entry from the 1977 line-up, Kazuhiko Hasegawa's *The Youth Killer* (*Seishun no satsujinsha*), featured in the Critics' Week.

The following year saw Nagisa Ōshima win the Best Director Award for the first time in the Official Selection with *Empire of Passion* (*Ai no bōrei*). 1979 was marked by Toshio Uruta's documentary *The Louvre Museum* out of competition and Hiroto Yokoyama's *Jun* in the Critics' Week.

## 1980s

The 1980 festival saw Japan win its second Palme d'Or, thanks to one of its living legends, Akira Kurosawa, for *The Shadow Warrior* (*Kagemusha*), which was, however, only his second film to compete in the festival in a quarter of a century. The Critics' Week, meanwhile, screened Mitsuo Yanagimachi's *The Nineteen Year-Old's Map* (*Jukyusai no chizu*). The following year, Shōhei Imamura presented *Why Not?* (*Eijanaika*) in Un Certain Regard and Shūji Terayama's *Fruits of Passion* (*Shanghai ijin shōkan*) featured in the Directors' Fortnight.

### Kagemusha

### The Ballad of Narayama



© DR

It was also in this section that the sole representative of Japanese cinema in 1982, Yōichi Takabayashi's *Irezumi: Spirit of Tattoo* (*Sekka tomurai zashī*), featured.

The Palme d'Or awarded to Shōhei Imamura's *The Ballad of Narayama* (*Narayama bushikō*) set the tone for an exceptional 1983 edition for Japanese cinema, which also featured Nagisa Ōshima's *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (*Senjō no merī Kurisumasu*), Tatsumi Kumashiro's *Modori River* (*Modori-gawa*) out of competition, and Masashi Yamamoto's *Carnival in the Night* (*Yami no kânibaru*) at Critics' Week. There was a reversal of fortune in 1984, with Japanese cinema completely absent.

1985 marked a strong comeback for Japanese cinema on the Croisette, with Shūji Terayama's *Farewell to the Ark* (*Saraba hakobune*) in competition, Mitsuo Yanagimachi's *Fire Festival* (*Himatsuri*) in Un Certain Regard and Jūzō Itami's *The Funeral* (*Osōshiki*) at the Directors' Fortnight. This resurgence continued the following year with Nagisa Ōshima's *Max My Love* in competition, Kijū Yoshida's *A Promise* (*Ningen no yakusoku*) in Un Certain Regard, Yōjirō Takita's *Comic Magazine* (*Komikku zasshi nanka iranai!*) and Yoshimitsu Morita's *And Then* (*Sorekara*) at the Directors' Fortnight.

The 40th Cannes Film Festival saw actor Rentarō Mikuni win the Jury Prize for his sole film as a director, *Shinran: Path to Purity* (*Shinran: Shiroy michi*), whilst Shōhei Imamura presented *Zegen*. Another regular, Kijū Yoshida, returned to the competition in 1988 with *Wuthering Heights* (*Arashi ga oka*). Just as France was preparing to celebrate the bicentenary of the French Revolution, Shōhei Imamura's *Black Rain* (*Kuroi ame*) won the Grand Prix of the Higher Technical Commission and a special mention from the Ecumenical Jury, whilst Critics' Week backed Kim U. Son's *Yun no machi*.

## 1990s

In 1990, with Japanese producer Hayao Shibata serving on the jury, Akira Kurosawa returned for the opening screening (out of

competition) with *Dreams (Yume)*, the Grand Prix and the Fipresci Prize were awarded to Kōhei Oguri's *The Sting of Death (Shi no toge)*, and the Directors' Fortnight presented Fumiki Watanabe's *Homemade Movie (Shimaguni konjō)*. The following year, Akira Kurosawa returned out of competition with *Rhapsody in August (Hachigatsu no rapusodī)*, whilst Un Certain Regard welcomed Seijun Suzuki's *Yumeji*. In 1992, Critics' Week screened Isao Yamada's *I've Heard the Ammonite Murmur (Anmonaito no sasayaki wo kiita)*. The following year proved more favourable, with Shinji Sōmai's *Moving (Ohikkoshī)* and Takeshi Kitano's *Sonatine* in Un Certain Regard, as well as Akira Kurosawa's *Madadayo (Mādada yo)* in a special screening. In the wake of the total drought of 1994 and despite the presence on the jury of the British-Japanese author of *The Remains of the Day*, Kazuo Ishiguro, Japan returned to the competition with Masahiro Shinoda's *Sharaku*. The following year, with Eiko Ishioka — the costume designer who won the 1985 Artistic Contribution Award for Paul Schrader's *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* — serving on the jury, it was Takeshi Kitano's *Kids Return* that was screened at the Directors' Fortnight.

The 50th anniversary of the Cannes Film Festival marked a double triumph for Japan: the Palme d'Or for Shōhei Imamura's *The Eel (Unagi)* and the Golden Caméra d'Or for Naomi Kawase's *Suzaku (Moe no Suzaku)*, which was selected for the Directors' Fortnight. In 1998, only Shōhei Imamura's *Dr. Akagi (Kanzō sensei)* was shown in a special screening. Japan made a strong comeback on the Croisette in 1999 with Takeshi Kitano's *Kikujirō (Kikujirō no natsu)*, which was a hit in competition; Un Certain Regard presented Masahiro Kobayashi's *Kaizokuban Bootleg Film*; the Directors' Fortnight showed Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Charisma (Karisuma)* and Nobuhiro Suwa's *M/Other*, which won the Fipresci Prize; and the Critics' Week presented Wataru Hayakawa's *7/25 (Nana-ni-go)*.

## 2000s

The year 2000 saw Shinji Aoyama's *Eureka (Yuriika)* win the Fipresci and Ecumenical Jury prizes, with Nagisa Ōshima's *Taboo (Gohatto)* also in competition, Yōichirō Takahashi's *Sunday's Dream (Nichiyobi wa owaranai)* in Un Certain Regard and Masahiro Kobayashi's *Film Noir (Koroshi)* in the Directors' Fortnight. The following year, three Japanese films took centre stage in the competition: *Warm Water Under a Red Bridge (Akai hashi no shita no nurui mizu)* by Shōhei Imamura, *Desert Moon (Tsuki no sabaku)* by Shinji Aoyama and *Distance* by Hirokazu Kore-eda. *Avalon* by Mamoru Oshii was screened out of competition. Un Certain Regard presented Masahiro Kobayashi's *Man Walking on Snow (Aruku, hito)*, Nobuhiro Suwa's *H Story* and Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Séance (Kōrei)*, which won the Fipresci Prize. Ryōsuke Hashiguchi's *Hush!* is featured in the Directors' Fortnight and Kunitoshi Manda's *Unloved* in Critics' Week, where



© DR

it wins both the Grand Rail d'Or and the Future Talents Award. A shrewd choice, confirmed the following year by the selection in the same section of Manda's short film, *The Day I Was Born*, alongside *Chicken Heart*, the second film by Hiroshi Shimizu, a former assistant to Takeshi Kitano. At the same time, Kijū Yoshida's *Women in the Mirror (Kagami no onna-tachi)* was screened out of competition.

2003 saw Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Bright Future (Akarui mirai)* and Naomi Kawase's *Shara (Sharasōju)* featured in the competition. The Directors' Fortnight presented the animated musical film by Kazuhisa Takenouchi and Leiji Matsumoto, *Interstella 5555: The 5tory of the 5ecret 5tar 5ystem*, and *Gozu (Gokudō kyōfu daigekijō: Gozu)* by Takashi Miike.

The following year saw the Best Actor Award go to Yūya Yagira for Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Nobody Knows (Dare mo shiranai)* and Mamoru Oshii's anime *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence (Innocence)* was in competition. The Directors' Fortnight, meanwhile, presented Kunitoshi Manda's *Ano tonneru* and Ishii Katsuhito's *The Taste of Tea (Cha no aji)*. With a wide-ranging presence in 2005, the Japanese

## Shoplifters

delegation screened Masahiro Kobayashi's *Bashing* in competition, Seijun Suzuki's *Princess Raccoon (Operetta tanuki goten)* out of competition, Shinji Aoyama's *My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me? (Eri, eri, rema sabakutani)* in Un Certain Regard, *The Buried Forest (Umoregi)* by Kohei Oguri and *Who's Camus Anyway? (Kamyu nante shiranai)* by Mitsuo Yanagimachi at the Directors' Fortnight, and *A Stranger of Mine (Unmei janai hito)* by Kenji Uchida at Critics' Week. There was a striking contrast in 2006, despite Nobuhiro Suwa's contribution to the Un Certain Regard opening film, *Paris, je t'aime*, with the segment *Place des Fêtes*, and Miwa Nishikawa's *Sway (Yureru)* in the Directors' Fortnight.

## 2010s

To mark its 60th anniversary, the festival presented *To Each His Own Cinema (Chacun son cinéma)*, an anthology of 33 films, each three minutes long, for which Takeshi Kitano directed *One Fine Day*. Naomi Kawase wins the Grand Jury Prize for *The Mourning Forest (Mogari no mori)*, whilst the Directors' Fortnight selects *Big Man Japan (Dai-Nihonjin)* by Hitoshi Matsumoto and Critics' Week selects *Funuke: Show Some Love, You Losers! (Funuke domo, kanashimi no ai wo misero)* by Daihachi Yoshida. The 2008 Un Certain Regard Jury Prize is awarded to *Tokyo Sonata* by Kiyoshi Kurosawa, whilst the Japanese capital serves as the backdrop for the triptych *Tokyo!* directed by Michel Gondry, Leos Carax and Bong Joon-ho. The following year, Hirokazu Kore-eda presented *Air Doll (Kūki ningyō)* in Un Certain Regard, and Hippolyte Girardot and Nobuhiro Suwa's *Yuki and Nina* in the Directors' Fortnight. 2010 marked Takeshi Kitano's return to the competition with *Outrage*. The following year saw the return of Naomi Kawase with *Hanezu (Hanezu no tsuki)* and Takashi Miike with *Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai (Ichimei)*, whilst the Directors' Fortnight hosted Sono Sion for a special screening of *Guilty of Romance (Koi no tsumi)*. The 2012 edition features a Japanese film directed by an

## Tokyo Sonata



© DR

Iranian, Abbas Kiarostami's *Like Someone in Love*, Takashi Miike's *For Love's Sake* (*Ai to makoto*) in a midnight screening, and in Un Certain Regard *11.25: The Day He Chose His Own Fate* (*11.25 jiketsu no hi: Mishima Yukio to wakamono-tachi*) by Kōji Wakamatsu.

In 2013, Naomi Kawase sat on the jury that awarded the Jury Prize to *Like Father, Like Son* (*Soshite chichi ni naru*) by her compatriot and friend Hirokazu Kore-eda, who also received a Special Mention from the Ecumenical Jury. Takashi Miike's *Shield of Straw* (*Wara no tate*) was also in competition. The following year, Naomi Kawase returned to the competition with *Still the Water* (*Futatsume no mado*), Chie Hayakawa's *Niagara* represented the Enbu Seminar at the Cinéfondation, and Isao Takahata's anime *The Tale of Princess Kaguya* (*Kaguya-hime no monogatari*) was in the Directors' Fortnight. In 2015, Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Our Little Sister* (*Umimachi Diary*) was in competition, Naomi Kawase's *Sweet Bean* (*An*) opens Un Certain Regard, where Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Journey to the Shore* (*Kishibe no tabi*) wins the Best Director Award, whilst the Directors' Fortnight hosts a special screening of Takashi Miike's *Yakuza Apocalypse* (*Gokudō daisensō*). The 2016 Un Certain Regard Jury Prize goes to *Harmonium* (*Fuchi ni tatsu*) by Kōji Fukada, in a section where Hirokazu Kore-eda's *After the Storm* (*Umi yori mo mada fukaku*) is also in the running. Naomi Kawase, meanwhile, is president of the Cinéfondation and Short Films Jury.

The 2017 Ecumenical Jury Prize goes to Naomi Kawase's *Radiance* (*Hikari*), Un Certain Regard presents Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Before We Vanish* (*Sanpo suru shinryakusha*); Takashi Miike's *Blade of the Immortal* (*Mugen no jūnin*) is screened out of competition; and the US-Japanese co-production *Oh Lucy!* by Atsuko Hirayanagi is in Critics' Week. The 2018 Palme d'Or is awarded to *Shoplifters* (*Manbiki kazoku*) by Hirokazu Kore-eda, *Asako I & II* (*Nete mo samete mo*) by Ryūsuke Hamaguchi is in competition, and the Directors' Fortnight presents Mamoru Hosoda's anime *Mirai* (*Mirai no Mirai*). The Japanese contingent was reduced the following year to a single feature film: *First Love* (*Hatsukoi*) by Takashi Miike in the Directors' Fortnight. The 2020 edition, held virtually, featured Naomi Kawase's *True Mothers* (*Asa ga kuru*) and Kōji Fukada's *The Real Thing* (*Honki no shirushi*), and, out of competition, Gorō Miyazaki's anime *Earwig and the Witch* (*Āya to majō*).

## 2020s

Postponed until July due to COVID-19, the 2021 edition saw the Best Screenplay, Fipresci, Ecumenical Jury and AFCAE awards go to Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's *Drive My Car*, whilst Cannes Première presented Mamoru Hosoda's anime *Belle: The Dragon and the Freckled Princess* (*Ryū to sobakasu no hime*). The Best Actor Award and the 2022 Ecumenical Jury Prize go to Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Broker* (*Beurokeo*), under the

South Korean flag, whilst a special mention from the Caméra d'Or is awarded to Chie Hayakawa's *Plan 75*, competing in Un Certain Regard. The ever-present Naomi Kawase shows her documentary *Official Film of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 Side A* as part of Cannes Classics, whilst the Acid selection features Juichiro Yamasaki's Japanese-French co-production *Yamabuki*. The Best Screenplay Award and the 2023 Queer Palm go to Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Monster* (*Kaibutsu*), Wim Wenders directs *Perfect Days*, a Japanese film whose lead actor, Kōji Yakusho, wins the Best Actor Award, whilst Takeshi Kitano presents *Kubi* at Cannes Première and the Acid shows Ryūtarō Ninomiya's *Dreaming in Between* (*Nigekireta Yume*).

A Japanese highlight in 2024, the year Hirokazu Kore-eda is a member of the jury chaired by Greta Gerwig, Studio Ghibli is awarded an Honorary Palme d'Or. Un Certain Regard presents *My Sunshine* (*Boku no ohisama*) by Hiroshi Okuyama, the Fipresci Prize goes to *Desert of Namibia* (*Namibia no Sabaku*) by Yōko Yamanaka and the anime *Ghost Cat Anzu* (*Bakeneko Anzu-chan*) by Yōko Kuno and Nobuhiro Yamashita. In 2025, whilst the jury for the immersive competition includes video-game creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi, the competition features *Renoir* by Chie Hayakawa, Un Certain Regard's *A Pale View of Hills* (*Tōi yama-nami no hikari*) by Kei Ishikawa, and Genki Kawamura's *Exit 8* (*8-ban deguchi*) as a special screening, Kōji Fukada's *Love on Trial* (*Renai Saiban*) in Cannes Première, Yuiga Danzuka's *Brand New Landscape* (*Miharashi sedai*) and Lee Sang-il's *Kokuho* (*Kokuhō*) in the Directors' Fortnight. The 2026 Festival is already looking spectacular, with Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's *All of a Sudden* (*Soudain*), Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Sheep in the Box* (*Hako no naka no hitsuji*) and Kōji Fukada's *Nagi Notes* (*Nagidaiai*) in competition, Yukiko Sode's *All the Lovers in the Night* in Un Certain Regard, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *The Samurai and the Prisoner* (*Kokurojo*) in Cannes Première, and the Angélieux Prize awarded at the end of the festival to the latter's director of photography, Akiko Ashizawa. ■

■  
**Drive My Car**

## COUNTRY OF HONOUR JAPAN SPECIAL SCREENING DAY

### JAPANESE CLASSIC FILMS

#### SCREENING SCHEDULE

May 16th @ Lérins 3

**BLACK RAIN** 9:30-11:50

**HER BROTHER** 12:00-13:50

**THE EEL** 14:00-16:20

**KWAIDAN** 16:30-19:50

#### — BLACK RAIN

(Shohei Imamura / 1989 / 123 mins)  
Official Selection – In Competition,  
42nd Cannes Film Festival (1989)  
TOEI: <https://cinando.com/en/contents/details/529313>

#### — HER BROTHER

(Kon Ichikawa / 1960 / 98 mins)  
Official Selection – In Competition,  
14th Cannes Film Festival (1961)  
KADOKAWA: <https://cinando.com/en/contents/details/529309>

#### — THE EEL

(Shohei Imamura / 1997 / 117 mins)  
Palme d'Or Winner – In Competition,  
50th Cannes Film Festival (1997)  
SHOCHIKU: <https://cinando.com/en/contents/details/529451>

#### — KWAIDAN

(Masaki Kobayashi / 1965 / 183 mins)  
Special Jury Prize – In Competition,  
18th Cannes Film Festival (1965)  
TOHO GLOBAL: <https://cinando.com/en/contents/details/529312>



# The Japan Films Selected

As is customary at Cannes, there are once again a large number of Japanese productions and co-productions this year. Whether in the competition or in parallel sections, festival-goers are treated to a diverse range of Japanese cinema. Here's an overview. BY VINCENT LE LEURCH

## ALL THE LOVERS IN THE NIGHT

— Feature length

French title : *De toutes les nuits, les amants*

Section : Un Certain Regard

Director : Yukiko Sode

Casting : Tadanobu Asano, Yukino Kishii, Misato Morita, Mai Fukagawa

Production : C&I Entertainment

Production, All the Lovers in the Night

Production Committee

International sales : Bitters End

Adapted from Mieko Kawakami's novel, which has sold over 400,000 copies in Japan since its publication in 2011, the film follows Fuyuko who leads a quiet, solitary life, punctuated by her work as a proofreader and the occasional outing with an extroverted colleague. Her chance encounter with a physics teacher, with whom she shares a fascination for light, gradually begins to shake up her routine. Through her contact with him, Fuyuko begins to see the world differently, emerges from her isolation and, for the first time, faces up to what she had never dared to experience. Said director and screenwriter Yukiko Sode in a statement: "From reading the novel, to meeting Yukino and Tadanobu, to location scouting and late-night brainstorming sessions, every fragment of the process came together to form this film. Every conversation, from planning to final cut, offered insights that guided our path. It was the passion of the cast and crew, captivated by this extraordinary story, that made *All the Lovers in the Night* possible. I'm excited for audiences to see it and talk about it."

## ERI

— Short film

Section : Directors' Fortnight

Director : Honami Yano

Casting (voices) : Serena Motola, Kotona Minami

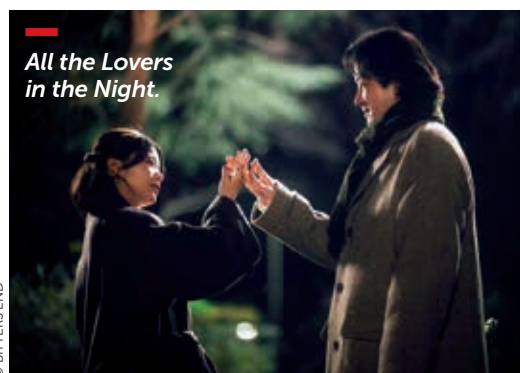
Production : Miyu Productions,

Au Praxinoscope

International sales :

Miyu Distribution

Adapted from Kasumi Asakura's novel *Who Else Is There?*, the film's narrative takes place in a world where dairy cows must bear calves to survive. Eri, a Holstein, falls in love with another cow. Her sighs linger through sleepless nights — will they ever find their way to true love? The animation techniques are cells and paint. The director's statement reads: "In this film I reimagine the human characters as cows. Eri is a Holstein who falls in love with another cow, but she lives in a world where those who do not bear calves cannot survive. I saw myself in Eri. Her way of



All the Lovers in the Night.

© BITTERS END



The Samurai and the Prisoner.

© 'KOKUROJO' FILM PARTNERS



Sugata Sanshiro.

© DR

loving one being, foolishly yet without reserve, pierced me. I felt something close to awe for her singular devotion, which bordered on insanity. Can anyone love a single being as completely and intensely? Eri pursues one being. Her ferocity, her relentlessness, even her madness — for her, these are simply what it means to be alive. Making this film was my attempt to take Eri's madness into myself, and transform it into images on the screen."

## THE SAMURAI AND THE PRISONER (KOKUROJO)

— Feature length

French title : *Le château d'Arioka*

Section : Cannes Première

Director : Kiyoshi Kurosawa

Casting : Masahiro Motoki, Masaki Suda, Yuriko Yoshitaka, Munetaka Aoki

Production : Shochiku Film Studio,

TBS Pictures

International sales : Charades

*The Samurai and the Prisoner* is the first period feature directed and written by Kiyoshi Kurosawa. The official synopsis is: "In feudal Japan, Lord Murashige barricades himself inside his castle and takes his enemy — the strategist Kanbei — prisoner, deciding to spare his life. As the seasons pass, unexplained crimes begin to disrupt the peace of the castle; Murashige investigates, but each time he comes up against a missing piece of the puzzle that only Kanbei, from his cell, seems able to decipher. Caught between mistrust and control, their relationship shifts, whilst new murders occur and Murashige gradually loses control of what is unfolding within his own castle." Kiyoshi Kurosawa's previous works selected at Cannes include *Before We Vanish*, *Journey To The Shore*, *Tokyo Sonata*, *Bright Future* and *Pulse*. He won best director at Venice in 2020 with *Wife of a Spy*.

## SUGATA SANSHIRO

— Feature length, 1943

French title :

*La légende du grand judo*

Section : Cannes Classics

Director : Akira Kurosawa

Casting : Denjirō Ōkōchi, Susumu Fujita, Yukiko Todoroki, Takashi Shimura

Production : Toho

Based on the 1942 novel of the same name written by Tsuneo Tomita, *Sugata Sanshiro* is Akira Kurosawa's first feature film. The film follows a talented though willful youth who learns discipline and martial prowess through his study of judo. The film is being screened in a restored version and includes 12 minutes of previously unseen footage.

## NAGI NOTES

— Feature length

French title : *Quelques jours à Nagi*

Section : Competition

Director : Koji Fukada

Casting : Takako Matsu, Kenichi Matsuyama, Shizuka Ishibashi, Kawaguchi Waku, Kiyora Fujiwara, Sawako Fujima, Long Mizuma, Shin Seo-gye



**Production :** Hassaku Labs, Survivance, Star Sands, Momo Film Co., Nathan Studio, Wonderstruck  
**International sales :** MK2 Films

In 2016, Koji Fukada's *Harmonium* won the Jury Prize at Un Certain Regard. Last year, *Love on Trial* premiered at Cannes Première. *Nagi Notes* follows Yuri, a divorced architect, who visits her former sister-in-law Yoriko, a sculptor living in the village of Nagi. The visit, initially intended as a brief break, takes an unexpected turn when Yuri agrees to pose for her. As the sessions progress, the silences fill with memories, and a deep, long-buried bond resurfaces between the two women. Far from the hustle and bustle of Tokyo, Yuri is drawn into the gentle rhythm of rural life and the daily lives of the locals. The days pass, as if something were inviting her to stay. For this film, producer Terutarō Osanaï was part of the Berlinale Talents programme in 2024.

### SHEEP IN THE BOX

— Feature length

**Section :** Competition

**Director :** Hirokazu Kore-eda

**Casting :** Haruka Ayase, Daigo Yamamoto, Rimu Kuwaki, Nana Seino, Kanichiro, Hinata Hiiragi

**Production :** Fuji Television Network, Gaga Corporation, Toho Co., Ltd, Aoi Pro. Inc

**International sales :**

Gaga Corporation, Goodfellas

*Sheep in the Box*, Hirokazu Kore-eda's 17th film, follows a couple who welcome an infant humanoid robot into their life following the passing of their son. Quoted by Deadline last September, the director said: "This project began with the idea of 'bringing the dead back to life using the latest technology'. A few years ago, similar concepts had already been featured on Japanese television programmes and attracted considerable attention. I was interested in exploring the conflicting perspectives regarding how technological advancement clashes with human inner values. "In the spring of last year [2024], I came across an article about the popularity of 'resurrection businesses' in China; and in the Fall, I met someone actually engaged in that field. It made me realise that such developments could occur in Japan as well, and with technology evolving at a pace far beyond what I had imagined, I felt that this reality might arrive sooner than expected." Hirokazu Kore-eda won the Palme d'or in 2018 with *Shoplifters*. He has showcased 10 of his works in Cannes.

### ALL OF A SUDDEN

— Feature length

**French title :** *Soudain*

**Section :** Competition

**Director :** Ryūsuke Hamaguchi

**Casting :** Virginie Efira, Tao Okamoto, Kyoza Nagatsuka, Kodai Kurosaki, Jean-Charles Clichet, Marie Bunel, Romain Cottard, Marie Denarnaud

**Production :** France (Cinéfrance), Japan (Office Shirous, Bitters end), Germany (HeimatFilm), Belgium (Tarantula, Gapbusters)

**International sales :** Cinéfrance



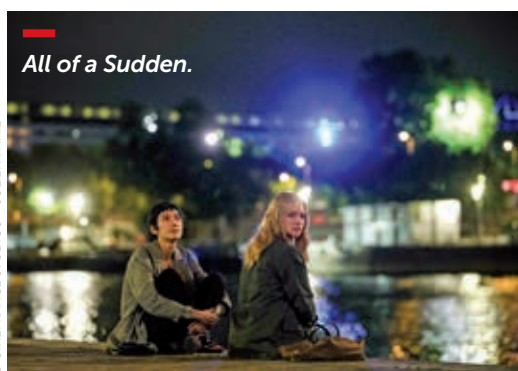
Nagi Notes.

© KOJI FUKADA



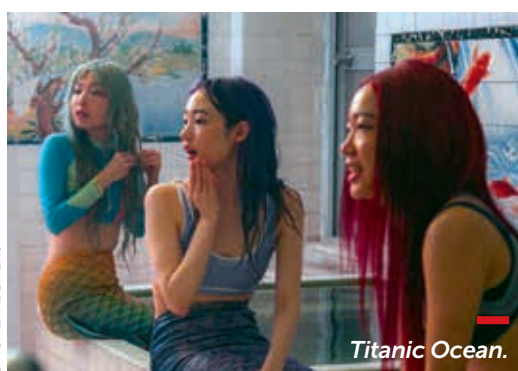
Sheep in the Box.

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All of a Sudden.

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Titanic Ocean.

© HOMEMADE FILMS



We Are Aliens.

© NOTHING NEW

Filmed between Paris and Kyoto during the summer of 2025, Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's drama tells the story of Marie-Lou Fontaine, 38, the director of a care home, who introduces the 'Humanitude' method, but faces resistance from the staff. She meets Mari Morisaki, 39, a terminally ill Japanese playwright, and the two women, each speaking the other's language, become friends. Together, they share a common vision and become inseparable. Mari's health deteriorates, and their relationship

profoundly transforms the 'Garden of Freedom'. Born in Kawasaki in 1978, Ryūsuke Hamaguchi gained international recognition for *Happy Hour* (2015), *Asako I & II* (2018) and *Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy* (2021). *Asako I & II* was part of the Cannes Competition in 2018. In 2021, the director won the Best Screenplay at Cannes for *Drive My Car*.

### TITANIC OCEAN

— Feature length

**Section :** Un Certain Regard

**Director :** Konstantina Kotzamani

**Casting :** Arisa Sasaki, Melina Mardini, Haruna Matsui, Hanase Kotone, Aki Kigoshi, Hanna Muro, Riku Nakamura

**Production :** Homemade Films with Wunderlust, deFilm, Frida Films, Happinet Phantom Studios, Mam Film, Onassis Culture, BR/Arte, Ert S.A.

**International sales :** Paradise City Sales

*Titanic Ocean* is the debut feature of multi-awarded Greek filmmaker Konstantina Kotzamani. The project went through different labs including TFL FeatureLab, CineMart, Oxbelly, EAVE – Ties that Bind, IFFAM (Creative Excellence Award), Venice Production Bridge, Next Step Vol II – Semaine de la Critique and APostLab. The film takes place in the scintillating teenage universe of a special boarding school in Japan that trains young girls to become professional mermaids, where 17-year-old Akame will find her siren voice, discover first love and experience a metamorphosis. Set in Japan, in a closed, female universe, the film explores sexual awakening, obsession and transformation in a world where fantasy is choreographed and bodies are trained.

### WE ARE ALIENS

— Feature length

**Section :** Directors' Fortnight

**Director :** Kohei Kadowaki

**Production :** Nothing New, Miyu Prod.

**International sales :** Charades

After graduating from the Department of Design at Tokyo University of the Arts, director Kohei Kadowaki worked for an animation production company. He then set up his own business and, after producing stage videos, adverts and music videos, became an animation artist. He creates works of great depth thanks to his unique visual style, which blends live-action footage and three-dimensional materials with animation. *We Are Aliens* follows a quiet boy named Tsubasa who meets Kyotaro, a boy everyone in the class looked up to, and the two become close friends during one summer in the third grade. Within their small world, they share irreplaceable moments — until a small incident suddenly tears them apart. Spanning more than 30 years, this gentle, contemplative story invites the audience to reflect on the meaning of life through the paths their lives take. *We Are Aliens* is the first feature length produced by Japan's Nothing New, a young company launched in 2022. The film was partly crowdfunded. ■

### WILL IT RAIN AGAIN TODAY

Short film

**Section :** La CinéF

**Director :** Wong Chau-Hong

Nihon University College of Art (Japan), 16'

# Tetsu Fujimura

CEO, FILOSOPHIA

Executive producer of One Piece live-action series shares insights on Japanese IPs and how they are a pillar of global entertainment today.

## How important are Japanese IPs for the global market?

Japanese IP has become a pillar of global entertainment, loved by audiences around the world. Japanese game-based films have already achieved blockbuster success internationally, and Japanese IP consistently ranks among the highest in global IP revenue. It is also a major source of value for leading Japanese companies such as Sony Group and Nintendo. In every respect, Japanese IP is now one of the most important and influential forces in the global market.

## How did you start Filosofia and how has it evolved to this day?

I founded Filosofia after leaving GAGA, at a time when no one was paying attention to the value of Japanese IP as source material for global adaptations — but I believed that time would come. I wanted to build a company that could serve as a bridge between Japanese rights holders and top Hollywood producers.

The journey has taken much longer than I imagined. It takes time to secure rights, and even after a deal is made, many projects never ultimately get produced — and those that do can take years to move into actual production. But we were fortunate that our work expanded into consulting, and many top-tier companies became our clients. Today, I feel the market has finally caught up with what we envisioned from the beginning.

## Are platforms a big game-changer for IPs?

Global platforms have changed the business dramatically. Before their rise, Japanese



© DR

“Japanese IP is one of the most important pillars of Japan's soft power”

content reached international audiences mainly through minor and niche players and limited distribution channels, so its global reach did not fully reflect its true potential. Platforms changed that by making Japanese content accessible to audiences worldwide. This has helped Japanese content receive recognition closer to its real value and has turned Japanese IP into global content.

## Which Japanese IPs are currently in the pipeline for adaptation? And what types of IPs are most promising today?

Among the projects already announced, *The Legend of Zelda* is moving into production. Manga-based titles such as *One Piece* are continuing successfully, with Season 3 currently shooting following the success of Seasons 1 and 2. *Naruto*, *One Punch Man*, *Attack on Titan* are also highly anticipated. There are also anime-based projects such as *Gundam*, *Your Name*, along with many others that have not yet been announced. The most famous titles are often already optioned unless there are specific rights issues, so I believe the next major opportunities lie in the next generation of Japanese IP: projects with strong originality, compelling characters and powerful stories.

## What makes Japanese IPs so unique?

Their uniqueness stems from Japan's distinctive creative ecosystem. Manga magazines have a history of nearly 80 years in Japan, and over that time they have produced compelling characters and highly original storytelling. Much of anime has grown out of manga, and it has in turn strongly influenced game creators. This interconnected creative system is one of the defining strengths of Japanese IP.

## From your experience, what are the keys to successful collaborations on Japanese IPs?

The most important thing is to respect the voice and creativity of the original creator. It is essential to reflect the author's vision, perspective and values in the adaptation process. Successful collaboration is not simply about acquiring rights, it is about building trust and understanding what makes the original work meaningful.

## Like K-pop is for South Korea, would you say that Japanese IPs are an important part of Japan's soft power?

Absolutely. I believe Japanese IP is one of the most important pillars of Japan's soft power. It is often said that entertainment will become Japan's next core industry, and many of Japan's most successful entertainment companies already derive significant value from their IP portfolios. Japanese IP has the power to connect with global audiences on a cultural level, and I believe its importance will continue to grow in the years ahead. ■

VINCENT LE LEURCH



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From left to right: *Ghost in the Shell*, *One Piece Season 2*, *Naruto*

# Panels and Japan IP Market

Two distinguished panels will explore the global potential of Japanese intellectual property, whilst the Marché du Film and TIFFCOM are launching a market entirely dedicated to Japanese works suitable for adaptation and remake for the cinema.

## Japan IP Market



Co-organised by the Marché du Film – Festival de Cannes and TIFFCOM (Tokyo International Film Festival Content Market), the Japan IP Market is taking place over three days (15-17 May) aboard the Art Explora catamaran. The programme is featuring one-on-one meetings with Japanese IP holders, pitching sessions highlighting the most exciting film, manga and novel IPs, as well as a keynote and a panel on all things Japanese IP (pre-registration required).

### PARTICIPATING JAPANESE IP HOLDERS

#### AMUSE CREATIVE STUDIO

##### — AMUSE CREATIVE STUDIO

A new type of creative studio that creates entertainment in a wide range of genres, centered on the planning and development of IP and its operation, conducting business globally, making use of the production capabilities that the Amuse Group has cultivated in areas such as film, TV drama, stage, musicals, artist production, comics and animation.



##### — KADOKAWA CORPORATION

One of the major publishing companies as well as a film production and distribution company in Japan. Kadokawa has a wide range of IPs from classic film titles from Kenji Mizoguchi and Akira Kurosawa, to novels and comics by acclaimed authors including Koji Suzuki and Keigo Higashino, among others.



##### — NIHON BUNGEISHA

A Japanese publishing company founded in 1959 and widely known for its strong line-up of entertainment manga. The company publishes a broad range of genres, including suspense, horror, action, crime and human drama. Through magazines and graphic novels, Nihon Bungeisha has built a reputation for delivering gripping stories and distinctive artwork that appeal to adult readers in Japan and abroad.



##### — NIPPON ANIMATION

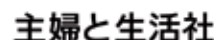
Founded in 1975, Nippon Animation has been one of the largest and best-known independent animation studios in Japan. Nippon Animation has been producing and distributing quality animations aimed toward kids and families for over 50 years with more than 130 titles.



##### — SHOCHIKU

A comprehensive entertainment company with core businesses in film, theatre including Kabuki, a Japanese

traditional play, and real estate. Since its founding in 1895, Shochiku continues to evolve, aiming to deliver inspiring films and theatrical performances to audiences in Japan and around the world.



##### — SHUFU TO SEIKATSU SHA

Founded in 1946, a publishing company that has enriched readers' lives through magazines and practical books. In recent years, it has expanded into a wide range of genres, with its comics division showing remarkable growth. Many of its works have been adapted into anime, reaching larger audiences both in Japan and around the world.



##### — TOEI COMPANY

Founded in 1951, a major force in Japanese cinema. From development to production at its Tokyo and Kyoto studios, as well as distribution, broadcasting, home entertainment, merchandising, and international expansion, Toei's ability to manage every stage of the filmmaking process in-house is one of its greatest strengths. Known for titles such as *Battle Royale*, *Battles Without Honor and Humanity* and *Ju-On*, Toei has also achieved global success through IP adaptations and major film festival recognition.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JAPAN IP MARKET INCLUDE:

• **Pitch session:** *Saturday, 16 May 11:00–12:00, Art Explora catamaran. Pre-registration required.*

• **The Future of Japanese IP in Global Adaptations:** a deep dive and comprehensive keynote seminar on the future of Japanese intellectual properties in global adaptations, presented by Tetsu Fujimura, Executive Producer of Netflix's live-action series *One Piece* and Founder/CEO of *Filosophia Inc.*  
*Saturday, 16 May, 10:00–11:00, Art Explora catamaran. Pre-registration required.*

• **A France–Japan focus**, spotlighting the long-term creative and industrial partnership between the two countries, with a strong emphasis on adaptation and cinema. The programme includes dedicated sessions on adapting literary and graphic works for the screen, alongside discussions on animation, video games and the synergies between manga, film and international distribution. One of the key sessions, 'Manga & Anime: Publishers and Broadcasters Driving Success', will bring together leading industry stakeholders, including Crunchyroll and Glénat Editions. ■  
*Full programme: Friday, 15 May, 10:00–13:00, Art Explora catamaran. Pre-registration required.*

## Two Panels

### THE FUTURE OF JAPANESE IP IN GLOBAL ADAPTATIONS

Presented by Executive Committee for Japan, Country of Honour 2026, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)  
**Thursday, May 14 – 10:30-11:30**  
– Main Stage & Online

• **Speaker:**  
**Tetsu FUJIMURA,**  
**CEO, *Filosophia Inc.***

Japan, as a "powerhouse of intellectual property" has produced numerous world-renowned IPs. This lecture will explore the current state of global adaptations of these Japanese IPs, using examples from the Asian market and Hollywood. Furthermore, in this era of entertainment that transcends language and national borders, we will consider how Japanese IPs are evolving and what further possibilities they hold for the future.

### THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF JAPANESE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Presented by Executive Committee for Japan, Country of Honour 2026, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)  
**Thursday, May 14 – 12.00-13.00**  
– Main Stage & Online

• **Speaker:**  
**Sanford PANITCH**  
**(President, Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group)**  
• **Moderator:**  
**Atsuo NAKAYAMA,**  
**Entertainment Sociologist,**  
**Re entertainment**

Recently Japanese IPs have shown remarkable strength, attracting growing attention from international audiences and major global media players. In this discussion, Sanford Panitch and Atsuo Nakayama will explore the value of Japanese IP and its future potential in the global media landscape.

# The Anime Industry driven by international

In its Anime Industry Report for 2025, the Association of Japanese Animations (AJA) states that animation is expected to grow even further though it needs to cope with a shortage of human resources. BY V. LE LEURCH

**R**elased in December 2025, the annual Anime report provided by the Association of Japanese Animations is more than encouraging. "In 2024, the anime industry market reached 114.8% of the previous year, an increase of ¥494.2bn to reach ¥3.8trn (rate: approx. ¥150/\$1 (2025 avg.), the highest profit on record," says the report. This is an increase from last year's record, and the second highest increase after 2019's (115.3%). The market has widened 2.1 times the size of 2015's market, and 3.5 times the size of 2002's. "The anime industry market, meaning the anime industry in a broad sense, is moving the entire consumer market with household expenses playing a leading part, so it's assumed that the amount of anime-related goods were paid for by users. The market is split up into nine genres with the majority (56.5%) being occupied by international, which is a reversal of the domestic and international markets that started in 2023. Domestically, merchandising is the biggest cut (19.5% of the total market, 44.8% of the domestic market) followed by entertainment (7.9% of the total market, 18.0% of the domestic market), so the sales of rights usage is large. In the field of media, streaming and its sudden growth (6.9% of the total market, 15.9% of the domestic market) has overtaken the total sales in the three fields of TV, film and video.



International is key in this industry. "Comparing the international and domestic markets, in 2023 the international market exceeded the domestic market by ¥97.9bn, and in 2024, the difference expanded to ¥499.7bn. The international market is clearly making rapid progress and it is predicted that the difference will only continue to expand due to the international advance of related businesses such as merchandising, a category that takes up the greater part of the domestic market." At cinemas, the report stresses that "in 2024, the anime film box-office revenue increased slightly to ¥69bn (up from ¥68bn). It is the third highest grossing year after 2022's ¥78.5bn and 2019's ¥69.2bn. The top grossing movies were *Detective Conan: The Million-dollar Pentagram* (¥15.8bn), *Haikyu!! The Dumpster Battle*

— *Detective Conan*

— *Haikyu!! The Dumpster Battle*

(¥11.6bn) and *Mobile Suit Gundam SEED Freedom* (¥5.4bn). Series with momentum continue to find success through film expansions. Nine different movies reached over ¥2bn in revenue and 14 movies reached over ¥1bn, meaning that out of the 84 animated films released in 2024, less than 20% of them broke ¥1bn. Also, the anime film share of the domestic Japanese box-office market is 33.3%. Its share rose because of the COVID pandemic, so for the fifth year in a row since 2021, it has taken over 30% of the market." Anime products on platforms are in constant growth. "According to an investigation by the JVA (Japan Video Software Association), the share of revenue on streaming services held by anime aimed at general audiences increased from 26.9% in 2022 to 45.9% in 2024, maintaining a high standard that occupies almost half the market. While the platform wars are shifting from acquiring new customers to scrambling for existing customers, anime is expected to be an important key in the competition." ■



## ANIMATION: THE PANELS AND CONFERENCES AT MARCHÉ DU FILM

### — TOEI ANIMATION: SCALING A GLOBAL ANIMATION STRATEGY (KEYNOTE)

May 17, 2026, 15:30-16:00

Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

As Toei Animation celebrates its 70th anniversary, the studio reflects on decades of creating and nurturing animated works shared across Japan and worldwide. Looking at the current global reception of its titles, Toei will present concrete examples of new strategic initiatives, notably the development of overseas-born projects beyond a purely export-driven approach.

**Speakers:** Yosuke Asama (General Manager, Toei Animation Co.,Ltd.) and Yoshi Ikezawa (Producer, Toei Animation Co., Ltd.)

### — THE GLOBAL APPEAL OF JAPANESE ANIME AND THE CREATIVE FORCES BEHIND IT (PANEL)

May 17, 2026, 16:00-16:30

Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

A discussion between TRIGGER Inc. and CoMix Wave Films — studios behind *Promare*,

*Little Witch Academia*, *Your Name* and *Suzume*. The speakers will explore the creative vision, production approaches and global outlook that shape Japanese animation, examining the artistic foundations and industry structures that drive its originality and worldwide appeal.

**Speakers:** Masahiko Otsuka (President, Studio TRIGGER) and Tomohiro Tokunaga (President and CEO, CoMix Wave Films Inc.).

**Moderator:** Yoshiki Usa (Vice President, Studio TRIGGER)

### — FROM JAPAN TO THE WORLD: EXPANDING THE INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION POTENTIAL OF JAPANESE ANIMATION (PANEL) (WITH ANNECY FILM FESTIVAL)

May 17, 2026, 16:30-17:00

Main Stage (Riviera) & Online

Japanese animation has become a powerful global brand, combining distinctive creative identities with strong commercial performance. This panel gathers leading international

distributors to discuss territory-specific strategies, deal structures, acquisition trends, release patterns and audience development, examining how anime titles are positioned, marketed, and scaled successfully across different markets worldwide.

**Speakers:** Eduardo Calla Zalles (Chief Strategy Officer, BF Distribution) and Amel Lacombe (CEO, EUROZOOM, PANORANIME)

### — ANNECY ANIMATION SHOWCASE

May 17, 2026, 10:00-11:50

Access: Marché du Film badge holders

Main Venue: Palais K (Palais des Festivals)

Two Japanese projects selected:

*Hidari* by Masashi Kawamura and Iku Ogawa, produced by Noriko Matsumoto, Yusuke Tominaga, Masami Ouchi (dwarf studios, Whatever, TECARA).

*Wasted Chef* by Takayuki Hirao, produced by Ryoichiro Matsuo, Yunosuke Uno, Kosuke Arai (CLAP Studio)

# Amel Lacombe

CEO, EUROZOOM

## “Japanese animation plays a vital role in the cinema industry”

Since its inception in 2005, Eurozoom has distributed numerous Japanese animated films in France, establishing the company as a leading name in the field.

### How did you get your business off the ground?

For a long time, Japanese animation in cinemas was something that was only known through Studio Ghibli productions, which were distributed nationwide. It was whilst travelling in Japan that I realised there were many other productions — adaptations of manga or TV series — which were only available on DVD. The first film we released in 2005 was Shinji Aramaki's *Appleseed*. At the time, it was a tricky release because there was a preconception in France that Japanese animation was only made for television, based on the popularity of series such as *Goldorak* and *Albator*. But none of this prevented the film from achieving critical acclaim. And the first to follow me in this endeavour was UGC.

### How did you go about promoting Japanese animation in France, which has become a significant sector of the cinema industry?

I'm delighted that Eurozoom has contributed to this transformation. Today, Japanese animation — excluding Ghibli — plays a vital role in the cinema industry. It is diverse enough to appeal to young adults as well. The 15–25 age group used to rarely go to see independent films. I attribute this paradigm shift primarily to the groundwork we've laid over nearly 20 years of cinema releases, featuring both established talents and debut films. We've always had an almost passionate approach to Japanese animation. We had no ulterior motive to make opportunistic moves, but rather to work long-term on this rich cinematic tradition by introducing French film lovers to directors who are now essential figures on the big screen: Hosoda, Shinkai, Aramaki, Hara and Watanabe all made their big-screen debuts with Eurozoom. It was mainly our love for this genre that drove us into this niche. We also owe a great deal to the CNC, which has always supported us in this proactive and unique initiative within the French distribution landscape. We have released 70 films in cinemas since 2005,

including *One Piece*, *Lupin*, *Conan*, and so on. The market has grown, with new players able to establish themselves on the back of the groundwork laid by Eurozoom over many years in the field of Japanese anime cinema. At Eurozoom, we have developed unique knowledge and expertise in this field of filmmaking, having worked with the leading Japanese studios and producers. In this work, we must also acknowledge the importance of film festivals, and foremost among them, Annecy.

### Speaking of which, what is your view on them?

The Annecy Festival pays close attention to Japanese animation. It is also thanks to them that we have managed to carve out this niche. And now there is Cannes. When we presented Mamoru Oshii's *Angel's Egg* at Cannes Classics last year, I was worried that no one would turn up for the screening, yet the venue was packed... We also took Makoto Shinkai's *Suzume* into the official competition at Berlin with our colleagues at Goodfellas, a first for Japanese animation since a Ghibli film was selected 20 years ago. More broadly speaking, Japanese animation has achieved genuine status as cinema. We have succeeded in transforming a niche into a mainstream cinematic force.

### What challenges does the Japanese animation industry face today, given the high demand for its content?

The rise in guaranteed minimum fees is the main problem. We sometimes attract fewer than 30,000 admissions, or even, in some extreme cases, fewer than 10,000! This therefore does not justify these fees. Especially since the post-COVID period, with a market that remains generally tight. Furthermore, at a certain point, Japanese creators got carried away by global streaming deals which, unfortunately in France, effectively prevent any cinema release outside of special events (due to media release windows). For example, the latest *Evangelion* arrived on Prime Video right in the middle of August and nobody



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was happy about the lack of a cinema release — neither the creator nor the fans. At Eurozoom, we are committed to treating films as such, with a proper theatrical release, rather than a one-off event, because filmmakers don't create works intended solely for such one-off screenings. Kiyotaka Oshiyama's *Look Back* was the sole exception, where we achieved 25,000 admissions over two days, but the film is then subject to a two-year embargo elsewhere. This is what I always explain to Japanese rights holders. Of course, a big cheque straight away is nice. But they should consider making an exception for France, where films thrive in cinemas and help filmmakers emerge and thrive. In fact, Japanese designers are well aware of this. Those invited to France for promotional events realise that it is only here, on the international stage, that the press engages with them on technical and creative matters and delves into the substance of their projects — unlike in other countries.

### What are your greatest achievements since Eurozoom was founded?

There have been many successes, and it's difficult to single out just a few, but I would say, first and foremost, that I am particularly proud of having restored classics to their rightful place, such as Eiichi Yamamoto's *\*Belladonna\**, which we released in 2016, Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* in 4K in 2020, and Mamoru Oshii's *Angel's Egg* last year. All these films have managed to win over French audiences, who are, by nature, very demanding. And of course, I'm delighted to have been able to work with Makoto Shinkai again on *Suzume*, having previously introduced him to the French public with *Your Name*.

What also makes us very proud is having worked with virtually everyone in the Japanese animation industry, from major studios such as Toho, Toei and TMS to independent studios like the iconic Studio 4C, founded by Eiko Tanaka, Miyazaki's former producer. We travel to Japan every year and enjoy reuniting with our Japanese film family.

Over the past two years, we have also launched a film production venture focused on Japan through our company Panoranime, and our first Japanese co-production, *Renoir* by Chie Hayakawa, was screened in the official competition at Cannes. We are currently working on developing several animation projects, including one with Japan, which I hope to tell you more about soon! Finally, on the latest news front, we are very proud to soon be able to introduce the iconic *Doraemon* to young French audiences with its cinema debut in France. ■

VINCENT LE LEURCH

# Georgina Pope

## The producer powering Japan's international production boom

Georgina Pope is director of production at the nascent TOHO Tombo Pictures company, established to grow international production across Japan.

**W**ith more than three decades of experience in the Japanese film industry, Georgina Pope has established herself as a key figure in bridging international productions with Japan's unique production landscape. Beginning her career in the early 1990s, she has worked extensively with both European and American studios, providing production services and producing projects ranging from feature films to high-profile television series. Her many credits include internationally known titles including *Enter the Void* (2009), *Earthquake Bird* (2019) and *Giri/Haji* (2019). Television productions include Japan-based episodes of US comedy series *Girls* (2012-2017); *Mozart in the Jungle*, whose Season 4 (2018) shot in Japan and all episodes of *SUNNY* (2024) for Apple TV. Her recent projects at TOHO Tombo Pictures include *The Smashing Machine* (2025) which won the Silver Lion Best Director Award at Venice Film Festival and *Marty Supreme* (2025), with nine Oscar nominations for A24 as well as *Monarch: Legacy of Monsters* Season 2 for Apple TV. In 2023, Pope co-founded production services company TOHO Tombo Pictures, a joint venture with Japanese studio Toho, aimed at supporting the growing demand for international filming in Japan — and where she is head of production. Combining her extensive network and experience of working in Japan with Toho's production infrastructure, the company's mission is actively to contribute to the ongoing drive to make Japan more accessible to global filmmakers, as well as to position the country as a significant international production hub. Pope said that when she started working in Japan over 30 years ago, "there was no government support or even awareness about international production whatsoever". But "things have really changed and evolved", she said, "as Japan has become aware of both the fiscal value of in-bound production as well as the cultural value in terms of Japan being



© PR

represented on global cinema screens and broadcast." The "unique drawcard" for international filmmakers is "the variety of locations both urban and rural only found in Japan. That, and the high-quality workmanship of Japanese crew," she said, adding that her experience of filming in the country has taught her that "experienced, bilingual crew are essential". She is also keen to encourage greater engagement between the production industry and local institutions, specifically towards the protection of professionals: "I do believe we need more collaboration with local police and fire departments to

guide us and work together to create a safe working environment for all crew." Japan's growing intent to strengthen ties with international productions was underscored recently with the launch of a national incentive programme in 2022 by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry — which can cover up to 50% of qualifying local spend. Projects supported by this initiative include *The Smashing Machine* (2025) directed by Benny Safdie and starring Dwayne Johnson with Japan Production by TOHO Tombo Pictures; *Rental Family* (2025), a comedy-drama feature directed by Hikari and starring Brendan Fraser as an actor working as a family-member-for-hire in a Tokyo agency; and the second season of *Drop of God*, the French-American-Japanese television series which launched in 2023, created by Quoc Dang Tran. And the film and television incentive is being extended through 2026 — most notably with the introduction of multi-year subsidies, which enable projects to receive support spanning up to two years. This relaxes the previous system's timeline requirements for expense reporting. Spending rules are laid out in the terms and conditions for release of the subsidy, including: that production costs in Japan are ¥800 million (\$5m) or more. Also, projects must benefit the Japan domestic content industry and projects must have scenes shot in Japan.

"Much has evolved well in the past few years, with local film commissions supporting production," Pope said. But she believes that the higher spending limits could affect low-budget productions. "Recent changes mean that only very large projects are supported," she said. "That is very disappointing because it means films that only shoot partially in Japan — like *Marty Supreme* or *The Smashing Machine* — or independent or European films, are no longer supported. This is a really a great pity and I am very concerned about the workflow for Japan's freelance crew. Big projects with a large spend are quite rare and if there is not a constant flow of work, the number of skilled crew will surely diminish." Meanwhile with the establishment of TOHO Tombo Pictures, Pope said one of her key roles now is "to show overseas producers Japan is up to the task of supporting their projects with the latest in international practices — from accounting to location permitting to camera and technical matters". She added: "However the most important thing is to keep delivering high-quality, creative work." ■

JULIAN NEWBY

# Local access, global ambitions: Japan welcomes the world

Across Japan, regional film commissions are playing an increasingly strategic role in attracting international film and television productions. From major cities to rural prefectures, these organisations are streamlining access, offering incentives and building local partnerships in a co-ordinated effort to position Japan as a globally competitive production destination. **BY JULIAN NEWBY**



## SAPPORO

**T**he Sapporo Film Commission (SFC), the official screen body of Sapporo City in Hokkaido, is stepping up its international outreach as Japan continues to position itself as an important destination for global production.

With a mandate that spans filming support, international co-production and content distribution, the SFC is actively building partnerships with territories worldwide while promoting Sapporo as a versatile screen location.

Offering support across all genres — including feature films, television drama and commercials — the commission provides a one-stop service for incoming productions. Its role includes facilitating permits, sourcing locations and connecting visiting producers with local crews and services. By acting as a bridge between creators and the city, the SFC aims to ensure that productions can operate efficiently while engaging meaningfully with the local environment and community.

Sapporo itself is known for its distinct seasonal shifts, which offer a wide range of visual backdrops — from snow-covered urban landscapes in winter to expansive green spaces in summer — within a relatively compact area. This diversity enables productions to achieve multiple looks without extensive travel, an increasingly important factor for cost-conscious international shoots.

Beyond logistics, the SFC is focused on longer-term industry development. It is committed to nurturing creative talent, supporting business growth and expanding opportunities for collaboration between Japanese and international partners. As the global content market evolves, the Commission sees visual media not only as entertainment but as a driver of cultural exchange and economic activity.

By aligning production support with a broader vision for city development, the Sapporo Film Commission is positioning itself as a proactive player in Japan's expanding screen sector. ■

— **For more info:** <https://www.screensapporo.jp>

### INCENTIVES

**Sapporo covers 50% of expenses up to ¥10m (approximately \$62,000) for films and TV dramas. This must be applied for through a production company based in Japan.**

— **Makomanai Takino Cemetery, on the outskirts of Sapporo City: a vast green space that features a collection of commanding statues, notably, 40 Easter Island heads, a Stonehenge replica and a giant Buddha statue.**

## GUNMA

**T**he Gunma Film Commission is positioning the Gunma Prefecture as an accessible and production-friendly destination for international film and television projects looking to shoot in Japan. Located within 100km of Tokyo, the region offers the logistical advantages of proximity to the capital while delivering a broad range of filming environments that extend well beyond the urban landscape.

Situated near the centre of the Japanese archipelago, Gunma is characterised by mountainous terrain to the north and west and the expansive Kanto Plain to the southeast. This geography provides a diverse mix of locations, from dramatic natural scenery to functional regional cities with administrative, industrial and commercial infrastructure. The result is a compact yet varied filming territory capable of doubling for multiple settings.

Connectivity is a key strength. Major expressways — including the Kan-etsu, Joshin-etsu, Kita-Kanto and Tohoku routes — link Gunma efficiently to Tokyo and other parts of the country, with travel times of around one hour from central Tokyo by road. This enables productions to move quickly between locations, supporting tight schedules and cost control.

Gunma also benefits from stable shooting conditions, with relatively few natural disasters and a high number of clear, sunny days annually. These factors contribute to greater predictability during production.

The Gunma Film Commission serves as a central point of contact, co-ordinating with municipalities and regional partners to provide location introductions, logistical support and local expertise. With an established track record across films, television dramas and commercials, Gunma is increasingly attracting international producers seeking flexibility, reliability and visual diversity within easy reach of Tokyo. ■

— **For more info:** <https://www.gunma-fc.jp>

### INCENTIVES

**The Gunma Prefecture covers 50% of production expenses up to ¥20m. The production must spend over ¥1m within the Gunma Prefecture.**



— **Doai Village is a unique glamping facility launched in late 2020 to revitalise Japan's deepest 'mole' station, Doai Station, in the Gunma Prefecture.**

## TOKYO

**T**he Tokyo Film Commission oversees what has become Japan's primary gateway for international film and television production. The city combines global recognisability with a mature and evolving production ecosystem. For the Tokyo Film Commission, the challenge is no longer attracting overseas producers — demand for stories set in the city remains consistently high — but ensuring that demand can be effectively serviced within one of the world's most complex urban environments.

The commission has positioned itself as a flexible partner across formats, supporting feature films, high-end television and international co-productions. This adaptability reflects broader industry trends, as streaming platforms and cross-border collaborations continue to reshape production models.

At an operational level, the Tokyo Film Commission focuses on facilitating access. Its core work centres on location scouting and permitting, particularly for shoots in public spaces where co-ordination with local authorities and communities is essential. Maintaining a balance between production needs and everyday city life is a key priority, requiring careful planning and local knowledge.

Beyond logistics, there is a growing effort to broaden Tokyo's on-screen identity. While often depicted through neon-lit districts and dense cityscapes, the wider metropolitan area offers a more varied visual palette, including suburban environments rarely seen by international audiences. Recent productions such as *Rental Family*, directed by Hikari and starring Brendan Fraser, highlight this shift, presenting a more intimate and nuanced portrait of contemporary urban life.

Supported by an extensive network of experienced local partners, Tokyo continues to position itself not just as a filming destination, but as a collaborative hub within Japan's expanding screen industry, with the capacity to anchor productions that extend across the country. ■

— For more info: <https://www.locationbox.metro.tokyo.lg.jp>

### INCENTIVES

**Tokyo offers 50% of location scouting expenses up to ¥1m for foreign productions; and 50% of production support for filming foreign productions, up to ¥10m.**



— **Habushiura Beach, Nii-jima Island: Tokyo has seven islands, and you can reach this beautiful beach in a few hours by jetfoil.**

— **Aqua Liner in central Osaka: a distinctive feature is the cruise boat Aqua Liner, which travels gracefully along the rivers against a backdrop of modern urban architecture.**



— **Kabukicho, Shinjuku: Kabukicho, a red-light district, is an iconic location for many films and TV shows.**

## OSAKA

**T**he Osaka Film Council has established itself as a cornerstone of Japan's production support infrastructure, with a mandate to attract and facilitate domestic and international filmmakers. Founded in February 2000 through a collaboration between the Osaka Prefectural Government, Osaka City and the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it was the country's first official film commission and remains one of its most experienced.

The council offers a comprehensive, free service aimed at streamlining production. Its support spans location scouting, permitting and co-ordination, as well as introductions to local crew, equipment suppliers, accommodation and transport. This end-to-end approach is designed to reduce friction for incoming productions and ensure efficient on-the-ground execution.

Osaka's appeal lies in both its scale and diversity. As Japan's second-largest economic centre, the city combines dense urban energy with easy access to natural landscapes, including mountains, rivers and coastal areas. Within a relatively compact area, productions can achieve a wide range of looks — from contemporary metropolitan settings to traditional architecture and culturally significant sites — making Osaka a versatile stand-in for locations across Japan and the wider Asia region.

Infrastructure is another key strength. Kansai International Airport provides extensive global connectivity, while the city's hospitality sector and established screen industries offer a high level of support for visiting crews. The Council leverages this ecosystem to position Osaka as a production-friendly environment capable of accommodating projects of varying scale.

As international producers continue to explore Japan, the Osaka Film Council remains focused on promoting the city as an accessible, efficient and visually rich destination for global content creation. ■

— For more info: <https://www.osaka-fc.jp>



— **Kishiwada Castle is the closest Japanese castle to Kansai International Airport and a symbol of Kishiwada City. It was destroyed by a lightning strike in 1827, and the current main keep was reconstructed in 1954. The castle also features a beautiful garden.**





**The Naka River district offers views that epitomise Fukuoka, and the food stalls lining up along the river are a sight unique to the city.**



**Seaside Momochi is home to landmarks such as Fukuoka Tower and a waterfront park.**

## FUKUOKA

**T**he Fukuoka Film Commission is strengthening its position as a key regional hub for international film and television production in Japan, offering a combination of financial incentives, logistical support and location diversity. Covering Fukuoka City and 16 surrounding municipalities, the commission operates across a metropolitan area of 2.56 million people, positioning itself as the gateway to the island of Kyushu.

For incoming productions, the commission provides a comprehensive, one-stop service spanning location scouting, permit coordination and on-the-ground support throughout the lifecycle of a production — with local expertise helping to navigate both creative and logistical challenges.

Fukuoka's visual appeal lies in its balance of urban infrastructure and natural scenery. The area offers modern cityscapes, coastal environments and culturally rich settings within a compact and accessible region. Its connectivity is a further advantage, with international Fukuoka airport and major rail links supporting both domestic and international travel.

A key driver of growing interest is the region's production incentive, which offers rebates of up to 50% on qualifying local spend for projects meeting specific criteria, including minimum production budgets and on-screen representation of the city. Additional support for location scouting is also available in certain cases, further lowering barriers to entry.

As Japan continues to expand its appeal to global producers, the Fukuoka Film Commission is leveraging its flexibility, infrastructure and proactive support model to position the region as a competitive alternative to more established production centres. ■

— For more info: <https://www.fukuoka-film.com>

### INCENTIVES

**Subsidies for live-action/animated productions including feature films, TV series and animations. Covers 50% of eligible production expenses up to ¥10m with the requirement that the production spends more than ¥10m in Fukuoka City.**

## SAGA

**T**he Saga Prefecture Film Commission is leveraging screen production as a tool for regional revitalisation, positioning the southwestern region as both a filming destination and a driver of local engagement. Operating as a non-profit public organisation, the commission's remit extends beyond production support to encompass tourism promotion, cultural development and community participation. Located in northern Kyushu, Saga offers a distinctive mix of coastal and rural landscapes, with access to two seas — the Ariake Sea to the south and the Sea of Japan to the north — as well as agriculture and culturally significant sites. The prefecture is known for heritage crafts such as Arita and Imari porcelain, as well as its food culture and traditional festivals — ideal for filmmakers seeking authentic Japanese settings.

The commission supports a wide range of content, including feature films, television drama, commercials and digital media. Core services include location sourcing, permitting and co-ordination, as well as assistance with extras and local logistics. A defining feature of Saga's approach is its emphasis on community involvement. The commission actively encourages local residents to participate in productions. This strategy aligns with broader efforts to stimulate economic activity and tourism through screen exposure.

As Japan continues to expand its regional production footprint, Saga is positioning itself as a culturally rich, collaborative and production-friendly destination. ■

— For more info: <https://www.saga-fc.jp>

### INCENTIVES

**The Saga Prefecture Film Commission provides grants covering up to 100% of production costs — including accommodation and travel expenses — for domestic and international films and TV dramas shot in Saga Prefecture, up to a maximum of ¥5m.**

**Marchen-Mura in Takeo City, Saga Prefecture, is a very retro amusement park. The park's symbol is a slide that has been recognised as Japan's largest squirrel sculpture.**



**Togari Fishing Port is located in Kawasoe-town, Saga City, Saga Prefecture. Situated near the mouth of the Ariake Sea, where the tidal range is significant, it is a fishing port that reflects the character of Saga Prefecture, showcasing different facets depending on the time of day.**



— Incentives provided by film commissions: <https://www.japanfc.org/en/incentives-provided-by-fcs>

# Five Key Japanese Studios

Japan has several well-equipped studios offering state-of-the-art services, as well as a highly skilled local workforce. Here's an overview. BY VINCENT LE LEURCH

## KADOKAWA DAIEI STUDIOS / KADOKAWA DAIEI STUDIO CO., LTD.

**K**adokawa Daiei Studio, a wholly-owned Kadokawa subsidiary, is a Tokyo-based comprehensive film production facility. Dating back to 1933, the studio seamlessly blends Japanese cinema's golden-age traditions with cutting-edge technology. It provides true one-stop solutions, from planning, art production and studio rental to advanced post-production, including virtual production and VFX. The facility features nine studios, including the state-of-the-art stage G spanning over 10,853 sq ft (1,008 sqm). "Our greatest strength is the direct employment of numerous artisans — a unique set-up among Japanese studios," says the studio. "This enables us to smoothly complete everything from crafting to assembling high-quality sets on our expansive grounds. For feature films, global OTT content, and TV commercials, Kadokawa Daiei Studio remains dedicated to bringing creators' visions to life."

**Selected filmography:** *Gamera: Guardian of the Universe* (1995), *Shall we dance?* (1996), *Kubi* (2023)

**Contact:** 6-1-1 Tamagawa, Chofu City, Tokyo 182-0025

**Email:** studio-info@kd-st.co.jp

**Website:** <https://www.kd-st.co.jp/>



## TOEI STUDIOS (TOKYO & KYOTO) / TOEI COMPANY LTD.

**F**or over 75 years, Toei Studios has stood at the forefront of Japanese films/TV series, offering world-class production hubs in Kyoto and Tokyo. Toei Kyoto Studios (est. 1926) is Japan's premier site for jidaigeki (period dramas). Located in Japan's cultural heart, it offers unparalleled authenticity with Edo-era sets and master artisans. For international producers, Kyoto provides a seamless gateway to Japan's past, offering expert services in period-accurate costume design, stunt co-ordination, and set construction. Toei Tokyo Studios (est. 1935) is a high-volume powerhouse, boasting approximately 350 credits annually across feature films and TV episodes. It perfectly bridges tradition with future-tech, featuring Studio 11 — a cutting-edge virtual production stage — and industry-leading motion capture technology. From timeless historical epics to next-generation filmmaking, Toei provides a comprehensive, 'one-stop' ecosystem. Toei International Co-production team serves as a dedicated gateway to both studios.

**Selected filmography:** *Battles Without Honor and*

*Humanity* (1973), *The Bullet Train* (1975), *The Makanai: Cooking For the Maiko House* (series, 2023), *Kokuho* (2025)

**Contact:** 2-1, Kyobashi 2, Chuo-ku, Tokyo (HQ)

**Email:** [toeistudios@toei.co.jp](mailto:toeistudios@toei.co.jp)

**Websites:** <https://toeistudios.com/>

<http://studios.toei-kyoto.com/en/>

<https://www.toei.co.jp/en/>



## TOHO STUDIOS / TOHO CO., LTD.

**W**ith a total area of approximately 57,000m<sup>2</sup>, Toho Studios is one of the largest filming facilities in Japan. The premises have 10 soundstages equipped with simultaneous recording (including Japan's largest one), two post-production centres featuring world-class sound quality, production offices, green rooms, set construction, wardrobe, special make-up and a commissary, among other amenities to provide consistent support throughout filmmaking, from pre-production to post-production. Its history goes back to 1932. Since its early years, Toho Studios has given birth to many of Japan's most representative films, from most of Akira Kurosawa's works, including *Seven Samurai*, to giant monster films such as *Godzilla*. Now, Toho Studios aims to decarbonise 100% of all electricity used in its studios by introducing electricity generated from solar and hydrogen which does not emit CO<sub>2</sub>, gradually from 2024.

**Selected filmography:** *Seven Samurai* (1954), *Kagemusha* (1980), *Godzilla Minus One* (2023)

**Contact:** 1-4-1 Seijo, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, 157-8561

**Email:** [production@toho-tombo.com](mailto:production@toho-tombo.com)

**Websites:** <https://www.tohostudio.jp/en/>

<https://toho-tombo.com/>



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## SHOCHIKU STUDIO (KYOTO & TOKYO)

**S**hochiku began producing films in 1920. Since then, the company has produced many films, including many internationally acclaimed masterpieces, *Tokyo Story*, *Harakiri*, *The Twilight*

*Samurai*, etc. "We have dual production bases in Kyoto and Tokyo, so those allow filming all over Japan," says Shochiku. "In Kyoto, we have a legendary studio consisting of six sound stages and backlot, which can be based in western Japan and have excellent skills in period dramas. Shochiku Kyoto Studio is proud to present its backlot, which can flexibly accommodate all sorts of settings and is suitable for shooting scenes covering a wide span of eras from the days of samurais and ninjas to modern times. The Tokyo production team handles all filming throughout Japan, and also will meet your needs regarding all stages from development to post-production."

**Selected filmography:** *The Last Samurai* (2003), *The Assassin* (2015), *Silence* (2016), *Marry My Husband* (Japan version, 2025)

**Contact:** [Kyoto] 12-9 Uzumasa Horigauchi-cho, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto City. [Tokyo] 3F, Togeiki Building, 4-1-1 Tsukiji, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

**Email:** [hiromi\\_suzuki@shochiku.co.jp](mailto:hiromi_suzuki@shochiku.co.jp)

**Website:** <https://www.shochiku-ks.com/studio/>



## NIKKATSU CHOFU STUDIO

**N**ikkatsu owns and operates a studio complex in Chofu, Tokyo, with a total area of approximately 484,400 square feet (45,000 square metres), known as Nikkatsu Chofu Studio. The facility includes five soundstages and supports a wide range of productions — not only Nikkatsu titles but also feature films, TV dramas, commercials, music videos and streaming content. Since its completion in 1955, the studio has supported a wide range of productions for over 70 years. In addition to its soundstages, the studio is equipped with a post-production division, as well as an art department and a set construction division. In 2025, a new workshop dedicated to art and set construction was established, and the post-production division underwent renovations, including upgrades to the MA, Foley and ADR studios. ■

**Contact:** 2-8-12 Somechi, Chofu-shi, Tokyo 182-0023, Japan

**Email:** [nk-m@nikkatsu.co.jp](mailto:nk-m@nikkatsu.co.jp)

**Website:** <https://www.nikkatsu.com/studio/>





# Shooting in Japan, the how-to

In addition to a wide variety of landscapes and skilled workforce, Japan provides competitive incentives to productions willing to shoot there. BY VINCENT LE LEURCH

## Subsidies and more

The Large-scale Live-action Production Support Program, provided by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), aims to empower international hit live-action content and facilitate large-scale location shooting through strategic collaboration with overseas studios. This programme supports domestic location shooting and advanced post-production work, such as VFX, conducted by Japanese production companies under commission from, or in collaboration with, the guidance of overseas studios. Eligible entities include corporations established in accordance with Japanese laws, corporations that have the necessary organisational structure and personnel to properly carry out the indirect subsidy project, and that possess sufficient capacity to manage funds and related matters, and, of course, corporations applying for this subsidy. The corporations must meet all the three requirements. Eligible projects are those involving production or post-production within Japan, conducted in co-operation with or commissioned by overseas production companies. The main evaluation criteria start with a market evaluation consisting of corporate track record (maximum sales of a past work produced as a primary contractor  $\geq$  ¥1bn), followed by the production scale (total production cost is a bonus factor) and the production costs in Japan ( $\geq$  ¥800m) and funding ratio (committed funding from the applicant or other parties  $\div$  domestic production costs  $\geq$  50%). Another key element includes Japanese scenes (a bonus factor), with the duration in minutes of Japanese scenes shot on location in Japan, set in Japan, within the work. The incentive detail is as follows: 50% of eligible expenses with a maximum subsidy of ¥1.5bn per project. Eligible

expenses include: production and post-production (including localisation). In addition, the International Co-production Subsidy programme, supported by Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Japan, vows to support international co-productions, thereby promoting international exchange of talents and leading to the production and dissemination of Japanese films. It also promotes international cultural exchange through films and contributes to the promotion of Japanese films. Fiction feature films or animation at least 60 minutes long with eligible production costs equal to or greater than ¥100m are eligible. The subsidy amount is up to 20% of the eligible production costs within the out-of-pocket costs of the Japanese corporations/entities and the cost that incurred by the Japanese corporations/entities during the relevant fiscal year. There is a cap of ¥50m with eligible production costs between ¥100m to ¥300m. There is another cap of ¥100m with eligible production costs greater than ¥300m. Production costs include: script development costs, costs for cast and crew and production costs (printing related, shooting, lighting, location scouting, location costs, production design, visual effects, music, recording, post-production). This refers to the 2026 application cycle (closed in Feb 2026). Details for the 2027 cycle will be announced on Agency for Cultural Affairs website in early 2027 (Jan–Feb). ■

### For more info visit

— Japan Film Commission:  
<https://www.japanfc.org/>

— JL-DB Japan Location Database:  
<https://jl-db.nfaj.go.jp/>

— Japan Co-production Portal:  
<https://www.co-pro.unijapan.org>

## Shooting in Japan: The conferences at Marché du Film

### THE INCENTIVES AND PRODUCTION SERVICES FOR FILMING IN JAPAN

Presented by Executive Committee for Japan, Country of Honour 2026, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

Friday, May 15, 10.00-11.00  
Palais Stage & Online

Focusing on Japan as this year's Country of Honour, this session explores how expanded government incentive programmes, regional film commissions, and leading studios collaborate to support international productions. Through case studies and expert discussion, it highlights how Japan streamlines production and delivers high production value.

#### • Speakers:

**Naohiro Kaji** (Director of Culture and Creative Industries Division Commerce and Service Industry Policy Group, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry - METI), **Ichita Yamamoto** (Governor, Gunma Prefecture), **Sosuke Kobayashi** (Director on the Board, KADOKAWA DAIEI STUDIO CO., LTD.), **Mitsuru Shimada** (President, TOHO Studios Co., Ltd.), **Georgina Pope** (Head of Production, TOHO Tombo Pictures, Inc.), **Yuji Kojima** (Director of the Board, Head of Studio and Production Service, TOEI Co., Ltd.), **Satoshi Nagashima** (Director, SHOCHIKU Studio Co., Ltd.)

### THE POWER OF PLACE: MADE IN JAPAN

Presented by AFCI and JFC.

Saturday, May 16, 15:30-16:30  
Main Stage, Riviera & Online

Bringing together leading Japanese filmmakers, producers and policymakers, this Main Stage conversation explores how creative vision and production infrastructure intersect. From local incentives to global partnerships, the panel examines how Japan is positioning itself as a dynamic hub for international production.

• **Speakers:** **Ruriko Sekine** (Secretary General, Film Commissioner, Japan Film Commission), **Mariko Sugisaki** (Manager for Location, Tokyo Film Commission), **Shin Yamaguchi** (Founder, Producer, Knockonwood Inc.), **Ichita Yamamoto** (Governor, Gunma Prefecture)  
• **Moderator:** **Leon Forde** (CEO, Olsberg, SPI)

# Toshihiro Takahashi

REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTOR AND PRESIDENT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, **SHOCHIKU**

“Our strength lies in a sincere and nuanced portrayal of human nature”

One of the oldest Japanese studios, Shochiku is one of the key players of the industry. Its CEO shares his views and ambitions.

Considered as one of the Big Four studios in Japan, Shochiku has diversified its activities since its inception in 1895 as a brand. Says CEO Toshihiro Takahashi: "Shochiku's DNA has been shaped by 130 years of storytelling across Kabuki, theatre and film, grounded in our enduring spirit of craftsmanship. While preserving and cultivating Japan's cultural heritage, we have continued to take on new challenges and create entertainment that resonates with people in every era. Our strength lies in a sincere and nuanced portrayal of human nature, and in creating a distinctively Shochiku experience defined by emotional depth." Last year, the company enjoyed considerable success by adapting or distributing a number of international titles. "A key highlight in 2025 was the international rollout of *Tokyo Taxi*, directed by Yoji Yamada. Based on the 2022 French film *Driving Madeleine*, the film reflects the character-driven storytelling that defines our slate. It screened at major festivals including Rotterdam and Tokyo, and has secured distribution across multiple territories, particularly in Asia. At the same time, we have continued to expand our international acquisitions strategy post-pandemic, focusing on a diverse range of titles. Among the highlights were *The President's Cake*, which won both the Caméra d'Or and the Audience Award in the Directors' Fortnight, and Aardman Animations' *Shaun the Sheep: The Beast of Mossy Bottom*." Cannes holds no secrets for Toshihiro Takahashi. "Some of my most memorable experiences at Cannes have been in the Cannes Classics section. Screenings of *Momotaro*, *Sacred Sailors* in 2016 and Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story* in 2018 were particularly meaningful, as they provided an opportunity to present the legacy of Japanese cinema directly to international audiences. Cannes also remains a key hub for international



acquisitions. Through direct engagement with rights holders and producers, we have secured Japanese distribution rights to a wide range of standout titles, while continuing to build long-term relationships with global partners. What makes Cannes unique is its dual role as both a global showcase and a marketplace — where discovery and partnership happen side by side. We are looking for strategic

co-productions that can expand the global reach of the IP and creative assets we have developed over our 130-year history." He adds: "With Japan named Country of Honour at Cannes in 2026, we expect global interest in Japanese cinema to further accelerate. For Shochiku, this is an important opportunity, and we plan to use this momentum to present a wide-ranging slate — from classics to new releases. Our upcoming titles include *The Samurai and the Prisoner*, marking Kiyoshi Kurosawa's first period drama, as well as a new horror film by Takashi Shimizu. Both reflect Shochiku's distinctive creative identity." What does he hope for his company in 10 years' time? "We aim for Shochiku to be recognised globally as a distinctive entertainment company that bridges tradition and innovation. We will continue to strengthen our core businesses across film, theatre and Kabuki, while developing compelling IP that speaks to today's audiences. Through digital innovation and international partnerships, we seek to bring Japanese storytelling to a wider global audience." For the time being, his analysis of the current ecosystem is as follows: "The industry is undergoing significant structural change. The recovery of the theatrical market remains uneven across regions, continuing to impact box-office performance and investment decisions. At the same time, the growth of digital platforms, including SVOD, is reshaping traditional distribution models and windowing strategies. This makes it increasingly important to tailor release strategies on a title-by-title basis. Ongoing global economic and geopolitical uncertainty is also a factor we continue to monitor closely." ■

VINCENT LE LEURCH

## SHOCHIKU

Established in 1895, **SHOCHIKU** managed kabuki theatres in Kyoto. In 1920, the company entered the film production industry. It is one of Japan's Big Four film studios.

# Hiro Matsuoka

PRESIDENT & CEO, TOHO

## “Building Moments for Life”

In addition to the *Godzilla* character, which has been a key factor in its growth, the company — which will soon celebrate its centenary — is expanding both its domestic market and its international presence.

In 2032, Toho will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The company, founded by Ichizō Kobayashi, has grown from a simple cinema operator into one of Japan's leading production and distribution companies. According to its president, Hiro Matsuoka: "Our founding principle is 'to widely provide inspiring entertainment to the general public', a sentiment championed by our founder, Ichizō Kobayashi, nearly a century ago. As we continue to build on these ambitions in the modern day, we have adopted a new group slogan: 'Moments for Life'. The inspiration we create moves our audiences, and those moments, in turn, move us, fueling new inspiration. We call this our 'circle of inspiration,' where we are committed to creating value that serves as a source of strength in the lives of all our stakeholders. That is precisely the DNA that runs deep within every employee of the Toho Group." In 2025, the company enjoyed a string of successes at the cinema, enabling it to dominate the box office. "Last year, Japan's annual box-office revenue reached a record-high of ¥274.4bn [\$1.7bn], marking an unprecedented boom in the film market. Amid this growth, films distributed by the Toho Group also delivered record performance, reaching ¥160.5bn [\$1bn] in box-office revenue. Among them, *Kokuho* stood out as a major success that redefined the history of Japanese live-action cinema, with a significant impact both within and beyond the industry. At the same time, our overseas strategy has only continued to accelerate. Following the acquisition of U.S. distributor Gkids in 2024, we further expanded our global footprint by welcoming the UK-based anime distributor Anime Limited into the Toho



Group as a subsidiary at the end of last year. These efforts have helped us establish a robust global network, marking a major inflection point in our growth strategy." Toho's international ambitions are vast, driven by the character of *Godzilla*, one of the company's most prominent intellectual properties. "Last year, we expanded opportunities for people around the world to engage with our intellectual property, including the installation of the world's largest *Godzilla* monument at Haneda Airport, as well as the opening of *Godzilla* stores in Taipei and Malaysia. Looking ahead, as we continue to produce highly anticipated films such as *Godzilla Minus Zero*, we are also focused on maximising the value of our intellectual property through our hubs in the U.S., Europe and Asia. Through these efforts, we aim to increase our overseas revenue share to 30% by 2032." In addition, these efforts come with a new phase of digital transformation. "In March 2026, Toho launched Toho-One, [a] groundbreaking customer platform that unifies IDs across the Toho Group's services-including Toho Cinemas, one of Japan's largest membership networks, as well as our theatrical and merchandising businesses — which were previously operated independently. With the full-scale rollout of Toho-One, we are now able to engage directly with each fan through personalised, direct marketing. The platform will aid in rapidly incorporating valuable

feedback into our content planning and marketing strategies, and we aim to maximise the value of our content and deliver only the best entertainment to audiences worldwide." The Cannes Film Festival and the Marché du Film are very important to the company. Adds Hiro Matsuoka: "Selection at the festival enhances a film's international reputation and provides an opportunity to attract global attention. The Marché du Film is also one of the world's largest film markets and serves as a key venue for Toho to negotiate overseas distribution rights for its films and expand its international distribution network. In recent years, the international distribution of live-action and animated films has become a key pillar of our business, and Cannes has become an indispensable part of Toho's global strategy." The CEO has been attending the Cannes event since 1995. "[I] returned every year for the next two decades as a member of Toho-Towa, a wholly owned subsidiary of Toho. One of my fondest memories is the annual party hosted by the late Mr. and Mrs. Kawakita, the founders of Toho-Towa. Their hospitality was legendary, and the event became a beloved tradition where we gathered with friends and partners from around the world to discuss cinema over Japanese sake, sushi and yakitori." When asked about the major issue the industry is facing, Hiro Matsuoka stresses the necessity to build a sustainable production environment, AI and "establishing international frameworks and ensuring the protection of creators' rights will become a defining challenge for the entire industry". In 10 years he envisions for Toho, "a future in which our intellectual property, led by *Godzilla*, transcends language and borders to become a source of strength in the lives of people around the world. As Japanese creativity continues to reach new audiences worldwide, we hope Toho will remain at the heart of that story." ■

VINCENT LE LEURCH

## TOHO

Founded in 1932, **TOHO** is known as the producer of numerous *Godzilla* motion pictures and most of the classic films directed by Akira Kurosawa. **TOHO** is also the distributor of films, television programmes and home-entertainment products, the owner of movie theatres and the licensor of merchandising properties.

# Fumio Yoshimura

PRESIDENT AND CEO, **TOEI**



“We want to fill the world with stories”

© DR

**T**oei is one of Japan's leading entertainment companies, but this is the first time that Fumio Yoshimura, its President and CEO, is visiting Cannes. He says: "I feel truly honoured to have the opportunity to visit Cannes for the first time and am genuinely very excited — especially with Japan being named this year's Country of Honour. I look forward to encountering incredible films and filmmakers, absorbing as much as possible, and using this experience as a concrete stepping stone toward elevating Toei on the global stage." For Toei, having a presence at Cannes is a strategic priority, in the company's best interests. "The Cannes Film Festival and the Marché du Film are of the utmost importance to Toei as we continue to expand our content globally since we have the opportunity to discover outstanding films and filmmakers as well as to present our own works to highly discerning audiences. Toei was honoured to receive the Palme d'Or in 1983 for *The Ballad of Narayama* directed by Shohei Imamura. This remains among our greatest honours, and we strive to create more films worthy of being screened at Cannes." In Cannes, Fumio Yoshimura plans, among other things, to develop international co-productions. "We

are actively looking to work on international co-productions. Toei Kyoto Studios brings together specialists in period drama production, while our Tokyo Studios produce a wide range of content, from tokusatsu (live-action special effects) to horror, and is equipped with state-of-the-art virtual production facilities. By leveraging these assets, we aim to create content that will be embraced by audiences worldwide — works that can stand alongside productions such as *Shogun*." If asked to describe Toei's ambitions, Fumio Yoshimura would say: "We want to fill the world with stories." Toei has produced over 4,400 theatrical films, 39,000 broadcast TV episodes and 600 streaming episodes. "We are the only film studio in Japan to own sound stages in two cities and we work with many highly skilled artisans whose expertise spans a wide range of genres — including period dramas, hero series, horror, mystery, action and human drama. With this foundation, we have brought countless stories to life. While the forms of entertainment may evolve with the times, the stories themselves are timeless. Looking ahead, Toei will continue to create universally appealing stories in forms best suited to each era and deliver them to audiences around the world." Last year, Toei enjoyed a number of successes,

including "*The 35-Year Promise*, released in March, [which] was a box office success. It tells the story of an illiterate man who writes a love letter to his wife for the first time in his 35-year-long marriage, and it was well received not only in Japan but also overseas. In addition, with the latest installment of the *Kamen Rider* series, *Kamen Rider ZETZ*, we succeeded in establishing a simultaneous broadcast across many countries and regions worldwide, allowing the series to be made available without delay following its broadcast launch in Japan. We aim to continue bringing our content to audiences around the world." 2026 got off to a good start with "the period mystery film *Samurai Vengeance*, released in February. [It] has been a major hit. Period dramas remain a cornerstone of Toei Kyoto Studios, and we plan to produce more of these works in the coming years. In March, Kyoto Uzumasa Village, the theme park adjacent to Toei Kyoto Studios, re-opened following a significant renovation. By mobilising all of our filmmaking resources — including our art department, costumes, props and performers — we have created an immersive entertainment facility that transports visitors into the Edo period. We warmly invite you to experience it for yourself. We also have a diverse line-up of upcoming films, including the comedy *Goodbye My Car*, starring renowned Japanese actor Hiroshi Tachi. We hope you will look forward to our releases." Fumio Yoshimura makes no secret of his international ambitions. "Our ambition is to become a company whose content is loved by one in every 10 people around the world. We envision a future in which the content we create — tokusatsu, period dramas, horror and mystery — is embraced globally and where we collaborate with creatives from around the world to bring many such works to life at Toei's studios." He adds: "Our key challenges are to enhance our storytelling so that it resonates internationally, to elevate the skills and technical capabilities of our crew through international co-productions, and to create works that draw on Japan's unique originality and share them with the world. We believe that addressing these challenges is essential to successfully expanding our content globally." ■ **VINCENT LE LEURCH**

## TOEI

Founded in 1951, **TOEI**, headquartered in Tokyo, has produced over 4,400 theatrical films, 39,000 broadcast TV episodes and 600 streaming episodes.

# Takeshi Natsuno

CEO, KADOKAWA

“Our DNA is IP creation”

Specialising in intellectual property searches, the company is constantly seeking new partners to expand its business.

Since its inception in 1945, the powerful KADOKAWA Group has diversified its activities and now comprises some 60 companies. KADOKAWA's core business is the creation of intellectual property. "The DNA of KADOKAWA is IP creation," says Takeshi Natsuno, KADOKAWA's CEO. "We discover creators, nurture original stories and develop them across multiple formats — publishing, animation, film, games and digital platforms. What defines us is the combination of strong editorial sensibility and a long-term commitment to building franchises that can travel globally. In short, we are a company that creates stories and then expands their value through media mix and technology." Last year, the company stepped up its expansion across several continents. "In 2025, one major highlight was the acceleration of our global expansion. We acquired Edizioni BD in Italy, which strengthened our position in the European manga and light novel market. We also expanded our reach in Southeast Asia by acquiring SOZO, the company behind Anime Festival Asia, one of the region's most influential anime events. Internally, 2025 was also important because we established the Studio Business Division to strengthen the foundation of our animation and film production." And this year, KADOKAWA has decided to expand its presence in the animation and film industries. "In 2026, one of our biggest highlights is the next phase of strengthening our animation and film ecosystem. We announced Animec, a joint venture with Aniplex dedicated to anime film distribution and promotion, and we also announced Studio One Base, a new animation production hub scheduled to open in Ikebukuro in autumn 2026. These initiatives reflect our intention to reinforce both creation and distribution, while building a more sustainable production environment for the future." KADOKAWA is constantly on the lookout for creative and commercial opportunities. "We are looking for partners who believe in building IP for the long term. That includes co-production partners, financing partners, distributors, streamers and creative collaborators who want to



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work with Japanese stories in a way that respects their originality while making them resonate globally. We are especially interested in projects that can move across formats — film, animation, series, publishing, games and live experiences — and in collaborations that open new audiences in Europe, North America and Asia." That is why its presence in Cannes is essential. "The Cannes Film Festival and the Marché du Film are extremely important for us, adds Takeshi Natsuno. They are not only places to present projects, but also where the global film community gathers to exchange ideas, discover new talent and build long-term partnerships." Cannes is an

event the executive knows well. What does he enjoy most of all? Networking. "My best Cannes memories are always the conversations that happen between screenings and meetings — the unexpected moments when a project becomes bigger because different people from different countries see the same potential in it. That is what makes Cannes special: it is not only about celebrating cinema, but also about creating its future." Finally, when asked about the future of his company, Takeshi Natsuno gives a straightforward answer: "In 10 years, I would like KADOKAWA to be recognised not only as a leading Japanese content company, but as one of the world's most important IP companies. I want us to be a place where creators from around the world can build original stories with us, and where those stories can naturally grow into books, films, anime, games, and immersive experiences. Just as importantly, I would like us to be known for creating an environment where creators can continue producing great work with pride and sustainability." ■ VINCENT LE LEURCH

## ► KADOKAWA

Founded as a publishing company in 1945, **KADOKAWA GROUP** has now become a leading comprehensive entertainment company in Japan, with more than 60 companies in its group. The Group focuses on consistently creating intellectual property and globally expanding its diverse portfolio to publication, film, animation, games, user-generated content, and more.

# Japan: New records at the box office

More screens, more audiences, more films: in Japan, the cinema industry thrived in 2025. BY VINCENT LE LEURCH

The Japanese film industry in 2025 broke records and showed a strong recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. Annual box-office takings reached ¥274.4bn, a 33% increase compared to 2024, far exceeding the previous record set in 2019. This is the highest level since modern statistics began, and indeed in the entire history of cinema, given the limitations of comparison. Cinema attendance also rose sharply, with 188.75 million admissions (+31%), approaching the 2019 record. The average ticket price rose slightly, driven in particular by the rise in premium screenings (IMAX, etc.). Japanese films largely dominated the market with a 75.6% share, generating ¥207.5bn — a record since 2000 — whilst foreign films are growing but remain below their pre-pandemic levels. The sector is showing an overall recovery: compared to the pre-COVID period (2015–2019), total box-office takings are up by 20%, although foreign films remain behind. The range of films on offer is expanding, with 1,305 releases in 2025 (+115), including a sharp increase in foreign productions, a sign of Hollywood's resurgence. The number of screens also continues to grow. There were numerous box-office hits: 38 films grossed over ¥1bn, generating a combined total of ¥167.2bn. Japanese animation remains a major driving force, accounting for a significant proportion of the biggest hits, particularly among films grossing over ¥10bn. However, live-action films also performed very well. Two works in particular symbolise the year: *Demon Slayer*, a massive national and international hit grossing over ¥100bn worldwide, and *Kokuho*, a more artistic yet highly popular film, which set a record for a Japanese live-action film and gained international recognition. These successes illustrate the



global potential of Japanese content. As for foreign films, results are also improving, with more films exceeding ¥1bn. Overall, the balance between animation and live-action is tending to stabilise, although animation remains dominant in Japan. At the same time, the market for physical video media continues to decline, facing competition from the rise of streaming.

## 2025 BOX OFFICE OVERVIEW DATA

- **Admissions:** 188,756,000 people (130.7%)
- **Box Office Revenue:** ¥274,452m (132.6%):
  - Domestic Films ¥207,569m (75.6% of total/133.2% compared to previous year)
  - Foreign Films ¥66,883m (24.4% of total/130.7% compared to previous year)
- **Average Admission Fee:** ¥1,454 (101.5%) \$9.7
- **Number of Released Films:** 1,305 films (1,190 films previous year) :
  - Domestic Films 694 films (685 films previous year)
  - Foreign Films 611 films (505 films previous year)
- **Number of Movie Theatres:** 3,697 screens (3,675 screens previous year/100.6%)
- **Estimated Sales Amount by Theatrical Film Video Software:** Manufacturer Sales ¥31.6bn (68.4%) Breakdown: Sell-through ¥27.0bn (67.8%) Rental: ¥4.5bn (72.1%)
- **Film Export Results:** \$490,361 thousand (90.8%)

Source : MPPAJ

Rate: Approx. ¥150/\$1 (2025 avg.)

Exports of Japanese films remain significant, although they are expected to fall slightly by 2025, with fluctuations linked to international distribution methods. Japan now regards cultural content as a strategic sector. It aims to grow the international market for Japanese content to ¥20trn by 2033, with significant and increasing budgetary support. According to reports, the Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan (MPPAJ) highlights its role in this drive and has set out several priorities: strengthening international competitiveness (filming, financing) and protecting the industry (working conditions, combating piracy). ■

## THE JAPAN CINEMA MARKET AT A GLANCE

Year	Total Number of Movie Screens (Number of Movie Screens for Cinema Complex)	Number of films released			Number of admissions (in thousands)	Admission Fee (in yen)	Box Office Gross Receipts (in million yen)			Share (%)	
		Japanese Films	Imported Films	Total			Japanese Films	Imported Films	Total	Japanese films	Imported films
2020	3,616 (3,192)	506	511	1,017	106,137	1,350	109,276	34,009	143,285	76.3	23.7
2021	3,648 (3,229)	490	469	959	114,818	1,410	128,339	33,554	161,893	79.3	20.7
2022	3,634 (3,228)	634	509	1,143	152,005	1,402	146,579	66,532	213,111	68.8	31.2
2023	3,653 (3,244)	676	556	1,232	155,535	1,424	148,181	73,301	221,482	66.9	33.1
2024	3,675 (3,274)	685	505	1,190	144,441	1,433	155,800	51,183	206,983	75.3	24.7
2025	3,697 (3,305)	694	611	1,305	188,756	1,454	207,569	66,883	274,452	75.6	24.4

Source: Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan, Inc.



# Guillaume Esmiol

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
MARCHÉ DU FILM –  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



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"Each year, the Marché du Film shines a spotlight on a country whose creative energy, industry strength and international outlook help shape the future of cinema. Following recent editions celebrating nations such as Spain, Switzerland and Brazil, we are proud to welcome **Japan as our 2026 Country of Honour.**

With a cinematic heritage spanning more than a century, Japan has long stood as one of the world's most influential film nations. From the enduring legacy of master's such as Yasujiro Ozu and Akira Kurosawa to the remarkable vitality of today's filmmakers, Japanese cinema continues to inspire, innovate and resonate across borders. This year, the presence of **five Japanese films in the Official Selection** of the Festival de Cannes, is a powerful testament to the strength, diversity and global relevance of its creative voices.

The Marché du Film is honoured to host an ambitious and wide-ranging programme dedicated to Japan, designed to foster new collaborations and highlight the richness of its industry. Throughout the Marché, Japanese professionals will take part in key initiatives and events, with a special focus on animation and

genre cinema – two areas where Japan continues to lead globally. Among the highlights of this year's programme, we are proud to launch the **Japan IP Market**, a new initiative developed in collaboration with TIFFCOM. Bringing together leading Japanese IP holders and international industry players, this platform will open new avenues for adaptation, co-production and cross-media collaboration. The programme will also feature a **Japan Screening Day**, as well as a series of **conferences, showcases and networking events**, offering a comprehensive insight into the country's dynamic film and content ecosystem. Japan's strong and longstanding presence at the Marché du Film is also reflected in its institutional engagement, including JETRO and UniJapan. For

many years, **the Japan Pavilion at the Village International** has served as a key hub for international exchange. This enduring partnership continues to play a vital role in supporting Japanese companies on the global stage.

The vitality of Japan's industry is equally visible across the Market itself, with the Japan booth at the Palais des Festivals and a significant number of **Japanese sales companies** actively engaged in business throughout Cannes. More broadly, we have observed a clear growth in **Japanese participation** in recent years, with a level today significantly higher than before the pandemic. Since 2023, this momentum has translated into a strong and sustained return of Japanese professionals to the Marché, confirming Japan's central role in the international film landscape. As we celebrate Japan throughout this edition, we also look ahead to new collaborations, new talents and new stories yet to be shared. On a more personal note, it is a particular pleasure for me to welcome Japan in this role, and to see these cultural and creative connections continue to deepen. Welcome to Japan and I wish you all a very successful Marché du Film and an inspiring Cannes." ■

