

『箱男』
HAKO OTOKO
(THE BOX MAN)
Directed by Gakuryu Ishii

Press Kit as of Feb. 2024



INTRODUCTION

Kobo Abe is one of Japan's leading literary figures boasting a passionate global fan base, along with Yukio Mishima. Abe's works having been translated and sold in more than 20 countries. His 1973 novel, "The Box Man (Hako Otoko)" is considered one of his greatest masterpieces. The novel asks what happens when people deny proof of their own existence and was considered too challenging to depict visually due to its illusory narrative technique and perplexing content.

Several famous European and Hollywood film directors tried repeatedly to turn the novel into a movie but failed to get permission from Kobo Abe's side. The one person who was ultimately entrusted with the screen adaptation by Abe directly was Gakuryu Ishii (then Sosuke Ishii), a brilliant filmmaker at the forefront of Japanese indie cinema since his shocking debut work, "Crazy Thunder Road."

Production went ahead in 1997 with Ishii traveling to Germany to shoot in Hamburg. Unfortunately, the day before production was slated to start, filming suddenly came to a halt, sending the cast and crew home disappointed.

The project became a phantom for the next 27 years until 2024, when coincidentally on the 100th anniversary of Kobo Abe's birth, director Ishii finally realized his dream of filming "The Box Man." Moreover, as if predestined, the world premiere is scheduled to be held in Germany. The film stars Masatoshi Nagase and Koichi Sato, both of whom were cast 27 years ago. They are joined by the globally active actor, Tadanobu Asano, and an ensemble of some of Japan's greatest dramatic talent. The film introduces Ayana Shiramoto, who was selected from an audition of hundreds.

The time is finally ripe for this long-awaited film. "The Box Man" will be shown at the Berlin International Film Festival!

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Admiring the box man, who wears a cardboard box over his head and wanders the city, “Myself” decides to take his first step as the box man. However, the road to becoming the real one is not easy, with the Fake Doctor assailing him to take over its existence.

LONG SYNOPSIS

“The box man” is the final form human beings long for, free from everything thoroughly. Wearing a cardboard box over his head, the box man wanders around the city, peeks into the world one-sidedly through a peephole, fantasizes incessantly, and writes them all down in his notebook. One photographer, “Myself” (Masatoshi Nagase), is captivated by the box man he comes across on the streets and decides to take his first step by wearing a cardboard box and cutting out a peephole. However, the road to becoming the real one is not easy, with countless challenges and dangers coming his way. Fake Doctor (Tadanobu Asano) who prowls after “Myself” to take over the existence of the box man, General (Koichi Sato), who is in control of everything and tries to use the box man for a perfect crime, and Yoko (Ayana Shiramoto), a mysterious woman who tries to seduce “Myself.” Can “Myself” accomplish his dream and become the real box man?

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Gakuryu ISHII

Born 1957. In 1976, as a college student, Ishii formed and led an independent film group “Kyo-eisha,” and shot “Panick High School” with an 8mm film in 1978. In 1980, his feature “Crazy Thunder Road” made him the spearhead of Japanese New Wave and went on to create punkish avant-garde films such as “Burst City” (1982) and “Crazy Family” (1984). “Crazy Family” was selected for Berlin International Film Festival Forum Section and won the Grand Prix at 8th Salso Film Festival in Italy. He continues to amaze the world, with “Angel Dust” (1994), which won the Grand Prix at Birmingham Film Festival, and “Labyrinth of Dreams” (1997), which was invited to Berlin International Film Festival Panorama Section and won the Grand Prix at Oslo

International Film Festival. After shooting “Gojoe” (2000) and “ELECTRIC DRAGON 80000V” (2001), he changed his name to Gakuryu Ishii in 2010, and since then has directed numerous much-talked-about films, such as “Isn’t Anyone Alive?” (2012), “The Flower of Shanidar” (2013), “That’s It” (2015), “Bitter Honey” (2016), “Punksamurai Slash Down” (2018), and “Choujyo no Hanashi” (2023 / “almost people”).

ABOUT THE CAST

Masatoshi NAGASE

Born 1966. Nagase made his acting debut in 1983 in the movie “P.P. Rider,” then earned international fame after starring in Jim Jarmusch’s “Mystery Train” (1989). His career that followed included roles in many foreign films including “Autumn Moon” (2001, directed by Clara Law), “Cold Fever” (1995, directed by F.T. Fridriksson), and “Flirt” (1995, directed by Hal Hartley). He was the first non-Chinese to be nominated for a Taiwan Golden Horse best actor award for “KANO” (2015, dir. Umin Boya), and became the first Asian actor to be selected in competition at the Cannes International Film Festival for three consecutive years for “An” (2015, dir. Naomi Kawase), “Paterson” (2016, dir. Jim Jarmusch) and “Hikari” (2017, dir. Naomi Kawase). Other notable works include Director Ishii’s “GOJOE” (2000), “ELECTRIC DRAGON 80000V” (2001), “DEAD END RUN” (2003), “Bitter Honey” (2016) and “Punk Samurai Slash Down” (2018).

Tadanobu ASANO

Born 1973, Asano’s acting debut came in 1990 with “Swimming Upstream.” After appearing in Won Kar-Wai’s short film, “wkw/tk/1996@/7’ 55”hk.net” (1996), he appeared in many foreign pictures, including “Last Life in the Universe” (2003, directed by Pen-Ek Ratanaruang), which earned him the Upstream Prize for Best Actor at the 60th Venice Film Festival. He played a young Genghis Khan in Sergei Bodrov’s film “Mongol”, nominated for an Oscar in 2008 for Best Foreign Language Film. He then went on to appear in numerous Hollywood productions including the Marvel Studios’ “Thor” (2011, dir. Kenneth Branagh), “Battleship” (2012, dir. Peter Berg), “Thor:

The Dark World” (2013, dir. Alan Taylor), “Silence” (2016, dir. Martin Scorsese), “Thor: Ragnarok” (2017, dir. Taika Waititi), “Midway” (2019, dir. Roland Emmerich), and “Mortal Kombat” (2021, dir. Simon McQuoid). He appears in several of Director Ishii’s films, including “GOJOE “(2000), “ELECTRIC DRAGON 80000V” (2001), “DEAD END RUN” (2003) and “Punk Samurai Slash Down” (2018).

Ayana SHIRAMOTO

Born 2002, Shiramoto made her drama debut in the television series, “Second to Last Love”, followed by “Kamen Rider Amazons Season 2” on Amazon Prime (2017). She has played heroines on NHK’s “Shugoro Yamamoto Drama: Sabu” (2020), on stage with “DECADANCE-Taiyo no Ko” (2020), the movie “A Theater with a View” (2021) and the stage production of “Hell’s Paradise: Jigokuraku” (2023).

Koichi SATO

Born 1960. Debuted in 1980 with numerous TV and film roles including Kinji Fukasaku’s “Crest of Betrayal” (1994), “64 Part I” (2016, dir. Takahisa Zeze) winning a Japan Academy Award for Best Actor. His major works include: “Sukiyaki Western Django” (2007, dir. Takashi Miike), an official competitive category entry in the 64th Venice Film Festival, “Nobody to Watch Over Me” (2009, dir. Ryoichi Kimizuka), Best Screenplay winner at the 32nd Montreal World Film Festival; “Heaven’s Story” (2010, dir. Takahisa Zeze), FIPRESCI Prize winner at the 61st Berlin International Film Festival; “Dearest” (2012, dir. Yasuo Furuhata), World Competition invitee at the Montreal World Film Festival; “Okiku and the World” (2023), Big Screen Competition category selection at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, and “One Last Bloom” (2023), a Harbour programme invitee at the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Cast:

Masatoshi Nagase, Tadanobu Asano, Ayana Shiramoto / Koichi Sato
Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Yuko Nakamura, Yohta Kawase

Director: Gakuryu Ishii

Screenplay: Kiyotaka Inagaki, Gakuryu Ishii

Original Novel: “The Box Man” by Kobo Abe (Shinchosha)

Happinet Phantom Studios presents

In association with cogitoworks & THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN

A cogitoworks production

Produced by Keisuke Konishi, Tomohiko Seki

©2024 The Box Man Film Partners

2024 / Japan / Color / 120 min.

For inquires please contact:

Happinet Phantom Studios

Rie Hatano rie.hatano@hsn.happinet.co.jp

Yoshiko Nomura a07058@hsn.happinet.co.jp

Happinet Phantom Studios: <https://happinet-phantom.com>

Hako Otoko X (Twitter): https://twitter.com/hakootoko_movie