

## Press Release



### Mystery Classics by Nakagawa Nobuo in the *Forum*

The Berlinale *Forum* revives its Midnight Screenings with nine classic genre films from the fifties and sixties by the Japanese master director Nakagawa Nobuo.

Nakagawa (1905-1984) began in 1929 as a director's assistant and scriptwriter. From 1934 on, he directed his own films – nearly 100 in almost every genre. In his most productive phase in the 1950s and '60s, he made primarily ghost, crime, and horror movies. Nakagawa worked within the Japanese studio system, but nonetheless developed his own signature as author in his genre films. He stages his anti-heroes – crooks, yakuza, and femmes fatales – with recurring poetic motifs and a symbolism shaped by the world of Japanese ghosts and myths.

The screening in the framework of the *Berlinale* invites viewers to make a discovery that seems overdue, considering the current Japanese horror film trend triggered by such films as *Ring (Ringu)* and *Dark Water (Honogurai mizu no soko kara, 2002 in the Panorama)*. Nakagawa's films were also stylish predecessors of the B-movies that Hammer Films in England and Roger Corman produced from the fifties on. This retrospective was first shown to mark Nakagawa's 100th birthday at the Tokyo Filmex Festival 2005.

The *Forum's* selection reflects the stylistic spectrum of Nakagawa Nobuo's films. In *Lynch (Rinchi, 1949)*, a classic of Japanese "film noir", a yakuza released from prison does not succeed in remaining law-abiding. In *A Wicked Woman (Dokufu Takahashi Oden, 1958)*, the protagonist swears to wreak vengeance on all men for the death of her daughter and becomes a demon. *Ghost Story of Yotsuya (Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan, 1959)* is probably the best-known film version of the classic play "Yotsuya Kai" by Tsuruya Namboku. The film is a stylistic highlight of the ghost film and established the image of the ghost as a woman with long black hair, clothed in traditional white.

With *The Mansion of the Ghost Cat (Borei Kaibyō Yashiki, 1958)* and *The Lady Vampire (Onna Kyuketsuki, 1959)*, Nakagawa adapted two horror novels by Soto Tachibana. In his masterpiece *Jigoku (1960)*, tragic accidents and doppelgänger motifs finally culminate in a depiction of a real hell. Also shown are the mystery crime story *Dandy Sashichi Detective Story – Six Famous Beauties (Ningyō Sashiichi Torimonocho Yoen Roku Shibijin, 1956)*, the neorealistic *Kaachan ('Nendo no Omen' yori: Kaachan, 1961)*, which plays in postwar Tokyo, and the swordfighting drama *Okatsu the Avenger (Yoen Dokufuden: Hitokiri Okatsu, 1969)*.

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