



KAMATAKI

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KAMATAKI
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a film by
CLAUDE GAGNON

starring
MATT SMILEY
TATSUYA FUJI
KAZUKO YOSHIYUKI
LISLE WILKERSON
NAHO WATANABE
CHRISTOPHER HEYERDAHL

Art Director
KIYOSHI SEY TAKEYAMA

Director of Photography
HIDEHO URATA

Lighting Director
YOSHIO TSUNETANI

Sound
KAZUYOSHI KAWASHIMA
JEAN-CHRISTOPHE VERBERT
LOUIS COLIN

Original Music Score
JORANE

Executive Producer
NOBUO ISOBE

Producers
YURI YOSHIMURA
SAMUEL GAGNON
TORU KANZAKI

Written, directed and edited by
CLAUDE GAGNON

Produced with the financial participation of

SODEC
Société de développement des entreprises culturelles - Québec

The Government of Canada
Canadian Film & Video Production Tax Credit program

WHAT IS KAMATAKI?

Kamataki is the operation of firing the pottery work into the wooden kiln for several continuous days and nights. A very tough but exhilarating process.

SYNOPSIS

KEN, a 22-year-old North American man, lost his father and his desire to live. He attempts suicide but miraculously survives a deadly plunge off a bridge. His mother feels that an estranged Japanese uncle is the only person who can help him find what he has lost. Uncle Takuma is a world famous potter. Eccentric and unpredictable he lives by his own unconventional moral standards. He is an opposite of Ken's late father. Takuma's shock treatment of sake, mystery, sexual tension and art succeeds in stirring his nephew's curiosity. Will those sparks be enough to rekindle Ken's inner flame and make it as strong as the flame of Takuma's wood-fired kiln?

CHARACTERS

KEN-ANTOINE

A young man of 22, troubled by the loss of his father. A medical student with good grades, but no 'joie de vivre'. A quiet boy, with a touch of a menace. Under those soft eyes, rests a deep sorrow and curtness towards the outside world. Unable to deal with his emotions, Ken tries to solve his problems by jumping off a bridge in the midst of a cold winter--however, he miraculously survives. The physical shock does not rekindle his desire to live. His mother decides to try the cultural shock as the last resort. Ken finds himself in Japan in the company of an eccentric Japanese uncle he never met. Will uncle Takuma manage to turn him around?

TAKUMA

The true artist's spirit. Takuma lives from moment to moment to moment, working on his ancient technique of pottery firing. A man who loves everything that screams tacky and non-conformist. His unusual ways had him part with his brother a long time ago when Ken was just a kid. Moral standards, a non-issue, Takuma takes his friends and family for who they are. A man with a strong love for nature, simplicity and the art of being.

KARIYA SENSEI

Widow of Takuma's late master potter; Kariya Sensei is the pure essence of natural beauty. She has aged with grace and honor, still keeping the inner child hidden behind her mystic eyes that spell 'young and free'. Everything that she does, is done with ease and calmness, a sheer indication of her long daily rituals of Qi-Gong and meditation. Her close relationship with Takuma remains a deep mystery, as is, just about anything about her. She remains, a mystic character to be discovered and appreciated.

RITA

A tall, athletic American woman, Rita has been studying the ancient firing techniques of Japanese traditional pottery, the art of Kamataki. She has been Takuma's apprentice for five years, helping him with his particular style and creativity. A profound respect for her master sheds light on the levels of appreciation found in the Japanese culture of apprenticeship. Rita is rough around the edges, a bit of a hippy with a desire to find herself through her art.

AUNT MIO

At the age of 34, Mio is a bouncy bundle of joy, fully capable of keeping up with her lover's eccentric personality. Mio is not offended by Takuma's way of living, in fact, they embrace a life of casual relationships, deep rooted with a strong love for each other. An artist in her own right, Mio practices the art of Taiko drums, only a small indication of her wild side.

SCOTT

An American potter who wishes to work as an apprentice for Takuma in order to learn the ancient technique and bring it back home. His beliefs and ways of creating pottery might be wonderful but his attitude could be better.

DIRECTOR

Biography

Claude Gagnon spent an entire decade in Japan in the 70's. With his first feature, "Keiko" (1979), he became the first and only foreigner ever to receive the Japanese Association of Film Director's prize for Best Film. Back to Canada in the 1980's, Gagnon and his wife Yuri Yoshimura founded their own film company Aska Film.

The Grand Prize of the Americas at 1987 World Film Festival in Montreal was given to Claude Gagnon's "The Kid Brother" (Kenny) with a unanimous decision of the Jury. Never before nor after in the 27 year history of the Montreal World Film Festival did this prize go to a Canadian director. "The Kid Brother" (Kenny) also received the UNESCO prize at the Berlin Film Festival as well as many other prizes and was sold to over 40 territories.

In 1994, TF1 entrusted a major project to Gagnon. In addition to directing and co-producing, he co-wrote the screenplay of "Pour L'amour de Thomas", (For the Love of Thomas), a prime-time feature with Brigitte Fossey, that scored 38,2% share on TF1.

He wrote and directed his last two feature films to date in Japan, Revival Blues in 2003 and Kamataki in 2005, featuring Japanese stars such as Tatsuya Fuji (Realm of the Senses and Realm of Passion) and Kazuko Yoshiyuki (Realm of Passion).

Filmography

1978 – KEIKO (117 minutes)
Director / Writer / Editor
35mm feature film / Japan

- 1981 – LAROSE, PIERROT ET LA LUCE** (102 minutes)
Director / Writer / Editor
35 mm feature film / Canada
- 1985 – VISAGE PÂLE**<Pale Face> (101 minutes)
Director / Writer / Editor
35mm feature film / Canada
- 1986 – KENNY** (100 minutes)
Director / Writer
35mm feature film / Japan-Canada-United States
- 1991 – THE PIANIST** (90 minutes)
Director / Writer
35mm feature film / Canada-Japan
- 1994 – POUR L'AMOUR DE THOMAS** (99 minutes)
Director / Co- Writer
Super 16mm / Canada-France (TF1)
- 2003 – REVIVAL BLUES** (114 minutes)
Director / Writer
35mm feature film (shot with DVCAM) / Canada-Japan
- 2004 – DAN AND THE SUPERDOGS**
Director: André Melançon
Original idea and script
35mm feature film / Canada
- 2005 – KAMATAKI** (110 minutes)
Director / Writer / Editor
35mm feature film (shot with HDCAM) / Canada-Japan

Prizes

KEIKO

Best Young Director

- Japanese film directors Association (Japan)

Official Competition

- World Film Festival, Montreal, 1979 (Canada)

Special Jury Prize

- Hochi Newspaper (Japan)

Third Best Film of the Year

- Kinemajumpo Magazine (Japan)

PALE FACE (Visage Pale)

International Press Award

- World Film Festival, Montreal, 1985 (Canada)

Nominated for Best Film in French Speaking World

- Ceasar (France)

THE KID BROTHER

Grand Prize of the Americas

- World Film Festival, Montreal, 1987 (Canada)

Unesco Award

- Berlin Film Festival, 1988 (Germany)

Unicef Special Award

- Berlin Film Festival, 1988 (Germany)

Prix Spécial Du Jury

- Festival des films pour la Jeunesse, Paris, 1988 (France)

Special Prize of the Jury

- Moscow International Film Festival for Children and Youth, 1989 (Russia)

Best Film of the Festival

- Moscow International Film Festival for Children and Youth, 1989 (Russia)

CAST

MATT SMILEY (KEN-ANTOINE)

Matt Smiley is a young actor making waves in the industry since his starring role in "Kamataki". Multi-talented and well rounded in all aspects of the craft, having studied traditional theater in France, USA and in Canada. Matt has appeared in a few MOW's, TV series and a slew of commercials in Canada. He is already being signed up for roles in future productions.

TATSUYA FUJI (TAKUMA)

Tatsuya Fuji, one of Japan's most acclaimed actors. Starring in Nagisa Oshima's « Realm of the senses » in 1976 and « Realm of Passion » in 1978. He has recently appeared in the Cannes Official Selection in the film « Bright Future » by director Kiyoshi Kurosawa. Tatsuya Fuji has appeared and starred in over 100 films.

KAZUKO YOSHIYUKI (KARIYA SENSEI)

The highly respected Kazuko Yoshiyuki is one of Japan's most renowned actresses. She co-starred in Nagisa Oshima's « Realm of the Passion » next to Tatsuya Fuji. She was also in Takeshi Kitano's « Kikujiro's Summer » in 2000. Kamataki is the first film that she and Tatsuya Fuji have done together since « Realm of the Passion ».

LISLE WILKERSON (RITA)

Born in the United States, Lisle immigrated to Japan at an early age. She has worked in the Japanese entertainment industry for over 20 years. Her background consists of mainly radio DJ/TV/ and voice acting. She appeared in Sofia Coppola's highly acclaimed « Lost in Translation ». The role of Rita in « Kamataki » is her first important role in a film.

NAHO WATANABE (AUNT MIO)

Stage actress and director, this wonderful actress makes her movie debut in KAMATAKI.

CHRISTOPHER HEYERDAHL (SCOTT)

Very prolific screen actor. He shares his time between Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Shooting constantly in various feature films and television series. Recently seen Chris in such productions as « Blade: Trinity » (2004), « Catwoman », « Stargate Atlantis: Rising » and « The Chronicles of Riddick ».

CREW

PRODUCERS

Yuri Yoshimura, Samuel Gagnon and Toru Kanzaki

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Nobuo Isobe

ALL THE POTTERY WORK AND THE KAMATAKI (FIRING) SUPERVISION

Shiho Kanzaki

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Hideho Urata

LIGHTING DIRECTOR

Yoshio Tsunetani

ART DIRECTOR

Kiyoshi Sey Takeyama

SOUND

Kazuyoshi Kawashima

Louis Colin

EDITOR

Claude Gagnon

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND EDITOR

Takako Miyahira

BEHIND THE SCENES

What is Kamataki?

KAMATAKI (Firing the pottery) by Anagama

ANAGAMA - The oldest kiln in Japan.

The anagama is the oldest and most widely used wood fired kiln in Japan.

These kilns and the "no glazing" technique of producing ceramic works are unique and exclusive to the Japanese culture. In this process the works are wad stacked into the kiln as unfired clay.

During the firing, the fly ash from the burning wood is carried through the kiln by the flame, and as the temperature reaches red to white heat, the stickiness of the melting clay causes the ash to attach to the wares and melt into a natural ash glaze. Since extreme temperatures are required to achieve this condition, these firings are traditionally 8 to 10 days long with the stoking of wood occurring every six minutes. The works produced during the Momayama area in Shigaraki, one of the six ancient kiln sites of Japan, are the most beautiful historical examples of this technique.

Because of the severity and unpredictability of the results of these firings, by 1600 A.D. the anagamas were replaced by noborigama multi chambered kilns that could produce 100 times more work of a consistent result in just two days of firing. Shiho Kanzaki, along with three other potters of central Japan, reintroduced anagamas and the no glazing techniques to the world for the making of ceramic art works in the early 1970's.

Profoundly imprinted as a child by his fathers love for the ancient wares, Shiho Kanzaki has refined this technique to the highest level in the contemporary world.

ABOUT THE POTTER SHIHO KANZAKI

SHIHO KANZAKI – Artist

Shiho Kanzaki was born in 1942 in Shigaraki, Japan. He was graduated from law school at Kansai University in 1964, and for the next two years studied to prepare to take the lawyers exam. But his mind and heart couldn't forget the images of the old Shigaraki anagama no glaze wares his father had so exuberantly shown his small son Shiho in the antique shops around their town.

By 1965 the attraction to ceramics was just too much and Shiho chose " for reasons of freedom" to become a ceramic artist. He established a studio in Osaka and lived in Shigaraki until 1969 when the father-son philosophies on art and life became too strained and his father disowned Shiho. For the next four years, Shiho, his wife Keiko and their daughter Yuki lived a meager life in Osaka. With the help of friends, a different name, long hair and a beard to conceal his identity, Shiho moved back to Shigaraki and built his first anagama kiln in 1973. An austere life style of difficulty that, in Shiho's

words, included a pottery workshop (3 tsubo) hut with galvanized steel sheets over a log scaffolding structure with a fire pit in the center and one kerosene lamp provided the space to produce pottery. "Even if I had a rough life, I was simply satisfied with having built the anagama I'd dreamed of for a long time on the Shigaraki mountain- though my life was very poor from other people's point of view". Two five-day firings of not so good results were done in 1973.

But in the spring of 1974, an eight-day firing using wet wood and employing the cross hatch stoking technique produced exciting results. The Iga works closest to the fire had intense charred surfaces of purple with glazes of deep green and blue with milky white streaks. Shigaraki ware back through the kiln had flowing waves of natural ash glaze with layers of various colors and tonality. Kanzaki relates the unloading of this kiln, " I was afraid of looking inside, and yet I wanted to see it soon. I put my shaking hands through the fire mouth and firmly grabbed the work. The old Iga-Shigaraki was in my hands, without a doubt it was in my hands. Through the heat on my hands I felt a wave of joy spreading in my whole body. My dream became a reality". From that time as more and more people discovered the power of the art work being produced at this work shop (Mukai-yama), Kanzaki's works have been exhibited extensively throughout Japan and as the saying goes, the rest is history. Today Shiho Kanzaki's work is in more than 4,000 collections in Japan and Europe. Since 1993 he has also attracted the attention of the American art community and enjoys a respected relationship with many people and institutions in North America. His works remain the best of this of this medium.