

The 15th Japanese Film Festival

17—27 November

This year's Japan Film Festival in Sydney features 30 movies—with two films for every one of its 15 years, it's the biggest ever JFF to hit Sydney!

And the 15th JFF will be bringing many recent hits and stars of Japanese film to Sydney.

Comedy, samurai, drama, action, romance, sci-fi, anime, true story and documentary – this year there definitely should be something for everyone. And, all 30 movies are Australian premieres.

The festival begins on a light note. **The opening night film** is *A Ghost of a Chance* [top right]. Part of the Koki Mitani “King of Comedy” Retrospective, the court-room comedy drama sees defence lawyer Emi (played by Eri Fukatsu, Best Actress at the 34th Montreal World Film Festival for *Villain* also at JFF) having to defend a man charged with murdering his wife and his only witness is the 421-year-old ghost, Rokubei (Toshiyuki Nishida). Probably best known to many Australians as the character Pigsy in the *Monkey TV* series, veteran actor Nishida stars in three other films featured at JFF: *Space Battleship Yamato*, *Star Watching Dog* and *The Magic Hour*. *The Magic Hour* and *Suite Dreams* are the two other films in the Mitani comedy retrospective.

The **samurai movie genre** shows no sign of waning and there are four in the JFF line-up. While the traditional samurai movie is represented by *The Last Ronin*, gender roles are reversed in *The Lady Shogun and Her Men* [bottom left] in a movie described as ‘samurai, comedy, alternate history and romance’! *A Boy and His Samurai* and *Abacus and Sword* both follow less conventional samurai narratives.



What if your only alibi is a 421-year-old ghost?

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Osamu Tezuka's manga classic *Buddha* now an anime

© Yasuomi Ishito/Toei Animation © 2011 Toei & Tezuka Productions



The key to survival is the courage to start again

© “Yamakoshi: The Recovery of a Tiny Japanese Village” Film Partners



A female shogun in charge of Edo (Tokyo)?

© The Lady Shogun and Her Men Film Partners

Animation is now a pillar of Japanese cinema. This year JFF has the latest Studio Ghibli film, *Arrietty*, a story about a family of 10cm tall ‘borrowers’ who create their homes from borrowed human household items. The anime is co-produced by animation master Hayao Miyazaki (*Spirited Away*, *Laputa*) who also wrote the screenplay. *Buddha: the Great Awakening* [bottom right] brings to the screen Osamu Tezuka's classic manga series telling the story of the life of Buddha—a series that was 10 years in the making and has sold 20 million copies worldwide.

Special guests in Sydney include the director Hideyuki Hirayama and lead actor Yutaka Takenouchi who will promote their latest film *Oba, the Last Samurai*, which is based on a story set during the Battle of Saipan (1944-45) as documented by US marine Don Jones. Director Hirayama has another film in the JFF, *Shin-san: a Serenade in a Coalmine Town*, and Takenouchi, something of a heartthrob in Japan, also has the lead in *A Honeymoon in Hell: Mr & Mrs Oki's Fabulous Trip*.

Donations raised from screenings of *Yamakoshi: The Recovery of a Tiny Japanese Village* [top left] and *The Town's Children* will go towards Save the Children to help the children of Japan. *Yamakoshi's* cinematographer Hiroataka Matsune and *The Town's Children's* director Tsuyoshi Inoue will also be special guests of JFF.

Special guests will be appearing at screenings of their films.

For schedules, synopses, ticketing and other JFF updates, see

www.japanesefilmfestival.net/15th/