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TAKESHI
(Childhood Days)
A film by Masahiro Shinoda

少年時代



Background to the Film

The originating spark for this film appeared after Fujio Fujiko read the award winning writer Hyozo Kashiwabara's novel *The Long Road*, a true story based on his own boyhood experience of being evacuated to the countryside in the final year of the war. Fujiko also shared the evacuation experience in an area near to where Kashiwabara was sent and the novel has held a fascination for him in the many years since he first began reading it. Fujiko took poetic license with his version and added a few experiences of his own to round out the characters. From the very beginning of Fujiko's comic series he dreamt of the day when it would be a full-length feature film and now, as producer of the film, he has seen a number of his dreams come to fruition.



The screenwriter Taichi Yamada, like many others of his generation, was also evacuated and was again able to draw on his own experiences in creating this moving film.

The very best staff were recruited for the project and Fujiko brought together a technically superb team in cinematographer Tatsuo Suzuki and Art Director Takeo Kimura.



The casting for the film was a long and time consuming process until the right mixture of talent was chosen. The character of the local gang-leader, Takeshi, is played by Yuji Horioka. Yuji's other passion is soccer and he never intended to become an actor

which makes his brilliant and technically praiseworthy performance all the more remarkable. Tetsuya Fujita who plays the evacuee, Shinji, put in his best performance to date and



won the respect of the entire cast and crew. The adults in the film are well-represented by the veterans, Shima Iwashita, Choichiro Kawarazaki and Shinsuke Ashida.

Shooting took place on location in Toyama prefecture from the summer of 1989 until the spring of 1990.



Director's Profile

Masahiro Shinoda

Veteran Japanese film director Kon Ichikawa once said of the younger Masahiro Shinoda, "his work has such a personal freshness and so brilliant a style that he is assured a place in Japanese film history."

Born in 1931, Shinoda made his directorial debut in 1960 at the Shochiku studios. Three years later he made *Pale Flower*, a film now generally considered his best. Later Shochiku films include the excellent *Assassination* and the Kawabata-based *Beauty and Sorrow*. In 1969 he reached out to an international audience with the famous *Double Suicide*.

As film historian Audie Bock has noted: "Shinoda's aesthetic concerns ... are close to Mizoguchi's fatalism cast in exquisite beauty." And the master director does indeed remain an ideal for the younger.

He also has a special admiration and respect for the Edo-period playwright Monzaemon Chikamatsu whose work he used in both *Double Suicide* and *Gonza the Spearman*.

Takeshi, the latest film by Shinoda was preceded by the

successful German-Japanese joint production, *Dancer*. Shinoda has previously covered the subject of youth in war with the 1984 production *MacArthur's Children*, a film which began on the day the of the Japanese surrender and covered the interval between surrender and occupation by the Allied forces. By contrast, Takeshi covers the final year of the war and ends with the Japanese defeat.

Director of over thirty feature as well as many noteworthy documentaries, Shinoda's strong visual style with its pronounced emphasis on pictorial beauty displays a concern for the meaning of the past which is rare in cinema.



Producer's Profile

Fujio Fujiko (A)

Fujio Fujiko (A) (Motoo Abiko) born in 1934, is one of Japan's major animators. He made his debut in 1952 and from that point on has had a major influence in his chosen field. His character series Hattori the Ninja and Saru, the Pro-Golfer appeal to a wide age-group of fans. His current character, *The Laughing Salesman* has racked up tremendous sales in both book and TV animation incarnations.

Fujiko's works have almost all been made into either animation films or TV series and have enjoyed huge success. Takeshi marks a change in profession for Fujiko who, in addition to his usual role of creating in comic form the original story, went on to produce the film version of Takeshi. Long a film-buff, Fujiko has followed Masahiro Shinoda's career right from the very beginning and he still remains one of Shinoda's greatest fans. Fujiko had long wanted his version to be born again on the big screen and when Shinoda expressed interest in the project Fujiko quickly signed on as producer.

The Story

By 1944 Douglas MacArthur had retaken the Philippines. With the Japanese army suffering defeat at the hands of the Allies in Saipan and Guam it was obvious to most that Japan was losing the war. The U.S. B-29 bombers had almost complete freedom of the skies as they continued in their attempt to bomb the Japanese into surrender.



Orders went out to evacuate the nation's schoolchildren from the big cities to the countryside. The children of the large cities were evacuated either on a class basis or else to the homes of country friends and relatives. This film is the story of a young Tokyo boy evacuated to the Japan Sea-side prefecture of Toyama. It is a tale of the final year of the war he spends there among the local boys and it ends with his relocation back to Tokyo at war's end.



In the late summer of 1944, the 5th grade elementary school pupil Shinji Kazama is escorted by his mother to his father's hometown in far-off Toyama Pref. There he is lodged in the large old house of his uncle and aunt who have lost their boy in the war. The local boys are all very interested in the, at the time, novelty of an evacuee. Takeshi Ohara is the leader of the local gang of boys. In addition to being a good student, Takeshi is also class captain in spite of the fact that his family are paupers.



One day Takeshi asks Shinji to be his friend. To Shinji, who was dreading being ostracized, it is wonderful to have the chance to be friends with the most popular boy in school. When the two boys are alone together they share a warm friendship and mutual respect but when others join their play Takeshi turns into a mean and nasty tormentor of Shinji and even encourages the others in the gang to bully him. Shinji spends each day in a love-hate relationship with Takeshi.



One day in winter Takeshi heads for the neighboring town to collect a package from Tokyo. Shinji is unaware that a fierce rivalry exists between the boys of the two towns and when Takeshi hears that he has gone by himself, the local boy makes a supreme effort to intercept him before the local toughs have a chance to beat up on the unsuspecting Shinji. Just as Takeshi fears, the local gang has already cornered Shinji and are about to start beating him up when Takeshi arrives on the scene. Takeshi and Shinji manage to fight their way free and to kill time while they are hiding from the boys they decide to get their photograph taken. In the waiting room of the studio, Shinji wonders out loud why Takeshi would come to his aid and yet be the very one responsible for the bulk of his torment. Takeshi roughly pushes Shinji's head against the floor and in tears tells him he doesn't know why he does what he does.

Spring rolls around and Sudo, a former vice-captain of the class is released from hospital. He takes pity on Shinji as well as resenting Takeshi's arrogant posturing. Sudo secretly lays plans to force Takeshi out as leader. Shinji is asked to join the plotters and along with more than half of the class joins the successful coup. Takeshi is given a beating he'll long remember and from then on the others either ignore him or take pleasure in tormenting him.



Shinji takes pity on him and offers to be friends again but the proud Takeshi rebuffs his advances.



Japan surrenders to the Allies and once the initial shock wears off, Shinji is ready to go back to his home in Tokyo. His classmates all come to the station to see him off but Shinji misses Takeshi most of all. The train starts up and as it begins the long journey to Tokyo we see Takeshi running alongside the train, only stopping to wave when it starts pulling away. As the train enters a tunnel the sepia photograph of the two boys fades in as the credit titles roll. (1 HR. 57MIN.)



TAKESHI

(Childhood Days)

A film by Masahiro Shinoda

Production Staff

Executive Producer..... Fujio Fujiko®
Directed by..... Masahiro Shinoda
Screenplay by..... Taichi Yamada
Original Story..... Hyozo Kashiwabara
(The Long Road)
..... Fujio Fujiko® (Shonen Jidai)

Cinematographer Tatsuo Suzuki
Art Director Takeo Kimura
Musical Director Shinichiro Ikebe

Cast

Tetsuya Fujita as..... Shinji Kazama
Yuji Horioka..... Takeshi Ohara
Katsuhisa Yamazaki..... Futoshi Tanabe
Noritake Kohinata..... Kensuke Sudo
Atsuko Koyama Minako Saeki

Shima Iwashita as..... Shizue Kazama
Toshiyuki Hosokawa..... Shusaku Kazama
Choichiro Kawarazaki Tatsuo Kazama
Kazuyo Mita Shige Kazama
Nobuko Sendo Akiko Tanabe
Mitsue Suzuki..... Masa Kazama
Takashi Tsumura..... Mr. Masuda
Shuji Ohtaki Stationmaster
Shinsuke Ashida Headmaster
Kyosen Ohashi Photographer

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