

Document Citation

Title	Yumeji
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Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1991 Jun 03
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Yumeji, Suzuki, Seijun, 1991

YUMEJI (JAPANESE)

A Genjiro Arato Pictures production. Produced by Genjiro Arato. Directed by Seijun Suzuki. Screenplay, Yozo Tanaka; camera (color), Junichi Fujisawa; editor, Akira Suzuki; music, Kaname Kawachi, Shigeru Umebayashi; art direction, Notiyoshi Ikeya. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (Un Certain Regard), May 18, 1991. Running time: 128 MIN.

Yumeji Takehisa Kenji Sawada

Also with: Tomoko Mariya, Yoshio Harada, Tamasaburo Bando, Masumi Miyazaki, Reona Hirota, Kazuhiko Hasegawa.

“Yumeji” is a flat biopic of the Japanese artist and poet Yumeji Takehisa, a playboy who apparently led a life of Western-style decadence from the 1920s until his death in 1934. Static, non-psychological, unerotic treatment offers nothing to the Western viewer.

Director Seijun Suzuki, now nearly 70, attained a certain celebrity under the name Suzuki Seitaro for his yakuza pictures in the 1960s. More recently, he has written books and directed for the big and small screens.

Given the personality of the subject, one might have hoped for something a bit spicy or analytical. Instead, Suzuki and his scenarist have concocted a story of surpassing blandness, a hodgepodge of symbolism, fantasy and random encounters.

Yumeji, imagining that he is involved in a duel, sets off for

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Kanazawa, where an intended assignation with one lover turns into an affair with another. Latter's husband, Wakiya, has been killed, but his ghost reappears to run roughshod over several people's lives, threaten Yumeji and take up entirely too much running time.

As an artist, Yumeji appears to have been a sort of poor man's Beardsley, tending toward delicate sketches of nubile women. As a character, he is entirely too ineffectual to anchor the film, his frequent couplings with women proving repetitive and unmemorable.

In the end, he comes off as a self-styled fashion follower of no particular interest, which can hardly have been filmmaker's intent.

Most interesting touches are some clever optical superimpositions and juxtapositions designed to relate his life to his work, but film overall is marked by a dull estheticism and a stylization that is more annoying than eye-catching. — *Cart.*