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Author(s)	Judy Bloch
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Yukio Mishima in an Offbeat Yakuza Film:

Afraid to Die (Karakkaze yaro)

9:00

4/7/84

The late novelist Yukio Mishima is the subject of a film currently in production, co-executive produced by Francis Coppola and George Lucas, produced by Tom Luddy and Mata Yamamoto, and directed by Paul Schrader. The film will be shot in Tokyo featuring an all-Japanese cast.

In 1960, Mishima starred in this New Wave yakuza film as Takeo, a gangster who realizes that he is a marked man when, on the day he is released from jail, a rival gang member kills one of his fellow prisoners by mistake. He embarks on a run through an underworld maze of kidnappings, attempted assassinations, attacks and retaliations. Popular Japanese actress Ayako Wakao is featured as the innocently outspoken Yoshio, girlfriend and victim of the emotionally impermeable Takeo, and Takashi Shimura (*Seven Samurai*, *Ikiru*, etc.) appears as "boss Asahina." Audie Bock writes in PFA's Daiei Collection Catalogue, "Masumura's film fits squarely into the New Wave phenomenon with a fast-moving but nearly incomprehensible plot and talent from outside the established movie world, such as novelist Mishima. A satirical look at the yakuza world before the genre of gangster films became formula, this film provides memorable off-beat locations in a merry-go-round love scene and an escalator death scene, along with the freshness of Mishima in a leather jacket, Takashi Shimura in total-body tattoos, and Ayako Wakao as a sweet young thing."

• Directed by Yasuzo Masumura. Produced by Daiei Company. Written by Ryuzo Kikushima and Hideo Ando. Photographed by Hiroshi Murai. With Yukio Mishima, Ayako Wakao, Eiji Funakoshi, Takashi Shimura. (1960, 96 mins, In Japanese with English titles, 35mm, Color, Print from PFA Collection)