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About Love, Tokyo

Mitsuo Yanagimachi

Japan, 1992, 110 minutes

Colour/35mm

Executive Producer: Yuzuru Tanaka, Masaaki Hagino

Producer: Masaru Koibuchi, Mitsuo Yanagimachi

Screenplay: Mitsuo Yanagimachi

Cinematography: Shohei Ando

Editor: Nobuo Ogawa

Art Director: Kouichi Takeuchi

Sound: Soichi Inoue

Music: Hakime Mizoguchi

Principal Cast: Wu Xiao Tong, Asuka Okasaka, Hiroshi Fujioka, Qian Po, Gu Xiao Tong

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The focus of our annual Spotlight programme in 1990, Yanagimachi's remarkably coherent body of work elicited much excitement. After the strains and limitations of his last film *Shadow of China*, a big-budget, international co-production employing a major star, Yanagimachi's new film continues the concerns of that film in a radically different manner. As in its predecessor, *About Love, Tokyo* concerns the Chinese in Japan, here a group of students who have fled the mainland after the events of Tiananmen Square. Consigned to the margins of a racially intolerant Japanese society, this group of Chinese discover that democracy can have more than one face. Forced to work at menial jobs while bearing the taunts and barbs of the Japanese who give them employment, Hojun and his friends learn to exploit a system for their own ends with somewhat tragic results. Bored with his job killing animals in an abattoir, Hojun has the good fortune of meeting Airin, a Chinese waitress who was born in Japan and cannot speak Chinese. As their relationship develops, Hojun finds himself attracted to the pachinko parlours in an attempt to make easy money. Caught cheating one day, he falls under the influence of a former yakuza, who soon develops a fancy for Airin. Increasingly limited by the demands of this malevolent patron, their lives are gradually transformed in an attempt to get by. Yanagimachi reserves his sympathy for the plight of the Chinese, and plays out his film against the backdrop of an alienating cityscape which his camera captures with customary sensitivity in a series of remarkably visual and moving sequences.

Mitsuo Yanagimachi was born in 1944 in Ibaragi Prefecture, near Tokyo. He graduated from the law faculty of Waseda University and began working as an assistant on documentary and educational films. He founded his own production company, Gunro, in 1974, and produced his first film, *God Speed You! Black Emperor* in 1976. The success of this film allowed him to continue producing his films independently. Films include: *God Speed You! Black Emperor* (76), *A 19-Year-Old's Map* (79), *Farewell to the Land* (82), *Fire Festival* (85), *Shadow of China* (90), *About Love, Tokyo* (92).

Piers Handling