

Document Citation

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|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Title | Arashi ga oka |
| Author(s) | Frank Segers |
| Source | <i>Variety</i> |
| Date | 1988 May 18 |
| Type | review |
| Language | English |
| Pagination | 38 |
| No. of Pages | 1 |
| Subjects | |
| Film Subjects | Onimaru, Yoshida, Yoshishige, 1988 |

CANNES COMPETING

Variety
5-18-88

Arashi Ga Oka (Onimaru) (JAPANESE-SWISS)

A Seiyu Ltd.-Madiactuel coproduction. (Foreign sales outside Far East, Cofimedia.) Coproduced by Kazunobu Yamaguchi, Francis Von Buren. Written and directed by Kiju Yoshida, based on "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Brontë. Camera (Fujicolor), Junichiro Mayashi; editor, Takao Shirai; music, Toru Takemitsu; art direction, Yoshiro Muraki; costumes, Reiko Yamada; sound (Dolby), Tadaski Shimada. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (competing), May 13, 1988. Running time: 130 MIN.

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| Onimaru | Yusaku Matsuda |
| Kinu | Yuko Tanaka |
| Mitauhiko | Tatsuo Nakaka |
| Tae | Eri Ishida |
| Hidemaru | Nagare Hagiwara |
| Shino | Keiko Itoh |
| Ichi | Masso Imafuku |
| Sato | Tokuko Sugiyama |
| Suka | Shun Ueda |
| Kinu (daughter) | Tomoko Takaba |
| Yoshimaru | Masato Furuoya |
| Takamaru | Rentaro Mikuni |

Cannes — Setting Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights" in medieval Japan is an interesting conceit that gets outsized treatment in this period costumer from Kiju Yoshida, who scored nicely in Cannes two years ago with "Promessu," a tight, tough look at sickly geriatrics and their children.

With "Arashi Ga Oka," however, Yoshida seems to have gone too far in the style department. Costumes are gorgeous as is camera-work by Junichiro Hayashi, but overall performances make the late John Belushi's "Saturday Night Live" samurai routines seem restrained by comparison.

This combined with a hefty 2-hour 10-minute running time make "Arashi" a tough sell in the West and an iffy prospect in Japan where Toho is rolling out the distribution May 28.

Pic isn't, obviously, an exact duplication of much-filmed "Wuthering Heights." Director Yoshida says he has for decades been struck by the fearsomeness and essential mysteriousness of the Brontë love story set in the Yorkshire moors of the mid-19th century. Amid the anguish, he sees steamy eroticism and abrupt violence.

The best parts of "Arashi" are alternately — and occasionally at the same time — violent or erotic. To

research the feverish pitches required to set the stage for such primal emotion, Yoshida seems to have worked up his cast so routine dialog is emoted at a high energy level. Must characters shout imprecations as they dig ditches?

The mythic approach taken by the film to its subject — this is hardly a model of logical unfolding of a storyline — also makes continuity difficult to grasp. Audience is left to piece together seemingly random scenes into a thematic jigsaw.

Central focus of the plot is passionate love gone berserk. Onimaru (Yusaku Matsuda), a strapping, homeless youth, is taken in by a family of priests engaged in various rites aimed at defusing the anger of the Mountain of Fire. In this pic, physical surroundings, things, take on human characteristics.

Youth's downfall is Kinu, the family's daughter, whom Onimaru deflowers (in a smoothly staged erotic scene) before she marries the heir to a rival family. She bears a daughter, dies and Onimaru goes off the deep end) mourning the loss.

There are undercurrents of incest and psychological violence in the film. Yoshida is intrigued by social reversals, when the inmates take over the asylum and the beggar becomes king. "Arashi" is a film with

psychological depth and insight.

The crusher is the acting. Matsuda, a versatile performer seen in "The Family Game" and three years ago at Cannes in "Sorekara," is urged to mug it up. The actor moves gracefully and gives a balletic touch to the heavily physical scenes. Yuko Tanaka as the daughter is sufficiently rarefied to appear zonked out during much of the film. Tanaka explains that long lapses in the film's production — at Gotamba near Mount Fuji and near the Aso volcano on Kyushu, Japan's southern island — allowed her to empty out her emotions. The draining shows onscreen.

Pic is a Japanese-Swiss coprod, costing some \$10,000,000 to lens. Japanese side is the innovative Seibu Dept. Store group, which produced director Yoshida's last, and far superior, pic. —Sege.