



Hiroki Hayashi

Director de Cine

Hiroki Hayashi nació en 1974 y estudió en la universidad Dokkyo.

Cuando estaba en la escuela secundaria, el filme italiano “New Cinema Paradise” le inspiró a convertirse en director de cine.

Trabajó como director asistente de Kiyoshi Kurosawa y Takeshi Kitano.

Debutó como director con la película “Rakuda Ginza” en el año 2003, filme que fue invitado a participar en el Tokyo International Film Fiesta en 2004, Cairo International Film Festival y otros festivales de cine internacionales.

“Blossoming Into a Family” / “Floreciendo en familia”, es su séptimo largometraje. Esta película fue galardonada con el "Gran Premio del Jurado - Mejor Largometraje" en el Festival Internacional de Cine Multicultural de Los Ángeles.

Actualmente está en la Universidad Ca 'Foscari de Venecia por un año como profesor visitante dentro del Sistema de envío de artistas de la Agencia de Asuntos Culturales del Japón.

Forma parte del jurado del Festival de Cortometrajes de Venecia.





Participación en festivales internacionales de cine:

2004 - Festival Internacional de Cine de Tokio RiFF

2005 - Festival Internacional de Cine de El Cairo

2006 - Festival de Cine Independiente de Londres

2008 - Festival Internacional de Cine de Minsk *Ganadora del "Premio Especial del Jurado"

2009 - Festival de Cine Kinotayo de París

2009 - Festival Internacional de Cine de Shanghai

2016 - Festival Internacional de Cine de Seúl

Festival Internacional de Cine de Hanoi

Festival de cine infantil de Toronto

Festival Internacional de Cine Multicultural de Los Ángeles

*Ganadora del "Gran Premio del Jurado – Mejor Largometraje"

2017 - Festival Internacional de Cine de Goa+

2017 - Festival de cortometrajes

*Ganador del "Japan Tourism Film Awards, Premio Especial del Jurado"

2018 - Festival de cortometrajes de Ozu

national

Director uses organic process to tell rural communities' tales

Locals engage in every stage of production

Masaaki Ito
STAFF WRITER

Every person, town or village has a story to tell, whether they are tales of love and friendship or the tragedy of losing a loved one, and they all are interwoven into our lives in complex layers.

That is how movie director Hiroki Hayashi and his film production company, Fireworks, collaborated with residents in the city of Ena, Gifu Prefecture, to create the film "Furusato Gaeri" ("Going Home").

Hayashi's method for making movies is unique. He invites thousands of locals to participate in the creative process, ranging from casting them, using them as extras or involving them in fundraising and advertising activities, with the aim of revitalizing and developing the community.

"Whether it's relationships between people, regions or companies, we create the story that lies at the center, born through such connections," Hayashi said. "Our job is to visualize that story and to create an opportunity to make sure that many people can feel and experience it."

The process of making "Furusato Gaeri" began one hot summer day in August 2002 when Fireworks received a surprise visit by a couple of municipal officials from Ena seeking help.

The city, whose population stands at around 34,000, has undergone several mergers, the

most recent in 2004, as part of the central government's drive to slash the number of municipalities nationwide. The municipality of Ena now comprises 13 towns and villages, and the municipal officials said the city has been merged in name only. In reality, they said, there were few ties between the villages and towns.

"The Ena officials wanted to see if they could revitalize the area through filmmaking. They said that due to the mergers, Ena had become staid," Hayashi recalled.

Fireworks' way of making movies does not prioritize the size of the budget or even the script. The process is about residents and their municipality, and what they wish to achieve through making a movie. Raising funds and writing a script come later.

So together with scriptwriter Masahito Kariyama, Hayashi repeatedly held workshops in Ena to connect with the locals, to understand their emotions and thoughts, and to come up with a project that would lead to their ultimate vision of the future.

After heated discussions and sometimes outright battles, they came up with a name for the film project — "Ena Kokoro no Goppet Purojekuto" ("The Merging of Ena's Hearts Project").

"It is a completely different process from the usual way of making movies — we basically start from scratch and talk it through completely to see what kind of script matches their vision and story," Kariyama said.

"The people of Ena believe that this movie is theirs because we created it together from the beginning."



Hiroki Hayashi

The process was long, according to Hayashi and Kariyama, and there were various conflicting emotions among locals at some stages, including friction between some of the former townspeople who did not want to work together, or between some who opposed making a movie at a time of economic gloom.

In the end, it took 5½ years and about half of the municipality of Ena, as well as supporters nationwide such as college students and salarymen, to make the film. Participants in the project did everything from building the sets and collecting money to making films and advertising the movie — as well as appearing in the movie.

"For us, what is most important is not what we create, but who we create it with," Kariyama said.

Unlike big budget film pro-

ductions in Japan, which are shown at cinemas nationwide at roughly the same time, Fireworks takes a "traveling screenings" approach, taking the movie to cities and towns interested in hosting it.

The first screening of "Furusato Gaeri" took place in April in Ena, and the film has since been shown at more than 100 venues all across the nation. This year the film is expected to be screened in Hokkaido and Okinawa.

Set in a fictitious village in Ena called Kuribato, the movie is about a young man who returns to his hometown after living in Tokyo for several years.

He struggles to rebuild the relationships he lost when he turned his back on the village and headed to the capital to pursue his dream of becoming a film director.

The movie depicts many fundamental problems affecting rural towns, including a rapidly aging society and young people leaving to find work in cities. It also focuses on internal conflict between the local men who have formed a volunteer fire brigade, and their wives, who consider it just an excuse by their husbands to gather at night for drinking sessions.

"If we try to create a film in this style halfway, it becomes one of those superficial, local PR movies. By digging deeply, we always end up finding a comprehensive, global theme — so find ourselves hitting the magnetic core," Hayashi said.

The 37-year-old director from Saitama Prefecture spent his early childhood dreaming of becoming a doctor to help cure his



Movie magic: Residents of Ena, Gifu Prefecture, along with college students, actors and fireworks employees, suit up for a scene about the city's volunteer fire brigade for the movie "Furusato Gaeri." PHOTO BY FIREWORKS AND ENA FILM PRODUCTION COMMITTEE

mother, who had a type of connective tissue disease.

As far back as he can remember, his one goal was to help his mother.

But after watching the film "New Cinema Paradiso," he was so captivated he decided he wanted to create films able to move viewers as much as the movie had moved him. Hayashi began his filmmaking career in college and went on to assist famous directors, including Kiyoshi Kurosawa and "Bess" Takashi Kiuchi.

He founded Fireworks in 2001, and the production company was one of the recipients of the internal affairs ministry's 2010 award for local development.

"It definitely wasn't easy to change paths," Hayashi said.

"But when I told my mother, she told me that it was not only medicine that could help people — that I could still reach out to others through filmmaking."

After the March disasters, Fireworks was asked by some towns that were badly hit by the tsunami and earthquake to create a film to help rebuild their communities, including Misamisawa in Miyagi Prefecture.

Although still limited, Fireworks also has begun to hold screenings of "Furusato Gaeri" in disaster-hit areas.

"After moving from the disaster shelters to temporary housing, their communities were ripped apart. I think disaster-hit areas want to take the opportunity of the screening to recon-

nect and rebuild the communities," Hayashi said.

Kariyama, the scriptwriter, has been traveling to disaster areas to screen "Furusato Gaeri" and to help volunteer projects that involve filming. He recalled meeting a man from Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture, who wanted to show the movie to the people of his hometown, which is near the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

"With tears running down his face, the man said that 'Furusato Gaeri' is the only movie that can reach out to nuclear disaster victims," Kariyama said. "The people of Iwaki are still in the middle of deciding whether to leave or to stay. The environmental damage (from the disaster) is serious but so is breaking up relationships."

Hayashi pointed out that more than 200 of the local volunteer fire brigade died in the earthquake and tsunami, and said he is hoping his film will give people a better understanding of how such volunteers risk their lives to save local residents.

He is currently in the middle of launching a separate movement with the Fire and Disaster Management Agency to raise money for the people who lost loved ones.

"Every screening of 'Furusato Gaeri' has led to discussions on the disaster because tsunami or a nuclear accident could happen anywhere in Japan," Hayashi said.

"The March 11 disaster is not just about the Tohoku region, it is a personal issue for all of us."