

PALETTE

Overview:

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, actors everywhere have been forced to suspend their careers. In the spirit of us all one day enjoying movies in cinemas again, I collaborated with twelve actors and a crew to shoot a film using appropriate viral transmission prevention measures immediately following the Japanese government's lifting of its state of emergency. To prevent infection, actors did not speak their lines during the shoot. Instead, we recorded dialogue in studio and added it later to the film, treating the actors' lines as if they were voice-over monologues. In this way, the film is truly experimental in its expression.

Synopsis:

When COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in 2020, people at first thought the virus would be easy to eradicate, but it mutated in ways that magnified the contagion, becoming resistant to all vaccines and drugs. Now, this terrifying, toxic virus has infiltrated every corner of Tokyo's city center and is spreading. Having put the city on lockdown, the Japanese government uses the telecom industry to surveil its citizens. People are prohibited from going out, a crime punishable by fine or imprisonment. Rumor says the new virus travels as easily as pollen, entering the body through membranes of the nose, mouth, or eyes. The authorities force the population to wear gas masks even at home. Against this dystopian background, a small group of people have gathered to create a utopian return to their normal, everyday lives. This film is a touching, yet fleeting memory of the small resistance they mount.

A Message from the Director:

COVID-19 has posed to humankind the question of what connects each one of us to other people. In my own personal way, I depict an answer to this question.

Director's Bio:

Born 1969, Tachikawa City, Tokyo, Japan. In the 1990s, Matsumoto started making his own 8mm films while a student at the Image Forum Institute of the Moving Image. He later began working as a freelance assistant director in commercial, studio filmmaking and served under such directors as Takashi Ishii, Takashi Yamazaki, Yoshihiro Nakamura, Hitoshi Yazaki, Banmei Takahashi, and Shinsuke Sato. His last film as assistant director was Nobuhiko Obayashi's HANAGATAMI. Now, Matsumoto focuses on directing his own work, mainly documentary TV dramas, as well as his passion for independent shorts. Many of Matsumoto's shorts have been nominated and won awards at numerous film festivals. PAY

PHONE won the Japan Competition Best Actor Award at Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia 2018, which is an Academy Awards accredited festival and one of the biggest short film festivals in Asia. The film also won Best Narrative Short at Kansas City FilmFest International 2020, a festival with a quarter-century of history. It has been screened at over fifty national and international film festivals, winning 17 awards, including four Grands Prix. *Cassette Tape*, the sequel to PAY PHONE, premiered at the 6th Hachioji Short Film Festival where it won both the Grand Prix and Audience Award. After that, it won Grand Prix and Best Actress at the 23rd Yokohama Visual Entertainment Festival, making Matsumoto the very first director to win Grands Prix there four years in a row.

From pop idol vehicles to socially aware melodramas, Matsumoto has directed a wide range of film productions. His VIRGIN BREEZE, a short he wrote and directed for the Japanese pop idol girl band Nogizaka 46, won significant critical acclaim. Meanwhile, Matsumoto's feature-length TALKING TO THE STARRY SKY is based on the true stories of people with disabilities and their supporters and sheds light on their forgotten experiences following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. The movie won an encouragement award from the highly authoritative 37th Japan Film Revitalization Committee.

Matsumoto's screenplay for TSUREZURE was nominated in the synopsis competition at the 3rd MPA/DHU Film Workshop. Carlos Saldanha (known for his *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, *Rio*, etc.) highly commended it. The same project also advanced to the final stage at the Sundance Institute/NHK Award 2017, where it was selected as one of the top nine screenplays.

In his hometown of Tachikawa City, Matsumoto actively contributes to film culture as a teacher in his local "Moviemaking Workshop" and as a judge for the Tachikawa Meigazadori Cinema Festival.