

## "Hibi AUG"

Director, Photography, Editing, Sound: Maeda Shinjiro

JAPAN / 2022 / Japanese / Color / 120 min

Source: SOL CHORD

English subtitles: Yamamoto Kumiko

Music: «an object of metamorphose» by Fukushima Satoshi and Hamaji Junichi

Performed by: Yamauchi Atsuko, Kimura Kei, Fukushima Satoshi, Hamaji Junichi

Premiere Screening: YIDFF2023 International Competition

<https://www.yidff.jp/2023/program/23p1-e.html>

### Director's Statement

"Hibi AUG" is a film created under a specific rule set outlined by me, the filmmaker. It is composed of 15-second clips shot daily, seamlessly joined together. These clips primarily feature random everyday scenes, with occasional recordings of particular locations, people, and stories. The filming was done in an improvisational manner, imagining the connections between the cuts.

This film isn't intended to serve as an exact record of my life. Instead, it includes fictional elements, notably through the presence of another filmmaker, "Shinjiro Maeda." His perspective, portrayed as the film's central viewpoint, diverges from actuality.

I initially chose to film in August each year because my workload was lighter then. However, as production progressed, I realized the historical significance of August in Japan: the month of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the end of World War II, and the Obon Festival to honor ancestors and the deceased.

The production period spanned over 15 years from 2008, marked by the Lehman Shock, to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The film also captures notable events such as the Great East Japan Earthquake, multiple changes to Japan's prime ministership, the transition from the Heisei to Reiwa era, and even to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020 and 2021. This period also aligns with the boom of smartphones and social networking services.

Notably, one may also notice that the film's protagonist (myself) undergoes two significant life events, including two weddings and cancer surgery.

"Hibi AUG" documents the unique perspective of an individual living through 15 years of the early 21st century. At times, his "look" might completely resemble that of a terrorist. As viewers watch, they might project their own memories onto the myriad of "seen and unseen" elements on screen. This could unlock their own forgotten memories or perhaps highlight the natural human tendency to forget.

I am eagerly anticipating to see how this film will resonate with viewers, intertwine with their memories, and bring forth new interpretations.

## "Hibi AUG" Monologue in 2016

The novel 1984. 1984 was published in 1949. The author was an Englishman, George Orwell. He wrote the novel while suffering from tuberculosis. He died at 46, a year after the publication of the novel. The novel depicts the near future 1984, 35 years later from 1949 as a hopeless dystopia.

The story goes like this: In the 1950s a nuclear war breaks out. The world is divided into three major powers. Countries are constantly at war with one another. Citizens live in rooms equipped with interactive TVs called 'telescreens.' The face of a leader called 'Big Brother' is constantly staring at them. The protagonist works for a government department. His job is to falsify official documents from the past. He feels uncomfortable in such a freedom-deprived, monitored and controlled society. He tries to live freely. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist tries to write a diary at home. Writing a diary is forbidden. But he breaks the rule. While excited and confused, he realizes that by writing the diary, he can remember things that happened on the day, in addition to what is written down. In the novel 1984, diary writing is depicted as the first stage of modest resistance.

The protagonist has a series of secret meetings with a comrade in resistance, but in the end, designated a dangerous person by the state, he is arrested, imprisoned, tortured and brainwashed. He is taken back to his former life.

What a hopeless story. Reading 1984 now, it seems a prophecy of our society today and the not-so-distant future. How could Orwell imagine that people would end up in a world like 1984? Orwell worked for BBC during the war, producing propaganda programs for Asia. He also worked for several other newspapers. His

experience of working for the media led him to set up a department called the Ministry of Psychology, which specialises in tele-screening, or tampering with truth in the novel. For example, a new language called 'Newspeak' is introduced in the work. It is a new language developed to tidy up traditional English, reduce vocabulary and encourage abbreviations, in order to restrict the public's vocabulary and thinking and prevent them from thinking ideas that contradict government ideology.

The novel also introduces a way of thinking called 'doublethink = double thinking.' For example, two plus two is five:  $2+2=5$ , which would normally be ' $2+2=4$ ', but ' $2+2=5$ ' is described as 'doublethink', the ability to understand two contradictory facts simultaneously and accept them both. In the world of 1984, this ability is required. This is also what is happening in our society today.

There was an American thinker, James Burnham. In 1941 he published a book called The Managerial Revolution. This book greatly influenced Orwell in his work on 1984. James Burnham's idea was that the new society would not be capitalist, not socialist, but would move to domination by those who would take control of the means of production.

A world dominated by corporate managers, engineers, bureaucrats and military officers, a world governed by managers, not capitalists. This was quite a frightening vision, moving towards a Minority dictatorship made up of giant superstates.

## SPUTNIK YIDFF Reader 2023 No.4

For Discovery of the World's Uncertainty:

### "Hibi AUG"

An Interview with Maeda Shinjiro

*— I would like to ask about “hibi” AUG, which resembles “hibi” 13 full moons, which screened at the 2005 festival. That was shot over a year in 2004, each day having a shot roughly 15 seconds in length...*

I set a goal to make a film over many months and years, deciding to record every August. At the beginning, I was very aware of the film that I had made over 12 months in 2004, so I was set on filming 12 years of Augusts, but with the Corona disaster another year was added, the film finally finished in the 15th year of 2022. Like in “hibi” 13 full moons, I would coordinate my shoots off-tandem with the movements of the moon, connecting 15 seconds per day, yet this differs in that I have added music and monologue to make it a little more accessible to audiences. Shooting daily at a given interval, I was bent on capturing the unexpected. More than recording the reality of my routine, I wished for the filmic rules.

*— I imagine that your approach of cording everyday scenes has its roots in diary films yet feel strongly that this work was tied to the side of rules.*

I think that diaries are the starting point of a form of art in which something is created by following rules. And I think that the individual filmmakers who took the diary film approach were very conscious of the rules.

Beginning in the 1990s, I have made cinema with video cameras rather than on film, and since entering the digital age, we can record without time limit, managing footage by computer. This is the age that we are in, so there must be some kind of rules as a base for practice. In the early 2000s, I would create media that

use computers for automatic editing, which were in a sense rule-based, but the first film that I shot according to strict rules applied to myself was “hibi” 13 full moons.

*— In the film we frequently see unexplained shifts in space, one day in Ogaki, Gifu, next in downtown Shibuya, for instance, and I found it very interesting how such unrelated spaces clash as a core of your montage.*

Well, if I shot this yesterday, what should I shoot today? I thought things through from the previous cut. An extremely different place results in tremendously strong montage, so I would make such connections, or conversely return to the same place as the day before to shoot from the same camera position. I shot daily through trial and error.

*— So you are orchestrating. All the more, this seems like a personal film of a cineaste. In any case, your 15-second shots show the real world, and I am curious, what, if anything, does this on-camera reality mean for you?*

For me, the real world is, well the more you look at it the more uncertain it becomes, a world with elements that cannot be captured. Human vision is ambiguous, and this uncertainty poignantly pierces. The environs I shot with my camera may not be the most unsettling, yet they were chosen to put their existence into question. Like the cinema audiences of the Lumière brothers, said to have been shocked upon first seeing as background motif trees and shrubs swaying in the wind, how can contemporary audiences be awed? Such I thought while filming, connecting cuts to make a movie.

\* Interview conducted by Murayama Kyoichiro (Film Critic) via Zoom in August 2023 (Translated by Kyle Hecht)