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After The Storm (2016)

Japan 117 mins

Director: Kore-eda Hirokazu

Screenplay: Kore-eda Hirokazu.

Cast: Hiroshi Abe - Shinoda Ryôta; Yôko Maki – Shiraishi Kyôko; Satomi Kobayashi – Chinatsu Nakashima; Lily Franky – Lily Frankie; Sôsuke Ikematsu – Kento Machida.

Dwelling on his past glory as a prize-winning author, Ryota (Hiroshi Abe) wastes the money he makes as a private detective on gambling and can barely pay child support. After the death of his father, his aging mother (Kirin Kiki) and beautiful ex-wife (Yoko Make) seem to be moving on with their lives. Renewing contact with his initially distrusting family, Ryota struggles to take back control of his existence and to find a lasting place in the life of his young son (Taiyo Yoshizawa) - until a stormy summer night offers them a chance to truly bond again. *By [Indiewire](#)*

Koreeda discusses before and ‘After the Storm’

by Mark Schilling, The Japan Times

I’ve interviewed the director Hirokazu Koreeda several times over the years since we first met at a preview screening of his otherworldly drama “After Life” (1999). Then and now his answers to even often-asked questions are always thoughtful and considered. Yes, he is publicizing his film of the moment, but he’s also interested in having a dialogue, not just regurgitating talking points. That puts more pressure on the interviewer to come in with more than a question list. When I met him last month, the subject was his new film “After the Storm” (Umi Yorimo Mada Fukaku), a selection for the Un Certain Regard section of this year’s Cannes Film Festival.

Similar to his universally acclaimed 2008 film “Still Walking”, “After the Storm” is about a troubled family, with Koreeda favorites Kirin Kiki and Hiroshi Abe again playing mother and son, respectively. But this time, the story feels closer to black comedy, with the son, Ryota, a failed novelist, working for a shady private detective agency in the name of “research,” while indulging his gambling habit and fending off demands from his exasperated ex-wife (Yoko Maki) for child support. Koreeda’s execution, however, recalls the masterpieces of his cinematic inspiration Mikio Naruse, whose characters faced personal abysses — and at times plunged over.

There usually seems to be a personal element in your films. For example, you set “After the Storm” in the *danchi* (public housing complex) where you used to live. Is this something that is necessary for you?

It’s a strong element for me, yes. But my previous film “Our Little Sister” (“Umimachi Diary”) was based on a manga; it didn’t come from me. Making that sort of film helps me grow as a filmmaker. On the other hand, I had a strong sense that this new film (“After the Storm”) was my own story. I shot both films at the same time, which made for a great balance.

There are similarities between the family in “Keep Walking” and the family in “After the Storm” — but the former is relatively well off, the latter, poor.

They’re Naruse-esque. (laughs)

I know that you’ve liked Naruse’s films for a long time, but “After The Storm” seems to be the closest you’ve come to Naruse.

Everyone is living with their backs bent. They aren’t standing straight and tall.

One important theme of the film is the difficulty of becoming an adult. Ryota wants to become an adult, but he’s stuck in a kind of perpetual adolescence. Is there any overlap between you and Ryota?

There is, there is. As a son and as a father there are still various things that I haven't done as well as I should have — that's my dilemma and regret. So in that sense there's really a strong resemblance (between Ryota and me). And like me, he won a literary prize when he was young and thought he could make a living from that but failed. When I was 27 I won an honorable mention in a scriptwriting contest and got a television job as an assistant director. But I thought about quitting, believing I could make a living scriptwriting. My mother told me to give up the idea, since I had to eat. She told me I should be patient and keep working. So I tried to be patient and I'm glad now I did. If I had quit. I probably would have become like Ryota.

His words and actions have their funny side — but the film is not a comedy.

It's not a comedy, no, but something about him makes you want to laugh, and that was my intention. The people in the screening room were laughing, weren't they? (laughs)

They were. But with a character like that, you run the risk of the audience starting to hate him. He's always making excuses for himself, not taking responsibility for his actions.

Right. The audience shouldn't think he's so hopeless they want to stop watching him. Abe and I thought about that a lot — about how much to make him hopeless, without going overboard.

Kirin Kiki always seems so natural on-screen, as though she's just being herself. Is that really the case? Did you have to give her many instructions?

Kiki totally understood what I wanted, so I didn't have to say much. But to get that extremely natural-looking performance she takes a lot of pains on the set. She practices small movements again and again so she can play someone who's lived in the same place for tens of years.

But that sort of attention to detail is characteristic of all your films.

It is important, yes.

I feel I have to watch them more than once to get everything.

That's good. Please write that in your article. (laughs)

One more thing about this film is that it leaves a kind of echo. I left the theatre, thought about the film and was moved again. I suppose that was your intention.

I see what you mean. That sort of praise makes me the happiest. But I can't always do it, even if I aim for it.

“Still Walking” had the same sort of echo. Its critical reputation rose after it was released and now it's considered one of your masterpieces. The two films are linked by theme and by the presence of Abe and Kiki. Do you plan to make a trilogy?

I'd like to do that. “Keep Walking” was set in the hero's 40s and “After the Storm” in the hero's 50s. Abe and I both have children, so I made the new film from the point of view of a father. I want to do one more, but after I've aged a bit, so there will be a gap between this one and the next one.

I'd like to do it while Kiki is still healthy, though. If she says “It's impossible,” nothing is going to happen. (laughs)

See also: After the Storm – hardboiled family drama with a soft heart; Peter Bradshaw's review of a drama, which, despite its grubby setting, is understated and delicate.

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/jun/01/after-the-storm-review-family-drama-hiro-kazu-kore-eda>

Our previous presentation:

Based on the feedback slips returned on the night, you rated **Certain Women**, screened on January 18, 3.14 stars out of 5. Please visit the current season page at <http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk> to read all the feedback comments.

You can still provide feedback on this, or any other film, by visiting the Discussions page (<http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk/discussion/>).

Our next presentation:

Citizen Jane: Battle for the City will be shown on Thursday, 15 February, starting at 8:00pm.