

Le Festival du Film de Tokyo

Tokyo International Film Festival 2024 Highlights and Breakthrough Moments: Celebrating Award-Winning Films that Shone Bright

By Sachiko Motomura

The 37th Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) concluded on November 6, 2024, celebrating cinematic excellence with a diverse array of award-winning films and performances.

Gladiator II Asia Premiere

Gladiator II, which was specially presented as a "Centerpiece" film at the 37th Tokyo International Film Festival, had its Asia premiere at TOHO Cinemas Hibiya in Tokyo on November 5th. This highly anticipated sequel to Scott Ridley's 2000 Oscar-winning epic continues the saga of power, intrigue, and vengeance set in Ancient Rome. Denzel Washington, Connie Nielsen, Fred Hechinger, and producers: Lucy Fisher, Douglas Wick, Michael Pruss appeared before Asia's first premiere screening and took the podium for the stage greeting. The lead actor, Paul Mescal, who was in Japan a few days prior, hurriedly returned home citing "personal circumstances" and delivered a video message of apology to the fans gathered at the venue.

Denzel Washington, who plays Macrinus, a mysterious man who holds the fate of the main character in his hands, said with joy, "I'm happy to deliver the work of the great filmmaker Scott Ridley to you." "I've been busy with promotions and haven't been able to go out during this trip. This is my 3rd or 4th time in Tokyo so

my wife went everywhere for me and she did a lot of damage, shopping (lol). Thank you for going to the movies so that I can make some money to pay for what my wife bought" he joked, and during photo shoots, he shouted "Money!" and "Box Office!" in hopes that the film would be a hit. Nielsen, who plays the role of Lucilla, the sister of Emperor Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix), former lover of Maximus (Russell Crowe), and mother of Lucius (Paul Mescal), said, "This is a story of a woman who lost everything. At the end of *Gladiator I*, she lost her son, she lost her family and she's watched Rome lose itself. A very rich story to tell. "I've been given a gift," she said with a look of emotion on her face. In contrast to Washington, she said with a smile that she was enjoying Tokyo to the fullest, saying, "Every morning, the first thing I do is to go for a run around the Imperial Palace and just absolutely love Tokyo." Heckinger, who played the role of Emperor Caracalla, one of the twin emperors who continues to show off his authority, revealed that he is a big fan of world-famous Japanese directors such as Yasujiro Ozu and Akira Kurosawa, saying, "I grew up watching their films, and to be able to walk in the streets to see the city has been wonderful" and shared his excitement about his first visit to Japan.

The film is set over a decade after the original, following Lucius Verus II's return to Rome as a gladiator seeking revenge and power. The narrative delves into themes of legacy and retribution, with Washington playing Macrinus, a wealthy power broker and arms dealer. The film is preparing for its North American release on November 22.

<https://youtu.be/4rgYUipGJNo?si=ZJBeFbKbk8HsH2fW>

https://youtu.be/a_TmOTMrUAM?si=AN28hFwlFHtnaWPg

Tokyo Grand Prix / The Governor of Tokyo Award

The festival's highest honor, the Tokyo Grand Prix, was awarded to Teki Cometh [敵], directed by Yoshida Daihachi. This black-and-white drama captivated audiences and critics alike, earning accolades for its compelling narrative and

artistic execution. Based on a 1998 novel by Tsutsui Yasutaka, "Teki Cometh" tells the story of Watanabe Gisuke, a retired professor who is quietly living out his final days when he gets a mysterious message on his computer indicating that his "enemy" (teki) is approaching. The film won top three awards: Tokyo Grand Prix, Best Director and Best Actor.

<https://youtu.be/A7rJQW1aN8g?si=LWKnPpBUQPzhdT5B>

Special Jury Prize

The Special Jury Prize was bestowed upon Adios Amigo, directed by Iván D. Gaona. This Colombian western action film explores themes of loyalty and brotherhood against the backdrop of the Thousand Days' War.

<https://youtu.be/GyHc0gV-wXc?si=uKg80ELeqZObFsxE>

Award for Best Director

Yoshida Daihachi received the Best Director award for his work on Teki Cometh, marking a significant achievement in his filmmaking career.

Award for Best Actress

"Happening" lead actor Anamaria Vartolomei was honored with the Best Actress award for her performance in Traffic. Her portrayal of a young Romanian emigrant involved in an art heist was lauded for its depth and authenticity. Directed by Teodora Ana Mihai and written by Cristian Mungiu, who won the Palme d'Or at Cannes with "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days,"

The film delves into the harrowing journey of a young Romanian couple who, after emigrating to Western Europe in search of a better life, find themselves ensnared in a plot to rob an art museum. Vartolomei's nuanced performance captures Natalia's transformation from hopeful immigrant to reluctant accomplice, reflecting the economic disparities between Eastern and Western Europe. Her award underscores her exceptional ability to convey complex emotions and character development. The director Teodora Ana Mihai, lead actor Ionuț Niculae (Ginel) and supporting actor Rares Andrici (Ita) were invited to present the film at TIFF 2024.



Traffic Trailer

<https://youtu.be/7aZSCo4yAvM?si=UQxakenKUc8a3y-J>

Traffic Q&A

<https://youtu.be/8DQIHP1Tfy8?si=XbDWp-w1DEkilNZ6>

Award for Best Actor

Nagatsuka Kyoze earned the Best Actor award for his role in Teki Cometh, delivering a powerful performance that resonated with the festival's jury and attendees.

photo : D.R.