

Gensenkan

NAKATA Hideo



Genre: Drama
Format: 35mm
Estimated Running Time: 120 min.

Budget:
US\$5,000,000
(HK\$39,000,000)

Producer:
Jennifer FUKASAWA

Writing Credits:
NAKATA Hideo (screenplay)
Jennifer FUKASAWA (screenplay)

Production Company:
Hideon Productions

HAF Goals:
Co-producers, Funds

Contact:
Hideon Productions
(Jennifer FUKASAWA)

Address:
401 Savory Awashima,
4-34-16 Ikejiri, Setagaya,
Tokyo 154-0001, Japan

Tel: +81-3-3487-2585

Fax: +81-3-3487-2585

Email: jennifer.fukasawa@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Gensenkan represents a totally different direction for Nakata Hideo, who is best known for his horror movies like *Ringu* (1999) and *Dark Water* (2001). The story takes place in an onsen(hotspring) inn, where wounded samurai in the past would hide for months while their injuries healed. Nakata believes that onsen inns represent a place where harried modern people can go to hide from their troubles and heal their spiritual wounds. His film tells how an onsen inn provides healing to four wounded souls and how the bond of friendship between these four strangers, in turn, helps to save the inn.

SYNOPSIS

An ensemble piece revolving around an onsen inn in Japan, *Gensenkan* is about all the different kinds of healing: physical, mental and emotional. The film tracks four main characters, unrelated to each other except for the fact that they have all come to an onsen inn because they are suffering from deep wounds.

The story starts with Stacy Edwards, a renowned American hotelier, who has come from Los Angeles to an onsen inn in the mountains of rural Japan to turn it into a luxury spa. Fumbling through this foreign environment, she quickly discovers that what worked in LA does not apply here and the more she goes against the nature of the inn, the more things go disastrously wrong. On top of it all, she is constantly at odds with Hiroyuki, the owner's son, who is adamantly opposed to all of her efforts to "improve" his family's inn.

The other guests are a mixed bag of strangers. There is Yukiko, a beautiful but guarded woman in her late twenties, who has just murdered her abusive, gambling addicted husband. After making her crime look like a yakuza hit, she comes to the inn to escape her guilt. Masahiro is an old school yakuza in his sixties who, after serving time in jail out of loyalty to his boss, finds that the organization has changed since his day and the new generation of yakuza are more global and business oriented. Unable to relate to the new yakuza he feels old and useless and has come to the hometown of his now-deceased boss to ask for forgiveness and permission to leave the organization. Koichi is a famous baseball player in his mid-forties who used to be the idol of millions. Now he frequents the inn because it is the only place where he can escape the prying eyes of the public and the press and secretly meet up with his gay lover. This time, however, the burden of leading a double life is catching up to him and he must finally choose which is more important.

As we follow our characters on their journey towards healing, we find that their lives parallel one another as they cross paths in the various parts of the inn, ultimately connecting through Stacy, the common denominator in all of their lives. When the future of the inn is threatened, Stacy and our three unlikely guests manage to pull through and come together to help save the inn that saved them.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

While I was working in LA and frustrated with the differences between making films in Japan and in the US, I realized that what I missed most from Japan was the onsen inn experience. With its traditional cuisine and serene landscape, it is unique to traditional Japanese culture, and it only exists in the rural areas of Japan today. There are special types of onsen inns called, "tojiba." People come and stay there for months at a time to cure long lasting wounds. The origin of these "tojibas" goes back hundreds of years when they served as hiding places where wounded samurai could take shelter from their enemies until they fully recovered.

This applies to modern people who suffer from their own stresses and wounds and feel the need to escape from society. Jennifer Fukasawa and I will introduce four characters, each of whom will carry their own ailments and secrets (crimes), as they seek refuge at the inn. This piece will be of strong ensemble character, with much emotional drama and lots of laughter. It will no doubt be a unique addition to my diverse filmography.

DIRECTOR

Nakata Hideo graduated from the University of Tokyo and started his career in the Japanese film industry as an assistant director at Nikkatsu Studios. His directorial debut was a TV horror series *Curse, Death & Spirit* (1992). In 1993, he spent a year in England on a scholarship and directed and produced a documentary, *Joseph Losey: the Man with Four Names*, and then returned to Japan to make his feature film debut, *Ghost Actress* (1996) followed by *Ringu* (1998), which was a massive international success and led to his Hollywood directorial debut, *The Ring Two* (2005).

Returning to his roots, he made *Kaidan* (2007), an Edo period piece that was a love drama/ghost story. Although many of his best-known films have been in the horror genre, he has also directed dramas like *Sleeping Bride* (2000) and *Last Scene* (2002).

Nakata has also directed and produced several documentaries such as *Sadistic & Masochistic* (2001), an homage to his mentor, director Konuma Masaru. He is currently working on his documentary, *A Foreign Filmmaker's Guide to Hollywood*, which talks about his life and struggles in Hollywood. His latest feature film is *L: Change the World*, a spin-off from the blockbuster *Death Note* series.

PRODUCER

Jennifer Fukasawa, a Southern California native, discovered her passion for filmmaking while attending UCLA and interning at Paramount Pictures. With ambitions of becoming a producer, Fukasawa worked her way up the development ladder at film production companies Jersey Films and Icon Productions. In 2004, she met director Nakata Hideo and was hired to assist him on *The Ring Two* (2005) for DreamWorks. She has been working with Nakata ever since, collaborating with him on several projects such as the Japanese film *Kaidan* (2007). She will be the producer of an independent film, *The Samurai's Garden*, with Nakata attached to direct. She will also be the associate producer of his upcoming film, *Inhuman*, for New Regency and Fox.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Hideon Productions, founded in 1995, started as a production company for Nakata Hideo to direct and produce independent projects at a low budget. It produced *Joseph Losey: The Man with Four Names* (1996), and is currently working on *A Foreign Filmmaker's Guide to Hollywood* as well as *Gensenkan*.