

The Blood of Wolves

Japan

SAKAGUCHI Tak



Genre: Action
Format: 35mm
Estimated Running Time: 90 min.

Budget:
US\$ 1,000,000 (HK\$ 7,800,000)

Producers:
SHIOMAKI Yuko
KUNIZANE Mizue

Writing Credits:
SAKAGUCHI Tak
TANAKA Yasuhiko
SONO Sion

Production Company:
pictures dept. LLP

HAF Goals:
Funds, Co-producers

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INTRODUCTION

The first “real” samurai action film in years, *The Blood of Wolves* is something that no one has seen before: a throwback to classic genre filmmaking of the 60’s and 70’s using modern make-up and CGI techniques along with full contact combat to fill the screen with sweaty, high impact action that integrates swordplay, monsters and martial arts. Add in a driving, hard rock score and you have got a movie that promises outrageous excitement from beginning to end. As the only Japanese motion picture director who is also an action director and a martial artist, SAKAGUCHI Tak is perfectly suited to forge this new style of action film.

SYNOPSIS

The Edo period - a time when samurais ruled Japan.

It is the middle of the night. A long, straight road splits the darkness. A lone man walks down this rough road, a wolf by his side. From the opposite direction comes a group of ninjas, disguised in traditional Japanese masks.

The man passes the group, sighs deeply and stops walking. He turns around and his sword flashes, biting deeply into the flesh of one of the ninjas. But the ninja is fast and counterattacks instantly. It’s one against many. Though the man is surrounded, he fights on. Multiple swords aim for his heart, but he deflects them and strikes the ninjas down, one after another. Fountains of blood spray through the air, but it is not the blood of the lone fighter. It is the blood of the ninjas. And finally, they all lie dead.

The name of this lone fighter is Jyubei, also known as Wolf, and anyone who looked into his eyes will feel true terror when they see the rage and hatred burning within. But Jyubei was not always this way.

We flash back 18 years, to the year 1616. The Wolf was once a child who belonged to a happy family. He was nine years old, living with his father, Muneori, his mother, Orin, and his younger brother, Samon. Jyubei loves painting and art but Samon loves martial arts. Jyubei is peaceful and quiet while Samon is hot-tempered and jealous of his older brother who will inherit the family fortune.

This is the story of these two brothers and which of them will inherit the leadership of the YAGYU clan, which has been cursed with the blood of wolves flowing in their veins, and burdened by a fine, bloodthirsty Munemasa sword that is in their possession. The time has come for these two brothers to determine who will be the clan leader. Will Jyubei give in to the violence of his wolf’s blood, or will Samon die trying to reach his goal?

DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

When I think of exciting swordplay action, I think of KATSU Shintaro as Zatoichi or the *Lone Wolf and Cub* films or MIFUNE Toshiro in *Seven Samurai*. Back in the classic days of Japanese filmmaking there were realistic samurai action stories, which gave audiences an almost perfect mixture of gritty action and well-told stories. It seems that recently, there are no longer any real samurai films to be found. Cinema has lost its samurai spirit.

I have often wondered why no more filmmakers are able to shoot real genre films these days. I want to revive the spirit of these filmmakers and elevate it to the next level of art. This is the ambition that has moved me to create *The Blood of Wolves*.

Contemporary action films are too “safe,” too weak. Their actors are untrained in real action and they are unwilling to hit each other with swords and fists, and so their action scenes lack spirit and look fake. My philosophy in making *The Blood of Wolves* is to make its action as realistic as possible. I want to show audiences truly extreme situations where real fear, real action and real excitement come together to give them a visceral, unforgettable experience.

DIRECTOR

Born in 1975, SAKAGUCHI Tak started out as an underground street fighter with a reputation for using martial arts to beat down his opponents. He was discovered by director KITAMURA Ryuhei who cast him as the star of his low budget, homemade action-horror film, *Versus*. This little film went on to become a cult hit, selling over 100,000 DVD copies in America, and it remains KITAMURA’s best-known role. He also appeared in several more films directed by KITAMURA, including *Azumi* and *Alive* as well as the KITAMURA-produced *Battlefield Baseball*. He went on to choreograph the action in KITAMURA’s big budget kaiju film, *Godzilla: Final Wars*. He has appeared in films such as *Shinobi* and also taken several television roles. In 2008, he wrote/directed/choreographed and starred in his directorial debut, *Be a Man! Samurai School*. Later that same year he directed and appeared in *Yoroi Samurai Zombie*, based on his own short story. He is well versed in Shaolin kenpo, kickboxing, boxing and mixed martial arts.

PRODUCERS

SHIOMAKI Yuko made her mark on the Japanese film industry as the vice-president of STYLEJAM, in charge of acquisitions, international co-productions, international sales and global distribution. She was also head of domestic theatrical distribution and marketing. During her time at STYLEJAM, the company produced *Sad Vacation* by AOYAMA Shinji, *Adrift in Tokyo* by MIKI Satoshi as well as other international titles such as *You, the Living* by Roy ANDERSON. She established a new film company, pictures dept., in June, 2009 and is currently the international representative of STYLEJAM as well as the producer of several international films.

KUNIZANE Mizue (co-producer) is the president of the talent agency Dongyu Club & Inc. Her clients include ODAGIRI Joe, who starred in KIM Ki-duk’s *Dream* as well as TIAN Zhuangzhuang’s *The Warrior and the Wolf*, an official selection of the Toronto International Film Festival 2009. She also produced *Adrift in Tokyo* with ODAGIRI Joe as well as *Then Summer Came* directed by IWAMATSU Ryo and starring ODAGIRI. Her other clients include director SONO Sion (*Love Exposure*), SAKAGUCHI Tak, ANDO Sakura (*Love Exposure*, *A Crowd of Three*) and many more.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

pictures dept. was established in June, 2009 as a distribution company handling international sales, PR and marketing for films destined for the global, digital marketplace. Its founder SHIOMAKI Yuko is an international co-producer and former vice-president of Japanese production and distribution company STYLEJAM. pictures dept. acts as a representative of the Japanese boutique production company STYLEJAM and of internationally acclaimed director AOYAMA Shinji as well as of several other young and talented film makers.