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present

a TV MAN UNION Production

# AIR DOLL

[KUKI NINGYO]

**A VERY "HUMAN" STORY**  
by **KORE-EDA Hirokazu**



**FESTIVAL DE CANNES**  
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## **C R E W**

**Written and Directed by** KORE-EDA Hirokazu

**Development Producer** YASUDA Masahiro

**Executive Producers** KAWASHIRO Kazumi  
SHIGENOBU Yutaka  
HISAMATSU Takeo  
TESHIMA Masao

**Producers** URATANI Toshiro  
KORE-EDA Hirokazu

**Associate Producer** KATO Yoshihiro

**Original Story** Based on the original graphic novel “Gouda’s  
Philosophical Discourse, The Pneumatic Figure of a  
Girl” by GOUDA Yoshiie, published by  
SHOGAKUKAN INC.

**Cinematography** Mark LEE Ping-Bing

**Editor** KORE-EDA Hirokazu

**Art Direction** TANEDA Yohei

**Music** world’s end girlfriend

**Production Designer** KANEKO Hiroki

**Lighting** OSHITA Eiji

**Sound** TSURUMAKI Yutaka

**Production Company** TV MAN UNION

**Producing Partners** ENGINE FILM  
BANDAI VISUAL  
TV MAN UNION  
EISEI GEKIJO  
ASMIK ACE ENTERTAINMENT

## **C A S T**

<b>Air Doll:</b>	<b>BAE Doona</b> (THE HOST; LINDA LINDA LINDA; SYMPATHY FOR MR. VENGEANCE)
<b>Junichi:</b>	<b>ARATA</b> (PING PONG; DISTANCE; AFTER LIFE)
<b>Hideo:</b>	<b>ITAO Itsuji</b> (TOKYO TOWER: MOM AND ME, AND SOMETIMES DAD)
<b>Sonoda (Doll Maker):</b>	<b>ODAGIRI Joe</b> (PLASTIC CITY; DREAM; SWAY; BRIGHT FUTURE)
<b>Keiichi (Old Man):</b>	<b>TAKAHASHI Masaya</b> (ALWAYS -SUNSET ON THIRD STREET)
<b>Yoshiko (Reception Desk Girl):</b>	<b>YO Kimiko</b> (DEPARTURES; CAFÉ LUMIÈRE)
<b>Samezu (Video Shop Manager):</b>	<b>IWAMATSU Ryo</b> (TOKYO TOWER: MOM AND ME, AND SOMETIMES DAD)
<b>Miki (Withdrawn Girl):</b>	<b>HOSHINO Mari</b> (SAYONARA MIDORI-CHAN; SHINIBANA)
<b>Todoroki (Policeman):</b>	<b>TERAJIMA Susumu</b> (DISTANCE; AFTER LIFE; HANA-BI)
<b>Chiyoko (Old Lady):</b>	<b>FUJI Sumiko</b> (HULA GIRLS; HIBOTAN BAKUTO)
<b>Shinji (Father):</b>	<b>MARUYAMA Tomomi</b> (AUDITION; SAKURAN)
<b>Moe (Daughter):</b>	<b>NARAKI Miu</b> (SCHOOL DAYS WITH A PIG)
<b>Toru (Prep School Student):</b>	<b>EMOTO Tasuku</b> (YAJI & KITA: THE MIDNIGHT PILGRIMS; 69)

## **TECHNICAL DETAILS**

<b>Running Time</b>	<b>126 minutes</b>
<b>Gauge</b>	<b>35mm 1:1.85 Colour</b>
<b>Number of Reels</b>	<b>8 reels</b>
<b>Length in Feet</b>	<b>11,392 feet/ 3,472 metres</b>
<b>Sound</b>	<b>Dolby SR</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>Japanese dialogue with English subtitles</b>
<b>Year of Production</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Country of Production</b>	<b>Japan</b>

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## **SYNOPSIS**

A life-size Air Doll lives in a shabby apartment in Tokyo. She cannot speak, nor can she move. But she is the only companion her middle-aged master has. He talks to her, puts her in a bath and makes love with her every day after he returns from work.

This routine life is disrupted when fantasy turns into reality. The Air Doll suddenly comes to life, filled with a soul. Like a newborn baby, she doesn't understand what is going on around her, but she sees a world waiting to be explored outside the apartment. Eventually venturing to the outside world, the Air Doll is fascinated by everything she sees, and though she meets many people in all walks of life, they can't seem to provide her an answer to what 'being alive' means.

When THE Air Doll wanders into a video store, her world is forever changed. She meets Junichi, the clerk, and immediately falls in love with him. The Air Doll begins working in the store and everyday, she and Junichi become closer: they go to the movie and explore the city together...like a couple. Everything is going perfectly for the Air Doll, until one day when her hand is accidentally cut and she begins to deflate in front of Junichi...

A romantic fantasy that explores the complexities of love and loss, joy and pain, fantasy and reality, internationally acclaimed director Kore-eda Hirokazu returns with this bittersweet love story that examines the intricacies and frailties of human existence.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

Mr. Gouda's comic "The Pneumatic Figure of a Girl" was published by Shogakukan in February, 2000. I distinctly remembered how much I was moved by this manga. This doll, inflated by the man she loves, walks around town at night and says to herself: "My empty body is filled with his breath. I may never be able to inflate myself on my own. Even if that means the end of my life, I don't care." The doll is determined to live her own life to the fullest even if death awaits at the end. "I am sad and happy at the same time," she says. How we feel about our lives, I believe, is inherent in these words: it is the truth about our "sad and happy" lives.

My policy was to only direct movies from my original ideas. But for this story I felt a need to make an exception and began development right away. In the winter of 2001, I came up with the treatment and the plot summery. Eight years later, my long-awaited movie has come to life.

"It seems life

is constructed in a way

that no one can fulfill it alone"

This is from "Life Is," a poem by the famous Japanese poet Yoshino Hiroshi. To me, this is the idea that reflects the world we live in, and the lives of the characters in the film. (I am using this poem symbolically in the film as well.) In this film, I want the characters to connect with each other through the "air doll." Through this "connection" people grow up and change. This is a reflection of my view of the world and its people: The truth and beauty of life lies in this kind of growth and change.

This film may appear to be a love story, but what lies deep down below are the questions about human nature: Can people fulfill their own emptiness? What is the meaning of life? What is a human being?

KORE-EDA Hirokazu

**Statement from Gouda Yoshiie, the artist of the original graphic novel:**

I am amazed at Mr. Kore-eda's capacity to make a 2-hour film from my original 20-page graphic novel. The script is masterfully written, fully developing the central character, Air Doll and her experiences with others. If the audience can feel how sad, and yet how happy we all are to have a soul, that is more than what I could wish for as the original author. Ms. Bae Doona was so pretty on set...pretty like a doll. I saw the eroticism that exists between a human and a doll inside her, which is both beautiful and strange.

**Statement from Bae Doona, the lead actress:**

When I first read the script, I felt that although "Air Doll" sounds like a small story, I immediately recognized that it was a very special project and a great metaphor for the world we live in now. The doll is cute and tender, but she feels very lonely as well. This is a sad yet beautiful story, and as I read it my heart ached. What is most important for me playing Air Doll, is her "soul." Her soul is as pure, as beautiful, and as spotless as a newborn baby's. And, as she lives her life and meets other people, she shares her soul with them. That is what I want to express. Director Kore-eda is perfect for me. He has all the virtues that the other directors I've worked with have: creativity, imagination, insight, love for humanity, leadership, character, strong will, insistence, humor, delicacy...everything. I feel so comfortable working with him, because his top priority in acting is not the technique but the heart, which is the style I like. During the shoot, I am so thrilled to be able to play this great character with a group of such talented people for this special project. It has been a little while since my last film, and I will try my best to show you all a new me in "Air Doll."



***Manufactured Being:  
Kore-eda's world of Connections and Disconnections***

**INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR KORE-EDA HIROKAZU**

**Apart from MABOROSI, all of your films are developed from real-life stories. This is the second time you are adapting from a fictional source, with AIR DOLL a film adaptation from a 20-page comic story. What attracted you to bring this story to the big screen?**

When I read the scene where the inflatable doll sheds a tear, loses the air inside her, and gets filled with the breath of the person she is in love with, I found it very erotic. I found the scene very cinematic as well. I had never shot anything like that before, and I wanted to try. This is sex through one's breath, and I believed I could express this cinematically and metaphorically.

The other thing I had always been eager to try since my TV documentary days was to explore the way people interact with each other on a deep, emotional level. I think the idea of being made whole by someone else's breath is a very intimate way to interact and receive satisfaction. The contrast between the human trying to fulfil himself, and the doll being fulfilled by someone else is so intriguing for me. MABOROSI was a project I received from my producer, so this is the first time I wanted to make a film based on another source. It meant a lot to me to be able to further develop my long-time subject matters through this inflatable doll character.

**You have developed a lot of interesting supporting characters. How and why?**

I came up with female characters from different generations in order to contrast with the doll's aging process, and depict their emptiness in a dramatic manner. For example, one girl tries to fulfil her emptiness by eating, while the doll can't eat. Another woman is afraid of aging, but the doll decides to enjoy her life and embraces growing older by abandoning her pump.

All the characters in this film are lonely regardless of their gender. For the female characters, the keywords are "emptiness" and "absence." For the male characters, those are "substitution" and "perversion." The male characters don't go straight to what they desire, but instead look for alternative solutions. These perverse men yearn for death, not life. These are the people I tried to portray. In other words, the film is about the loneliness of urban life, for both men and women.

**AIR DOLL is set in Tokyo, though this is not the modern Tokyo we usually see. Why do you choose to set the film in older parts of the city?**

I chose to set the story in the area that will soon be gone and lost forever. My first idea was a dilapidated apartment with just few people living there and high-rise condominiums behind it. The actual part of the city we picked was very peculiar. The place was near the prominent St. Luke's Hospital, where it wasn't bombed during the war, so the area has somehow remained untouched while the surrounding areas are very developed. When you walk around, there are still a lot of old printing offices and you can hear the sound of their rotary presses. This is a place that greedy land developers have left untouched. It was really close to my idea of the town I want for the film, so we picked one of the houses there and used it for the shoot.

**This is the first time you work with such a Pan-asian crew and cast. Can you tell us why you cast Korean actress Bae Doona in the title role?**

The first time I saw her was in TAKE CARE OF MY CAT, and she really impressed me and is really great in all her other films like BARKING DOGS NEVER BITE and LINDA LINDA LINDA. I'm a big fan. But even though I'm a fan, it is difficult to shoot a film in Tokyo with suitable material for a foreign actress. With this story, I thought we could do it, because she could start with limited Japanese.

She has a good ear and her pronunciation is perfect. Her make-up took a really long time to apply every day, so she would read the script during the make-up session, and I saw her cry as she really got into her character. We were not shooting chronologically, but she was perfect in getting into character and finding the right emotions in every scene. She really knew how to create the flow of her character's emotional journey in the context of the narrative. She is so sensitive yet at the same time, a genuine professional. I tip my hat off to her.

**Tell us about your collaboration with Taiwanese cinematographer Mark Lee.**

I had never liked the moving camera in the past, but this time I was surprised by how much I loved [Mark's](#) moving camera. He always had [a lot of long track](#) everywhere, but it was never like "Look, here's the camera." He never moves the camera without a reason. He knows his relationship with what he is shooting, understands the characters' emotions, and then lays his [track](#). That is always his priority. When I watched IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE, what I really loved was the way he shot the actors over the objects in the foreground. I asked him to do the same for this film from time to time (laughs), and again he was great. The other thing I was surprised with was how fresh the Japanese houses and the cityscapes look under his lens. Usually laying [track](#) on the tatami floor never works, but he did it beautifully.

**It has been 8 years since you last worked with ARATA in DISTANCE and AFTER LIFE. What was it like working with him again? Can you also tell us why you cast a popular comedian, Itao Itsuji, to play the frustrated middle-aged Hideo?**

I like ARATA so much, especially his voice. He has been playing pretty unusual characters recently, so I was a bit hesitant to offer him the part, but he was my choice from the beginning, so I just followed my original intention. He has really grown since AFTER LIFE and he really understands what it means to be an actor now.

Itao is more a brilliant actor than a comedian to me. I have been trying to work with him for quite some time, and he **is just** as brilliant as I had imagined. I really don't want to talk about this, but in the opening scene, the camera slides to Itao looking out from the train. He leans against the window and we see his reflection on it, as well as a couple leaning against each other in the foreground. I only told him to look out the window when we were shooting, but when I watched the footage later, what I saw was Itao leaning against another Itao in the window! I haven't checked to see if he did it on purpose, but I just wished it was MY idea (laughs).

**What about Odagiri Joe? Is his character, the doll maker, a metaphor for God?**

I would call this character a creator or a father, rather than God. He is like Doctor Frankenstein. I interviewed a doll maker at Orient Industry, Japan's top life-size doll manufacturer, and I found this person very interesting. He is trying his best to hide seams on the doll bodies, to make them keep their temperature, and to make their lips feel just like human's. He is a real professional who never leaves out the details. But at the same time, when our conversation became more philosophical and we talked about things like "what if a doll has a soul," what he said was very impressive as well. In fact, many of Odagiri's lines are based on what this doll maker told me, including the line "Was everything you saw in this world sad?"

And in more philosophical scenes, Odagiri is Japan's only young actor I could think of whose presence is strong enough to make it convincing.

**Is this film a deliberate departure from your previous works?**

I think I employed a different perspective this time around, for example, how I used music in this film. But I don't see my works in a linear timeline. I am basically a person who gets bored easily (laughs). If my film is a circle and I am at the center of it, I want to expand this circle to as many directions as possible every time. One time I would prioritize the narrative aspect, another time I would focus on the physicality of human bodies. This film is another one of these challenges I set for myself.

## **CREW BIOGRAPHIES**

### **KORE-EDA Hirokazu (Director, Writer, Editor, Producer)**

Born in Tokyo, Japan, in 1962, Kore-eda graduated from Waseda University in 1987. He soon joined TV MAN UNION, directing several prize-winning documentaries. His first feature film, MABOROSI, won the Osella d'oro at the Venice Film Festival in 1995. His second feature, AFTER LIFE, distributed in over 30 countries and brought Kore-eda international acclaim. His third film, DISTANCE, was selected to screen In Competition at the Cannes Film Festival 2001 and his fourth film, NOBODY KNOWS, received the Best Actor Award at the Cannes Film Festival 2004 for Yagira Yuuya. 2006's HANA set in the Edo period is his first period piece. The film explored themes of chivalry and revenge. In 2008, STILL WALKING, loosely based on his own experience, received its international premiere in Toronto, and won the Best Director Award at the Asian Film Awards and the Golden Astor Prize at the Mar del Plata International Film Festival. In the same year, he directed his first feature documentary film DAIJOBU DE ARUYO NI: COCCO OWARANAI TABI which follows a tour of Japanese singer-songwriter Cocco. AIR DOLL is his latest film.

Kore-eda has also produced three films by young Japanese directors. KAKUTO, directed by Iseya Yusuke, premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2003. WILD BERRIES, written and directed by Nishikawa Miwa, premiered at New Directors/New Films in New York 2003, while her second feature, SWAY, screened in the Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival 2006.

#### **Director's Filmography:**

2009 AIR DOLL  
2008 STILL WALKING  
2008 DAIJOBU DE ARUYO NI: COCCO OWARANAI TABI (documentary)  
2006 HANA  
2004 NOBODY KNOWS  
2001 DISTANCE  
1998 AFTER LIFE  
1995 MABOROSI

### **URATANI Toshiro (Producer)**

Uratani is the Vice President of TV and feature film production company TV Man Union, and a frequent collaborator of Kore-eda's. He worked as an associate producer for DISTANCE (2004) and NOBODY KNOWS (2004), and participated in the production of the other films by Kore-eda in many different capacities. He has also worked on numerous TV productions and documentary films, most notably as the director of JUZO ITAMI: THE MAN WITH 13 FACES (2007), a documentary about the Japanese legendary filmmaker, and PRINCESS MONONOKE: MAKING OF A MASTERPIECE (2004), a behind-the-scene documentary of the animation directed by Miyazaki Hayao. AIR DOLL marks the first time he collaborated with Kore-eda as a producer.

### **GOUDA Yoshiie (Original Graphic Novel Artist)**

Born, Fukuoka, Japan, 1958. After dropping out of Seinan Gakuin University, he debuted as a manga artist with GOUDA KUN, which appeared in “Young Magazine,” published by Kodansha since 1983. His works include JIGYAKU NO UTA, THEATER APPARE, the HYAKUNEN SENRYU series and GOUDA’S PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE among many others. JIGYAKU NO UTA was adapted into a feature film of the same title in 2007 by Tsutsumi Yukihiko. THE PNEUMATIC FIGURE OF A GIRL, the short story AIR DOLL is based on, appeared as part of GOUDA’S PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE, published by Shogakukan.

### **Mark LEE Ping-Bing (Cinematographer)**

Born in Taiwan in 1954, Lee started his career in the film industry in 1977 as an assistant to cinematographers. He has since worked on numerous feature films, and is a regular winner at Taiwan’s Golden Horse Awards. He is especially known for his collaborations with Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Wong Kar Wai on films such as THE PUPPETMASTER (1993), FLOWERS OF SHANGHAI (1998), and IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE (2000) which won him the Technical Grand Prize at Cannes Film Festival. His other works as cinematographer include À LA VERTICALE DE L’ÉTÉ (2000) by Tran Anh Hung, SPRINGTIME IN A SMALL TOWN (2002) by Tian Zhuangzhuang, SPRING SNOW (2005) by Yukisada Isao, and THE SUN ALSO RISES (2007) by Jiang Wen. AIR DOLL is his first collaboration with Kore-eda.

### **TANEDA Yohei (Art Direction)**

Born in Osaka, Japan, Taneda graduated from Musashino Art University. He started working as assistant art director for Terayama Shuji when he was still a college student, and has since been a very active art director for feature films as well as TV productions, theater plays and TV commercials. Most notably, he worked with Quentin Tarantino on KILL BILL VOL. 1 (2003), which brought him a nomination at the Art Directors Guild’s Excellence in Production Design Awards. He was also nominated for the Japanese Academy Awards for Iwai Shunji’s SWALLOWTAIL (1996), Lee Chi-NGai’s SLEEPLESS TOWN (1998), Mitani Koki’s SUITE DREAMS (2006) and THE MAGIC HOUR (2008), and Lee Sang-II’s HULA GIRLS (2006). His other works for feature films include HANA & ALICE (2004), BE WITH YOU (2006), K Aidan (2007) and DANCE, SUBARU! (2009). In 2008, he published THE HOT SET: YOHEI TANEDA PRODUCTION DESIGNER ANTHOLOGY, a book that chronicles his art direction career.

### **world’s end girlfriend (Music)**

world’s end girlfriend is a Japanese electronica musician. After appearing in several compilation albums, he released his first album “ending story” in 2000. Since then, he has released 6 albums which won him many fans, both domestically and internationally. He composed the score for OSOI HITO (2004) by Shibata Go, and AIR DOLL is his second film working as a composer.

## **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

### **BAE Doona (Air Doll)**

Born on October 11, 1979, BAE started modeling when she studied art at Hanyang University in Seoul, Korea. After appearing in a KBS TV drama in Korea, she is recognized as a hot young star at home. She made her debut as a movie actress in *THE RING VIRUS* (1999), a Korean remake of the Japanese horror film *RINGU* (1998). She was offered her first leading role in Bong Joon-Ho's *BARKING DOGS NEVER BITE* (2000), which won her the Best New Actress Award at Korea's Blue Dragon Film Awards. She then appeared in *TAKE CARE OF MY CAT* (2001) which was shown at many international film festivals including Rotterdam, Hong Kong, Toronto, Helsinki and Gent, and Bae gained global popularity both among critics and movie fans worldwide. She has also worked with Korea's two leading directors, Park Chan-Wook and Bong Joon-Ho, in *SYMPATHY FOR MR. VENGEANCE* (2002) and *THE HOST* (2006) respectively. Both films enjoyed huge international success, and made Bae one of the most popular and sought-after Korean actresses. In 2005, she appeared in the Japanese film *LINDA LINDA LINDA*, directed by Yamashita Nobuhiro, where she played a lead vocal of a girl rock band in Tokyo. Her other notable works include *PLUM BLOSSOM* (2002), *SAVING MY HUBBY* (2002), *DO YOU LIKE SPRING BEAR?* (2003), and *TUBE* (2003). *AIR DOLL* is her first film in 3 years since *THE HOST*.

### **ARATA (Junichi)**

Born on September 9, 1974 in Tokyo, Japan, ARATA started his career as a model. In 1999, in his feature film debut, he starred as the lead in Kore-eda's *AFTER LIFE*. Since then, he has worked with many top Japanese filmmakers, such as Aoyama Shinji in *SHADY GLOVE* (1999), Kore-eda again in *DISTANCE* (2001), Sori Fumihiko in *PING PONG* (2002), and Okuhara Hiroshi in *A BLUE AUTOMOBILE* (2004), Kudo Kankuro in *YAJI AND KITA, THE MIDNIGHT PILGRIMS* (2005), Tsutsumi Yukihiro in the *20TH CENTURY BOYS* series (2008-09), Ninagawa Yukio in *SNAKES AND EARRINGS* (2008) and the legendary Wakayama Koji in *THE RED ARMY* (2008). While he is very busy with his acting career, he is also active in many other creative areas, including running his own fashion label.

### **ITAO Itsuji (Hideo)**

Born in 1963 in Osaka, Japan, Itao is a person with multiple talents. He was first recognized as a member of a popular standup comedy duo called 130R, and is frequently seen on TV in Japan. Since 2000, in addition to his work as a comedian, he started appearing in feature films, TV dramas and theaters as an actor, and one of the most highly regarded character actors in the business. His notable works as a film actor include *JOSSE, THE TIGER AND THE FISH* (2003), *9 SOULS* (2003), *HANGING GARDEN* (2005), *YAJI AND KITA, THE MIDNIGHT PILGRIMS* (2005), *TOKYO TOWER: MOM AND ME, AND SOMETIMES DAD* (2007), *DAI-NIPPONJIN* (2007), and *LOVE EXPOSURE* (2008). He recently finished directing his first film, *KING OF THE ESCAPE* (2009). He is also a writer and has published several essays. He has also released CDs as a singer-songwriter.

### **ODAGIRI Joe (Sonoda)**

Born on February 16, 1976 in Okayama, Japan, Odagiri is one of the few Japanese actors working internationally. He started his acting career playing the title role for the TV series *MASKED RIDER*. He made his feature film debut in Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *BRIGHT FUTURE* (2003) which premiered in the Cannes Film Festival, where his performance was critically acclaimed. Since then, he has appeared in films like *AZUMI* (2003 / New Comer of the Year, the Japanese Academy Awards), *BLOOD AND BONES* (2004 / Best Supporting Actor, the Japanese Academy Awards), *BREAK THROUGH!* (2004), *LA MAISON DE HIMIKO* (2005), *SWAY* (2006), and *SAD VACATION* (2007) among many others. He played the lead in *TOKYO TOWER: MOM AND ME, AND SOMETIMES DAD* (2007), for which he was nominated for Best Actor at the Asian Film Awards. He also appeared in international productions such as *DREAM* (2008) by Kim Ki-Duk and *PLASTIC CITY* (2008) by Yu Lik Wai. He has recently completed *THE WARRIOR AND THE WOLF* directed by Tian Zhuangzhuang and produced by Bill Kong.

### **TERAJIMA Susumu (Todoroki)**

Born on November 12, 1963 in Tokyo, Japan, Terajima's debut feature film is *A HOMANCE* (1986) directed by Matsuda Yusaku. He then starred in Kitano Takeshi's *VIOLENT COP* (1989), which gained him international recognition. Since then, he is a regular collaborator of Kitano's in such films as *A SCENE AT THE SEA* (1991), *SONATINE* (1993), *KIDS RETURN* (1996), *HANA-BI* (1997), *BROTHER* (2000), *TAKESHIS'* (2005) *GLORY TO THE FILMMAKER!* (2007) and *ACHILLES AND THE TORTOISE* (2008). He has also appeared in more than 100 films, such as *GOHATTO* (1999), *ICHI THE KILLER* (2001), *WILD BERRIES* (2003), *THE TASTE OF TEA* (2004), *BLOOD AND BONES* (2004), *HULA GIRLS* (2006), and *ALL AROUND US* (2008). Terajima has often been the choice of Kore-eda, who cast him in *AFTER LIFE* (1998), *DISTANCE* (2001), *NOBODY KNOWS* (2004), *HANA* (2006) and *STILL WALKING* (2008).

## **YO Kimiko (Yoshiko)**

Born on May 12, 1956 in Kanagawa, Japan, Yo started her acting career in the late 1970s and founded the theater company “Tokyo Ichigumi” in 1986. Her first major feature film appearance is LOVE BITES BACK (1988) directed by Kumashiro Tatsumi. Her other films include A NIGHT IN NUDE (1993) by Ishii Takashi, WAIT AND SEE (1998) by Somai Shinji and GAKKO III: A NEW VOYAGE (1998) by Yamada Yoji, which earned her many awards including the Best Supporting Actress at the Japanese Academy Awards. She recently appeared in DEPARTURES which won the Oscar® for Best Foreign Language Film in 2009.

## **Production Company**

### **TV MAN UNION**

Established in 1970, TV Man Union is one of Japan’s oldest TV production companies. They have produced a huge number of TV programs, most notably documentaries, for Japanese network TV stations, and have won more than 100 awards in Japan, such as the Galaxy Awards and ATP Awards, in the company’s history. The company is also active in producing feature films, and many of them received great acclaim at international film festivals and won many awards. Their films include Kore-eda’s MABOROSI (1995), AFTER LIFE (1998), DISTANCE (2001), NOBODY KNOWS (2004), HANA (2006) and STILL WALKING (2008); Nishikawa Miwa’s WILD BERRIES (2003) and SWAY (2006); Gozu Naoe’s FALLING INTO THE EVENING (1998); and Iseya Yusuke’s KAKUTO (2003), among others.