



Presents

In Association with TSG Entertainment
A SIGHT UNSEEN and DOMO ARIGATO Production

A Film by HIKARI

RENTAL FAMILY

Starring

BRENDAN FRASER as Phillip Vandarpleog

TAKEHIRO HIRA as Shinji Tada

MARI YAMAMOTO as Aiko Nakajima

AKIRA EMOTO as Kikuo Hasegawa

SHANNON MAHINA GORMAN as Mia Kawasaki

Directed by HIKARI

Written by HIKARI, Stephen Blahut

Produced by Eddie Vaisman, p.g.a., Julia Lebedev, p.g.a.,

HIKARI, p.g.a., Shin Yamaguchi, p.g.a.

Executive Producers Jennifer Semler, Tomo Koizumi, Stephen Blahut,

Leonid Lebedev, Brendan Fraser, Oren Moverman

Director of Photography Takuro Ishizaka

Production Designers Norihiro Isoda, Masako Takayama

Edited by Alan Baumgarten, ACE, Thomas A. Krueger

Music by Jónsi & Alex Somers

Costume Designer Meg Mochizuki

Casting by Kei Kawamura, CSA, Yumi Takada

Run Time: 103 minutes

Rating: PG-13

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RENTAL FAMILY

Set in modern-day Tokyo, **RENTAL FAMILY** follows an American actor (Brendan Fraser) who struggles to find purpose until he lands an unusual gig: working for a Japanese "rental family" agency, playing stand-in roles for strangers. As he immerses himself in his clients' worlds, he begins to form genuine bonds that blur the lines between performance and reality. Confronting the moral complexities of his work, he rediscovers purpose, belonging, and the quiet beauty of human connection.

Searchlight Pictures presents **RENTAL FAMILY**, directed, co-written and produced by **HIKARI** ("Beef", "Tokyo Vice", *37 Seconds*). The film stars Academy Award® and Screen Actors Guild award winner **Brendan Fraser** (*The Whale*, *The Mummy*, *Encino Man*) with a supporting cast that includes Emmy® nominee **Takehiro Hira** ("Shogun"), **Mari Yamamoto** ("Pachinko," "Monarch: Legacy of Monsters"), newcomer **Shannon Mahina Gorman** and iconic actor **Akira Emoto** (*Lovers Lost*, *Shin Godzilla*, *Dr. Akagi*). With a screenplay by HIKARI and **Stephen Blahut** (*37 Seconds*), the film is produced by Sight Unseen Pictures' **Eddie Vaisman** (*Wildlife*, *A Thousand and One*, *Bad Education*) and **Julia Lebedev** (*Dear White People*, *Bad Education*), as well as Knockonwood's **Shin Yamaguchi** (*37 Seconds*, *Spirit World*). **Jennifer Semler** (*A Real Pain*, *Theater Camp*), **Tomo Koizumi**, Blahut, **Leonid Lebedev** (*Bad Education*), Fraser, and **Oren Moverman** (*The Messenger*, *Love & Mercy*) are executive producers.

Joining filmmaker HIKARI behind the camera are director of photography **Takurô Ishizaka** (*Lear Rex*, *Rurouni Kenshin* Trilogy, *All of Us Strangers*), production designers **Norihiro Isoda** (*The Blind Swordsman: Zatoichi*) and **Masako Takayama** ("Tokyo Vice"), editors **Alan Baumgarten** (*The Trial of the Chicago 7*, *Venom*, *American Hustle*) and **Thomas A. Kruger** ("Shogun", *37 Seconds*), composers **Jónsi** and **Alex Somers** (*Nickel Boys*, *Captain Fantastic*), costume designer **Meg Mochizuki** (*37 Seconds*), makeup department head **Hiromi Momose** (*Like Father, Like Son*), and casting directors **Kei Kawamura** and **Yumi Takada**.

"I believe that cinema can make the world a better place. It allows us to view others with empathy, creates space for conversation, and see parts of ourselves we did not know existed. If we embrace it, walls fade, and humanity comes through"
- **HIKARI**

DISCOVERING THE WORLD OF RENTAL COMPANIONS

You get a plus-one to a wedding but you're woefully single. Your new boyfriend wants to meet your mom, but you're worried she'll embarrass you. You're tired of going to the movies alone every weekend, but none of your friends are cinephiles.

Who hasn't wished for an ideal companion in a circumstance like this -- a person to help fill our emotional voids in uncomfortable social situations?

That longing for connection is at the heart of **RENTAL FAMILY**, which centers around a Tokyo-based business staffed with actors who play parents, friends, spouses or more for an hourly fee. Filmmaker **HIKARI**, who was born in Osaka, began exploring the "rent-a-family industry" that exists all over in Japan. The practice of renting such actors has been a well-documented phenomenon, beginning in the 80's, which is what she discovered when she began researching the industry around 2018.

"Currently there are about 300 companies that exist in Japan," the director says. "In a big city like Tokyo, or even a countryside town, you can feel so isolated. ... Every single person I spoke to was looking for connection. Even though they're paying for the service, they find a friendship within that two or three hours they spend together. And the actors who become the surrogates -- they are also 100% invested in the relationship and find their own connection in the community. The roles may seem fake but the emotion is real."

HIKARI attributes the rise of the rental business to modern loneliness, isolation, and a lack of societal acceptance surrounding therapy in her native country. In Japan, she says, mental health services are not as easily accessible as in the U.S -- especially via telehealth.

"Unfortunately, it's a little bit more challenging for people in Japan who don't want to talk to a therapist in person," she says. "So people would rather hire somebody and just casually share their issues, or just to talk ... they're not licensed professional therapists, but they will give support and perspective."

HIKARI's actors also became invested in learning about the real-world implications of such relationships. Before shooting began, **Takehiro Hira** ("Shōgun") -- who plays the owner of the titular RENTAL FAMILY business in the film -- spent time interviewing employees at similar companies in Tokyo. He was particularly moved by the story of an elderly woman who hired an actor to sleep in her guest room so she wouldn't feel lonely at night.

"When I heard that story, I immediately thought of my mother, who's in her eighties living by herself in Tokyo," Hira says. "I was filled with a tremendous amount of guilt as a son. [laughs] I wondered if she ever felt so lonely that she would feel more secure having some strange person sleeping in the next bedroom."

HIKARI set out to introduce the Rental Family business in a way that felt unusual, expansive—even a little absurd. By peeling back its layers through Phillip -- the character at the center of the story -- and his relationships with the agency members, she wanted to craft an experience that is entertaining but also allows the viewer to gain an understanding and appreciation of this unique business.

"We want the story to sneak up on you," she adds. "By the end of the film, we hope audiences ask themselves what role they would hire someone to play in their own lives." Mindful of the familiar Hollywood "fish out of water" trope, HIKARI wanted to make the Rental Family business not a story solely looked at through western eyes. "It was important to us to strike a balance. Often, a country and its people are

reduced to stereotypes. That's why Tada, the owner, and his co-workers are so important. They add complexity and nuance by giving the story an eastern and female perspective."

FROM THE OSCAR STAGE TO JAPAN

As she began distilling everything she'd learned about the rental family industry into a screenplay, HIKARI found herself turning inward to guide the storytelling. Outwardly, Phillip doesn't bear much resemblance to the filmmaker: He's a middle-aged American actor who moved to Tokyo after landing a major gig in a toothpaste commercial. Now, it's 7 years later and the acting gigs have dried up, so when his agent sends him on a last-minute job requiring him to wear a black suit, he jumps at the opportunity. When he arrives at work, however, he realizes he has been paid to act as a mourner at a funeral for a man who is lying, still alive, in an open casket. When the service comes to an end, Phillip learns that the man paid a business to stage a funeral for him so he could listen to glowing eulogies. After moving past his initial shock that such a service exists, Phillip agrees to take a meeting with the owner of the RENTAL FAMILY business and soon after begins working for the company.

HIKARI wanted to tell the story of an American actor in a foreign country because of her own experience moving from Osaka to Utah at age 17. As a foreign exchange student, she was the only Asian person at her high school, and she "wanted to put that into what it feels like for anybody foreign to live in Tokyo – it's like you're adrift, not truly connected to the country or culture – it can be overwhelming," she explains.

She was searching for the right person to play Phillip when *The Whale* was released -- the 2022 drama featuring a performance by Brendan Fraser that would later earn him the best actor award at the Oscars. HIKARI was invited to a screening of the film, and afterwards, Fraser participated virtually in a question-and-answer session.

"He was so genuine and charming I just felt in my heart, 'Oh, there's my Phillip.'"

She immediately urged producers **Eddie Vaisman** and **Julia Lebedev** to reach out to the actor's team to see if he'd be interested. Fraser agreed to meet HIKARI for a quick cup of coffee outdoors, their conversation ended up lasting for six hours -- they eventually had to move inside because the sun was setting.

"I think she could talk to anyone on the planet -- that's her superpower," Fraser says of the filmmaker. "She's a creator who has a strong intuition of the human condition and has a talent for extracting performances from actors you might not otherwise think were performers -- children, the elderly, people who are vulnerable. She's someone who thrives on joy and kindness."

Fraser agreed to star in RENTAL FAMILY, but the role would require him to familiarize himself with both the Japanese culture and language. While Phillip is not fluent in Japanese, the character has been living in Tokyo long enough that he has a solid grasp of the language. To prepare for the part, Fraser began studying with a tutor and a translator. During production, he teamed with dialogue coach **Eriko Yamaguchi**, who would spend the cast's two days off a week working on the dialog.

"Brendan wanted to know every single meaning of what he's saying," observed Yamaguchi. "And Japanese grammar is totally opposite from English, so it's usually backwards. When he got all that, he knew exactly what he was saying, and it helped him to deliver his lines."

Fraser also traveled to Japan weeks before filming actually began in an effort to immerse himself with the locals and create his "own Tokyo story to tell." He spent time wandering the streets with a pocket translator, attempting to engage in conversation with as many native speakers as possible.

"Once you arrive in a place and it's less about thinking and more about doing, it feels a lot easier," Fraser says. "Finding a way to take the dialog from the page to the spoken word and having a sense of authenticity about it, rather than just parroting lines that I'd learned."

Many of his best conversations, he adds, took place at restaurants. “I never had a bad meal, and let me tell you, Japanese people are very good at eating and drinking.”

But he also relished quiet moments of observation, reveling in the “practicality and convenience” of Japanese culture. He was impressed by the independence of the local school children, who rode the subway to class in their matching uniforms without any adult supervision.

“The understanding is inherently that it’s everyone’s job to parent the children, so they’re easily identifiable,” Fraser says. “That automatic understanding to give care is something that really touched me about Japan.”

The effort Fraser put into understanding Tokyo impressed HIKARI, who recalls how the actor only knew how to say “arigato” (thank you) when she first met him. By the time filming wrapped, she laughs, “I was like, ‘Oh, damn, he speaks better Japanese than I do.’” She adds, “Brendan brought honesty and truth, and really a vulnerability to his performance that was necessary for Phillip’s journey.”

As a colleague, he also inspired a sense of creative freedom on set, says co-star **Mari Yamamoto**. The Japanese actress, who plays Phillip’s co-worker at the RENTAL FAMILY agency, felt so comfortable acting alongside Fraser that she was able to lean into the darker side of her character without trepidation.

“He’s exactly what you hope he would be,” says Yamamoto. “Kind. Generous to everybody. Acting with him is really knowing that somebody’s gonna catch you if you fall. I mean, he is the role. Phillip is kind of a superhero. He will accept whatever you throw at him ... so even if you do show a dark side, or an ugly side, he allows you to be.”

During one scene where Yamamoto’s character, Aiko, grows upset with Phillip, the actress got so enraged that she actually ended up breaking character.

“Mari was completely committed to the role,” HIKARI recalls. “She played it with such strength and vulnerability. I hope everyone who watches her performance will feel empowered and say, ‘That could be me. I can do that.’ I happen to be female and there are moments that I have to express myself more or my voice may not be heard. It’s just what it is. But regardless of our gender, we also have to learn to speak up and stand up for ourselves.”

A YOUNG TALENT EMERGES

When he begins working in the RENTAL FAMILY industry, Phillip quickly realizes the relationships he’s entering into with clients are far more than transactional business dealings. As he starts to recognize the emotional impact his work can have, he must grapple with the ethical implications of his new career path.

Phillip’s moral compass is put to the ultimate test when he meets Mia, played by 11-year-old-newcomer **Shannon Mahina Gorman**. Mia is being raised by a single mother, played by **Shino Shinozaki**, who wants her daughter to attend a competitive private school, but the organization’s admissions board initially rejects the girl because she does not come from a two-parent household. Mia’s mother reaches out to the RENTAL FAMILY company to hire an actor -- Phillip -- to pretend to be her child’s father during interviews with the school. The job, however, will require Phillip to do more than just show up in front of the admissions board. He must form a legitimate relationship with Mia to make their connection seem authentic. So after a childhood spent believing she’s been abandoned by her father, Mia suddenly thinks she has a dad -- one who she quickly starts becoming attached to.

Like with Phillip’s character, HIKARI again used her own experience to inform the young girl’s storyline.

“Mia’s character is based on my own experience,” admits the filmmaker, who was also raised by a single mother. “My mom used to lie to me all the time [laughs]. She told me that my dad was dead for a long time... he was very much alive.”

HIKARI says, “I believed this story for years, until I was jump-roping outside and a neighbor approached and asked if I knew where my father was. I said, ‘He’s dead.’ The neighbor said that wasn’t true, that he had left us for another woman. I ran to my mom confused, and she said, ‘Well, he’s alive—there he is,’ pointing to a very good-looking actor on the television screen. ‘That’s your dad.’ And I believed her.”

That was just one of the fabrications HIKARI’s mom invented about her father over the coming years. But as an adult, she came to understand that her mother had been lying to protect her -- that it was all really an act of love. With Mia, she says, “we made a very dramatic version of it. Mine was definitely not that dramatic -- it was more comedy.”

Gorman, who plays Mia, had never appeared in a film before getting the part in RENTAL FAMILY. “When I got the role, I couldn’t stop crying,” she says. “And Brendan is so kind and funny.”

Fraser was so impressed by Gorman’s performance that after his first day working with her, he approached her father and said: “She’s the best I’ve ever worked with.”

“The qualities that Shannon has are instinctive,” the actor says. “She is able to give an acting performance, but there’s nothing contrived about her. Shannon has a bottled-up energy that is infectious. She’s a sincere kid and has a fearlessness and courage to her. She has a lot to say and strong opinions -- she’s righteous and she’s angry and she’s loving.”

A CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN JAPAN

From the beginning, there was never any question that RENTAL FAMILY would be filmed in Japan and feature a predominantly Japanese cast. But shooting in Tokyo, which has a population of over 14 million, presented logistical challenges.

“If you have over 100 people on your crew, navigating from one location to another takes so much longer than shooting in America,” HIKARI says. “And in Japan, they can cancel on you at any time. You have a location booked for two months and they can say, ‘Sorry, my neighbor doesn’t like you being here.’”

Eddie Vaisman, one of the film’s producers, acknowledges that making the movie in the massive metropolis was difficult. Sometimes the travel time between two relatively close locations would exceed two hours. “It’s nuts,” he says. “It’s so loud and yet quiet and peaceful. It’s the combination of these two very different energies coming together 24/7.”

Portraying both the frenetic pace of the city as well as its more zen pockets of tranquility was something the filmmaking team tried to lean into. “We wanted to capture all of those things in a way that honored Japan,” Vaisman says. “The traditional meets the modern, because that’s what Japan is.”

“I love Tokyo,” adds Fraser. “Its cultural, polite customs, its practicality and convenience, and strong sense of family and community. There’s a quality of finding what you do, and doing that well.”

Embracing the culture also meant using Japanese dialogue in the film -- ultimately, about half of the lines are spoken in Japanese while the rest are English. In addition, working with a cast and crew who were Japanese brought an authenticity to the portrayal of the customs and behaviors.

“We really wanted to lean in. There was never any shying away from that,” says Vaisman. “The challenging part was making sure the story stayed relatable and grounded enough so the [language] didn’t take you out of it.”

The fact that Fraser took such an interest in learning Japanese lent itself to an open cross-cultural exchange amongst the cast and crew. Vaisman’s producing partner, **Julia Lebedev**, says the star was always eager to try out his new language skills on set and never minded being corrected.

“Brendan was super game for that and excited by it,” the producer says. “He thought of that as a perk.”

And Fraser wasn’t the only one speaking a new language in the film. **Akira Emoto**, the 76-year-old Japanese legend renowned for his role in 1998’s *Dr. Akagi*, had never before had to perform as many lines

of English dialogue before. To prepare, Emoto worked with dialogue coach **Sean Muramatsu**, who admits he was nervous to collaborate with the veteran actor.

“Anybody would be,” Muramatsu jokes. But the coach found that like Fraser, Emoto was so committed to performing the dialogue accurately that he devoted much of his off-time to rehearsing.

“He’s so passionate and dedicated to his art that he wanted to meet with me as frequently as possible, so I’d get calls left and right saying, ‘Hey, do you have this time available?’” says the dialect coach. “He’s very precise. He wants to know every detail about the dialogue he’s delivering. It was an honor to work with him.”

In *RENTAL FAMILY*, Emoto plays Kikuo, a famous Japanese actor who is beginning to lose his memory. Kikuo’s daughter hires Phillip to pretend to be a journalist writing a story about the aging star, giving Kikuo a companion to spend many of his days with. As their friendship develops, Kikuo asks Phillip if he’ll grant him a wish his daughter won’t: Travel with him to his hometown in the south of Japan. Kikuo won’t reveal why he wants to go on the trip, but Phillip senses it’s deeply important to his new friend -- forcing him to decide where his moral responsibility lies.

“It reminded me of working with Ian McKellan, like, twenty-five years ago,” says Fraser of Emoto. “England has Ian McKellan, and Japan has Akira Emoto. Someone who is respected and accomplished and has an obligation to themselves to work from a place of authenticity.”

Working with the legend was rewarding for Fraser, he says, and he was initially deferential to Emoto. But as the production progressed, he discovered the actor’s cheeky sense of humor and came to respect his “working actor” approach to the job.

“It’s kinda the same thing with guys I’ve worked with like Michael Caine,” says Fraser. “They’re actors who really never have lost that sense of, ‘Well, it’s good to be here. I’m glad I got a job. I hope I get hired again.’ Even though they’re brilliant. “I think it’s just an attest to humility and professionalism.”

Adds HIKARI of Emoto, “He really elevates what it means to be Japanese: how to respect people, how to respect yourself. For me, he is a person who represents what Japan is all about.”

CREATING A WORLD OF COLOR AND EMOTION

After a brief stint as an actor early in her career, HIKARI pivoted to various roles behind the camera. Before she began directing, she spent years developing her visual style as still photographer and cinematographer. Because of this background, the filmmaker was especially passionate about creating a specific aesthetic for *RENTAL FAMILY*.

“I’m a visual person. I like to paint and design costumes,” she says. “I’m particular about what I want a movie to say and how I want to say it. If a single shot can get the audience closer to the character or stir a genuine emotion—even for just a moment —then I feel like I achieved something.”

HIKARI paid special attention to the use of color in the movie, hoping the palette would set discrete tonal shifts. When the story begins, for instance, Phillip is in a low place emotionally -- isolated in his small, box-like apartment, staring out the window at others who seem to have much fuller lives. So the director honed in on the blue hues in an effort to represent the character’s depressive state. As his world broadens and he starts meeting more people through his new job, his world literally brightens. After he befriends Mia, the child he’s pretending to father, pops of the rainbow become more evident on-screen. Phillip even brings those vivid hues into his formerly-drab apartment, hanging Mia’s vibrant art projects from his windows.

When it came to the music in *RENTAL FAMILY*, HIKARI gave her collaborators more creative freedom. The film was scored by Jónsi, the lead singer of Sigur Rós, and his producing partner, and a fellow composer, Alex Somers. The musical duo have been working as a pair since 2003 but first gained acclaim in 2009 for their debut album, “Riceboy Sleeps,” a 68-minute instrumental work recorded on acoustic

instruments in Iceland. Critics took note of the album's deep emotional affect, remarking on the fragile and sad music whose songs still managed to fade "to white, not black."

After meeting the duo, HIKARI had so much faith in them that she told them to "just create whatever you think feels good to you, and just go with it," the director says. "I wanted them to have complete freedom—and they exceeded my expectations in the most beautiful way."

Jónsi and Alex, who are both vocalists, even gave HIKARI a small singing part of the score, which is layered with strings, piano, harp and cello. "Their music may be unconventional, but that's what makes it so powerful—there's so much emotion and beauty in it," she explains. "You can really feel a story, a journey, in every sound. It was such an amazing collaboration. I'd do it all over again in a heartbeat."

INSPIRING GLOBAL CONNECTION

While RENTAL FAMILY may be set in Japan, HIKARI is hopeful that audiences will embrace its universal themes.

"I hope the audience will connect with the story and see themselves in the characters," HIKARI says. "I always ask myself, 'How can I, as a director, offer the audience a new perspective on how to see the world?' Because I believe that one way to make the world a little better is by telling stories that help us understand each other and ultimately, build respect for one another despite our background or culture."

"Family is really who we include, rather than who we're assigned to," Fraser says. "If we make an investment in people's lives, as long as we believe it, they will also. And I just don't see what the harm in that could ever be."

Takehiro Hira has an even simpler wish for those who see RENTAL FAMILY: That it inspires them to call a loved one.

"I want people who watch this film to call their family members and check in on them," the actor says with a laugh. "I mean, that's what I did when I first read the script. It's like, 'Oh, maybe I'm just chasing my dreams and neglecting my old mom!'"

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

HIKARI – Director, Writer, Producer

Originally from Osaka, HIKARI is an award-winning writer, director, producer with professional background as a dancer, singer, painter, and photographer. Her debut feature *37 Seconds* premiered at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival and won the Panorama Audience Award, the CICA Art Cinema Award, and earned nomination for Best First Feature. The film received accolades globally.

Her past television credits include the Emmy® winning series “Beef”, starring Oscar nominee Steven Yeun and comedian Ali Wong, as pilot director and “Tokyo Vice” starring Ansel Elgort, Ken Watanabe, and executive produced by Michael Mann. She has also written and directed multiple award winning short films such as *Tsuyako*, a post-war Japanese drama USC Thesis film that won over 50 awards including DGA Student Award for the Best Female Director, live action/animated fantasy short film *A Better Tomorrow, Can & Sulochan*; a comedy about an Indian scientist living in Tokyo who falls in love with a vending machine; and a dance short film *Where We Begin*, which was nominated for the Best International Short Film at Tribeca Film Festival.

She’s currently developing several projects including an Untitled Female Samurai project, an original TV series with Annapurna based on her life as an exchange student living with a dysfunctional Mormon family in Utah, as well as an original adaptation of a beloved classic with Hyde Park Entertainment and Barbra Broccoli.

Stephen Blahut – Writer

Stephen Blahut launched his career as a cinematographer shooting HIKARI's debut feature *37 Seconds*, which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival and won the Panorama Audience Award, the CICA Art Cinema Award, and earned nomination for Best First Feature. The film, which follows a young woman with cerebral palsy with a dream to become a manga artist, received accolades globally and played at multiple fall festivals. He’s currently developing an original female samurai project with HIKARI.

Eddie Vaisman – Producer

Eddie Vaisman is a producer and co-founder of Sight Unseen, an independent production and financing company with offices in LA and NY.

Vaisman produced the 2023 Sundance Grand Jury Award winning *A Thousand and One*, directed by A.V. Rockwell, which was released in 2023. The multi-part documentary film series, *Willie Nelson and Family*, which he executive produced, alongside his Sight Unseen partner Julia Lebedev, premiered in 2023.

In 2020 the highly acclaimed release of Cory Finley’s *Bad Education* starring Hugh Jackman and Allison Janney garnered Vaisman an Emmy® Award for Outstanding Television Movie. Other prior credits include Kobi Libii’s 2024 directorial debut, *The American Society of Magical Negroes*, the genre-bending horror satire *Bad Hair* from writer director Justin Simien, Kent Jones’ Independent Spirit Award nominee *Diane*; the Sundance hit and Special Jury Prize-winning *Monsters and Men*, Reinaldo Marcus Green’s directorial debut, and Paul Dano’s directorial debut *Wildlife*, an Independent Spirit Award nominee, and the Berlin Film Festival competition title *The Dinner*, from writer/director Oren Moverman.

Prior to founding Sight Unseen, Vaisman’s credits included Lake Bell’s *In A World...*, Michael Polish’s *Big Sur*, and Rob Zombie’s *31*. Vaisman started his career in 2004 at Kathryn Bigelow’s Paramount-based production company First Light and was Director of Development at Sony-based Avenue Pictures where, among other projects, he worked on *Closer* and *Angels in America*. Following, Vaisman was Head of

Production at 3311 Productions and the US Consultant for London-based sales and finance company Protagonist Pictures.

Vaisman is currently in production on a thriller with Academy Award® winner Guy Nattiv, starring Carrie Coon and Lily James for Bleecker Street. Also in the works are several novel adaptations, including Kiley Reid's *Such A Fun Age* and Bess Kalb's *Nobody Will Tell You This But Me* with Elizabeth Chomko set to direct.

Julia Lebedev – Producer

Julia Lebedev is a producer and co-founder of Sight Unseen, an independent production company with offices in LA and NY.

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In 2020 the highly acclaimed release of Cory Finley's *Bad Education* starring Hugh Jackman and Allison Janney garnered Lebedev an Emmy® Award for Outstanding Television Movie. Other prior credits include Kobi Libii's 2024 directorial debut, *The American Society of Magical Negroes*, the 2020 genre bending horror satire *Bad Hair* from writer director Justin Simien; Kent Jones' Independent Spirit Award nominee *Diane*; the Sundance hit and Special Jury Prize-winning *Monsters and Men*, Reinaldo Marcus Green's directorial debut; and the Berlin Film Festival competition title *The Dinner*, from writer-director Oren Moverman.

Prior to 2017, Lebedev was the CEO and Founder of Code Red Productions, under which she launched her first collaboration with Simien, the Independent Spirit Award winner *Dear White People* that led to the subsequent 4 season series of which Lebedev was an executive producer. Under the Code Red banner Lebedev executive produced *The Prophet*, inspired by Kahlil Gibran's beloved classic book. Other credits include *The Good Doctor*, starring Orlando Bloom, Riley Keough, and Taraji P. Henson, *State Like Sleep*, starring Katherine Waterston and Michael Shannon, and the thriller, *Honour*, starring Paddy Considine.

Lebedev is currently in production on a thriller with Academy Award® winner Guy Nattiv, starring Carrie Coon and Lily James for Bleecker Street. Also in the works are several novel adaptations, including Kiley Reid's *Such A Fun Age* and Bess Kalb's *Nobody Will Tell You This But Me* with Elizabeth Chomko set to direct.

Shin Yamaguchi – Producer

Shin Yamaguchi, producer and founder of the Tokyo-based production company KNOCKONWOOD, has been creating films, episodic dramas, and branded content for nearly two decades since 2005. With a commitment to crafting powerful, enduring cinematic experiences, he has built a career on international co-productions and financing structures that bring global standards of film craftsmanship to life.

He began his feature film career with French auteur Gaspar Noé's *Enter the Void*. Since then, he has produced works such as Eric Khoo's *Ramen Teh*, *Spirit World* starring Catherine Deneuve, and the latest film by Koji Fukada — one of Japan's most acclaimed auteurs and a celebrated fixture at the Cannes Film Festival — each of which has been recognized at major international festivals.

He has also been a longtime collaborator of HIKARI. Since 2011, Yamaguchi has produced her films from the shorts *A Better Tomorrow* and *Where We Begin* to her acclaimed feature debut *37 Seconds*, which won both the Panorama Audience Award and the CICA Art Cinema Award at the Berlin International Film

Festival. For more than a decade, he has stood as a close creative partner and key supporter of HIKARI's artistic vision.

Currently, he is developing a new feature film with Takeshi Fukunaga, episode director of *SHŌGUN*, *Tokyo Vice 2*, and the upcoming *12 12 12*.

Takuro Ishizaka – Director of Photography

Takuro Ishizaka is an award-winning cinematographer working between Los Angeles and Tokyo. Originally from Kawasaki City, Japan, he grew up in a family of directors and writers, inspiring his lifelong passion for visual storytelling. A graduate of Chapman University's film production program, Ishizaka is best known for lensing the *Rurouni Kenshin* live-action film series, now streaming on Netflix.

His work blends dynamic movement with striking color palettes, redefining the samurai genre for global audiences. All five *Rurouni Kenshin* films topped box office charts in Japan and across Asia, cementing the series as one of the most successful manga-to-live-action adaptations.

Beyond narrative film, Ishizaka has collaborated with leading camera and lens manufacturers, including Canon, Panasonic, Zeiss, DJI, and RED, on high-profile product launches. His upcoming projects include *Lear Rex* starring Al Pacino and Jessica Chastain.

Norihiro Isoda – Production Designer

Norihiro Isoda is a film production director and designer, originally from Nagasaki, Japan. After learning the fundamentals of film art at Daiei Tokyo Studio, he made his debut as a production designer in 1987 with director Mei Kato's *Oba-ke-chan*. Since then, he has worked on numerous masterpieces, including films by director Takeshi Kitano, and has led Japanese cinema with his outstanding art design.

His notable works include *Hana-Bi*, which won the Golden Lion Award at the Venice International Film Festival and propelled director Takeshi Kitano onto the international stage, as well as *Zatoichi*, which won the Silver Lion Award at the same festival and the Audience Award at the Toronto International Film Festival. He also supported Kitano's *Kids Return*, *Brother*, and "Outrage" series as a production designer who creates unique worlds, becoming an indispensable presence in Kitano's works.

He has also participated in numerous highly acclaimed and talked-about domestic films such as *Maiko is a Lady*, *Swing Girls*, and *Asakusa Kid*, captivating audiences across diverse genres.

For his work on director Isshin Inudo's *The Floating Castle*, he won the Japan Academy Prize for Best Art Direction. With his meticulous spatial construction and playful artistic expression, he continues to leave a solid mark on the film world both in Japan and internationally.

Masako Takayama – Production Designer

After graduating from fashion college, Masako Takayama met art designer Kikuo Ota while attending a graphic design school and began working in film art. He started as an art assistant for films, then became an art designer for television dramas, before returning to the film world. Most recently, he did a TV drama called "Mass-Produced Luka."

Alan Baumgarten, ACE – Editor

Alan Baumgarten (Editor) has edited multiple films for directors Aaron Sorkin, David O. Russell, Ruben Fleischer, The Farrelly Brothers and Jay Roach.

He has received 2 Academy Award® Nominations, for *The Trial of the Chicago 7* and *American Hustle*, and 6 Eddie Nominations from American Cinema Editors with 3 Eddie wins, for *The Trial of the*

Chicago 7, American Hustle, and Recount. Among his other credits are *Being the Ricardos, Molly's Game, Zombieland, Trumbo, Venom, Gangster Squad, The Heartbreak Kid, Charlie Bartlett, Fever Pitch, Lord of Illusions, The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland, Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story, and The Lawnmower Man.*

Born in Los Angeles, Baumgarten studied at the University of California at Santa Cruz and received a B.F.A. from New York University.

Thomas A. Krueger – Editor

Forthcoming.

Jónsi - Composer

Since the 1990s, world-renowned interdisciplinary artist Jónsi has produced ethereal sounds through an astute aesthetic that combines the minimal, classical and progressive. Jónsi initially gained international recognition as the lead vocalist for the Icelandic experimental rock band Sigur Rós, whose unique sounds have been equated with the sublime. As a solo artist, Jónsi has released three albums and worked with musicians such as Elizabeth Fraser, Robyn, and Alex Somers. Jónsi's unequivocal vocal and instrumental approach, notably his bowed guitar method to create musical atmosphere, have expanded the boundaries of musical genres.

Jónsi has collaborated with musicians, visual artists, and filmmakers to create a robust body of work across disciplines. Working with such leading creative figures as Doug Aitken, Cameron Crowe, Merce Cunningham, Olafur Eliasson, and Carl Michael von Hausswolf, Jónsi's artistic collaborations have resulted in prestigious awards and critical acclaim. His film scoring projects include Cameron Crowe's *We Bought A Zoo* and Tom Clancy's *Without Remorse*, and he has contributed a number of tracks to the *How To Train Your Dragon* franchise.

Jónsi formally entered the visual art scene in 2018 and has had three solo exhibitions with Tanya Bonakdar Gallery in Los Angeles and New York City. Jónsi has also had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Tasmania; the National Nordic Museum, Seattle; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; and the Reykjavík Art Museum Hafnarhús, Iceland.

Since 2009, Jónsi has been an avid self-taught perfumer and founded Fischersund perfumery and art collective with his three sisters in Reykjavík, Iceland. Jónsi's creations are used extensively in his visual art practice and in "scented concerts" curated by Fischersund around the world.

Born in Iceland in 1975, Jón Þór "Jónsi" Birgisson lives and works in Los Angeles.

Alex Somers – Composer

Alex Somers' journey into film composition began with a Tascam four-track tape recorder he acquired at age 13, which ignited his fascination with manipulating sound and creating his own sonic realities. This early interest evolved significantly, leading him to study film scoring and music therapy at Berklee College of Music. Upon completion, Somers relocated to Reykjavík, Iceland where he attended the Iceland Academy of the Arts. In Reykjavík, Somers honed his skills as a composer, producer, audio engineer and mixer. His pivotal moment came when he collaborated with Jónsi of Sigur Rós, contributing to ambient projects like *Riceboy Sleeps* and *Liminal*, which saw him transition to a sought-after composer for film and television.

Somers gained notable recognition in film scoring, contributing music to acclaimed projects such as *Captain Fantastic, Honey Boy, Here We Are: Notes For Living On Planet Earth*, and the series "Black Mirror" episode "Hang the DJ". More recently, his solo composing efforts include 2020's hugely popular Taylor Swift documentary *Miss Americana, Causeway* starring Jennifer Lawrence, the "Under the Bridge" miniseries, *Holland* starring Nicole Kidman, and the series "Overcompensating" with Charli XCX. In addition,

Somers makes music as a collaborator with artist and composer Scott Alario. The duo co-scored (with Forest Kelley) the 2019 Oscar-nominated documentary film *Hale County This Morning, This Evening* (2018, directed by RaMell Ross). In 2024, they connected with Ross again, this time to compose music for his fiction feature debut *Nickel Boys* (MGM, 2024).

His work also extended to producing and recording with artists like the aforementioned Sigur Rós and Jóhann Jóhannsson. With several solo albums to his name, his work outside of film scoring showcases his distinctive style, blending elements of film composition, ambient, post-classical, and electronica into a cohesive and evocative sound. His music often combines his fascination with found sounds and his musical influences, including electronic pioneers like Oval and his brother John Somers. Now based in Los Angeles, Somers continues to work on film scores and new solo projects, marking a new chapter in his dynamic career.

Meg Mochizuki – Costume Designer

Meg Mochizuki is a Tokyo-based costume designer with over 20 years of experience in film, television, and commercial productions.

Her upcoming projects include *Tashika ni Atta Maboroshi* (*The Imaginary That Truly Existed* – tentative English title, directed by Naomi Kawase), and *Hodonaku, Owakare desu* (*We'll Say Goodbye Soon* – tentative English title, directed by Takahiro Miki and produced by Toho), both scheduled for release.

Kei Kawamura, CSA – Casting Director

Affiliated with Dentsu Casting and Entertainment, Kei Kawamura has engaged in casting for film and television, both domestically and internationally.

Kawamura handled casting for FX's "SHOGUN," winning the Casting Award at the 76th Primetime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Drama Series—the first Japanese person ever to receive this honor.

Kawamura also serves as a director for the Casting Society of America's Global Chapter.

Yumi Takada – Casting Director

Forthcoming.

ABOUT THE CAST

Brendan Fraser – “Phillip Vandarpleog”

Brendan Fraser is an Academy Award® winner whose nuanced performances and compelling role choices have earned widespread acclaim. Fraser starred in Darren Aronofsky’s, *The Whale*, which premiered in December 2022 and earned him several awards including his first Academy Award® for Best Actor in a Leading Role, a Critics Choice Movie Award, SAG Award, AACTA International Award, Satellite Award, and nominations for a BAFTA Award, and Gotham Independent Film Award.

Coming up, Fraser will portray Dwight D. Eisenhower in *Pressure*. In 2026, you will be able to see him in the Adult Animated Comedy “Breaking Bear.” Other recent works for Fraser include Steven Soderbergh’s *No Sudden Move* as well as “Doom Patrol,” the hit series where he stars as Cliff Steele and is the voice of Robotman. He can also be seen in *Line of Descent*, a crime narrative that follows the relationship between a mafia family and an undercover officer; *The Secret of Karma*; *The Poison Rose*; “Trust,” an FX anthology series, starring opposite Donald Sutherland and Hilary Swank; and “Condor,” where he played Nathan Flower, an unstable yet efficient central cog in an unholy alliance between the private military company that employs him and the CIA.

Other credits include the action-comedy film *Brothers*, directed by Max Barbakow, Martin Scorsese’s *Killers of the Flower Moon*, alongside Leonardo DiCaprio and Lily Gladstone, the third season of the award-winning TV show “The Affair,” where he played Gunther, a menacing security guard in the prison that Noah Solloway (Dominic West) was incarcerated in, and *The Field*, a classic crime narrative that merges a dysfunctional, mafia family at war with each other as an undercover officer plots their downfall. Fraser played an arms dealer in this independent feature.

He was seen in the mini-series, “Texas Rising,” alongside Bill Paxton, Ray Liotta, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, and Olivier Martinez. Fraser previously starred in the feature *Gimme Shelter*, opposite Rosario Dawson and Vanessa Hudgens; voiced characters in two animated films as Scorch Supernova in *The Weinstein Company’s Escape from Planet Earth*; Open Road Films’ *The Nut Job*, with Will Arnett and Katherine Heigl; and *Whole Lotta Sole*, a heist comedy directed by Terry George in which Fraser starred and served as Executive Producer.

In 2008, Fraser had an incredible summer at the box office. The release of *Journey to the Center of the Earth* in 3-D, which he starred in and served as Executive Producer, has grossed more than \$100 million domestically. The film is the first live-action feature to be filmed entirely in 3D. More credits include *Inkheart*, *GI Joe: The Rise of Cobra*, *The Air I Breathe*, *George of the Jungle*, *Furry Vengeance*, *Extraordinary Measures*, *Looney Tunes: Back in Action*, *Bedazzled*, *Monkey Bone*, *Blast From the Past*, *Dudley Do-Right*, *Mrs. Winterbourne*, *Encino Man*, *School Ties*, *With Honors*, *Airheads*, *The Scout*, and *The Twilight of the Gods*. Fraser has been in a string of some of the most successful independent films of the past decade including Academy®-award-winning *Crash*, directed by Paul Haggis; Phillip Noyce’s *The Quiet American*, based on Graham Greene’s 1955 thriller of the same name; and Bill Condon’s *Gods and Monsters*, opposite Sir Ian McKellen and Lynn Redgrave.

Fraser is most well-known for his role in the *Mummy* Franchise as Rick O’Connell. Stephen Sommers’ 1999 action/horror adventure was an ambitious retooling of the 1932 horror classic, with Fraser cast as an American serving in the French Foreign Legion who becomes involved with an English archaeological expedition and the ancient secrets they unleash. In 2001, Fraser reteamed with Sommers

and co-star Rachel Weisz in the sequel, *The Mummy Returns*. In 2008, *Mummy 3: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* was released. The franchise has grossed \$1.415 billion worldwide.

Fraser made his Broadway debut, starring in the comedy *Elling*, based on the Norwegian novels by Ingvar Ambjørnsen. Fraser's diverse theatre roster includes his appearance at the Lyric Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue in London and in the West End production of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Fraser also received high praise for his work as the anxious writer in John Patrick Shanley's *Four Dogs and a Bone* at the Geffen Playhouse where he co-starred with Martin Short, Parker Posey, and Elizabeth Perkins for director Lawrence Kasdan.

Fraser was born in Indianapolis and raised in Europe and Canada. He has been dedicated to honing his craft since the early age of 12 and began attending theater when his family lived in London. He attended high school at Toronto's Upper Canada College and received a BFA in acting from the Actor's Conservatory, Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle.

Takehiro Hira - "Shinji Tada"

BAFTA and Emmy® award-nominated actor Takehiro Hira was most recently seen starring in the critically acclaimed FX series "Shōgun" alongside Hiroyuki Sanada and Anna Sawai. Hira is seen as the 'Ishido Kazunari', an all-powerful bushō, member of the Council of Regents and the Protector of Osaka Castle. For this performance, Hira was nominated for an Emmy® and Critic's Choice Award in the category of Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series.

Hira is currently in production on *Karoshi* in which he stars opposite Cynthia Erivo, Teo Yoo and Isabelle May.

Earlier this year, Hira was also seen in in Guy Maddin's *Rumours*, opposite Cate Blanchett and Alicia Vikander. The film follows leaders of seven wealthy democracies who get lost in the woods while drafting a statement on a global crisis, facing danger as they attempt to find their way out. It had its global premiere at the Cannes Film Festival and will be a part of the Toronto International Film Festival this fall.

Hira will soon be seen returning in the second season of the series "Monarch: Legacy of Monsters," opposite John Goodman and Wyatt Russell. He will reprise his role of 'Hiroshi Randa' the patriarch of the Randa family, who finds themselves uncovering their buried secrets and legacy linked to the secret organization known as 'Monarch.' The show is set in the aftermath of the battle between Godzilla and the Titans that decimated San Francisco.

Most notably, Hira was seen starring in the series "Giri/Haji," opposite Kelly Macdonald. The series follows Kenzo Mori (Hira), a detective from Tokyo who scours London for his missing brother, who's been involved with the Yakuza and accused of murder. For this performance, Hira was nominated for a BAFTA TV Award in the category of Leading Actor in 2020.

Other credits include films such as Marvel's *Captain America: Brave New World*, Neill Blomkamp's *Gran Turismo*; William Olsson drama thriller, *Lost Girls and Love Hotels*; Robert Schwentke's *Snake Eyes*; Yûichi Hibi's *Erica 38*; Masato Harada's *Criminal on the Prosecutor's Side* and *Sekigahara*; Takashi Yamazaki's *The Fighter Pilot*; Yasuo Mikami's *Bushido*; Shinji Higuchi and Isshin Inudô's *The Floating Castle*; Takashi Miike's *Lesson of Evil*, *Ace Attorney* and *Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai*; as well as Hajime Hashimoto's *Chacha*.

Mari Yamamoto - "Aiko Nakajima"

Mari Yamamoto is quickly establishing herself as an internationally renowned rising star, showcasing her range of disciplines both on and off camera.

Next, Yamamoto will be seen in the second season of "Monarch: Legacy of Monsters" alongside

Kurt and Wyatt Russell, Anna Sawai, Ren Watabe, Kiersey Clemons, Joe Tippett and Elisa Lasowski. The show is set in the aftermath of the battle between Godzilla and the Titans that decimated San Francisco, following a family's journey to uncover its buried secrets and a legacy linking them to the secret organization known as 'Monarch.' Yamamoto will reprise her role as 'Dr. Keiko Miura,' a well-respected Japanese scientist who researches the monsters as a leader of the Monarch team.

In 2022, Yamamoto was seen in the acclaimed series adaptation of Min Jin Lee's novel "Pachinko" alongside Jin Ha, Youn Yuh Jung, Lee Min Ho, and Minha Kim. The series follows a family across four generations, led in modern day by Solomon (Ha). Their stories journey between Korea, Japan and America, deeply rooted in lessons of war and peace, love and loss, triumph and reckoning. Yamamoto played 'Hana,' Solomon's ex-girlfriend who uses alcohol and sex to stifle her sadness and low self-esteem and contracts the AIDS virus as a result. Season 1 won the Independent Spirit Award for Best Ensemble Cast in a New Scripted Series.

Offscreen, Yamamoto served as a writer and producer on the series "Tokyo Vice," which follows an American journalist who explores the dark and dangerous world of the Japanese yakuza whilst living under the city's official line that 'murder does not happen in Tokyo.' She is currently developing her own series at Disney+ Japan.

Prior credits include Cedric Nicolas-Troyan's *Kate* alongside Mary Elizabeth Winstead and Woody Harrelson; Jason K. Lau's *Story Game* alongside Greer Grammer and Ayumi Ito; Max Gold's *Surfer's Paradise* opposite Ben Palacios; Christian Lee's *Jimami Tofu* alongside Jason Chan, Rino Nakson and Masande Tsukayama and Giorgos Georgeopoulos' *Not to be Unpleasant, But We Need to Have a Serious Talk*.

Yamamoto was born in Japan and grew up in London and Tokyo. She has a BA in International Relations from ICU (Tokyo) and studied acting at The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in New York for two years. She was a member of The Bats at The Flea Theatre in Tribeca NY for several years, performing in various off-off Broadway shows. She currently resides in New York.

Akira Emoto - "Kikuo Hasegawa"

Akira Emoto is one of the most distinguished and acclaimed actors in Japan's film, TV and theater fields. In 1976, he founded the Emoto Company Tokyo Kandenchi, where he has served as the leading figure, shaping its artistic direction. His rich expressiveness, honed on stage, has seamlessly translated into his work in films and TV.

In 1998, Emoto starred in *Dr. Akagi*, directed by Shohei Imamura and premiered at 51st Cannes International Film Festival, earning the Best Actor award at the 22nd Japan Academy Prize, along with accolades from a lot of Japan film awards and solidified his reputation as one of Japan's most respected actors.

His versatility continued to shine. In 2004, he won two Best Supporting Actor awards for his roles in Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Doppelganger*, and Takeshi Kitano's *Zatoichi*.

In 2010, Emoto's portrayal of a grieving father in *Villain*, directed by Lee Sang-il, earned him the Best Supporting Actor award at the 32nd Japan Academy Prize.

Beyond his acting achievements, Emoto was awarded the Medal with Purple Ribbon in 2011 and The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette in 2019, recognizing his national contributions to the arts.

Shannon Mahina Gorman - "Mia Kawasaki"

Shannon Mahina Gorman was born as the youngest of four siblings, far apart in age, and grew up showered with her family's attention. Western music always played in their home. Surrounded by brothers who sang loudly and danced playfully, and a sister who hummed along, she naturally spent her early childhood dancing with her small body and singing with gusto. Watching diverse films together was a weekend family tradition, so her immersion into the entertainment world felt equally natural. By age four, she entertained her family with solo performances, and her true nature shone through when she danced to music in stores, delighting those around her. Seeking a place where she could be her free-spirited self, Gorman passed an audition for a child talent agency at age seven and began lessons. Through her first acting experience in *Rental Family*, she discovered the joy of performing and the stimulation of the set, feeling strongly that this was where she truly belonged.