

a Cinema Guild release



Opens August 2 in New York at Film at Lincoln Center

1993 / 124 min / 1.66:1 / 4K DCP / Stereo / Color
In Japanese with English subtitles

Restored in 4K in 2023

Press

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Press Materials:

https://www.cinemaguild.com/theatrical/moving_press.html

Synopsis

When her parents split and her father Kenichi moves out of their family home, Renko (Tomoko Tabata), a bright and energetic 6th grade girl, is left alone with her mother, Nazuna, in Kyoto. As Nazuna sets out new rules for their life together, Renko makes plans of her own, and sees to it that any changes happening in her family happen on her terms.

Since its premiere at Cannes in Un Certain Regard in 1993, Moving has been one Shinji Somai's most beloved films. In this poignant family drama, Somai transcends the tropes of stories of children dealing with divorce to bring us a film filled with indelible images about an unforgettable teenage girl who encounters the unknown and refuses to succumb to it.

Credits

Cast

Kenichi, Renko's father..... Kiichi Nakai
Nazuna, Renko's mother.....Junko Sakurada
Renko Urushiba.....Tomoko Tabata
Teacher.....Tsurube Shofukutei
Wakako Takano.....Mariko Sudo
Yukio Nunobiki.....Taro Tanaka
Minoru Oki.....Minoru Oki

Crew

Directed by Shinji Somai
Writers: Satoshi Okonogi, Satoko Okudera
Original Story: Hiko Tanaka
Producers: Hirohisa Mujuku, Hiroyuki Fujikado
Director of Photography: Toyomichi Kurita
Editor: Yoshiyuki Okuhara
Sound: Hidetoshi Nonaka
Music: Shigeaki Saegusa
Production Design: Shinegori Shimoishizaka, Hidemitsu Yamazaki

Restoration: Yomiuri Telecasting Corporation

A Yomiuri Telecasting Corporation Production
World Sales: mk2 films
U.S.-Canada Distribution: Cinema Guild

Director Shinji Somai on “Moving”

There are more than enough stories about children who are affected by the lives of adults around them. How can I reach beyond this framework?

It's fortunate if children can just enjoy their childhood, but unfortunately, they're often forced to live through their parents' divorce. But children can't choose their parents. How do children who get sucked into their parents' problems mend themselves?

This is a story about Renko's discovery of herself. She tries to pave her own path into the future. She encounters the unknown and mentally empowers herself to keep facing the unknown.

Embracing yourself doesn't mean you question why your parents gave birth to you. You have to find your own place in this world that you've been born into, like it or not.

I very much look forward to how this film will be received today by children facing the same situation as Renko.

- Shinji Somai, Director (in 1993)

Note on the Film's Restoration

When working with a great filmmaker like Shinji Somai, known for being self-effacing and cunning, I had to work extra hard to find clues for the concept and visual ideas of the film as a cinematographer. Working without storyboards, we had to work shot by shot, one shot organically developing into another. One shot would develop into a whole scene, and the finished film was a collection of these scenes. It was as if the script was just an excuse for making the film. When we finished a shot, he would mumble as if to ask himself, “Are YOU okay with this?”. I know now this was his strategy to get better work from his staff members. His voice stayed with me for a long time, even though he is no longer in this world (Shinji Somai passed away on September 9th, 2001).

Moving was shot in 1992 during a very hot summer. Thirty years later, in 2022, the production company decided to make a digital master and DCP from the original, photo-chemically processed negatives. Since the director and producers are no longer with us, I was asked to take on the task. The original crew of the film reunited to help the digitalization team. The new team members didn't know much about the director or the film, but they worked hard to attain the highest quality possible. When facing a problem during the restoration process, I thought again of Shinji Somai's voice, asking me “Are YOU okay with this?”

I hope he will be happy with the digitally restored new version of Moving.

-Toyomichi Kurita, Cinematographer (2023)

“The World Doesn’t Know Shinji Somai” by Ryusuke Hamaguchi (*Drive My Car, Evil Does Not Exist*)

“The world doesn’t know Shinji Somai”. That was the catchphrase coming with the book *Yomigaeru Somai Shinji (Shinji Somai Renaissance)* published in 2011, 10 years after the director’s death. Now that 10 years has passed again, does the world finally met Shinji Somai? Yes and no. Of course, several retrospectives of his films have been organized in festivals, where he found a new audience. He is still far from achieving the widespread recognition that all Somai lovers feel is his due. This is a thing that I’ve felt precisely while speaking with those involved in cinema around the world. The world still doesn’t know Shinji Somai.

Since his debut in 1980, Shinji Somai is held in the highest esteem by Japanese film fans, just as it is, let's face it, impossible for anyone making cinema in Japan today not to have Somai in mind. Of course, it is easy to imagine the difficulty of mulling over the atmosphere of early Somai films if one is not familiar with the specific context of Japanese cinema in the 1980s. At a time when, with the dismantling of the major studio production system many films were being made by parasitising other industries such as television or music Somai launched his filmography by making "idol films" relying on the popularity of the teenage girls who played the leading roles (which is reminiscent of Hou Hsiao Hsien's debut at the same period).

We often speak of the "sequence shot" or the "long shot" to characterize the stylistic feature he acquired during this period. However, nothing could be more misleading than to regard this as his 'auteurism'. Simply comparing Somai Shinji's long takes with those of Welles, Tarkovsky, Angelopoulos and others will only make his technical coarseness stand out. This could be understood as a reflection of the poor production conditions of Japanese cinema in the 1980s. But no. What he was really aiming for was first and foremost the 'sparkle of life' of the actors. In his work, the long shot allows these young women, seen as "idols", to burst through the frame from within, the better to escape. This inspires the crew, who grew up in studios, to break through the limited circumstances of the time. This 'long shot', which is a by-product of his deep trust in the vitality of the actors' and crew's bodies, is not just a directorial technique, but rather a reflection of his 'attitude to life'.

Moving (selected in Cannes Film Festival's Un Certain Regard section in 1993) is, amongst all of Somai’s films, the one which first created a contact between international audience and his entire oeuvre. However, the film did not simply end up unawarded, nor did it receive the same critical favors as Takeshi Kitano's *Sonatine*, which was screened in the same year and in the same section. Here again, the world and Somai replayed their failed encounter. Watching the film again today, it seems unbelievable. Especially because of the presence of the lead actress, Tomoko Tabata. Her ability to move, the expression on her face, her eyes - everything is incredible; but it is her voice that I find most captivating. This voice, which alone manages to express her whole being, which plays with distance and time as if it were breaking down all boundaries, to touch and shake the adults who play the other characters, right up to the

audience. As a filmmaker, it's hard to believe that such a being could exist in a film. The images are like so much evidence of her vital energy. We are led to reflect on the fact that the life force residing there may also be in us, and we may not be making full use of it. Life, here reinstalled.

There can be no doubt that *Moving* is still the best gateway for "the World" and Shinji Somai to meet. You don't need to know anything about the history of Japanese cinema to understand this film, which marks a period of the highest refinement in his career, as well as having been brought to life through Tomoko Tabata's character. But if, thanks to this film, viewers ever become interested in Shinji Somai, I would like them to see his twelve other films. Because in each of them, you will see bodies and hear voices that surprise you. Again and again. There's nothing to be surprised about. We have not yet met Somai Shinji enough. We still don't know Somai!

Director Shinji Somai's Bio

Born January 13th, 1948 in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture. After dropping out of college, Somai joined Nikkatsu Studios as an assistant director. In 1976, he left Nikkatsu and started working as a freelance, assistant directing for such filmmakers as Kazuhiko Hasegawa, Murakami Ryū and Terayama Shūji. He made his directorial debut in 1980 with the film *Tonda Couple* and directed *Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* the following year, which became the No.1 box office hit in the Japanese film category.

Revered by the likes of Kiyoshi Kurosawa and Ryusuke Hamaguchi, Somai was a monumental figure of Japanese cinema in the 1980s and beyond, whose body of work bridged the collapse of the studio system and the rise of a new generation of independent filmmakers. In a lively career tragically cut short (he completed 13 films before his untimely death in 2001, aged 53), Somai developed a singular way of working, characterized by his signature long-take style and the highly physical performances of his actors, who were usually young and unknown. Disrupting the usual flow of narrative, Somai's camera ventured out into space to match the volatility of his performers, provoking them along in a dance at once precisely designed and wholly off-the-cuff. Five of Somai's works, including *Typhoon Club* and *Moving*, are ranked among Kinema Junpo's greatest Japanese films of all time.

Filmography

Tonda Couple (1980)
Sailor Suit and Machine Gun (1981)
P.P. Rider (1983)
The Catch (1983)
Love Hotel (1985)
Typhoon Club (1985)
Lost Chapter of Snow: Passion (1985)
Luminous Woman (1987)
Tokyo Heaven (1990)
Moving (1993)
The Friends (1994)
Wait and See (1998)
Kaza Hana (2000)
Gassan (2001)

Select Festivals & Awards

Official Selection – Cannes Un Certain Regard 1993
Best Film – Kinema Junpo Awards (Readers' Choice) 1994
Best Restored Film – Venice Film Festival 2023