

Departures (Okuribito)

Japan 2008

Director

Takita Yôjiro

Screenplay

Koyama Kundo

Director of Photography

Hamada Takeshi

Original Music

Hisaishi Joe

Cast

Kobayashi Daigo

Motoki Masahiro

Mika

Hirosue Ryoko

Sasaki Ikuei

Yamazaki Tsutomu

Kamimura Yuriko

Yo Kimiko

Yamashita Tsuyako

Yoshiyuki Kazuko

130 minutes Subtitles

As we sit and watch this Oscar acclaimed film, it offers us a channel for reflection given the present circumstances in Northern Japan.

Death is a funny thing - both peculiar and ha-ha. Director Yojiro Takita and writer Kundo Kayama know this and aren't afraid to give you an emotional punch as well as a punchline. Takita approaches his film as a careful orchestration, blending sweet with sour to produce an unexpected and subtle symphony of moods that was a surprise, but worthy winner of the foreign language Oscar this year.

Amber Wilkinson, Eye for Film

Departures' whimsical take on the Japanese funeral industry proves surprisingly funny. Director Yojiro Takita delights in playing with the squeamish qualities of his subject, as the undertakers deal with deceased transvestites and shoot ill-conceived corporate videos. Yet it's also gently uplifting, as Daigo's journey of self-discovery is fired by his newfound appreciation of the end that awaits us all.

Jamie Russell, Radio Times

As we all come to it in the end, it's not surprising that from Sophocles's *Antigone* through the gravediggers in *Hamlet* to the Fisher family's Los Angeles undertaking business in TV's *Six Feet Under*, funerary rites have fascinated dramatic writers. The death-obsessed Sam Peckinpah actually cast himself as an impatient coffin-maker in *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*. *Departures*, is a moving, gently amusing contribution to this tradition. The film, mostly set in a wintry landscape surrounded by snow-capped mountains, is fastidiously composed.

Philip French, The Observer

From the outset there is a great deal of beauty here, both cinematographically and narratively – particularly in the ceremonious preparations that recurrently ground the film's somewhat erratic tonality. In largely abstaining from over-romanticism, *Departures* never allows the stench of death to linger, instead exuding an optimism that gestures towards new beginnings; not for the deceased themselves, but for the friends and family left behind.

Adam Woodward, Little White Lies

Count on the first tear to fall by the 55-minute mark.

Kent Turner, Film-Forward.com

Our next screening...

Fish Tank (UK)

Tue 5 April 2011

Dir: Andrea Arnold

BAFTA winning drama set in East London from the director of *Red Road*.

