

A FILM BY AKIO FUJIMOTO

ALONG THE SEA

HOANG PHUONG • QUYNH NHU • HUYNH TUYET ANH

PRESENTED AND PRODUCED BY E.X.N K.K. IN ASSOCIATION WITH EVER ROLLING FILMS

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• PRODUCTION SUPPORT BY ALLEN CO., LTD. • SCREENPLAY BY HOANG PHUONG HUYNH TUYET ANH QUYNH NHU • COP KENTARO KISHI • SOUND DESIGNER YOUKI YAEI
• COLORIST TAKAMITSU HOSHINO • FOODS YUKI KOSUGE • SOUND ENGINEER KEEFAR • 1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND PRODUCTION MANAGER YUJI SHIMADA • 2ND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AYA KATSUKI
• INTERPRETER PHAM THU HUONG • DIT KENTA TANAKA • BEHIND THE SCENES HOANG LIEN SON • PRODUCER KAZUTAKA WATANABE JOSH LEVY NGUYEN LE HANG
• ASSOCIATE PRODUCER YUKI KITAGAWA • POSTER DESIGN STANDBY INC. • ARTIST EDITED AND DIRECTED BY AKIO FUJIMOTO • INTERNATIONAL SALES ASIAN SHADOWS



ALONG THE SEA

海辺の彼女たち

UMIBE NO KANOJOTACHI



88' | JAPAN – VIETNAM | 2020 | Drama | Color
Vietnamese & Japanese | DCP | 24fps / 1.85 : 1 / 5.1

JAPAN & PRESS

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VIETNAM

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INTERNATIONAL SALES & FESTIVALS

ASIAN SHADOWS

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SYNOPSIS

AN, NHU, and PHUONG, three young Vietnamese women in their early 20's, work as technical trainees in Japan.

Unsatisfied of their situation, overwhelmed with work, not well remunerated, and unable to discuss terms and conditions with their boss, who confiscated their passports at their arrival in Japan, they decide to escape, becoming illegal residents in Japan.

Contacting a broker, DAN, a middle-aged Vietnamese man, and searching for solutions, he introduces them to a fisherman for work, and a shed to stay for free.

Traveling by train and ferry, they arrive to the snowy landscape of Northern Japan. PHUONG's parents keep urging her to send them money, since they rely on her working abroad for financial support. In spite of illegal working conditions, the three feel relieved as they, as well as finding a job, have also doubled their salary.

As they start their work, Phuong suddenly falls to the ground, stricken with severe pain. Worried, An and Nhu take Phuong to a hospital, but they are refused admission for not having an ID card. Phuong starts then searching how to get fake documents.

MAIN CAST



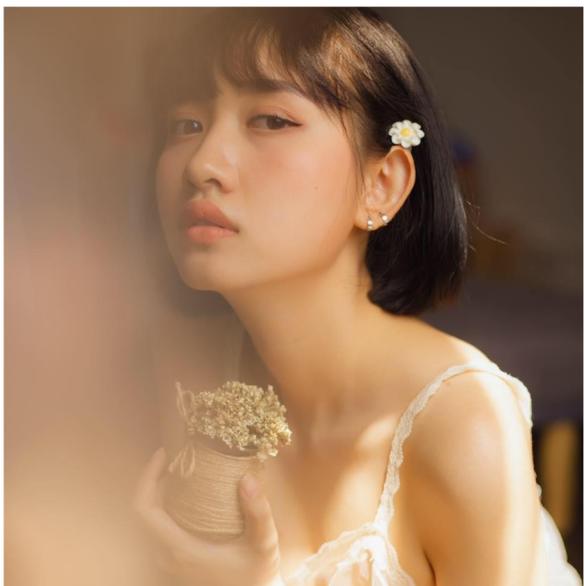
HOANG PHUONG
*as **Phuong***

Hoang Phuong is a Vietnamese News Anchor, MC and a self-taught actress who has had lead roles in various genres and mediums. She worked mainly on independent short film and TV Series before being selected for the leading role in *INVISIBLE LOVE* by director Guo Xiang, a 2019 co-production between Vietnam, China and the USA. *ALONG THE SEA* is her second feature film as a leading actress.



HUYNH TUYET ANH
*as **An***

Huynh Tuyet Anh is a Vietnamese actress. She worked as a stunt performer in *GIRLS 2* (Hong Kong, 2017) by Barbara Wong & Chun Chun. In 2017-2018, she starred in *789 MUOI* by Dustin Nguyen, *100 DAYS OF SUNSHINE* by Vu Ngoc Phuong, *FIGHT BACK TO SCHOOL* by Duy Joseph and *MY MR. WIFE* by Charlie Nguyen. In 2019, she was the leading role of the indie short *CƯỜI VỢ CHO CHA*, one of five projects supported by the CJ Cultural Short Film Fund.



QUYNH NHU
*as **Nhu***

Quynh Nhu is a Vietnamese model of commercials. *ALONG THE SEA* is her acting debut. During casting for the film, Nhu's natural talent has stood out among the others auditioning, and it persuaded the director and the producers that she could take on the role of Nhu for the film.

IN CONVERSATION with the MAIN CAST



HOANG PHUONG

as Phuong

What was your feeling when you came to Japan to take part in the film?

Japan always amazes me with its culture, art and people. One month in Japan was not too long but I shared many memories with the crew, and especially our experiences in Aomori.

How do you feel about your role?

This is such a memorable role and one that will always stay with me. The story in the film reflects the actual stories of many people who come to Japan to work or study, especially those who are from my country, Vietnam. My character is a woman who has her family's well being on her shoulders. After taking out a large loan to get to Japan, plans change suddenly. She has to decide whether to go back to Vietnam or stay in Japan to pay her debt. Her inner struggles are the most difficult and chaotic, it was difficult to get into character and feel these emotions.



HUYNH TUYET ANH

as An

What was your feeling when you came to Japan to take part in the film?

Since I was a child, I was fond of cherry blossoms and anime, so when I heard the news that I have been selected for a role in the movie *'Along The Sea'*, I was very excited to see Japan with my own eyes.

What experience did you gain after taking part in the film?

Most of my previous acting experience was on Vietnamese commercial projects which are different in many ways. Working on *'Along the Sea'* I had the opportunity to learn a professional working style and understand the teamwork required to make an Independent Art Film like this.

IN CONVERSATION with the MAIN CAST



QUYNH NHU

as Nhu

What was your feeling when you came to Japan to take part in the film?

I still remember my feelings in being selected for the role in *'Along The Sea'*. Excited, happy and a little bit proud for representing many young people who are currently living and working in Japan, for expressing a part of their difficulties as well as their thoughts. I hope that this film can help others to understand and empathize with these young women.

How do you feel about your role?

I play Nhu, a young enthusiastic girl who loves her family above all. She has a bright vision for the future, yet when working in Japan, everything is not as Nhu imagined. This is a role I feel quite similar to who I really am, full of ambitions and dreams. I hope this role will partly encourage and motivate those in situations like Nhu to be stronger, work harder, because after all, by tomorrow the sun will rise again.

What experience did you gain after taking part in the film?

First, it's about having to fit into a large team. We had two different cultures, different working styles, but sharing a common goal to make the best film we can. Secondly, I made my own research to learn about the subject. That helped me to prepare for my role, but also gave me a lot of insight, and empathy. Third, working with two crews, two working models, from two countries, speaking three languages on set, I have learned a lot about acting. And finally, it's about having new relationships and experiences. Sitting on the edge of the sea, everyone sat next to each other, covered in blankets, sharing cups of coffee, reminiscing of eating Vietnamese food. I will never forget watching the crew suffering from the cold, and some even walking barefoot on the snow, because of the sound of footsteps during a scene.

AKIO FUJIMOTO

Director, Screenwriter, Editor



Biography

Akio Fujimoto born in 1988, in Osaka, Japan, studied family psychology in college. After he enrolled in the Visual Arts Academy Osaka where he learned the essence of filmmaking, he worked as selection committee chief for the student film category at the Nara International Film Festival.

In 2013, he directed his first short, "PSYCHEDELIC FAMILY". A subtly crafted piece based on his own experiences in a crumbling family. He moved to Tokyo to work on his first feature, a Japan - Myanmar co-production *PASSAGE OF LIFE*, which took 5 years to be completed. The film premiered at the Tokyo International Film festival in 2017, where it was awarded Best Asian Future Film and The Spirit of Asia Award. Since then, based in Yangon and Tokyo, he is directing programs and documentaries for Japanese Broadcaster NHK.

His second feature film, *ALONG THE SEA*'s World Premiere will be at the 2020 San Sebastian Film festival, in the New Director Competition.

AKIO FUJIMOTO

Director, Screenwriter, Editor



Filmography

ALONG THE SEA / *Umibe No Kanojotachi*

Drama, 2020, 88'

- New Directors Competition, San Sebastian International Film Festival

BLEACHED BONES AVENUE / *Hakkotsu Kaido*

Short, 2020, 16'

- Osaka Asian FF 2020, Japan Cuts 2020

PASSAGE OF LIFE / *Boku no kaeru basho*

Drama, 2017, 98'

- Tokyo IFF 2017, Best Asian Future Film, The Spirit of Asia Award

- CinemAsia 2017, Best Performer Award

- Bangkok ASEAN Film Festival 2017, Jury Prize

- Jogja NETPAC Asia Film Festival 2017, Gebar Award

PSYCHEDELIC FAMILY / *Saikefamiria*

Short, 2013, 26'

- Nara International Film Festival

- Dubai International Film Festival

In CONVERSATION with the DIRECTOR



How did you build the script?

The base of the script was built writing a long version treatment, based on my imagination. Then, I did my own research by studying the news/internet, and conducting interviews with those who lived through similar stories. That research changed my idea and affected the plot of the film tremendously.

I was able to work on the treatment before starting any serious research because “technical trainee/migrant laborers” was already a concern in my daily life. Even in the past, I directed a TV program related to these topics. That is how I knew the basics of information needed for this story.

The hardships and anxieties of the foreigners in Japan, expressed in the script, come from my Burmese wife’s experiences. She is always my closest interviewee. I learned how they feel when they are discriminated in Japan, how stressful it is to give birth in a foreign country, and how much pressure they have supporting Burmese parents with the salary earned in Japan. My wife is also working as a counselor for foreign laborers at the government-managed association.

I went on researching what ex-technical trainees do and came to understand some of their inner emotions and struggle after running away from their working place. I found temples and shelters that support and help them. I interviewed many of those who shared their personal experiences remaining anonymous. The base of my research lasted about two months.

About the “real” of the film, how real is the script and which part is not?

In making a fiction drama, I am focusing on finding a “truth” we need to capture in the film. It is always somewhere in between Real and Fiction. This is an old theory in the Japanese Art called “Kyojitu Himaku Ron” according to which the appeal of art lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal. So the part where the broker buys the pills, the part Phuong goes to the hospital alone to get the check-up, the part the three works for fishermen, those are all not based on fact, however, it is within the range of what could happen.

How did you choose and work with the three Vietnamese actresses?

As we had a limited budget, I was thinking of casting someone who had some acting experience rather than choosing a non-professional actress who needs a lot of time for preparation. We met over 100 actresses in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

What I pay attention to when choosing the cast is the facial natural elements, the atmosphere when he/she is in the room and the impression I get when I see them at a first glance. Their presence on camera is often more important to me than the level of their acting ability.

Another point is whether they are capable of reacting to the direction made impromptu, and to perform more than what they were told. I tested all the candidates in the audition, and Phuong, Anh, and Nhu performed in front of our camera in the street of Vietnam to confirm their capability.

Interview done in Tokyo in September 2020



PRODUCERS' Notes

ALONG THE SEA is the third film directed by Akio Fujimoto and produced by E.x.N K.K.. It's inspired by true stories and based on interviews of Vietnamese women immigrants in Japan. So it was our 2017 film PASSAGE OF LIFE focusing on Burmese immigrants in Japan. In our daily news, it is reported how the numbers of foreign people living in Japan are raising. As the Japanese population is decreasing rapidly, it is obvious that Japan needs to accept more laborers from overseas. Though the immigration laws changed in 2018, the media shows the several issues related to the cases of exchange students, missing trainees, refugees, enlisting tons of cases and issues without actually telling their stories, their lives and their emotions. Thus, we decided to continue focusing on the lives of foreign people in Japan. --

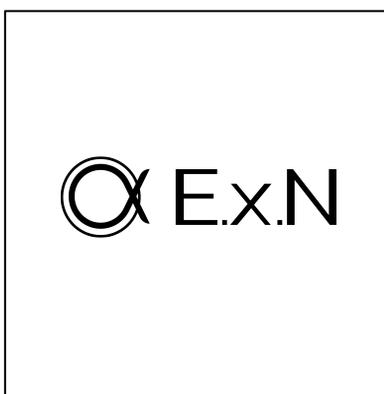
Kazutaka Watanabe, Producer, E.x.N K.K. (Japan)

This was a special project bringing together the two countries of Japan and Vietnam to show an authentic representation of culture, while taking a look at the rarely talked about sensitive topics portrayed in the film. --

Josh Levy, Producer, ever rolling films (Vietnam).

Cinema in Vietnam is growing very quickly, but still much of the world hasn't had the opportunity to hear the stories of Vietnamese people. Our goal at ever rolling films is to share films like these and now we look forward for these important stories to reach all audiences" --

Nguyen Le Hang, Producer, ever rolling films (Vietnam).



Presented by E.x.N K.K. (Japan)

A Tokyo-based film production company established with the aim to create meaningful films in the current moment from international and local perspectives.

- ALONG THE SEA by Akio Fujimoto (2020)
- BLEACHED BONES AVENUE by Akio Fujimoto (2020, short)
- PASSAGE OF LIFE by Akio Fujimoto (2017)
- GANGURO GALS RIOT by Ken'ichi Ugana (2016)



Co-produced by ever rolling films co., ltd. (Vietnam)

A Hanoi-based film production company. The company specializes in creating high-quality video productions of local stories for international audiences.

- ALONG THE SEA by Akio Fujimoto (2020)
- TRADING HAPPINESS by Duc Ngo Ngoc (2020, short)
- TILL THE CAVE FILLS by Nguyen Le Hoang Viet (2019)
- ROOMMATE by Nguyen Le Hoang Viet (2018, short)

ALONG THE SEA
海辺の彼女たち UMIBE NO KANOJOTACHI

Cast

Hoang Phuong as *Phuong*

Huynh Tuyet Anh as *An*

Quynh Nhu as *Nhu*

Crew

Director of Photography: Kentaro Kishi

Sound Designer: Youki Yaei

Associate Producer: Yuki Kitagawa

Focus - Yuki Kosuge

Sound Recordist - Keefar

1st Assistant Director and Production Manager - Yuji Shimada

2nd Assistant Director - Aya Katsuki

DIT - Kenta Tanaka

Interpreter - Pham Thu Huong

Interpreter (for editing) - Tran Huu Huynh

Behind the Scenes & Assistant Camera - Hoang Lien Son

Colorist - Takamitsu Hoshiko

Associate Producer - Yuki Kitagawa

Producers - Josh Levy and Nguyen Le Hang

Producer - Kazutaka Watanabe

Written, edited and directed by Akio Fujimoto

In cooperation with

Japan Vietnam Mutual Support Association

Sotogahama Town (Aomori Pref)

Tairadate Tourism Association

Japan Myanmar Media Culture Association

Production support - Allen co., Ltd.

Sponsored by Beyond Standard Inc. / Sakawa Law office /
Nagasaki University school of global humanities and social sciences

Supported by Japan-Asean Center

Granted by The Japan Foundation Center for Cultural Exchange in Vietnam

In association with ever rolling films

VIETNAM
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