

The End of Summer (Kohayagawa-ke no aki)

Japan 1961 Cert PG 102 minutes

Director : Yasujiro Ozu
Scriptwriters: Kôgo Noda and Yasujiro Ozu
Cinematography: Asakazu Nakai
Music: Toshirô Mayuzumi
Editor: Koichi Iwashita



Cast:

Manbei Kohayagawa
Akiko Kohayagawa, his daughter in law.
Noriko Kohayagawa, his unmarried daughter
Fumiko Kohayagawa, his married daughter
Hisao Kohayagawa, her husband
Tsune Sasaki, Manbei's former Mistress
Yanosuke Kitagawa
Yuriko
Eiichiro Isomura
Farmer
Chief Clerk
Masao

GANJIRO NAKAMURA
SETSUKE HARA
YOKO TSUKASA
MICHIO ARATAMA
KEIJU KOBAYASHI
CHIEKO NANIWA
DAISUKE KATO
REIKO DAN
HISAYA MORISHIGE
CHISHU RYU
KAKYU SAZAN
MASAHIKO SHIMAZU

'Autumn for the Kohayagawa Family' is the literal English translation of the Japanese title, and it's a fair indication of the main theme of Yasujiro Ozu's contemplative film about a family that's slowly falling apart



The penultimate film from acclaimed director Ozu, this is the story of the elderly, widowed owner of a failing family brewing firm who is distracted from his financial crisis by his daughters: one is angry with him for reviving an old affair; another is a widow with a small son, in need - so the family's menfolk believe - of remarriage.

The film is a reflective look at old age, mortality, the loss of traditional ways to a growing western influence, and the emergence of a new generation. It concerns the passing of a particular era and a way of life. The film's imagery establishes the conflict between the old and the modern, with the neon signs in the opening sequence for 'The New Japan', and through the juxtaposition of office blocks and traditional residential quarters.

It is fairly non-judgemental and not particularly nostalgic for the past, seeming to accept that change is not only inevitable, but like death, an integral part of life.

The beautiful photography is sublime; the cinematography from Asakazu Nakai, looks so good on dvd, at times almost like a watercolour - as if the pallid hues had been painted on to monochrome film stock by hand



Born in 1903 at 20 Ozu abandoned his university studies to become an assistant director, and within a few years he was directing films himself. Before his death of cancer on his 60th birthday he made 54 films, remarkably consistent in their theme and style. His films almost invariably dealt with the lives and domestic problems of the Japanese middle class family.

Many considered Ozu to be 'more Japanese' than his contemporaries, a consensus that may have hindered the international distribution of his films.



Technically his films are characterised by a fixed camera filming from a low angle, about three feet above the ground, which corresponded with the eye-level of a Japanese adult crouching on a cushion, a position customarily taken by his tradition bound characters. But this affecting and beautiful film really is a very

accomplished piece of work from Moretti, superbly acted, refreshingly direct and blessed with an ingenious, unexpected final act. For this reason his sets were built with ceilings, something that did not happen in American films until much later.

He seldom varied his camera angle and almost never resorted to devices such as fades, dissolves, pans or tracking shots. Yet despite this usage of some of the apparent basic techniques of cinema, he turned out films of great beauty and magnetic power.

As Chris Wiegand states in on the BBC4 website in reviewing Ozu's career:

"Embrace the quiet wit, patient pace and all-round finesse of Ozu's filmmaking and leave the samurai antics and yakuza bullet fests for another day."

Iain McGlashan