



Monday 27 May at 6:30 pm

In this Corner of the World Kono sekai no katasumi ni Japan 2016

Director: Sunao Katabuchi
Producers: Masao Maruyama
Production co: Genco, Mappa
Screenplay: Sunao Katabuchi, based on the manga by Fumiyo Kono
Photography: Yuya Kawazawa
Editor: Kashiko Kimura
Music: Kotringo

Voices: Non, Yoshimasa Hosoya, Minori Omi, Natsuki Inaba, Mayumi Shintani, Shigeru Ushiyama, Daisuke Ono, Megumi Han

129 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes
In Japanese with English subtitles

It's with a leisurely air that *In This Corner of the World* unravels its coming-of-age tale, yet the relaxed pace, sweet sentiments and gorgeous visuals expected of Japanese animated fare prove somewhat deceptive. It is exactly what a tender yet tragic Second World War-set effort should be, especially one that sweepingly traces a young woman's determined journey to adulthood as uncertainty and worse looms over Japan. As Katabuchi lovingly helms the second screen adaptation of Fumiyo Kono's manga, his Studio Ghibli pedigree – as an assistant director on *Kiki's Delivery Service* – is evident.

With protagonist Suzu Urano first spied as a child, filling in for her ill older brother on the family's seaweed delivery route, the film's hardy, can-do attitude is evident from the outset. Time passes, and soon 1933 becomes 1943, with text on screen marking the changing months and years. Now 19 years old, aspiring artist Suzu harbours a secret crush on seemingly disinterested neighbourhood bully Tetsu; and yet, when a marriage proposal comes her way, it's actually from a stranger. Agreeing to wed naval clerk Shūsaku Hōjō means relocating to Kure on the other side of Hiroshima, living with his family, and starting life anew. Her days are filled with intensive housework, stolen moments as a bond slowly forms with her kindly husband, curt words from his sister, and the many changes the war brings – and then the bombings start. – S Ward, *Screen Daily*

Slyly and artfully, Katabuchi packs his narrative with incident and revelation. Epiphanies keep popping out from this director's meticulous portraiture, his acute observations of habits and gestures. This generous *mélange* of domestic drama and Bildungsroman never devolves into a sob story, and Suzu never registers as a soap-opera heroine, bearing up nobly under multiple calamities, which include a devastating physical injury.

Katabuchi prizes suppleness, responsiveness, and flexibility, in his characters, his drawings, and his storytelling. He establishes a psychological intimacy with Suzu so instinctive that we can read her signals in an instant. Visually, the movie goes beyond prewar nostalgia. With a lived-in realism, it takes a vital, tactile, observant view of the past. As a child, Suzu wades through the mud of the seabed at spring tide; as a young wife, she wanders lost through the courtesan district of Kure. Katabuchi intersperses this naturalistic tapestry with splashes of volatile lyricism. In the eyes of Suzu the artist, anti-aircraft blasts become Van Gogh-like starbursts. In the psyche of Suzu the bomb victim, the world goes black, and people register as chalky stick figures.

Katabuchi withholds any scenes of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, until the end. Then he delivers an intense vignette of a little girl clinging to her dead mother until she's driven away by flies. That child enters into Suzu and Shusaku's life as they determine to rebuild it. – Michael Sagrow, *Film Comment*



Tuesday 04 June at 6:30 pm

My Man Godfrey USA 1936

Director: Gregory La Cava
Production co: Universal Pictures
Screenplay: Morrie Ryskind, Eric Hatch, based on the novel by Hatch
Photography: Ted Tetzlaff
Editors: Ted Kent, Russell J Schoengarth
Music: Charles Previn

With: William Powell (Godfrey), Carole Lombard (Irene Bullock), Alice Brady (Angelica Bullock), Gail Patrick (Cornelia Bullock), Jean Dixon (Molly), Eugene Pallette (Alexander Bullock)

94 mins, Blu-ray. PG

So long as we live in a world of vulgar inequalities, *My Man Godfrey* will have relevance. The story of a mysterious butler who carbonates a household of madcap swells is ageless, and we marvel that such a piquant piece of film can be over 80 years old. *Godfrey* is foremost a screwball comedy, albeit one with considerable tang. As a Depression-era product, it has plenty to say about responsibility in hard times, but it maintains a light touch throughout. Director Gregory La Cava achieves this through repeated crossings of class lines. Rich and dizzy Irene Bullock (Carole Lombard) dares to cross the divide by her active adoration of "forgotten man" Godfrey (William Powell). Irene and maid Molly (played by brittle wisecracker Jean Dixon) commiserate over Godfrey and further break down barriers of the working and idling classes. Repeatedly, La Cava and company serve up the rich as silly, frivolous, childlike, and trivial, while the poor are strong, dignified, generous, and compassionate. Miraculously, he gives us these elemental distinctions without the torpor of penny-ante philosophizing or the goo of Capraesque speechifying. – Matthew Kennedy, *Bright Lights Film Journal*

Godfrey doesn't merely use Lombard and Powell, it loves them. She plays Irene, a petulant kid who wants what she wants when she wants it. His Godfrey employs an attentive posture and a deep, precise voice that bespeaks an exact measurement of the situation he finds himself in. These two actors embody personal style in a way that is (to use a cliché that I mean sincerely) effortlessly magical. How can such reserve suggest such depths of feeling? And Lombard has a dreamy, ditz breathlessness that shows her sweetly yearning after this man who fascinated her even when she thought he really was a bum.

The cinematography by Ted Tetzlaff is a shimmering argument for everything I've ever tried to say in praise of black and white. Everything that can shine, glimmers: the marble floors, the silver, the mirrors, the crystal, the satin sheen of the gowns. There is a tactile feel to the furs and feathers of the women's costumes, and the fabric patterns by designer Louise Brymer use bold splashes and zigs and zags of blacks and whites to arrest our attention. These tones and textures are set off with one of those 1930s apartments intended to look like a movie set, all poised for entrances and exits.

A couple of reviewers on the Web complain that the plot is implausible. What are we going to do with these people? OK, it's all implausible. That's what I'm here for. By pretending the implausible is possible, screwball comedy acts like a tonic. Nothing is impossible if you cut through the difficulties with an instrument like Powell's knife-edged delivery. The movie also benefits from the range of sharply defined characters, and the actors to play them. Even the biggest stars in those days were surrounded by other actors in substantial roles that provided them with counterpoint, with context, with emotional tennis partners. – Roger Ebert, *RogerEbert.com*