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DONOSTIA ZINEMALDIA  
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIAN  
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

# TRUE MOTHERS

母が来る

A FILM BY NAOMI KAWASE



Cinéart stelt voor



# TRUE MOTHERS

[ASA GA KURU]

朝が来る

A FILM BY NAOMI KAWASE

WITH HIROMI NAGASAKU, ARATA IURA, AJU MAKITA, MIYOKO ASADA

Japan | 139 min.

# SYNOPSIS

Na AN en RADIANCE keert de gerenommeerde Japanse regisseur Naomi Kawase terug met een ontroerend verhaal over familie en moederschap. Warm, menselijk, genuanceerd en met een perfect gevoel voor dat wat ons leven waarde geeft.

Satoko en haar man hebben het goed, maar het lukt niet om zwanger te worden. Ze besluiten voor adoptie in aanmerking te willen komen. Zo worden ze de ouders van Asato, een jongentje geboren uit een onstuimige puberliefde. Jaren later komt hun gezinsgeluk onder spanning te staan als een onbekende jonge vrouw zich aandient en beweert Asato's echte moeder te zijn. Satoko gaat de confrontatie met deze Hikari aan. Wie is ze en wat is er dedstijds gebeurd?

Gebaseerd op een roman van Mizuki Tsujimora en met de herkenbare visuele kracht van Kawase, die de film een unieke intensiteit geeft. TRUE MOTHERS maakte deel uit van de officiële selectie van Cannes 2020.





## SYNOPSIS

### ***“I want my son back, that was what the woman on the phone said...”***

After suffering through a long and unsuccessful series of fertility treatments, Satoko and her husband Kiyokazu make the decision to adopt a child. Six years after adopting a boy they named Asato, Satoko has quit her job to concentrate fully on her husband and son. The family lives a peaceful existence.

But one day, a phone call threatens Satoko’s happiness and the careful balance she has found. The call was from a woman named Hikari: “I want my son back, and if that’s not possible, I want my money.”

Hikari was Asato’s birth mother. Satoko and Kiyokazu had met her once, when they adopted Asato. At the time, Hikari was 14 years old. The couple has not heard from Hikari, who is now 20, in over six years. Satoko had just assumed that the birth mother was living a quiet life with her parents.

One day when Asato is at school, Satoko receives a visit from Hikari. The slender young woman at her door bears no resemblance to the teenager who gave birth to their adopted son. But more importantly, Satoko feels instinctively that this woman is not Hikari. And if she is not Hikari, then who is she? What will Satoko do when Hikari’s shocking past is revealed?







## DIRECTOR: NAOMI KAWASE

Born in Nara, Japan, Naomi Kawase graduated from Osaka University of the Arts in 1989. Her documentaries *Embracing* (1992) and *Escargot* (1994) received international recognition and were awarded at the 1995 Yamagata Documentary Film Festival. In 1997, she became the youngest winner of the Camera d'or for her first feature *Suzaku*, presented at the Directors' Fortnight. In 2000, *Firefly* won both the FIPRESCI and the CICAIE Prizes at the Locarno Film Festival. Then followed a series of feature films selected for competition at the Cannes Film Festival: *Shara* (2003), *The Mourning Forest* (Grand Prix 2007), *Hanezu* (2011) and *Still the Water* (2014). *Sweet Red Bean Paste* was selected as the opening film for the Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes Film Festival in 2015. Naomi Kawase has also been recognized for her accomplishments in documentary filmmaking. Among other honors, she has received the Carrosse d'or from the Directors' Fortnight (2009) and was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture (2015). She was a member of the Jury headed by Steven Spielberg at the 66th Cannes Film Festival. Retrospective exhibitions of Kawase's work have been organized all over Europe, including at the Jeu de Paume in Paris (2002). In 2010, she founded the International Nara Film Festival, dedicated to promoting the work of young directors.





## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When shooting a film, there always comes a moment that moves me to tears. That is the point when the actors so fully inhabit their characters' lives that they express emotions reaching far beyond the script. I realize that this is something precious and rare. The actors in this film are astonishing – their characters are fully fleshed out living beings.

We shot in six different locations in Japan: on an island, in the forest, in the city, at a historical site... We have made this film as if it were the souvenir of a journey through the seasons and character of each place.

Through a twist of fate, a life that was not meant to be arrives in the lives of a married couple who weren't able to have the child they desired. It is a story about forging one's destiny, as if after the rain, a radiant light had purified the world. Everybody is somebody's child; everybody has a mother who gave birth to them. And in this respect, the core of this story should touch people's hearts. For therein lies the world's beginnings, seen by a pure soul who believes that this world is genuinely beautiful.





## PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

When I first read Mizuki Tsujimura's novel, I was deeply impressed by the uncommon path followed by the two main characters: a woman who is resigned to her fate of childlessness due to her husband's infertility, and a girl who accidentally becomes pregnant with a boy she truly loves. Two women at completely opposite ends of the spectrum and a young child who ties them together.

Before reading this book, I had never heard of plenary adoption – which allows this child to be fully adopted

(permanently severing all ties with his birth family) and thus legally handed over from a young girl to a woman who is not his birth mother – and the way this system impacts many people's lives. The choice these characters make is for some a well-kept secret. And this is something that raised strong doubts as well as feelings akin to anger in me. For the story has important messages and speaks forcefully to today's world. That is why I believe that now is the time to make this film.







# CAST

Hiromi Nagasaku  
Arata Iura  
Aju Makita  
Miyoko Asada

**Satoko Kurihara**  
**Kiyokazu Kurihara**  
**Hikari Katakura**  
**Shizue Asami**





# CREW

Written and Directed by **Naomi Kawase** (*Radiance, Sweet Bean, Suzaku*)  
Based on the original novel «Asa ga Kuru» (Bungeishunju Ltd.) from **Mizuki Tsujimura**  
Co-written by **Izumi Takahashi**  
**An Tôn Thât**  
Music **Akira Kosemura, An Tôn Thât**  
C&K **EMI Records**  
Theme song «Asa to Hikari» by **C&K** (EMI Records)  
Chief Executive Producer **Naoya Kinoshita**  
Producer **Yumiko Takebe** (*Radiance*)  
Cinematographers **Yuta Tsukinaga, Naoki Sakakibara**  
Production Design **Setsuko Shiokawa**  
**Tina Baz**  
Editing **Tina Baz, Yoichi Shibuya**  
**Roman Dymny**  
Sound Designer **Roman Dymny**  
**Olivier Goinard**  
Sound Mixer **Olivier Goinard**  
Stylist **Miwako Kobayashi**  
Hair & Makeup **Naoko Koizumi**  
Line Producer **Hiroaki Saito**  
Production Manager **Tetsushi Onoyama**  
Assistant Director **Seitaro Kai**  
Production **Kino Films, Kumie**  
**KAZUMO**  
Associate Production **KAZUMO**  
Japan distributor **Kino Films / Kinoshita Group**  
International Sales **Playtime, Kinoshita Group**