



Kairo

Pulse

Kiyoshi Kurosawa

JAPAN, 2001

118 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
 Production Company: **Daiei Company Ltd./NTV Network/Hakuhodo/Imagica**
 Executive Producer: **Yasuyoshi Tokuma**
 Producer: **Shun Shimizu, Seiji Okuda, Ken Inoue, Atsuyuki Shimoda**
 Screenplay: **Kiyoshi Kurosawa**
 Cinematographer: **Junichiro Hayashi**
 Editor: **Junichi Kikuchi**
 Production Designer: **Tomoyuki Maruo**
 Sound: **Makio Ika**
 Music: **Takefumi Haketa**
 Principal Cast: **Haruhiko Kato, Kumiko Aso, Koyuki, Kurume Arisaka, Masatoshi Matsuo**

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The masterful bending of genre that has been the hallmark of Kiyoshi Kurosawa's extraordinary career hits a new high note with *Pulse*. Of its many qualities, one must admire its sheer audacity above all else: Kurosawa has unapologetically chosen to situate his densest and most complex film within the usually low-rent teen horror genre.

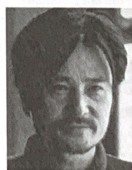
Pulse might be described as an Internet ghost story, but that would only give a scant sense of the unsettling ideas in play.

The film comes out of the gate self-aware and smartly referential, like a Japanese take on *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*. Young people know something nasty is going on; its eerie presence is palpable. Soon a young computer analyst is found hanging dead in his apartment. There is what seems to be... electrical discharge? a big black splodge? on the wall. His friends search the apartment – do they see his ghost?? and discover a mysterious floppy disk containing an unusual virus. It may give them a clue to his bizarre suicide. The disk turns up in the hands of a young man eager to get on the Internet to check out some games. It launches a programme that appears to present real-time transmissions of people engaged in solitary activities in their apartments – like a boring group webcam site. But there is something not quite right in the appearance and behaviour of these lonely souls... As the film progresses, the seemingly generic horror moments are accompanied by strange disappearances, terrifying rooms sealed in

red tape and a hypnotic, totally disturbing, dancing ghost. By its end, the film exists in an emptied world, full of ghosts past and present and an eerie, Tarkovskyesque calm as the remaining kids try to find solace in their lonely existence.

In many ways, *Pulse* continues Kurosawa's exploration, begun with *Cure*, of the loneliness felt by those unanchored by religion (traditional, financial and otherwise), conventional ethics or, ultimately, deep, abiding love (this is his most romantic film, too). But never has the ache of humanity been so powerfully conveyed. These kids are staring down an existential abyss that decides, finally, to swallow them whole. Astonishing cinema.

■ **Noah Cowan**



Kiyoshi Kurosawa was born in Kobe, Japan in 1955 and is a graduate of the sociology department of Rikkyo University. He made his directorial feature debut with *Kandagawa Warriors* (83). In 1992, the Sundance Institute awarded Kurosawa a scholarship for his script for *Charisma*; in 1999, he was the featured director in the Festival's Spotlight programme. Selected filmography: *The Excitement of the Do-Re-Mi-Fa Girl* (85), *Eyes of the Spider* (97), *Serpent's Path* (97), *Cure* (98), *Barren Illusion* (99), *Charisma* (99), *Licence to Live* (99), *Seance* (00) and *Pulse* (01).

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