



Seance

Kiyoshi Kurosawa

JAPAN, 2000

97 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Kansai Telecasting Corporation**

Executive Producer: **Yasuyuki Uemura, Takehiko Tanaka**

Producer: **Atsuyuki Simoda**

Screenplay: **Tetsuya Ohishi, Kiyoshi**

Kurosawa, based on the original work

by **Mark McShane**

Cinematographer: **Takahide Shibunushi**

Editor: **Junichi Kikuchi**

Production Designer: **Tomoyuki Maruo**

Sound: **Makio Ika**

Music: **Gary Ashiya**

Principal Cast: **Koji Yakusho, Jun Fubuki, Teuyoshi Kusanagi, Ittoku Kishibe**

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Any casual student of recent Japanese cinema knows that Kiyoshi Kurosawa is one of that nation's most important working filmmakers. His ability to manipulate worn-out generic forms into provocative and profound packages is turning heads around the world. Recently he has been confidently experimenting with narrative structure, especially in films like *Charisma* and *Barren Illusion*, which demonstrate his commitment to keeping cinema fresh and exciting.

His newest film, developed for television, is a psychological thriller. Sort of.

The story involves a woman whose husband is a sound effects technician. She quietly works out of their home as a kind of spiritual advisor, mostly assisting people in need. One day a girl is kidnapped in strange circumstances. The detective on the case, unable to find any clues, hires the spiritualist to assist him. The girl escapes and, coincidentally, hides in the husband's equipment case. The woman uses her powers to locate the girl and they bring her into the house to recover. Deciding that now is the time for her to become a star of the spiritualist community, she prods her bumbling husband into creating an elaborate hoax to have the girl miraculously "found."

One of Kurosawa's trademarks is to create critical paradoxes and *Seance* is no exception. By investing deep hubris in a spiritually enlightened character, he elegantly questions the generic authority of the medium – why do we always believe that someone

communicating with the other world is either a complete charlatan or telling the absolute truth? More playfully, he marries the husband's Foley designs with the sounds of spiritual disturbance, a clever special effects trick that artfully implicates the viewer in the "hoax" of the spiritual and generic medium. But the glory of Kurosawa is that these speculations are beside the point. Ultimately, *Seance* is a rip-snorting thriller full of fascinating twists and action that delivers exactly what it promises.

■ **Noah Cowan**

Kiyoshi Kurosawa was born in Kobe, Japan in 1955. He is a graduate of Rikkyo University, where he studied film with influential theorist Shigehiko Hasumi. He was the subject of the Festival Spotlight in 1999. Selected filmography: *The Excitement of the Do-Re-Mi-Fa Girl* (85), *Eyes of the Spider* (97), *Serpent's Path* (97), *Cure* (98), *Licence to Live* (99), *Charisma* (99), *Barren Illusion* (99) and *Seance* (00).

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