



Tokarev

Junji Sakamoto

JAPAN, 1993

103 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: **Suntory Ltd./
Bandai Visual Co. Ltd./Arato
Production**

Executive Producer: **Munetaka Inami**

Producer: **Genjiro Arato**

Screenplay: **Haruko Imamura**

Cinematography: **Isao Ishii**

Editor: **Kenichi Takashima**

Art Director: **Koichi Kanakatsu**

Sound: **Fumio Hashimoto**

Music: **Shigeru Umebayashi**

Principal Cast: **Takashi Yamato, Yumi
Nishiyama, Koichi Satoh**

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A complex and disturbing manhunt lies at the centre of *Tokarev*, a ruthlessly violent tribute to the power of an exploding handgun.

The Tokarev of the title is the Russian equivalent of a Magnum .45, a big, brawny macho pistol much revered by the Japanese mafia. The gun makes its first appearance in a school bus, driven by Michio. Hooded kidnappers, motivated by unknown objectives, enter the vehicle, humiliate Michio with their bruising weapon and kidnap Michio's young son. Through a series of enigmatic and beautifully choreographed twists, Michio comes into possession of the Tokarev and seeks his tormenters. A guy on a motorcycle, shot in the shoulder at the scene of the crime, also gets involved.

This is the new Japanese cinema of spattered blood and metal blowjobs. But *Tokarev* is also formally bizarre, with short bursts of plot dissolving to black, only to be picked up at some unidentified later time, in some other place. So a suburban nightmare, with nosy neighbours and claustrophobic paranoia, shifts into an urban hell of desiccated punks and small-time street hoods. Until an initially tranquil, then fierce and brutal ending in the countryside.

Director Junji Sakamoto made his first film about the exploitation rife in the world of Japanese boxing. It displayed a kind of strong-armed machismo which had him grouped with Kitano and Murakami as one of Japan's "tough guy" directors. *Tokarev*,

with bruising Leone-like showdowns and with former middleweight champion Takashi Yamato as its star, adds a whole new chapter to this burgeoning genre.

– *Noah Cowan*

Junji Sakamoto began working in film as a university student. He made his debut as a director in 1989 with a film about boxers; it won a major award in Japan. *Tokarev* (93) is his latest film.