



presents

a film by Sion Sono

# Strange Circus

奇妙なサーカス



CONTACTS

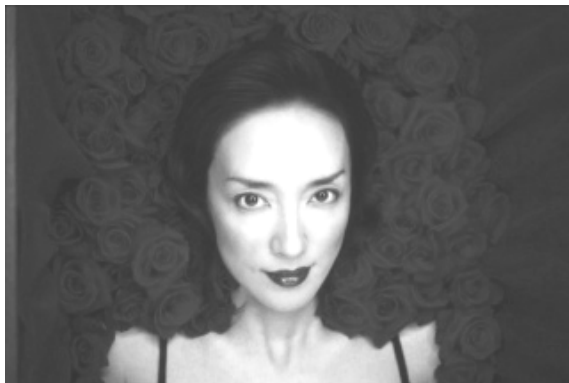
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## **STRANGE CIRCUS**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

A new film by Sion Sono, Japan's wildest modern poet! Known as the "film poet" and the "Shuji Terayama of the 21st century," Shion Sono has directed many ambitious experimental films including *Suicide Club* and *Utsu-shimi* since his debut *I am Shion Sono!* in 1985.

In 1994, *Heya* won a special jury prize at Sundance. Since that film, Sono has worked with cinematographer and friend Yuichiro Otsuka on the screenplay and soundtrack to all their films. *Strange Circus* follows the wanderings of one woman in the "women's industry" (erotic literature). It depicts a world swirling with love, desire, envy, sibling hatred, psychological breakdown, perversion and revenge. How much is "reality" and how much is "dream"? Welcome to a new Sion Sono world.



# STRANGE CIRCUS

## *The Story*

“It’s as if I was born on the guillotine. I slipped from my mother’s belly on the guillotine and took her place. Guillotines are hidden here and there around the house, ever since I could remember. Traps exist here and there too, and failure to solve the puzzle earns immediate execution.”

In a pure white, rococo mansion, only daughter and pre-teen schoolgirl Mitsuko (Rie Kuwana) spies on her parents’ lovemaking and is caught by her father Gozo (Hiroshi Oguchi). Gozo makes her sit in a cello case with a peephole to watch him having sex with her mother Sayuri (Masumi Miyazaki). One day when Sayuri is out, Gozo rapes Mitsuko. Sayuri returns early and discovers the incestuous rape but merely falls weeping at Gozo’s feet. Gozo then forces Sayuri into the cello case while he ravishes his daughter. Mitsuko becomes psychologically confused, wanting to please her father yet afraid of her mother’s jealous rages. The perverse relationship escalates as Sayuri begins to envy Mitsuko as a woman and she indulges all of Goz’s sexual whims. Mitsuko, in turn, when ravished by Gozo, begins to imitate Sayuri’s ecstatic moans.

When Gozo is out, Sayuri abuses Mitsuko. One day while quarreling, Mitsuko pushes Sayuri down the stairs. Sayuri dies, but she lives on by possessing Mitsuko’s soul. From that day on, Gozo monopolizes Mitsuko/Sayuri. Occasionally, Mitsuko resurfaces and one day she tries to commit suicide by jumping from the school’s roof. Mitsuko survives but is confined to a wheelchair. Gozo sees a hint of madness in Mitsuko and starts to bringing prostitutes back to the house...

In a baroquely designed apartment, popular erotic novelist Taeko (again played by Masumi Miyazaki) says, “All women like perverse sex.” Unable to walk, Taeko is confined to a wheelchair and writes novels that seem autobiographical. She lives in luxury and is waited on by an editor and several assistants. When writing the novel about Mitsuko, a new editorial assistant comes to work for her. He is taciturn, fey young man Yuji (Issei Ishida) who does exactly as he’s told. The nymphomaniac Taeko likes him. Yuji tells her he is a big fan of hers and acts like a robot to Taeko so she nicknames him “Robo.”

One day, Yuji asks Taeko if the novel is autobiographical. Taeko denies it immediately. While writing the novel, Taeko herself had thought “who am I?” and begins to wonder if the fictional world described by Mitsuko was actually her own life.

Meanwhile, Yuji is ordered by his editor (Tomorowo Taguchi) to investigate Taeko, whose private life remains a complete mystery. As Yuji tries to expose her private life, he discovers that Taeko is only pretending to be disabled. Moreover, he discovers the existence of a secret room in Taeko’s house, a filthy room full of garbage and a cello case.

Together, Taeko and Yuji collaborate on the novel, taking it into even more extreme territory. Taeko is heading for a breakdown however, as the dreams of a strange circus full of freaks and guillotines become ever more vivid...

# **STRANGE CIRCUS**

## ***Cast***

Sayuri / Taeko	Masumi Miyazaki
Yuji	Issei Ishida
Young Mitsuko	Rie Kuwana
Young Mitsuko	Mai Takahashi
Taeko's Editor	Tomorrowo Taguchi
Gozo	Hiroshi Oguchi

## ***Crew***

Producer: Toshiaki Nakazawa, Koji Hoshino  
Planning: Kunizane Mizue  
Line producers: Toshiie Tomida, Toshihiro Sato

Director, screenplay, music: Shion Sono

Cinematography: Yuichiro Otsuka  
Lighting: Jun Maeda  
Art direction: Yuto Oba  
Sound: Shin Fukuda  
Editor: Junichi Itou  
Assistant director: Shukei Amano  
Producer's assistant: Masanori Murase  
Post Production Designer: Naoki Kaneko  
Costume Director: Chieko Matsumoto  
Stylist: HACHI

Production assistance: Excellent Film, For Peace  
Production: Sedic International, Chuo Eigaboeki

# STRANGE CIRCUS

## Cast

### Biography

Born in Toyokawa, Aichi Prefecture, Japan. Debuted as a poet at age 17 with poems published in "Yuriika" and "Modern Poetry" Magazine. Started making 8mm films at Hosei University. *I Am Sion Sono* (1985) was selected by Pia Film Festival and *Otoko no Hanamichi* (1987) won the Grand Prix. Pia scholarship work *Bicycle Sighs* (1990) was invited to 30 international film festivals including Berlin. *Heya* (1994) won the special jury prize at Sundance and was invited to 49 international film festivals including Venice, Berlin, Rotterdam, Hong Kong, etc. While continuing to make films such as *Keiko desu kedo* (1996) and *Kaze*, Sono oversaw the street-poetry event "Tokyo Gagaga" which attracted 4000 performers to streets of Shibuya. After making "Utsu-shimi" (1999) for the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Sono directed the controversial *Suicide Club* (2001). The film was released on DVD internationally in the US (TLA Releasing), France, Germany, etc., and won the audience award at Montreal Fantasia in 2003.

### Filmography:

1985 *I am Shion Sono!, Ai*  
1986 *Otoko no Hanamichi*  
1988 *Kessen! Joshiryo tai Danshiryo*  
1990 *Jitensha Toiki (Bicycle Sighs)*  
1993 *Heya*  
1997 *Keiko desu kedo*  
1998 *Kaze*  
1999 "Utsu-shimi" "0cm4 (Paris Collection Passion)"  
2002 *Jisatsu Saakuru (Suicide Club), Chichi no Hi, HAZARD*  
2004 *Otona ni Nattara*  
2005 *Strange Circus, Yume no Naka e, Noriko no Shokutaku*  
Unreleased: *BAD FILM*

