

Perfect Days

(Redirected from Perfect days)

Perfect Days is a 2023 drama film directed by Wim Wenders from a script written by Wenders and Takuma Takasaki.^[4] A co-production between Japan and Germany, the film follows the routine life of Hirayama (Kōji Yakusho), a public toilet cleaner in Tokyo.^[5]

Perfect Days premiered on 23 May 2023 at the 76th Cannes Film Festival, where it competed for the Palme d'Or and won the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury and the Best Actor Award for Kōji Yakusho. It was nominated for the Best International Feature Film at the 96th Academy Awards, becoming the first film directed by a non-Japanese filmmaker to be nominated as the Japanese entry.^[6]

Plot

Hirayama works as a public toilet cleaner in Tokyo's upscale Shibuya district, across town from his modest home in a middle-class neighbourhood east of the Sumida River. He repeats his structured, repetitive routine each day, starting at dawn. He dedicates his free time to his passion for music cassettes, which he listens to in his van to and from work, and to his books, which he reads every night before going to sleep. He reads stories by William Faulkner and Patricia Highsmith, and the essays of Aya Kōda. His dreams are shown in flickery impressionistic sequences at the end of every day.

Hirayama is also very fond of trees and spends time gardening and photographing trees. He has a sandwich every day in the shade under trees on the grounds of a shrine, and takes analog photos of their branches and leaves and the 'Komorebi' (木漏れ日) – sunlight filtered by the leaves. His pride in his work is apparent by its thoroughness and precision. Hirayama's young assistant, Takashi, is often late, loud, and not as thorough. One day, a young woman named Aya stops by the public toilet Takashi is cleaning, so he hurries to finish. He tries to leave with Aya, but his motorbike will not start, so he convinces Hirayama to let him use his van.

Perfect Days



Japanese theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Wim Wenders</u>
Written by	<u>Wim Wenders</u> <u>Takuma Takasaki</u>
Produced by	<u>Wim Wenders</u> ^[1] <u>Takuma Takasaki</u> ^[1] <u>Koji Yanai</u> ^[1]
Starring	<u>Kōji Yakusho</u> <u>Tokio Emoto</u> <u>Arisa Nakano</u> <u>Aoi Yamada</u> <u>Yumi Asō</u> <u>Sayuri Ishikawa</u> <u>Tomokazu Miura</u> <u>Min Tanaka</u>
Cinematography	<u>Franz Lustig</u> ^[1]
Edited by	<u>Toni Froschhammer</u> ^[1]
Production companies	<u>Master Mind</u> <u>Spoon</u>

When Aya says Takashi can stay with her as she works at a girls bar, he complains loudly that he is broke. Unbeknownst to Hirayama, Takashi slips Hirayama's Patti Smith tape into Aya's purse. Takashi talks Hirayama into going into a shop to get some of his cassettes appraised. When Takashi discovers how valuable they are, he urges Hirayama to sell, but Hirayama refuses, giving him some cash so he can take Aya out. When Hirayama runs out of gas on the way home, he is forced to sell a cassette for gas money. Hirayama commences a tic-tac-toe game with a stranger after finding a piece of paper left hidden in a stall. The game continues over the course of the film. He exchanges furtive glances with a strange woman eating lunch one bench over.

Aya catches up with Hirayama to return the Patti Smith cassette. She asks to play it in his van one last time, and then gives him a thank-you kiss on the cheek, leaving him visibly startled. On his free day, Hirayama does his laundry, takes the film with his tree photos to be developed, cleans his flat, buys a new book, and dines out at a restaurant where the proprietor shares gossip with him. Niko, Hirayama's niece, shows up unannounced, having run away from his wealthy estranged sister Keiko's home. Hirayama lets Niko accompany him to work during the next two days. The two photograph the trees in the park and ride bikes together. Eventually, Keiko comes to pick up Niko in a chauffeured car.

Keiko tells him that their father's dementia has worsened and asks whether Hirayama will visit him in the nursing home where he lives. She says that he does not recognise anything anymore and will not behave the way he did before. Hirayama sorrowfully refuses but hugs his sister goodbye. Before she leaves, she asks him whether he really cleans toilets for a living, and he says yes. As they drive away, Hirayama begins to cry inconsolably. The next day, Takashi quits without giving notice, leaving Hirayama to cover his shift. Later, as Hirayama goes to his usual restaurant, he opens the door and sees the proprietor embracing a man. Hirayama hurries off, buying cigarettes and three bottled highballs to consume at a nearby riverbank. The man Hirayama saw at the restaurant approaches and asks him for a cigarette.

The man tells him the restaurant proprietor is his ex-wife whom he had not seen in seven years, and that she opened her restaurant the year after divorcing him. He says he visited her to make peace before he dies of cancer, telling Hirayama to look after her. Hirayama lightens the mood by offering him a drink and inviting him to play shadow tag, and they eventually part ways. The following morning, Hirayama begins another workweek. As he drives his van and listens to Nina Simone sing "Feeling Good", a range of powerful emotions washes over his face.

	Wenders Images
Distributed by	DCM (Germany) <div>Bitters End (Japan)</div>
Release dates	25 May 2023 (<u>Cannes</u>) <div>21 December 2023 (Germany)</div> <div>22 December 2023 (Japan)</div>
Running time	124 minutes
Countries	Japan <div>Germany</div>
Language	Japanese
Box office	\$25.7 million ^{[2][3]}

Cast

- Kōji Yakusho as Hirayama
- Tokio Emoto as Takashi
- Arisa Nakano as Niko
- Aoi Yamada as Aya
- Yumi Asō as Keiko
- Sayuri Ishikawa as Mama

- Tomokazu Miura as Tomoyama
- Min Tanaka as homeless^[1]
- Wim Wenders as cassette shop customer

Backstory

In an interview with *The Progressive*, Wenders revealed that, in his conception, Hirayama was a wealthy alcoholic businessman who, after ending up in a hotel room with no memory, contemplating suicide, and being struck by the beauty of sunlight falling through leaves, gave up his career and became a gardener and then a toilet cleaner.^[7]

Production

Right after COVID-19 pandemic precautions eased, Wenders was invited to Tokyo by Koji Yanai to observe The Tokyo Toilet, a project in which Japanese public toilets were redesigned in 17 locations throughout Shibuya with the help of 16 creators invited from around the world. Wenders was invited to take a look at the uniqueness of each of these facilities. At first, the producers envisioned Wenders would make a short film or series of short films on the facilities, but he opted for a feature film, with co-screenwriter Takuma Takasaki explaining that the conception of the character of Hirayama felt like new territory for them.^{[8][9]} The film is produced by Master Mind Limited (Japan) and Spoon Inc. (Japan) in collaboration with Wenders Images (Germany).^{[10][11]}

The film was shot over 17 days in Tokyo.^[12]

The style of the film takes inspiration from the style of Japanese director Yasujirō Ozu. The minimalist approach to storytelling, the focus on ordinary life, and the 4:3 aspect ratio of the film are all nods to Ozu.^{[13][14]} Also, the name Hirayama comes from a common character name in Ozu's films (*Tokyo Story*, *An Autumn Afternoon*).^[15]

Soundtrack

The music that Hirayama listens to with his cassettes is a major motif in the film.^{[16][17]} In describing the way that Hirayama chooses the music he listens to, Wenders said: "Maybe he's clinging to the past. But he's clinging a little bit also to his youth and he loves that music. He chooses in the morning exactly what he's going to listen to that day. And it's not random." Wenders described Lou Reed as "a mighty voice in the film."^[18]



The Tokyo Toilet, Yoyogi-Hachiman was one of the filming locations



The Tokyo Toilet, Yoyogi Fukamachi Mini Park has walls that turn opaque when switched on



Yoyogi-Hachiman-gū was the filming location where Hirayama takes his lunch break

Title	Artist	Year
"The House of the Rising Sun"	<u>The Animals</u>	1964
"Pale Blue Eyes"	<u>The Velvet Underground</u>	1969
"(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay"	<u>Otis Redding</u>	1968
"Redondo Beach"	<u>Patti Smith</u>	1975
"(Walkin' Thru The) Sleepy City"	<u>The Rolling Stones</u>	1964
"Perfect Day"	<u>Lou Reed</u>	1972
"Aoi Sakana"	<u>Sachiko Kanenobu</u>	1972
"Sunny Afternoon"	<u>The Kinks</u>	1966
"The House of the Rising Sun" (Japanese version) ^[a]	<u>Sayuri Ishikawa</u>	2023
"Brown Eyed Girl"	<u>Van Morrison</u>	1967
"Feeling Good"	<u>Nina Simone</u>	1965
"Perfect Day" (Komorebi Version)	<u>Patrick Watson</u>	2024

Release

Perfect Days was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival,^[19] where it had its world premiere on 25 May.^[20] It was also invited to the 27th Lima Film Festival in the Acclaimed section, where it was screened on 11 August 2023.^[21] Subsequent screenings were held at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival and 2023 New York Film Festival.^{[22][23]}

World sales were handled by The Match Factory,^[10] with Neon distributing the film in the United States, and Mubi distributing the film in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Turkey and Latin America.^[24]

Perfect Days was released in Germany on 21 December 2023 by DCM,^[25] and in Japan on 22 December by Bitters End.^[26] The film was released in the U.S. on 7 February 2024.^[27]

The film is available on home video from the Criterion Collection.^[28]

Reception

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 96% based on 184 reviews, with an average rating of 8.3/10. The website's critics consensus reads, "An absorbing slice-of-life drama led by a remarkable Kôji Yakusho performance, *Perfect Days* adds a quietly soaring gem to director/co-writer Wim Wenders' estimable filmography."^[30] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 80 out of 100, based on 38 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[31]

Hsin Wang of FIPRESCI described the film as Wim Wenders' lifetime masterpiece.^[32] German film journalist Dieter Oßwald wrote, "With furious ease, Wenders succeeds in making a rather perfect film."^[33] The Guardian called *Perfect Days* "Wim Wenders's best film in years," praising the film for being "as much

a manifesto as a movie...advocating not just a new way of looking, but of new way of living." Kōji Yakusho's performance drew acclaim for his ability to "convey an extraordinarily rich interior life, almost entirely without leaning on dialogue."^[34]



Koji Yakusho's performance received universal acclaim with him winning the Cannes Film Festival Award For Best Actor and many regarding that he was snubbed of an Academy Award nomination^[29].

Accolades

Award or film festival	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>AARP Movies for Grownups Awards</u>	<u>17 January 2024</u>	<u>Best Foreign Language Film</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[35] ^[36]
<u>Academy Awards</u>	<u>10 March 2024</u>	<u>Best International Feature Film</u>		Nominated	^[37]
<u>Asia Pacific Screen Awards</u>	<u>3 November 2023</u>	<u>Best Film</u>		Won	^[38] ^[39]
		<u>Best Performance</u>	<u>Kōji Yakusho</u>	Nominated	
<u>Asian Film Awards</u>	<u>10 March 2024</u>	<u>Best Film</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[40] ^[41]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Kōji Yakusho	Won	
<u>Astra Film and Creative Arts Awards</u>	<u>6 January 2024</u>	<u>Best International Feature</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[42]
		<u>Best International Filmmaker</u>	Wim Wenders	Nominated	
		<u>Best International Actor</u>	Kōji Yakusho	Nominated	
<u>Blue Ribbon Awards</u>	February 2024	<u>Best Film</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[43]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Kōji Yakusho	Nominated	
<u>Belgian Film Critics Association</u>	<u>6 January 2024</u>	<u>Grand Prix</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[44]
<u>Boston Society of Film Critics Awards</u>	<u>10 December 2023</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Kōji Yakusho	Runner-up ^[b]	^[45]
<u>Cannes Film Festival</u>	<u>27 May 2023</u>	<u>Palme d'Or</u>	<u>Wim Wenders</u>	Nominated	^[19]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Kōji Yakusho	Won	^[46]
		<u>Prize of the Ecumenical Jury</u>	Wim Wenders	Won	^[47]
<u>César Awards</u>	<u>23 February 2024</u>	<u>Best Foreign Film</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[48] ^[49]
<u>Critics' Choice Movie Awards</u>	<u>14 January 2024</u>	<u>Best Foreign Language Film</u>		Nominated	^[50]
<u>Houston Film Critics Society</u>	<u>22 January 2024</u>	<u>Best Foreign Language Feature</u>		Nominated	^[51] ^[52]
<u>IndieWire Critics Poll</u>	<u>11 December 2023</u>	<u>Best Performance</u>	Kōji Yakusho	10th Place ^[c]	^[53]
		<u>Best International Film</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	4th Place	
<u>International Cinephile Society</u>	<u>11 February 2024</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Kōji Yakusho	Nominated	^[54]
<u>Japan Academy Film Prize</u>	<u>8 March 2024</u>	<u>Picture of the Year</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[55] ^[56]
		<u>Director of the Year</u>	Wim Wenders	Won	
<u>Kinema Junpo Awards</u>	<u>18 February 2024</u>	<u>Outstanding Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role</u>	Kōji Yakusho	Won	^[57]
				Won	

Award or film festival	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>Georgia Film Critics Association Awards</u>	5 January 2024	Best International Film	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[58] ^[59]
<u>Manaki Brothers Film Festival</u>	29 September 2023	Golden Camera 300	Franz Lustig	Nominated	^[60]
<u>Miskolc International Film Festival</u>	9 September 2023	Emeric Pressburger Prize for Best Feature Film	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[61]
<u>Montclair Film Festival</u>	30 October 2023	Junior Jury		Won	^[62]
<u>North Texas Film Critics Association</u>	18 December 2023	Best Foreign Language Film		Nominated	^[63]
<u>San Francisco Bay Area Film Critics Circle Awards</u>	9 January 2024	<u>Best International Feature Film</u>		Nominated	^[64]
<u>Seattle Film Critics Society Awards</u>	8 January 2024	Best Actor in a Leading Role	Kōji Yakusho	Nominated	^[65]
<u>St. Louis Film Critics Association</u>	17 December 2023	Best International Film	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[66]
<u>Toronto Film Critics Association</u>	17 December 2023	Outstanding Lead Performance	Kōji Yakusho	Runner-up ^[d]	^[67]
<u>Washington D.C. Area Film Critics Association Awards</u>	10 December 2023	<u>Best Foreign Language Film</u>	<i>Perfect Days</i>	Nominated	^[68]

Impact

Following the theatrical release of *Perfect Days* in international markets, interest in Japanese public facilities, particularly those of the Tokyo Toilet Project in Shibuya, has surged.^{[69][70]}

See also

- Cinema of Japan
- List of submissions to the 96th Academy Awards for Best International Feature Film
- List of Japanese submissions for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film

Notes

- a. Translated into Japanese by Maki Asakawa, who first recorded the version in 1972.
- b. Tied with Cillian Murphy for *Oppenheimer*
- c. Tied with Glenn Howerton for *BlackBerry*, Benoit Magimel for *Pacifiction*, and Franz Rogowski for *Passages*
- d. Tied with Paul Giamatti for *The Holdovers*, Andrew Scott for *All of Us Strangers*, and Emma Stone for *Poor Things*

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External links

- [Official website \(https://www.perfectdays-movie.jp\)](https://www.perfectdays-movie.jp) 
 - *Perfect Days* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt27503384/>) at IMDb
 - *Perfect Days* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/perfect_days_2023) at Rotten Tomatoes
 - *Perfect Days* (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/perfect-days>) at Metacritic
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