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火 Hee to open 14th Vladivostok International Film Festival

Writer-Director & Actress Kaori Momoi receives honors in Guanajuato, Mexico



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TOKYO, JAPAN – Writer-director Kaori Momoi's **火 Hee** has been selected as the opening film of the 14th Vladivostok Pacific Meridian International Film Festival (Sept. 10-16). **火 Hee**, which marks Momoi's second film as writer-director, has steadily gained attention on the international festival circuit.

The opening film honor continues Kaori Momoi's relationship with the respected Russian festival. Momoi's directing debut *Faces of a Fig Tree* – awarded the NETPAC prize in Berlin in 2007 – won acclaim at Vladivostok that year, receiving both Best Director and Best Actress accolades. Momoi also served on the international jury at Vladivostok the following year.

Currently, Kaori Momoi has been attending the Guanajuato International Film Festival (July 22-31) in Mexico as an honorary guest. On July 23rd, Momoi received the prestigious Silver Cross in recognition of her life and achievements in cinema. Momoi is presenting **火 Hee** and *Faces of a Fig Tree* in Guanajuato, as well as starring in Mexican director Carlos Bolado's *Duermevela* – screening as one of eight segments in upcoming feature *Tales of Mexico (La Habitación)*. As an actress, Momoi is also in the news as of late for her role as Scarlett Johansson's mother in upcoming Hollywood production *Ghost in the Shell*.

火 Hee kicked off its international festival tour in Berlin, followed by Hong Kong, Jeonju, and Okinawa. In addition to Vladivostok, **火 Hee** will screen at the Aichi International Women's Film Festival (Sept. 7-11).

火 Hee receives its theatrical release in Japan on August 20th at Image Forum in Shibuya, followed by engagements across the country.

About the Film

火 Hee is based on the short story of the same title by Akutagawa Prize and Oe Kenzaburo Prize-winning, internationally renowned author Fuminori Nakamura. Kaori Momoi adapted the story into a feature film project, relocating the action to Los Angeles. With a production period of only 10 days, Momoi has produced a highly accomplished, daring work anchored by her tour de force performance and boasting arresting visuals. **火 Hee** executive producer Kazuyoshi Okuyama of Yoshimoto Kogyo's film production subsidiary Katsu-do is no stranger to internationally acclaimed films. His producing credits include Shohei Imamura's 1997 Palme d'Or winner *The Eel* and Takeshi Kitano's *Sonatine*.

Synopsis

Dr. Sanada works as a psychiatrist at a clinic in the United States. One day while out shopping with his family, he encounters a woman whom he once treated, named Azusa. Azusa's words reverberate in his mind, and he envisions questioning her at the clinic. Soon after the episode, Dr. Sanada gets the chance, but under very different circumstances. Azusa's shocking story goes beyond anything he imagined. Azusa lost both parents in a fire as a child, was bullied at school, and later married a man who became unfaithful. After getting divorced, Azusa started working as a prostitute in the United States to support her debt-filled existence. As Dr. Sanada listens further, he begins to see himself mirrored in the various men whom Azusa recalls, being drawn deeper into her world. Azusa's revelations escalate, pushing the story toward an unexpected conclusion.

Background

With appearances in over 60 films, Kaori Momoi has won more acting awards for lead and supporting roles than any other Japanese actress, including the Japan Academy Prize, Blue Ribbon Award and Kinema Junpo Award. Among her acting credits are roles in Yoji Yamada's *The Yellow Handkerchief*, Akira Kurosawa's *Kagemusha*, Shohei Imamura's *Eijanaika*, and Takashi Miike's *Sukiyaki Western Django*. Her international profile has grown since 2005, with appearances in Rob Marshall's *Memoirs of a Geisha*, Alexandr Sokurov's *The Sun*, and Maris Martinsons' *Amaya*. In 2007, Kaori Momoi made her critically acclaimed writing and directing debut with *Faces of a Fig Tree*.

Official Site:

<http://hee-movie.com>

Downloads:

Hi-res Images (12 film images + 1 director portrait, .zip file 4.1Mb): http://www.loadedfilms.jp/downloads/Hee_images.zip

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