

# Hana Bi

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***Hana Bi (Fireworks, 1997)*. Japan. Dir: Takeshi Kitano. Cast: Takeshi Kitano, Kayoko Kishimoto, Ren Osugi, Susumu Terajima, Tetsu Watanabe, Hakuryu Minato-ku.**

After winning the Golden Lion at last year's Venice Film Festival, the elegiac and violent yakuza-cop film *Hana-Bi (Fireworks)* by Japanese director (Beat) Takeshi Kitano drew a full crowd at its preview at the Academy Theatre on a frosty morning in Pusan last October.

The full house testified to the power of a Kitano film which now commands a loyal following verging on the fanatical. In fact, his films attract far more viewers than the cult films of Quentin Tarantino such as *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*.

Kitano's films are characterised by his uncanny ability to create, like in the eye of a storm, a quiet beginning which is suddenly whipped into a ferocious chain of events. However, they have none of the sadness of Hou Hsiao-hsien's landmark gangster film, *Goodbye South, Goodbye*. Kitano's brand of violence is what most women would stir clear off -- heavy doses of lyrical yet unsettling quiet followed by explosions of violence, then back to dead calm.

## Author Information

TOH Hai Leong is a Singapore-based freelance film critic and filmmaker (*Zombie Dogs, 2005*) who writes for independent film publications such as *Screen International* and *World Paper*. He has covered the Hong Kong International Film Festival since 1985 and specializes in the cinemas of Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Korea and Japan.