

The Language of Film

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Film: Drive My Car

Director: Ryūsuke Hamaguchi

Stars: Hidetoshi Nishijima, Tôko Miura, Reika Kirishima

Genre: Drama

Run time: 2hr 59min

Rated: 15

Rating: 4/5

Drive My Car



Drive My Car is about a theatre director / actor and his sexually charged relationship with his screenwriter wife that abruptly ends after her sudden death and how his **chauffeur** becomes his companion and **confidant**.

It begins with a woman naked on top of a man telling an erotic story. The woman is a screenwriter, Oto, who is married to the man, theatre director Yūsuke. They continue the story in the car the next day remembering the sexual fantasy from the previous evening. It's a **ritual** of theirs – she tells an erotic story during sex and he reminds her of it the following day **fuelling** her creative writing.

Another ritual of Yūsuke's is learning his **lines** in the car with his wife's recorded voice and he is currently learning Chekov's *Uncle Vanya* whose lines become cleverly woven into the story's **narrative**. He has to leave town for a show but when his plane is cancelled he returns home unexpectedly to find his wife in the **throes** of a sexual act with a young actor acquaintance Koji but deciding not to intervene he **keeps up** the pretence of his not knowing by video calling her from a hotel in a somewhat muted tone.

Moving into the second phase of the film Yūsuke takes a job as a play director for a production of *Uncle Vanya* in Hiroshima where he will be based for the next two

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months auditioning and rehearsing the play. There is one unusual condition though that he must agree on, he must have a young female chauffeur, Misaki, to drive him. As the rehearsals get under way we see Yûsuke is an expert in directing multilingual performances and here there is a mix of American, Japanese, Korean as well as a deaf sign language user; and amongst them is the young actor, Koji, who had an **affair** with his wife.

The cinematography captures the urban sprawl of the Japanese cityscapes and the **mis-en-scène** of the apartments, bars, and theatres are immaculately presented and in particular it's the conversations in the car that bring a confessional type of intimacy inside the classic red Saab 900 they drive around town.

Similar films:

Radiance (2017): Dir: Naomi Kawase; Stars: Masatoshi Nagase, Ayame Misaki

The Hand of God (2021): Dir: Paolo Sorrentino; Stars: Filippo Scotti, Toni Servillo

Exercises:

A. Questions True or False:

1. Yûsuke's wife, Oto, is killed by the chauffeur? T/F?
2. Oto writes erotic stories for television? T/F?
3. Yûsuke practises learning the script in the car? T/F?
4. He discovers his wife with another man? T/F?
5. Yûsuke calls his wife to tell her he found out about her relationship? T/F?
6. He isn't happy he is given a young female driver? T/F?

B. Vocabulary / Phrases Match

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. chauffeur | a. energising |
| 2. confidant | b. scene setting |
| 3. ritual | c. script |
| 4. fuelling | d. routine |
| 5. lines | e. unfaithful |
| 6. narrative | f. maintains |
| 7. in the throes of | g. story |
| 8. keeps up | h. driver |
| 9. affair | i. in the middle of |
| 10. mis-en-scene | j. someone you speak to |

C. Discussion Questions:

1. What can you see in the picture?
2. What helps you to be creative?
3. Why do you think people have chauffereurs?
4. How difficult would it be to work on a multilingual script?
5. Is honesty always the best policy?

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Listening Gap Fill

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Another ritual of Yûsuke's is learning his lines in the car with his wife's recorded voice and he is currently learning Chekov's *Uncle Vanya* whose lines become cleverly woven into the story's narrative. He has to leave town for a show but when his 3. _____ is cancelled he returns home unexpectedly to find his wife in the throes of a sexual act with a young actor acquaintance Koji but deciding not to intervene he keeps up the pretence of his not knowing by video calling her from a hotel in a somewhat muted tone.

Moving into the second phase of the film Yûsuke takes a job as a play director for a production of *Uncle Vanya* in Hiroshima where he will be based for the next two months 4. _____ and rehearsing the play. There is one unusual condition though that he must agree on, he must have a young female chauffeur, Misaki, to drive him. As the rehearsals get under way we see Yûsuke is an expert in directing multilingual performances and here there is a mix of American, Japanese, Korean as well as a deaf sign language user; and amongst them is the young actor, Koji, who had an affair with his wife.

The cinematography captures the urban sprawl of the Japanese cityscapes and the mis-en-scène of the apartments, bars, and theatres are immaculately presented and in particular it's the 5. _____ in the car that bring a confessional type of intimacy inside the classic red Saab 900 they drive around town.