

Kiyoshi Kurosawa wins best director award at Venice for 'Wife of a Spy'

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Filmmaker Kiyoshi Kurosawa won the best director award on Saturday at this year's Venice International Film Festival, becoming the first Japanese director to take the award in 17 years.

"Wife of a Spy" ("Spy no Tsuma") follows the story of a couple in 1940 in the city of Kobe before the outbreak of World War II. A man accidentally stumbles upon a state secret and tries to bring it to light, while his wife takes action to ensure his safety.

Actress Cate Blanchett, who headed the jury, told a news conference that selection of the Silver Lion winner had been a "difficult decision to make" but that the choice of Kurosawa was "undeniable in that final assessment."

"It is a big surprise. I am feeling too happy for words," Kurosawa, 65, said in a video message sent to the festival. "I never dreamed I would receive such a pleasant present at my age. I think I did well to continue with filmmaking for a long time."

Kurosawa became the third Japanese director to win a Silver Lion. He followed Takeshi Kitano in 2003 with "Zatoichi" and Kenji Mizoguchi in 1956 with "The Life of Oharu" ("Saikaku Ichidai Onna").

Kurosawa's film, starring Yu Aoi and Issei Takahashi, is set to be shown in domestic theaters from Oct. 16.

While the 77th Venice film festival in northern Italy went ahead despite the coronavirus pandemic, with strict measures in place to prevent the spread of the virus, Kurosawa and his cast decided not to fly to Italy.

The Golden Lion best film award for this year went to "Nomadland," which was directed by Chloe Zhao of the United States.

Kurosawa earned a name for himself globally with his 1997 horror-thriller "Cure." He has also taken prizes in the Cannes Film Festival.

In 2015, Kurosawa received the best director prize in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes film festival. Also in Cannes, his "Tokyo Sonata" won the jury prize in the same section in 2008.

Among the representative works of the director, who hails from Kobe, is the 2001 horror film "Kairo." The film was later made into a U.S. remake "Pulse" in 2006.

