

Kumiko, the Treasure Hunter

Cert 12A USA 2014 105 mins

Crew

Director	David Zellner
Screenplay	David Zellner & Nathan Zellner
Cinematography	Sean Porter
Film Editing	Melba Jodorowsky
Original music	The Octopus Project

Cast

Rinko Kikuchi	Kumiko
Nobuyuki Katsube	Sakagami
Shirley Venard	Older woman
David Zellner	Policeman
Nathan Zellner	Robert

Synopsis

Tokyo, the present. Kumiko lives in utter solitude, working in a dead-end job under an awful boss, intimidated by her peers, and nagged incessantly by her overbearing mother. The only joy in her life comes from a old grainy VHS tape of Fargo. Kumiko is convinced that the story is real, and becomes obsessed about finding the money buried in snow.

With only a hand-drawn map and little preparation, Kumiko embarks on a journey across the Pacific to the frozen Midwestern plains in search of her treasure.



Booking Information

Distributor: Soda Pictures

DVD bookings: contact Hannah Roeg

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Available: June 29 2015



Reviews

There's always room for another writing-directing brother act in cinema – the more oddball, the better. The Zellners of Austin, Texas have spent years accumulating an underground oeuvre that includes such titles as *Redemptitude*, *Aftermath on Meadowlark Lane* and their rather fine feature *Kid-Thing*. Now they sail closer to the mainstream, but not too close, in a haunting road movie about morbid obsession.

The normally hyper-chic Japanese star Rinko Kikuchi (from *Babel* and *Pacific Rim*) drabs it down as Kumiko, an alienated Tokyo "office lady" whose increasingly frayed psyche latches on to a bizarre fixation. Watching a VHS of the Coen brothers' *Fargo*, she decides to head for Minnesota in search of the money stashed away by that film's Steve Buscemi character.

...For all its surface eccentricity, *Kumiko* is a tender portrait, observing its heroine's slow implosion closely, but with gentle discretion. Kikuchi says little, but her body language, a listless hunched shuffle, is immensely eloquent. By the time the film has plunged deep into snow-covered Minnesota – shot with poetic starkness by Sean Porter – Kumiko has become something like a mythic heroine. This quietly magnificent piece should put the Zellners on the map: one day, the Coens will make movies inspired by them.

Jonathan Romney, The Observer, February 2015

.An unlikely mix of true-life tragedy and urban myth inspired this sweet, melancholy comedy.

... though it never descends into slapstick, there are shades of the silent-era greats in Kikuchi's wonderful and largely wordless performance, which echoes the hangdog Buster Keaton more than the pratfalling Chaplin. Her sad but compelling presence brings much-needed pathos to the film's final stretch, a surreal, quirky road trip in which Kumiko seems to be at cross-purposes with everyone she meets - a poignant replaying of the situation she is trying to leave behind at home.

Damon Wise, Radio Times, February 2015

FILM FACTS...

- ☆ *Kumiko, the Treasure Hunter* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2014, where it won a Special Jury Prize for its musical score.
- ☆ Rinko Kikuchi first came to international attention for her role in *Babel* (2006) which earned her a Best Supporting Actress Oscar nomination.
- ☆ Kumiko's story is based on the urban legend surrounding the death of Takako Konishi in Minnesota in 2001.