Eastern’ (2010) involves a re-enactment of the final scene in Sergio Leone’s ‘Once Upon a Time in the West’, by locals who live near Zempukuji Park in the suburbs of Tokyo. Thirty non-professional actors and actresses took the role of either Charles Bronson or Henry Fonda. Each time an edit occurs a new face is seen. There is little continuity, but shot for shot there is a close imitation of Leone’s original fatal dual between a man murdered and a man wronged.

Sergio Leone and Japanese director Akira Kurosawa were locked in a legal battle over the copyright of a story first presented as a Samurai film and then in the form of the Western (Kurosawa won). The cultural translations, interpretations and mis-interpretations at work in ‘Eastern’ look again at this debate of how East and West perceive each other, and how each uses the other’s culture to confirm their own.

To make Eastern, props and wardrobe were made from what was immediately available. Even the dolly (an essential part of Leone’s approach to filming) is made from rollerskates and plumbing tubes. Passersby amble in and out of shot and the music was made overnight by two local musicians met in a bar, improvising having heard Morricone’s score.

CREDITS: Eastern 2010
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Additional interpreter: Nahoko Kudo
Camera: Liz Murray
Camera stills: Masaru Yanagiba, Naoya Sugisawa, Morita Junten
Music: Taro Ishikawa, Satoshi Ikeda
Volunteer Coordinator and Props: Yuta Yamazaki, Chiharu Shizuno, Kanako Takagi, Charbel Ackermann
Additional Casting: Rieko Akatsuka, Micky Kobayashi, Risa
Catering: Sarah Woodfine
Thanks also to: Tamiko O’Brien, Mark Dunhill, Sam Stocker, Claire Hickman, Hiroko & Tatsuhiko Murata, Youkobo Art Space, Danielle Arnaud


Keisuke Kawada as Henry Fonda in Eastern