

# Ecstasy of the Angels

## (Tenshi no kôkotsu)

### Staff

Production	Wakamatsu Production, Art Theatre Guild of Japan
Producer	Wakamatsu Kôji, Kuzui Kinshirô
Director	Wakamatsu Kôji
Screenplay	Deguchi De (=Adachi Masao)
Photography	Itô Hideo
Editing	Tanaka Hajime
Sound	Sugisaki Takashi
Light	Isogai Hajime
Music	Yamashita Yôsuke Trio

### Cast

Yoshizawa Ken, Shibata Hidekatsu, Iwabuchi Susumu, Matsushima Shinichi, Aresa Yuki, Yoshida Kiyoshi, Motoda Takihiko, Ôizumi Tomoo, Mie Hiroyuki, Oyamada Shôichi, Yokoyama Rie, Onogawa Kôzaburô, Wajima Shinsuke

Release date: March 11, 1972 (X-rated)  
89 min.; B&W/color; 1:1.33; 35mm

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*Tenshi no kokotsu* (Ecstasy of the Angels) is the first film Wakamatsu made in co-operation with the Art Theatre Guild Japan. Since his debut film *Amai wana* (Sweet trap, 1963) Wakamatsu had made over 60 films already. Starting with the great scandal around the participation of his film *Kabe no naka no himegoto* (Secrets behind Walls, 1965) at the Berlin Film Festival, Wakamatsu had launched several provocative films, and had gained overwhelming support especially from the younger generation. Now time was ready to present an ATG film. ATG had produced groundbreaking films such as Ôshima Nagisa's *Kôshikei* (Death by Hanging, 1968) and films of other avant-garde filmmakers such as Matsumoto Toshio, Terayama Shûji, Jissôji Akio and Kuroki Kazuo. Now they took in the "pink eiga" director Wakamatsu Kôji.

The police station in the Shinjuku district of Tôkyô, which is blasted by a bomb in the film, later became the real target of the so-called Christmas tree bombing on Christmas Eve. Other bomb attacks on police stations followed. In addition, in February 1972, the United Red Army had taken a hostage at Asama mountain lodge. Since the film tells the story of a revolutionary organisation, which plans an all-out attack on Tôkyô, local store owners, the association of theatres, and the public security agency together with the mass media such as the daily newspaper *Mainichi Shinbun*, launched a campaign against the screening of the film, and accused it of encouraging "random terrorism". After bombing threats were made against the movie theatre Nichigei Bunka, the only one among the ATG cinemas to show the film was the Art Theatre Shinjuku Bunka. The upcoming rivaling genre "Nikkatsu Roman Porno" can be seen as a further reason.

Kuzui Kinshirô, who was also involved as a producer of the film, was the manager of the Shinjuku Bunka cinema. The opening of the underground theatre Sasori-za in the basement of the Shinjuku Bunka was celebrated with the film *Gingakei* (Galaxy, 1967) by Adachi Masao, who was a member of Wakamatsu Production. Also, the first late night show shown at the Shinjuku Bunka was a film made by Adachi during his time at the film club of Nihon University. In August 1968, the program "Wakamatsu Kôji's Soul Demonstration" was presented at the Sasori-za. Since then a number of

special series with Wakamatsu Production films were shown there. These special features helped to foster the great popularity of Wakamatsu, and created conditions for him to realize his ATG film. The people who made the screening of the film at the Shinjuku Bunka possible at all were Kuzui Kinshirô and also Iseki Taneo, president of ATG and head of Sanwa Kôgyô to which the Shinjuku Bunka cinema belonged to. Pushing the film's screening regardless of the resistance brought about a great sympathy from the audience. Today the film is valued as the most provocative film in ATG's history, and is not only representative for the films of ATG, but is also regarded as an outstanding film in Japanese cinema.

In the first concept of the film, Soka Jirô, who committed a series of bombing attacks in 1962, served as a model, and the story contained a meta level, in which Wakamatsu himself appeared as a film director. But in 1971 Wakamatsu's films *Okasareta byakui* (Violated Angels, 1967) and *Seizoku* (Sex-Jack, 1970) along with Ôshima's ATG productions *Gishiki* (The Ceremony, 1970) and *Tôkyô sensô sengo hiwa* (The Man Who Left His Will On Film, 1970) were invited to the Quinzaine at the Cannes Film Festival. On their way back Wakamatsu and Adachi traveled to Lebanon, where they produced the news film *Sekigun/PFLP – Sekai sensô sengen* (Red Army/PFLP – Declaration of World War, 1971) for the Palestinian revolution, together with Shigenobu Fusako of the Japanese Red Army and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). As a criticism of the existing capitalistic cinema system, they organized a screening tour for the film with a red bus throughout Japan. During this process, many activists gathered around Wakamatsu Production. Wakamatsu's ATG film carries this radicalism into the feature film genre. The armed group appearing in the film was not based on the Marxist Revolutionary Party, but on the secret "Société des Saisons" of the French 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary Louis-Auguste Blanqui. Also the structure of their organization based on year, season, month and week day, was taken from this model.

The first draft of the screenplay was published in the magazine *Eiga hihyô* (October 1971 issue) under the title "Tenshi wa kechi de aru" (The Angels Are Stingy), the second draft was entitled "Tenshi no bakusatsu" (Bombing by the Angels). The final screenplay, "Tenshi no kôkotsu" (Ecstasy of the Angels) was published in *Art Theater* No. 93. The screenplay is credited to Deguchi De, which was the collective pseudonym for all activist film productions of Wakamatsu Production. In the case of this film, Adachi Masao is behind the pseudonym. The fabulous team of Itô Hideo and Isogai Hajime was responsible for the cinematography and the lighting. The music of the film was created by the Yamashita Yôsuke Trio, which also appeared with a passionate performance in the film. The still photographer was Nakadaira Takuma for the first time. The actors were: Yoshizawa Ken, who played many of the leading roles in Wakamatsu's films, Yokoyama Rie, who also appeared in the proceeding film *Hika* (Secret Flower, 1972), Honda Tatsuhiko, known from the theatre shows at the Shinjuku Bunka and former actor at Gendaijin Theatre, Onogawa Kôzaburô from the Daiei series, and newcomer Arasuna Yuki. Okishima Isao, also member of Wakamatsu Production, was the assistant director, and the theme song "Here is the silent forefront" was composed by Akiyama Michio, and was written by Adachi Masao. Both appear in the film in supporting roles. Also, many real activists, including members of the Japanese Red Army, participated either as performers or in the production of the film. Thus Wakamatsu's first ATG film became a huge gathering of the people around him, and it could be said that it is a "Best of" of his films. ATG later distributed Wakamatsu's *Hika*, and co-produced *Seibo Kannon Daibôtsu* (Eros Eterna, 1977).

Shooting started on November 20, 1971, and production was announced on November 24. The production costs were 12 million Yen. The leading actor in the beginning was Yasuda Minami, a former singer of Jiyû Theatre, but he disappeared after two days. In mid-December shooting was finished, and on December 25 the first preview screening took place. The film premiered on March 11, 1972 at the Shinjuku Bunka and was screened together with Fujita Toshiya's *Hachigatsu no*

*nureta suna* (Wet Sand in August, 1971). It was later also screened in cinemas, which were not part of the ATG chain, such as the Kawasaki Eki Building Bunka and Yokohama Sôtetsu Bunka, in the latter together with Wakamatsu's *Hika*.

Hirasawa Gô