



**MUSIC  
BOX  
FILMS**

**presents**

# **QUILL**

**a film by Yoichi Sai**

**100 minutes. In Japanese with English subtitles.  
Not yet rated.**

**To download hi-res images and video clips, please visit:  
<http://www.musicboxfilms.com/quill>**

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## QUILL

2004 / JAPAN / 100 min / color / 1:1.85 / Dolby SR

Directed by Yoichi Sai (*Doing Time, All Under the Moon, Marks*)

Starring: Kaoru Kobayashi (*Secret, Like Asura*), Kippeï Shiina (*Gonin, Jubaku: Spellbound*), Teruyuki Kagawa (*Doing Time, Devils on the Doorstep*)

*"Quill, when I walk with you, I realize what it is to be alive."*

### - Based on a true story -

Labrador Retriever Quill's life as a "dog" drastically changes when he leaves his mother's side in order to become a "seeing-eye dog." He is taken in by "foster parents" known as puppy-walkers, where he basks in their love fully and spends his puppy days running around innocently and full of vigor. When he reaches his first birthday, he leaves his foster parents and eventually enters a training center. Little does he know that he will later meet the man who will become his owner (=partner). The gentle Quill will be teamed up with this man, who first refuses to take a seeing-eye dog. An incident occurs that causes the seemingly completely incompatible man and dog to come to rely on each other, and begin to walk together. This is their first step in becoming "life partners." When he walks with Quill, he feels the wind. He can see the sky through Quill. The bond between Quill and his partner, who rediscovers the joy of life, grows deeper with each passing day... Until one day, they face a sudden and sorrowful parting...

Quill experiences many encounters and farewells in his daily life as a seeing-eye dog. The happier the encounter, the more emotional the departure. In the face of inescapable fate, a person can get hurt, and sometimes shut one's heart. Quill tenderly extends the gift of his unconditional love and trust to the people he meets. Quill was born with a curious mark on his side that resembles a bird spreading its wings. Perhaps this is the symbol of the happiness of his partner.

Directed by Yoichi Sai, whose film "ALL UNDER THE MOON" won 53 awards, including the Kinema Junpo awards (the most prestigious film award in Japan) for Best Picture and Best Director. His most recent film "DOING TIME" was also highly praised, receiving a number of awards including Best Director Award.

### Story

Five Labrador Retrievers are born at a house in Tokyo. One of the puppies is easily identifiable from the rest at first sight. He has a curious pattern on his side that resembles a bird spreading its wings. The owner names him "Jonathan," and wants to make the puppies into seeing-eye dogs like their father. It is normally difficult for a dog to become seeing-eye dogs unless both parents had experience as a "seeing-eye," but as she continuously bugs the dog trainer Satoshi Tawada (Kippeï Shiina), he reluctantly agrees to take only one of them. He chooses the easygoing Jonathan, as fast-reacting, emotionally expressive dogs are not fit to work as seeing-eye dogs.

Jonathan barks in protest when he is somewhat forced to leave his mother and his brothers. Tawada takes Jonathan to a new home of volunteer “puppy-walkers” Isamu Nii (Teruyuki Kagawa) and his wife Mitsuko (Shinobu Terajima), to raise the puppy. Tawada leaves them with instructions not to scold the dog under any circumstance. Jonathan receives the new name of “Quill” for the “bird wings” mark on his side.

The mischievous Quill loves to throw Mitsuko’s sandals around and rip window screens, but his favorite plaything is a toy bear that squeaks when bitten. Later, Quill goes out on his first walk and soon becomes a town celebrity. Mitsuko explains to Quill everything he comes into contact with, from cherry trees to birds and snakes. These days of merriment pass by in the blink of an eye. Before we know it Quill has reached his first birthday, the last day that he is in the puppy-walkers’ care. On this day, during a long walk, Quill sees Mitsuko crying on a park bench and opens his mouth, which seems like an attempt to smile at her. When Quill lifts his arrestingly charming face, it looks like he is smiling.

Quill is put on the rear deck of Tawada’s car and fades into the distance as it rolls away from the Nii home. As the couple vanishes into the distance, all Quill can do is whimper helplessly.

Life at the seeing-eye dog training center begins. Quill exhibits his naivete and his way of doing things at his own pace. As the other dogs steadily advance, learning how to negotiate steps and avoid obstacles, Quill alone is left behind. Could it be that seeing-eye work isn’t in his blood? Just as Tawada, trainer of many outstanding seeing-eye dogs, is about to give up, he discovers a unique talent in Quill. When told to wait, Quill will stay calmly in the same spot for hours without moving.

Finally, Quill’s partner is decided. Mitsuru Watanabe (Kaoru Kobayashi) had always adamantly refused to have a seeing-eye dog, saying he would rather stay in bed than be pulled around by a dog. However, thanks to Tawada’s somewhat pushy recommendation and a trial walk with Quill, Watanabe himself requests the dog. Joint training commences at a camp for the vision-impaired and their seeing-eye dogs. The man and the dog have trouble communicating. Watanabe and Quill are not in step and the man even starts using his white walking stick. Then, little by little, Quill starts showing his kindness to Watanabe. One evening during voluntary training, a trivial incident causes Watanabe to open up his heart, and for the first time he starts to walk aided by Quill alone. The dog senses the man’s rhythm. Their shadows on the street gradually draw closer.

## **Crew**

Director: Yoichi Sai

Producer: Nozomu Enoki, Ichiro Yamamoto

Written by: Shoichi Maruyama, Yoshihiro Nakamura

Cinematographer: Junichi Fujisawa

Lighting: Masao Kanazawa  
Production Designer: Riki Imamura  
Sound Editing: Osamu Onodera  
Editing: Isao Kawase  
Dog Trainer: Tadami Miya  
Music: Kuricorder Quartet  
Music Producer: Tsugihiko Sasaki

### **Cast**

Kaoru Kobayashi (*Secret, Like Asura*) as Mitsuru Watanabe  
Kippe Shiina (*Gonin, Jubaku: Spellbound*) as Satoru Tawada  
Teruyuki Kagawa (*Doing Time, Devils on the Doorstep*) as Isamu Nii  
Keiko Toda (*Welcome Back, Mr. McDonald*) as Yoshiko Watanabe  
Shinobu Terajima (*Akame 48 Waterfalls*) as Mistuko Nii  
Tomoka Kurotani (*Samurai Resurrection, Boxer Joe*) as Masumi Kubo  
Yuko Natori (*Marks, The Discarnates*) as Ren Mito

### **Director's Biography**

#### **Yoichi Sai**

After working as an assistant director to Nagisa Oshima, Toru Murakawa and others, he made his debut as a theatrical film director in 1983 with "Mosquito on the 10<sup>th</sup> Floor," which was presented at the 40<sup>th</sup> Venice International Film Festival. This film won him the Sports Nippon Grand Prix New Director Award of the Mainichi Film Contest as well as the New Director Award of the Yokohama Film Festival. After that, he directed a series of Kadokawa films including "Itsuka Darekaga Korosareru" (1984). He also made a large number of TV films, which helped his talent to flourish. His 1989 "Via Okinawa" brought him the Yokohama Film Festival Screenplay Award and other prizes.

In 1993, his "All under the Moon" won 53 of the film awards of the year, including the Hochi Film Award and the Nikkan Sports Film Grand Prix, which put him in the limelight overnight. After directing "Marks" in 1995, he entered Yonsei University in Korea in 1996. During this period, while studying the history of the contemporary film in Korea, he associated with many Korean people concerned with films. After returning to Japan, he directed films including 1998 "The Pig's Retribution," which won the Don Quixote Award at the Locarno Film Festival.

### **ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS**

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films has quickly established itself as one of the leading distributors of non-English language feature films in the US in theatres, on DVD/Blu-ray and via Video-on-Demand. Music Box's release of Guillaume Canet's TELL NO ONE was the most popular foreign-language film of 2008 and in 2010, the film adaptations of Stieg Larsson's trilogy of international mega sellers dominated the foreign-language film market. The first in the series, THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO, with over \$10 million in US box office, was one the most popular

international releases of the decade. Recent acquisitions include Terence Davies' *THE DEEP BLUE SEA*, starring Rachel Weisz, and Philippe Falardeau's *MONSIEUR LAZHAR*, 2012 Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.