



JUNICHI KAJIOKA STEVE CAMPBELL

DARK HIGHLANDS

A MARK STIRTON MOVIE



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DARK HIGHLANDS

Synopsis Short

A Japanese Artist visiting the Highlands of Scotland, is about to find out that one wrong word can get you into a lot of trouble. Especially when not everyone in Scotland, is friendly. When THE ARTIST crosses paths with the disgusting GAMEKEEPER - only one of them will leave the Highlands alive.

Starring the multi award-winning Japanese actor, Junichi Kajioka (47 Ronin, Johnny English Strikes Again), Dark Highlands is a thrilling cat and mouse chase across the vast, unforgiving wilderness of Scotland.

Synopsis long

Dark Highlands is set in the Highlands of Scotland and chronicles the journey of a Japanese artist who has come to Scotland to paint the magnificent scenery. Little does he know that the Highlands is also the home to a dark secret. Lurking in the woods, is a dangerous, yet pitiful creature; The Gamekeeper. Is he a brain damaged survivor existing entirely on instinct? Or is he a darker, unnatural force?

All it takes is one wrong word, shouted at the wrong time, for the two characters to end up locked together in a dangerous battle of wills, with the unforgiving Highlands of Scotland as a backdrop.

The Artist must not only battle The Gamekeeper and his filthy perversions, he must battle the natural elements of Scotland. With no water, no food and no help, The Artist must find a way to survive not only a madman, but a brutal landscape of rocks and cliffs and endless forests.

Lost and with a limited time to find water, the cat and mouse game involves everything in The Gamekeepers arsenal of weapons, stun darts, drones and traps. Not to mention his faithful and freakish Dog... While The Artist must utilise the few possessions he has, as cleverly as possible, to survive the onslaught of terror, because only one of them is coming out of the Highlands alive.



DARK HIGHLANDS

PRODUCTION

Developed by the creative team behind "The Planet," and "One Day Removals," (director, Mark Stirton and producer, Michael Clark) Dark Highlands is a chase movie in the style of many of the 1970's great psychological thrillers. Filmed entirely in the beautiful, but unforgiving, Scottish Highlands the movie follows a terrified Japanese artist as he is hunted by a masked killer with a deadly arsenal of weapons and gadgets

The movie has little dialogue, relying instead on tense scenes and drama to drive the story to its conclusion. Using a Japanese speaking character in Scotland enabled us to heighten the isolation of the character, lost and hunted with no way to communicate: forcing the audience to be chased along with him.

In the role of "The Artist," is London-based Japanese actor Junichi Kajioka, who apart from having over 50 screen credits to his name also has a background in Japanese theatre - which he uses to great effect to portray a wide range of emotions and information without using words.

For the movie's villain, the masked hunter/cannibal "The Gamekeeper," Scottish born actor Steve Campbell was chosen. The character goes through several transformations in the movie, which Steve with his very physical style of acting was able to carry off.

The supporting cast includes cult film icon, Mike Mitchell as "Ghillie" and the voice talents of international star, Brian Cox.

Dark Highlands is a Hats on Sticks Pictures production and is distributed on dvd, bluray, VOD and cable in North America by **Gravitas Ventures**.



DARK HIGHLANDS

PRINCIPLE CAST

Junichi Kajioka – The Artist

Junichi Kajioka is a multi-award-winning Japanese filmmaker and actor based in London. Appearing initially in Japanese TV series such as the soap opera "Wataru seken wa oni bakari" (1990) he later became one of the pioneer Japanese actors working in China.

Junichi's first professional film appearance came in the modern classic Chinese war drama "Devils on the Doorstep" (2000). He has also played various Japanese historical figures in Central Chinese Television (CCTV) drama series, such as 'Monk Fusho' in "Jianzhen Dongdu" (2007) and 'Aritomo Yamagata' in "Taiwan 1895" (2008) in leading roles.

In 2012, he was nominated for his roles in "King of Life" (2012) and "Phone Box" (2013) at film festivals in the UK and India. Further successes followed and in 2014 he won awards for "Imphal 1944" (2014), winning Best Producer and Best Screenplay for Short Drama at the Monaco International Film Festival. His second documentary, "Sugihara Survivors: Jewish and Japanese, Past and Future" (2017) has swept the board of international festivals, picking up multiple awards for best short documentary and best director..

Junichi has worked actively in television and film worldwide. Notable projects include Universal Pictures' "47 Ronin" (2013), Yimou Zhang's "The Flowers of War" (2011) and Chuan Lu's "City of Life and Death" (2009) and "Johnny English Strikes Again" (2018).



Steve Campbell – The Gamekeeper

Steve Campbell, a UK based actor, began his career as a model and later studied stagecraft, playing lead roles in many well know plays such as 'Scrooge' in "A Christmas Carol," "Under Milk Wood" and a variety of Shakespeare's works, most notably the lead in "Romeo and Juliet".

Finding additional work in commercials, Steve became a known face in Scottish casting circles - leading to roles in the BBC prime-time soaps "River City," "Monarch of the Glen" (2000) and the ITV series "Sea of Souls" (2004).

Film work followed with roles in several productions, including "The Planet" (2006), "One Day Removals" (2008), "Captain Phillips" (2013).

He has also lectured in media at a prestigious London college.

DARK HIGHLANDS

SUPPORTING CAST

Mike Mitchell - Ghillie

Mike Mitchell has had several professional careers before moving to acting. Initially training as a combat frogman with the UK Royal Navy, he went on to become part of the Naval Elite Special Forces: seeing action in many situations worldwide.

After leaving the navy, Mike developed his other interests of equestrian show-jumping, competitive yachting and bodybuilding, all of which he excelled at, but it was because of his body building that he was discovered and cast in Mel Gibson's "Braveheart" (1994) both acting and performing stunt work.

After winning five Masters Mr. World titles and two Mr. Universe titles with the World Fitness Federation, Mike's build and energy attracted attention from casting directors and he has built up an impressive list of international credits, including "Gladiator" (2000), "The Planet" (2006), "Apocalypse Z" (2013) and "The Dark Kingdom" (2018).



Brian Cox – Opening Narrator

Brian Cox is an Emmy Award-winning Scottish actor. Cox first came to attention in the early 1970s with performances in numerous television series and films. His first big break was as 'Dr. Hannibal Lector' in "Manhunter" (1986). Since then he appeared in over 200 film and television series, as well as making numerous television guest appearances, including "X-Men 2" (2003), "Red" (2010) and the title role in the biographical movie "Churchill" (2017).

He was awarded Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2003 Queen's New Year's Honours List for his services to drama.



DARK HIGHLANDS

CREW

Mark Stirton - Director, Writer, Editor, Sound Editor, Digital Effects

Mark Stirton, has over 20 years of experience in drama and television production in the UK; producing his first short film "Spooked" (1995), at the age of 25. "Spooked," was nominated for an award at the 1996 Glasgow film festival. Mark studied broadcast media at Aberdeen College and worked as a cameraman / vision mixer for a local television station before setting up his own company, Stirton Productions in 2003.

Several short movies were produced before breaking into the feature length market, one of the short films "Removals," (2003) was developed as his 2nd feature "One Day Removals."

His first feature film, "The Planet," (2006), received world-wide acclaim for its take on the science fiction genre and extensive visual effects. His second feature, an all-out comedy road/murder movie, "One Day Removals" (2009) was acquired by Canada-based Cinemavault, for worldwide distribution in 2010.

Mark is currently developing several screenplays.



Michael G Clark - Producer, Cinematographer/Dp, Production Designer, Special Effects

Michael G Clark is founder and CEO of Hats on Sticks Pictures.



His 25 year career in film and television production started behind the camera as grip, lighting and cameraman; later moving to SFX, makeup, stuntman and actor. Under the Stirton Production banner, he produced many short films and the cult features "The Planet" and "One Day Removals," before starting his own production company in 2015.

The movie "Dark Highlands," is the first produced by his company and his first credit as Director of Photography.

He is also the stunt double for the terrible Gamekeeper, and can be seen in Dark Highlands running around the wetter and more insect infected areas of Scotland; where no sane actor would venture.

Michael also has a professional background in advertising, marketing, graphics and digital animation. Working with many major clients, worldwide.

DARK HIGHLANDS

Jon Brooks - Composer

Jon Brooks was born in South Manchester, UK in 1980. He studied music at Anglia Ruskin University (Cambridge) followed by a Masters degree in Composition for Film and TV at Kingston University (London). Jon previously spent six years working as an in-house composer in Malaysia before returning to the UK. He is a professional composer specialising in music production for film, TV, advertising, sonic branding, animation series and corporate videos. His passion is writing dramatic and emotive scores for film and TV, whether scoring for solo instruments or full orchestra.

Jon is accomplished on piano and French horn and has performed on stage with Richard Clayderman, auditioned for Nigel Martin-Smith, performed at a variety of venues including the Royal Albert Hall, Kuala Lumpur's Twin Towers and at the Vatican, Rome. He also had the privilege of performing for the Queen in London during her Jubilee Tour.

Writing from his purpose-built recording studio based in South Manchester, UK, his clients and credits include: Walt Disney, Coca Cola, Saatchi and Saatchi, Sony Playstation, O&M, Breitling and Sony Music.



Supporting Crew

No movie production can be made without a crew of dedicated individuals. We were gifted with a core of multi-talented people - Barry Thackrey (aerial cameraman/effects/stunts) , Mary Sommerville (Director's PA/wardrobe/sound/ transport), Fraser Napier (1st Assistant Director/sound/effects) Zani Mikyta (Exec. Producer/wardrobe/makeup/effects) and Mark Wyness (Photographer/stunts/carpentry/ acting).



DARK HIGHLANDS

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Details

Completion: May 2018

Run Length: 1:25:33

Format: 2k Scope 2.39:1

Native FR: 24fps

Language: English

Audio: 5.1 Surround

Delivery: Quicktime Apple 4.2.2. HQ or Uncompressed. Original and textless version
5.1 audio channels
Subtitle .srt format

Exhibition: PAL DCP, DVD, BluRay, .MOV file

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WINNER BEST FEATURE SCOTTISH INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL 2018

WINNER BEST SCOTTISH DIRECTOR SCOTTISH INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL 2018

HATS ON STICKS PICTURES

Gravitas Ventures

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

What did I intent with Dark Highlands? Well, Scotland doesn't really have a Freddy Krueger or a Jason Voorhees or even a Micheal Myers. We have legends to be sure, but they are rather old and dusty. I wanted to do something that was of the 21 century. A villain that uses technology as well as a good old sharp blade. A villain that can spy on you with a drone as easily as he can catch you with a simple snare. And so, The Gamekeeper was born. A filthy, get cunning creature of the Highlands. When you hear a noise outside your tent at night? That's him.

Of course, having conceived a villain, I needed a victim. Once again, I wanted to avoid the done to death trope of having an attractive woman chased through the woods. Been done, hasn't it? So I picked a male antagonist. But not a retired soldier or a qualified rock climber or anything tough like that. An artist. Just a simple artist and his box of paints. No match for a heavily armed madman. Or is he? Plus, being Japanese, he was a natural outsider in Scotland. Only dimly aware of how dangerous it can be, as many an unfortunate tourist has found out.

The other stipulation I had was that the central character should be smart. Not some fool walking into trouble at every turn, but a thinking human being who has to reason and plan his way to survival and home.

The other important element in this drama, are the Highlands of Scotland. Not only do they look stunning, as depicted in Michael G Clark's amazing cinematography, they are free! As a director with a very low budget, £40.000 isn't much, the Highlands offered outstanding production values for relatively little money.



DARK HIGHLANDS

CREDITS

WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND EDITED BY
MARK STIRTON

PRODUCED BY
MICHAEL CLARK

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
FORBES HARDIE
SYLVIA HARDIE
JUNICHI KAJIOKA
ZANI MIKYTA

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS
MICHAEL CHARLESTON
SHONA CHARLESTON

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
PRODUCTION DESIGNER
MICHAEL G CLARK

MUSIC BY
JON BROOKS

Production Manager
MARK STIRTON

First Assistant Director
FRASER NAPIER

CAST
In order of appearance

Opening Narrator:	BRIAN COX
Ghillie:	MIKE MITCHELL
Female Student:	ARIA MORRISON-BLYTH
Male Student:	FRASER NAPIER
Suicidal Man / Vomit-Head:	STEVE CAMPBELL
The Driver:	MARK WYNESS
The Artist:	JUNICHI KAJIOKA
Male Hiker:	ALISTAIR RITCHIE
Female Hiker:	LUCY PHILIP
The Gamekeeper:	STEVE CAMPBELL
The Jogger:	BARRY THACKREY
Rescue Worker 1:	MICHAEL G CLARK
Rescue Worker 2:	FAUSTAS TALACKA
Nurse:	JANE NYOKABI

STUNTS

The Artist/Utility Stunts
MARK WYNESS

The Gamekeeper
MICHAEL G CLARK

PRODUCTION

Production Assistants
MARY BAIRD SOMMERVILLE
ZANI MIKYTA
FRASER NAPIER
MARK WYNESS

Art Director / Props
MICHAEL G CLARK

Camera Operator / Grip
MARK STIRTON

Steadycam Operator
FAUSTAS TALACKA

Aerial Photography
BARRY THACKREY
MARK WYNESS
INNES GREGORY
KANE GREGORY

Set Photographer
MARK WYNESS

Sound Recording
MARK STIRTON
ROBERT AITKEN

Additional Recording Facilities
GREYSTOKE STUDIO, LONDON

Wardrobe Supervisor
ZANI MIKYTA

Lead Carpenter
MARK WYNESS

Makeup/SFX
MICHAEL G CLARK

Prosthetics Sculptor
ANDREW GLAZEBROOK

Watercolour Artist
TERRY COOK

Transportation Captain
MARK MADDOCK

Drivers
MARK WYNESS
MARY BAIRD SOMMERVILLE
ALEXANDER CRUCKSHANK
ANDREW McLEAN

Production Accountant
ANDREW RAYSON (WILLIAMSON & DUNN CA)

Legal Consultant
GAIL WATT

Medical Advisor
ELEANOR BINNE MACLEOD

POST PRODUCTION

Digital Effects / Titles
MARK STIRTON

CG Effects / Grading / Colouring
MICHAEL G CLARK

Audio Mixing / Foley
MARK STIRTON

Additional Music
RODDY HUGAN
MARK STIRTON
MORAG WHYTE