

Did You Know?

Though a large portion of the film takes place in the sweltering heat of summer, it was filmed during the winter. Thus, it was too cold for Takashi Shimura to eat popsicles – the one he is sucking on in the film is actually a radish on a stick.

The set design of *Drunken Angel*, which sets the slum below the main road leading to the rest of the city, is a physical manifestation of class relationships in post-war Japan.

The set for *Drunken Angel* was built for another movie – *These Foolish Times*, directed by Kurosawa's mentor Kajiro Yamamoto – and Toho, the studio that produced both pictures, wanted to get more use out of it, so they asked Kurosawa to come up with a film for which he could use the set. Kurosawa conceptualized *Drunken Angel* and promptly demolished a huge section of the set to build the sump.

The character of Sanada was originally designed to be a young humanist, but Kurosawa and fellow scriptwriter Keinosuke Uekusa couldn't find enough conflict and fallibility to make the character interesting. Then, one day, while wandering Tokyo's black markets, researching the film, they came across an old, hardened, alcoholic doctor working in the slums. The script was immediately rewritten, with Sanada based on this man.

AK's writing partner, Keinosuke Uekusa, was a childhood friend of the director's, and a playwright.

In early drafts of the script, the film focused completely on Sanada. Kurosawa's love of Mifune as an actor led to several re-writes, to give Matsunaga/Mifune more screen time.

Drunken Angel is the first of three AK films released sequentially featuring a mentor/mentee relationship between Shimura and Mifune – the other two are *The Quiet Duel* and *Stray Dog*, both released in 1949.

Kurosawa's father died during production of *Drunken Angel*. Wandering the streets of Tokyo after learning of his father's death, Kurosawa heard the song *Cuckoo's Waltz* playing from an open window. The joyous tone of the song intensified his feeling of loneliness and loss. When it came time to choose music for the scene in which Matsunaga falls from grace, Kurosawa elected to use *Cuckoo's Waltz*, to create counterpoint between the song and the scene. He and composer Fumio Hayasaka spent hours scouring Tokyo's record stores to find the exact same recording Kurosawa overheard the day his father died.

Drunken Angel is the first collaboration between Kurosawa and composer Hayasaka. Hayasaka would compose music for all of Kurosawa's films until his death from, ironically, tuberculosis, in 1955.

Production on *Drunken Angel* began in November of 1947 and opened in Japan on April 27, 1948. It debuted in the United States in 1960¹.

¹ Galbraith