Don't be so quick to ring the death knell of Japanese horror. Today, Nikkatsu Studio announced THE COMPLEX, the latest fright film from director Hideo Nakata (pictured). With a résumé that includes such chilling classics as RINGU and DARK WATER, Nakata's return to the genre he practically invented could be the kick in the pants needed to reactivate the floundering J-horror industry, which has in recent years turned toward more graphic and humor-based fare.

According to Nikkatsu, THE COMPLEX is Nakata's first true horror film in almost a decade, and one that takes advantage of his ability to build suspense and exploit the ever-present fear within commonplace settings and situations. It tells the story of nursing student Asuka (Atsuko Maeda), who has just moved into a row of aging apartment buildings with her parents and younger brother. On the first night in her new room, she is awakened by a strange scratching sound coming from the apartment of her neighbor, a reclusive old man who has refused all attempts at communication. Concerned over his well-being, Asuka enters his home, only to find him dead from malnutrition. Worse, it looks as if he had been trying to claw his way into her room. When the late-night scratching returns, she nervously ventures back next door, only to come face to face with an apparition of the old man.

Asuka soon learns that there have been many strange deaths in the complex over the years. Hoping to rid herself of the evil surrounding her, she seeks help from a spiritualist, and signs soon point to the danger being rooted in events in a past as tragic as the one Asuka lives in denial of. Former lead singer for the phenomenally popular idol ensemble AKB48, Maeda has been segueing her huge popularity from the concert stage to the acting circuit. Although she has appeared before in films and TV dramas, including a small part in the 2007 horror film THE SUICIDE SONG, THE COMPLEX is her first time taking top billing.

Fango caught up with Nakata in Tokyo for a few words about his latest horror entry. "As it weaves together elements from my previous horror films, THE COMPLEX is something of a summation of my work," he tells us. "People today are growing increasingly isolated from each other, an idea I use as the central theme of the film. The isolation affecting Japanese life leaves plenty of space for ghosts to crop up."

THE COMPLEX is set to go into domestic release in Japan in the first quarter of 2013, with festival screenings outside Japan to be announced in the near future. Look for exclusive coverage of THE COMPLEX at this site and in future issues of FANGORIA.