

*Mark  
WHELAN*

## THE BEST FILMS OF THE DECADE:

# LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Hirokazu Koreeda's *Like Father, Like Son* (2013) boldly questions the explanation of what constitutes as “family.”

The multi-talented Masaharu Fukuyama lays out, in heartbreaking earnestness, a typical Japanese businessman driven by ambition and success, only to have his world come to a screeching halt upon the realization that his six year old son (played by the adorable Keita Nonomiya) was switched at birth.

Stoic and rational, Fukuyama intricately bares the burden of a man coming to terms with his newly fractured state. His choices are not always agreeable but they're done with conviction and credibility—much to the discouragement of his wife (Machiko Ono) who exhibits her anger to this traumatic experience more blatantly.

Lily Franky and Yoko Maki—notable collaborators with Koreeda—add a more delicate touch to the proceedings as the other family in question. Though their purpose is to constitute a lighter tone, they are no less compelling and thoroughly developed.

These are ordinary people under extraordinary circumstances, and this gifted ensemble explores every angle of their sensitivities with a ring of truth.

Akin to his other work, such as *After Life* (1998), *Nobody Knows* (2004), and *Shoplifters* (2018) Koreeda masterfully allows his material to quietly unfold. Softly moving and deliberately paced, he abandons melodramatic and manipulative methods in favor of a simplistic and gentler approach.

It is an effective attempt to preserve the film's sincerity: with thematic elements this dynamic, why burden us with spoon-fed sentiment?

*Like Father, Like Son* adopts its minimalistic delivery to penetrating effect. It is a simple story rife with raw emotional power and paints a beautiful tapestry of family values.



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### LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON (2013)

D: Hirokazu Koreeda

C: Masaharu Fukuyama,  
Machiko Ono, Yoko Maki,  
Lily Franky, Keita  
Nonomiya, Shogen Hwang,  
Yuri Nakamura

**NOT RATED**