



At the Movies

Sadako and I went to see a movie yesterday. We don't go too often, maybe two or three times a year. She herself is actually much more of a movie fan than I, and has an account at a local video rental shop which she uses regularly. But because our tastes are somewhat different, it doesn't happen very often that we both say "Yes, let's go and see that one!" , when we read the movie listings in the newspaper.

So what usually happens is that one of us will read about a movie we would like to see, and thinking that it might be at least 'bearable' for the other person, will suggest a 'date'. I did this last week when I saw the reviews about the new 'Wallace & Gromit' film that is on current release. I really wanted to see it, knew that Sadako would probably not choose it on her own, but also thought that she would agree to go along. I was right, so we went to see it yesterday.

Because I go to a movie so infrequently it's kind of an 'event' for me, so I don't think too much about how much it costs. But each time I buy the tickets I can't avoid thinking "Gee, movies are so expensive in Japan!" Partly, this is because I have been here so long that my memories of movie prices back in North America are of course out of date; I'm sure that these days it's quite expensive over there too. But part of it is true - prices here are very expensive; 1,800 yen seems to be the 'set' price for a normal adult ticket to a first run film. Ouch!

So these days, we have started going to theatres that offer some kind of discount from the list price; I'm not eligible for the 'Ladies' Day' prices offered by one of the local theatres, but Sadako found that many theatres these days have a special price for 'Couples at least one of whom is over 50'. I'm 54, so that covers us just fine (and which has the added benefit of not having to ask the lady about her age!)

The theatre we went to yesterday was a new one for us, and when I approached the wicket to buy our tickets, there was no indication that any such discount was available. But - mostly just as a joke - I asked if they had a 'senior discount', even though I well know we aren't in that class yet! And lo and behold, she offered us that same '... one of you over 50 ...' discount. We were very happy to accept, as 2,000 yen for the couple means almost half price for us. Interestingly enough, the girl didn't ask to see any ID; perhaps my white beard is enough to 'convince' her that we qualified, even though it's been white since I was in my mid-40s!

And the movie? Well, Sadako was polite, but I suspect she probably thought "Next time, it's my turn to choose!" And for myself, I have to say that it didn't live up to expectations. I basically enjoyed it, but I felt quite disappointed by the relentlessly fast pace of the whole thing. The sets are gorgeous, and the characters are capable of wonderful levels of subtlety, as we have seen in previous films by this maker, but we had no chance to enjoy such things this time, as nothing stayed on the screen for more than a second or two, before being pushed aside by the next 'action'.

If this is what movies are like for me now, what will I be thinking when I really am in that 'senior' class?

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