



MARCHÉ DU FILM
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

PRESS REVIEW
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Author: Naman Ramachandran

Japan Readies Major Industry Showcase as 2026 Cannes Market Country of Honor

Japan will take the spotlight at next year's Cannes market, the business hub of the [Cannes Film Festival](#), after being [named the 2026 Country of Honor](#) — a recognition that will see the nation lead the market's opening festivities and mount a large-scale showcase of its film, animation, and content industries.

The plans were outlined at a press conference during the ongoing [Tokyo International Film Festival](#) by Junichi Sakamoto, chair of the executive committee for Japan, Country of Honor 2026, and [Guillaume Esmiol](#), executive director of the Cannes market. The 2026 edition will run May 12–20 alongside the 79th Cannes Film Festival.

As Country of Honor, Japan will co-host the market's opening night — an industry gala drawing more than 1,200 global delegates — and feature across its flagship programs. A series of panels, networking sessions, and project showcases will highlight Japanese animation, genre cinema, and co-production opportunities. The slate will also include a Japan Industry Summit and a day of screenings dedicated to new Japanese films.

“Being named Country of Honor presents a wonderful opportunity to showcase the appeal of Japanese cinema on a global stage,” Sakamoto said. “We look forward to seeing Japan's rich film culture, along with its emerging talents and technologies, shine even brighter internationally.”

Sakamoto noted that Japan's participation aims to deepen industry linkages and promote international collaboration. “This provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen ties with film industries worldwide and encourage joint productions,” he said.

Shiina Yasushi, vice chair of the executive committee and vice president of UniJapan, who also serves as the head of the Tokyo film market, added that Cannes would help demystify Japan's production committee model for overseas producers. “We hope international partners gain a clearer understanding of how Japanese films are financed and developed, paving the way for more meaningful co-productions,” he said.

Esmiol added, “Japan holds a unique place in international cinema and is one of the most dynamic countries at the Cannes market, with highly active sales companies and producers. On a personal note, as someone with Japanese roots, it's a beautiful opportunity to pay tribute to my cultural heritage.”

The initiative will be jointly organized by the executive committee, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), with UniJapan coordinating participation through the Japan Pavilion at the Village International. Program details and participating companies will be revealed early next year.

At the Tokyo briefing, METI's Satoru Hayasaka said the selection aligns with Japan's updated Cool Japan strategy, which targets JPY20 trillion (\$131.47 billion) in overseas content revenue by 2033. Japan's exports have quadrupled in the past decade to JPY5.8 trillion (\$38.126 billion), driven largely by games and animation but with growing potential in live-action film.



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Producing around 1,200 films a year and drawing 150 million admissions annually, Japan's local market remains one of the most resilient in the world, with box office receipts exceeding JPY200 billion (\$1.31 billion). Officials see Cannes 2026 as a chance to deepen international collaboration and position Japanese storytelling more prominently in the global marketplace.

Japan follows Brazil (2025), Switzerland (2024), Spain (2023), and India (2022) as the fifth nation to hold the title since the Cannes market launched the Country of Honor initiative to celebrate standout national industries and foster cross-border partnerships.

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