

Contemporary Japanese Film

Mark Schilling

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#3009438 in Books Mark Schilling 1999-11-01 1999-11-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.05 x .88 x 6.001, 1.40 #File Name: 0834804158400 pages Contemporary Japanese Film | File size: 58.Mb

Mark Schilling : Contemporary Japanese Film before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Contemporary Japanese Film:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A collection of essays, interviews and film reviews By Zack Davisson "Contemporary Japanese Film" is a mis-named book. Judging from the title and size, I was expecting something along the lines of a continuation of Donald Richie's seminal "100 years of Japanese film," something bringing equal insight into contemporary Japanese film as Richie brought into the historical. Instead, "Contemporary Japanese Film" is nothing more than a collection of previously published and unconnected essays, interviews and film reviews by Japan-based film critic Mark Shilling. Obviously, someone saw the potential to make money off of existing

material, without further work. There are no original articles. Shilling is a fine film critic and clearly knowledgeable about the modern Japanese film industry. However, either he or his editors do not know how to assemble this knowledge into a useful book. Several of the essays overlap, with the same information in each. For instance, Shilling is clearly a fan of Iwai Shunji's film "Swallowtail," as it is introduced, described and critiqued in several essays, without any acknowledgement that it was introduced only a few pages before in a different essay. Also, several concepts, such as block-booking movies and advanced ticket sales to drive up box office, are talked about but never adequately explained for non-familiar readers. In addition, although it looks like a thick and potent read, more than half of the book, 250 pages out of a 388 page book, is film reviews, culled from Shilling's column in the English-language Japan Times. The majority of these films are not available to Western audiences. All of this may sound terrible, but the content that is here is of good quality, and once one gets over the initial disappointment of the mis-labeled title, there are a few kernels of insight to pull out of the pages. Probably the most interesting section is the directors interviews, showcasing such luminaries as Kurosawa Akira, Takahata Isao, Itami Juzo, Sudo Masayuki (Shall we dance?) and Kitano Takeshi. There are some glaring oversights, such as no Suzuki Seijun, Miike Takashi or Miyazaki Hayao, but I suppose he can't have covered everyone in his newspaper work. As a book about contemporary Japanese film, it is a failure. As a collection of non-related essays, interviews and film reviews from someone with knowledge and history of modern Japanese film, it is successful.

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. The most comprehensive resource on the subject available. By A Customer. Mark Schilling is a film reviewer for one of the Tokyo newspapers, so this book is made up of all the films released in the past 10 years, bundled up with a load of articles/interviews with the like of Shunji 'Swallowtail Butterfly' Iwai and Juzo 'Tampopo' Itami. He writes very well, but most interesting is the wide diversity of the films reviewed. It's far more comprehensive than Weisser's book, which would have you believe that Pinku Eiga were the only type of films being made in Japan in the 90's. Most of the films reviewed have probably had little release outside of Asia. This definitely the best book out there on the subject.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Everything you need to know about Contemporary Japanese Cinema. By Tosh Berman/TamTam Books. One of the better and hipper books on Japan is the Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture, by Mark Schilling. Schilling is one of the few foreigners who can really distinguish the important icons of Japanese culture from the stuff that's of less interest. It was with great relief that I found his Contemporary Japanese Film, focusing on cinema from the 1990s. Not surprisingly, he makes reference to the golden age of Japanese cinema in the 1950s, including the magnificent talents of Kurosawa, Ozu, and Mizoguchi, in an effort to understand what has gone wrong in the nation's cinema since then: a downward spiral of bad talent and visionless film producers. Ever since, there has been little international attention paid to Japanese cinema except for the interesting work of '60s mavericks Nagisa Oshima and Seijun Suzuki (the "Sam Fuller of Japan"). According to Schilling, there were some new beams of light in the Japanese cinema of the '90s. Leading the pack is filmmaker Takeshi "Beat" Kitano, who has already gotten serious attention in the States and Europe for his stylized gangster films, such as Sonatine (1993); and the hysterical films by the late (and very much missed) Juzo Itami, who made the culinary adventure Tampopo. So it is not surprising that the two most interesting interviews in the book are with these filmmakers. Takeshi must be the hardest-working man in the world: He makes at least two films a year plus eight television episodes a week. He tells a funny story about how on one talk show dealing with food and drink; he fell asleep on television due to the alcohol. The other guests just went on their merry way while commenting every so often on Takeshi's sleeping habits. He claims that there is no pressure doing that much television shows because nothing is planned; it is even relaxing. It is worth noting that, on the side, he has a career as a kind of Japanese David Letterman. As for Itami, who is known for his television acting as well as his films, his interview focuses on how contemporary Japanese culture is conveyed in different aspects of his film work. Itami has made fun of everything from family practice (The Funeral) to the Japanese Mafia, the Yakuza (as a result, he had his face slashed by a Yakuza member). The second half of the book includes nearly 400 Japanese film reviews by Schilling, published originally in the Japan Times. I would recommend this book not only to film fans, but also to readers who are interested in contemporary Japanese culture. Schilling, along with American journalist Donald Ritchie, has excellent insight into what makes Japan tick, and also understands the nature of kitsch in Japanese culture.

This comprehensive look at Japanese cinema in the 1990s includes nearly four hundred reviews of individual films and a dozen interviews and profiles of leading directors and producers. Interpretive essays provide an overview of some of the key issues and themes of the decade, and provide background and context for the treatment of individual films and artists. In Mark Schilling's view, Japanese film is presently in a period of creative ferment, with a lively independent sector challenging the conventions of the industry mainstream. Younger filmmakers are rejecting the stale formulas that have long characterized major studio releases, reaching out to new influences from other media: television, comics, music videos, and even computer games and from both the West and other Asian cultures. In the process they are creating fresh and exciting films that range from the meditative to the manic, offering hope that Japanese film will not only survive but thrive as it enters the new millennium.

About the AuthorMark Schilling set off for Japan in 1975 to immerse himself in the culture, learn the language, and haunt the theaters. He has been there ever since. In 1989 he became a regular film reviewer for the Japan Times, and has written on Japanese film for a variety of other publications, including Screen International, the Japan edition of Premier, the Asian edition of Newsweek, Asian Wall Street Journal, Japan Quarterly, Winds, Cinemaya, and Kinema Jumbo.