

Making Markets for Japanese Cinema: A Study of Distribution Practices
for Japanese Films on DVD in the UK from 2008 to 2010

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Abstract

The thesis will examine how DVD distribution can affect Japanese film dissemination in the UK. The media discourse concerning 4Digital Asia and Third Window proposes that this is the principal factor influencing their films' presence in the UK from 2008 to 2010. The distributors' actions establish the UK market that exists for Japanese films, and that these consumer demands are best pursued through the medium of DVD. As a result, the distribution and marketing materials for the film releases often highlight the discs and their DVD labels as much as the production background and content of the films. This fact leads to the following questions: how are DVDs of Japanese films made distinctive? How important is the DVD format itself, as well as the labeling of the films as Japanese? An effective methodological strategy is needed to answer these questions. The thesis' approach allows for an integrated analysis of relevant sources within the fields of Japanese film, DVD media, and film distribution and marketing. DVD packaging, special features, trailers, websites and reviews are all essential parts of 4Digital Asia and Third Window's DVD distribution processes. Multiple analytical approaches can integrate methods of close textual analysis required for the study of various sources that represent film distribution. Therefore, the discourses circulating the DVDs, and the influence of DVD dissemination strategies of Japanese films in the UK, will be investigated. They reveal that the distributors' practices communicate how Japanese cinema is distribution on DVD in the UK, and act as a means of identifying the market that exists for these films.

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Introduction

It is widely recognised by those working in the film and video sector that distribution is the vital link which connects producers to audiences throughout the whole sector, from the commercial film industry to grassroots community initiatives. But to those outside the sector, that link is largely invisible...

---Julia Knight and Peter Thomas.¹

Distribution plays a crucial role in film culture – it determines what films we see, and when and how we see them; and it also determines what films we do *not* see.

---Ramon Lobato.²

Following these statements, distribution can be argued as the most important process in the film industry. It is especially crucial for niche areas of cinema, such as for Japanese films released in the UK. Despite their importance, film distribution practices are perceived by researchers as being under-examined as well as invisible.³ However, such practices are becoming visible in order for particular companies to establish themselves within certain markets. 4Digital Asia and Third Window are two UK distributors who accomplished this during the years of 2008 to 2010, when they were both active. The labels established a market for Japanese cinema within the UK, and provided these films predominantly through DVD releases, distinguishing themselves amongst the wide variety of Asian media products that are becoming increasingly popular in the UK. The thesis will therefore investigate the extent to which DVD distribution practices affect Japanese films released in the UK, as the actions of 4Digital Asia and Third Window pose several questions about wider trends concerning Japanese cinema. How are DVDs of Japanese films distinctive? How important is the DVD

¹ Julia Knight and Peter Thomas, *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), p.13.

² Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* (London: BFI, 2012), p.2.

³ *Ibid*; Sean Cubitt, 'Distribution and Media Flows' (193-214), *Cultural Politics*, 1:2 (2005), 193-4.

format itself, as well as the labelling of the films as Japanese? By answering these questions, it will be determined how influential DVD labels' actions are within the UK market. Answers to these questions will also intervene in the fields of Japanese cinema studies and research of the DVD format. Furthermore, the market that 4Digital Asia and Third Window established is still present within the UK, which their actions after 2010 illustrate.

Distribution is a vitally important process within the whole of the film industry. As David Sin explains, it is often:

‘...referred to as ‘the invisible art’, a process known only to those within the industry, barely written about and almost imperceptible to everyone else. Yet arguably, distribution is the most important part of the film industry, where completed films are brought to life and connected with an audience.’⁴

Without distribution, films would not end up in places of exhibition and consumption, such as cinemas, film festivals, retail outlets and digital streaming sites. Distributors negotiate rights from filmmakers and production studios in order to distribute media within a particular format or country. Depending on a film's perceived market, the distributor can decide whether or not to release it in cinemas, through physical media (for example, DVD and Blu-Ray), or by digital means (such as streaming and downloading). This is often linked to the marketing and promotion of the film as well. Most large production studios (such as those in Hollywood) may carry out these processes themselves. However, there are a great number of independent distributors within all countries around the world that release films from other countries. Their actions represent their understanding of a particular market, and which films audiences are most likely to “connect with” in a certain country.

Therefore, distribution is a highly revealing process within the film industry, as it can give scholars a great deal of information about a film's dissemination – in addition to audience research, reception analysis and analysis of sales figures. As a result of

⁴ David Sin, ‘What is Distribution?’, *BFI Screen Online* website, accessed 06/06/2013, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/distribution/distribution1.html>.

distribution's significance, the fact that 4Digital Asia and Third Window both predominantly released Japanese films on to DVDs in the UK from 2008 to 2010 is also revealing. This behaviour demonstrates that the market for these films in the UK was best served by the DVD medium at this time. Sales information for DVDs is not publically available for the UK market, making analyses of audiences and consumption figures difficult.⁵ However, the material that needs to be generated for digital media distribution, such as DVD, is made distinctive by distributors and can subsequently be examined. For instance, a release of a DVD brings with it the generation of the physical product itself; the media contained within it; marketing materials such as trailers and websites; and reviews by various publications.⁶

Making distribution practices distinctive therefore appears to be an effective aid for bringing certain products to the UK, such as Japanese films. How distribution can be made visible, and the potential benefit this has for DVD labels and their film releases, will be revealed by studying 4Digital Asia and Third Window. The many materials and processes utilised within distribution mean that it can be thoroughly investigated, as well as demonstrating its visibility. Critical perspectives of distribution also help to realise how varied sources of evidence for this process can be:

Through their acquisitions policies, their promotional and marketing practices, and their links with production and exhibition, together with their relationship with national arts policies, funders, and financiers, distributors play a crucial role in determining what we as audiences get to see and hence in shaping our film culture.⁷

In the process, [distributors] shape public culture by circulating or withholding texts which have the potential to become part of shared imaginaries, discourses and dreams.⁸

⁵ Full figures are available from places such as the British Video Association (BVA), but these are only available through paying subscription fees or by being a member of the press – and none of these obstacles were able to be overcome during the writing of the thesis: 'Market Information', BVA website, accessed 06/06/13, <http://www.bva.org.uk/market-information>.

⁶ David Sin, 'Digital Distribution', accessed 06/06/13, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/distribution/distribution7.html>.

⁷ Knight and Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.14.

⁸ Lobato, *op. cit.*, p.2.

Here, the influence of the distribution process is clear, and the evidence that can represent it is potentially vast (as these writers go on to demonstrate in their own research).⁹ In both quotations, the public is mainly attributed with generating discourse, but practices related to production, exhibition and specific institutions also generate it. Discourse essentially means dialogue, and it is signified by language and meanings used within information that is communicated.¹⁰ The amount of distribution material that generates discourse suggests that an approach utilising multiple analytical methods is best suited to examining the influence of distribution practices – as such a methodology aims to reveal discursive patterns within varied sources of evidence. Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window released predominantly Japanese films on DVD from 2008 to 2010. They also used comparable materials for their distribution, namely packaging for the discs, special features, trailers and websites. Some reviews also referred to the actions of the distributors alongside their evaluation of a film after its DVD release. These sources provide evidence of the distributors' actions and varying modes of communication used, which signify the language and meanings circulated for the disc releases. As a result of closely analysing the sources, it will be revealed how the distributors' actions influence UK DVD releases as much as (if not more than) the films' titles and contents. The introduction will fully explain the thesis' approach to investigating the DVD labels' actions, and that the study of these practices is increasingly necessary as distributors become more visible within the UK.

⁹ Knight and Thomas, *op. cit*; Lobato, *op. cit*.

¹⁰ Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning: history, culture and the films of Douglas Sirk* (Indiana University Press, 1994), p.xvi; Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton University Press, 1992), p.89.

Japanese Cinema in the UK: Making Distributors' Visible

Distribution of a variety of media texts and products are at the centre of an increasing number of public events, and a growing number are becoming focused on Japan. In 2003, the MCM (Movies Comics and Media) Expo had become bi-annual, which demonstrates how popular it is within the UK (as well as the fact that 225,000 people attended in May 2013).¹¹ Since 2005, the three-day Expo has included promotional exhibitions and events for the distributors of Japanese *manga* (comics) and *anime* (animation), as well as films and television shows from across the world.¹² Furthermore, in 2007, a section of the event was entitled JapanEx, offering demonstrations of *origami* (paper folding), food and drink preparation, music and other aspects of Japanese culture.¹³ Though this event has been based in Greenwich, London, its influence has spread to other events and other parts of the country. Hyper Japan (essentially similar to JapanEx, but on a larger scale) has now been taking place annually for three years, at various London locations.¹⁴ The MCM Group also hosts other Expos that take place in Birmingham, Manchester and Scotland.¹⁵ In addition, Edinburgh now hosts the annual Scotland Loves Anime festival, after a successful initial event in 2010.¹⁶ Therefore, it would make sense that 4Digital Asia and Third Window's DVD releases are prominent across the UK, as there has been a significant growth of interest in Japanese media and culture. However, this suggests that a profile of both labels would focus on their titles, whereas the labels' distribution practices have often brought attention to them.

Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window have not only established that there is a significant demand in the UK for Japanese films, but that this demand represents several

¹¹ 'Story', *MCM Expo Group* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://www.mcmexpogroup.com/story/>.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ 'JapanEx London', *MCM Expo Group* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://www.mcmexpogroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/MCM-Comic-Con-2013-Japan-ex-1.pdf>.

¹⁴ 'What's On', *Hyper Japan* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://hyperjapan.co.uk/whats-on.html#UebGWRpwaM8>.

¹⁵ 'Shows', *MCM Expo Group* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://www.mcmexpogroup.com/shows/>.

¹⁶ 'About Us', *Scotland Loves Anime* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://www.lovesanimation.com/about/>.

different interests. 4Digital Asia is a sub-label of the UK distribution company 4Digital Media, which launched in 2006.¹⁷ The label has consistently brought media from a variety of countries to the British Isles almost entirely through the DVD format. Third Window has similarly favoured the DVD format (and began releasing films shortly after 4Digital Media), though it has distributed only films from Asian countries and the majority of those films have been Japanese. In 2008, the focus of both 4Digital Asia and Third Window on Japanese cinema set them apart from other distributors. At this time, Manga Entertainment brought Japanese media to UK DVDs, though their releases are predominantly *anime* titles.¹⁸ This was also the focus of Optimum Entertainment, which specialised in international films and cinematic releases more so than Manga, but in conjunction with distributing DVDs of popular *anime* feature films.¹⁹ Japanese live-action films were therefore being treated as secondary products by these companies, who specialised in catering to larger markets in the UK for *anime* and *manga*, and world cinema in general. The only other notable Asian-focused distributor in 2008 was Tartan, which had just gone bankrupt partly because it had saturated the market with Asian horror films.²⁰ Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window still wanted to appeal to the established markets for horror films, world cinema, and Japanese *anime* and *manga*. Nonetheless, their DVD releases demonstrated that they wanted to show what Japanese cinema could offer in addition to these generic categories. They also concentrated on giving viewers an experience on DVD that stood out from other home media titles, rather than consider the format as an afterthought following a theatrical release and a large-scale promotional campaign.

¹⁷ '4DM/Contact Us', from the *4Digital Media* website, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/contact>.

¹⁸ 'Home Page', *Manga UK* website, accessed 07/06/2013, <http://www.mangauk.com/>.

¹⁹ Optimum is now part of StudioCanal, but the distributor still specialises in releasing popular anime films, as shown by a dedicated section of its website: 'Studio Ghibli', *StudioCanal* website, accessed 07/06/2013, <http://press.optimumreleasing.net/press/?id=960>.

²⁰ Daniel Martin, *Asia extreme: the marketing and critical reception of cult Asian cinema in the UK*, PhD Thesis (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2009).

Therefore, as a result of the distributors' intentions, one aim of the thesis is to investigate to what extent the image of Japanese cinema in the UK can be influenced by distribution companies' actions. However, this perspective contrasts with claims about the profile of Japanese cinema and culture around the world. In 2008, Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai published the following statement:²¹

Both Japan and Hong Kong have legacies of 'soft power' in world cinema, not only measured by their global impact (admittedly modest compared to Hollywood's) but their status as 'peripheral' cultural empires in regional markets, dominating, transforming and sometimes damaging less 'worldly' cinemas.²²

Essentially, Japanese cinema is perceived to have inherently transformative characteristics, and it is suggested that these stem from the history and their status of the films as a form of 'soft power'. This is a term regularly used by Susan Napier in reference to the presence that Japanese media products and cultural exports have around the world, which has given the country considerable cultural and economic influence.²³ Hunt and Leung refer to films as forms of soft power, and Napier expands her definition to the products of 'fashion designers, toy makers, artists, video game designers, manga [comic] artists, and animators', as do several other writers.²⁴ The problem with both of these perspectives is that they focus on the products' inherent characteristics, in order to emphasise that their Japanese origins primarily explain influence around the world. No attention is paid to the effects of the processes of distributing these products in specific countries around the world. For instance, in the UK, the

²¹ Asian names presented in the traditional format, surname last, unless cited and/or quoted otherwise.

²² Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai, 'Introduction' (pp.1-13), in L. Hunt and L. Wing-Fai (eds), *East Asian Cinemas: Transnational Connections on Film* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2008), p.4.

²³ Susan Napier, 'When Godzilla Speaks' (pp. 9-19), in W.M. Tsutsui and M. Ito (eds), *In Godzilla's Footsteps: Japanese Pop Culture Icons on the Global Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.12; and Napier, *From Impressionism To Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.213.

²⁴ Napier, 'When Godzilla Speaks', *op.cit.*, p.12. Napier originally took the term from Douglas McGray, who defines the term within politics as meaning cultural and economic power in opposition to 'hard' military power – McGray, 'Japan's Gross National Cool', *Foreign Policy*, No.130 (May/June 2002), 44-54. It has been used in relation to Japan in several articles since – e.g. Peng Er Lam, 'Japan's Quest for "Soft Power": Attraction and Limitation', *East Asia*, No.24 (2007), 349-363; and Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin, 'Contesting soft power: Japanese popular culture in East and Southeast Asia', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 8:1 (2008), 73-101.

companies that facilitate distribution are now discussed as much as the products they release, especially in the case of Japanese films.

The history of the distributor Tartan helps to highlight this fact, and further contextualises the more recent practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window. In 1991, Tartan established itself as a UK distributor of a variety of films, from a variety of countries, after merging with another company called Metro. Soon, the company had a variety of sub-labels, including one which specialised in films from Japan, Korea and Hong Kong.²⁵ After having success with several films containing horrific and violent imagery sourced from these countries, Tartan continued to release more of these films and label them as Asia Extreme. However, the staff at the company announced its bankruptcy in 2008, a story which was given significant attention by the British press. Its demise as an independent label was seen as the result of many other companies imitating the Tartan Asia Extreme sub-label, and the fact that Tartan had saturated the market with more and more films of the same type.²⁶ Though many commentators also saw the label's expansion to the USA as one step too far, the majority reported that its demise was sudden and unexpected.²⁷ Nonetheless, the label's catalogue is now owned, and infrequently re-released, by Palisades, demonstrating the influence the distributor and its catalogue of titles still has.²⁸

The history and impact of Tartan Asia Extreme also caught the attention of several academic writers. In 2007, Oliver Dew explored the use of the term 'Asia Extreme' as a brand, and then as a meta-generic term that was adopted by several distributors following

²⁵ Martin, *op. cit.*, p.2.

²⁶ Geoffrey Macnab, 'Death of a salesman' (July 2008), *The Guardian* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/jul/04/filmandmusic1.filmandmusic1>,

Andrew Pulver, 'R.I.P. Tartan' (June 2008), *The Guardian* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2008/jun/30/riptartan>;

Andrew Stimpson, 'Demise of Tartan Films: What Went Wrong?' (July 2008), *The Quietus* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://thequietus.com/articles/00209-on-the-demise-of-tartan-films>.

²⁷ Macnab, *op. cit.*; Pulver, *op. cit.*; Stimpson, *op. cit.*; and Martin, *op. cit.*, p.252.

²⁸ 'About', *Palisades Tartan* website, accessed 15/07/2013, <http://www.palisadestartan.com/AboutUs.asp>.

Tartan's success.²⁹ Chi-Yun Shin then provided a history of the sub-label in 2008 (shortly before the bankruptcy of Tartan was announced), which concluded that its staff saw the Asia Extreme films as representing a specific genre.³⁰ In 2009, Daniel Martin analysed the promotion and critical reception of several Tartan Asia Extreme films. He concluded that, due to Tartan's popularity and influence, 'Orientalism is alive and well'.³¹ By this, Martin refers to late eighteenth century depictions of Asia within literature which proclaimed the Orient as an exotic and mysterious contrast to Western countries.³² Martin then compares this perspective with the marketing and critical responses for the Asia Extreme films, as do Dew and Shin.³³ The violent and shocking content of the films was emphasised, marginalising them in a similar way to the exotic Asian Orient. The three studies illustrate that in Britain the connotations of Tartan and Asia Extreme became inextricably linked to films from any East Asian country. Essentially, films with specific characteristics came to define the label, and the cinematic output of Asian countries (such as Japan), despite the fact that Tartan released a range of films from all over the world.³⁴ The content of the films eventually became more prominent than the distributor's actions. More recently, perhaps as a consequence of Tartan's history, other companies' practices are now emphasised over the content of their films, in order to raise their profile within the UK.

In particular, the presence of both 4Digital Asia and Third Window at the MCM London Expo helps to illustrate recent trends. In 2010, 4Digital Asia's logo and name featured heavily within the programme for that year's MCM Expo, unlike Third Window,

²⁹ Oliver Dew, '“Asia Extreme”: Japanese cinema and British hype', *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 5:1 (2007), 53-73.

³⁰ Chi-Yun Shin, 'Art of branding: Tartan “Asia Extreme” Films', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* (website), No.50 (2008), accessed 15/07/2013, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/TartanDist/index.html>

³¹ Martin, *op. cit.*, p.250.

³² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp.2-3.

³³ Dew, *op. cit.*; Shin, *op. cit.*

³⁴ Pulver, *op. cit.*; Shin, *op. cit.*

who also had a stall at the same event.³⁵ By this time, almost all of the label's DVD releases were of Japanese films, and certain Japanese titles are used in its mission statement to highlight the extent of its catalogue:³⁶

4Digital Asia is a sub-label specialising in Asian "cult" live action films in their original language with English subtitles. The catalogue includes favourites such as *Death Note*, *Death Note: The Last Name*, *L Change the World*, the *20th Century Boys* trilogy and *Tokyo Gore Police*.³⁷

This statement still appears on the website for 4Digital Media, which is the parent company of 4Digital Asia, despite the fact that the last DVDs from the sub-label were released in 2010.³⁸ The reference to specific titles suggests that they continue to be popular within the UK market for Japanese films due to 4Digital Asia's distribution practices. Furthermore, both the sub-label's film titles and actions have been seen to represent a wide view of Japanese cinema. This is recognised in the preface to *Directory of World Cinema: Japan 2*. The book is a continuation of a previous edited collection, showing that Japanese cinema is still of great interest around the world, both critically and commercially.³⁹ The second edition names the managing director of 4Digital Asia as Andrew Kirkham, and acknowledges his assistance in providing information on the Japanese film industry.⁴⁰ The reference to 4Digital Asia highlights that the sub-label distinguished itself as a distributor of Japanese cinema from 2008 to 2010, despite containing the broader term of "Asia" in its name. Following these points, evidence of the sub-label's prominence is clear, but the facts do not explain how this

³⁵ 'Event Directory' and 'Event Plan', in *2010 London MCM Expo Official Show Guide* (MCM Expo Group, 2010).

³⁶ From 2008 to 2010, 4Digital Asia only released one film not from Japan – *Meat Grinder* (dir. Tiwa Moeithaisong, 2009) from Thailand – '4Digital Asia', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/asia>. All the Japanese releases can be seen in Appendix One.

³⁷ '4DM/Contact Us', *op. cit.*

³⁸ '4Digital Asia', *4Digital Media* website, *op. cit.* However, the mission statement was reworded at the end of 2013.

³⁹ John Berra, 'Introduction', in Berra (ed), *Directory of World Cinema: Japan 2* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012), pp. 7-10.

⁴⁰ John Berra, 'Acknowledgments', in Berra, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

was achieved through the distribution of the company's DVD releases, and so their actions require further analysis.

Third Window has also gained recognition for its specialism in Japanese cinema over films from Asian countries, and this has again been because of its practices as a distributor, rather than the titles of its DVD releases. Although the label did not feature as prominently in the 2010 MCM London Expo programme as 4Digital Asia, Third Window's presence at the event was focused on by writer and journalist Michael Leader. His self-published essay, 'Online Worlds and Grassroots Activity', provides a general overview of world cinema distribution in the UK, particularly after the history of Tartan.⁴¹ This is a watershed moment that Third Window also marks in its website's mission statement:

The Third Window Films brand was born in 2005 when its film-loving founders grew bored of the stream of worn-out shock horror vehicles from the Far East. ... We strive to represent a rich variety of film genres, be they dramas, comedies, political satires, action or anything else in between.⁴²

Though not stated literally, 'shock horror vehicles' refers to titles from Tartan Asia Extreme, a company which was at the peak of its activity in 2005.⁴³ In Leader's essay, Third Window is initially positioned as exceptional from other film distributors because of its aims and face-to-face contact at the MCM Expo with potential new customers. Leader even argues that the label stands out from others that also attend the MCM Expo, such as Manga Entertainment (a distributor of Asian films in addition to a huge range of *anime* titles) and Optimum Releasing (which release films from across the world).⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the goal of Third Window, and

⁴¹ This was published in four parts in June 2011, on Michael Leader's website. The separate sections are entitled 'Extreme Fallout: A Post-Tartan Context'; 'Online Convergence and East Asian Film Distribution'; 'Participatory Cults IRL: Societies, Festivals and Cons'; and 'Market Realities, Patience and Playing The Long Game'. All can be accessed from the following webpage: Michael Leader, 'June 2011 archive', *Wild Tyme*, accessed 16/07/2013, http://wildtyme.blogspot.co.uk/2011_06_01_archive.html.

⁴² 'About', *Third Window* website, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/about>.

⁴³ Martin, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ Michael Leader, 'Participatory Cults IRL: Societies, Festivals and Cons' (June 2011), *Wild Tyme*, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://wildtyme.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/477-participatory-cults-irl-societies.html>. Since Leader's essay, Optimum Releasing has become StudioCanal.

other distributors, is confirmed as selling DVDs to make a profit.⁴⁵ As this is the company's central focus, it is curious why Leader does not investigate the role of the DVDs and their distribution materials, as they are the centre of attention at the label's Expo stall.

The distributor's DVD releases did become a major topic of discussion later in 2010, on the international film news and reviews website, Twitch.⁴⁶ The website's writers state that the DVDs in general are unique and 'finely curated', while detailing each of the film's characteristics and narratives.⁴⁷ However, the website's interview with the Third Window's managing director, Adam Torel, was used as a chance to promote the label's actions in regard to Japanese cinema, over films from other Asian countries (such as Korea):

What I prefer about the Japanese industry is that because they've been around a lot and make all their money back (for the most part) domestically, their films are more aimed towards their own people and their own market. You do get to see films with a lot more of a 'Japanese' feel to them nowadays, compared to Korean which is more them trying to do films that other people constantly expect from them... I tried to continue in the last few years trying to pick up [Korean] titles like (Lee Chang Dong's) 'Secret Sunshine' and (Im Sang-Soo's) 'The Housemaid', but their sales agents wanted comically high amounts for them, and while I could probably pick them up now for less (more so for 'Sunshine'), the demand is already gone (especially for 'Sunshine').⁴⁸

Here, Torel acknowledges that he has made Third Window distinct by specialising mainly in Japanese films for its DVD releases.⁴⁹ Furthermore, he has continued to do so, as after 2010

⁴⁵ Michael Leader, 'Market Realities, Patience, and Playing The Long Game' (June 2011), *Wild Tyme*, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://wildtyme.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/478-market-realities-patience-and.html>.

⁴⁶ 'About', *Twitch* website, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://twitchfilm.com/about/>.

⁴⁷ J Hurtado, 'Video Home Invasion: Third Window Films Introduction' (Dec 2010), *Twitch* website, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://twitchfilm.com/2010/12/video-home-invasion-third-window-films-introduction.html>. The remainder of the profile is published on the Twitch website through pages linked from this one: 'Third Window Films' Korean Collection'; 'Third Window: Nakashima, Sono and Satoshi'; 'Third Window and The New Japanese Cinema'; 'Third Window Films Looks To The Future'.

⁴⁸ Hurtado, 'Third Window Films' Korean Collection', *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ From 2008 to 2010, Third Window also released seven Korean films alongside the ten DVDs of Japanese films (which are listed in Appendix One). The Korean titles are *Friend* (dir. Kwak Kyeung-Taek, 2001), *The President's Last Bang* (dir. Sang-soo Im, 2005), *Kick The Moon* (dir. Sang-jin Kim, 2001), *Dasepo Naughty Girls* (dir. Je-yong Lee, 2006), *No.3* (dir. Neung-han Song, 1997), *Oasis* (dir. Chang-dong Lee, 2002), and *Peppermint Candy* (dir. Chang-dong Lee, 2000) – 'Films', *Third Window* website, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films>.

the company distributed films only from Japan until April 2013.⁵⁰ The distribution label's actions as a whole are emphasised through Torel's views, despite a tendency to associate these practices with his decisions alone. Instead, the emphasis of the predominant focus on Japanese films is seen to make the company distinct, though Torel does not explain how this was put into action through the DVD releases from 2008 to 2010. Therefore, though the label's practices are emphasised, Torel's perspective does not fully detail them. As a result, the DVDs and their distribution require further analysis in order to understand how influential they were in making Third Window distinct within the UK market.

Through the context of Japanese cinema's presence in the UK, and the background of 4Digital Asia and Third Window, certain questions emerge: how are DVDs of Japanese films distinctive? Is the DVD format more important than the labelling of the films as Japanese? Investigating the extent to which distribution practices affect DVD releases will help to answer these questions. Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window are communicating reasons why UK consumers should watch their disc releases, as both Japanese films and as products of their companies' actions. The labels are generating discourse within the distribution material for their DVDs, and evidence of the distributors' visibility in the UK demonstrates that they intend to promote the companies' profiles as much as the films' characteristics. The thesis will investigate the significance of distribution practices within the UK market, leading up to the influence these actions have on the critical reception of DVD releases of Japanese films. While evidence presented so far increasingly suggests that the labels' are fully responsible for how their releases emerge in the UK market, it is necessary for the study to objectively investigate whether or not this is the case. Distribution and discourses linked to it are also growing as topics of interest within the wider fields of both Japanese cinema and

⁵⁰ *Vulgaria* (dir. Ho-Cheung Pang, 2012) is a Hong Kong comedy film, and was noted as a divergence from Third Window's predominant attention to Japanese films on the label's website – 'Third Window Films acquires 'Vulgaria' and 'The Woodsman & the Rain'', Third Window website, accessed 16/07/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/news/2012/08/third-window-films-acquires-vulgaria-and-the-woodsman-the-rain>.

DVD research. How the thesis intervenes in these topics will now be explained, which will clarify why an approach combining multiple methods will be essential for analysing the impact of the distributors' actions.

Concerns in Japanese Cinema Studies: Why are these films so distinctive?

Exploring reasons why Japanese cinema is so distinctive still preoccupies Japanese film studies, and can suggest why 4Digital Asia and Third Window are unique in the UK market. The study of Japanese film has a long history, and many directors and periods of the industry's history have been examined. However, the variety of approaches and methods used to analyse it has greatly increased over the last two decades. To clarify this point, and demonstrate how the thesis intervenes in the most recent debates surrounding Japanese film, earlier studies will be discussed to illustrate and contextualise later changes. Much of this work concerns questions similar to those posed by the thesis' topic: how is Japanese cinema distinctive and what does it mean to label a film as Japanese? Addressing existing research will clarify how these questions have always been central in the study of Japanese cinema. In the last few years, especially, the discussion of Japanese films as being transnational helps to signify the attention that their international distribution is now receiving.

Much of Japanese film research has shifted from examining how the films' content is unique, to how its international circulation is unique. The work of Donald Richie is useful for explaining this, as he is one of the most prolific writers on Japanese cinema. Richie's later work also illustrates how the films' distribution has become a growing concern, but his earlier writings demonstrate that Japanese cinema's distinctive content has always been a central issue. In 1959, with Joseph L. Anderson, Richie wrote *The Japanese Film: Art and*

Industry, one of the most detailed historical records of Japanese film history.⁵¹ It was updated by both authors in 1982, paralleling a growing number of publications by other authors who shared interests in Japanese cinema. Anderson and Richie aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of this particular film industry, but the passages often become lengthy essays on the reasons why the works of certain directors stand out from others.⁵² While directorial authorship continues to be a useful means through which types of cinema can be categorised and studied,⁵³ it is the predominant perspective through which investigations of the characteristics and history of Japanese films' have been approached.⁵⁴ Alternative perspectives were not notably applied in the research of Japanese cinema until the 21st century.

Though Donald Richie's work was influential on the proliferation of in-depth sources regarding Japanese cinema's history and its directors, his later work signifies other recent developments. The availability of Japanese films within Western countries, such as the UK and USA, was briefly addressed by Richie in 2005. *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* provided another overview of Japanese film history, as well as a guide to finding the films on VHS and DVD.⁵⁵ What these technologies meant for the distribution of Japanese films was not addressed by Richie, but he did put forward that Western filmmaking and technology are highly influential on contemporary Japanese films: 'That the Japanese cinematic accent is

⁵¹ Expanded and revised in 1982 – Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 15-18.

⁵³ C. Paul Sellors, 'Collective Authorship in Film', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65:3 (2007), 263-271.

⁵⁴ Noel Burch, *To The Distant Observer* (University of California Press, 1979); Audie Bock, *Japanese Film Directors* (New York: Kodansha, 1985); Darrell William Davis, *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film* (Columbia University Press, 1996); Stephen Prince, *The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa* (Princeton University Press, 1999); Donald Richie, *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (University of California Press, 1999); Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Duke University Press, 2000); Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York: Continuum, 2005); Keiko McDonald, *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context* (University of Hawaii Press, 2006) Peter Cowie, *Akira Kurosawa: Master of Cinema* (New York: Rizzoli, 2010); Catherine Russell, *Classical Japanese Cinema Revisited* (London: Continuum, 2011).

⁵⁵ Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005).

now much closer to that of the West is apparent. What is not so obvious, and this I have attempted to describe, is that it is still there.’⁵⁶

Discourses affecting Japanese films, as a result of their international circulation, were then studied in greater depth by other writers. For example, in 2007, two essays investigated the potential effects of industry and media discourse on the reception of Japanese films in different countries. Julian Stringer examined the reception of both the original horror film *Ring* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 1998) and its 2002 American remake (dir. Gore Verbinski).⁵⁷ Rayna Denison also analysed the theatrical reception of the animated fantasy, *Spirited Away* (dir. Miyazaki Hayao, 2001), in cinemas in Japan and France, as well as the reception of its USA DVD release.⁵⁸ Both Denison and Stringer find value in comparing the films’ distribution in Japan to that of other countries, and analysing the discourses that surround these films in an international context has since continued within academic research. Subsequent examples include the study of Tartan Asia Extreme’s releases in the UK, but as with Denison and Stringer’s studies, this research mainly concerns the films’ critical reception through theatrical exhibition (for instance, at cinemas and film festivals).⁵⁹ The effect of other means of distribution (such as DVD discs) has not been explored thoroughly, despite DVD being the format that Palisades still use to distribute Asia Extreme films.⁶⁰ Instead, the increasing international profile of Japanese films has been used to describe both Japanese and Asian cinema as transnational because of their content, and not how they are disseminated.

Factors affecting the international distribution of films, other than their content, are a concern within world cinema studies. Some terms, such as transnational, must be used with

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.259.

⁵⁷ Julian Stringer, ‘The Original and The Copy: Nakata Hideo’s *Ring* (1998)’, in A. Phillips and J. Stringer (eds), *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp.296-307.

⁵⁸ Rayna Denison, ‘The Global Markets for Anime: Miyazaki Hayao’s *Spirited Away* (2001)’, in Phillips and Stringer, *op. cit*, pp.308-21.

⁵⁹ Dew, *op. cit*; Martin, *op. cit*; Shin, *op. cit*.

⁶⁰ ‘About’, *Palisades Tartan* website, *op. cit*.

caution, as the work of Hunt and Leung again demonstrates. Their views, quoted earlier, state that Japanese cinema, and films from other Asian countries, are ‘transformative’ because of their effect on film culture, or their status as ‘soft power’.⁶¹ The statements of Hunt and Leung shape the introduction of an edited collection published in 2008, and are shared by other writers. For example, Vivian P.Y. Lee introduces and edits the 2011 volume, *East Asian Cinemas*, and also posits that the films of Asian countries are transnational.⁶² But these writers essentially argue that Japanese films’ characteristics are uniformly interpreted across the world, due to inherent traits which remain constant throughout their international distribution. Such conclusions are curious in light of other studies of both world cinema, and Japanese films, which were published in 2006. In the volume *Remapping World Cinema*, Lucia Nagib states:

Films all over the world are... not confined into tight compartments of their own nationalities, but interconnected with each other according to their relevance at a given historical moment, regardless of whether they originate in the first, second, or third worlds.⁶³

This inclusive view of different nationalities within regional and global cinema around the world argues that films’ inherent traits do not remain fixed as they are circulated internationally, but are subject to the contextual factors that can potentially affect them at any ‘given historical moment’.

Furthermore, in the same volume, Rachael Hutchinson poses a similar argument for the study of Japanese cinema. She claims that binaries of ‘East’ and ‘West’, and Hollywood and other national cinemas are not helpful, and that the complexities and interconnectedness

⁶¹ Hunt and Leung, *op. cit.*, p.4.

⁶² Vivian P.Y. Lee, ‘Introduction’, in Lee (ed), *East Asian Cinemas: Regional Flows and Global Transformations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.1-12.

⁶³ Lucia Nagib, ‘Towards a positive definition of World Cinema’ (pp.30-8), in S. Dennison, and S.H. Lim (eds), *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), p.35.

of films within various contexts should be studied in order to appreciate their history.⁶⁴ This perspective relates to a much earlier statement regarding the critical investigation of national cinemas. In 1989, Andrew Higson proposed that the uses of a national cinema in specific contexts require as much attention as the films' production and content, which includes how information about them is communicated and discussed in international (or, transnational) contexts.⁶⁵ The status of Japanese cinema, as a result of its international profile, can still be called transnational. But it is not helpful to see their inherent characteristics as being the only reasons why these films are distributed in other countries, such as the UK. This perspective does not take into account the language and meanings that circulate these films as a result of distribution practices within Japan and other countries, and such discourses are often circulated by DVD labels.

Principally, Japanese cinema studies have moved towards researching the discourses that surround the films in different contexts around the world. Currently, this is often limited to the critical reception of the films at cinemas and film festivals. But the thesis will explore how other formats and processes also generate discourse, such as DVDs and their distribution. DVD is a physical object through which films can be disseminated and exhibited, and is the medium through which the majority of 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's films are released. However, it is a format through which critical debates have arisen, in terms of how the discs affect film-viewing experiences, and what experience it provides to consumers. Therefore, there are equally complex and interconnected discourses that are linked to the DVD format, in comparison to perspectives on Japanese cinema.

⁶⁴ Rachael Hutchinson, 'Orientalism or occidentalism?: dynamics of appropriation in Akira Kurosawa', in S. Dennison, and S.H. Lim (eds), *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), pp.173-87.

⁶⁵ Andrew Higson, 'The Concept of National Cinema' (36-47), *Screen*, 30:4 (1989), 45-6.

DVD Concerns: How are film releases made distinctive through this format?

In addition to questions about the qualities of Japanese cinema, the thesis is also asking: how are DVDs of Japanese films made distinctive, and how important is the DVD format? DVD is a media format that has generated much discourse and debate, and 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's use of it is fundamental to the labels' positions in the UK market. While DVD is classed as 'new media' by many writers, it has attracted a large body of research over the last decade.⁶⁶ Far from simply being a format that allows the viewing of audio-visual media from a disc, DVD is claimed to have caused a widespread change in film-viewing experiences.⁶⁷ As will become clear through addressing existing work, DVD media is often regarded as making film-viewing about more than watching a film. DVD is a slippery term that can mean film, disc, or both packaged together as a specific release. The phrase DVD disc can also be used to differentiate from Blu-Ray and other disc media, such as the antecedent laserdisc.⁶⁸ Different sources studied throughout the thesis, especially in this section, refer to one or all of these uses of the term DVD. The thesis will also do the same, in order to highlight this complexity, as well as a means of highlighting the distributors' treatment of the DVD format.

Throughout the changing landscape of DVD research, the role of distributors has not been greatly discussed. However, indications of their significance are implied in some studies. Initially, discourse within certain aspects of DVD media characterised a large number of examinations of the disc format. A critical investigation of the film-viewing experience provided by DVD was written by Robert Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus in 2002, five

⁶⁶ James Bennett and Tom Brown, 'Introduction: Past the Boundaries of "New" and "Old" Media', in Bennett and Brown (eds), *Film and Television After DVD* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp.1-18.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ James Kendrick, 'What is The Criterion? The Criterion Collection as an Archive of Film as Culture', *Journal of Film and Video*, 53:2 & 3 (Summer/Fall 2001), 124-39.

years after the introduction of the format.⁶⁹ They concluded that the audio commentary (provided by cast and crew members) on the DVD of *Fight Club* (dir. David Fincher, 1999) provides an intended reading of the film.⁷⁰ In essence, the audio commentary is claimed to ‘discourage and discount some interpretations while encouraging others.’⁷¹ Though such determinist views of DVD consumers were later criticised,⁷² Brookey and Westerfelhaus then explored other aspects in 2005. This time, the discs of *Monsters Inc* (dir. Pete Docter, David Silverman and Lee Unkrich, 2001) were the object of attention, and their traits were similarly emphasised in subsequent DVD research. Extra materials (or special features) provided on discs, in addition to a film, are often found to be part of larger commercial strategies – either for a certain film or media production company (which Brookey and Westerfelhaus claimed in regard to Pixar).⁷³ Therefore, DVD discs do not just contain the content of a film, but also other content and discourses that can potentially influence how such media is viewed. Distributors can also be responsible for including additional content, but this possibility is not explored in either article.

The commercial purposes of DVD extras have been the crux of several further studies. Paul Arthur provided a concise history of making-of documentaries. After charting their origins prior to their frequent inclusion on DVD discs, Arthur noted that ‘they are called into being to advertise.’⁷⁴ Following this statement, an assumption is that making-ofs advertise specific films, but the work of Brookey and Westerfelhaus demonstrates that companies and production studios can be advertised too. Ever since, writers have formed

⁶⁹ Aaron Barlow, *The DVD Revolution: Movies, Culture and Technology* (London: Praeger, 2005), p.17.

⁷⁰ Robert A. Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus, “Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View: The *Fight Club* DVD as Digital Closet”, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19:1 (2002), 21-43.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 39.

⁷² Craig Hight, 'Making-of Documentaries on DVD: *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and Special Editions', *The Velvet Light Trap*, No.56 (2005), 4-17.

⁷³ Robert A. Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus, ‘The Digital Auteur: Branding Identity on the *Monsters, Inc.* DVD’, *Western Journal of Communication*, 69:2 (2005), 109-128.

⁷⁴ Paul Arthur, “(In)Dispensable Cinema: Confessions of a ‘Making-Of’ Addict” (38-42), *Film Comment*, 40:4 (2004), 42.

different propositions concerning what effects the commercial aims, and origins, of DVD media have on potential audiences. John Caldwell, Graeme Harper and Craig Hight have all explained that the format of most DVD extras is derived from electronic press-kits (EPKs).⁷⁵ This material is used to aid the promotion of films and television shows through print and broadcast media outlets. Journalists and reviewers are sent discs and tapes that often contain interviews and behind-the-scenes footage which can provide context for an article. Essentially, the content of these materials (now prevalent on DVD) contains discourse that is now argued to influence the reception of media texts, though researchers are divided over how far its effects can go.

As special features are often adapted from promotional material, they have been interpreted as media which provide limited interactive possibilities. An example of how these limited interactions have been explained can be found in the work of Barbara Klinger. In 2006, she charted different forms of film-viewing behaviour in homes, including DVD.⁷⁶ Regarding the discs' extras, she claims that viewers are exposed to 'trivia' and 'insider knowledge' – but only that which filmmakers and producers want audiences to see.⁷⁷ Since Klinger's work, further descriptions of the experiences offered by DVD extras have been categorised as 'the illusion of going backstage' and 'new smart media pleasures'.⁷⁸ Nicola J. Evans' and Pat Brereton's respective terms each emphasise the illusions created by special features. There is the illusion of having all a film's production secrets revealed, and the illusion of a dialogue between a viewer's curiosity and a filmmaker's explanation. Therefore, the terms help to reinforce most claims within DVD studies, which state that the format is a

⁷⁵ John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 298-306; Graeme Harper, "DVD and the New Cinema of Complexity", in N. Rombes (ed), *New Punk Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp.89-101; Hight, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶ Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (University of California Press, 2006).

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp.54-90.

⁷⁸ Nicola J. Evans, "Undoing the magic? DVD extras and the pleasure behind the scenes" (587-600), *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 24:4 (2010), 598; Pat Brereton, *Smart Cinema, DVD Add-Ons and New Audience Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.19.

new way of meeting consumer demand through a media object fully controlled (discourse and all) by filmmakers, producers and studios. Again, despite the further conclusions brought by Klinger, the influence of distributors is still not explored.

These uniform findings concerning the purposes of DVD extras suggest that distribution may not be an influential factor. Emphasis of the commercial aims and origins of most special features leads to proposals that such material can only be viewed in certain ways by audiences because of filmmakers and production studios (for example, as informative trivia). Furthermore, those proposals can be seen as a return to Brookey and Westerfelhaus' determinist conclusions regarding audio commentaries and their encouraged readings of films' narratives. But despite the majority of similar claims within DVD research, other perspectives have surfaced. Charting and detailing different DVD releases of films can give a thorough overview of the medium's diversity and dominance around the world.⁷⁹ Moreover, it can lead to the understanding of a film's history and status within certain cultures and societies through its presence on a DVD disc, or what discourses have circulated a film, which are often the result of how it was distributed.

Deborah and Mark Parker were the first writers to allude to this possibility within DVD media. As with Brookey and Westerfelhaus, their research initially concerned the intentions of directors, which can be iterated through audio commentaries.⁸⁰ However, Parker and Parker also made claims about the overall format, stating that: 'The DVD edition is essentially a reorientation of the film... the DVD constitutes a new edition, and should be seen in these terms.'⁸¹ Though her conclusions are drawn from a more diverse range of

⁷⁹ Two books have already provided such overviews, and are useful reference sources for figures and trends in DVD releases: Barlow, *op. cit.*; and Paul McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries* (London: BFI, 2007).

⁸⁰ Deborah Parker and Mark Parker, "Directors and DVD Commentary: The Specifics of Intention", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62:1 (2004), 13-22.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

extras, Rayna Denison's research presented a similar perspective in 2007. She stated that DVD is:

'a multitext of layered, competing yet combined narratives, any of which potentially impacts on and changes the meaning of the others depending on which features audience members engage with...DVD becomes an opportunity within a text's production life cycle in which the makers can put back or reemphasise missed or missing genre parts.'⁸²

Denison may be stressing DVD's effect on media genre categorisations, but she is also drawing parallels with Parker and Parker. Both studies are claiming that each version of a film or media text released on DVD provides different viewing experiences for its potential audiences. The discs should therefore be charted so that it can be seen what material was being made available to audiences at particular times by certain distributors. This can potentially reveal the discursive influences that filmmakers, media companies and DVD labels are communicating to viewers of the discs and their extras.

In addition, DVD discs are proposed to be individual textual objects that warrant in-depth analysis as much as films and other media. Parker and Parker's use of the term 'edition' specifically infers the creation of a new object, and Denison's term 'multitext' goes further by implying that DVDs include multiple materials that can be studied. While similar claims have been made in other studies of DVDs, both Parker and Parker, and Denison, provide a different perspective. Discussion of special features and other DVD media as extra-textual objects is found within publications ranging from Brookey and Westerfelhaus to Klinger.⁸³ This suggests a hierarchical structure where the films on DVD discs are the central texts, and DVD extras are secondary, meaning they cannot exist separately from the film itself. In contrast, Parker and Parker, and Denison, see both the media texts and the extra

⁸² Rayna Denison, "It's a Bird! It's a Plane! No, it's DVD! *Superman, Smallville, and the Production (of) Melodrama*" (pp.160-79), in I. Gordon, M. Jancovich and M.P. McAllister (eds), *Film and Comic Books* (University Press of Mississippi, 2007), pp. 178-9.

⁸³ Brookey and Westerfelhaus, 'Hiding Homoeroticism...' and 'The Digital Auteur...', *op. cit*; Klinger, *op. cit*.

material as equally relevant to study. Furthermore, they do not dismiss the importance of intertextuality, which is also found in most DVD research.

Despite their characteristics as media texts, the discussion of DVD extras as extra-texts underlines many previous DVD studies and the use of the concept of intertextuality. However, these points actually help to clarify DVDs' status as texts. Coined by Julia Kristeva, intertextuality signifies the importance of links between texts, because 'any text is the absorption and transformation of another.'⁸⁴ This statement has fuelled various categorisations of types of texts that are intertextually linked, such as central texts and their extra-texts. Jonathan Gray has gone further in stating that DVDs and their extras are paratexts of their central texts (such as films).⁸⁵ In adapting the term from Gerard Genette, Gray is claiming that these paratexts mediate between a text and its reader.⁸⁶ Again, a hierarchy is being proposed, where the paratexts are seen as subordinate to a media text, and only provide alternate means of interacting with it. But the DVDs are texts that are essentially being accessed by viewers. Parker and Parker, and Denison, propose just that by using the terms 'edition' and 'multitext', while also recognising that the discs are constructed by multiple media texts which can be viewed separately (from films and television shows, to various types of special feature).⁸⁷ The DVD is the format in which these texts can be viewed, which highlights their intertextual links. Parker and Parker, and Denison, neither ignore the intertextual qualities of DVD, nor overcomplicate them by suggesting that there are different hierarchies of intertexts. Moreover, the study of the DVD format requires the study of multiple sources, as that is what the discs provide access to.

⁸⁴ Julia Kristeva, quoted in Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p.21.

⁸⁵ Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York University Press, 2010), p.25.

⁸⁶ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.1-3.

⁸⁷ Parker and Parker, *op. cit.*, 14; Denison, 'It's a Bird!...', *op. cit.*, pp.178-9.

Both Parker and Parker, and Denison, emphasise the importance of the DVD release, rather than a specific film or TV show, and how the discs are texts that contain a range of media texts. Ultimately, the DVD is a useful source for charting a media text's life-span, through the discs' specific characteristics and different types of special features. All these aspects generate discourse originating from distribution practices. The importance of the DVD release is therefore clear in regards to 4Digital Asia and Third Window. How they use and construct DVDs as texts for distributing films is just as important as studying their use of the term Japanese as a categorical label. There are numerous complexities within terminology related to both DVD and Japanese film. While these areas have been explored as concepts, methods of studying them have not yet been determined. However, as has been discussed, recent directions in the study of both Japanese cinema and DVD media have concerned patterns of discourse and their potential influences. Multiple methods can be adopted for analysing discourse, but a suitable methodology will help justify the choices made for certain sources.

Satellite Texts: Navigating Multiple Methods and Sources

The thesis is investigating how discourses act as evidence of DVD distribution practices. Because of the historical nature of the study (which is investigating the period from 2008 to 2010), utilising a historical reception study approach initially seems to be a logical step. However, earlier reception studies have not shared the exact same approach or methods in order to study particular sources and patterns. While the majority of reception studies focus on reviews, these are not the only sources that are found in relation to UK DVDs of Japanese films. Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window made use of DVD packaging, special features, trailers and websites in order to distribute their disc releases from 2008 to 2010. Reception studies have analysed a variety of sources beyond reviews, but this has been in order to

investigate responses towards films and their content, and not to examine the influence of distribution practices. Different methods are needed to study the content of each of the sources concerning the actions of 4Digital Asia and Third Window. Furthermore, conceptualising the sources as satellite texts not only helps to structure their analysis within the thesis, but also positions the sources in relation to the distributors, as they are a vital link between filmmakers and audiences. As a result of taking this conceptual position, appropriate methods for the study of distribution can be implemented (specifically those that do not only focus on studying from the perspective of either the filmmaker or the audience).

Further reasoning for these methodological choices will begin with what can be adapted from a reception studies approach. The study of discourses within distribution practices requires acknowledgement of the reception studies perspective, especially as the multiple method approach of the satellite text concept stems from such studies. Janet Staiger most clearly outlined the aims of a reception study. In 2000, she explained that its purpose is to study an event, which is:

...a set of interpretations or affective experiences produced by individuals from an encounter with a text or set of texts within a social situation. It is not an analysis of the text except in so far as to consider what textually might be facilitating the reading.⁸⁸

What can be taken from this quote, and what Staiger explains afterwards, is that the sources a reception study can examine are potentially numerous and varied. Evidence for this type of study is described as ‘traces’, and examples of printed prose or images are mentioned as potential sources of evidence.⁸⁹ Reviews and promotional images within posters and flyers are examples, and have been the basis of many reception studies – from the earlier work of Barbara Klinger and Janet Staiger,⁹⁰ to recent publications by Mark Jancovich.⁹¹ Klinger and

⁸⁸ Janet Staiger, ‘Taboos and Totems: Cultural Meanings of The Silence of The Lambs’ (pp.181-88), in J. Hollows, P. Hutchings and M. Jancovich (eds), *The Film Studies Reader* (London: Arnold, 2000), p.182.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning...*, *op. cit.*; Staiger, *Interpreting Films...*, *op. cit.*

Staiger particularly state that interpretations of films and media signify patterns of discourse, which a reception study aims to uncover.⁹² However, the terms Klinger and Staiger use are undeniably broad in their definition, as they also state that discourse is signified by patterns of language and associated meanings. The quotation from Staiger demonstrates this, as does the 1997 article ‘Film history terminable and interminable’ by Klinger. She recognised that a great range of material can potentially be studied in order to chart the history and the reception of films (from the production of a film to its broadcast on a television channel).⁹³ Such material would require a variety of methods for its analysis, and both Klinger and Staiger have gone on to use a combination of approaches in later studies.⁹⁴ The major concern of reception studies has therefore become how certain methodological combinations can be justified.

Writers encountering various materials from film history, after Klinger’s article, have applied reception studies alongside other methods for various reasons. Cynthia Erb used the later all-inclusive view of historical sources (provided by Klinger) in order to investigate the appearance of the King Kong character within various media.⁹⁵ However, to overcome the diversity of material, Erb states that ‘[t]he execution is admittedly eclectic, with methods sometimes shifting from chapter to chapter, because I wanted to let the reception evidence generated by *King Kong* dictate the course of the book.’⁹⁶ This seems only logical in charting a long history of a fictional character. However, even at a single moment in a film’s history,

⁹¹ Mark Jancovich, ‘Shadows and Bogeymen: Horror, Stylization and the Critical Reception of Orson Welles during the 1940s’, *Participations*, 6:1 (2009), 25-51; ‘“Two Ways of Looking”: The Critical Reception of 1940s Horror’, *Cinema Journal*, 49:3 (2010), 45-66; ‘“Samuel Bronston’s Latest Epic”: Spectacle, Heterogeneity and Nation in the Critical Reception of *El Cid* (1961)’, *Comparative American Studies*, 8:4 (2010), 300-15.

⁹² Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning...*, *op. cit.*, p.xvi; Staiger, *Interpreting Films...*, *op. cit.*, p.89.

⁹³ Barbara Klinger, ‘Film history terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies’, *Screen*, 38:2 (1997), 107-128.

⁹⁴ Klinger, *Beyond The Multiplex...*, *op. cit.*; Staiger, *Media Reception Studies* (New York University Press, 2005).

⁹⁵ Cynthia Erb, *Tracking King Kong: A Hollywood Icon in World Culture* (Wayne State University Press, 1998).

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.26.

much potential evidence can be generated. Martin Barker outlines this fact when he defines such sources as ‘ancillary material’:

They flow from leaks and teasers, advance information, website presentations, through poster campaigns, advertorials, television advertising, into -- as release finally approaches -- publication of *Making Of* books, released interviews with stars, director, and others, Electronic Press Kits, and the final flood and push to persuade people to give the movie a try.⁹⁷

Barker then proceeds to detail steps that should be taken to analyse these materials. Essentially, he states that each type of material’s volume, frequency and characteristics needs to be taken into account, hinting at a variety of analytical methods similar to Erb’s approach.⁹⁸ Though this helpfully progresses the categories of sources laid out in Klinger’s 1997 article, only methods for charting the appearance of these sources are suggested in these studies, and not for their critical analysis.

The mention of volume and frequency implies that some material is inherently more prolific than others, and so should be given greater attention. However, Thomas Austin has investigated similar sources, and instead positions each ancillary material as equally relevant:

A constellation of satellite texts orbits the film, including not only licensed merchandising, but also media coverage arranged via symbiotic relations between distributors and television and press outlets... Some such texts and forms may be consumed in their own right, their ancillary experiences enjoyed as more or less autonomous from the film.⁹⁹

Austin categorises the distribution (or ancillary) material that surrounds a media text (such as a film or DVD) as satellite texts. As a result, he demonstrates and fully justifies the value of analysing each potential source in-depth, according to its characteristics. Not only will the satellites’ relationship to a text be clarified, but also their creation and facilitation by a particular institution or company (for example, a distributor). As well as this, Austin

⁹⁷ Martin Barker, ‘News, Reviews, Clues, Interviews and Other Ancillary Materials: A Critique and Research Proposal’ (19 pages when printed), *Scope* (website), February 2004, accessed 18/07/2013, 3 of 19, <http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=feb2004&id=246>.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 10 of 19.

⁹⁹ Thomas Austin, *Hollywood, Hype and Audiences: Selling and Watching Popular Film in the 1990s* (Manchester University Press, 2002), p.30.

recognises that each is equally likely to influence reception, because though they can be consumed separately, all satellite texts are made with the purpose of guiding a viewer to a certain media text.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, each can be located at varying distances away from a specific film, but still influence how it is received within a particular market, such as the UK.

In addition, Austin is studying a film's impact within a particular market as comprehensively as possible. Earlier in his study of Hollywood films, Austin states that his work is attempting to be 'a triangulation between film texts, contexts and audiences', because 'a film is framed by a constellation of institutions, texts and practices'.¹⁰¹ However, Austin is studying three Hollywood films in this way, whereas the films released by both 4Digital Asia and Third Window in 2008 to 2010 amounts to over 30. What has instead emerged as a pertinent characteristic linked to all these films, within the UK market, is the behaviour of their respective distributors. Distribution represents a vital link between film texts, contexts and audiences, as well as institutions, texts and practices. Austin's multi-method approach overlooks this process, but it is still comprehensive in terms of methodology. By adapting this same ethos to sources that represent distribution practices, the influence of the DVD labels' actions can be fully explored.

The concept of satellite texts can be effectively applied to the distribution material resulting from the practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window. Both DVD labels treat their films as physical commodities by placing them on discs and producing material that aids the discs' dissemination within the UK. This is through the use of DVD packaging, special features, trailers and websites. The films' disc releases also generate reviews, which are not created by the DVD labels but still signify discourse that circulates the films. Therefore, the critical reception of the DVD releases can also be studied, which helps to reveal the influence

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

of the distributors' actions. However, as the majority of these materials are created and influenced by the distributors' actions, they signify discourses concerning the distributors' themselves. Again, specific methods are needed to fully analyse the discursive patterns within the sources, which Austin's approach has not detailed. But utilising the concept of satellite texts has given a structure to the thesis, in terms of what order each type of distribution material should be studied through a particular method.

4Digital Asia and Third Window each make use of DVD packaging, special features, trailers and websites to distribute and market their releases. Within each of these sources, discursive patterns are evident, which signify the distributors' actions in terms of providing access and guiding potential viewers to a specific film through its DVD release. The packaging orbits the DVD itself as a physical commodity, which provides access to the disc after it has been purchased. Contained within the disc, as well as the film, are DVD special features. The content of these does not relate directly to the case for the film, but the extras still signify material utilised by the distributor that the DVD packaging provides access to. Another important set of materials contained within the discs are trailers for the DVD labels' film titles, but they can also be viewed on the websites. The trailers can be constructed by a distributor to advertise a disc release, or re-used following the film's initial theatrical release in Japan. The websites themselves are important to analyse too, as they contain much more than just the trailers. The distributors' webpages contain cast and crew information, DVD packaging and synopses, as well as links to external pages. Often the text and web-links refer to reviews of the films within other websites and printed publications. The reviews themselves are another important source. They exist as satellite texts orbiting the disc releases though they are not produced by the distributors, but can refer to their actions as much as the content of the films. In essence, each satellite text is generated as part of the distribution practices for the DVD releases of 4Digital Asia and Third Window. As a consequence, the

order of the thesis' chapters demonstrates the intertextual links and proximity each source has to another within the DVD labels' distribution practices, rather than signifying a hierarchy of importance.

Analysing distribution materials allows for the prominence of 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's DVD releases in the UK to be demonstrated. Film distribution is simultaneously claimed to be an invisible link between filmmakers and audiences, and the most powerful process (basically, no distribution means a film does not get seen).¹⁰² But the distributors' actions are being investigated further as it appears that in certain situations they have additional influence (especially for the releases of Japanese films on DVD). In becoming recognised for specialising in predominantly one national cinema, through one media format, 4Digital Asia and Third Window have made themselves distinct within the UK market, and the thesis is investigating how their distribution practices have aided this.

Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window are making potential viewers aware of the distribution processes they have undertaken to get these films to the UK market. The thesis will investigate the impact this has on the labels' DVD releases. In addition, the thesis will explore the importance of concepts of Japanese cinema and the DVD format in making disc releases of Japanese films distinctive. This is because exploring the extent to which distribution practices affect DVDs of Japanese films in the UK asks if the releases are distinctive because of the labels' treatment of the DVD format or Japan's films. In recognising that discourses concerning these factors are generated by the DVD distributors' actions, an approach using multiple methods can be applied, meaning that the distribution materials can be conceptualised as satellite texts, and each can be studied in-depth. As a result of detailed analyses, the research will show how the distributors' actions are emphasised through the treatment of both their DVD discs and the films they release.

¹⁰² Knight and Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp.14-5.

Concerning Chapters and Methods: Five Satellite Texts

The satellite texts orbiting both the DVD releases of 4Digital Asia and Third Window include their packaging, special features, trailers, websites and reviews. In Chapter One, the packaging is examined separately from the other materials, as it provides access to the disc itself, and information linking to other distribution materials (for instance, DVD contents, website information, and review quotes). The packaging of media texts, in both VHS and DVD formats, has been closely analysed by Kate Egan in order to determine identities of the films that the covers promote.¹⁰³ This examination of their structure and imagery pays close attention to certain elements of the packaging, and parallels with Klinger's concept of 'consumable identity' particularly stand out.¹⁰⁴ Klinger explains that this term signifies a form of commodification. Promotional discourse fragments a film's characteristics into commodities which appeal to a wide range of audiences. The DVD packaging is a physical manifestation of this commodification, and encases the films' that 4Digital Asia and Third Window release. It contains texts and images linked to the films that can create audience expectations, signifying discourses of genres, stars, authorship and critical responses. Within these elements, 4Digital Asia and Third Window construct an image of their films as distinctive examples of Japanese cinema, in order to both attract as many viewers as possible, and to distinguish their disc releases as the products of specialist distributors. While this suggests activities associated with branding, the absence of an aggressive branding strategy is what in fact makes the DVDs' packaging most distinctive.

Chapter Two interrogates the DVD special features' content and the patterns of discourse generated from them. While the material is often translated and re-used from a

¹⁰³ Kate Egan, *Trash or treasure? Censorship and the changing meanings of the video nasties* (Manchester University Press, 2007), p.54.

¹⁰⁴ Barbara Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture' (3-19), in *Cinema Journal*, 28:4 (1989), 10.

film's promotion in Japan, it is exclusively provided to an English-language audience on the distributors' DVD discs.¹⁰⁵ The packaging provides access to the contents of the DVDs, so the discs' extras do not guide a potential viewer to the release itself. However, the special features make up part of the content of the DVDs, and they cannot also be viewed through online sources.¹⁰⁶ This contrasts with the distributors' webpages, trailers and reviews, which can be accessed both on the DVD discs and websites for 4Digital Asia and Third Window.¹⁰⁷ Concerning the analysis of special features, the most detailed methods for their investigation have been formulated by Craig Hight.¹⁰⁸ However, this approach was developed for charting the characteristics of making-of documentaries and links to other special features, so that potential viewing experiences could be determined. As Hight sees making-ofs as re-used promotional material, the same perspective could be applied to many of the extras on the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs. Although, the DVDs are the only means by which audiences in the UK can access such material. Therefore, they do not just provide additional perspectives on a film's production and content from cast and crew members. The distributors provide the experience of how the films have been promoted within Japan, as well as knowledge regarding their production, in an environment shaped by the distributor (specifically, the DVD disc). By exclusively providing this content, 4Digital Asia and Third Window are distinguishing their DVD distribution practices through the use of disc content other than the film itself.

The DVD discs contain trailers of the distributors' other releases, which are also material that appears on the labels' websites, and Chapter Three closely studies how the trailers are used. Keith M. Johnston claims that trailers are layered texts, making them a

¹⁰⁵ None of the DVD extras (apart from trailers) on the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs have been found through other sources – such as online streaming websites (e.g. *YouTube*).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Appendix One shows that weblinks are often included in the contents of the DVDs, and Appendix Two shows that trailers and review quotes and links are often displayed on the distributors' webpages.

¹⁰⁸ Hight, *op. cit.*

‘unique source of historical and textual information’ which requires both textual and contextual analysis.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, their content and structure can signify evidence of a trailer’s history, how they were used, and their conventions (for example, their use of film excerpts, inter-titles, graphics, music and voice-over).¹¹⁰ The 4Digital Asia and Third Window trailers are often shown alongside other trailers on both the DVDs and websites, and are classified as either original or theatrical. Their original and theatrical context is their release in Japanese cinemas, which the trailers often refer to. Therefore, an analysis of the trailers’ characteristics shows what aspects of the films the distributors wish to promote in a similar fashion to the Japanese theatrical trailers. In essence, 4Digital Asia and Third Window are emphasising the films’ characteristics in conjunction with their own distribution practices, which signifies discourse that reveals what is most distinctive about the films and how they are promoted. The trailers are either re-edited or translated according to the distributors’ intentions, which is evident through an analysis of the trailers’ content and structure. Rather than stressing that some common characteristics of Japanese films make the distributors’ releases and practices distinct, analysis of the trailers shows that both 4Digital Asia and Third Window use the promotional format to choose specific elements of the films. This is in order to emphasise both the films’ distinctions and the DVD labels’.

In Chapter Four, the websites of each distributor are illustrated as satellite texts in which the companies state that their aims are distinct from other labels within the UK market.¹¹¹ They are crucial to 4Digital Asia and Third Window as they provide details regarding the distribution of their DVD releases. Disc content and packaging is displayed and

¹⁰⁹ Keith M. Johnston, *Coming Soon: Film Trailers and the Selling of Hollywood Technology* (London: McFarland and Company, 2009), p.154.

¹¹⁰ Lisa Kernan, *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers* (University of Texas Press, 2004); Sarah Street, “‘Another Medium Entirely’”: Esther Harris, National Screen Service, and Film Trailers in Britain, 1940-1960’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 29:4 (2009), 433-48.

¹¹¹ ‘4DM/Contact Us’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 18/07/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/contact>; ‘About’, *Third Window* website, accessed 18/07/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/about>.

listed, as well as trailers and references to reviews from other websites and publications. The website's importance in media analysis has been emphasised by Niels Brugger, defining them as 'signifying units' whose textual content and forms of presentation are helpful historical sources.¹¹² However, he does categorise webpages as different types of paratexts, despite stressing their individual textual characteristics.¹¹³ As argued earlier, terms such as paratext simply illustrate the importance of recognising interrelations between texts. Therefore, the websites' content signals the interrelations between various materials utilised within the distribution practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window, as well as demonstrate the webpages' status as a satellite text. The websites' content and layout emphasises the material and processes that contribute to the distributors' distinctiveness within the UK market, such as the DVD packaging, special features, trailers and reviews. In addition, they do not simply repeat the characteristics evident within these sources. The websites actively promote further patterns of discourse that 4Digital Asia and Third Window communicate in regard to both Japanese cinema and DVD media.

The distinctive attributes of the distributors are recognised within the films' critical reception. Reviews are also satellite texts, as the DVD packaging displays quotes from them, as do the websites, in addition to links to other reviews on other webpages. Critical reception within *NEO* magazine is frequently quoted by both 4Digital Asia and Third Window, and is unique from that written in other publications. The magazine has reviewed all of 4Digital Asia and Third Window's releases from 2008 to 2010.¹¹⁴ In addition, the magazine is the only publication that reviews the discs' presentation and special features, as well as the film. *NEO* was the only commercial UK publication dedicated to Asian media from 2008 to 2010,

¹¹² Niels Brugger, 'Website history and the website as an object of study', *New Media and Society*, Vol.11 (2009), 115-32.

¹¹³ Brugger, 'The Archived Website and Website Philology: A New Type of Historical Document?' (155-75), *Nordicom Review*, 29:2 (2008), 168.

¹¹⁴ Except for one Third Window release - *Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers* (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2005).

so its discussion of the distributors is an important aspect of the discs' reception.¹¹⁵ The significance of review content has been explained in past reception studies,¹¹⁶ and single publications have been analysed according to their influential positions in popular culture.¹¹⁷ Alongside evaluations of the films' content, the distributors' additions to the viewing experience, and their reputation following past releases, are standards against which the DVDs are judged in the *NEO* reviews. Such patterns of discourse assist the distributors in emphasising the distinctiveness of their distribution practices within the UK, as they are often re-used in the DVDs' packaging and/or websites.

These chapters demonstrate evidence of how the distributors' actions affect the labels' DVD releases. The reviews are particularly illustrative of how the discussion of the distributors' practices characterise discourse surrounding the DVD releases. However, the aim of the thesis has been to show how each of the discs' satellite texts demonstrates discursive patterns. Therefore, potential viewers are likely to encounter material highlighting both the distributors' attributes and those related to a certain film. A potential audience can become aware of a certain release due to the circulation of distribution materials. They emphasise the DVD releases' characteristics due to the films' status within Japanese cinema, as well as the distributors' use and composition of DVD and related digital media. Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window use these discourses to emphasise their efforts in bringing Japanese cinema to the UK market.

Following on from the first five chapters, Chapter Six will chart the actions of 4Digital Asia and Third Window after 2010, to establish that each label has continued to

¹¹⁵ *NEO* magazine is now not the only UK publication dedicated to Asian media, as a new magazine was launched in 2012 called *MyM* ('Home', *MyM Magazine* website, accessed 3/12/2012, <http://www.mymags.net/>). However, *NEO* is the more established of the two: 'NEO has been riding the wave of Asian animation since 2004, bringing the freshest anime, manga and Asian film titles to UK audiences and spreading the good word about Japanese, Korean and Chinese entertainment.' – from 'About: NEO Magazine', *Facebook* page, accessed 18/07/2013 <http://www.facebook.com/neomagazineuk/info>.

¹¹⁶ Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning...*, *op. cit.*; Staiger, *Interpreting Films...*, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ Jancovich, 'Shadows and Bogeymen...', *op. cit.*; '“Two Ways of Looking”...', *op. cit.*; '“Samuel Bronston's Latest Epic”...', *op. cit.*

emphasise their distribution practices for subsequent DVD releases. These further activities of the labels can be divided into three areas. 4Digital Asia stopped operating as a sub-label of 4Digital Media after 2010. But its parent company has continued to distribute DVDs within a variety of genres, finding regular success with horror and crime films.¹¹⁸ It is also no secret that the DVD production and subtitling company, Silk Purse Enterprises, was an integral part of the sub-label's releases, as it was credited on every 4Digital Asia DVD.¹¹⁹ Owned by Andrew Kirkham, this company has gone on to facilitate further UK DVD releases of Japanese films through the distribution labels of Cine Du Monde and 100Meter Films.¹²⁰ Silk Purse Enterprises and Cine Du Monde now utilise the social media website, Facebook, to publicise their upcoming releases.¹²¹ Similarly, Third Window has increasingly promoted its DVDs through both Facebook and Twitter after 2010.¹²² And, until 2013, the label's releases continued to be entirely sourced from Japan.¹²³ Both distributors' publicise their DVD releases by focusing on the production and circulation of satellite texts through predominantly online sources, especially on social media sites (and their content often concerns packaging, trailers, press information and advertising). Therefore, the distributors are continuing to distinguish their DVD releases by emphasising their distribution practices and processes. Certain instances of these patterns continue to demonstrate intertextual links to other distribution materials (for example, the Facebook and Twitter addresses are referenced within the DVD packaging and websites). Though social media sites in particular are

¹¹⁸ Diana Lodderhose, *op. cit*; Andreas Wiseman, *op. cit*.

¹¹⁹ Usually within a caption displayed over a film's end credits, or credits at the end of a special feature.

¹²⁰ 'About' and 'Silk Purse Enterprises – 13 November 2012', *Facebook* page, accessed 19/07/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/SilkPurseEnterprises>; 'Andrew Kirkham', *LinkedIn* website, accessed 19/07/2013, <http://uk.linkedin.com/in/andrewpkirkham>.

¹²¹ 'Silk Purse Enterprises...', *op. cit*; 'Cine Du Monde', *Facebook* page, accessed 19/07/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/CineduMonde>.

¹²² 'Third Window Films', *Facebook* page, accessed 19/07/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/thirdwindowfilms>; 'Third Window Films', *Twitter* website, accessed 19/07/2013, <https://twitter.com/thirdwindow>.

¹²³ *Vulgarità* (dir. Pang Ho-Cheung, 2012) is a Hong Kong film production, released in the UK on April 15th 2013 – 'Vulgarità', *Third Window* website, accessed 19/07/2013.

markedly different from other satellite texts studied, the posts and tweets act as another source of discourse illustrating the distributors' actions.

The conclusion will reinforce how all the satellite texts bring attention to the processes through which Japanese films have been brought to UK DVDs by the distributors. This claim refers back to the transformative effects of transnational cinemas, which are outlined by Hunt and Leung.¹²⁴ A similar parallel can be found in the work of Parker and Parker, who claim that, in regard to DVD: '[t]he medium, as in other cases of technological transformation, may well be the message.'¹²⁵ What the thesis will demonstrate is that the means of these transnational and technological transformations are becoming increasingly visible, because of the actions of the distributors. The messages (or patterns of discourse) contained within materials, resulting from these actions, will always have the potential to shape the presence of films in particular media formats (such as DVD releases), within markets such as the UK.

¹²⁴ Hunt and Leung, *op. cit*, p.4.

¹²⁵ Parker and Parker, *op. cit*, 13.

Chapter One – Packaging DVDs of Japanese Films:
Films, DVD Labels and their Consumable Identity

The DVD cases, covers and UK releases are the result of the distribution practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window. Therefore, they signify a consumable identity for each Japanese film, as well as their distributors. Despite the significance of packaging, discs' cases and covers have only been discussed incidentally within the research of DVD media.¹ Kate Egan has given the most attention to the packaging of films for both VHS and DVD.² In her study of horror films released in Britain in the 1980s (aka 'video nasties'), Egan states that distributors used a combination of words and images to produce a constructed image of a film that could be easily marketed:³

The function of such covers is therefore a clear foregrounding of particular ideas or themes... What is also frequently clear is how the title of the film, the image on the cover and the accompanying tagline all work together to achieve this highlighting and foregrounding of a particular idea and theme, with the image and tagline visually and textually literalising the film's title.⁴

The marketable theme or idea is similar to a concept that Barbara Klinger categorises as a film's 'consumable identity'.⁵ A consumable identity is a process of commodification, whereby certain aspects of a film are fragmented and accentuated for its promotion – such as its genre, director, stars, and stylistic content:⁶

The textual elements foregrounded through the process of commodification are given frequent reworking through specific promotional inter-texts devoted to extending a film into the social sphere as fully as possible. The fetishized elements of a text are connected to a network of cultural signification that exists to elaborate and extend its "capitalizable" elements. The circulation of a film as a

¹ Bennett and Brown (eds), *op. cit.*; John T. Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Duke University Press, 2008), pp.274-315; Craig Hight, 'Making-of Documentaries on DVD: *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and Special Editions', *The Velvet Light Trap*, No.56 (2005), 4-17.

² Kate Egan, *Trash or treasure? Censorship and the changing meanings of the video nasties* (Manchester University Press, 2007), pp.47-77 and pp.185-228.

³ *Ibid*, pp.50-61.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.52.

⁵ Barbara Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture' (3-19), in *Cinema Journal*, 28:4 (1989), 10.

⁶ *Ibid*, 12.

commodity, therefore, engenders not only its fetishization into a series of specialized elements that will establish its exchange-value, but also its extension into the social sphere through the signifying activities of the promotional inter-textual network attached to its commodification.⁷

Similarly, the DVD covers represent commodification, and are at the heart of the distributors' practices. Viewers of DVD discs must interact with the packaging, either to gain access to and navigate the disc, or to view the content described on the cover.⁸

For these reasons, the packaging is an integral factor in the investigation of DVD distribution of films within the UK. Furthermore, searching for consumable identities within the packaging means exploring how the distributors make their releases distinct, particularly as Japanese films. In the words of Klinger: 'The single element in a film – the character a star plays, a scene created by special effects – is never just "itself", its functions in the narrative, but the source of polysemic extension, grist for other kinds of signification.'⁹ Essentially, the consumable identity represents patterns of discourse that circulate a specific film, and are generated from ancillary material (such as the packaging of a DVD). Whether through words or images, the distributors use certain elements to distinguish and signify their particular DVD releases, as well as the individual films. Each film has a consumable identity, and the distributors are simultaneously constructing images of themselves as well. Specifically, the DVD covers' language and imagery are used to signify the films' genre, critical reception, directors and stars, and wider cultural connotations (for example, awards at film festivals and links to other media). These elements within the packaging can convey a range of discursive meanings, both in relation to a specific film and the discs' distributors. As a result, the DVD releases have a broad appeal, and both the films and the labels are perceived as not just catering to those who favour or have specialist knowledge of Japanese cinema.

⁷ *Ibid*, 11-12.

⁸ Jo T. Smith, 'DVD Technologies and the Art of Control' (pp.129-48), in J. Bennett and T. Brown (eds), *Film and Television After DVD* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p.140.

⁹ Klinger, *op. cit*, 13.

It would be easy to conclude that the image that the distributors put across is that of brands which appeal to a broad range of film-viewing tastes, rather than the films themselves. However, no aggressive or uniform branding strategies are evident in the labels' DVD packaging. John Caldwell's studies into the production home media formats argues how the commercial branding and promotion of media studios can carry over from DVD packaging to websites.¹⁰ More recently, both Paul Grainge and Catherine Johnson have presented evidence that brands are becoming increasingly meaningful to audiences as their appearance across media formats proliferates. Grainge has argued that this is occurring frequently within contemporary Hollywood cinema and many TV channels;¹¹ while Johnson has claimed that the appearance of brand ident-images and logos is becoming as important to producers and institutions as the content of television shows and other media texts.¹² However, through both textual analysis and displaying images of the DVD covers, it will become clear that no uniform branding of the DVD cases is evident in the case of 4Digital Asia and Third Window. The packaging is designed and constructed according to each film's characteristics. Regular patterns are disguised within these aspects, and are dedicated to emphasising the appeal of both the distributors' and Japanese cinema to a wide variety of potential audiences within the UK market.

The examples analysed in the chapter will demonstrate how the distributors' DVD covers present various elements through their language and images. Each release will be explained as representative of characteristics found within all the other 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVD covers. They will also be discussed in pairs in each section of the chapter, in order to fully address the numerous elements within the packaging used by each

¹⁰ Caldwell, *op. cit.*, pp.274-315.

¹¹ Paul Grainge, *Brand Hollywood: Selling entertainment in a global media age* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp.1-18; Paul Grainge, 'Lost Logos: Channel 4 and the Branding of American Event Television', in R.E. Pearson (ed), *Reading Lost* (London: IB Tauris, 2009), pp. 95-118.

¹² Catherine Johnson, 'The authorial function of the television channel: augmentation and identity', in J. Gray and D. Johnson (eds), *A Companion to Media Authorship* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 275-95.

distributor. Genres, critical reception, directors and stars, and cultural contexts can all signify multiple meanings, and so are discursive (or polysemic) in nature. Egan used a similar approach which repeatedly examined individual examples of packaging to fully assess and illustrate the imagery and language used by distributors of the ‘video nasties’.¹³ However, this chapter does not similarly claim that the DVD labels used a variety of shock tactics to promote their Japanese films through their packaging. 4Digital Asia and Third Window instead establish that their releases have a broad market within the UK because of their non-branded appeal to a wide range of potential audiences.

Genre’s Significance for both Films and DVD Labels

Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window make use of genre in their DVD packaging. At first, their use of genre appears to contrast. 4Digital Asia includes a genre category on the rear of each of its DVD covers, whereas Third Window does not. However, far from seeing genre as unimportant, Third Window makes use of genre categories within its descriptions of the films, as does 4Digital Asia. The *20th Century Boys* films (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiko, 2008-2009) have multiple genre terms on their DVD covers from 4Digital Asia. Third Window’s DVD packaging of *Memories of Matsuko* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2006) also contains multiple generic categorisations. With their frequent references to genre, both through text and images, these releases help illustrate how 4Digital Asia and Third Window use it to market their films in their DVD covers. Studies of film genres clarify that these categorisations have varied meanings, and are used so that films appeal to a variety of tastes. The DVD labels’ use of genre similarly illustrates multiple connotations so that the market for the distributors’ films, and Japanese cinema as a whole, is established as broad and not just a single niche.

¹³ Egan, *op. cit.*, pp.47-77 and pp.185-228.

Though previous studies of genres have helped to illustrate the term's varied connotations, they emphasise that niche markets are targeted through the use of specific genre categories. Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window, however, use certain terms to utilise broad genre associations, rather than fixed definitions. Christine Gledhill has posited that some terms, such as melodrama, do not define any one genre, but characteristics that transgress several categories or subgenres.¹⁴ In particular, genres are often found to change over time as well as be used in multiple ways. Rick Altman uses the example of 1920s and '30s Universal monster films, and their re-release in the 1950s, as an explanation. To fit the popularity of science-fiction films in the 1950s, the monster series was 'rebaptized' in contrast to the films' horror roots.¹⁵ Mark Jancovich provides further examples in his investigation of the Universal series of *Sherlock Holmes* films from the 1940s.¹⁶ Though they are now seen as a detective series, the films were more commonly referred to as 'mysteries'.¹⁷ This was often used as a conjunctive term to promote aspects of 'fear, terror and horror'; and combined with influences from other films that potentially appeal to many audiences (such as romantic elements and film noir-style femme fatales).¹⁸ However, these combinations of genre elements were essentially niche tastes, which were then catered to by later 1940s Hollywood films adapted from 19th century literature, which often contained a Gothic visual style.¹⁹ Rather than attempting to satisfy a particular niche market, 4Digital Asia and Third Window are trying to emphasise the broad appeal of their films to the whole UK market through their use of genre terms.

¹⁴ Christine Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre' (pp.221-243), in C. Gledhill and L. Williams (eds), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp.240-1.

¹⁵ Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), pp. 79-80.

¹⁶ Mark Jancovich, 'The Meaning of Mystery: Genre, Marketing and the Universal Sherlock Holmes Series of the 1940s', *Film International*, 17:5 (2005), 34-45.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 35.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 43-5.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

The DVD releases of the *20th Century Boys* films (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008-2009) illustrate 4Digital Asia's use of genre, which at first seems quite rigid.²⁰ The first film, released as *Chapter One*, is labelled as 'science fiction/thriller'.²¹ All three films are then labelled as 'sci-fi' in the later release of the entire trilogy (images for the DVD releases can be seen in Figure 1).²² However, the rear of the DVD cover also states that the films are:

[a] positively epic exercise in film-making and storytelling, the blockbusting 20th Century Boys trilogy has proven to be one of the most ambitious, expensive and successful undertakings in Japanese Cinema. Director Yukihiro Tsutsumi's epic efforts to release three films in one year based on Naoki Urasawa's acclaimed manga (selling 28 million copies) has brought to life a stunning doomsday thriller that spans multiple generations and genres, and bites into conspiracy theory, pop culture, nostalgia and spectacular special effects.²³

Following the labelling of the films as 'sci-fi', and the synopsis' mention of their origins within a successful *manga* (comic), the trilogy seems to only appeal to niche tastes (particularly consumers of both Japanese and science-fiction films). Although, the latter part of the synopsis stresses the characteristics of 'conspiracy theory, pop culture, nostalgia and spectacular special effects.' These are not mentioned as characteristics specific to a Japanese 'sci-fi' film, but ones which potentially have a broad appeal. Within the imagery of the DVD covers these elements are simultaneously emphasised. Figure 1 (below) shows that both the *20th Century Boys* DVD covers display the mysterious masked antagonist, Friend, who is at the centre of the films' conspiracy plot. The films' special effects spectacles are similarly showcased – with a city in destruction on the *Chapter One* cover, and the agents of its destruction being visible on the trilogy cover (specifically, flying saucers and giant robots).

²⁰ To clarify, 4Digital Asia originally intended to release each *20th Century Boys* film individually, as they did with *Chapter One*. However, the company could eventually only afford to release the entire trilogy a year after their release of the first film. The information intended for the packaging of each individual DVD release has been posted on a section of the 4Digital Media website – '20th Century Boys Trilogy: The Complete Saga', 4Digital Media website, accessed 29/07/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/20thcenturyboyst.html>.

²¹ From the rear of the DVD cover of *20th Century Boys: Chapter One* (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008), released by 4Digital Asia on 04/05/2009.

²² From the rear of the DVD cover of the *20th Century Boys Trilogy* (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008-2009), released by 4Digital Asia on 31/05/2010.

²³ *Ibid.*

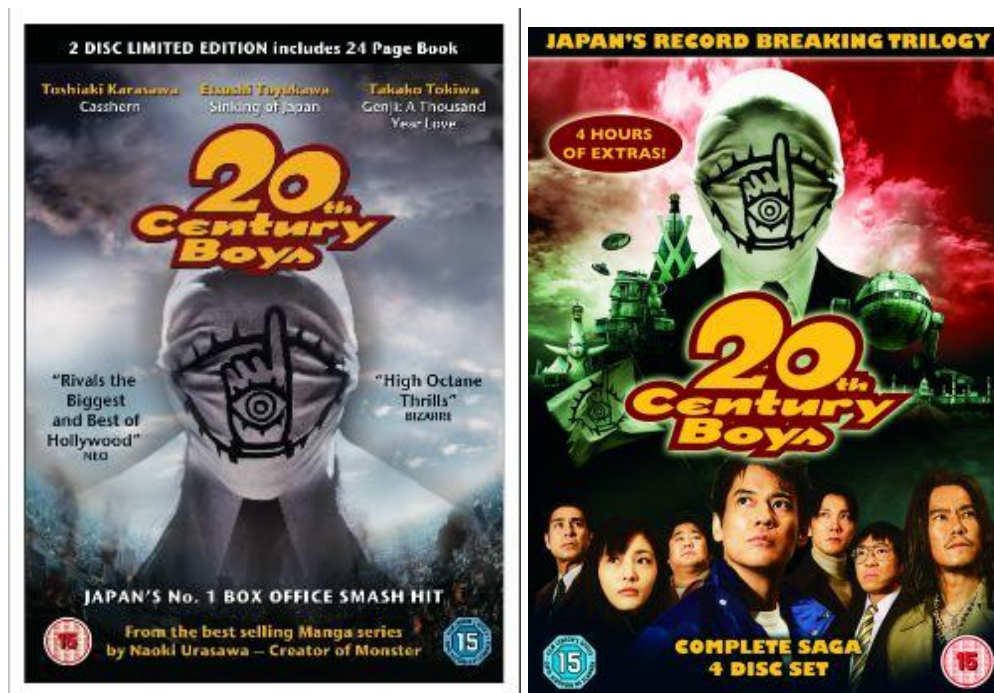


Figure 1 – The 4Digital Asia DVD covers for the 20th Century Boys films (Chapter One and the Trilogy).²⁴

As a consequence, certain elements are highlighted to show that films labelled with specific categories, such as ‘Japanese’ and ‘sci-fi’, can appeal to a broad range of UK consumers. The emphasis of a ‘narrative image’ or framing of a film’s identity through a ‘cover image spectacle’ is nothing new.²⁵ Kate Egan argues that distributors were doing just this in her study of the history of video nasties.²⁶ Correspondingly, emphasis of a film’s Japanese origins is deemed necessary for such films to be successfully promoted and received around the world. John Berra, Rayna Denison and Tom Mes and Jasper Sharp all suggest that the identification of unique traits and visual style within Japanese cinema helps its promotion, as Japanese cultural goods are now visible on a global scale.²⁷ However, 4Digital Asia is not

²⁴ Images from the 4Digital Media website, accessed 29/07/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/asia>.

²⁵ Egan, *op. cit.* p.54.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ John Berra, ‘Introduction’, in Berra (ed), *Directory of World Cinema: Japan* (Bristol, Intellect, 2010), pp.6-7; Rayna Denison, ‘The Global Markets for Anime: Miyazaki Hayao’s *Spirited Away* (2001)’, in A. Phillips and J. Stringer (eds), *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp.308-21; Tom Mes and Jasper Sharp, *The Midnight Eye Guide To New Japanese Film* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2005), pp. xi-xiv.

limiting itself to just identifying the 20th Century Boys films as a phenomenon originating from Japan. Numerous generic elements within the films are highlighted in the DVD packaging (particularly concerning its science-fiction-centred narrative). They are accompanied by terms that describe the film as simultaneously thrilling, mysterious, nostalgic and spectacular. This is not done simply to promote the films to multiple markets of niche tastes, as suggested by studies of the use of genre. It establishes 4Digital Asia's belief that a science-fiction film from Japan can appeal to many viewers in the UK.

The potentially wide-ranging attractions of a Japanese film are similarly indicated in the packaging of Third Window's DVDs. The rear of the cover for *Memories of Matsuko* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2006) states:

A collision of visually stunning hues and Bob Fosse-like musical set pieces, this Amelie-esque fairytale gracefully glides through the decades from the 50s to the 80s. Miki Nakatani displays an award-winning performance as Matsuko, engaging the audience with her touching portrayal of life.²⁸

Figure 2 displays the front cover imagery of this DVD. Within the image, and the synopsis on the rear of the cover, no mention is made of the fact that the film is Japanese. Instead only the musical elements which characterise it as 'Bob Fosse-like' and 'Amelie-esque' are emphatically stressed. The name Bob Fosse references a certain style of musical theatre, which the film appears to emulate by containing several song-and-dance numbers.²⁹ The film *Amelie* (dir. Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) was both a critical and commercial success around the world, in part because of its promotion as an exhilarating and life-changing film-viewing experience.³⁰ Rather than emphasise its unique qualities through its Japanese origins, Third Window instead decides to underscore the film's multiple generic elements through these intertextual comparisons. The word 'collision', combined with the collage of images on the

²⁸ From the rear of the DVD cover of *Memories of Matsuko*, released by Third Window on 12/01/2009.

²⁹ Martin Gottfried, *All His Jazz: The Life and Death of Bob Fosse* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: DaCapo Press, 2003); Tom Mes, 'Midnight Eye review: Memories of Matsuko', *Midnight Eye* website, accessed 29/07/2013, <http://www.midnighteye.com/reviews/memories-of-matsuko/>.

³⁰ Isabelle Vanderschelden, *Amelie* (London: IB Tauris, 2007), pp.77-91.

front cover, further illustrates this point. 4Digital Asia may promote its films slightly differently, by mentioning their Japanese origin as well, but both distributors attempt to greatly broaden the appeal of their DVD releases through the emphasis of various traits, and often highlight those associated with several genres.



Figure 2 – The Third Window DVD cover for *Memories of Matsuko*.³¹

Further examples help to illustrate 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's releases, and how the covers' other elements help promote multiple generic attributes.³² The cover for the 4Digital Asia DVD of *Death Note* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006) labels the film as a 'supernatural thriller'.³³ In addition, the synopsis explains that the film is based on the 'supernatural action mystery manga' of the same title.³⁴ Again, as with *20th Century Boys*, the generic elements are emphasised as much as the film's roots in Japanese popular culture (particularly its adaptation from a *manga*). Certain genre traits are then highlighted more than

³¹ Image from the *Third Window* website, accessed 29/07/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films>.

³² Images of all the covers mentioned within this paragraph, and those for other 4Digital Asia and Third Window releases, can be found in the Appendix Two of the thesis.

³³ From the rear of the DVD cover of *Death Note*, released by 4Digital Asia on 28/07/2008.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

others, by the inclusion of a quote from the magazine *Time Out*: ‘Gripping Japanese manga adaptation with an exceptionally high body count.’ The number of deaths in the film, and the focus on finding the killer, is seen as a reason for the film’s narrative to be a thrilling mystery as well as the original *manga*. Another 4Digital Asia release, *Black Kiss* (dir. Tezuka Macoto, 2004) is promoted similarly, with a tagline that reads: ‘A gruesome thriller in the tradition of *Silence of the Lambs* and *Seven*’.³⁵ Here, specific film titles are used to stress that the film is a thriller that focuses on the chase for a serial killer. Moreover, the English language titles of *Silence of the Lambs* (dir. Jonathan Demme, 1991) and *Seven* (dir. David Fincher, 1995) are used in the hope that UK audiences will be attracted by the comparison.

Third Window uses review quotes to emphasise generic traits as well, rather than attach its own labels. Another example from the distributor also helps to illustrate the overall findings regarding genre’s use in the discs’ packaging. The comedy *Fine, Totally Fine* (dir. Fujita Yosuke) is loosely described as ‘comical’ and ‘heart-warming’ within the synopsis on the DVD cover.³⁶ But it is a quote from a newspaper, *The Metro*, which labels the film as ‘[a] quirky romcom, bonkers in the only way Japanese movies can be.’³⁷ Apart from the suggestion that the film is Japanese and is therefore ‘bonkers’, the other genre label given suggests the film has a broad appeal. The term ‘rom-com’ could mean a film that is a screwball comedy; or one which is both humorously dialogue-heavy and self-reflexive; or even a spectacularly gross-out farce.³⁸

³⁵ From the front of the DVD cover of *Black Kiss*, released by 4Digital Asia on 22/09/2008 (see Appendix Two).

³⁶ From the rear of the DVD cover of *Fine, Totally Fine*, released by Third Window on 11/05/2009.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ These varied definitions of ‘rom-com’ are charted in both Tamar Jeffers McDonald, *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* (London: Wallflower, 2007); and Mark D. Rubinfeld, *Bound to Bond: Gender, Genre, and the Hollywood Romantic Comedy*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 2001). However, they are also distinctions, or sub-genres, that occur throughout the history of film and across other genre categories (such as comedies and musicals) – as detailed by Tom Ryall, ‘Genre and Hollywood’, in J. Hill and P.C. Gibson (eds), *The Oxford Guide To Film Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.327-38; and David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction – Sixth Edition* (London: McGraw-Hill, 2001), pp.94-109.

Following the additional examples from 4Digital Asia and Third Window, it can be argued that elements within the packaging (whether they are images or words) connect together to promote the films' generic characteristics. This is a correlation with Egan's findings within the packaging of horror films, where taglines, screenshots and bloody fonts are all used to emphasise the films' gory content.³⁹ However, focusing only on these similar conclusions infers that the genres of the films released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window are central to their consumable identity. Instead, the distributors' emphasis of multiple genre characteristics is a uniform pattern that highlights the broad appeal of the DVD releases. No particular genres are stressed above any others in order to characterise, or brand, the distributors. Genre is mentioned alongside many other aspects on the DVD cases. For instance, genre is highlighted throughout the DVD packaging, within the imagery, synopses and review quotes, in order to broaden the films' appeal within the UK. In addition, the review quotes attach further connotations to both the films and the distributors.

Critical Reception: The Benefits of Quotes and their Sources for Films and DVD Labels

A prolific characteristic of the DVD cover images in Figures 1 and 2 are the quotes from review sources. These signify a range of discursive meanings that both 4Digital Asia and Third Window aim to associate with their film releases. Whether they match or contrast from the colour schemes of the images and titles, the review quotes can draw the eye of a potential consumer as much as other elements within the packaging. However, it is not just the words within the review quotes that are of significance. The *20th Century Boys: Chapter One* DVD cover has quotes from the magazines *NEO* and *Bizarre*, which respectively exclaim: 'Rivals the biggest and best of Hollywood' and 'High octane thrills.' The specific language used here brings attention to the generic traits of the film, alongside the synopsis

³⁹ Egan, *op. cit.*, p.54.

which explains that the film has both action and thriller elements.⁴⁰ The quote on the *Memories of Matsuko* DVD cover can be interpreted similarly. The magazine *Time Out* states that the film is ‘[a]stounding... a profoundly compassionate, humanist work’, which both matches the ‘Amelie-esque’ summation given in the film’s synopsis, and the film’s narrative premise as a biography of the fictional Matsuko. While the quotes themselves are indications of positive acclaim, the titles of the publications that they are taken from signify various critical perspectives in the UK market, which become associated with both the films and their DVD distributors.

Reviews are regularly analysed within film and media research, often to gauge how a certain media text was received at a certain point in time. Publications of reviews, and their authors, have been of popular interest in regard to particular periods of filmmaking and film criticism.⁴¹ In regard to *4Digital Asia* and *Third Window*, the publications are emphasised as much as the quotes’ contents. Examples provided by Jancovich illustrate that specific magazines and websites signify markers of taste and genre boundaries within broad classifications of films, especially in regard to horror and science-fiction (and where the line is between the two).⁴² Critical consensus across publications can also continue to influence a film’s later reception. Daniel Martin provides evidence for this in his research of reviews for the Japanese film *Ring* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 1998) within the British press. He concludes by explaining that the film has been the standard against which all subsequent Asian horrors were judged after its release.⁴³ Egan’s research on video nasties is again useful to draw upon for its similar conclusions. Though banned and marginalised initially, these particular horror

⁴⁰ From the rear of the DVD cover of *20th Century Boys: Chapter One*, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Compilations of reviews and essays from eminent film critics are useful examples – Roger Ebert, *The Great Movies* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002); Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Goodbye Cinema, Hello Cinephilia: Film Culture in Transition* (University of Chicago Press, 2010); Sato Tadao, *Currents In Japanese Cinema* (Kodansha, 1987).

⁴² Mark Jancovich, ‘“A Real Shocker”: Authenticity, genre and the struggle for distinction’, in G. Turner (ed), *The Film Cultures Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.469-80.

⁴³ Daniel Martin, ‘Japan’s *Blair Witch*: Restraint, Maturity, and Generic Canons in the British Critical Reception of *Ring*’, *Cinema Journal*, 48:3 (2009), 35-51.

films were critically re-appraised several years later in both magazines and newspapers, signifying the potential effects of such views in printed media.⁴⁴ Reviews as evidence of critical opinions are therefore useful, although the review quotes on the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVD covers represent more than this. They continue to increase the appeal of the DVD releases, beyond the genre characteristics already identified within the packaging.

Additional attributes related to the films are clear within the review quotes on the *20th Century Boys* cover image (seen in Figure 1). First, the *NEO* quote favourably compares the film to a Hollywood production. This opinion initially seems to contrast with the source of the quote. *NEO* is a UK magazine that reviews a range of media that originates from Asia – from *manga* to *anime*, films and music – and not from Hollywood or other English-speaking countries.⁴⁵ The second quote on the cover is from the magazine *Bizarre*, which implies similar connotations, as it specialises in news and reviews regarding ‘the alternative community’.⁴⁶ Each publication obviously caters to a distinct set of niche tastes and fan groupings, as Jancovich demonstrated with the examples in his research.⁴⁷ And yet Hollywood productions in general are used as a standard against which films and other media are judged by the critics in *NEO* and *Bizarre*. Such a view does not permanently locate the film as marginal from ‘ordinary’ films, or those made in Hollywood.⁴⁸ Instead, in the case of *20th Century Boys*, fans of big-budget effects-laden Hollywood blockbusters are encouraged to view the film, as well as those seeking something with ‘alternative’ origins.

Quotes used by Third Window are similarly inclusive. The cover for *Memories of Matsuko* uses excerpts from reviews in two separate publications – *Time Out* on the front (see

⁴⁴ Egan, *op. cit.*, pp.244-51.

⁴⁵ ‘About: NEO Magazine’, *Facebook* page, accessed 30/07/2013, <http://www.facebook.com/neomagazineuk/info>.

⁴⁶ ‘Bizarre Magazine’, *Bizarre* website, accessed 30/07/2013, <http://subscribe.bizarremag.com/>.

⁴⁷ Jancovich, ‘“A Real Shocker”...’, *op. cit.*, pp.477-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Figure 2), and *Sight and Sound* on the rear.⁴⁹ Again, these are both magazines, but with different aims and outlets. *Time Out* is both a printed and online publication that reviews various types of media, as well as events and entertainment.⁵⁰ *Sight and Sound* is a more specialised magazine, and though it is published by the British Film Institute, it reviews films from all over the world.⁵¹ Writers such as Egan have noticed a tendency within both of these publications to appreciate films as ‘art’ more often than ‘entertainment’.⁵² Therefore, in addition to the “feel-good” and musical elements that the *Memories of Matsuko* packaging emphasises, the film’s appeal to a wider range of knowledgeable ‘aficionados’ and ‘specialist audiences’ is also promoted.⁵³

However, though there is a tendency for quotes from reviews to be inclusive, most examples highlighted tend to focus on the films’ status as Japanese. Within the DVD covers for *20th Century Boys* and *Memories of Matsuko*, 4Digital Asia appears to target a broad mass-market audience by stressing multiple generic elements and specially-picked appraisals from certain publications. In contrast, Third Window’s focus appears to be on attracting a more discerning and critical audience, which appreciates artistic qualities over entertainment. The films’ status as Japanese may not be emphatically stressed in the review quotes, but the acclaim mentioned appears to be necessary to stress because the films are Japanese (and can perhaps be initially perceived as niche). Although, when other examples of review quotes are taken into account, the films’ Japanese origins can be used as a means of underscoring the films’ broad appeal. For instance, on the front cover of *Funuke, Show Some Love You Losers!* (dir. Yoshida Daihachi, 2007) a quote is taken by Third Window from the website

⁴⁹ ‘Miki Nakatani pulls off one of the best performances of the year’, Roger Clarke, *Sight and Sound* – from the rear of the DVD cover of *Memories of Matsuko*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ ‘Time Out Magazine’, *Time Out* website, accessed 30/07/2013, <http://www.timeout.com/london/free-mag>.

⁵¹ ‘Sight and Sound magazine subscriptions’, *BFI* website, accessed 30/07/2013, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/sight-sound-magazine-subscriptions>.

⁵² Egan, *op. cit.*, pp.231-2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

LoveHKFilm (another publication specialising in Asian media).⁵⁴ It states that the film is ‘entertaining, subversive, and surprisingly satisfying. For the manga fan in all of us.’⁵⁵ Though the Asian perspective of the publication is perhaps reinforced by the use of the term ‘manga’, the quote does mention qualities that would appeal to ‘all of us’ (or, the whole UK market, rather than a specific niche).

Other examples from 4Digital Asia are also comparable with this tendency, and help to illustrate the patterns evident within all of the DVD covers’ review quotes. The distributor does not shy away from appealing to a variety of distinct niche tastes. A quote from the magazine *Gorezone*, for its release of two films, *Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost* (dir. Miyake Ryuta and Asato Mari, 2009) is particularly illustrative. The review from *Gorezone* is noted as saying: ‘Shocking from start to finish, better than the Ring!’⁵⁶ The films are being recommended as instances of Asian horror, and for their appeal to fans of gore-heavy horror films (for instance, the readers of *Gorezone*). Furthermore, the films are seen as superior to *Ring*, appealing to the knowledge of audiences with a critically discerning view of Asian cinema (and this particular film’s reception in the UK).

Taken with earlier findings regarding genre, it is clear that both 4Digital Asia and Third Window make their films appeal to as many potential UK audiences as possible. They promote both their own DVD releases, and Japanese films as a whole, beyond specific niche markets. No particular set of publications are regularly referred to on the DVD cases. As a result, the review quotes emphasise the films’ diverse characteristics, rather than help to construct a particular brand image for 4Digital and Third Window. However, these findings alone do not completely demonstrate the means by which the distributors emphasise their

⁵⁴ ‘Home’, *LoveHKFilm.com* website, accessed 30/07/2013, <http://www.lovehkfilm.com/index.htm>.

⁵⁵ From the front of the DVD cover for *Funuke, Show Some Love You Losers!*, released by Third Window on 11/05/2009 (see Appendix Two).

⁵⁶ From the front of the DVD cover of *Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost*, released by 4Digital Asia on 19/01/2010 (see Appendix Two).

films' appeal through their packaging. Other elements that are prominent within the DVD covers' have not yet been discussed, are best represented by analysing another pair of examples in-depth.

Naming Directors and Stars: Their Relevance to both Films and DVD Labels

Directors and stars are both displayed prominently on the covers of several of the distributors' DVD releases of Japanese films. 4Digital Asia's packaging for *Tokyo Gore Police* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008) and Third Window's cover for *Kakera: A Piece of Our Life* (dir. Ando Momoko, 2009) are particularly illustrative examples. Unlike the front covers in Figure 1 and 2, the films' covers have both the faces and names of their lead actors displayed (as can be seen in Figures 3 and 4). In addition, the director's name is visible on either the front cover or on the rear. Despite the lack of corresponding imagery displayed alongside the names of the directors, both the directors and stars are significant elements used to promote the films. Moreover, the Japanese cultural background of these directors and stars does not need to be communicated alongside their names and associated images. The distributors' use of the names and images is not simply informative. These figures within the filmmaking process are singled out by Klinger within the detailing of elements that contribute towards consumable identities.⁵⁷ As other writers have also recognised, directors and stars have significance in relation to specific films, and in other contexts outside of them (for example, in the Japanese film industry in general). This is both in regard to the roles of directors and stars in general, and those related to specific films. 4Digital Asia and Third Window particularly use the naming of these figures to their advantage, even if they are likely to be unfamiliar outside of Japan.

⁵⁷ Klinger, *op. cit.*, 15-16.



Figure 3 - The 4Digital Asia DVD cover for *Tokyo Gore Police*.⁵⁸
 Figure 4 - The Third Window DVD cover for *Kakeru*.⁵⁹

There are numerous parallels between the distributors' use of directors and stars, and existing research on these figures. For instance, James Naremore outlines, film criticism and studies of film directors tend to stress their status as 'auteurs', or master filmmakers.⁶⁰ However, Naremore also cautions that they need to be considered alongside other 'historical, social and cultural determinants' that affect film industries.⁶¹ With this in mind, it is useful to take into consideration a view that is put forward by Catherine Grant:

Contemporary auteurism comprises a complex series of interrelated film production, marketing, and reception practices and discourses which are all underpinned by a shared belief in the special capability of an individual agent – the director – to marshal and synthesize the multiple, and usually collective,

⁵⁸ Image from the 4Digital Media website, accessed 30/07/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/asia>.

⁵⁹ Image from the Third Window website, accessed 30/07/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films>.

⁶⁰ James Naremore, 'Authorship', in T. Miller and R. Stam (eds), *A Companion To Film Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp.9-24.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.22.

elements of filmmaking for the purposes of individual expression, or to convey in some way a personal or, at least, “personalized” vision.⁶²

Directors can therefore communicate and represent multiple aspects of the filmmaking process, and become a useful figurehead both for film production and promotion. When seen in this way, parallels with critical perspectives on stars can also be drawn.

Both Jeremy G. Butler and Richard Dyer see star personae as identities that transcend individual media texts that they appear in.⁶³ Furthermore, Dyer believes a star’s image is constructed from multiple texts in which they are featured or mentioned. This means any representations of stars have multiple connotations attached, and the construction of their image signifies various media processes (for example, production, promotion, criticism, etc).⁶⁴ Therefore, within DVD packaging, the emphasis of directors and stars implies that their names and images can provide numerous connotations. In essence, the use of the films’ directors and stars are again signs of the distributors broadening their DVD releases’ appeal within the UK market. And, as found with genre and critical reception, 4Digital Asia and Third Window use these aspects to promote their own identities alongside the films and their status within Japanese cinema.

The title of *Tokyo Gore Police* already suggests a certain image. The film is indeed full of both gore and action, as described through the DVD cover’s synopsis. In comparison to the synopsis and screenshots on the rear of the cover, though, the front image is less overt. There is a cityscape of Tokyo with a sea of blood in the foreground, but the centre of the image is taken up by the film’s lead actress, Shiina Eihi (see Figure 3). She is depicting her character Ruka, complete with samurai sword – her chosen law-enforcement weapon for despatching illicit genetic engineers of human DNA. Underneath the film’s title, and to the

⁶² Catherine Grant, ‘Auteur Machines? Auteurism and the DVD’ (pp.101-15), in Bennett and Brown (eds), *op. cit.*, p.101.

⁶³ Jeremy G. Butler, ‘The star system and Hollywood’, in Hill, J and Gibson, P.C (eds), *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.342-53; Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1998), p.60.

⁶⁴ Dyer, *op. cit.*, pp.60-3.

right of her face, is a caption which identifies her through a previous film performance. She is credited with starring in *Audition* (dir. Miike Takashi, 1999), which was released in the UK under the Tartan Asia Extreme sub-label. The film is being marketed similarly, as the sub-label's films were also heavy on shocks and horrors (particularly *Audition*).⁶⁵ It is also not the only significant aspect of the front cover.

The depiction of the lead actress in a revealing outfit, with a samurai sword, shares connotations with the promotional images used for *Kill Bill Vol. 1* (dir. Quentin Tarantino, 2003). Uma Thurman is the lead actress for this film, and was depicted as wearing a skin-tight outfit while holding a samurai sword in many posters and advertisements, as she does in the film. However, similarities with *Kill Bill Vol.1* illustrate connotations that go beyond simply invoking a particular film made in the USA. As Ian G Mason and Alain Silver have pointed out, in addition to numerous other critics and reviewers, a lot of the iconography of *Kill Bill Vol. 1* homages the *chambara* (sword-play) films that Japan released throughout the 1970s and '80s.⁶⁶ Silver adds to this point by indicating that Hollywood has in fact found inspiration from this genre for several decades, and not just recently.⁶⁷ As a result, it is reductive to see the reference to *Kill Bill* as the only one which is ultimately being signified through the cover image of *Tokyo Gore Police*. Taking Shiina's *Audition* credit into account as well, three specific connotations have been identified. The film is not only meant to appeal to fans of Asia Extreme, but also audiences for action-heavy films from both Hollywood and Japan.

⁶⁵ Joe Cornish, 'Audition', from the *Audition* collector's edition DVD cover, released by Tartan Asia Extreme on 28/06/2004; Chi-Yun Shin, 'Art of branding: Tartan "Asia Extreme" Films', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* (website), No.50 (2008), accessed 31/07/2013, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/TartanDist/index.html>.

⁶⁶ Ian G Mason, 'Gaijin takeaway', *New Statesman*, Vol. 133, 22 November 2004, 38-9; Alain Silver, *The Samurai Film* (New York: Overlook Press, 2005), pp.231-4.

⁶⁷ Silver, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-38.

While in this instance genre again seems to be a major factor, the Third Window DVD release of *Kakera* uses both the film's director and lead actress in contrasting ways. At first, there appear to be several similarities with the *Tokyo Gore Police* cover. As seen in Figure 4, the DVD cover of *Kakera* displays an image of one woman fondling another's underwear, which is arguably as sexually provocative as Shiina's outfit. Below the film's title, the lead actress Mitushima Hikari is credited with another film role in *Love Exposure* (dir. Sono Sion, 2008). The earlier film explores and portrays sexual desires and attractions in its scenes, as does *Kakera*.⁶⁸ But, more importantly, *Love Exposure* was an earlier film distributed on DVD by Third Window. *Kakera* was released in June 2010, and *Love Exposure* had been released back in January of the same year. Mitsushima is not just being used as a star persona to promote *Kakera* through comparable aspects of an earlier film. She is promoted as a recognisable star, and not just an actress. Viewers of previous Third Window releases (such as *Love Exposure*) are believed to be familiar with Mitsushima, and so may wish to view the film to see another performance from her.

Third Window does not just emphasise one cast member's name on the packaging for *Kakera*. The director, Ando Momoko, is credited at the top of the DVD case's front cover (see Figure 2). This may imply that she is an established filmmaking figure within Japan, but in fact this is her first feature film production.⁶⁹ Even so, Ando is being used as a name around which the film's marketing and reception can be centred, in parallel to claims made

⁶⁸ '...Yu [Nishijima Takahiro] is determined to become a true sinner, eventually training to become an expert at sneak upskirt photography. Pornography being the one sin no priest can overlook, Yu gets the attention he's been so desperately seeking from his dad.' – from the plot synopsis on the rear of the *Love Exposure* DVD cover, released by Third Window on 25/01/2010. On the cover, the film's rating guide also states that it contains 'very strong bloody violence and sex references'.

'Based on the best-selling manga 'Love Vibes' by Erika Sakurazawa and featuring a soundtrack by James Iha, former guitarist of Smashing Pumpkins, 'Kakera' is a delicately-nuanced portrait of two very different women... the two begin an all-encompassing relationship that draws Haru [Mitsushima Hikari] away from her dissatisfying routine and into a new and more emotionally fulfilling area of her life.' – from the plot synopsis on the rear of the *Kakera* DVD cover, released by Third Window on 21/06/2010. On the cover, the film's rating guide also states that it contains 'strong sex'.

⁶⁹ 'Momoko Ando', The Internet Movie Database (IMDb), accessed 31/07/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3614508/>.

by Grant about film directors in general.⁷⁰ Her name gives additional meaning to the various aspects of the film that are detailed on the DVD cover. The casting of Mitsushima, the music composed by James Iha (formerly in the band Smashing Pumpkins), and the summation of the film as ‘a delicately nuanced portrait of two very different women’ are all suggested to be linked to Ando’s decisions as the film’s director (which is a role prominently displayed on the front cover).⁷¹ Third Window can then use Ando’s name and the film as a reference point for further DVD releases. For example, *Instant Swamp* (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2009) was released by Third Window a month before *Kakera*. It states that the film is from the director of *Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers* (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2005), which Third Window had released a year earlier. The names of directors can therefore be a useful means of promoting a DVD release through references to earlier films, which then act as further promotion of a distributors’ back catalogue.

The distributors do not each strictly use directors and stars in these respective ways. 4Digital Asia and Third Window use either of these means to help promote the films through their packaging. Following the release of *Tokyo Gore Police*, the film’s title and director Nishimura Yoshihiro are constantly used as a benchmark for subsequent 4Digital Asia releases. ‘From the creators of Tokyo Gore Police’ is stated on the covers of *Samurai Princess* (dir. Kaji Kengo, 2009) and *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009), as Nishimura assisted in the production of both.⁷² Director Nakashima Tetsuya is used similarly when he is credited as the writer on Third Window’s cover for *Lala Pipo* (dir. Miyano Masayuki, 2009) and the director of *Kamikaze*

⁷⁰ Grant, *op. cit.*, p.101.

⁷¹ The quote is taken from the rear of the *Kakera* cover, *op. cit.* – the information regarding Mitsushima and Iha appears on the front.

⁷² Quote taken from the front of the DVD covers for *Samurai Princess* (released 26/10/2009) and *Vampire Girl Vs Frankenstein Girl* (released 15/03/2010) – (see Appendix Two) – Nishimura’s credits as special effects creator and co-director (respectively) are also detailed on the rear of the covers.

Girls (2004), which is also an earlier Third Window release.⁷³ The *Kamikaze Girls* cover then provides additional credits within its synopsis, specifically relating to stars. Fukuda Kyoko is mentioned as an actress that also appeared in *Ring 2* (dir. Nakata Hideo 1999) and *Dolls* (dir. Kitano Takeshi, 2002), and Tsuchiya Anna is credited with appearing in *Dororo* (dir. Shiota Akihiko, 2007) and *Sakuran* (dir. Ninagawa Mika, 2006).⁷⁴ The names promote both *Kamikaze Girls* and the other films through the use of intertextual references.

Directors and stars therefore have particular significance as they aid the promotion of new releases (for instance, in relation to associated films which potential audiences may have already seen). But the directors and stars can also become established within certain markets, such as the UK, through the releases of distributors such as 4Digital Asia and Third Window. It is clear that both distributors do not restrict themselves to a few significant aspects of the films which can be prolifically displayed on their DVD covers (such as genre and critical reception). The distributors use various elements to characterise their whole catalogue of films released, as well as a certain film's status within a specific genre or director's career in Japanese cinema. In addition, the labels do not construct an image of themselves where they are branded by their association with only one or two directors. 4Digital Asia and Third Window also emphasise other cultural contexts and interrelations within the DVD packaging of films they release. Far from simply reinforcing meanings already detailed, these additional findings demonstrate other aspects of the films' consumable identities which the distributors communicate through characteristics in the DVD covers.

⁷³ Credits appear on the front of the DVD covers for *Kamikaze Girls* (released by Third Window on 12/01/2009) and *Lala Pipo* (released by Third Window on 08/02/2010).

⁷⁴ Credits appear on the rear of the DVD cover for *Kamikaze Girls*, *op. cit.*

Cultural and Intertextual Links for Films and DVD Labels

Exploring additional aspects within the DVD releases' packaging requires that both *Tokyo Gore Police* and *Kakera* are highlighted again as examples. One element not yet addressed in the analysis of their covers is the mention of the films' appearances at film festivals (see Figures 3 and 4). 4Digital Asia's front cover for *Tokyo Gore Police* says the film won an award at the Fant-Asia Film Festival. Third Window's cover for *Kakera* also makes significant use of its appearance at festivals, mentioning Kinotayo, Raindance, Stockholm and Glasgow immediately below the film's title. As will be explained, film festivals are events whose names can be used by the distributors to attach additional connotations, as well as to emphasise specific genres and contexts of critical reception.

Furthermore, *Kakera* is described as an adaptation of a *manga* on the rear of its DVD cover. While this was mentioned earlier in the chapter, it is more significant than simply being source material which inspired a director to make a film. *Manga* is a separate medium, with its own audience and characteristics, as are books and other media adapted for film.⁷⁵ A film's origins within a *manga*, or indeed any other media, adds another layer of meaning to it, as does the film's screening at one or several film festivals. These types of media and events are often already branded, but 4Digital Asia and Third Window do not highlight this information alone. The distributors use these facts to add to the consumable identity for the DVD release, rather than repeat or emphasise other elements already displayed on the covers.

Within existing film research, festivals and intertextual links to other media are claimed as areas and processes in which many meanings are created. Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window use the various meanings attached to festivals as much as possible. Janet

⁷⁵ Erik Hedling, 'Framing Tolkien: Trailers, High Concept, and the Ring', in E. Mathijs (ed), *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), pp.225-37.

Harbord provides several reasons as to why film festivals are significant within her book,

Film Cultures:

An interdependency of nation and film culture exists at the heart of the festival event. Festivals are not simply spaces of commerce free from the state, nor are they localities disconnected from the national context. Festivals in Europe remain committed to a range of activities and purposes; in addition to marketing and evaluating film are the components of training, education and a commitment to cultural diversity.⁷⁶

Due to these intertwined aspects, a particular film festival can carry multiple connotations, such as expectations for certain types of films; a certain cultural mix; or a combination of both. An example of this is again provided by returning to the work of Egan. Her exploration of the video nasties includes examinations of festivals where these films were screened. In the year 2000, and soon after, films that had been banned twenty years ago (or earlier) were shown at a variety of UK festivals, ranging from Bradford to Edinburgh.⁷⁷ As well as their historical context, critical opinions were disseminated to audiences before the screenings, meaning that the place of exhibition and processes within it provided additional interpretations of the films.⁷⁸ Illustrating these aspects of film festivals demonstrates how significant they are when mentioned on a DVD cover.

Intertextual references to other media are also utilised by 4Digital Asia and Third Window, and are highly significant as well. This is in addition to other films as points of comparison, which was mentioned earlier in regard to discussions of genre. A film's origins as a story within a comic, novel or other media text can potentially provide various meanings for filmmakers and audiences. For instance, Erik Hedling utilises Justin Wyatt's notion of 'the book, the hook and the look' in his case study of the *Lord of the Rings* films (dir. Peter Jackson, 2001-2003), explaining that they are three key points which are used in the

⁷⁶ Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: Sage, 2002), p.73.

⁷⁷ Egan, *op. cit.*, pp.235-44.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.244.

marketing for high concept, or blockbuster, Hollywood films.⁷⁹ Hedling mentions that J.R.R. Tolkien's original novels do not just provide preconceptions of aspects of the films' content and genre, but also expectations regarding the films' audience (which were potentially very large, due to the novel's popularity).⁸⁰ Audiences' interpretations and opinions regarding the books can then greatly affect their experiences of viewing the films. Both Kate Egan and Martin Barker found (again, in relation to *Lord of the Rings*) that fans of the books had certain expectations from the films, but appreciated them as additional experiences to the book's narrative through engagement with special features on their DVD releases.⁸¹ Martin Barker and Kate Brooks have also found that comics can provide similar audience expectations within their research of the film version of *Judge Dredd* (dir. Danny Cannon, 1995).⁸² Therefore, there are various meanings that distributors can utilise when including the names of film festivals and related media on their DVD covers. Familiarity with a specific film festival or media text is not necessarily required either, as the DVD packaging can help to identify these aspects.

To return to *Tokyo Gore Police* as an example, the mention of its award-winning screening at the Fant-Asia Film Festival seems small compared to the other words and imagery used on the DVD cover (see Figure 3). Although, the award logo both emphasises the other elements within the front cover, and stands out from them. The Fant-Asia Film Festival, held in Montreal, Canada, is an event which screens films of various genres from, not only Asia, but all over the world.⁸³ The fact that the film won an accolade at such a large

⁷⁹ Hedling, *op. cit*; Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (University of Texas Press, 1994), pp.20-22.

⁸⁰ Hedling, *op. cit*, p.227.

⁸¹ Kate Egan and Martin Barker, 'The Books, the DVDs, the Extras and Their Lovers', in M. Barker and E. Mathijs (eds), *Watching The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), pp.83-102.

⁸² Martin Barker and Kate Brooks, *Knowing Audiences: Judge Dredd – Its Friends, Fans and Foes* (University of Luton Press, 1998).

⁸³ 'Sponsorship and Advertising', *Fant-Asia Film Festival* website, accessed 31/07/2013, <http://www.fantasiafest.com/pre2012/en/sponsorship/>.

event bestows a level of critical appreciation and recognition, in addition to the quotes from reviews already displayed on the DVD cover. In conjunction with the cover's imagery, the Fant-Asia award signifies what types of films are highly appreciated at this particular festival (particularly those with girls, gore, and various types of weaponry). *Tokyo Gore Police* is both exceptional within the context of the festival, and illustrative of it, due to the content which the DVD cover alludes to. Furthermore, it reflects back on 4Digital Asia – the distributor has sourced a film that both stands out from and characterises a particular cultural event.

The *Kakera* cover includes similar elements related to festivals, despite the film not winning any awards. The front cover explains where the film was screened internationally (see Figure 4). Such associations make it appear that *Kakera* appeals to a critically discerning European audience of film critics and connoisseurs. Moreover, the Kinotayo festival is one in France that only screens films that have been made in Japan,⁸⁴ while an international mix of films is shown at Raindance, Stockholm and Glasgow.⁸⁵ As a consequence, *Kakera* is portrayed as a film that has an international profile due to its festival screenings. Third Window is then portrayed as a distributor that believes that these films (and Japanese cinema in general) have an appeal outside of film festivals by releasing them on DVD in the UK. This is in combination with other markets that Third Window believes the film will attract (and in addition to elements relating to genre, critical reception and cast and crew members). On the rear of the cover, the film's story is explained as adapted from a *manga*. The audience for *manga* in western countries, such as the UK, is known to have rapidly grown in the last

⁸⁴ 'Contact', *Kinotayo Festival* website, accessed 31/07/2013, <http://www.kinotayo.fr/contact.php>; Gavin J. Blair, 'Winners of Kinotayo Japanese Film Fest Announced in Paris', *Hollywood Reporter* website, accessed 31/07/2013, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/winners-kinotayo-japanese-film-fest-266587>.

⁸⁵ 'About Raindance', *Raindance Film Festival* website, accessed 31/07/2013, <http://www.raindance.org/about-raindance/>; 'About Us: History', *Stockholm Film Festival* website, accessed 31/07/2013; 'Press Releases: 31/07/13: Most Ambitious Glasgow Film Festival ever closes with record admissions', *Glasgow Film Festival* website, accessed 31/07/2013, http://www.glasgowfilm.org/festival/press/press_releases.

decade.⁸⁶ Therefore, Third Window is highlighting another potential audience for *Kakera*, alongside its sexually thematic content and its status as a critically acclaimed foreign film.

These cultural contexts and interrelations add to the DVD releases' consumable identities within other examples of the distributors' covers, and not just *Tokyo Gore Police* and *Kakera*. 4Digital Asia also emphasises certain films' origins within popular *manga* in addition to their genre traits and critical reception. The latter elements have already been mentioned in regard to the *20th Century Boys* films and *Death Note*.⁸⁷ In addition to these aspects, the format of the packaging for the films underscores their status as *manga* adaptations. For *20th Century Boys: Chapter One*, a booklet is included in the cover's packaging that explains the history of the manga, the work of the directors and producers, and various visuals and props which are inspired by images within the *manga*. The *Death Note* packaging includes a similar booklet, which also details the earlier careers of the film's main cast. Following on from elements already discussed in the chapter, the emphasis of a film as a *manga* adaptation can be seen as another aspect of the consumable identity within the DVD cover. 4Digital Asia uses *manga* as another way to promote the film to audiences, as well as illustrate various elements (particularly genre, cast and crew, etc). Other types of media can be used similarly, as well as particular events, such as other film festivals from around the world.

Further examples help to illustrate how the use of film festivals and other media texts aid promoting the labels, and not just the titles being released. The 4Digital Asia DVD cover of *Starfish Hotel* (dir. John Williams, 2006) explains that the film won awards at festivals in Luxembourg and Austin, Texas.⁸⁸ Third Window's front cover for *Love Exposure* also

⁸⁶ Hye-Kyung Lee, 'Between fan culture and copyright infringement: manga scanlation', *Media, Culture and Society*, 36:6 (2009), 1011-22.

⁸⁷ For images of these examples, please see Appendix Two.

⁸⁸ From the front of the DVD cover of *Starfish Hotel*, released by 4Digital Asia on 20/10/2008 (see Appendix Two).

reveals that it won awards at the Fant-Asia and Berlin festivals.⁸⁹ Another Third Window example then illustrates how it is not only *manga* adaptations that have a significant presence within Japanese cinema. The synopsis for *Kamikaze Girls* states that the film's story is 'taken from the pages of favourite cult author Novala Takemoto'.⁹⁰ Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window correspondingly use such elements to create a consumable identity for each film, as well as emphasise other elements (for example, genres, cast and crew members and sources of critical reception). These characteristics then become part of each distributor's consumable identity. They are not just releasing Japanese films into the UK to appeal to fans of Japanese cinema and culture alone. All the characteristics within the packaging have been displayed through words and images to attract as many audiences as possible. This is not just to maximise DVD sales for 4Digital Asia and Third Window. The distributors are also emphasising the diversity of Japanese cinema – which helps identify the distributors as distinct, and not just their films.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the packaging examined throughout the chapter can be seen as ways in which the distributors distinguish their releases as Japanese films. Focusing on genre traits can emphasise how a film is an example of a particular genre, or a Japanese interpretation of a genre, by singling out certain elements within the film or comparing it to others. Critical reception can provide further generic comparisons, as well as articulate a film's qualities that are distinctly Japanese or different from others. Directors and stars can then be used to illustrate a film's popularity and history within Japan, as well as any potential links to other Japanese media (such as *manga*). Furthermore, recognition of certain films at

⁸⁹ From the front of the DVD cover of *Love Exposure*, *op. cit.* (see Appendix Two).

⁹⁰ From the rear of the DVD cover for *Kamikaze Girls*, *op. cit.*

festivals illustrates how acclaimed and popular particular Japanese films can be. All these aspects of critical acclaim, genre traits, and other elements within the films, are used to distinguish the DVD labels as well as their film releases. 4Digital Asia and Third Window are showing how varied Japanese cinema is, and how the films can appeal to a wide range of audiences within the UK, particularly through their DVD releases. Through emphasising the films' diverse characteristics, a similarly diverse range of characteristics are found on the DVD cases. This is evident within the images displayed throughout the chapter and in Appendix Two, which demonstrate multiple non-branded images. Even the films' titles are not printed uniformly on all the cases, with only the distributors' logos appearing very discreetly (as can be seen in Figures 3 and 4). The appearance of the DVD cases therefore reinforces the diverse and broad appeal that 4Digital Asia and Third Window are aiming for, in addition to the chapter's findings.

The distributors are claiming that their films are distinct due to elements that can appeal to several potential audiences. As a result, 4Digital Asia and Third Window are portrayed as labels which aim to attract a diverse range of viewers to their DVD releases, and not just fans of Japanese cinema. None of the aspects identified within the packaging marginalise viewers who are not knowledgeable of Japanese cinema, due to the assorted range of words and images used. These characteristics within the packaging have been found by exploring how these physical commodities communicate consumable identities, and by taking guidance from earlier examinations of DVD and VHS packaging.⁹¹ What the chapter has shown, in using the same approach, is that the packaging gives each distributor a consumable identity, as well as each film. The covers are just one element of 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's DVD releases. They highlight certain aspects of the films within physical commodities that are at the heart of the DVD labels' distribution and marketing

⁹¹ Egan, *op. cit*; Klinger, *op. cit*.

practices. The commodities do not just provide access to the films on DVD discs, but other material as well. The next chapter will analyse how the distributors also use the discs' special features to make their DVD releases distinct.

Chapter Two: DVD Special Features:
Exploring the Purposes of Promotional Material as Additional Viewing Experiences¹

Within studies of DVD media, special features (or extras) are usually interpreted as promotional material. From 2002 onwards, several critical analyses of media on DVDs have detailed how such material was originally disseminated to reviewers and journalists to aid the promotion of a particular film (often as making-ofs, interview footage, outtakes and deleted scenes).² Now, such material is often found accompanying a film on a DVD, or on a second separate disc, signifying that they are intended to be viewed after watching a film. Studies of extras often conclude that a similar promotional purpose is fulfilled by DVD special features. However, these conclusions ignore what different types of extras can tell researchers about distribution. In 2004, Deborah and Mark Parker stated that, because of the special features on a DVD, it is ‘essentially a re-orientation of the film’, meaning ‘the DVD constitutes a new edition, and it should be seen in these terms.’³ According to Rayna Denison, interpreting them can be complex because any extra feature ‘potentially impacts on and changes the meanings of the others depending on which features audience members engage with.’⁴ Therefore, extras can greatly affect the viewing experience of a film, especially when a distributor’s disc is the only means of accessing a film and its extras within the UK.

¹ Extracts of this chapter were adapted for publication – Jonathan Wroot, ‘Special Features and Stage Greetings: Whose Promotional Material is it anyway?’, *Frames Cinema Journal* (online), No.3 (2013), <http://framescinemajournal.com/article/dvd-special-features-and-stage-greetings-whose-promotional-material-is-it-anyway-2/>

² Robert A. Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus, ‘Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View: The *Fight Club* DVD as Digital Closet’, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19:1 (2002), 21-43; Paul Arthur, ‘(In)Dispensable Cinema: Confessions of a “Making-Of” Addict’, *Film Comment*, 40:4 (2004), 38-42; Robert A. Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus, ‘The Digital Auteur: Branding Identity on the *Monsters, Inc. DVD*’, *Western Journal of Communication*, 69:2 (2005), 109-128; Graeme Harper, ‘DVD and the New Cinema of Complexity’, in N. Rombes (ed), *New Punk Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp.89-101; Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (University of California Press, 2006), pp.54-90; John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 298-306; James Bennett and Tom Brown (eds), *Film and Television After DVD* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

³ Deborah Parker and Mark Parker, ‘Directors and DVD Commentary: The Specifics of Intention’ (13-22), *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62:1 (2004), 14.

⁴ Rayna Denison, ‘It’s a Bird! It’s a Plane! No, it’s DVD! *Superman, Smallville*, and the Production (of) Melodrama’ (pp.160-79), in I. Gordon, M. Jancovich and M.P. McAllister (eds), *Film and Comic Books* (University Press of Mississippi, 2007), p.178.

This is the case for the special features on the DVD releases of Japanese films from 4Digital Asia and Third Window. As a consequence, it is necessary to analyse them in-depth to determine how their characteristics highlight the labels' distribution practices as distinctive in the UK market. Unlike the packaging of the DVD releases (discussed in Chapter One), the special features are not a physical commodity constructed by the distributors. They constitute some of the media texts included on a DVD, but are separate from the film itself and are accessed through the disc's menus.⁵ Therefore, they are integral to the viewing experience on the discs that both 4Digital Asia and Third Window package and distribute as DVD labels. Furthermore, they signify additional viewing material and experiences that the distributors share with UK viewers and use in order to make their DVD releases distinct.

The extras are texts with their own characteristics that can be analysed thoroughly. Craig Hight has written the most detailed and versatile method for examining special features, in order to investigate the making-of documentaries on the *Lord of The Rings* (*LOTR*) discs (dir. Peter Jackson, 2001-2003).⁶ As with other studies of DVD media, he concludes that the extras act as another means of film promotion for filmmakers and production studios. But Hight also discovers how these particular extras wish to promote the *LOTR* films and why. There are two patterns of discourse conveyed through the special features: an assertion of the films' authenticity (as adaptations of the original books by JRR Tolkien), and the sophistication of the digital technologies used in their production.⁷ As Hight has specifically explored the discursive characteristics of the extras, his guidance can be integrated into the multiple method approach being used to investigate the DVD releases from 4Digital Asia and Third Window.

⁵ Jo T. Smith, 'DVD Technologies and the Art of Control' (pp.129-48), in Bennett and Brown (eds), *op. cit.*, pp.140-1.

⁶ Craig Hight, 'Making-of Documentaries on DVD: *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and Special Editions', *The Velvet Light Trap*, No.56 (2005), 4-17.

⁷ Hight, *op. cit.*, 13.

DVD special features are proof of various meanings and messages that filmmakers wish to convey, and ultimately highlight what they are trying to tell audiences about a particular film. Hight's method of revealing these intentions is versatile in that it bridges a gap between two points of view on new media formats. Lev Manovich's perspective interprets much contemporary digital media as accessible through a database (for example, as a DVD, or CD-ROM), so that an array of texts and materials can be viewed or read in any order that a consumer wishes.⁸ Essentially, each text on a DVD disc is argued to have considerable potential influence on a media viewing experience. Robert A. Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus instead see additional texts in digital formats (such as DVD) as providing alternative or preferred interpretations of a film or media text.⁹ In devising a number of steps that detail how DVD extras should be analysed, Hight addresses these two perspectives. Individual extras can be closely examined, as well as potential links with other texts or extras on the DVDs. Hight's steps, adapted for the analysis of all special features (and not just making-ofs),¹⁰ require assessment of:

1. the nature of the content of each extra;
2. the relationship these extras have with the feature film as central parts of a complex layering of possible readings of this text (from the suspension of disbelief inherent to a reading of the film, to the detailed presentation of the industrial techniques behind the creation of that fictional narrative);
3. the relationship they have with other extras.¹¹

⁸ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p.215.

⁹ Brookey and Westerfelhaus, 'Hiding Homoeroticism...', *op. cit.*, 25.

¹⁰ Hight refers to these specific features as MODs – Hight, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Hight's original steps are essentially the same as these: '1. the nature of the content of each MOD segment... 2. the possible combinations of MODs as part of trajectories, shaped through by the disc's interface, through the DVD's content... 3. the relationship these extras have with the feature film as central parts of a complex layering of possible readings of this text (from the suspension of disbelief inherent to a reading of the film, to the detailed presentation of the industrial techniques behind the creation of that fictional narrative)... 4. the relationship with other extras, with their own combinations of narrative and database forms' – quote taken from Hight, *op. cit.*, 14. When taking into account various types of DVD extra, points 2 and 4 have the same aims.

As a result of addressing these points, the chapter will demonstrate how the extras assist in making the DVD releases of 4Digital Asia and Third Window distinct within the UK market.

The distributors include a diverse amount of material within their special features, and the discs are often the only means of viewing this content. Footage from the DVD extras is not available on either of the companies' websites. The UK DVDs distributed by 4Digital Asia and Third Window (from 2008 to 2010) are often the first English-language releases for these films.¹² The extra material that is included on the DVDs has also been exclusively licensed for their discs.¹³ 4Digital Asia's DVDs all state that: '[t]he Owner of the copyright hereunder has licensed the material contained in this videogram for non-commercial private use only and prohibits any other use, copying or reproduction in whole or part.'¹⁴ Third Window's DVDs all include a similar statement: 'This DVD is not to be exported, re-supplied or distributed by way of trade outside the UK and Eire without a proper license from Third Window Films.'¹⁵ Therefore, in addition to the titles they release, the distributors provide exclusive information regarding certain aspects of the films. The chapter will present case studies which demonstrate the purposes of re-circulating promotional material on both 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's DVDs. The extras are evidence of film promotion through directors, cast members, theatrical releases and material which directly addresses its viewers. The distributors' use of the footage creates an additional viewing experience that makes the disc releases and their special features distinct, rather than simply re-using the

¹² The following DVDs' UK release dates can be confirmed in Appendix One:

The only films from 4Digital Asia's catalogue that were already available in the USA were (in order of DVD release date): *Black Kiss* (dir. Tezuka Macoto, 2006), *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2006), *Tokyo Gore Police* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008) and *Meatball Machine* (dir. Yamaguchi Yudai and Yamamoto Jun'ichi, 2005). All 4Digital Asia's other titles released in the UK were available subsequently from USA distributors, except for: *Starfish Hotel* (dir. John Williams, 2006), *Cyborg She* (dir. Jae-young Kwak, 2008), *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess* (dir. Higuchi Shinji, 2008), and *Kaiji* (dir. Sato Toya, 2009).

In Third Window's catalogue, the only film that was already available on DVD in the USA was *Kamikaze Girls* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2004).

¹³ None of the footage discussed in the chapter was found through video-streaming websites, such as *YouTube*.

¹⁴ All of 4Digital Asia's DVDs have this statement printed on the rear of their cases.

¹⁵ All of Third Window's releases have this statement printed on the rear of their DVD cases.

material to promote a film's disc release following its theatrical showing in Japan. Though there is evidence of the latter, there is not often an equivalent for a UK release – so 4Digital Asia and Third Window both have to formulate additional viewing experiences from this material to distinguish their releases.

The Purpose of Documenting the Director's Role

Directors make up a large proportion of footage within DVD extras. Whether as part of a making-of, interview, or as an appearance at a film's premiere, the director's comments regarding a film's production are often caught on camera. Paul Arthur argues that directors often receive 'the lion's share' of coverage in DVD special features.¹⁶ On many 4Digital Asia and Third Window discs, this is indeed the case. The 4Digital Asia DVDs of the *Death Note* films – *Death Note* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006), *Death Note: The Last Name* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006) and *Death Note: L Change The World* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 2008) – provide illustrative examples. These discs contain a vast range of special features, most of which are types also found on both distributors' other releases.¹⁷ Within these various extras, the director is a constant and prominent figure. The making-of, a common feature on all three of these DVDs (and many of the other releases), particularly demonstrates this trait. Such characteristics have been found by examining the making-ofs' content, their relationship to aspects of their respective films, and their links to other extras. 4Digital Asia and Third Window not only provide footage that documents the director's role, but they present his perspective as an experience to share with DVD viewers.

In this respect, the director is utilised in a way that goes beyond their figurehead status, which was highlighted in Chapter One. In the special features, the director is not just a

¹⁶ Arthur, *op. cit.*, 40.

¹⁷ The content of the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVD special features can be seen in Appendix One.

name, but a person who converses and interacts with actors, cameras and colleagues during filming. Such a perspective within making-ofs has been noticed before. In older footage, Paul Arthur notes: ‘There is a peculiar tendency to celebrate older studio directors through a metaphoric conjunction of movie engineer and lyrical composer’.¹⁸ Furthermore, after examining several making-ofs for later productions, Barbara Klinger concludes that ‘DVD provides ample opportunity for affirming authorship’.¹⁹ Parker and Parker agree that, in all types of special features, ‘what emerges in this form is the intentional practice carried out by a particular director from scene to scene’.²⁰ Following these claims, the director is both elevated and emphasised within DVD extras. However, the director’s perspective is not the only one through which filmmaking is documented on the DVDs released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window. Both the director and cast are often used to provide an insight into a film’s production which is documented within the extras in order to share the director’s experiences with DVD viewers.

The DVDs for *Death Note* and *Death Note: The Last Name* include typical making-ofs within their special features. In these extras, the director speaks to a camera in response to questions asked, as do the stars, in addition to footage of the cast and crew filming certain scenes. Other explanatory points are also displayed through captions, such as the director’s decisions on how to shoot a particular scene or achieve a specific effect.²¹ It is the actions of the director that are often central within this footage, in order to convey their experiences to the DVD viewers. Kaneko’s tight schedule for making the two *Death Note* films is explained in both making-ofs (as the films were made back to back so that they could be released in the same year). It is particularly emphasised within the making-of for the second film, as the

¹⁸ Arthur, *op. cit.*, 41.

¹⁹ Barbara Klinger, ‘The DVD Cinephile: Viewing Heritages and Home Film Cultures’ (pp.19-44), in Bennett and Brown, *op. cit.*, p.39.

²⁰ Parker and Parker, *op. cit.*, 20.

²¹ These captions are subtitled in English, as are the cast and crew’s dialogue, and any narration that occurs.

director is told of the positive reviews and box-office success of the first film while on set. He is the last to be congratulated with flowers and champagne after completing the final scenes for the second film, whereas he had earlier congratulated the actors as they finished their scenes. Relationships with the director also convey aspects of his role, through either the cast's comments or those of the director. For instance, in the making-of for *Death Note: L Change The World*, the actor Takashima Masanobu comments on working with director Nakata, as do other cast members. However, the actor also states that he is a fan of the director's other films, particularly *Joyu-rei* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 1996 – known in English as *Don't Look Up*).²² Therefore, the special features give insights into the director's role, through either the documentation of his actions or the perspectives of actors. The director is an individual who signifies a particular personality or a certain set of meanings according to their colleagues.

The *Death Note* making-ofs are not the only examples where the director's role is documented, and do not illustrate the only means by which it is conveyed.²³ The 4Digital Asia DVD of *Starfish Hotel* (dir. John Williams, 2006) intercuts interview excerpts with the director, in English, alongside footage of him on set as he speaks in Japanese to other cast and crew members.²⁴ In addition, the making-of includes comments from the actors, and the interview footage with the director is included as a separate feature on the disc. Both the director's own experiences of making the film, and those of the cast, are documented on this DVD. Here, the director's perspective is not the only one given in regard to the film's production, but viewers are given the option of hearing more of his views.

²² 'Don't Look Up (1996)', from *The Internet Movie Database (IMDb)*, accessed 27/03/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0229499/>.

²³ The content of the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVD special features can be seen in Appendix One.

²⁴ John Williams is originally from Wales, but now resides in Japan where he makes films in the Japanese language – 'John Williams', 100 Meter Films website, accessed 27/03/2013, <http://www.100meterfilms.com/en/about/staff/john.html>.

However, the director can sometimes be the only crew member interviewed within the special features. Despite this limitation, their insights can still highlight the collaborative process that they undergo during a film's production. On the Third Window DVD for *Kakera* (dir. Ando Momoko, 2009), the director is interviewed before a screening of the film in London (where she also speaks in English). Ando is questioned on her experiences of filmmaking and her background, in regards to her education in England and actors in her family (particularly her father and sister). This allows her to subsequently discuss her preferences for certain colours and images in the film, but she also mentions anecdotes about meeting and then working with the female leads of the film (Mitsushima Hikari and Nakamura Eriko). The director's insights therefore become a potential means of understanding the influences on the making of this film, as well as how certain cast and crew members interacted with each other.

As this section has shown, the director illuminates the processes involved in making a film through being documented within the DVD special features. Furthermore, the distributors' intentions for this material are evident, and not just the promotional purposes for which the footage was recorded in Japan. The director is not just a name linked to a film, but is seen and heard in regard to their actions concerning a film's production. When the director is being interviewed during or after a film shoot, or simply being recorded while they direct actors and crew members, their experiences are being shared. When available, as a making-of, interview, or other type of extra, 4Digital Asia and Third Window see the footage of a director as a further viewing experience that makes their DVD releases' content distinct. The extras could be potentially used as footage to help promote a film's DVD release, but the distributors only make them viewable on the DVDs. 4Digital Asia and Third Window recognise that the experiences of the directors can potentially be significant to the DVDs' viewers, whether they are conveyed by a member of the cast or a director. Furthermore, the

insights of the cast also illustrate another set of experiences that can be documented within the special features and provided to DVD viewers.

The Purpose of Documenting the Cast

Footage of the cast members provides additional material in the extras on UK DVDs of Japanese films. They have already been highlighted in regard to making-ofs and interviews that include the directors. While they help to provide an insight into the director's actions through discussion of a film's production, the comments and experiences of the cast are prominent too. In taking steps to examine the content of making-ofs and other features, as well as their relationship to the films and other extras, the importance of the cast members becomes evident. One particular example provided by Third Window illustrates this finding amongst their other DVD releases and those from 4Digital Asia. The making-of for *Love Exposure* (dir. Sono Sion, 2008) records the comments of many of the lead and supporting actors in between the filming of certain scenes on set. The director is spoken to as well, but the actors do not always discuss working with him. Different topics are spoken about by the cast, showing that they wish to share certain aspects of their experiences. Many of the other 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs include such footage in their extras, and further examples will be used to demonstrate this pattern. As a consequence, the cast are the centre of attention within many DVD extras, in comparison to the prominence of the director – though both can be used by the distributors to distinguish their releases.

The role of a film's cast members within DVD extras has been outlined before. But their roles are often seen as limited to ones that aid a film's promotion and intended interpretation. Paul Arthur states that 'earnest' exchanges with actors frequently punctuate

making-ofs, often to aid the representation of director's personalities.²⁵ Brookey and Westerfelhaus also find that cast members are regularly featured in audio commentaries, and their views can often affirm a director's intended reading of a film's narrative.²⁶ Nicola J. Evans has then found that actors can literally be used to narrate and present certain information to viewers of making-ofs and other features, in a similar fashion to examples found by John Caldwell.²⁷ However, they do not suggest that actors are also sharing their experiences with viewers in order to achieve these aims. The special features on the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs significantly demonstrate these experiences, in addition to aspects which signify the promotion or interpretation of a film and its narrative. Comparisons can be made between these findings and those highlighted in Chapter One (particularly those concerning how stars transcend their media texts),²⁸ but the footage in the extras also goes beyond the commercial uses that the cast represent to the distributors.

The making-of for *Love Exposure* documents much more than how the film's scenes were shot. The special feature is one hour long, and is found on a disc separate from the film. Many of the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs have their films and extras on the same disc.²⁹ Their making-ofs are usually between 20 to 30 minutes long and do not often amount up to 60 minutes. Also, the DVD extras all share similar traits in their making-ofs – footage of the cast and crew on set, intercut with comments, interview footage or narration from either the actors or director. As there is a large cast in *Love Exposure*, their experiences on set could justify the length of the film's making-of. Furthermore, the film's final cut is four hours

²⁵ Arthur, *op. cit.*, 41.

²⁶ Brookey and Westerfelhaus, 'Hiding Homoeroticism...', *op. cit.*, 33-40.

²⁷ John Caldwell, 'Prefiguring DVD Bonus Tracks: Making-ofs and Behind-the-scenes as Historic Television Programming Strategies Prototypes', in Bennett and Brown, *op. cit.*, pp.149-71; Nicola J. Evans, "Undoing the magic? DVD extras and the pleasure behind the scenes" (587-600), *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 24:4 (2010), 587.

²⁸ Jeremy G. Butler, 'The star system and Hollywood', in Hill, J and Gibson, P.C (eds), *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.342-53; Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1998), p.60.

²⁹ See Appendix One.

in length. But it is not just the amount of acting on set, and the filming of scenes, that is detailed in this special feature.

Interpretations of the film's story via the thoughts of the cast are also provided, rather than as part of a separate feature (such as an audio commentary). These comments often lead to anecdotes from the cast, on working with the director and other actors. Subsequently, this can sometimes lead to the actors musing on the current state of their careers, in regard to previous work they have done and what they hope their work on the film allows them to do next. The two young leads in *Love Exposure*, Mitsuhima Hikari and Nishijima Takahiro, particularly make these statements. This potentially adds extra meaning to the end of the making-of, when they are congratulated and presented with flowers by the director (a gesture which they both reciprocate), as it signifies a milestone in their acting careers. Furthermore, the wider context of the actors' careers and personalities are being used to make the viewing experiences on the DVDs distinct, and not just for documenting a particular film's production.

Similar anecdotes appear within many other 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs. The *Death Note: L Change The World* and *20th Century Boys* making-ofs also emphasise the actors' perspectives. This is also the case with anecdotes in shorter extras, such as the making-of for *Kaiji* (dir. Sato Toya, 2009 – released by 4Digital Asia) and the interviews for *Fine, Totally Fine* (dir. Fujita Yosuke, 2007- released by Third Window). Viewers of these extras are not just sharing in the experiences of actors in regard to a particular film. In almost all instances where the films' production is documented, it is evident that the films are being presented as important moments within the actors' lives and careers. Whether or not these actors are established stars in Japan, their emphasis within the UK DVD extras means that they are being highlighted as recognisable personalities in the Japanese film industry because

of the distributors' inclusion of this material (which does not simply illustrate the cast as significant in relation to a specific film).

It is not only the making-ofs which potentially place the films and the actors' experiences in the context of their overall careers. Other special features can accompany the making-ofs, and can give alternate perspectives. The 4Digital Asia release of *Yo Yo Girl Cop* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2006) includes a making-of as well as interviews with cast and crew members. In addition, one interview sees the lead actress, Matsuura Aya, discuss playing the film's title character with another actress, Saito Yuki. Upon viewing this feature, anyone previously unaware becomes informed of the film's origins as a Japanese television series, in which Saito was the lead. Not only that, but the film is seen as a significant point in Matsuura's career. It was an action role that required great exertion through stunts and training with yo-yos, but also an iconic one. Matsuura sees it as a great opportunity to re-interpret a character that already has a history within Japan, and mentions this to Saito. Here, the context of these stars and their characters in Japan is directly explained through the DVD extras, showing how the distributors also wish to use this context to distinguish their disc releases and the content within them.

However, the DVD labels do not always use the actors own comments to achieve this. The difficulties, as well as the opportunities, that particular roles can bring to cast members can also be revealed through the DVDs' special features. Third Window's disc for *Memories of Matsuko* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2006) includes a making-of and storyboard-to-film comparisons of certain scenes. These scenes are ones that include song and dance routines, and they are frequent occurrences within the film. The lead actress, Nakatani Miki, sings or dances in all of these scenes, though she is largely absent from the behind-the-scenes footage in the making-of. Instead, many supporting actors, and crew members, say that the performance was a lot of work for Nakatani. The storyboard-to-film comparisons then act as

evidence of this. The storyboards for the dance routines are shown first, followed by practices in a dance studio, before the scene is shown in conjunction with the relevant song (which is heard alongside the storyboard and practice footage). Evidence of the physical work put into the role by Nakatani accompanies the comments made in the making-of. Displaying footage of the practices required for the dance routines means that aspects of her experiences are being shared. The details of Nakatani's performance do not just distinguish the film's production, but also the DVD release because of the distributor's inclusion of this content.

Within the making-ofs and other DVD extras, cast members can be just as prominent as the film directors and other crew members. However, that does not mean that they are displayed in similar ways. The director is a figure that interacts with many other crew members, as well as the actors. The cast similarly interact with many others, but each film is often contextualised as one experience within their careers. As a result, the cast's experiences are shared through the special features. The actors often provide their point of view on a film's production, in addition to the documentation of their work on a film set. Other anecdotes and topics of conversation can also highlight how one film fits into one actor's career, and broader contexts of Japanese culture (for example, mass media, such as film and television). The extras distinguish the films through the actors' experiences, highlighting an intention of the distributors that results in distinct content on their DVDs. Though the comments of the cast can be conveyed as discourse that promotes aspects of a certain film, they are not limited to being used in this way. As has been seen in analysing their content, extras including the cast can provide a wider perspective of the Japanese film industry and Japanese culture through documenting one film's production. Furthermore, the distributors also re-circulate footage from events promoting the theatrical release of films in Japan, which signify both the films' wider contexts and another set of special features that make the DVD releases distinct.

The Purposes of Promotional Events

Film premieres, press conferences and stage greetings are often found on DVDs released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window. As with the other extras, they provide viewers with additional experiences and meanings related to a film's content and characteristics. These special features share similar formats within the distributors' discs, and are distinct from other extras, such as making-ofs and interviews. Because of their differences, their content and relationships with their respective films and other DVD extras can be examined closely. The 4Digital Asia DVDs also include these extras more often than the Third Window DVDs.³⁰ The release of *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* (*VGvsFG* – dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009 – 4Digital Asia, 2010) is a typical example. Recorded before a screening of *VGvsFG* in Japan, the footage documents certain cast and crew members greeting the audience and answering their questions from the stage at a cinema (an event called "stage greetings"). Though the production of the film, and interpretations of its narrative, are often discussed at these events, they also provide additional experiences of the cast and crew that can be shared with UK viewers of the DVDs (and not just audiences in Japan). Moreover, due to their format and specific traits, they significantly stand out from other types of special feature, providing further evidence of how the distributors use certain extras to make their DVDs distinct within the UK.

Stage greetings are a regular occurrence on the 4Digital Asia discs' special features, and they are sometimes categorised as press conference or film premiere footage. Such DVD

³⁰ There are twelve 4Digital Asia DVDs that include stage greetings footage: *Death Note*, *Death Note: The Last Name*, *Death Note: L Chang The World*, *Yo-Yo Girl Cop*, *X-Cross* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2007), *Tokyo Gore Police* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008), *20th Century Boys: Chapter One* (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008), *Cyborg She* (dir. Jae-young Kwak, 2008), *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009), *20th Century Boys Trilogy* (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008-2009) and *Kaiji*.

There are two Third Window DVDs that include stage greetings footage: *Memories of Matsuko* and *Fish Story* (dir. Nakamura Yoshihiro, 2009).

extras are promotional material, similar to that which has been found in other studies. John Caldwell and Graeme Harper emphasise that electronic press-kits (EPKs) preceded DVD special features, and that they share many characteristics. The EPKs were disseminated to various media press outlets, so that their content could be drawn upon for articles and programmes that would aid a film's promotion.³¹ This would often include interviews, outtakes and behind-the-scenes footage. Hight mentions that many DVDs with an extensive range of extras can also contain footage from a film's theatrical premiere.³² Essentially, many past studies argue that all extras have similar aims and purposes on DVDs, suggesting they have uniform characteristics and content. However, the stage greetings footage is not adapted or re-edited to disguise the fact that it documents a promotional event, and its characteristics provide a viewing experience separate from the extras already analysed in the chapter.

The stage greetings for *VGvsFG*, provided on the DVD from 4Digital Asia, are a typical example. A presenter with a microphone introduces certain members of the cast and crew on to a stage in front of a cinema screen to converse with the audience. In the instance of *VGvsFG*, the presenter is one of the supporting actresses in the film, Kametani Sayaka. She plays a nurse who assists a doctor in illegal experiments. These result in the reincarnation of the doctor's daughter as the titular Frankenstein Girl, who then battles the demonic Vampire Girl. The respective actresses for these title characters are also on the stage, Otaguro Eri and Kawamura Yukie. They are joined by the film's directors, Nishimura and Tomomatsu, who explain that they shared their duties by directing approximately half of the film's scenes each. Both the cast and crew mostly respond to questions from the audience. These comments can be seen as an addition to footage within other features, such as making-ofs (and one is also included on the *VGvsFG* disc). But the recorded footage also represents

³¹ Caldwell, *Production Culture...*, *op. cit.*, pp.298-306; Harper, *op. cit.*

³² Hight, *op. cit.*, 10.

another experience of the cast and crew, showing that their activities in regard to a particular film do not end at a film's production. When watching this extra, DVD viewers share in the experience of the stage greetings event, which gives them knowledge of how the film's theatrical release was promoted in Japan, as well as further information on aspects the film's production.

Therefore, while similarities have been found across several making-ofs and interviews, the stage greetings represent a significantly different type of DVD special feature. They clearly document a promotional event, and so are primarily promotional material by definition. But the distributors do not simply re-use footage from these events to fill up space on a disc. The stage greetings document experiences of cast and crew members different to those within making-ofs and other DVD extras. They do much more than promote a film, or the personae of the cast and crew, as they are not limited to only providing these people's interpretation of the film's narrative or reflections on its production. The stage greetings make the DVD viewers aware of the impact of a film's theatrical release in Japan. The extras on the *VGvsFG* disc illustrate the characteristics of these features, which are found on the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs. These extras provide great detail on the films' context in Japan, as a corresponding event is not likely to have occurred in the UK. Therefore, the footage is essential if UK viewers wish to know more about a film's context in Japan. Furthermore, when the distributors include this content on their discs, they continue to make their releases distinctive in the UK market through their special features.

The format of the stage greetings, as in the *VGvsFG* example, is similar within other instances on the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs. Despite their uniformity, their traits allow for a variety of different experiences to be presented to the discs' viewers. The 4Digital Asia DVD for *Cyborg She* (dir. Jae-young Kwak, 2008) contains several stage greetings features – listed as footage from the film's screenings at the 'Yubari International Fantastic

Film Festival’, ‘Japanese Premiere’ and ‘Opening Day Stage Greetings’. In this last feature, the director is presented with a cake, similar to the one the male lead receives from the titular female cyborg. The cake provides meaning as a link to the film’s narrative, in addition to its use for congratulating the director for his work. Actions before and after the stage events can also be documented in the discs’ extras. In the ‘Yubari’ feature, the two leads (Ayase Haruka and Koide Keisuke) reminisce about the film’s production and discuss the event they are going to. They exhibit trepidation, suggesting that greeting an audience is much more stressful for actors than filming on a set. The DVD viewer is given exclusive access to these views, as even the audience at the film festival is not shown the conversation. As a result, further information is given on the impact of this film’s theatrical release and festival screenings, especially in regard to the cast and crew. In particular, when viewed after the film, these extras communicate further meanings and experiences stemming from the scenes in *Cyborg She*.

Events on stage can also go beyond the typical format of greetings and screenings. On the Third Window DVD for *Fish Story* (dir. Nakamura Yoshihiro, 2009) is a recording of a live music performance at Tokyo’s Tower Records store. The film is about how a song released by a Japanese punk band in the 1970s eventually helps save the world from a meteor strike in 2012. The actors who play as the band members in the film had to practice the song for the film’s production. As part of the film’s promotion, the actors performed onstage at Tower Records, where they were joined by the writer of the song, Saito Kazuyoshi (a popular Japanese guitarist). All this information is explained within the feature, by the actors’ announcements to the audience at the performance. The meaning of the song within the film is important to the narrative, and the significance of the actors’ performances and the song’s writer are obviously important to the excited audience. The feature allows any potential DVD viewers to realise the importance of this knowledge for fans of Japanese films and music. In

addition to documenting a promotional event and relaying this information, the song's performance itself is an experience that the footage shares with DVD viewers – and it gives further emphasis to its significance within the film.

Through documenting events tied to a theatrical release of a film, the stage greetings significantly stand out from other special features. Footage of promotional events can support existing conclusions regarding the commercial aims of DVD extras. Such conclusions cannot be denied, as these extras and the DVDs' distribution and marketing are all part of the film industry, which is essentially a commercial business. However, defining all special features as only promotional material ignores their varied content. The DVD extras demonstrate the creativity and originality that is needed for a film's promotion, as much as a film's production. These events constitute additional experiences that cast and crew members share after the production process, as demonstrated by the types of extras usually categorised as stage greetings. The distributors signify the importance of these experiences to their DVD viewers, as the footage explains how the cast and crew impact on a film's theatrical release. Due to the stage greetings' contrast with other extras, it helps to distinguish the DVD releases. Stage greetings may not always occur, or be recorded, for certain films, but there are many other perspectives that are often included within the content of DVD special features. In particular, a tendency in several extras is the direct address of their potential viewers.

Additional Purposes of Special Features

The acknowledgement of DVD viewers and their interest in extra material has been briefly addressed in some existing research, but it is often overlooked. However, the acknowledgement of viewers, both directly and indirectly, is prominent within the extras on the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs. Both labels heavily repurpose Japanese promotional materials as additional context for their releases. No alternative content may

exist for the benefit of a UK audience, though the distributors use the material to distinguish their DVDs as much as the traits of the Japanese films. While this characteristic has defined some of the extras' content already analysed in the chapter, it highlights another pattern that is evident throughout all of the special features, and not just making-ofs, interviews and stage greetings (for example, some discs also include music videos and short films). The special features can either directly address viewers within their content, or indirectly address the viewers' potential interests that relate to a specific film. These patterns have been found throughout the analysis of the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVD extras' content, alongside their links to their respective films and other special features on the distributors' discs. The Third Window DVD of *Kamikaze Girls* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2004) has a great range of special features, in contrast to many other films released by the distributors. Furthermore, the extras' traits strongly illustrate patterns of viewer acknowledgement, which are also visible within several other DVD special features disseminated by both 4Digital Asia and Third Window.

As mentioned earlier, DVD viewers' interests in extra material has been briefly addressed in some existing research, but its importance has often been overlooked. Barbara Klinger hints at the direct address of DVD viewers within some special features, by stating that DVD audiences are treated as "insiders" who are privy to exclusive behind-the-scenes information. Moreover, she concludes that this intentionally disguises the commercially controlled aims of this material.³³ As a result, it is suggested that nothing further can be revealed from investigating special features within subsequent studies that share these conclusions.³⁴ However, some researchers have looked beyond the commercial perspectives within DVD extras.

³³ Klinger, *op. cit.*, pp.68-74.

³⁴ Caldwell, *op. cit.*; Harper, *op. cit.*; Hight, *op. cit.*

The predominant perspectives put forth by other researchers are those that reflect and expand upon the film-viewing experience. Aaron Barlow claims that additional information on DVDs both affects and aids discussions of films within academic settings.³⁵ Denison also explains that the special features are evidence of film producers and studios utilising the DVD format to intentionally expand one or more narratives for several purposes (for instance, to expand upon certain generic traits, which may appear in a media text's central narrative).³⁶ Martin Barker and Kate Egan have then noted a reflective trait that is evident within some extras. Their content allows viewers to acknowledge their memories of viewing a certain film within another context, or a certain narrative within another medium (for example, book-to-film adaptations).³⁷ Such reflections can also be found within special features on the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs, and often within the content displayed to viewers, such as comments made by actors and directors. The reflective comments and addresses to viewers signify more content within the extras that is distinct from the characteristics already identified, and is intended by the distributors to be used beyond the extras' superficial function as promotional material.

Third Window's DVD of *Kamikaze Girls* was originally released in January 2009. However, it was subsequently re-released as a two disc edition in February 2010, due to it being one of the distributor's most popular releases.³⁸ The interviews with the female leads (Fukuda Kyoko and Tsuchiya Anna) from the one disc edition are still included. But now there is also a making-of, an interview with the director, a short film, deleted scenes, and

³⁵ Aaron Barlow, *The DVD Revolution: Movies, Culture and Technology* (London: Praeger, 2005), pp.127-42.

³⁶ Denison, *op. cit.*, pp.177-9.

³⁷ Kate Egan and Martin Barker, 'The Books, The DVDs, The Extras and Their Lovers', in M. Barker and E. Mathjis (eds), *Watching The Lord of The Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), pp.83-102.

³⁸ Adam Torel, director of Third Window Films, has confirmed this in interviews he has featured in – J Hurtado, 'Video Home Invasion: Third Window Films Introduction' (Dec 2010), *Twitch* website, accessed 28/03/2013, <http://twitchfilm.com/2010/12/video-home-invasion-third-window-films-introduction.html>; Michael Leader, 'Online Worlds and Grassroots Activity', *Wild Tyme* website, accessed 28/03/2013, http://wildtyme.blogspot.co.uk/2011_06_01_archive.html.

trailers included.³⁹ The making-of contains comments from the cast and crew, alongside the footage of scenes being filmed, as do other making-ofs. But one significant difference is the direct address to the camera within some of the comments and footage. This is usually done by the actors in the cast of *Kamikaze Girls*, and they introduce themselves by mentioning what other Japanese films and television shows they have starred in. The actors' information can be a useful reference point for DVD audiences in Japan. Outside of Japan it can serve a similar purpose, as well as inform viewers of films and television shows that they may not have heard of before. In Western media, such information is instead usually found in posters and trailers,⁴⁰ whereas 4Digital Asia and Third Window have been able to provide these details in the form of an extra viewing experience.

Other messages directly spoken to potential viewers are found in the other special features for *Kamikaze Girls*. At the end of their respective interviews, Fukuda and Tsuchiya each look at the camera and say that they hope viewers of the film enjoy it, think about its themes, and to try watching it both individually and with friends. Though the interviews are clearly part of the film's promotion (as they are recorded in front of posters for the film), the actresses' messages ask viewers to seriously consider aspects of the film, and not just watch it as entertainment. The hope that viewers may find elements within the film that they wish to explore further is evidently shared by Third Window due to the inclusion of these extras. In addition, the distributor continues to illustrate this tendency in other special features distributed alongside the film.

Indirect address to the viewers is also found within this DVD release. In the two disc edition of *Kamikaze Girls*, a short film regarding the origins of a minor character (Unicorn Ryuji, played by Abe Sadao) accompanies the other extras. While this relates to a specific

³⁹ To confirm the DVD extras' content, please see Appendix One.

⁴⁰ Barbara Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture', in *Cinema Journal*, 28:4 (1989), 3-19.

character in the film, another extra is not similarly related. A music video for a song by Tsuchiya Anna, entitled 'Taste My Skin', is also included on the second disc. It is not a song that features in *Kamikaze Girls*, yet Third Window has added it anyway. The short film suggests that there is an interest in this character within Japan, and so fans of the film may be interested in the character's origins on the DVD. Third Window also seems to think UK viewers may be interested in this story, and Tsuchiya's music career. Though the simultaneous promotion of a particular pop song is unlikely, Third Window's inclusion of the music video indirectly informs UK viewers that Tsuchiya is both a pop star and an actor in Japanese media. Therefore, the distributor's inclusion of certain material can act as an indirect address of the viewers' potential interests.

The direct address and acknowledgement of DVD viewers may at first seem specifically related to certain elements within a film's production and narrative, but broader patterns are found within other DVDs released by the distributors.⁴¹ The 4Digital Asia disc for *Black Kiss* (dir. Tezuka Macoto, 2004) contains two interviews with the director, explaining his aims for how he intended the film to look ('Mystery Behind *Black Kiss*'), and the twists in the plot ('Truth Behind *Black Kiss*'). The two interviews are recorded in the same setting, but remain divided across two features, and are not edited together. Whether the features were filmed and edited separately by the film's production studio, or separated by 4Digital Asia for the DVD release, the focus on potential viewers is evident. The film's stylish set design and effects are emphasised as significant aspects of the film which may interest its viewers, as well as the narrative's twists concerning the identity of a mysterious serial killer. At the end of the feature about the plot, the director even mentions that he hopes to make a sequel, implying that this is also what audiences want to see. Tezuka seems keen to make his films appeal to audiences, so that they will continue to be watched. Such interview

⁴¹ Appendix One confirms the extras on other 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs.

content could be seen as an address to viewers, and an attempt to sustain a loyal fan-base for a director's output. However, the features are primarily focused on one particular film, and so can also encourage viewers to recommend *Black Kiss* to others. A possibility could then be to share the knowledge learnt about the film with these viewers, and discuss their thoughts on the narrative.

Short features that are intended to give out specific facts about films, rather than multiple ones within making-ofs and interviews, are also found on the distributors' discs. The 4Digital Asia DVD for *X-Cross* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2007) contains an extra which explains the language used by the residents of a mysterious village in the film. Far from being unintelligible, the language is shown to be lines of dialogue which are then played backwards within the film itself, making them seem strange to any visitors to the village. Another pattern found by Klinger within DVD extras, particularly their tendency to provide exclusive 'trivia' to their viewers, would seem to explain the purposes of these features.⁴² However, both the 4Digital Asia and Third Window DVDs often go further within their extras – by encouraging people to watch their films and share the information with others.

The *Black Kiss* DVD may have indirectly encouraged viewers to watch and discuss the film with friends, but this intention is more evident in other examples. The Third Window disc for *Fine, Totally Fine* (dir. Fujita Yosuke, 2008) only has interviews with the film's two male leads as special features (which may seem incomplete, as the film concerns a love triangle that develops between two men and a woman). Both actors are interviewed separately, and are questioned about their work on the film and with the director. They are also aware that their comments are being recorded for DVD viewers. The actors say that they hope people will watch the movie and enjoy it, and also say that they hope people who have

⁴² Klinger, *op. cit.*, pp.68-72.

bought the DVD have enjoyed the interview. The cast's statements show an intention to share their experience with the DVD viewers, as well as an aim to encourage the viewers to share the films with others.

In addition to these intentions, topics of conversation within interviews and other extras may encourage DVD viewers to think about a certain subject. The Third Window disc of *Lala Pipo* (dir. Miyano Masayuki, 2009) has an example of such a feature. Alongside a making-of for the film (which is about several people involved in the pornography industry), a separate set of interviews are presented as reflections on the meaning of sex, titled 'What Is Sex?'. All the actors are asked this same question, and some give similar answers, but the title of the feature is also posed as a question. In addition to giving insights into the thoughts of the cast, the question 'What Is Sex?' also asks viewers to think about what their answer would be.

The acknowledgment of DVD viewers through indirect means or direct address has illustrated how this material is intended to be viewed – by both the Japanese filmmakers and the UK distributors. All special features can potentially be viewed by those who purchase a DVD disc, but they are just as likely to only watch the film. Despite only having a possibility of being viewed, the intentions within the extras' content are evident. Many contain comments and footage that are aimed at deeply engaging their viewers, and acknowledging their potential interests in certain aspects of the films. Furthermore, the special features document experiences of the cast and crew. Making-ofs and interviews document and chart their actions and memories on a film set, but the interviews and comments recorded on camera are also additional experiences. Acknowledgement of viewers watching the special features could mean that they are addressing viewers of the DVD in Japan. However, 4Digital Asia and Third Window have decided to include these extras on their DVDs released in the UK, suggesting that UK viewers may be interested in their contents. Whether they are viewed

or not, the distributors have provided additional viewing experiences on their discs, alongside the films they are distributing. While the special features can initially be seen as promotional, they in fact inform viewers on numerous aspects of the Japanese context in which they were produced and released.

Conclusion

4Digital Asia and Third Window's treatment of these special features is evidence of its intended use as additional viewing material. The re-use of material that was originally created for a film's promotion is not limited because of these origins (as suggested by Klinger),⁴³ but in fact informs viewers about multiple aspects of a film's context within Japan. Through detailing the experiences of the cast and crew; documenting the events related to the films' theatrical releases in Japan; and addressing the viewers' potential interests, the extras reveal several facets of the film industry in Japan and its culture in general. The special features may have the most significance in relation to specific films and their narratives, but they do not have to be interpreted in this way alone. In adapting Hight's methodical steps for examining DVD extras, what have been revealed are the many discursive meanings and patterns that can be found within the extra content of the disc releases.

Moreover, the DVD labels make their releases distinct by including exclusive special features. The footage is often recorded as part of a film's promotional campaign in Japan. The distributors do not re-use the footage for a similar reason in the UK. Instead, the special features document the films' promotion in Japan, as well as including material that details certain aspects of their production. The distributors purposefully include the extras,

⁴³ Klinger, *op. cit.*, pp.68-74

demonstrating their belief that DVD viewers can have an equal interest in both films and extra viewing material that the format can exhibit.. As a result, the chapter has demonstrated how these extras can potentially create another viewing experience for the DVD viewers. This is because the special features detail many aspects of the films' contexts in Japan, which have been demonstrated through the extras' different formats and characteristics. However, promotional material originating from Japan can be re-used by the DVD labels for similar reasons within their own distribution practices. 4Digital Asia and Third Window only re-use one type of promotional material for the same purpose. They are the films' trailers, which will be investigated in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Trailers – How the DVD Labels’ Re-Use Japanese Promotional Texts to Distinguish Themselves

Keith M. Johnston states that trailers are ‘complex, layered texts that cross media boundaries’, due to the fact that they appear on the Internet, and various mobile entertainment and communication devices, as well as DVD.¹ They are texts created separately from a film, which are then used for a film’s marketing and promotion.² The 4Digital Asia and Third Window trailers appear on both the distributors’ discs and websites, in order to promote the releases to DVD viewers and visitors to their webpages. On the DVDs, trailers for both past and upcoming releases are provided, as well as those for a specific title. They are used identically on both the discs and online, and are often categorised as either “original” or “theatrical” trailers – both of which refer to their origins in Japan. However, both the 4Digital Asia and Third Window trailers are often re-edited and translated before being re-used. In re-using the trailers and emphasising their Japanese origins, the distributors highlight specific aspects of the films that they wish to emphasise, in order to both distinctively promote the titles and the labels’ distribution practices through their DVD releases. By doing this, both 4Digital Asia and Third Window negotiate between generating their own promotional material and re-using similar sources from Japan. As a result, they distinguish themselves as distributors of Japanese films, and as DVD labels within the UK market.

The research of trailers is a relatively new field, and as a result there are several debates over how they should be conceptualised and studied. Furthermore, 4Digital Asia’s and Third Window’s use of trailers that emphasises specific Japanese characteristics, both illustrates and provides contrasts with existing findings. For Lisa Kernan, the trailer is used

¹ Keith M. Johnston, *Coming Soon: Film Trailers and the Selling of Hollywood Technology* (London: McFarland and Company, 2009), p.25.

² David Sin, ‘Marketing: Prints and Advertising’, *BFI Screen Online* website, accessed 15/04/2013, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/distribution/distribution4.html>.

particularly for the promotion of a film's theatrical release.³ However, this does not take into account the appearance of trailers on DVDs which are sold after a film's theatrical exhibition. Johnston acknowledges the diverse media platforms that can display trailers' within his research, and sees them as 'mobile' texts which exist separately from a film across a variety of contexts (such as in cinemas, and on DVDs, mobile phones, etc).⁴ In addition, the trailer's basic elements cross geographical boundaries, as has been found in Sarah Street's research of trailers re-edited for the USA and the UK.⁵ Re-edited trailers are found on several 4Digital Asia DVDs, but both 4Digital Asia and Third Window also translate the "original"/"theatrical" trailers from Japan without re-editing them.⁶ These trailers are therefore more mobile than either Johnston or Street have previously claimed. The DVD labels' trailers are not always re-edited, and can be used similarly in a different country following a film's theatrical promotion in Japan. The treatment of the trailers by 4Digital Asia and Third Window suggests that certain elements of the films' are of great significance to the distributors – in order to both promote themselves and each of their releases.

Close textual analysis of the trailers will reveal patterns within them. The content and conventions of trailers have been the basis of past studies, and from their characteristics patterns of discourse can also be identified. Johnston's summation of trailers' characteristics parallel with those outlined by Kernan and Street: 'excerpted scenes, graphic title work, music and voiceover.'⁷ These aspects will be the points closely analysed within the trailers for films released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window. The traits of the films emphasised

³ Lisa Kernan, *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers* (University of Texas Press, 2004), p.1.

⁴ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p.25.

⁵ Sarah Street, "Another Medium Entirely": Esther Harris, National Screen Service, and Film Trailers in Britain, 1940-1960', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 29:4 (2009), 433-448.

⁶ In addition to the DVD menus, the distributors usually only include one trailer on each webpage for their individual releases. However, both 4Digital Asia and Third Window do have their own pages on the video-streaming website, *YouTube* (www.youtube.com). Here, all their trailers are viewable, and in the case of the 4Digital Asia releases, both the UK and Japanese trailers can be viewed.

⁷ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 154; Kernan, *op. cit.*, pp.9-16; Street, *op. cit.*, 443.

through the editing and translation of the trailers' characteristics (for example, through subtitles) signify what the distributors intend to emphasise as elements within the films. 4Digital Asia and Third Window generate discourse by highlighting particular layers of meaning within the trailers through their treatment of them. The distributors neither create their own promotional material nor entirely re-use the trailers exactly as they were originally shown in Japan. 4Digital Asia and Third Window integrate the trailers' content according to their own distribution practices, in order to be seen as DVD labels that are distinct because of the methods they use as well as the content within their film releases. In addition, 4Digital Asia predominantly re-edits the Japanese trailers as UK versions, while Third Window simply translates them – meaning that these differing practices will be investigated separately within the chapter.

Yo-Yo Girl Cop: Re-Using Elements of Spectacle

The DVD for *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2006) is not the only 4Digital Asia release that has both the Japanese theatrical trailer and UK trailer on its disc. However, it does contain the most striking contrasts between the two trailers. With no voiceover, minimal dialogue, and fewer excerpts, the UK trailer focuses on action and spectacle more than narrative. The UK trailer is edited by 4Digital Asia to focus on elements of visual spectacle, and contains less dialogue and exposition of the narrative (through both voiceovers and inter-titles) than its Japanese equivalent. Examining the Japanese and UK trailers' shows which aspects of *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* 4Digital Asia has chosen to promote. The reproduction of spectacular elements from the Japanese trailer, and their inclusion in the UK trailer, is a general pattern that can be found across 4Digital Asia's releases (which will also be demonstrated through supporting examples). Detailing the basic conventions within the

Yo-Yo Girl Cop trailers will provide evidence of how elements of spectacle both promote the film and the DVD label.

Spectacle is one of the most prolific aspects found in trailers for films. In his historical study of the trailer in Hollywood, Johnston has found that trailers often focus on spectacular images and effects, and adopts the metaphor of a former film marketing executive, Paul Lazarus, to describe them as ‘strawberries’.⁸ More precisely, this term refers to special effects sequences in films, usually generated through computer animation, which then become the central focus of a film’s marketing campaign. The importance of special effects and visuals has often been highlighted in other research as well.⁹ Principally, though, Sarah Street is most succinct in summing up the significance of spectacle in film trailers. She states that ‘trailers and marketing campaigns for contemporary “high concept” Hollywood blockbusters frequently deliver the most remarkable shots and sequences from the film as a deliberate strategy to attract audiences through concentrated visual and aural bombardment.’¹⁰

How spectacle is used is also highly significant. For example, Street then goes further in the conclusions of her study. She claims that the changes between the US and UK trailers for the film *A Night To Remember* (dir. Roy Ward Baker, 1958), a film about the fateful voyage of the Titanic, reveal different intentions for the promotion of an individual film. The suspense and shock created by a shot of the iceberg hitting the ship, for example, depends on when this appears in the trailer. The editing and structure of a trailer’s elements therefore can have a great effect on a film’s promotion. However, the key difference in regard to 4Digital Asia is that both the UK and Japanese trailers for the films are often present on their discs. Rather than significantly alter the promotional message for a certain film, the distributor is

⁸ Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp.121-3.

⁹ Erik Hedling, ‘Framing Tolkien: Trailers, High Concept and the Ring’, in E. Mathjis (ed), *Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* (Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 225-237; Kernan, *op. cit.*, pp.163-206.

¹⁰ Street, *op. cit.*, 444.

foregrounding particular meanings in the trailers by presenting both versions to viewers. 4Digital Asia's choice of distinct elements for the promotion of a Japanese film for its UK DVD release can be determined from comparing both trailers. As a result, 4Digital Asia's use of spectacle within its trailers is demonstrated.

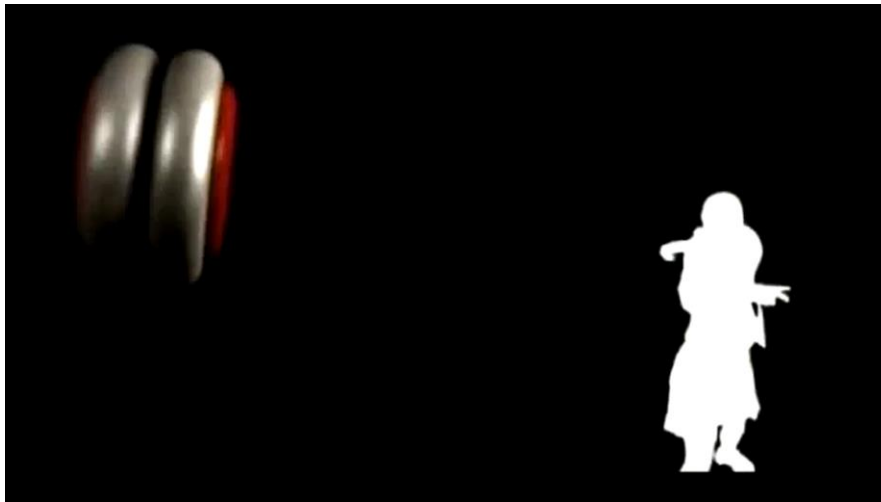


Figure 5 – Excerpts of *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* are intercut with silhouettes of the heroine practicing her yo-yo skills in the UK trailer.

The UK trailer for *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* begins by showing a girl running through a crowded urban area, with a bomb attached to her. Before she can get away from the crowd, the bomb explodes, and a burnt yo-yo is launched from the girl's remains. The film's title, in both Japanese and English characters, subsequently spins on to the screen before a computer-animated yo-yo cuts through it horizontally. Silhouettes of the titular heroine practicing her yo-yo skills (as shown in Figure 5) are then intercut with sequences from the film: the heroine having mug-shots taken; the heroine launching her yo-yo through the air in a shopping mall; and then the heroine taking on a group of adversaries with machine guns, before the trailer fades to one final yo-yo swinging silhouette. These sequences in the UK trailer – the opening, the title graphic, and the scene excerpts – are all included in the original trailer from Japan. However, they are only shown for a few seconds at a time. The rest of the Japanese trailer is a mix of shorter and longer clips from scenes within the film. They contain an equal mix of

action and dialogue, and are intercut with cast and crew credits, inter-titles and title graphics, all of which are translated through subtitles (as shown in Figure 6). Other than these differences, the same rapid electric-guitar-and-drums music plays in both trailers. In essence, the Japanese trailer aims to give more information about the film's premise and plot, about an undercover Japanese agent who is armed with a deadly yo-yo and is searching for a terrorist cell in a school. In contrast, the UK trailer is solely dedicated to emphasising the yo-yo-wielding heroine as the film's spectacle, over her status as the central character in the film's narrative.



Figure 6 – Yo-Yo Girl Cop excerpts are shown in the Japanese trailer, as well as the translation of dialogue, inter-titles and voice-over.

The fact that *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* is a Japanese film is explained on 4Digital Asia's DVD cover for the film, as is the case with all of its other releases. This object has to be accessed by a viewer before the UK trailer can be viewed on a DVD – either on the disc for *Yo-Yo Girl Cop*, or as part of the trailers that the distributor includes on all of its other DVD releases. So, particularly in the latter instance, why should a viewer watch *Yo-Yo Girl Cop*? 4Digital Asia is presenting it as a unique Japanese film that uses its yo-yo wielding protagonist to showcase a series of spectacles. Both computer-generated effects and live-action scenes are used in the

UK trailer to emphasise this point, as is found in many Hollywood film trailers.¹¹ Though similar sequences appear in the UK trailer, less information and narrative exposition is given than in the Japanese trailer. The basic premise is put across through the order of the sequences - there is a threat, and the film's protagonist is going to tackle it, with her skills that combine hand-to-hand combat and yo-yos. The film's unique elements are drawn primarily from the visual spectacles offered by *Yo-Yo Girl Cop*. Though this is not the only element of a film that can appear within a trailer, the emphasis of spectacle regularly occurs in other examples. It is not a characteristic that is predominant in all of 4Digital Asia's trailers, but it is an aspect that the distributor can emphasise through its use of these promotional texts.

4Digital Asia includes different trailers for several of its films, including *Tokyo Gore Police* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008), and these examples exhibit similar contrasts to those for *Yo-Yo Girl Cop*. Here, the UK trailer and Japanese version are again presented, as well as an extended "promo reel". The reel is almost five minutes long, making it lengthier than the other trailers, but it is very similar in its format (and is grouped with the trailers in the disc menu). With little dialogue heard, the reel displays mostly scenes of bloody carnage taken from the film, the narrative of which concerns a futuristic police officer's pursuit of murderous human-body-altering engineers. As stated, the trailers include similar excerpts, along with the film's title, and some scenes are shown for a longer time than others (specifically where the lead actress shelters from a shower of blood underneath an umbrella). The excerpts are presented in a similar fashion to 'strawberries', or scenes of spectacle used to entice viewers, as mentioned in Johnston's research.¹² In all the trailers, despite music played from the film's end credits, no voice-over or inter-titles are used in conjunction with

¹¹ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p.117; Street, *op. cit.*, 444-5.

¹² Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp.121-3.

the images. Though these scenes are perhaps more horrific than those found within Hollywood examples of action and science-fiction, they still operate on a similar principle in order to foreground horror elements (for instance, scenes involving blood are often shown in slow-motion). Such generic characteristics are frequently associated with Japanese cinema, especially through the term ‘J-Horror’ – signifying that the distributor is appealing to UK markets for both Japanese cinema and horror.¹³

Other instances where many contrasting trailers are found are for the DVD releases for the *Death Note* film franchise. The UK trailer for the first film, *Death Note* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006), includes footage of one of the main characters, Light (Fujiwara Tatsuya), holding both an apple and a notebook in a darkened room. Though the props are used in the film, where the supernatural notebook is used by Light to kill those he opposes, this exact footage does not appear within *Death Note*. Also, the same footage is found within one of the teaser trailers from Japan, with the same under-stated yet foreboding music. But, unlike the Japanese trailers, the UK version includes no dialogue and little narrative exposition. Despite this difference, the trailer for UK viewers still creates suspense and intrigue by revealing little about the notebook, but presenting it as central to the film’s premise and the actions of Light.¹⁴ The footage of Light is intercut with scenes of actors and action from the film, emphasising both the character and the notebook as spectacles within the film (which are also central to the narrative).¹⁵ This contrasts with the Japanese trailer’s focus on the film as a

¹³ Again, the research of Tartan Asia Extreme helps to illustrate this association - Oliver Dew, ‘“Asia Extreme”: Japanese cinema and British hype’, *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 5:1 (2007), 53-73; Daniel Martin, *Asia extreme: the marketing and critical reception of cult Asian cinema in the UK*, PhD Thesis (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2009); Chi-Yun Shin, ‘Art of branding: Tartan “Asia Extreme” Films’, *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* (website), No.50 (2008), accessed 16/04/2013, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/TartanDist/index.html>.

Another publication has also highlighted the characteristics and patterns often associated with the Japanese horror genre, and not just films from one distributor – Jay McRoy (ed), *Japanese Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh University, 2005).

¹⁴ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p.117; Street, *op. cit.*, 444-5.

¹⁵ Hedling, *op. cit.*, p.232.

manga adaptation, which 4Digital Asia avoids in order to broaden the film's appeal beyond those who are already knowledgeable of the *Death Note* story.

As explained in the trailers' analysis, elements of visual spectacle are not the only aspects of the films emphasised. Spectacle can be central to a film's promotion and help to explain its narrative. Similar uses of spectacle will be seen within later examples in this chapter. However, across all of 4Digital Asia's trailers for its DVD releases, there are instances where certain spectacles within the film are strongly emphasised. As with other trailers studied, this usually occurs in order to make a film stand out from others, in order to entice potential viewers. In addition, for all of 4Digital Asia's releases, these elements are used to highlight how the films stand out within the distributor's catalogue. Certain scenes from the films are central to the UK trailers, and accentuate aspects identified as central to the films: the uniquely armed heroine in *Yo-Yo Girl Cop*; the scale of blood and gore that can be found in a Japanese horror film; and a supernatural concept such as a notebook which can kill. All these scenes are usually found in the trailers' Japanese counterparts, but it is 4Digital Asia's choice to re-use certain scenes above others within its promotional material. As a result, the films are represented through elements that the distributor wishes to emphasise, and not necessarily the filmmakers. Spectacle can therefore be useful to promote a film as unique within both Japanese cinema in general, and a DVD labels' catalogue of titles. But other elements can be similarly adopted within 4Digital Asia's trailers, such as narrative.

20th Century Boys: Re-Using Elements of Narrative

The trailers for the trilogy of *20th Century Boys* films (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiko, 2008-2009) are the most varied within 4Digital Asia's catalogue, as there are trailers for the individual films and the trilogy as a whole. However, one common aspect within all of the

trailers is the promotion of the films' narrative. Visual imagery and the films' origins as a *manga* are emphasised, but do not feature as often as subtitles and captions. The translated dialogue and inter-titles are not only frequent – they also heavily focus on enticing potential viewers through the premise of the films' story. The first *20th Century Boys* film was released by 4Digital Asia individually, though the following two films were only released later in a four-disc set that included the trilogy as a whole.¹⁶ The inclusion of the second film's trailer on the DVD for the first film, and other 4Digital Asia DVDs, shows that the distributor originally intended to release each film individually.¹⁷ The change in strategy to releasing the whole trilogy is then evident in later DVDs that feature a trailer promoting all three films.¹⁸ The UK trilogy trailer is re-edited from all three film's individual trailers, whereas the individual film trailers are translated versions of the Japanese originals. As with *Yo-Yo Girl Cop*, some footage is removed from the re-edited trilogy trailer, such as certain excerpts, captions, inter-titles, and graphics. The three films' narratives are regularly highlighted as a compelling reason to watch the film in both the UK and Japanese trailers. As a result, elements of the narrative are stressed as unique to these particular films. This emphasis of the narrative above other elements within the films is found in other UK 4Digital Asia trailers as well, which illustrates how these traits help to promote the distributor.

The use of elements of narrative within film trailers is also recognised within existing research, especially as a filmic trait that can be accentuated above others. Lisa Kernan states

¹⁶ DVD of *20th Century Boys: Chapter One* (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiko, 2008), released by 4Digital Asia on 04/05/2009; DVD box-set of the *20th Century Boys Trilogy* (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiko, 2008-2009), released by 4Digital Asia on 31/05/2010 – contents and packaging confirmed within Appendix One.

¹⁷ The second film's trailer can be found on the following 4Digital Asia DVDs - *Meatball Machine* (dir. Yamaguchi Yudai and Yamamoto Jun'ichi, 2005), released 01/06/2009; *Tokyo Gore Police* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008), released 03/08/2009; *Goth* (dir. Takahashi Gen, 2008), released 21/09/2009; *Samurai Princess* (dir. Iguchi Noboru, 2008), released 26/10/2009; *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009), released 15/03/2010; *Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost* (dir. Miyake Ryuta and Asato Mari, 2009), released 19/04/2010.

¹⁸ The trilogy trailer can be found on the following 4Digital Asia DVDs – *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess* (dir. Higuchi Shinji, 2008), released 28/06/2010; *Kaiji* (dir. Sato Toya, 2009), released 26/07/2010; *Death Tube* (dir. Fukuda Yohei, 2008), released 20/09/2010.

that ‘trailers make assumptions about audiences’ interests in movements of story and narrative, usually in relation to the story’s characterizations, causality, enigmatic structures, or narrative worlds: they assume certain kinds of desire for knowledge and experience.’¹⁹ Through use of the terms suspense and intrigue, Sarah Street makes similar conclusions about the trailers for *A Night To Remember*: ‘Both trailers use similar strategies of building up suspense and conveying a sense that puzzles surrounding Titanic will be unravelled in the film, giving audiences a sense of intrigue and the impression that they really need to see the film if they are to find out the truth.’²⁰ Street subsequently compares these trailers to other examples from Hollywood, and finds several similarities, as well as the parallel significance of visual effects and genre-specific characteristics.²¹ However, the narrative elements of suspense and intrigue are identified most often as aspects that help to emphasise the narrative. In contrast, what is striking about re-edited examples of trailers used by 4Digital Asia is that references to the narrative are used in both the UK and Japanese trailers, especially in regard to the *20th Century Boys* trailers. The narrative within the films is often emphasised more so than other characteristics, such as visual effects. While this is perhaps common in trailers, as Street’s research suggests, the emphasis of the narrative by 4Digital Asia suggests that certain traits are also being highlighted as unique within both Japanese cinema and the distributors’ titles.

There is a Japanese trailer for each film within the *20th Century Boys* trilogy. These appear on the 4Digital Asia DVD releases for both *Chapter One* and the *Trilogy*.²² In addition, the second film’s trailer appears on other 4Digital Asia disc releases (and is often labelled as ‘Coming Soon’), as does the trilogy trailer. Within each Japanese trailer, excerpts

¹⁹ Kernan, *op. cit.*, p.214.

²⁰ Street, *op. cit.*, 444.

²¹ *Ibid*, 444-5.

²² This can be confirmed in Appendix One.

and music draw attention to scenes of action and visual effects, as the music is often dramatic and builds up in volume until the trailer ends. Graphics are often displayed as part of the films' titles, and no voice over is used. However, the excerpts are regularly intercut with inter-titles, and sentences of dialogue are heard over the footage. Both of these aspects are translated through subtitles. Though there are differences in excerpts and music used, the UK trilogy trailer incorporates a substantial amount of dialogue and subtitles (unlike the UK trailers for *Yo-Yo Girl Cop*, *Death Note* and *Tokyo Gore Police*).

Essentially, there are many similarities between the different elements within the trailers for *20th Century Boys*, but significant differences in how they are presented. Evidence for this is found in comparing the third film's Japanese trailer with the trilogy trailer. Specifically, there are many excerpts towards the end of the Japanese trailer that are found at the end of the UK trailer, but with significant contrasts. The trilogy concerns the machinations of a mysterious antagonist called Friend. A group of friends then discover that stories they made up as children are linked to Friend's schemes, and decide to join forces to stop him and discover his identity – a struggle which begins in 1999 and ends in 2017. The films were based on a *manga* series, which is highlighted in the Japanese trailer, but the UK trailer does not similarly emphasise the narrative's origins. The film's narrative content is instead more prominent than any reference to the context of the *manga*.

In the last sequences of the Japanese trailer, a giant bipedal robot stomps towards the camera before cutting to a black screen, followed by the main character, Kenji, removing his sunglasses. An inter-title that reads 'Different from the original' follows the next cut, and is timed with the sound of the robot's foot-stomp (images of the robot's feet and the inter-titles can be seen in Figures 7 and 8). A brief montage of the film's antagonist, Friend, and a young Kenji then precede another inter-title, which states 'Another ending'. Footage of Friend

taking off his mask is displayed, along with a montage of characters from the film shown in the film's future setting and as children in the 1960s. In the background, the sound of an electric charge building up plays, and is also heard alongside the next inter-title, that reads 'Another...'. The last brief clip shows one person wearing the Friend mask, who is fitting a similar mask on to another person. The electric charge build-up sound then culminates in a smash, as the film's title is displayed, followed by the subtitle 'Last Chapter: Our Flag', and the film's theatrical release date.²³ As has been detailed, many sounds are heard, but no music is played over these excerpts. The UK trilogy trailer has one important difference in regard to this last point. The title of the films, taken from the *manga* it is based on, is a reference to the song '20th Century Boy' by the band T-Rex. It is this song that plays throughout the last sequences of the UK trilogy trailer. The song is accompanied by a rapid montage of clips from the final film. Many are similar to the Japanese version, especially shots of the bipedal robot and Friend removing his mask. At the end of the trailer, the trilogy's title (*20th Century Boys*) is shown, and one final sound of the robot's foot-stomp stops the trailer and the music. But, perhaps most significantly within the trilogy trailer, none of these final excerpts have inter-titles cut between them.



Figure 7 – Excerpts in the third *20th Century Boys* film trailer, such as the giant robot, are intercut with translated inter-titles referring to the film's *manga* origins.

²³ All inter-title quotes taken from the Japanese *20th Century Boys 3* trailer, from the fourth disc of the DVD trilogy, *op. cit.*



Figure 8 – Similar excerpts appear in the *20th Century Boys* trilogy trailer, but are only shown while the song ‘20th Century Boy’ plays.

The inter-titles are a major point of difference between the two trailers. Inter-titles are included throughout both, though there are less in the trilogy trailer, and they refer to the film’s back-to-back production and box-office takings in Japan. But the inter-titles in the third film’s trailer explicitly reference the *manga* of the same name, which is referred to by the use of the term ‘original.’ The Japanese trailer is therefore utilising high-concept marketing methods seen before in other adaptations of narratives. With specific reference to trailers, Erik Hedling has explained how references to the original book of the *Lord of The Rings* helped to promote their live-action film adaptations.²⁴ Furthermore, the third *20th Century Boys* trailer includes the caveat of labelling the ending of the film’s narrative as ‘Different from the original.’ It is able to give audiences both a ‘sense of intrigue’ and a ‘need to see the film if they are to find out the truth’,²⁵ as well as attract readers of the *manga*. The trilogy trailer, in contrast, had to re-use footage from the Japanese trailer without reference to

²⁴ Hedling, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-7.

²⁵ Street, *op. cit.*, 444.

the original *manga*. Only in April 2013, almost three years after the films' DVD release, were all the volumes of 20th *Century Boys manga* series finally published in English.²⁶

Without this pre-existing media context in the UK, it is up to 4Digital Asia to emphasise the characteristics of these Japanese films. Therefore, in the UK the films were promoted through their narrative and visual content alone, though the visuals are mainly used to bring attention to the distinctive elements of the narrative. The final seconds of the trilogy trailer show this explicitly. Retained images from the Japanese trailer are elements of visual spectacle used to entice and intrigue audiences.²⁷ The order of excerpts shown is also similar to the Japanese trailer. The films' resolution is shown to lead up to a battle with a bipedal robot and the revelation of Friend's identity, creating a 'sense of intrigue' in itself.²⁸ The use of the upbeat T-Rex song suggests a positive outcome without suggesting how it will be achieved. Again, these elements contrast with the use of little music, dramatic sound effects, and inter-titles in the Japanese trailer, which provides intrigue because of the claim that the film will be 'Different from the original'. In both instances, the visual effects are used in reference to the narrative, more so than as stand-alone elements of spectacle (as was found with *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* and other examples). The narrative is strongly emphasised as a key element of the films, even when the original *manga* is not referred to. Therefore, this is what distinguishes the film within both Japanese cinema and all of 4Digital Asia's releases.

The 20th *Century Boys* trailers are not the only instances where 4Digital Asia uses the elements of narrative to promote a film over its other characteristics. The Japanese and UK trailers for *X-Cross* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2007) are very similar in regards to their footage, but again there are key differences in captions and music used. The Japanese trailer provides

²⁶ The final volume, titled *21st Century Boys: Volume 2*, was released in the UK on 11/04/2013 - 'UK release schedule: Manga', *NEO*, No. 108, (April 2013), 24; 'Naoki Urasawa's 21st Century Boys 2', Amazon.co.uk, accessed 17/04/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Naoki-Urasawas-21st-Century-Boys/dp/1421543273/>.

²⁷ Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp.121-3; Street, *op. cit.*, 444.

²⁸ Street, *ibid.*

large captions which detail the film's origins as a book, and excerpts are shown alongside an upbeat Japanese pop song taken from the film's end credits, leading up to an image of the film's title. In the UK trailer, captions are shown at the beginning of the trailer which state: 'Every year, 100,000 people go missing in Japan, but only 90% are ever found.'²⁹ As a result, the footage in the trailer becomes intrinsically linked to this statistic, emphasising the film's narrative premise. A montage of footage from the film follows the caption, again leading up to an image of the film's title. The footage clarifies the film's premise, which concerns a trip to a hot spring by two women that turns sinister when the nearby village's residents start pursuing them. A caption for the book's author is briefly seen, and is much smaller than in the Japanese trailer. Another contrast is the music that accompanies the UK trailer, which is a series of rapid drumbeats that creates much more dramatic tension than the Japanese pop song. No single element of spectacle from the film is foregrounded over any other. Instead, the excerpts are presented briefly to create intrigue related to the film's narrative, stemming from the premise detailed in the caption concerning missing people in Japan. In addition, the caption helps to emphasise the significance of the film's narrative, which is also aided (and not over-shadowed) by the footage used.

At this point in the trailers' analysis, narrative can be seen as an element that is emphasised when the film is adapted from another Japanese media text. However, narrative can also be used over other elements in trailers when the films are not adaptations. The trailer for *Death Tube* (dir. Fukuda Yohei, 2010) is one such example, and the DVD was the last of 4Digital Asia's releases. As with *Tokyo Gore Police*, it is a horror film, and both the Japanese and UK trailers for *Death Tube* show excerpts of footage where victims die because of injuries from knives, saws and electric drills. However, none of these images are dwelt on for

²⁹ Quote taken from the UK *X-Cross* trailer, from the 4Digital Asia DVD released on 19/01/2009.

more than a second, in contrast to the gruesome *Tokyo Gore Police* trailers. Instead, footage from *Death Tube* is shown alongside dialogue that clarifies the narrative of the film, which is about a group of people forced to play deadly games, and their attempts are broadcast onto a website. The one addition made by the UK trailer is a caption stating that the film is ‘from the producers of the banned *Grotesque*’.³⁰ Excessive torture scenes prevented the UK DVD release of *Grotesque* (dir. Shiraishi Koji, 2009).³¹ In contrast, the *Death Tube* trailer promotes the horror film through the intrigue and suspense of the premise and the victims’ efforts to discover who is behind their capture. This is seen as a distinct characteristic of the narrative that both the Japanese filmmakers wanted to emphasise, as well as 4Digital Asia, in order to distinguish the film from other releases.

Narrative has already been identified as an important element within the conventions of trailers. But examples from 4Digital Asia demonstrate that it can be emphasised over other elements within trailers, such as visual spectacle and adapted source material (for instance, a *manga*, novel, or other media text). The trailers’ portrayals of the films’ narratives, and their creation of intrigue and suspense, are re-used from the original Japanese versions. The mysteries surrounding the identity of Friend, the strange village located near a hot spring, and a deadly online game, are presented as unique narrative premises within Japanese films that 4Digital Asia believes will also appeal to UK viewers. In addition, the trailers help to explain, as well as emphasise, the narratives of these films, without references to other media texts and contexts that have yet to be communicated from Japan to the UK. Nonetheless, both narrative and visual spectacle are not the only elements that can be used for the promotion of a film within a trailer, or a DVD labels’ catalogue of titles. Sources of adaptation, such as a

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ 4Digital Asia was meant to release *Grotesque* on DVD in the UK, but the British Board of Film Classification refused it a certification – ‘BBFC Case Studies: Grotesque’, *BBFC* website, accessed 17/04/2013, <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/case-studies/grotesque>; ‘Infamously Grotesque’, *NEO*, No.63 (October 2009), 15.

manga or novel, have already been mentioned. Furthermore, there are other contextual factors which affect a film's content and production that can feature within trailers. Further information for UK viewers therefore appears in the trailers as a result of these factors, in addition to the trailers' use as promotional messages.

Cyborg She: Re-Using Contextual Elements

The Japanese trailers for *Cyborg She* (dir. Jae-young Kwak, 2008) are included on its 4Digital Asia DVD release, and its UK trailer is found on the distributor's later DVD releases.³² These trailers demonstrate characteristics that contrast with the examples already analysed, and which are also found in relation to more than one film released by 4Digital Asia. Both trailers make similar use of the credits and past films linked to members of the production crew for *Cyborg She*. The use of cast and crew names is a characteristic that is often found in trailers, but its inclusion in 4Digital Asia's re-edited trailers is at odds with earlier examples in the chapter. Such references have been found to be brief in the UK versions of the trailers, for both cast and crew, and elements of visual spectacle and narrative are used more prominently. An argument could be made for the fact that UK audiences may not be familiar with many other Japanese films or cast and crew members, and so this information is not always communicated within the trailers. However, the trailers provided for *Cyborg She* emphasise certain names within the production crew. Further examples have been found which refer to other contextual factors within Japan's film industry and popular culture, such as related media and antecedent films. When such elements have already been central to a film's promotion, 4Digital Asia may not always remove reference to them (as was

³² The UK trailer can be found on the following 4Digital Asia DVDs: *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009), released 15/03/2010; *Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost* (dir. Miyake Ryuta and Asato Mari, 2009), released 19/04/2010; *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess* (dir. Higuchi Shinji, 2008), released 28/06/2010; *Kaiji* (dir. Sato Toya, 2009), released 26/07/2010; *Death Tube* (dir. Fukuda Yohei, 2008), released 20/09/2010.

found with the *manga* origins of *20th Century Boys*). Instead, the distributor can re-use these elements to promote a film within the UK, as well as illustrate the film's unique characteristics within Japanese cinema.

The significance of contextual factors has been underscored in specific studies of Japanese films, and also in regard to trailers. Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer explain the significance of contextual factors to films from Japan, specifically through the example of authorship in the introduction to their edited collection, *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*. 'The formation of critical canons around the reputations of celebrated Japanese film directors is a variedly situated and ongoing process that does not necessarily signify the same thing in Japan as it does elsewhere.'³³ Such differences in reception and reputation can also stem from how related media texts have been disseminated outside of Japan. How contexts and sources of Japanese literature, *manga*, theatre, and marketing materials, are circulated and explained in relation to certain films is the focus of many essays within *Japanese Cinema*. Furthermore, Sarah Street has investigated how similar contextual factors are used within trailers. For example, the film *Brief Encounter* (dir. David Lean, 1945) was not promoted primarily through the name of its director, but the name of the original playwright (Noel Coward) in reference to its stage origins.³⁴ Here, one name references both the contexts of literature and theatre in order to aid a film's promotion, by relying on the potential perceptions that audiences have of such media. The re-use of certain elements within 4Digital Asia's trailers can therefore refer to certain contexts within Japan, such as names within the Japanese film industry and popular media. However, 4Digital Asia is not just re-using elements within the trailers for the same reasons, but also using these promotional messages to familiarise UK audiences with Japanese popular culture.

³³ Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer, 'Introduction' (pp.1-24), in A. Phillips and J. Stringer (eds), *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p.16.

³⁴ Street, *op. cit.*, 445.

There are two Japanese trailers on the *Cyborg She* DVD, and their similarities with the UK version are evident through comparisons with the first Japanese trailer. As well as their similar content, the Japanese trailers are comparable due to their similar lengths.³⁵ In both trailers, the excerpts shown throughout focus on the main characters, Jiro (Koide Keisuke) and the female cyborg (Ayase Haruka) that travels through time to accompany him. Footage of how they meet is followed with the cyborg showing her strength by lifting a bus and flinging Jiro against a wall. After Jiro kisses the cyborg, her skills are again exhibited. She picks up Jiro, runs very fast with him on her back, and then throws a piece of chalk through a wall in a classroom. The lead actors are again shown in individual close-ups in both trailers as they end, emphasising the romantic elements of the film's narrative.

Some different excerpts are found in the UK trailer, but generally they give the same impression as the Japanese version. However, additional media sources are referred to in the Japanese trailer. Both trailers use the same piece of music. Two different Japanese pop songs are used in the trailers on the DVD, and one also plays within the UK trailer.³⁶ The song is called 'Kizuna', by Hi-Fi Camp, and its credits are captioned only within the Japanese trailer. This is not only a contrast between these two trailers, but also Japanese and English language trailers in general. Music is a prominent characteristic in trailers, but specific songs and artists are not usually credited, as music written by a film's composer is more likely to be featured in a trailer.³⁷ In Japan, however, it would seem that the trailer acts as additional promotion for this particular band. But it is not used similarly in the UK, as 4Digital Asia only provides the

³⁵ The first Japanese trailer is nearly two minutes long, whereas the second is just over a minute. Both contain very similar content despite this difference. The first trailer is therefore representative of the content in both trailers, and is also comparable to the UK version's 90 second running time.

³⁶ Captions crediting the songs exist within the Japanese trailers, and are translated. The first song is 'Kizuna (Bonds) by Hi-Fi Camp', and the second is 'Yakusoku no Tsubasa (Wings of the Promise) by Misia'.

³⁷ Johnston explains this fact through illustrating the use of John Williams' music in the *Star Wars* film trailers – Johnston, *op. cit.*, 131-4.

Japanese trailer on its DVD disc of *Cyborg She*, and not on its other disc releases. Instead, the distributor uses other information to attract potential viewers.

The details used in the trailers predominantly concern other films that the members of the production crew have worked on. As the song 'Kizuna' plays in the Japanese version, a caption accompanies footage of the female cyborg transporting through time and explaining that she is man-made. The caption states: 'My Sassy Girl...Windstruck...Director Jae-Young Kwak's latest film.'³⁸ This same information appears within inter-titles seen between excerpts featured in the UK trailer. Dialogue and voice-over are largely cut out of the UK version, whereas the inter-titles have been added by 4Digital Asia (as the white writing on a black background does not appear in the Japanese trailer - these contrasts between can be seen in Figures 9 and 10). The first inter-title appears after some initial close-ups of the leads, and states: 'Written and directed by Jae-Young Kwak (*My Sassy Girl*).'³⁹ Several seconds later, after more excerpts are displayed, the next inter-title reads: 'Produced by Mataichiro Yamamoto (*Azumi*).' The third inter-title in the trailer is subsequently shown after a final flurry of clips from the film, and it explains that the film spent '5 weeks in the Japanese Box Office Top Ten' before displaying a title graphic. In addition to the excerpts, these inter-titles detail specific elements significant to the film and its context in Japan.

³⁸ Quote taken from the Japanese trailer for *Cyborg She*, from the 4Digital Asia DVD released on 26/10/2009.

³⁹ Quotes taken from the UK trailer: 'Cyborg She', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 18/04/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/122>.

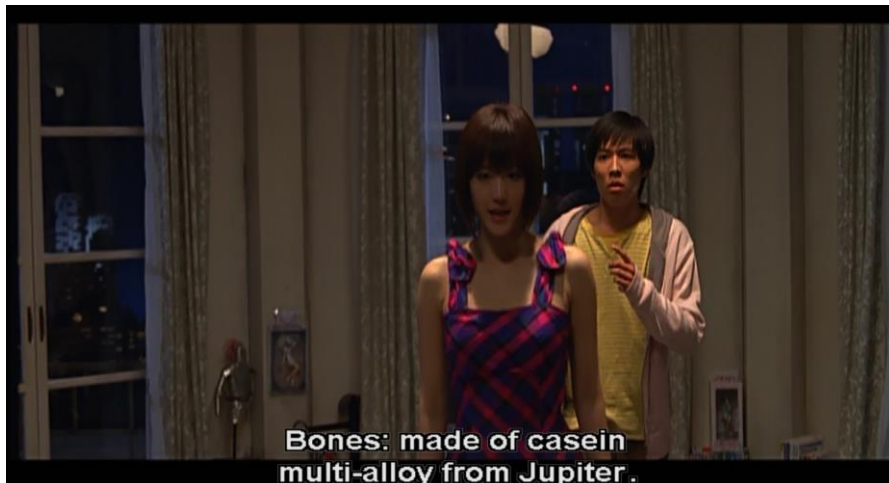


Figure 9 – Both dialogue and inter-titles are translated alongside excerpts within the Japanese trailer for *Cyborg She*.



Figure 10 – Similar excerpts appear in the UK *Cyborg She* trailer, and additional inter-titles with extra information are added.

Both Johnston and Street agree that the director's name can be an important aspect within film trailers.⁴⁰ Though he himself is South Korean, Kwak's films have been hugely popular in Japan.⁴¹ The production of *Cyborg She* in Japan was therefore likely to have been

⁴⁰ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p.142; Street, *op. cit.*, 445-6.

⁴¹ Though no statistics can be found for this, the commercial and critical success of Kwak's Korean films are evident in the following articles: JaeYoon Park, 'Asia's beloved sassy girl: Jun Ji-Hyun's star image and her transnational stardom', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* (website), No.51 (2009), accessed 18/04/2013, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/SassyGirl/index.html>; Mark Schilling, 'Japanese are Windstruck by Korean film', *Screen Daily* website, accessed 18/04/2013, <http://www.screendaily.com/japanese-are-windstruck-by-korean-film/4021671.article>.

a consequence of the success of Kwak's Korean films, *My Sassy Girl* (2001) and *Windstruck* (2004).⁴² As the director is known for these romantic comedies, the trailer promotes *Cyborg She* as a similar type of film. Footage of character close-ups and kisses emphasise the romantic elements, and Jiro's exclamations and shocked expressions as the cyborg showcases her abilities are presented as comedic. Within the UK trailer, alongside these generic elements, Kwak is identified as the director of both *Cyborg She* and *My Sassy Girl*. However, the latter film has not been released by a UK distributor, though the similarly titled American remake is available on a DVD which explains its Korean origins.⁴³ Despite this fact, the treatment of the director's name suggests he has a celebrated reputation within Japan, due to its appearance alongside information regarding the theatrical success of *Cyborg She*.

Producer Mataichiro Yamamoto's name is also mentioned, as well as one of his previous films, *Azumi* (dir. Kitamura Ryuhei, 2003). Yamamoto's name was similarly circulated through international production notes that accompanied *Azumi* when it was screened at film festivals.⁴⁴ Consistently described as 'action-packed',⁴⁵ the reputation of that film is used to promote *Cyborg She*, as his name precedes an excerpt where the cyborg overcomes an adversary with a machine gun. The prominent names of the director and producer are therefore emphasised as strongly as the generic elements of romance, comedy and action that are demonstrated within the trailers' excerpts. Moreover, the production crew names featured are directly linked to the content of the film through the inter-titles that are

⁴² The Japanese production company Gaga Usen is named at the beginning of the Japanese trailer for *Cyborg She*. The 4Digital Asia DVD case also confirms the film is a Japanese production, as does the following article: Derek Elley, 'Cyborg She', *Variety* website, accessed 18/04/2013, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117938066/>.

In contrast, the cast, locations and production companies for *My Sassy Girl* and *Windstruck* are South Korean.

⁴³ The film's synopsis begins with 'Yann Samuëll's remake of the Korean romantic-comedy stars Jesse Bradford...' – from 'My Sassy Girl [DVD - 2008]', *Amazon.co.uk* website, accessed 18/04/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/My-Sassy-Girl-DVD/dp/B0015DLZX2/>.

⁴⁴ 'Azumi production notes', *Cinematic Intelligence Agency* website, accessed 18/04/2013, <http://thecia.com.au/reviews/a/images/azumi.pdf>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

intercut with the excerpts. While authorship could be argued as the most significant aspect of the inter-titles, what is in fact evident is the use of contexts related to *Cyborg She* and its production crew. This includes the reputation of the director in Japan, the reputation of the producer's past films, and the box-office success of *Cyborg She* in Japan. 4Digital Asia often makes use of these contexts for the promotion of its DVD releases, and uses it as information to communicate to UK viewers, as will be seen with further examples.

The trailers for *Goth* (dir. Takahashi Gen, 2008) similarly utilise aspects of authorship, but foregrounds certain names over others. 4Digital Asia does not significantly re-edit this film's trailer into a UK version, apart from removing dialogue and providing English subtitles. The trailer introduces the characters and premise of the film, which charts how classmates Morino (Takanashi Rin) and Kamiyama (Hongo Kanata) follow the murders committed by a serial killer near their homes. As well as the subtitles and captions, excerpts from the film's scenes help illustrate the gruesome killings and the classmates' fascination with death. These elements follow information which is displayed early on in both trailers, and later captions refer back to it when they state that the film depicts how 'murder becomes art.'⁴⁶ The film is explained as an adaptation of the book by Japanese author Otsuichi, which is also an 'award-winning novel'.⁴⁷ Before the DVD release, the novel appeared to have only been published in French outside of Japan,⁴⁸ but its critical reputation is still used to promote the film in the UK (as 4Digital Asia's other DVD releases and website contain the UK trailer). The book is obviously popular in its home country, and suggests to potential UK viewers that the film may have been equally popular in Japan.

⁴⁶ Quotes taken from both the UK and Japanese trailers for *Goth*, from the 4Digital Asia DVD released on 21/09/2009.

⁴⁷ Otsuichi, *Goth* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2003).

⁴⁸ 'Goth', *Amazon.co.uk*, accessed 19/04/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Goth-Otsuichi/dp/2845996187/>.

In October 2009, the novel was then published in English – 'Goth: A Novel of Horror', *Amazon.co.uk*, accessed 19/04/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/GOTH-A-Novel-Horror-Otsuichi/dp/1427811377/>.

The trailers for *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess* (dir. Higuchi Shinji, 2008) are translated by 4Digital Asia. Though they are not re-edited into a UK version, they are edited into a 3 minute and 40 second compilation, categorised on the DVD as “Trailers and TV Spots”.⁴⁹ This same compilation is also used as a trailer on 4Digital Asia’s website. Compared to the other examples, it is quite useful for the analysis of the trailers as each can be viewed one after the other in quick succession, and recurring similarities can easily be noticed (suggesting that the distributor believes that comparisons and contrasts between the trailers will be of interest to viewers). Moreover, this compilation is used by 4Digital Asia as an alternative to its usual inclusion of trailers in the DVD menus. However, despite being a compilation of both trailers and TV spots, both are displayed for reasons similar to those mentioned in the chapter’s earlier examples. Each trailer briefly provides an explanation of the film’s plot, where two bandits assist a princess of a conquered land, who is trying to return to an allied kingdom with her gold and her bodyguard. The word ‘reborn’ is displayed and exclaimed (via voice-over and subtitles) often, and this happens for several reasons.

Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess is a remake of *The Hidden Fortress* (1954), an acclaimed period adventure made by the director Kurosawa Akira. The earlier film is also well-known for being an inspiration to George Lucas’ story structure and script for *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977).⁵⁰ The trailer references both these points in film history, alongside the word ‘reborn’. Excerpts shown most often, other than those featuring the four main characters, are from scenes which depict the villains and the explosion of an enemy stronghold. The villains are all dressed similarly to the central antagonist of the *Star Wars* films, Darth Vader, and the explosion echoes the one seen at the end of *A New Hope*. In contrast to this iconography, the second trailer within the compilation is the only one which

⁴⁹ The TV Spots essentially take the form of very short trailers.

⁵⁰ Director George Lucas admits this in a recorded introduction for the film – from the BFI DVD of *The Hidden Fortress*, released on 25/03/2002.

literally explains that it is a remake of *The Hidden Fortress*. However, within all the trailers for *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess*, the use of the word ‘reborn’ implies that it is a remake of an earlier film. But the use of ‘reborn’ and the *Star Wars*-style iconography also suggests that there are Japanese elements within Lucas’ film, as well as suggesting that the film will appeal to overseas audiences as well as those within Japan. 4Digital Asia does not re-edit the trailers to alter these implied references, but the compilation of them means that the recurring similarities will definitely be noticed.

The contextual elements of the trailers for *Cyborg She*, *Goth* and *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess* have all been found alongside excerpts of footage and captions/inter-titles that highlight elements of visual spectacle and narrative. Any aspect of visual spectacle or narrative within these examples has been strongly linked to a contextual factor, such as a member of the production crew or other piece of information (for example, the film’s box office performance or adaptation from another media text). As much as 4Digital Asia can omit these elements within the re-edited trailers of other films, such as *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* and *20th Century Boys*, they can also be aspects which a distributor focuses on for a film’s promotion outside of Japan. References to elements of Japanese culture, such as popular media and prominent figures within entertainment industries, are illustrated for the benefit of potential UK viewers – and demonstrate what a distributor believes these viewers will be interested in. 4Digital Asia’s treatment of its trailers shows that it wishes to inform UK audiences of these elements as well as re-use them for promotional purposes. Moreover, the distributor highlights that its use of the trailers is distinctive, because of the regular contrasts between the UK and Japanese versions. Third Window treats its trailers similarly. Even though it only translates Japanese trailers (and does not re-edit them), the label can still be

selective over what elements it decides are most important to communicate to UK audiences, both for informative and promotional reasons.

Third Window: The Implications of Re-Using Trailers through Translation

All of Third Windows DVDs include trailers for their feature films, which are categorised as either the “original” or “theatrical” versions from Japan. Though 4Digital Asia’s DVDs tend to contain both UK and Japanese trailers, some of its releases only include the Japanese trailers.⁵¹ Therefore, the trailers from Third Window DVDs will be analysed separately from the 4Digital Asia examples, in order to fully address the significance of subtitling within the trailers, as it often occurs without the trailers being re-edited. The Third Window examples represent how a whole trailer can be re-used for promotional purposes by both distributors. The trailers appear in DVD menus that showcase the label’s past and upcoming releases, as well as those specific to the title film. Though the trailers are not re-edited, aspects of their translation (particularly the subtitles) can still represent the distributor’s choices and intentions for their re-use. It could be assumed that many aspects of the films are represented clearly to UK viewers by translating the Japanese trailers. But, more importantly, subtitles can be used as much as any other aspect of a trailer to emphasise certain elements. Spectacle, narrative, and other contextual information can be referred to at varying points within a trailer, representing different promotional strategies that the distributors utilise for different films through their subtitles. Even though both *Turtles are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers* (2005) and *Instant Swamp* (2009) are films by the same director

⁵¹ 4Digital Asia DVDs which only include Japanese trailers are as follows: *Black Kiss* (dir. Tezuka Macoto, 2004), released 22/09/2008; *Starfish Hotel* (dir. John Williams, 2006), released 20/10/2008; *Meatball Machine*, released 01/06/2009; *Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost*, released 19/04/2010; *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess*, released 28/06/2010; *Kaiji*, released 26/07/2010; *Death Tube*, released 20/09/2010.

(Miki Satoshi) and from the same genre (comedy), the trailers' subtitles contrast greatly in comparison to their similarities.

Subtitles have been found to be as complex and meaningful as other conventions and traits within film and media texts, and not just trailers. Graphics comprised of text are often central to trailers, as they have been prominent ever since the earliest examples. Kernan often makes the text and graphics central to her analyses, as do Johnston and Street in their explorations of trailers.⁵² Kernan also explains that inter-titles and title graphics are a component of trailers that has remained constant despite other changes in their history, following how films were made in the silent era. She explains that it 'helped naturalize trailers' continuation of a graphic regime that used titles to connect – and simultaneously hype – the disjointed scenes.'⁵³ The inter-titles are therefore crucial to linking together excerpts and other elements within the trailers, so that they coalesce into particular meanings and representations intended to aid a film's promotion. Further textual conventions within audio-visual media, such as subtitles, are also understood to represent the specific intentions of translators and other figures that are responsible for their formulation.

Studies of translation techniques, such as dubbing and subtitling, not only share findings within trailer research, but also reveal much about media communication and dissemination. In the conclusion of his research into both dubbing and subtitling, Abe Mark Nornes states: 'Subtitlers, for example, take it as a point of pride that they are masters of condensation. In any form of translation, change is inevitable.'⁵⁴ Michael Cronin expands on this claim within his own study:

The spectator takes on the role of interpreter experiencing the joy of connectedness without the pain of connection, the time and the effort necessary to

⁵² Kernan, *op. cit*; Johnston, *op. cit*; Street, *op. cit*.

⁵³ Kernan, *op. cit*, pp.32-3.

⁵⁴ Abe Mark Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p.242.

master languages. However, the very availability of the subtitles themselves indicates the limits to any omniscience that might be assumed by their readers.⁵⁵

Gilbert C.F. Fong agrees with this point, and goes further by detailing the two-way relationship that subtitles represent, in stating that ‘the importance of subtitles hinges not on media hierarchy, i.e., the power positions occupied by dialogue, image and subtitles, but on the need to assist the audience to overcome their linguistic deficiency.’⁵⁶ Alongside DVD and digital technologies developments, language options such as subtitles have become increasingly essential to the global distribution of media.⁵⁷ This means that the purposes behind the subtitles, and the intentions of those who create them, are as far-reaching as the digital media through which they are disseminated. Essentially, distributors (through the work of subtitlers) want to provide access and understanding of films and other media to audiences outside of a film’s country of origin, such as Japan. However, this access and understanding is limited to the interpretations of the distributors and subtitlers (meaning what they translate and how they translate it). Therefore, subtitles reveal certain means of communicating and disseminating media to audiences across geographical borders, as well as the promotional intentions of a film’s distributor.



Figure 11 – Only dialogue is translated within the excerpts used in the *Turtles...* trailer.

⁵⁵ Michael Cronin, *Translation Goes To The Movies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p.106.

⁵⁶ Gilbert C.F. Fong, ‘Let The Words Do the Talking: The Nature and Art of Subtitling’ (pp. 91-105), in G.C.F. Fong and K.K.L. Au (eds), *Dubbing and Subtitling in a World Context* (Chinese University Press, 2009), p.104.

⁵⁷ Minaka O’Hagan, ‘Impact of DVD on Translation: Language Options as an Essential Add-On Feature’, *Convergence*, 13:2 (2007), 157-168.

The trailers for the comedies *Turtles...* and *Instant Swamp* illustrate how subtitles can reveal the intentions of a distributor, such as Third Window. In addition, their content is inextricably linked to certain aspects that help to distinguish the films. Only the dialogue in excerpts from *Turtles...* is translated within its trailer, whereas dialogue, captions and inter-titles are translated in the *Instant Swamp* trailer. As a consequence, both of these examples help illustrate characteristics found across all the Third Window trailers (which will be explained with reference to other examples). Evidence of contrasts between these promotional texts will now be presented before further examining the significance of them.

The *Turtles...* trailer was included on its disc, as well as all other subsequent DVDs released by Third Window up to 2010.⁵⁸ In all these instances, only dialogue spoken by characters within the film is translated through the subtitles. The only exception is where a poster's text is translated, when the female protagonist Suzume (Ueno Juri) accidentally stumbles upon it. The poster reads 'Spies Wanted', and after meeting up with the husband and wife duo that put it up, their dialogue is also translated: ' "Very ordinary. Just right for a spy...That's what I thought too. Take it from a veteran, the truly ordinary are rare" ' (as seen in Figure 11).⁵⁹ In between these scenes are inter-titles composed of characters from the Japanese language (*kanji*), and are not accompanied by subtitles. They are frequently found amid the trailer's various excerpts, which depict the bizarre occurrences that Suzume experiences both before and after answering the spies' advertisement (such as falling victim to an avalanche of apples and then sneaking around a supermarket).

⁵⁸ In addition to being the cut-off point of the thesis' research sample, Third Window also started to reduce the number of trailers that it included on its DVD releases after 2010.

⁵⁹ Quotes taken from the *Turtles...* trailer, from the Third Window DVD released on 23/02/2009.



Figure 12 – Dialogue, captions and inter-titles are all translated within the excerpts used in the *Instant Swamp* trailer.

The trailer for *Instant Swamp* is similar in some respects, upon being viewed after the *Turtles...* example, though its contrasts are highly significant. Again, it appears on the film's DVD disc and other DVDs released by Third Window. It also depicts some bizarre events that affect the film's female protagonist, Haname (Aso Kumiko) both before and after being made redundant from the office for a lifestyle magazine (such as having boxes collapse on her at work, and then meeting a series of eccentric characters while exploring the countryside). Many inter-titles and captions appear amid these scenes, as well as regular exclamations from a male narrator. The major difference in this example is that the additional inter-titles, captions and narration are all translated. As well as dialogue from the film, which mostly suggests that leaving a water tap running can cheer you up, various pieces of information are given in the trailer's subtitles. The male voice-over narrator explains the character's names and backgrounds very briefly, as the excerpts introduce them. The narrator also exclaims that 'Director Miki Satoshi's work has an unforeseeable surprise!'⁶⁰ Captions list the names of the actors in the film's cast, and other ones briefly mention the titles and companies responsible for releasing the CD soundtrack and novelisation of the film. In the

⁶⁰ Quotes taken from the trailer for *Instant Swamp*, from the Third Window DVD released on 24/05/2010.

trailer's final few sequences, dialogue spoken by Haname is translated (again, concerning taps), as well as more captions which state: 'Poverty stricken life... Gradually becoming poor office lady... Exceeding boundaries... Happiness has come!' (as seen in Figure 12). The flurry of captions and subtitles directs the viewer's attention to several points on the screen, though some sentences and phrases are given more emphasis than others. This is a similarity shared within both trailer examples, which will now be demonstrated.

Due to the fewer subtitles that the *Turtles...* trailer contains, it would appear to emphasise fewer elements derived from the film. However, fewer subtitles actually signify similarities to conclusions that were made about the *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* trailers. What has been translated by the subtitles is dialogue, and this draws attention to the narrative premise and comedic spectacles that the trailer depicts (which the *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* trailer also did, but its focus was on action and visual spectacle). The protagonist of *Turtles...*, Suzume, decides to become a spy, and as a consequence has to meet bizarre people and engage in abnormal activities, such as picking up items with her feet and sneaking around supermarkets. The bizarre qualities of the other characters are signified through the dialogue (which contains many unexplained exclamations, such as 'Gingko nuts!'), but they are also represented as comedic because of excerpts of characters laughing and the light-hearted tone of the trailer's music.⁶¹ The humorous dialogue and events depicted are therefore the only elements that the subtitles add understanding to. Essentially, Third Window promotes this film by its generic tone and narrative premise, and these are also seen as elements that make the film distinctively Japanese.

The increased amount of subtitles in the *Instant Swamp* trailer demonstrates a change in promotional tactics for this particular film. The translation provided by Third Window also

⁶¹ Kernan, *op. cit.*, pp.190-2; Street, *op. cit.*, 445.

helps to explain some of the reasons for this. ‘Director Miki Satoshi’s latest film’ is the first inter-title which appears at the beginning of the trailer. *Third Window* is obviously keen to use the director’s name to help promote the film, in contrast to the *Turtles...* trailer. The timescale between both of Miki’s films partly explains why this is the case. The director’s prior film, *Adrift in Tokyo*, was released in between *Turtles...* and *Instant Swamp* in 2007 (the other two were released in 2005 and 2009, respectively). *Adrift in Tokyo* had been both popular in Japan, and within several other countries, as a result of its many screenings at various film festivals.⁶² *Third Window* therefore wants to attract potential viewers familiar with the director’s name, in addition to the comedic and narrative elements of the films, which the subtitles are mainly engaged with explaining.⁶³

The narrator in the trailer repeats many of the captions displayed on screen, and both narration and captions are translated in the subtitles. They explain Haname’s situation both before and after she loses her job, and briefly introduce the eccentric characters she meets in between being the victim of bad luck (such as the collapsing boxes) and turning on lots of taps. Subtitles explaining these aspects of the film appear the most frequently in the trailer. Captions crediting the film’s theme song, soundtrack and novelisation also appear in the trailer, providing evidence of the multimedia marketing campaign that helped promote the film in Japan. However, they appear very briefly in comparison to the captions and dialogue concerning the film’s narrative and characters. *Third Window* is not against viewers knowing this information, but believes in this instance that the film’s story and director are the most useful elements from the trailer that can aid its promotion (as well as be of most interest to

⁶² The film’s webpage from its Canadian distributor lists these festivals, as well as awards won – ‘Adrift In Tokyo’, *Evokative Films* website, accessed 19/04/2013, <http://www.evokativefilms.com/en/films/show/1>.

⁶³ *Third Window* would also release *Adrift In Tokyo*, but not until 2012 – ‘Adrift In Tokyo’, *Third Window* website, accessed 19/04/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/adrift-in-tokyo>.

the UK market). Furthermore, these aspects of the film highlight its distinction within Japanese cinema, and are aspects that Third Window is explaining to viewers of its DVDs.

Other elements are seen as completely unnecessary for translation. In both the *Turtles...* and *Instant Swamp* trailers, products are advertised at the end alongside captions in Japanese *kanji* (respectively, a CD with *Turtles...*, and a mug with *Instant Swamp*). Such products have been advertised at the end of trailers used by 4Digital Asia, showing how certain merchandise related to a film is sold as part of its theatrical promotion in Japan. In the Japanese trailer for *Death Note*, a CD is also featured at the end of the trailer, as well as their prices in Japanese yen. The Japanese trailer for *Death Note L: Change The World* includes a similar advertisement at the end of its trailer, but this time for a key-ring. However, 4Digital Asia does not include this information within its re-edited UK trailers. Therefore, the distributor is showing its belief that this information is not necessary for its own marketing practices, but may be of interest to viewers of the films' DVDs (where the Japanese trailers are found). Third Window has not edited out these advertisements, but it has not translated them either. Combined with 4Digital Asia's treatment of these elements, it is clear that the distributors only believe that certain aspects in the trailers will be of interest to UK viewers. Moreover, all the trailers' contents, whether translated or not, concern how the film was promoted theatrically in Japan. Third Window may only use certain aspects of the films for its own marketing practices, rather than re-produce the exact same materials through a comprehensive translation. But the distributor can also include some other distinctive material, such as these advertisements, that originates from a film's Japanese promotion.

The choices that the distributors have regarding the trailers they use, and how they use them, are evident within further examples. *Kamikaze Girls* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2004) is given the same trailer on its own disc and all other DVDs released by Third Window up to

2010. Though the trailer on the DVDs does not include any audible English language content, it is also not translated, meaning that it contrasts with the subtitled trailers. The only English text that is displayed is the title of the film, which dissolves before several excerpts from the film are presented. A Japanese pop song plays over the images, leading up to the end of the trailer, which fades out on the image of the two lead actresses driving away on a motorbike. No subtitles appear to explain the premise of the film. Instead, the images suggest that the film concerns two girls with separate fashion senses, who clash at first with each other, then decide to become friends and clash with other people that they meet (particularly a female-only biker gang, seen before the trailer's fade-out shots).⁶⁴ In this instance, Third Window has decided that the film can be most effectively promoted through its visual elements alone, suggesting that the film will build on and offer more of the viewing experience that the trailer provides. Essentially, Third Window emphasises the visuals of *Kamikaze Girls* as central to the film's distinctiveness within both Japanese cinema and all of its DVD releases. The lack of subtitles in this example is as significant here as it is in the *Turtles...* example.

Third Window does not always decide against utilising content which a Japanese trailer has originally focused on for a film's promotion. Elements of narrative and spectacle are always communicated within trailers, but Third Window has decided that it is just as important for a film's production crew and music writer to be recognised in the trailer for *Fish Story* (dir. Nakamura Yoshihiro, 2009). The film depicts how a 1970s Japanese punk song, 'Fish Story', ends up affecting several characters over several decades, leading up to 2012 where it ultimately helps prevent a meteor destroying the world. The trailer's voice-over and captions emphasise these elements within the story, and the subtitles translate them, as well as brightly coloured inter-titles that appear between the trailer's excerpts. At the

⁶⁴ The film's DVD cover synopsis (the same as on Third Window's webpage), has almost this exact summation of the film's narrative – 'Kamikaze Girls', Third Window website, accessed 19/04/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/kamikaze-girls>.

beginning of the trailer, an inter-title states that the film is ‘From the team behind “The Foreign Duck, The Native Duck and God In A Coin Locker”’ (released in 2007).⁶⁵ The film’s director, (Nakamura) and the writer of the original novel (Kotaro Isaka) are then credited in the next inter-title. After introducing the characters from each decade, another inter-title appears before a final montage of excerpts which precedes an image of the film’s title. The name Kazuyoshi Saito is credited with writing the film’s music. These elements specifically relate to other viewing material which Third Window provides on its DVD release of *Fish Story*. The disc’s special features include a making-of that presents interview footage with the director, and a recording of a live performance of the film’s title song, which spotlight’s Kazuyoshi’s guitar skills. In this example, Third Window has provided information concerning how the film was promoted theatrically in Japan through the trailer’s subtitles.⁶⁶ The trailer stresses, and helps explain, the significance of the film’s director, original novel and song writer in Japan – distinguishing it within Japanese cinema and Third Window’s catalogue of titles.

Third Window’s treatment of its trailers at first suggests that it uses marketing materials for its films exactly as they were intended for theatrical promotion in Japan. But subtitling is as selective as 4Digital Asia’s re-editing of trailers. Third Window has often only translated certain elements within the trailers it uses, signifying the choices available to the distributor through subtitles. As a result, only certain aspects of the films’ content are translated and communicated through the subtitles. The distributor is not only choosing how its releases are promoted through these trailers, but is also deciding what information is likely to be of interest to UK viewers. Furthermore, this is often information that Third Window can

⁶⁵ Quote taken from the trailer for *Fish Story*, from the Third Window DVD released on 26/07/2010.

⁶⁶ Kazuyoshi’s music is not available widely within the UK (as it can only be imported on CDs and vinyl records from abroad), and *The Foreign Duck, The Native Duck and God In A Coin Locker* was not released by Third Window until 2012.

explain through subtitles (for instance, the prominence of a director, or song writer, or the characteristics of its narrative and/or genre). Whether a trailer is re-edited or shown with subtitles, the examples discussed have shown how these means of exhibition and translation have integrated the trailers into the distributor's own marketing practices, as they do not always recycle unaltered theatrical promotional material that originates from Japan (though this can be a convenient and cost-effective option).

Conclusion

In demonstrating how 4Digital Asia and Third Window have integrated trailers fully into their DVD distribution practices, additional trailer characteristics have been highlighted. Johnston's most recent definition of trailers as 'complex, layered texts that cross media boundaries' is supported by the analysis throughout the chapter.⁶⁷ However, the flexibility of trailers as promotional material is evident too. The trailers examined have promoted Japanese films for UK distributors, and they could again be categorised as 'mobile' due to their global movement from Japan to Britain.⁶⁸ Moreover, the trailers are altered when they are exhibited in the UK. Therefore, the trailers are flexible as well as mobile, allowing them to be shaped according to a distributor's aims for the promotion of a particular film. They still have many layers of meaning which can be interpreted, as the examples have shown. But 4Digital Asia and Third Window have decided which of these layers is most significant for their own promotional practices, as established by the examination of the re-editing and translation of the trailers. The use of particular filmic elements also illustrates the trailers' flexibility, as certain aspects have been foregrounded more than others because of the distributors' re-editing and translation of the trailers. The categorisation of the trailers as "original" or

⁶⁷ Johnston, *op, cit*, p.25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp.149-152.

“Japanese” does not mean that they are shown and used exactly as originally intended (for the films’ theatrical promotion in Japan). The distributors are choosing what elements to emphasise, showing what they wish to bring attention to in contrast to the filmmakers and promoters in Japan, and within the UK market.

Therefore, as a result of 4Digital Asia and Third Window re-using them as promotional material, the trailers highlight many elements of the films’ characteristics and contexts. Furthermore, this helps to demonstrate how the trailers help make the DVD labels’ distribution practices distinctive. They integrate certain information into the promotional messages that they circulate through the trailers. A consequence of these actions is that the reasons for the films being distinct also become characteristics that make the distributors distinct within the UK market. 4Digital Asia and Third Window each do what they can to distinguish each film from its other DVD releases. Though the trailers have demonstrated these facets within this chapter, the next chapter will examine how the websites also aim to make the labels as distinct as the films they distribute. The webpages exhibit the films’ trailers, but they contain much more than this material, and do not just act as another promotional platform – for the distributors or the films. As found in Chapter One, what makes the labels’ distinct within the trailers and the websites is the broad appeal of their films’ content, rather than establishing a uniform perception of them.

Chapter Four: DVD Labels' Websites:
How Distributors Promote and Provide New Experiences to UK DVD Viewers

The websites for both 4Digital Asia and Third Window supplement the distribution practices examined in the previous chapters – in more than one way. The labels' webpages display the DVD discs' packaging, special features and trailers, which both promote this material and the Japanese films released. However, the websites also provide a separate experience from all of the satellite texts within an online environment, which aims to present the distributors as distinctive companies. This is not achieved by repeating content and information from the packaging, special features or trailers. Details regarding this material are integrated into the experience provided on the distributors' webpages. The labels' releases are at the centre of the websites' content, as is the case with the other satellite texts, but specific actions and information that contribute to the DVD releases are conveyed. How the distributors present these practices as distinct will be the objective of the chapter's analysis of the webpages' content. Niels Bruggen states that a webpage is a signifying unit, and that any potential meanings and interpretations within it are evident through its textual elements and the environment in which these elements are displayed.¹ Therefore, the intentions of the websites created by 4Digital Asia and Third Window can be revealed. The websites provide a separate experience for web browsers, through the pages' text and media content, which is dedicated to emphasising the labels' distinctiveness. The websites literally state the distributors' aims, and so are perhaps the clearest representations of their intentions in the UK market. However, they also integrate the other satellite texts into the webpages' content, clarifying that the labels ultimately aim is to use their distribution practices to emphasise their distinction within the UK market.

¹ Niels Bruggen, 'The website as unit of analysis? Bolter and Manovich revisited' (75-88), *Northern Lights*, 5:1 (2007), 87; Niels Bruggen, 'Website history and the website as an object of study' (115-132), in *New Media and Society*, Vol.11 (2009), 119.

Niels Brugger has provided a consistent and adaptable approach for website analysis that fully interrogates their characteristics and conventions, in contrast to other critical discussions. This approach is derived from a critical examination of existing work by Jay David Bolter and Lev Manovich.² Bolter claims that websites are both fragmented and disparate, as well as having a unifying structure and coherence within their elements, by arguing that webpages and elements within them have a ‘perpetually shifting relationship’.³ Manovich’s perspective is much broader, and argues that the language of ‘the Web’ is a set of conventions which are communicated across webpages and websites allowing users to uniformly interact with these media sources.⁴ However, Brugger recognises that both these perspectives do not posit an analytical method or approach which would allow for the discussion and research of the content within the website, beyond how they interconnect within the vast scope of the internet.⁵ Moreover, the majority of discussions of the internet in relation to media industries focus on how websites highlight interconnections between media texts, rather than examine the webpages as texts.⁶

Brugger’s proposition for tackling this problem is to approach research of the internet by identifying the website as a unit which can be closely analysed. Through examining the textual elements that make up the webpages within websites, elements that are communicated across the internet as a whole are then examined, and reveal how information is viewed and used across the internet, or the Web (terms which Brugger uses interchangeably):

For some years now, the website has constituted the most prevalent and pregnant form of coherence on the Web. This is why when we analyse the Web, it is both

² Brugger, ‘The website as a unit of analysis?...’, *op. cit.*

³ Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext and the History of Writing* (2nd edition – Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2001), pp.11-12.

⁴ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p.7 and 31.

⁵ Brugger, ‘The website as a unit of analysis?...’, *op. cit.*, 83-4.

⁶ James Monaco, *How To Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia –Third Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2000, pp.550-8; Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (University of California Press, 2006), pp.191-238; John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 274-315.

important and necessary to direct the analytical focus towards the website as a phenomenon in its own right.⁷

Brugger therefore proposes that websites are units in order to demonstrate how the internet is browsed and understood through textual elements. These elements form webpages, which make up websites. Such elements can consist of text, images, sounds, and audio-visual media.⁸ It is not only necessary to investigate the content of these elements, but also how they are presented within the websites' layout.⁹ Alongside the 'media environment' that allows access to the internet (in particular, the computer hardware and software that facilitates access to it), Brugger labels specific aspects of websites as their 'textual elements' and their 'textual environment' in a later clarification of his approach.¹⁰ The content of 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's webpages, and how it is displayed, will therefore be examined throughout this chapter.

The significance of such aspects are not only emphasised by Brugger. Following his claims, other researchers have also treated websites and webpages as 'signifying textual units' in order to explore how they communicate specific information and meanings.¹¹ David Gauntlett argues that the construction and promotion of websites is central to understanding how the internet now 'offers an extraordinary explosion of opportunity for creativity and expression.'¹² Since this overview of the internet's characteristics, Gauntlett has gone further in exploring how meaning is created through the creation of websites and users' interaction with the information contained in them.¹³ Therefore, the websites created by 4Digital Asia and Third Window are capable of providing particular meanings and experiences for

⁷ *Ibid*, 87.

⁸ Brugger, 'The website as a unit of analysis?...', *op. cit*, 85.

⁹ *Ibid*, 85-6.

¹⁰ Brugger, 'Website history...', *op. cit*, 119.

¹¹ Brugger, 'The website as a unit of analysis?...', *op. cit*, 87.

¹² David Gauntlett, 'Web Studies: Introduction to the Second Edition' (2004), *NewMediaStudies.com*, accessed 01/05/2013, <http://www.newmediastudies.com/intro2004.htm>.

¹³ David Gauntlett, *Making is Connecting: The Social Meanings of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

browsers, in addition to other material which aids the distribution of their DVD releases (for instance, the packaging, special features and trailers). The websites signify patterns of discourse that aim to make both the labels' actions and DVD releases distinctive within the UK market. Following from previous chapters, the diverse image of the DVD labels is further illustrated by the websites, rather than a uniform brand image.

Applying the approach of Brugger, in analysing the textual elements of the webpages and how they are presented, provides evidence that demonstrates the potential meanings and experiences signified within the distributors' websites. Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window have webpages that promote all aspects of their DVD releases to their browsers (particularly the packaging and special features, as well as the film itself). Furthermore, they add to material included on the DVD, through information displayed on the webpages, as well as links to different modes of exhibition and consumption for some films. A significant amount of supplementary links and information concerns various forms of critical reception for the films, providing details of printed and digital content as well as dates of awards received. But the distributors' always use the information for their own marketing practices, especially through their associated feeds on social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. These varied aspects represent the content of the webpages, and the chapter will analyse representative examples of these trends. Their examination will reveal that 4Digital Asia and Third Window use the websites to distinctively promote both their distribution practices and their DVD releases – mainly through textual elements that both guide potential viewers to, and supplement, the content on the discs. As a result of aiming to emphasise the labels' distinctions, the websites provide unique online experiences for both their DVD viewers and other web browsers.

Death Note: Promoting The Experience Of The DVD, Not The Film

The 4Digital Asia website has many (if not most) of its pages dedicated to the releases of the *Death Note* films. The three films' titles are *Death Note* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006), *Death Note: The Last Name* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006) and *Death Note: L Change The World* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 2008), which were released in box-sets as well as individual editions.¹⁴ Most of these webpages are presented in a similar format to 4Digital Media's other pages, with a trailer, synopsis and disc details included. However, the 4Digital Asia pages have a different colour scheme. Each of these pages has a yellow banner at the top of it, with the page options of 'Home', 'Coming Soon', '4Digital Asia', 'Catalogue' and 'Contact Us'.¹⁵ On all the other 4Digital Media pages, the banner is coloured red, highlighting the sub-label's intent to distinguish itself from its parent company's English-language releases.¹⁶ This is despite a 4Digital Media page stating that both distribution labels have similar aims:

4Digital Media is one of the UK's leading truly independent DVD distributors with an eclectic, cutting edge feature film catalogue that delivers great value, extraordinary home entertainment [sic]. Recent hits include two high concept British gangster films; *Triads*, *Yardies* & *Onion Bhajees* and *Thugs, Mugs and Dogs*, the art house phenomenon *INK* and the hugely popular *Big Fat Gypsy Gangster*.

4Digital Asia is a sub-label specialising in Asian "cult" live action films in their original language with English subtitles. The catalogue includes favourites such as *Death Note*, *Death Note: The Last Name*, *L Change the World*, the *20th Century Boys* trilogy and *Tokyo Gore Police*.

Our aim is to delivery quality not quantity.¹⁷

¹⁴ See Appendix One – the *Death Note* films were individually released on 28/07/2008, 13/10/2008 and 29/12/2008, respectively. The *Death Note* 4-disc set of the first two films was then released on 26/10/2009. The third film was not included, as it was a spin-off from the previous films, and not a direct sequel.

¹⁵ '4Digital Asia', 4Digital Media website, accessed 01/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/asia>.

¹⁶ The majority of 4Digital Media's releases are of English-language media – 'Catalogue: View All', 4Digital Media website, accessed 01/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue>.

¹⁷ '4DM/Contact us', accessed 01/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/contact>.

The last sentence is very indicative of the distributor's aims, more so than the characteristics of the films in their catalogue. The DVD releases are intended to meet certain standards of 'quality', and this could be interpreted as meaning only the films themselves. However, throughout all the types of webpages that display the 4Digital Asia releases, a pattern emerges which demonstrates the promotion of the whole potential viewing experience offered by the DVDs (from their packaging to their extras). The *Death Note* releases are representative examples of this pattern, and illustrate the various webpages constructed for the 4Digital Asia sub-label.

The promotion of the experiences offered by a particular media format has been studied before within academic research, but such analyses often concern the titular media content. In contrast, 4Digital Asia's webpages promote the physical aspects of their DVD releases as well as their media content, which is a pattern of behaviour only recently recognised in media promotion. One of the later points made in Keith M. Johnston's research on trailers is how these promotional texts changed fundamentally after the growth in popularity of home video. As thousands of titles were re-released on VHS, new trailers were also produced to promote them. Johnston highlights trailers for the *Star Wars* trilogy as particularly representative of this trend.¹⁸ Trailers that promoted these VHS releases included the phrases 'The Force can be with you...exploding on your screen', and 'So you think you've seen the whole of the *Star Wars* legend on video?... Well, think again.'¹⁹ The slogans signify an emphasis of ownership that the video format offers media consumers, as well as suggesting that it offers a whole new viewing experience.

¹⁸ Johnston explores the trailers for the earlier *Star Wars* films – *A New Hope* (dir. George Lucas, 1977); *The Empire Strikes Back* (dir. Irvin Kershner, 1980); and *Return of The Jedi* (dir. Richard Marquand, 1983)

¹⁹ Keith M. Johnston, *Coming Soon: Film Trailers and the Selling of Hollywood Technology* (London: McFarland and Company, 2009), pp.127-36.

Such promotional strategies are now used within the advertising and press releases for upcoming DVD and Blu-Ray releases, showing that they have a longstanding relevance carried over from VHS tapes.²⁰ A similar promotional strategy is evident within 4Digital Media's webpages as well. The pages do display trailers for the films, as will be explained with the *Death Note* examples. The trailers mainly promote the film itself, as was explained in Chapter Three. The films' characteristics are also a focal point within all the webpages, but they are not the only one evident. Brugger states: 'in order to identify recurrent patterns and traits... it is important to examine the ways in which the textual web constituents as well as their combinations have actually been used'.²¹ Within all the different types of webpages that display information about the *Death Note* DVD releases, there is evidence of 4Digital Asia using the films' characteristics to promote not only the films, but the rest of the discs' contents.

Within 4Digital Media's website, and the 4Digital Asia webpages, the most frequent pages displayed in relation to the *Death Note* films provide a synopsis and basic details. The synopsis often refers to the film's narrative, while the basic details include director and cast information, as well as the discs' contents (such as the special features that are included). Visual elements exhibited are comprised of the trailer, immediately underneath the distributor's logo and banner, and above an image of the DVD cover. These elements can be seen in Figure 13, which specifically relates to the first *Death Note* film, and displays the recurring elements of the 4Digital Asia webpages provided for the *Death Note* films and the label's other titles (as seen in Appendix Two).²² However, what can also be seen at the top of

²⁰ Gary Crowds, 'Editorial', *Cineaste*, 35:1 (2010), 1; Jennifer M. Wood, 'Make Way for Blu-Ray', *Cineaste*, 35:1 (2010), 32-35.

²¹ Brugger, 'Website history...', *op. cit.*, 128.

²² Appendix Two displays all the webpages for 4Digital Asia's DVD releases of Japanese films, and confirms the recurring similarities within them. All the webpages are also currently accessible online: '4Digital Asia', 4Digital Media website, accessed 01/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/asia>.

these images is a link to a separate *Death Note* website, which is accompanied by a link to a similar page for the *20th Century Boys* trilogy (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008-2009). Though separate pages are only provided for the two series of films, they help to illustrate how the 4Digital Asia webpages often emphasise the label's DVD contents as much as, if not more than, the films' characteristics.

The screenshot shows the 4Digital Asia website interface. At the top left is the 4Digital Media logo. Navigation links include 'Visit our 20th Century Boys website here' and 'Visit our Death Note website here'. A search bar is present with a 'GO' button. A yellow navigation bar contains links for 'HOME', 'COMING SOON', '4DIGITAL ASIA', 'CATALOGUE', and '4DM / CONTACT US'. The main content area features a video player for 'DEATH NOTE' with a play button and the quote 'deliriously dark... weirdly cool!!!' by Bizarre. To the right of the video player is a list of technical specifications:

Release Date:	29/12/2008
Catalogue number:	ASIA3745
Barcode Number:	5034741374514
Certificate:	15
Running Time:	126mins approx
Release Media:	DVD
Aspect Ratio:	16:9 Anamorphic
Region Code:	2
TV Standard:	PAL
Colour:	Colour

A 'Buy Now' button is located below the specifications.

This screenshot shows a detailed product page for the DVD of 'Death Note'. On the left is a large image of the DVD cover, which includes the quote 'brilliantly effective' ★★★★★ by Alan Jones - Starburst and the quote 'deliriously dark... weirdly cool!!!' by Bizarre. The cover also features the text 'The human whose name is written in this note shall die'. To the right of the image is the following text:

Synopsis:
The film follows the manga story of Light Yagami, who is a brilliant but bored student with great prospects. Life changes dramatically when he finds the Death Note, a notebook dropped by a rogue Shinigami death god named Ryuk. Any human whose name is written in the notebook dies. Light sees an opportunity to rid the world of evil using the powers granted in the Death Note. The police authorities call in the help on the famous, but unconventional detective L when criminals begin to mysteriously die. Both Light and L believe themselves to be serving justice, and so begins the battle of wits to see who really is good or evil.

A 'Buy Now' button is located below the synopsis.

Genre: Thriller

Director: Shusuke Kaneko (Gamera; Death Note: The Last Name & Azumi 2)

Starring: Tatsuya Fujiwara (Death Note: The Last Name; Battle Royale & Battle Royale 2); Kenichi Matsuyama ("Death Note" / "Death Note 2: The Last Name" / "Sanjuro")

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 5.1 & 2.0
Audio Language(s): Japanese
Subtitle Language(s): English

A 'Back' button is located at the bottom right of the page.

Figure 13 – 4Digital Asia webpage for the first *Death Note* film.²³

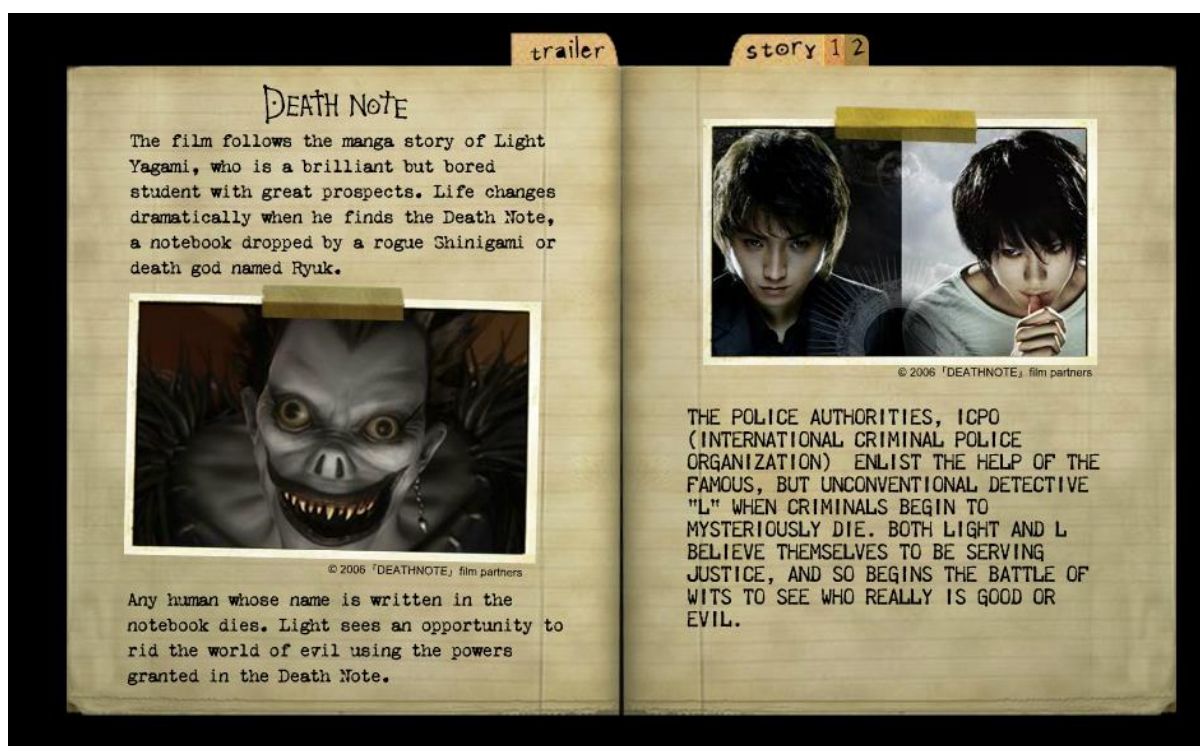


Figure 14 – Example of the webpages within 4Digital Asia's separate *Death Note* website.²⁴

An example of a page from the *Death Note* website created by 4Digital Asia can be seen in Figure 14. The webpages are animated, with browsers either having to click on the tabs at the top of each page in a virtual notebook, or click and drag the image to mimic the movement of a notebook's pages. Initially, this signifies a representation of a central aspect of the films' narrative, which the pages explain in addition to displaying the films' trailers. The first two *Death Note* films depict how Light (Fujiwara Tatsuya) acquires a notebook that kills those whose name is written in it, and how the detective L (Matsuyama Kenichi) goes about uncovering his identity. The third film, *L Change The World*, portrays L in a separate story where he has to stop a terrorist plot. The virtual notebook pages mainly explain the premise of the first two films, and give the names of the actors and information about the

²³ 'Death Note', 4Digital Media website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/1>.

²⁴ 'Intro - Death Note', 4Digital Media website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/deathnote/>.

manga (comic) that the story is adapted from. In addition, the last two virtual pages detail the contents of the DVD releases for the films *Death Note*, and *Death Note: The Last Name* (both for their discs' extras and their packaging). These details show that the DVD packaging contains a booklet, similar to the website's representation, which expands on much of the information given in the virtual notebook (such as the actors' other films, as well as background on members of the crew). The separate website therefore signifies a sample of the contents of the DVD packaging and emphasises the disc releases' contents, as a result of integrating the films' characteristics into promotional material specific to the disc release.

Moreover, these separate websites mark the success of some of 4Digital Asia's releases. Many other films released by the sub-label do not receive similar treatment. This is most likely to be because of the successful sales that 4Digital Asia experienced for their DVDs of the *Death Note* films. The first two films were re-released, following their separate releases in 2008, as a four-disc box-set in 2009. In addition to the first two films being included in the separate website, the spin-off film *L Change The World* was not re-released, implying that it was not as successful as the first two films.²⁵ In contrast to this evidence, the *20th Century Boys* films also have their own website.²⁶ The webpages detail the films' plot, display their trailers, and provide additional information on props used, as well as interviews with certain cast and crew members. The details regarding the first film, *The Beginning of the End* (2008), are mostly repeated from the booklet that is included in the special edition packaging, released by 4Digital Asia in May 2009.²⁷ The sub-label had intended to release each film as an individual special edition DVD, but the first film appears to not have been

²⁵ This was indeed the case at the Japanese box office, where *L Change The World* was not as successful as the earlier films – 'FOCUS: World Film Market Trends (2007 and 2009)', *European Audiovisual Observatory* website, accessed 06/05/2013, http://www.obs.coe.int/oea_publications/market/focus-bis.html.

²⁶ 'Welcome - 20th Century Boys', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/>.

²⁷ See Appendix One.

very successful.²⁸ All three films were instead released a year later in one box-set, and extra information on each individual film is now visible on 4Digital Asia's separate website. Links to these pages are explained as 'extra information about Chapters 2 and 3 not included on the DVD'. Therefore, the discs still contain content that is not included on the website (particularly within their special features). Though some of 4Digital Asia's webpages do contain extra information, the majority of the pages evidently promote the overall DVD experience offered by the sub-labels' releases, and not just the films. The films' characteristics are not promoted separately, but are integrated into the content that promotes the discs' contents.

Third Window has similar aims within certain sections of its website. Most of the distributor's webpages are given over to details of the films it releases, but there are exceptions. The Third Window website content is selectable from a banner at the top of every webpage, similar to 4Digital Asia's pages. The options for Third Window are 'Home', 'Films', 'Events', 'News', 'Shop', 'About' and 'Contact'. The 'News' section provides regular updates for upcoming Third Window releases, and displays older announcements. Through viewing all of these, it is clear that the distributor aims to promote the additional content of the DVDs as much as the films (in a similar fashion to 4Digital Asia). One illustrative example is a post from December 2008. Shortly before their release in January 2009, the DVDs for *Memories of Matsuko* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2006) and *Kamikaze Girls* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2004) received several reviews.²⁹ Third Window announced

²⁸ Some reviews of the DVD box-set also suggest that poor sales were the reason for this – e.g. Jitendar Canth, 'Review for 20th Century Boys Trilogy: The Complete Saga (4 Discs)', *MyReviewer.com*, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://www.myreviewer.com/DVD/129830/20th-Century-Boys-Trilogy-The-Complete-Saga-4-Discs/129945/Review-by-Jitendar-Canth>.

4Digital Asia's judgement of the potential success for *20th Century Boys*, though, appears to have stemmed from its strong box-office takings in Japan – 'FOCUS: World Film Market Trends (2009)', *European Audiovisual Observatory* website, accessed 06/05/2013, http://www.obs.coe.int/oea_publ/market/focus-bis.html.

²⁹ 'Memories of Matsuko and Kamikaze Girls reviews', *Third Window* website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/news/2008/12/memories-of-matsuko-and-kamikaze-girls-reviews>.

the reviews' publication and noted the positive reception of the discs' content, and not just the quality of the films. Though the reviews are derived from other websites, Third Window describes their content, and provides links to these pages for potential browsers. Unlike the reviews mentioned within the packaging for these films (as discussed in Chapter One), these particular examples are not quoted on the DVD covers. Here, Third Window is not simply drawing attention to the release itself (as the review quotes do on the packaging), but providing additional information to promote the discs' content.

Essentially, one intention of the distributors' websites is to promote the experience offered within all of the DVDs' content. In the case of 4Digital Asia, the sub-label's webpages do not simply act as another platform for the purchase and consumption of the disc releases. Instead, significant space is given over to trailers and information regarding the discs' content, which includes the films but is not limited to them alone. Though the examples of the separate websites are infrequent (such as those for *Death Note* and *20th Century Boys*), they help to illustrate this intention. Similarly, Third Window has not always made announcements of positive disc reviews for all of its DVD releases. But the potential of the websites as a means of promoting all the elements within the distributors' DVD releases has been revealed by analysing these examples. The labels' intentions for the websites are apparent because of what content the webpages display, as well as how they display it. Furthermore, the textual elements of the websites do not only reveal this particular trait.

Kamikaze Girls: Web Content That Adds to the DVDs' Experiences

The distributors include further details on the films and DVDs they release within the majority of their webpages. Third Window's pages are specifically representative of this characteristic, especially in regard to the film *Kamikaze Girls*. In the previous section, brief

mention was made of information on the websites that could supplement the content of the DVDs, particularly within the separate site for *20th Century Boys*. However, additional information is not always included on a segregated set of webpages. The *Kamikaze Girls* webpage contains information and images that are not disseminated within the DVD release's packaging or digital content. Third Window is evidently aiming to distinguish itself as a DVD label, through its website, by attempting to provide an experience that encompasses more than just the film and the disc it is disseminated on.

In parallel to 4Digital Asia's mission statement, Third Window proclaims its intentions through one of its webpages:

The Third Window Films brand was born in 2005 when its film-loving founders grew bored of the stream of worn-out shock horror vehicles from the Far East.

Third Window Films works hard to bring you the wonderful world beyond long-haired ghost films and mindless Hollywood action copies, sourcing the finest works in new Far Eastern cinema. We strive to represent a rich variety of film genres, be they dramas, comedies, political satires, action or anything else in between. Expect everything from the unknown and cult to the off-beat and even the occasional mainstream masterpiece...or expect nothing but quality Asian cinema!

Let Third Window Films be your window to the East!³⁰

The phrases 'brand' and 'window to the East' imply how Third Window wants its releases to ultimately amount to more than just the films themselves. Though the word 'brand' implies a uniform image for the label, its aims are much broader. The distributor states that its DVDs literally provide a perspective on Far Eastern cinema that is diverse and unique to UK audiences. However, there are limits to what the packaging and extras within the discs can tell potential viewers. Third Window's web address is displayed on its packaging, and web-links are often included within its DVDs, which again implies that there is additional information on its website. The distributor evidently intends for viewers of the DVDs to visit

³⁰ 'About', *Third Window* website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/about>.

its website, in order to promote itself as a distinct brand by providing viewers with additional content. The page for *Kamikaze Girls* will demonstrate how the distributor presents these attributes, as well as indicate traits shared across all the Third Window webpages.


The supplementary experiences and information offered by websites is another facet recognised by Brugger:

That the website plays a still greater role on the Internet today than ten years ago is reflected by the fact that the website absorbs a substantial part of online activities, and this is in two ways. First throughout the last ten years, formerly separate uses and applications – such as chat, newsgroups, listserv, e-mail, etc. – have become integrated into websites, and second, the greater parts of activities that were earlier delivered in other digital media like the CD-ROM or DVD – such as music sharing, games, digital artworks, etc. – have moved to the Internet where they are often embedded in a website.³¹

Websites can therefore offer a variety of experiences, and the implication that this can go beyond a website's immediate content is also clear. However, Third Window is not just integrating experiences, but also creating them. Gauntlett supports Brugger's views within his own research on the capabilities of websites, and goes further with some points. The act of forming and displaying a website is seen as a creative act that can both be separate from and linked to other media forms, such as art, music, film, etc.³² Indeed, in the examples that are going to be discussed, both Third Window and 4Digital Asia clearly provide access and information through their websites that concern specific experiences linked to their DVD releases. Whereas the first section of this chapter outlined how the websites expanded on some of the promotional practices of the distributors, evidence will now be presented that shows how the webpages provide content that forms a distinct experience online, rather than simply act as another means of promotion.

³¹ Brugger, 'The website as a unit of analysis?...?', *op. cit.*, 76.


³² Gauntlett, 'Web Studies: Introduction...', *op. cit.*



Play Trailer

Gallery

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Original Title: Shimotsuma Monogatari
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2004
Rating: 12
Genre: Comedy
Running Time: 103 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Kamikaze Girls

Dir: Tetsuya Nakashima
Writer: Tetsuya Nakashima
Cast: Kyoko Fukada, Anna Tsuchiya, Hiroyuki Miyasako, Sadao Abe, YosiYosi Arakawa, Yoshinori Okada

Our principal character and narrator is Momoko (Kyoko Fukada), the 17-year-old product of a highly dysfunctional marriage who wishes she'd lived in 18th Century France, during the Rococo age; instead, she and her bonnets and frilly dresses are stuck in Japan's rural outback, where she abides by a philosophy that claims, "If I can't live independently, I'd rather be a water flea."

Enter Ichigo (Anna Tsuchiya), a tough-talking, head-butting, scooter-riding thug who doesn't know rococo from rock & roll, and whom the haughty Momoko deplures and mostly ignores--at least until they're brought together by, of all things, embroidery (Momoko's good at it, Ichigo needs some for her biker threads).

Suffice it to say that these two oddballs form a union of sorts, and Kamikaze Girls (entitled Shimotsuma Monogatari in Japanese) ultimately delivers a fairly straightforward message about independence, loneliness, and friendship. But getting there is quite a trip. Director and co-writer Tetsuya Nakashima combines live action, animation, special effects, fourth-wall asides, fantasy sequences, and more in a dazzling onslaught of images.

Retweet Like 53

Blu-ray Disc Info



amazon.co.uk
 PLAY.COM
 hmv.com

BD Release Date: 8 Feb 2010
BD Specifications: Anamorphic widescreen, 5.1 surround sound, removable subtitles
BD Bonus Features: "Making of", interviews with the cast and crew, "Birth of Unicorn Ryuji" short film, workprint footage, Anna Tsuchiya music video, theatrical trailer, trailers of other Third Window Films titles

Crew

Producer: Takashi Hirano, Yuuji Ishida, Satoru Ogura
Executive Producer: Kunikatsu Kondo, Yokichi Osato
Co-Executive Producer: Kazuya Hamana, Masayuki Miyashita
Line Producer: Yutaka Suzuki
Editor: Yoshiyuki Koike, Chiaki Toyama
Production Manager: Tadao Osawa
Production Designer: Towako Kuwashima
Cinematography: Masakazu Ato
Music: Yoko Kanno
Lighting: Taro Kimura
Presented in Association with: TBS, Amuse Soft

Figure 15 – Third Window webpage for Kamikaze Girls.³³

³³ 'Kamikaze Girls', Third Window website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/kamikaze-girls>.

All of Third Window's webpages have similar basic characteristics, as do the majority of 4Digital Asia's pages. Each Third Window page has a banner, and a similar colour scheme (of different blues and greys), which is evident in Figure 15. Specific sections highlight much of the extra content that Third Window provides within the pages for its individual films, such as *Kamikaze Girls*. As with the 4Digital Asia webpages, the trailer appears most prominently below the website's banner, and a synopsis of the film appears underneath it.³⁴ However, there are several other details given on the right side of the webpage, including still images taken from the film and information regarding its production (such as the original Japanese title, year of production, crew members, etc). These details are listed on all of Third Window's pages for its film releases, as are links to other sites concerning reviews and the purchase of the DVDs (often found at the bottom of the webpages). Though aspects of this information parallel the discs' digital content and packaging, much of it is supplemental, and signifies content on the website that emphasises the label's actions as distinctive.

In Figure 15, a selection of images can be seen on the right side of the page. These are taken from the film, and some even appear on the rear of the *Kamikaze Girls* DVD cover (but only three). There are nine images in total, including the largest one above the synopsis. All of them illustrate the visual aesthetics of the film, as each become enlarged and visible in colour when selected. With these images, Third Window is providing material that can either attract viewers to watching the film because of their aesthetics (in addition to the trailer, as found in Chapter Three), or provide another means of accessing elements of the films visuals after viewers have watched the film. Either is a possibility, as the website's address is visible on the packaging for the *Kamikaze Girls* DVD, and the webpage provides links through which the disc can be purchased. Certain credits for the film's production crew are given on

³⁴ Appendix Two provides images of the webpages for all of Third Window's releases, as well as 4Digital Asia's.

the DVD cover as well, but they do not go into as much detail as the website (for example, the line producer is not listed on the rear of the DVD cover). The credits at the end of the films are not always fully translated by Third Window, so this information also supplements the disc's content. Another additional aspect of the webpage is more infrequent, as not all of Third Window's releases are available on Blu-Ray.³⁵ However, *Kamikaze Girls* is, and its distributor uses the same page to promote the film's availability on either DVD or Blu-ray format. Blu-Ray is not only an additional format, but is widely regarded as an enhanced viewing experience for a film, in comparison to DVD.³⁶ Taking all these aspects into account, the Third Window webpages provide a range of visual aesthetics and information that potentially adds to the viewing experience offered within the DVD discs. As a result of providing this variety of material, the distributor emphasises its webpage as distinct by providing access to additional experiences related to its disc releases.

4Digital Asia has similar traits in its webpages, notwithstanding the separate websites for *Death Note* and *20th Century Boys*. Other formats for the films are given their own webpages within the 4Digital Asia catalogue site. Again, this is particularly the case for the *Death Note* films, whose DVD box-set and Blu-Ray releases are given separate pages, even though the Blu-Ray contains the same content and number of discs as the DVD set. However, the box-sets did not also include the booklets contained in the first two *Death Note* films' individual releases. Despite these exclusions from the box-sets, 4Digital Asia categorises the releases as additional viewing experiences that the sub-label offers, as they are given their own pages within the 4Digital Asia catalogue. Both box-sets allow for the two *Death Note*

³⁵ Figure 3 shows that the release date of the *Kamikaze Girls* Blu-Ray was 8/02/2010. Only two other Japanese films released between 2008 and 2010 on DVD were subsequently released on Blu-Ray – *Love Exposure* (dir. Sono Sion, 2008 – 25/01/2010) and *Memories of Matsuko* (14/02/2011).

³⁶ 'What is Blu-Ray?', BVA website, accessed 07/05/2013, <http://www.bva.org.uk/what-blu-ray>; William Boddy, 'The Last Format War: Launching the High-Definition DVD', in J. Bennett and T. Brown (eds), *Film and Television After DVD* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 172-94; Wood, *op. cit.*

films to be contained in one case, and the Blu-Ray provides access to an enhanced viewing experience. These pages only provide information on the box-sets, as well as links to online retailers. But this can be useful information for viewers who are looking to obtain the films within one case, or switch to the Blu-Ray format.³⁷ Here, 4Digital Asia is evidently aiming to emphasise the variety of formats available for its releases in order to distinguish itself as a distributor.

Additions to the viewing experience are also not limited to providing information on other formats for the films. Many additional web addresses are displayed on Third Window's webpages, including official promotional sites from Japan. However, most no longer exist, as they are taken down shortly after the film's theatrical release in Japan. This is the case with Third Window's page for *Fish Story* (dir. Nakamura Yoshihiro, 2009), but another link is also provided on the webpage that does give its browsers additional information.³⁸ The film was originally sponsored for theatrical release in the UK by the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation. The link provided with this information takes browsers to the Foundation's website, where it is explained as an institution that aids cultural exchanges between Japan and the UK.³⁹ As implied by the label's own mission statement, Third Window is obviously keen to show how it is a brand that consists of more than the films it releases. The links to another institution's website illustrates this aim, and the distributor's webpages demonstrate the means by which it can establish its brand image in addition to releasing DVDs. Therefore, in this instance, Third Window has foregrounded its distribution practices not only to distinguish this particular release, but also its actions as a label that brings Japanese cinema to the UK.

³⁷ Boddy, *op. cit.*; Wood, *op. cit.*

³⁸ 'Fish Story', *Third Window* website, accessed 07/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/fish-story>.

³⁹ 'General Information', *Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation website*, accessed 07/05/2013, <http://www.gbsf.org.uk/general/index.html>.

Both 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's webpages therefore have the potential to provide information that supplements their DVD releases. These textual elements mainly concern the films and other formats for viewing them, and so could be considered as additional promotion. But most of the information is not detailed or explained on the DVD releases alone, so both potential and current viewers of the distributors' DVDs can possibly find out something new within the webpages. Additional webpages and links can also provide indirect promotion of products and associations separate from the distributors, as seen with the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation. Through providing access to this varied content, the distributors emphasise their distribution practices, and highlight them as distinct because they result in additional potential experiences for browsers of their webpages. Furthermore, the next section of the chapter will demonstrate the various media sources that 4Digital Asia and Third Window present on their websites, other than their DVDs. The distributors manage to spotlight these sources for their own aims, and do not simply promote the content and information of other publications and websites.

Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl: The Impact of the Films' and their DVD Release

Many of the distributors' webpages provide other additional information and links within them. As with the earlier sections in the chapter, though, it is the use of this material that causes emphasis of the distinct actions of the labels through their websites. A lot of the additional information and links can be compared to the use of review quotes and other information given within the discs' packaging, as discussed in Chapter One. However, both 4Digital Asia and Third Window expand on these practices within their websites, instead of repeatedly using the same marketing materials. As has been demonstrated already in this chapter, the capabilities of websites allow their content to add to a DVD release's physical

and digital content. The webpage for the 4Digital Asia release, *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009), is particularly representative of this pattern within the websites' textual elements. As well as the synopsis and disc details, the text on the webpage explains positive critical accolades that the film received following its UK release. Parallel patterns exist within the webpages for other films released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window. These traits can relate either to reviews or awards, and therefore refer to other media sources (such as physical or digital publications). Nonetheless, the distributors do not display a dependence on critics and awards events for how their DVD releases are received. In effect, these traits emphasise the many media sources that labels can use to chart the impact of their releases in order to emphasise the distinctions of their distribution practices (and their DVDs) within the UK market.

4Digital Asia and Third Window's promotion of their DVD releases on their webpages, rather than exhibiting their films online, provides both parallels and contrasts with other film distribution websites. In 2007, Paul McDonald stated that film distribution websites were most likely to be successful by providing both physical and digital retail and rental options for film consumption, rather than only providing online access. This statement followed observations that DVD disc sales are gradually falling in contrast to their rapid domination of the video market after 1999.⁴⁰ While the decline has continued, DVD sales in the UK still make up substantial percentages of revenues for film consumption, in comparison to Blu-Ray and other digital media.⁴¹

Elements already discussed in this chapter demonstrate that the distributors' websites specifically promote the purchase of the DVD releases, and not just the films on the discs.

⁴⁰ Paul McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries* (London: BFI, 2007), pp.212-7.

⁴¹ 'Video revenues are the lifeblood of UK film and TV industry (6th July 2012)', *British Video Association* website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.bva.org.uk/news-press-releases/video-revenues-are-lifeblood-uk-film-and-tv-industry>; Tim Murray, 'The ERA (Entertainment Retailers Association) Yearbook in Numbers', *The Raygun* website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.theraygun.co.uk/?p=5362>.

Information about awards the films received, and links to reviews of them, could also be seen as similar elements. But these aspects of the websites are in fact comparable to behaviour that has been found in online discussion forums and fan-created websites. Kate Egan claims that websites that provided lists and figures about films formerly banned as ‘video nasties’ strengthened the identity and authenticity of the sites’ pages and its creators, as well as teaching browsers about the history of these films.⁴² Mark Jancovich has also found that discussion forums and comments within websites are regularly used as environments through which avid viewers of particular genre films, such as horror, prove their status as authentic fans.⁴³ Though the distributors’ websites do not have discussion forums, they provide a plethora of information that essentially charts a film’s impact within a variety of contexts (for example, according to a particular genre, or within Japanese cinema). This impact not only justifies and promotes the distributor’s DVD release of a film, but can also inform website browsers of a film’s wider significance in film history. Again, this signifies distinct content on the webpages, in comparison to other material related to the DVD releases. As a result, the labels’ distribution practices are emphasised, and not just their films’ characteristics.

The 4Digital Asia webpage for *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* provides a particularly illustrative example. As with the other pages for the distributor’s releases, the film’s DVD cover is shown underneath the trailer, with the synopsis on the right-hand side of the image. However, the *Vampire Girl...* synopsis has an extra piece of information displayed above it. All the website synopses for 4Digital Asia’s releases are the same as the ones provided on the DVD packaging, except in this instance. The line that appears above the *Vampire Girl...* synopsis is ‘[v]oted Best International Horror Feature Film 2010 by

⁴² Kate Egan, *Trash or treasure? Censorship and the changing meanings of the video nasties* (Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 128-153.

⁴³ Mark Jancovich, ‘“A Real Shocker”: Authenticity, genre and the struggle for distinction’, in G. Turner (ed), *The Film Cultures Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.469-80.

Gorezone readers’, and can be seen in Figure 16. Though a quote from a *Gorezone* review is displayed on the DVD cover, no mention of the award is made.⁴⁴ 4Digital Asia chooses not to repeat the positive reception that the *Gorezone* magazine’s writers gave the film, but instead emphasise an award that was bestowed upon the film after its DVD release.⁴⁵

Several things can be learnt from this small piece of information, which 4Digital Asia exclusively circulates on the *Vampire Girl...* webpage. First, it is still displayed despite the fact that the *Gorezone* magazine is now no longer published.⁴⁶ 4Digital Asia has not only provided evidence of the positive reception that the film received from a publication and its readership. This information now also represents part of the history of *Gorezone* magazine in the UK, as well as the film’s reception upon its DVD release. In addition, the 4Digital Asia webpage confirms that *Vampire Girl...* was a Japanese film, but the *Gorezone* award falls under the category of ‘International Horror Feature Film’. Japanese horror films can often be seen as part of a separate genre or wider categorisation of Asian cult films, often known as ‘Asia Extreme’.⁴⁷ Therefore, 4Digital Asia’s use of the award stresses that the distributor has aimed to cater to this audience within the UK through this particular release.

⁴⁴ ‘Complete bloody madness, perfection!’, *Gorezone* – front of the DVD cover of *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl*, released by 4Digital Asia on 15/03/2010.

⁴⁵ The award was given to 4Digital Asia months after the release on 15/03/2010 – Mitchell Wells, ‘Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl Wins Best Horror (October 2010)’, *Horror Society* website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.horrorsociety.com/2010/10/13/vampire-girl-vs-frankenstein-girl-wins-best-horror>.

⁴⁶ No announcement was made on the *Gorezone* Twitter feed (which has not been updated since 2011), but the link to its website now only leads to text that states ‘This Domain is for sale – please email: sales@gz-magazine.co.uk with your offer!’ – ‘GZ Magazine’, *Twitter* webpage, accessed 08/05/2013, <https://twitter.com/gorezonemagazin>; ‘gz-magazine.co.uk’, *Gorezone* website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.gz-magazine.co.uk/>.

⁴⁷ Chi-Yun Shin, ‘Art of branding: Tartan “Asia Extreme” Films’, *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* (website), No.50 (2008), accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/TartanDist/index.html>.

4 DIGITAL MEDIA

▶ Visit our *20th Century Boys* website here  ▶ Visit our *Death Note* website here 

Search:

HOME COMING SOON 4DIGITAL ASIA CATALOGUE 4DM / CONTACT US



Vampire Girl vs. Frankenstein Girl

Release Date: 15/03/2010
 Catalogue number: ASIA3804
 Barcode Number: 5034741380416
 Certificate: 18
 Running Time: 85 Mins
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour



Synopsis:
 Voted Best International Horror Feature Film 2010 by Gorezone readers

From the man (Yoshihiro Nishimura) behind the outrageousness of Tokyo Gore Police and The Machine Girl comes this crazed response to both Twilight and Let the Right One In, a film that consistently overwhelms the viewer in its sheer dementia.....

High school student Mizushima receives Valentines Day chocolates from the new student, Monami. Little did she know that the chocolates contained traces of Monami's vampire blood. He gets infected from eating them and Monami confesses that she wants to live with him forever as vampires. Meanwhile, Mizushima decides that he wants to fully become a vampire with Monami's help. Keiko, Mizushima's girl friend, sees the two on the school rooftop kissing and in a state of hysteria, attempts to throw Monami off the roof but falls off herself instead. Keiko dies but her father, Kenji Furano, the mad scientist, resurrects her as Franken girl. Thus begins a deadly combat between Franken Keiko and Vampire Monami in the name of love. As we all know, this kind of Vampire vs. Frankenstein conflict can only be solved by fighting, beating, stabbing, chewing, clawing and a showdown high atop Tokyo Tower!

Genre: Horror

Original Title: Kyūketsu Shōjo tai Shōjo Furanken

Director: Yoshihiro Nishimura, Naoyuki Tomomatsu (and writer)

Starring: Eihi Shiina, Yukie Kawamura, Eri Otaguro, Takumi Saito, Jiji Bu, Erina

Extras: Making of Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl (65 mins)
 Japanese Release Day Stage Greetings with Stars & Directors (20 mins)

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

Figure 16 – 4Digital Asia webpage for *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl*.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ 'Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl', 4Digital Media website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue/120>.

But *Vampire Girl...* has been selected as a film of the highest quality within the even broader categories of “international” and “horror”. Jancovich’s research also illustrates the breadth of the horror genre, as its own fans debate whether or not it overlaps into other genres, such as science fiction.⁴⁹ International, or global, cinemas can also overlap. World cinema either represents films made outside of Hollywood, or is more inclusive by equating to all countries around the globe.⁵⁰ The webpage’s use of this information essentially promotes the film to both viewers of horror films and world cinema. The webpage has gone further, though, by simultaneously charting the film’s impact within both of these groupings, and the history of its reception in the UK, through details of the *Gorezone* award. 4Digital Asia’s use of the award therefore equates with the label’s aim of appealing to a broad range of audiences in the UK (as mentioned in its mission statement), as well as emphasising its distribution practices as distinct because of this intention.

Reviews and awards are additional sources of information which Third Window’s website circulates as well. As was discussed in Chapter One, the distributor often quotes reviews on its DVD covers, as does 4Digital Asia. However, Third Window’s page for *Funuke, Show Some Love You Losers!* (dir. Yoshida Daihachi, 2007) demonstrates how it takes this practice further.⁵¹ Awards that the film won, at film festivals both in Japan and around the world, are listed below the links to online retailers. Other links to reviews of the film, which can be read online, are also provided. This information appears on most of Third Window’s webpages for its individual releases, though the webpage for *Funuke...* highlights that none of the award information was used to promote the film on its DVD packaging (unlike other releases, such as *Memories of Matsuko* and *Kakera* (dir. Ando Momoko,

⁴⁹ Jancovich, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ Lucia Nagib, ‘Towards a positive definition of World Cinema’, in S. Dennison, and S.H. Lim (eds), *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), pp. 30-8.

⁵¹ ‘Funuke: Show Some Love, You Losers’, *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/funuke-show-some-love-you-losers>.

2009)).⁵² Due to the location of the festivals where the awards were given (which were Japan, Morocco and Poland), the film's impact within both Japanese and world cinema is charted. Through this information, the webpage's browsers are informed of how the film has been disseminated and received internationally. Though the awards and review links can seem biased towards positive reception, the reviews can be read in their entirety, meaning that the negative comments can be read alongside more favourable ones. Such information is used in contrast to similar details that appear on the DVD packaging, because the whole reviews are accessible, and not just quotes. Therefore, these elements of webpages are distinctive from the other promotional material as a result of providing this information, and continue to give emphasis to the distributor's actions.

Awards and reviews are not the only pieces of information which represent the film's impact within the webpages. 4Digital Asia's page for *Starfish Hotel* (dir. John Williams, 2006) displays the DVD cover, which does detail the awards that the film won in Luxembourg and Texas.⁵³ The synopsis of the film, concerning an office worker's involvement in a modern-day mystery thriller, is also reproduced from the DVD cover. In contrast to this repetition, the details above the synopsis also mention the credits of other films that the cast have appeared in, which is not included on the DVD cover. The lead actor, Sato Koichi, is credited with appearing in *Ring 2* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 1999), *Battle Without Honor* (dir. Sakamoto Junji, 2000), and *When the Last Sword is Drawn* (dir. Takita Yojiro, 2003). While this can be interpreted as information that is being displayed for promotional purposes, it also informs the webpage's browsers about the actor's impact through his other

⁵² The webpages for these titles both confirm the awards the films won, and that they displayed on the DVD covers – 'Memories of Matsuko', *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/memories-of-matsuko>; 'Kakera', *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/kakera-a-piece-of-our-life>.

⁵³ 'Starfish Hotel', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/5>.

appearances. As a result, 4Digital Asia reveals its presumptions of the knowledge that UK viewers are likely have of Japanese cinema due to past DVD releases. This is because both *Ring 2* (a horror) and *When the Last Sword is Drawn* (a period film about *samurai* swordsmen) were released by the British distributor, Tartan, before it was taken over by Palisades.⁵⁴ Moreover, 4Digital Asia is emphasising its actions in comparison to Tartan – the distributor is both continuing to appeal to the market for these films, but also offering viewers something different with a mysterious thriller (rather than a horror or violent *samurai* film).

It has been claimed several times (in earlier chapters) that the elements of awards, reviews and acting credits can be interpreted as promotional material. The websites are centred on the physical and digital media contained within the distributor's DVD releases, through both the information and links they provide. But this is the same information that 4Digital Asia and Third Window provide to website browsers who may have already watched their films, as web addresses and web-links are often included within the DVDs. Aspects regarding awards, reviews and acting credits do not necessarily prolong the experience provided on the DVD releases, unlike elements concerning a film's aesthetics. These aspects instead chart the impact of the films for the benefit of the distributors and viewers of their DVDs. Whether the webpages are accessed before or after viewing a particular film, they can inform web browsers of specific information for a certain film. The pages can therefore act as a partial record of its history following its initial release in Japan, as well as provide links to further sources of information, should they be of interest. The presentation of these elements exclusively on the websites, by the distributors, emphasises their intention to provide both DVD viewers and website browsers with experiences separate from those offered by their disc releases. This makes the labels' practices distinct, as they are being highlighted

⁵⁴ 'Ring 2', *Amazon.co.uk*, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Ring-2-DVD-Miki-Nakatani/dp/B00005LW4G/>; 'When the Last Sword is Drawn', *Amazon.co.uk*, accessed 08/05/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/When-Sword-Drawn-Special-Edition/dp/B0007NBJ14>.

alongside the DVDs' content and films' characteristics. Furthermore, it prolongs the promotion of the disc releases, showing how both 4Digital Asia and Third Window intend to remain visible in the UK market through their distribution practices.

Love Exposure: Prolonging the Promotion of the DVD Releases

So far, this chapter has detailed how the distributors' websites add to their other forms of promotional material, as well as add to the experiences offered by their DVD releases. Another trait of the websites, in addition to these, is the continuation of the promotional practices themselves, both in regards to the DVD releases and the distributors as a whole. Promotional campaigns for films are often assumed to end and lose significance after a film's release, particularly after a film has been promoted for a theatrical release.⁵⁵ However, such an assumption cannot be transposed on to the activities of 4Digital Asia and Third Window, as their promotional practices continue long after a DVD's release. Most of these involve links to separate websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Amazon. But the distributors do not refer to these websites for additional content and information provided by others, such as reviewers and associated publications. Instead, both 4Digital Asia and Third Window make full use of these sites' capabilities for their own promotional aims, both for individual DVD releases and the promotion of themselves as distribution labels. These other sites can also display the activities and comments of viewers of their DVDs, although they still aid the distributors' promotional aims. The webpages and links that Third Window provides for *Love Exposure* (dir. Sono Sion, 2008) are particularly representative of these traits, which are found across many of the distributors' webpages – both on their own websites and associated retail and social media sites.

⁵⁵ Martin Barker, 'News, Reviews, Clues, Interviews and Other Ancillary Materials: A Critique and Research Proposal', *Scope* (website), February 2004, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=feb2004&id=246>

The use of social media websites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, means that theories and perspectives regarding online media and communications must be considered in relation to the distributors' websites. The webpages for 4Digital Asia and Third Window are designed to display information and media, such as images and trailers, but do not allow for direct or immediate interaction with web browsers, unlike the social media websites. Many academic researchers are now exploring what impact such sites have on media industries and social communication. Henry Jenkins asserts that user-generated content and comment functions on sites such as YouTube signify 'lowered barriers of entry' between members of the public and representatives of particular companies and institutions (for example, government figures, media producers, etc).⁵⁶ What such online communication represents is a 'participatory culture', which allows for users and consumers of media and websites to increasingly interact with, and potentially influence, cultural producers and regulators.⁵⁷ Therefore, by using social media, both 4Digital Asia and Third Window could be encouraging such behaviour. But the use of these sites by commercial companies has been interpreted differently by other researchers.

In particular, John Caldwell argues that websites and other digital outlets associated with media companies and institutions, such as social media feeds and pages, are extensions of commercially-driven ancillary material, such as DVD special features and other antecedents, such as electronic press-kits.⁵⁸ Therefore, the influence and level of communication that consumers perceive as having through online media is essentially an illusion, and aids producers in their marketing and promotional practices. However, Caldwell's claims suggest that the media companies and institutions disguise their true aims through the use of social media websites. In contrast to this view, both 4Digital Asia and

⁵⁶ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (New York University Press, 2006), pp.271-94.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp.1-24.

⁵⁸ Caldwell, *op. cit*, pp. 274-315.

Third Window do not mask their intentions through their uses and links to the content of other websites. They do not foreground consumers' views and comments before their own actions and messages, either. The distributors highlight their own efforts and practices on their webpages and social media sites, in order to encourage positive reception and recognition from both current and potential viewers of their DVDs. Furthermore, the labels emphasise the distinct characteristics of their distribution practices, as these pages are directly linked to their official websites.

The Facebook and Twitter pages of Third Window are particularly illustrative of these characteristics, especially through messages that the distributor posted about the film *Love Exposure*. On both social media sites, *Love Exposure* has been one of the titles that Third Window has posted about most often (especially from 2008 to 2010). Third Window began to use Twitter in October 2009, whereas Facebook was adopted by the distributor in August 2010.⁵⁹ *Love Exposure* was released on UK DVD on January 25th 2010, and from October 2009 reviews were already being published for it. Subsequently, Third Window provided the links to these reviews on its Twitter feed, with messages such as 'great reviews for Love Exposure today!...check the website for more!' from October 30th 2009.⁶⁰ Here, the posts are comparable to earlier patterns noted in regard to *Memories of Matsuko* and *Vampire Girl*... However, Third Window is extending the promotion of itself as a distinct label, and providing information on a social media feed as an additional experience for web browsers to potentially interact with through its website. In Figure 17, a green 'Retweet' Twitter link can be seen at the bottom of the *Love Exposure* webpage, showing that the label intends for web browsers to view the social media feed as well as the distributor's website.

⁵⁹ These are the dates of the earliest posts on Third Window's social media sites – 'Third Window Films', *Twitter*, accessed 09/05/2013, <https://twitter.com/thirdwindow>; 'Third Window Films', *Facebook*, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://www.facebook.com/thirdwindowfilms>.

⁶⁰ 'Third Window Film', *Twitter*, *op. cit.*



Play Trailer

Love Exposure

Dir: Sion Sono

Writer: Sion Sono

Cast: Takahiro Nishijima, Hikari Mitsushima, Sakura Ando, Makiko Watanabe, Atsuro Watabe

Tokyo teen Yu Honda (Takahiro Nishijima) is the traumatized son of a widower-cum-Catholic priest (Atsuro Watabe), who begins a sexual liaison with parishioner Kaori (Makiko Watanabe). When Dad's affair comes to a halt, he begins admonishing his son to confess to so many sins that the 17-year-old takes up new ones to appease his father's increased religious zeal. One "sin" - surreptitiously taking candid photographs of panties worn by female pedestrians - becomes a vocation. Unfortunately, a deal with a porn company comes undone when Yu turns down starring roles, because he admits he's saving himself for a Virgin Mary-like ideal woman.

On cue, the narrative introduces feisty schoolgirl Yoko (Hikari Mitsushima), who loathes men and enjoys beating them up for their moronic attitudes. Yu falls in love and tries to win her, fully aware that exposure of his superstar status will enrage her. Observing the development of this bizarre courtship is religious cult rep Aya Koike (Sakura Ando). Aya not only wants to claim Yoko for herself but aims to convert each of the protagonists to her own spiritual cause. Pointed (and pointless) violence ensues at various intervals, beginning with Aya's castration of her comatose father.

Date of Domestic Cinema Release: 31st January 2009

Retweet Like 28

Blu-ray Disc Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

zavvi.com

thehut

BD Release Date: August 6th, 2012

BD Specifications: New high definition transfer supervised by Sion Sono, 5.1 Surround Sound, Removable English subtitles

BD Bonus Features: 1 hour long Making Of, Additional 30 minute Making Of with Sion Sono interview, Hikari Mitsushima deleted & extended scenes, Sakura Ando deleted & extended scenes, Zero Church deleted scene, Theatrical trailer

Gallery

These images are free to use under [certain conditions](#). All images should be credited appropriately, in addition to Third Window Films.



Original Title: Ai no Mukidashi

Country: Japan

Year of Production: 2009

Rating: 18

Genre: Comedy, Drama

Running Time: 237 mins

Original Language: Japanese

Crew

Producer: Umekawa Haruo

Executive Producer: Yokohama Toyoyuki, Kawai Shinya

Co-Executive Producer: Matsuoka Shusaku

Associate Producer: Yutaka Morohashi

Editor: Junichi Ito

Production Manager: Kaku Toda

Cinematography: Souhei Tanigawa

Music: Tomohide Harada

Lighting: Kaneko Yasuhiro

Make-up: Yoshihiro Nishimura

Costume Design: Chieko Matsumoto, Isao Karasawa

Casting: Mitsuyo Ishigaki

Presented in Association with: Phantom Films, Omega Project Ltd, Studio 3

Figure 17 – Third Window webpage for *Love Exposure*.⁶¹

⁶¹ 'Love Exposure', *Third Window* website, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/love-exposure>.

Though its Facebook presence would not be established until August 2010, Third Window has constantly announced the availability of all its DVDs through retail outlets, such as Amazon, since that date. The first post on the Third Window Facebook page reads ‘Check out our Amazon shop to buy all our titles at great prices!’, and quotes the link, ‘astore.amazon.co.uk/thiwinfil-21’. In addition, this is not the only means that Third Window utilises to continuously promote its titles. Other opportunities regularly arise on Facebook, such as in 2012 when another film by Sono Sion, *Himizu* (2011), was due to be released. A photograph was posted in the lead-up to the release date, stating that posters of *Love Exposure* were for sale to any of the page’s followers.⁶² A link to Facebook can also be seen at the bottom of Figure 17, further demonstrating how the use of social media sites extends the labels’ promotion of its own actions. Moreover, Third Window’s Facebook and Twitter pages include the label’s website address, linking any potential browsers to webpages that provide further online experiences and material related to the DVD releases.⁶³

All the social media posts can be seen as interrelated means of promoting the distributors’ DVD releases. However, the significance of these posts goes beyond their commercial aims. All the Twitter posts publicised by Third Window can be responded to by followers of the feed, allowing the distribution label’s staff to respond in return. Similar options are also available on Facebook. While interactions and influence by the web browsers on Third Window’s actual distribution and marketing practices is not possible through these options, comments and responses to them can be made. In using sites such as Facebook and Twitter, the distributor encourages these actions, meaning the comments can be seen as a form of ‘talk’ which indirectly acts as promotional ancillary material, according to Martin

⁶² ‘Third Window Films - Wall Photos’, *Facebook*, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://www.facebook.com/#!/photo.php?fbid=375097045875548&set=a.322092414509345.102961.115487281836527&type=3&theater>.

⁶³ ‘Third Window Film’, *Twitter*, *op. cit.*; ‘Third Window Film’, *Facebook*, *op. cit.*

Barker.⁶⁴ The result of this is essentially an amalgamation of the claims of Jenkins and Caldwell. Facebook and Twitter allow for web browsers to comment, discuss and respond to the actions of Third Window that are publicised on these pages. The commercial aims of the distribution label are being met, but the distributor cannot regulate or completely control the comments that appear on the webpage. Nevertheless, Third Window's distribution activities are fully documented on these posts, and this information generates the browsers' comments and responses. Therefore, the promotional actions that the distributor instigates for all its releases are extended, as the social media sites mean that they can be continuously discussed through the comment options available.

The activities of 4Digital Asia are also opened up to comments and responses from web browsers through other websites, particularly YouTube. Here, the distributor has its own "channel", where it displays all of its trailers, as it does on its website.⁶⁵ The only major difference is that the channel is categorised as belonging to 4Digital Media and the 4Digital Asia trailers are not separated from its other releases, unlike the distributor's website. Here, the parent company is showcasing the variety of releases it offers through all of its DVD releases. Though this material is limited to the trailers, it still extends the distributor's promotional practices. Each trailer is accompanied with a synopsis of the film but no other details, as seen with the trailer for *Kaiji* (dir. Sato Toya, 2009). This film was released by 4Digital Asia on July 24th 2010, and its trailer was uploaded to YouTube a month earlier, along with most of the other trailers for 4Digital Asia releases.⁶⁶ Though only adopted after the sub-label's later releases, 4Digital Asia obviously saw this as a chance to promote many of its other titles in addition to *Kaiji*. In addition, Third Window similarly established its own

⁶⁴ Barker, *op. cit.*, 8of 19.

⁶⁵ '4Digital Media', *YouTube*, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://www.youtube.com/user/4DigitalMedia/videos?view=0>.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*; 'Kaiji UK trailer', *YouTube*, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iw2Mm3boKkY>.

YouTube channel in 2010, with trailers for both its latest and earlier releases.⁶⁷ For both distributors, YouTube offers more than another platform from which to exhibit trailers. As with Facebook, the trailers can be commented on, as well as display the number of views and ‘likes’ that a trailer has received. Not only can the trailer be watched, but its impact as promotional material is revealed – within 4Digital Media’s channel, and YouTube’s many other videos.

Links to retail outlets have already been mentioned in earlier examples of the distributors’ webpages. Such outlets can also add to information about the UK DVD releases, as demonstrated by Third Window’s links to an Amazon webpage. Here, unlike Amazon’s other pages, the name of the retailer is overshadowed by the distributors’, as its title is the Third Window Amazon Store.⁶⁸ All releases are listed on the store pages, including Blu-Rays and DVDs, paralleling the distributor’s webpages. However, additional information can be included on this website too. For example, Third Window released two films by director Miki Satoshi *Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers* (2005) and *Instant Swamp* (2009) during 2008 to 2010. In 2012, *Adrift in Tokyo* (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2007) was also released on DVD. All three films were then included in the *Miki Satoshi Collection*, a DVD-box-set that Third Window released in the same year.⁶⁹ Third Window did announce this release through Facebook and Twitter, and the Amazon store, but its own webpages were not updated. The marketing for these DVD releases therefore continues because of the box-set, and the Amazon webpage acts as both a retail and promotional outlet for Third Window. The capacity for customer reviews and ratings also means that a level of interaction is evident on

⁶⁷ The trailers for both *Turtles...* and *Funuke...* were both posted first on Third Window’s YouTube channel, several months after their DVD release, but the trailers for the 2010 releases of *Fish Story* and *Kakera* were then posted soon after – ‘Third Window Films’, *YouTube*, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://www.youtube.com/user/thirdwindowfilms/videos>.

⁶⁸ ‘Third Window Films – Amazon’, *Amazon*, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/thiwinfil-21>.

⁶⁹ ‘Miki Satoshi Collection’, *Amazon*, accessed 09/05/2013, <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/thiwinfil-21/detail/B006MJDPAU>.

the Amazon pages, which is comparable to the characteristics of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The impact of certain distribution and marketing practices are prolonged through these associated websites, not only making Third Window's actions distinctive, but also keeping them visible.

The distributor's use of social media and other related websites (such as the retail site Amazon) is comparable to the awards and reviews discussed earlier, in regard to the *Vampire Girl...* webpage. However, interaction with potential and current viewers of DVDs is offered through the websites of Amazon, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. As a result, the distribution practices of both 4Digital Asia and Third Window are the focus of the comments and responses displayed on these associated webpages. The distributors are not providing sites for user-generated content alone, but do allow these comments to co-exist with information linked to their commercial aims. What this means is that the labels' distribution practices can be constantly discussed and viewed, in addition to their webpages. The social media sites also record, to a certain extent, what impact the distributors' actions have had as part of promotional strategies. The linked pages and social media sites may not comprehensively document all the distribution and marketing materials utilised by 4Digital Asia and Third Window, but it does give a broad overview of them – highlighting how distinct and visible the labels intend to be.

Conclusion

The aspects of the websites analysed in this chapter all add to the distinction that both distributors intend to achieve through their DVD releases. The 4Digital Asia webpages and associated sites promote the experiences offered on their discs, as well as inform potential viewers of the DVDs' details and means of purchasing them. The Third Window pages act

similarly, though the visual aesthetics of its film releases are used as a means of continuing the experiences the distributor offers. The impact and status of the DVD releases, as evidenced through elements of the films' history and reception, is also communicated through the websites. Furthermore, the distributing and marketing practices become events that allow the distributors to interact with potential and current viewers, because of the capabilities of online media and communication. Not only does this add to the material analysed in earlier chapters – such as the DVD packaging, special features and trailers – but all of the webpages' elements contribute towards an online experience offered by the distributors in addition to their DVD releases.

No purchase of the discs, or other media, is required to interact with any of the websites and webpages detailed in the chapter. But the DVD releases are the focus of many of the webpages, as well as the promotional activity and material documented. Therefore, the websites represent an extensive, but not comprehensive, view of the DVD labels' distribution activities, as well as a partial insight into the impact these practices can have. The DVD releases are central to the actions of 4Digital Asia and Third Window. In addition, the websites illustrate that the labels wish to promote themselves as distinct companies, which can provide a diverse range of media experiences within DVD discs (that are not limited to only film-viewing). The mission statements and the webpages' highlight this view. Therefore, the websites demonstrate how the distributors' wish to be seen and perceived by potential viewers, alongside the DVD releases and other media that they disseminate. Essentially, the DVD labels do not wish to be seen to release films with uniform characteristics through a uniform set of processes. As a result of this intention, the labels provide an experience on their websites that is separate from anything else offered through the DVD releases – especially their packaging, special features and trailers. However, as they are linked to

particular film releases, they are also linked to the distributors' actions, and highlight that the labels promote their diverse practices as much as the characteristics of the films they release. The DVD labels clearly aim to give more to their viewers than just a film-viewing experience. This particular intention is not only established within 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's webpages, but is also recognised in certain reviews of the DVDs, which will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Reviews of DVD Releases:
NEO Magazine and the Critical Reception of Distributors

NEO is the only UK magazine that reviews the majority of films released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window - not just as films, but as DVD releases.¹ Therefore, through the magazine's critical evaluations, a unique opportunity exists to analyse the reception of the distributors' discs. A variety of other review sources have been mentioned in earlier chapters, in relation to the DVD packaging and websites, but none of them assess all of the distributors' Japanese releases as both films and DVDs. In *NEO* magazine, the DVDs' content (such as the packaging and special features) is reviewed as well as the individual films. While reviews of the film have been integrated into the distribution practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window (for example, in their DVD covers and websites), examining the reviews reveals the influence of the distributors' actions. The reception in *NEO* is illustrative as the distribution labels are regularly discussed in the reviews, highlighting their significance within the critics' assessment of the DVD releases' qualities. The critics in *NEO* communicate views of the UK market for Asian films and media, and demonstrate the success of 4Digital Asia and Third Window in both broadly appealing to the whole market and specific niche tastes within it. In essence, the reviews in *NEO* establish that the labels' distribution practices are distinct within the UK, and the chapter will reveal how the magazine discusses and evaluates their actions.

The widely publicised aims of *NEO* magazine convey how it is a relevant representation of the demand for Asian media in the UK. The magazine was launched in the

¹ One DVD release from Third Window, *Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers* (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2005), was not reviewed in any issues of *NEO* from 2008 to 2010 – despite its release date on 23/02/2009. *NEO* was aware of the film, though, as it mentions the DVD's release date in Issue 53, January 2009, 22; and also as part of an 'Asian Movies 2009' preview feature in Issue 54, February 2009, 36. In the feature article, the film is described as 'hilarious', which implies an opinion by the author, David West, even though it is not categorised as a review.

UK in 2004, and its first editor (Stu Taylor) explained the origins of *NEO* in an interview posted online the same year:

Basically it was noticed that there is a gap in the market for a dedicated anime/manga [Japanese animation/comic] magazine, and that there now appears to be a sufficient audience to warrant launching a title to support that demand. Whilst primarily covering anime and manga, *NEO* also broadens its appeal by catering for fans of Asian Cult Cinema, videogames, and those with an interest in J-Pop (we have an hysterical profile on Japan's answer to Beyonce, Ayumi Hamasaki, in issue one).²

Here, the broad interests in different types of Asian media in the UK are stated as a reason to launch the magazine. Furthermore, the market has grown since, as the history of *NEO* demonstrates. Taylor mentions that Uncooked Media is a relatively small publishing company, and so cannot offer readers free samples of products initially.³ However, competitions, product giveaways and *manga* extracts now regularly feature in the magazine. This signifies a growth in readership and demand in Asian media since 2004, as well as the increasing success of distributors of Asian media and their recognition of *NEO*. But despite the current strong relationships with distributors, the magazine has maintained its original intentions. In 2011 *NEO* began an official Facebook page, which now includes the publication's mission statement. This remains similar to Taylor's aims for the magazine, despite his departure in 2006:⁴

In every issue of the mag, you'll find features, previews, reviews and guides for the latest anime, manga, Asian movies and games, all written by our team of expert journalists from the UK, the US and Japan. Alongside this exciting line-up you'll also find profiles on the hottest names in the Asian music world, exclusive interviews and more.

Because we're an independent publication, *NEO*'s unbiased editorial means that you'll always get our honest and informed opinions so you know what DVDs, CDs and books are worth spending your money on. So if we think something's

² 'Interview with *NEO* magazine editor' (11 Nov 2004), *Anime UK News* website, accessed 15/05/2013, <http://www.animeuknews.net/article/23/interview-with-neo-magazine-editor>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Taylor's departure can be confirmed through his *LinkedIn* profile. Since 2006, Gemma Cox has been the editor of *NEO* – 'Stu Taylor – Ireland', *LinkedIn* website, accessed 15/05/2013, <http://ie.linkedin.com/in/stoonami>.

fantastic, we'll shout it from the rooftops. And if we think something's bad, we'll tell it like it is.⁵

The statement illustrates a respect for its readership in the UK. The readers of *NEO* consist of a wide range of tastes and media preferences, all of which further signify the breadth of the magazine's audience, as each type of media can attract consumers of a various ages and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the magazine emphasises its reviews as the most pertinent content for its readers, through its use of the phrases 'unbiased editorial' and 'honest and informed opinions'. Therefore, the critical perspectives of the reviewers in *NEO* are the sections of the magazine which are likely to reveal the most when closely examined.

In film research, reviews are also found to be highly revealing forms of evidence. Academic studies of them, especially in the last two decades, have led to the discussion of opinions and tastes in relation to films and other media texts. Janet Staiger investigated reviews, and other texts and objects related to film and media, in order to understand the history and reception of particular films.⁶ A few years later, Barbara Klinger carried out similar research, and emphasises how useful reviews can be as a means of identifying patterns of discourse:

While there is some evidence that reviews influence attendance decisions, we cannot blithely assume that they dictate public response. Their value for reception studies lies rather in their mobilization of terms that attempt to define how a film will be perceived in the culture at large.⁷

Both Staiger and Klinger re-addressed the potential scope and outcomes of reception studies in later publications.⁸ Furthermore, their continuing influence is most clearly seen through the

⁵ 'NEO Magazine – About', *Facebook*, accessed 15/05/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/neomagazineuk/info>. This statement used to be on the *NEO* website, but the magazine and its webpages were redesigned in 2011.

⁶ Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁷ Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning: history, culture and the films of Douglas Sirk* (Indiana University Press, 1994), p.70.

⁸ Barbara Klinger, 'Film history terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies', *Screen*, 38:2 (1997), 107-128; Janet Staiger, 'Taboos and Totems: Cultural Meanings of The Silence of The Lambs', in J. Hollows, P. Hutchings and M. Jancovich (eds), *The Film Studies Reader* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp.181-88.

adoption of similar methods by other researchers. Mark Jancovich has recently written several articles about the many canonical opinions and tastes that are evident within newspaper reviews, particularly those of the *New York Times* within the 1940s.⁹ In Jancovich's own words: 'Not only was the *New York Times* the most prestigious and respected newspaper of the period, but [Bosley] Crowther and his fellow film critics were situated within a classic position of cultural legitimacy.'¹⁰ Here, Jancovich has used a similar approach to Staiger and Klinger, and demonstrated the potential findings that can be discovered from interrogating only one publication's reviews.

NEO magazine can be thoroughly analysed for similar reviews. The critical perspectives within the reviews are usually written by two specific figures – Calum Waddell and David West – though other writers are also credited. Moreover, the magazine's reviews do not only provide assessments of both the films and the extra material within the DVD releases. Until 2012, *NEO* was the only magazine printed in the UK that reviewed films and other media that specifically originated from Asian countries.¹¹ Therefore, the magazine illustrates the critical discourse that accompanied Japanese films released on DVD, by both 4Digital Asia and Third Window, in the UK from 2008 to 2010. As a result of this fact, how the reviews discussed the distributors' practices can be analysed.

By charting and examining the language and terms used in the *NEO* reviews, views on the distributors and their film releases are revealed. This approach also appropriates the same means of analysis traditionally used in reception studies, particularly those conveyed in

⁹ Mark Jancovich, 'Shadows and Bogeymen: Horror, Stylization and the Critical Reception of Orson Welles during the 1940s', *Participations*, 6:1 (2009), 25-51; '“Two Ways of Looking”: The Critical Reception of 1940s Horror', *Cinema Journal*, 49:3 (2010), 45-66; '“Samuel Bronston's Latest Epic”: Spectacle, Heterogeneity and Nation in the Critical Reception of *El Cid* (1961)', *Comparative American Studies*, 8:4 (2010), 300-15.

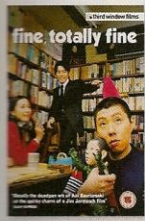
¹⁰ Jancovich, '“Two Ways of Looking”...', *op. cit.*, 48.

¹¹ *NEO* magazine is now not the only UK publication dedicated to Asian media, as a new magazine was launched in 2012 called *MyM* – 'Home', *MyM Magazine* website, accessed 15/05/2013, <http://www.mymags.net/>.

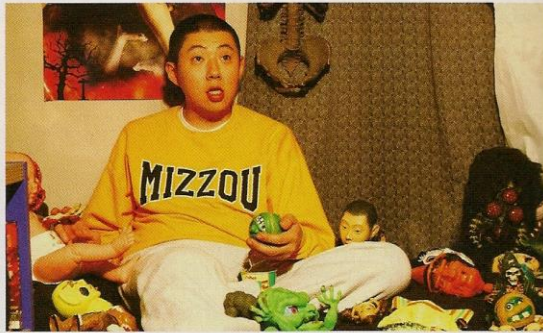
the work of Jancovich, Klinger, and Staiger.¹² As a result, the study of reviews demonstrates how film reception concerns distribution practices and media formats as well as filmic content. The perceptions of the DVD distributors, within the *NEO* reviews, are likely to affect the reception of the films as much as the additional media content (such as the discs' packaging and special features). Specifically, both the DVD labels and the films have the term 'cult' attached to them, with reference to varying connotations. In addition, the DVD release is appraised as the most preferred format for viewing the films. Both these perspectives then affect how the films are placed in taste distinctions that the reviewers discuss in relation to Japanese cinema, such as the J-Horror genre and the works of particular directors.

These latter two discursive patterns in the reviews, regarding the horror genre and authorship, at first appear to signify a contrast between the DVD labels. 4Digital Asia's releases are often categorised as horror films, whereas authorship is constantly discussed in regard to Third Window's releases. However, as with *NEO* magazine's use of cult, and the appraisal of the DVD format, the discussion of both the horror genre and authorship signifies common traits within the reviews. All the critical discourse evident emphasises the distribution practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window. The DVDs, and the films, are seen to be the result of the labels' actions, as much as the work of the films' cast and crew. Moreover, consumers of the discs' extras are revealed as a prominent niche within the UK market for Japanese films, further signifying the influence of the DVD labels' distribution practices on the films' critical reception.

¹² Jancovich, '“Two Ways of Looking”...?', *op. cit*; Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning...*, *op. cit*; Staiger, *Interpreting Films...*, *op. cit*.



AVAILABLE: 11 May
 LABEL: Third Window Films
 CERTIFICATE: 15
 NO. OF DISCS: 1 Disc
 RETAIL PRICE: £14.99
 RUNNING TIME: 110 mins



Fine, Totally Fine

An almost indescribable oddity, this debut offering from director-to-watch Yosuke Fujita is a comedy whose delicate sense of humour is almost certain to be lost in translation. Nevertheless, the great performances, stylish cinematography and bizarre storyline is unlikely to go unloved by appreciators of eccentric cinema and, for that, we're pleased to see this esoteric mini-epic on the shelves.

Fine, Totally Fine introduces us to a trio of protagonists, each approaching 30: an introverted female photographer / artist, a horror movie buff with a gift for special effects wizardry, and a nice-guy hospital manager. Where they all fit together is part of the plot's singularly surreal talent – and although the movie is – perhaps surprisingly

– often a bit of a downer (even in spite of its occasional attempt to aim for high concept hilarity and fluffy romance) there is plenty to enjoy here. With Pinter-esque dialogue and discussions, not to mention a *Reality Bites* feel to the humdrum set pieces and a charming grasp of life's lunatic quirks, Fujita certainly gives you something to chew on. Even so, this might be just a tad too pretentious to win over the mainstream – but if your tastes lie in the arthouse then *Fine, Totally Fine* will leave you feeling satisfied, totally satisfied...
 CALUM WADDELL

A perversely enjoyable exploration into mundane modern existence – Japanese-style...

FILM ★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★☆☆

DVD EXTRAS
 Kudos to Third Window films for giving us quality extras on its library of cult eastern insanity. *Fine, Totally Fine* comes with cast interviews and a theatrical trailer, making for a neat little package.



AVAILABLE: 11 May
 LABEL: Third Window Films
 CERTIFICATE: 15
 NO. OF DISCS: 1 Disc
 RETAIL PRICE: £14.99
 RUNNING TIME: 112 mins



How can you go wrong with a title as memorable as this? And, indeed, what can be said about a movie that begins with a couple being crushed in a car accident courtesy of a rogue cat on the carriageway?

Funuke is an insane, sort-of satire focusing on a dysfunctional family and the resulting friction when they are all brought together after the aforementioned motorway massacre (think of a less pretentious version of *The Royal Tenenbaums*, and you're halfway there).

Funuke largely deals with the strained relationship between two sisters: Kiyomi, an arty introvert, and Sumika, the older of the two and a bitchy, if slightly insecure, failed actress. However, although this might

sound a bit slight, rest assured that the story soon becomes a lot more sinister – spiralling into subplots focused on sexual deviance, sibling rivalry and spousal abuse. It does not always hang together, and some of the "hilarity" might be a bit dark for many, but *Funuke* is that rare animal: a genuinely challenging, not to mention mind-mangling, cult comedy that demands your attention. And, as an aside, leading lady Eriko Sato is blindingly brilliant as bitchy leading lady Sumika...

CALUM WADDELL

This slice of manga-inspired madness is a tad overlong, but it is still nutty enough to warrant a watch.

FILM ★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★☆☆

DVD EXTRAS
 Just a series of trailers for this and other Third Window films – although, to be fair, there must be an hour's worth of previews!

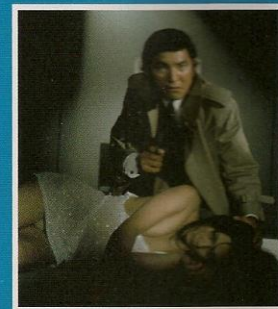


FILM ROUND UP

Calum Waddell gets stung by the Female Scorpion

A box set sent from the heavens, we tell you! Well, that was our initial reaction when the fabulous *Female Prisoner #701: Scorpion* collection arrived at NEO this past month. Containing 1972's original classic (which we awarded a well-deserved five stars back in 2006), as well as the first sequel *Jailhouse 47* (a four star offering in its own right) and 1973's *Beast Stable* (three stars), this is a must-have godsend for any self-respecting cult movie buffs. Priced at only £15.99, and with each picture sporting gorgeous transfers and sharp sound quality, we really cannot recommend this kooky compilation enough.

In case you need a plot rundown, 1972's initial outing introduces us to kick-ass heroine Matsu (played with awe-inspiring aplomb by *Lady Snowblood* starlet Meiko Kaji). Wrongly imprisoned, thanks to her double-crossing, crime-connected husband, our girl is soon exposed to the harsh hell of incarceration – although it is not long before she is butt kicking her way out of *Strangeways* and straight back to her former homestead. With excellent special effects, and a truly endearing leading lady, this is one of the most outright entertaining bouts of grindhouse grime to ever slip out of the Far East. The sequel, however, is more of a raucous road movie – although the action continues to come thick and fast and, despite an underlying air of sleaziness, there is a real "girls doing it alone" attitude to the onscreen insanity. Third entry *Beast Stable*, however, stumbles a little – although it's still a damn sight more scorching than most of today's genre offerings! Released by Eureka, this set demands to be purchased.



www.neomag.co.uk NEO 077

Figure 18 – NEO magazine review for *Fine, Totally Fine*.¹³

¹³ Calum Waddell, 'Fine, Totally Fine', *NEO*, No.58 (May 2009), 77 – © NEO Magazine and Uncooked Media.



AVAILABLE: Now
 LABEL: 4Digital Asia
 CERTIFICATE: 15
 NO. OF DISCS: 1 Disc
 RETAIL PRICE: £14.99
 RUNNING TIME: 103 mins

Cyborg She

TERMINATE
 Ayase's robotic character in *Cyborg She* comes with the reference number 'Cyberdyne Model 103'. Sound familiar? It should: Cyberdyne is the company responsible for all kinds of computer-related carnage in *The Terminator* series. Now, that's scary!

A pension-aged professor called Jiro, crippled in a shoot-out when he was a youth, builds a beautiful femme fatale robot in the shape of a woman he once met and fell for and sends her back in time to look after his virginal, and painfully shy, 21-year-old student self (essayed by Keisuke Koide). This she does, saving the boy from gunfire, although our poor young hero ends up falling in love with the top-heavy terminatrix, whilst the lady in question (played by Ichi's Haruka Ayase) has no idea how to return such emotions. Eager to get rid of her—and accusing the girl of breaking his heart—Jiro soon feels as lonely as ever. Nevertheless, little does the lad realise that his gorgeous acquaintance will soon stop the Grim Reaper from taking his life for a second time...

DVD EXTRAS

Nothing, nothing, nothing... In this current climate it seems fewer cult DVD labels are splashing the cash on extras. A shame.

Now this is what we would have expected Park Chan-wook's comparatively lightweight *I'm A Cyborg* to be like. In this Japanese sci-fi romance (yes, you

did read that right) director Kwak Jae-young—who won considerable acclaim with his hit comedy *My Sassy Girl*—gives us two characters to really care about and a bonkers plot that, nevertheless, moulds together incredibly well. Sure, one of the two main personalities may be made of metal but, just as in the Disney classic *Wall-E*, the film's cyborg sweetie grabs all of the best moments, and is so likeable, that it is difficult to imagine anyone not warming towards her...

Arriving in Tokyo ala *Amie* in *The Terminator* series, Ayase's 'cyborg' first appears to us as a juvenile delinquent—breaking widows, shoplifting and nicking the occasional piece of fruit from market vendors. Naturally, Jiro is intrigued by the girl's actions and smitten when she finally shows him some attention (even agreeing to stay over in his unkempt student apartment). What follows is as melancholy as it is maddening—with writer-director Jae-young alternating between set pieces of outrageous comedy and unrequited love.

Wisely, however, the movie's tone never demonises Ayase for her inability to return the feelings of the young man who has fallen in love with her. Rather, we feel genuine sadness that she can never relate to him as anything other than someone who must be protected at all costs. It would be a shame to give away where this plot is going but, as with this month's *Tidal Wave*, it would seem that man-made disaster is the name of the game in the Oriental film world right now...

Veering between comedy, cute chick-flick-like theatrics and, finally, complete balls-to-the-wall carnage, *Cyborg She* is an eccentric mix of genres, but also nothing short of



involving. Praise, especially, has to be given to one-time swimwear model Ayase who, as in *Ichi*, enters a positively adorable performance and eats up her screen time with such aplomb that it can only be a matter of time before she becomes a certified superstar. With natural good looks and actual acting ability, the voluptuous vixen is certainly a great deal more appealing than many of Hollywood's decidedly more vacant leading ladies (we will refrain from naming names, but look to any of the recent 'teen' horror flicks and you will have some idea). Whereas *Ichi* never gave her quite enough time to showcase her charms, *Cyborg She* demonstrates just what a rare talent she is.

Crossing gender boundaries and never feeling like a 'chick flick' or a 'guy's movie', *Cyborg She* is that rare entity: a thoughtful slice of fluff that has something to offer both sexes. And should any male NEO readers be in doubt about that—just remember: you do get some healthy final reel destruction!

CALUM WADDELL

A robotic romance that is sure to capture your heart.
 FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★



074 NEO www.neomag.co.uk

Figure 19 – NEO magazine review for *Cyborg She*.¹⁴

¹⁴ Waddell, 'Cyborg She', *NEO*, No.65 (November 2009), 74 – © NEO Magazine and Uncooked Media.

Cult Distributors: How the Labels are Labelled

In the reviews of *NEO* magazine, both 4Digital Asia and Third Window are categorised as cult DVD labels. The term appears in two separate issues, and the reviews are written by the same author, Calum Waddell (see Figures 18 and 19). In using ‘cult’ to characterise elements of the DVDs for *Fine, Totally Fine* (dir. Fujita Yosuke, 2008 – Third Window) and *Cyborg She* (dir. Kwak Jae-young, 2008 – 4Digital Asia), Waddell refers to both the films and the distributors.¹⁵ However, the term can potentially represent a variety of connotations, as suggested by recent studies,¹⁶ and Waddell is not the only reviewer in *NEO* that attaches this label to the distributors or the films they release. *NEO* magazine does not just contain reviews of Asian films and other media, as it also provides news, interviews, recipes, advertisements and *manga* previews. In addition, it describes itself as an ‘independent publication’, which contains ‘honest and informed opinions’.¹⁷ Therefore, within the pages of *NEO*, the discussions of the distributors in the reviews, and the use of the term cult, refer to the wide range of tastes and niche markets that the magazine perceives – both for its own readership and potential consumers of Asian media, such as the DVDs. Analysing the term’s use in-depth will reveal what specific connotations are being implied.

The score-boxes, situated separately from the review columns printed in *NEO*, are particularly indicative of opinions of the labels. In Figures 18 and 19, the images represent one page and half-page reviews, whereas some others can be printed on two pages (and these are the three “sizes” of the reviews). In the blue boxes, the films are given a separate star score from the DVD extras included in their UK disc releases (and both are scored out of

¹⁵ Calum Waddell, ‘Fine, Totally Fine’, *op. cit.*; Waddell, ‘Cyborg She’, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Elena Gorfinkel, ‘Cult Film, or Cinephilia By Any Other Name’, *Cineaste*, 34:1 (2008), 33-8; Ernest Mathjis and Xavier Mendik, ‘Editorial Introduction: What is cult film?’, in Mathjis and Mendik (eds), *The Cult Film Reader* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008), pp.1-12; Ernest Mathjis and Jamie Sexton, *Cult Cinema* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2011), pp1-10; Adrian Martin, ‘What’s Cult Got To Do With It?: In Defense of Cinephile Elitism’, *Cineaste*, 34:1 (2008), 39-42.

¹⁷ ‘NEO Magazine: About’, *Facebook* page, *op. cit.*.

five). The box also includes a critical summation of the film, which is paralleled with an overview of the disc extras. A separate paragraph, printed in italics, summarises the content and qualities of the DVD special features. It is in these paragraphs, in the reviews for both *Fine, Totally Fine* and *Cyborg She*, that opinions on the distributors are expressed, as well as their categorisation as cult DVD labels. In May 2009, Waddell wrote: ‘Kudos to Third Window Films for giving us quality extras on its library of cult eastern insanity. *Fine, Totally Fine* comes with cast interviews and a theatrical trailer, making for a neat little package.’¹⁸ With *Cyborg She*, in November 2009, similar inferences are made even though 4Digital Asia is not named by Waddell: ‘Nothing, nothing, nothing... In this current climate it seems fewer DVD labels are splashing the cash on extras.’¹⁹ However, this line is incorrect, because several extras were included on the *Cyborg She* disc (as was explained in Chapter Two).²⁰ Nonetheless, Waddell’s usage of the word cult can be interpreted in several ways. This is because the term has been defined and used in a variety of ways throughout the history of film and media studies and criticism.

Explorations of the history of cult films, and the usage of the term, are currently widespread within academic studies. Certain statements help to highlight opinions and views on cult that are shared by other writers, as well as illustrating its complexity – both in general, and in the context of the *NEO* reviews. In 2008, with Xavier Mendik, Ernest Mathjis charted the many genres and categories of films that cult can encompass (for example, from horror to science-fiction, and their various hybrids and sub-genres). Moreover, cult films are claimed to have ‘an active and lively communal following’, as well as ‘a continuous market value and

¹⁸ Waddell, ‘*Fine, Totally Fine*’, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Waddell, ‘*Cyborg She*’, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Appendix One confirms the extras included on the DVDs released by both 4Digital Asia and Third Window.

a long-lasting public presence'.²¹ However, the term's use transgresses two other specific meanings, also published in 2008, which are illustrated with the following quotes:

Every media consumer is in some sense a ready-made cult viewer – that is, if we accept the identities that media franchises construct for us in advance and use technologies in the ways they are intended.²²

The fatal moment for any cult movie is its much-vaunted “crossover” into the mainstream – or at least into a niche market big enough that some scout-representative of the mainstream will be clamouring to get in and colonize it.²³

Cult is recognised both as a commercial term that signifies a set of niche tastes that media producers believe they can cater to, and as a category of media that is perceived as separate from mass-produced media texts (specifically, ‘the mainstream’). Respectively written by Elena Gorfinkel and Adrian Martin, the quoted statements also see the two patterns of behaviour as representing different types of cinephilia.²⁴ Such behaviour is associated with avid fans of films, and has also influenced certain media production practices linked to DVD, as found by Barbara Klinger.²⁵ DVD cinephilia can represent either an aesthetic appreciation of a film, or a desire to know the story of a film's production and history following its initial release.²⁶ Cult can therefore refer to certain generic traits, market perceptions, or media distribution practices. Moreover, the *NEO* reviews refer to all of these aspects in the reviews for *Fine*, *Totally Fine* and *Cyborg She*.

Waddell implies both filmic traits and market perceptions with his use of ‘cult eastern insanity’. In making this statement, Japanese cinema is seen to cater to those who prefer films and media located outside of the mainstream, and have a range of characteristics that are broadly seen as out of the ordinary (or, insane). This also appears to be justification for

²¹ Mathjis and Mendik, *op. cit.*, p.11; , Mathjis and Sexton, *op. cit.*, p.6.

²² Gorfinkel, *op. cit.*, 38.

²³ Martin, *op. cit.*, 40.

²⁴ *Ibid*; Gorfinkel, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Barbara Klinger, ‘The DVD Cinephile: Viewing Heritages and Home Film Cultures’, in J. Bennett and T. Brown (eds), *Film and Television After DVD* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp.19-44.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp.42-3.

Waddell using terms such as ‘eccentric’, ‘Pinter-esque’ and ‘*Reality Bites* feel’ to describe *Fine, Totally Fine*, as well as a reason for suggesting that the potential audience for this film sees itself as preferring cult films and media.²⁷ The terms quoted imply both generic and stylistic traits and certain tastes regarding theatre and cinema, each of which potentially attach a myriad of connotations to one Japanese film.²⁸ In addition, the cinephilic connotation of cult is applied to both Third Window and 4Digital Asia as DVD labels, in both the *Fine, Totally Fine* and *Cyborg She* reviews. Third Window is perceived as a ‘library of cult eastern insanity’, and 4Digital Asia is a ‘cult DVD label’.²⁹ Not only does this suggest that they release certain types of films (or a variety of them, because of the complexity of the media category of cult), but it also implies particular expectations for the DVD discs. For both Third Window’s and 4Digital Asia’s releases, the *NEO* reviews state preference for distributors that add extra content for the benefit of their viewers. Moreover, the statements infer that the labels attract a cult following of DVD consumers because of the treatment of their releases.

Further evidence of this is illustrated in other reviews, which also show that views of the distributors and the treatment of their DVD releases regularly appear in the magazine, and not just in the instances pictured in Figures 18 and 19. In fact, three reviews specifically assess the distributors’ actions within one issue of *NEO*. In issue 54, Waddell reviews the Third Window release, *Kamikaze Girls* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2004), and the 4Digital Asia release, *X-Cross* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2007), while David A. McIntee reviews the Third Window release of *Memories of Matsuko* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2006). In this latter

²⁷ Waddell, ‘Fine, Totally Fine’, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Harold Pinter is a critically acclaimed playwright, who was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2005, suggesting that his style of drama and writing is unique – ‘Home Page’, Harold Pinter website, accessed 16/05/2013, <http://www.haroldpinter.org/home/index.shtml>.

Reality Bites (dir. Ben Stiller, 1994) is a film which depicts a love triangle between three college graduates living in Houston, and emphasises its stylistic and contemporary 1990s setting – ‘Reality Bites’, *IMDb*, accessed 16/05/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110950/>.

²⁹ Waddell, ‘Fine, Totally Fine’, *op. cit.*; Waddell, ‘Cyborg She’, *op. cit.*

review, McIntee confirms that a variety of DVD special features are appreciated in comparison to none, with the statement that both a making-of and a storyboard-to-film comparison are ‘not bad at all!’³⁰ However, in the *Kamikaze Girls* review, it is not just the DVD extras that are evaluated alongside the film. Waddell says that the packaging is ‘gnarly’, in addition to the disc containing ‘slender, but worthwhile’ extras.³¹ Aesthetic appraisal is not limited to the film text itself, but also the packaging, the menus and special features. In the second review by Waddell, he states that ‘4Digital Asia has blessed *X-Cross* with a solid DVD presentation – with extra features that include cast and crew interviews, and a making-of documentary.’³² Here, the DVD extras are seen as bonus content that accompanies the ‘solid’ presentation of the film’s visuals. Moreover, 4Digital Asia and Third Window are seen as exemplary labels because of how they ‘bless’ their DVDs with ‘gnarly’ packaging and extras. Such appraisals are evidently frequent in relation to both distributors, and they set expected standards for the DVD releases, which the *NEO* reviewers then communicate to their readers.

The *NEO* reviews therefore illustrate how the DVD labels can appeal to many niche (or cult) tastes through their releases for the UK market. The reviews state the qualities of the films that can potentially appeal to existing markets. However, they also outline how DVD media and extras represent a niche market, suggesting that this highlights another cult following of consumer interest. This is not the only way of interpreting the extras, however, as the *NEO* reviews also express how the extras can add to the DVD experience offered by films with a broad appeal. The reviews discussed so far in this chapter imply that the market for the Japanese films released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window is one that is only interested in non-mainstream media. However, the reviews can highlight the potentially

³⁰ David A. McIntee, ‘Memories of Matsuko’, *NEO*, No.54 (February 2009), 70.

³¹ Calum Waddell, ‘Kamikaze Girls’, *NEO*, No.54 (February 2009), 69.

³² Calum Waddell, ‘X-Cross’, *NEO*, No.54 (February 2009), 70.

broad appeal of many of the films. On top of these traits, the DVD extras can be interpreted as an extra experience for audiences that have a wide range of tastes can enjoy, as well as those who seek out cult media and DVD special features.

What's in a Disc?: Critical Assessments of the DVD Experience

The reviews in *NEO* magazine place strong emphasis on the DVD format for film-viewing. This is perhaps most evident in the reviews' presentation in the magazine, as the discs' extras are assessed separately from the films. However, there is more to the emphasis of the DVD format than these segregated elements. The *NEO* reviewers manage to see the films before their official release in the UK, and this is by varying means. The DVD could potentially be viewed with the extras on it; or they may not yet be available; or the film may be screened theatrically before its DVD release. The reviews for the *20th Century Boys* films (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008-2009 – 4Digital Asia) illustrate these different means of viewing the films for the critics in *NEO*. In addition, though, these reviews signify a prominent pattern, which is a preference for the DVD format over other means of film-viewing. The reviews do not only assess the contents of the discs, but appraise them as an ideal means for UK audiences to watch the films released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window, as their analysis will show. For this reason, further discourse concerning the DVD releases' prominence in the UK market is evident.

DVD studies help to highlight the benefits of the format that the *NEO* reviews refer to, and in turn illustrate how DVD media can add to the film-viewing experience. Most studies of discs of films and television shows do argue this, but for different reasons. Researchers such as Craig Hight have attempted to definitively demonstrate how DVDs create opportunities for interaction for their viewers, but his case study leads to him to instead

conclude that it mostly provides commercial opportunities for filmmakers and production companies to market their products.³³ However, Martin Barker and Kate Egan also investigated the same discs as a case study – the DVDs of the *Lord of the Rings* films (dir. Peter Jackson, 2001-2003). They found that both readers of the books and viewers of the films valued the DVDs and their extra content, as it allowed for reflection on what the films achieved in their adaptation of such a well-known story.³⁴

Other writers have similarly claimed that the wide range of interactions offered by DVD can create diverse meanings and pleasures for viewers. Aaron Barlow argues that the medium has fundamentally changed the film-watching experience, and appeals to a broad spectrum of viewers:

It is unlikely, however, that the DVD will disappear as a discrete item, replaced by Internet access to movies... This is a technology where the medium is certainly changing the message it conveys...

Most people hunger to be more than passive viewers. The “couch potato” cliché never really captured the whole of what was being experienced or desired, as the explosion of the interactive Internet has shown.³⁵

Though compared to online media, DVD is seen as a separate medium that offers unique ways of interacting with films and other media texts. Barlow sees this as a possibility that is open to all film-viewers, and not just those who seek out the additional knowledge and material that DVD extras can provide, and this perspective is paralleled within *NEO* magazine. The *NEO* reviews promote the benefits and possibilities of the DVD format, and even suggest that it is superior to other means of film-viewing. Furthermore, they do not

³³ Craig Hight, ‘Making-of Documentaries on DVD: *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and Special Editions’ (4-17), *The Velvet Light Trap*, No.56 (2005), 12-14.

³⁴ Kate Egan and Martin Barker, ‘The Books, The DVDs, The Extras and Their Lovers’, in M. Barker and E. Mathjis (eds), *Watching The Lord of The Rings: Tolkien’s World Audiences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), pp.83-102.

³⁵ Aaron Barlow, *The DVD Revolution: Movies, Culture and Technology* (London: Praeger, 2005), p.27 and p.159.

advocate niche interests in DVD media, but instead state how the format can appeal to a broad range of viewers.

The reviews for the *20th Century Boys* films are particularly helpful in illustrating these patterns, as they chart the different formats in which the films could be viewed in the UK (as a of 4Digital Asia's actions). The double-page review in Issue 56 of *NEO* was printed when the first film was being screened in several UK cinemas, prior to its DVD release (and can be seen in Figures 20 and 21). Because of this, the assessment of the discs' extras reads as follows:

At the time of writing the final line-up of extra features for the DVD release has yet to be properly nailed down, but expect a two-disc Special Edition with lots of behind the scenes goodies, and a 24 page Book of Prophecies of your very own. From what we at *NEO* have already seen, this will be a keeper for fans of the flick!³⁶

The review was then followed up by a shorter one in the next issue, which both claimed that the DVD was 'packed to the rafters' with extras and confirmed the above details for the first film's disc release.³⁷ Finally, the entire trilogy was reviewed in Issue 72, following the release of a four-disc box-set containing the films and several extras. Again, the DVD extras were assessed separately:

With an entire disc devoted to bonus features, this generous package boasts four hours' worth of extras. These include interviews with the cast members, a documentary on the Japanese premiere, extensive behind-the-scenes footage and a lavish 24 page booklet.³⁸

In all these reviews, the DVD content is regularly praised, and is sometimes emphasised as the most rewarding reason for buying a copy of the film. The assessment of the extras also parallels some of the comments made about the films, suggesting that the experience offered

³⁶ David West, '20th Century Boys', *NEO*, No.56 (Spring 2009), 75.

³⁷ Calum Waddell, 'Film Round-Up', *NEO*, No.57 (April 2009), 77.

³⁸ David West, '20th Century Boys: The Complete Saga', *NEO*, No.72 (June 2010), 70.

by the films can be extended by the distinctive contents of the discs (courtesy of 4Digital Asia).



SMASH
 The original 24 volume manga by Naoki Urasawa has sold twenty million copies. The movie was no slouch either, taking ¥ 3,184,475,945 (almost £24 million) in Japanese cinemas. Currently, none of Naoki Urasawa's manga are available officially in the UK, although *Monster* is being published in the US.

20th Century Boys



AVAILABLE: Now (theatrical)
 LABEL: 4Digital Asia
 CERTIFICATE: 15
 RUNNING TIME: 142mins

Kenji (Toshiaki Karasawa) is a blue-collar slob, working in a convenience store and – following the disappearance of his sister – taking care of his little niece Kanna. Life has been one big disappointment ever since he failed to make it as a rock star – at least, until the mysterious leader of a religious cult starts trying to orchestrate the end of the world.

The villain of *20th Century Boys* is a masked figure called Friend – who appears

to be following the path of a story Kenji wrote with a group of his pals when he was a boy. This journal, entitled *The Book of Prophecies*, was meant to be a fun way to fill the hours, but now everything they had written is coming to pass. Meeting up for the first time in decades at their high school reunion, Kenji and his mates realise only they can stop Friend and save the world.

20th Century Boys is the first of a trilogy adapted from the manga by Naoki Urasawa,

and it is the most expensive undertaking in Japanese cinema history. The total budget is six billion yen, which converts to roughly £50 million. Part one was a killer at the box office in Japan, but will present more of a challenge to western audiences unfamiliar with the source material. Several key plot points are either glossed over or simply left unresolved, presumably due to the constrictions of the movie's length. It already runs for over two hours, although it certainly takes some time getting up to speed with an ambling prelude.

Kenji is a slacker and borders on being an anti-hero. He is drifting aimlessly through life, but when people start disappearing in his neighbourhood, his curiosity is piqued. One quirk that the script never satisfactorily resolves is Kenji's inability to remember his childhood in any detail. He wrote out and drew *The Book of Prophecies*, but can not remember either where he left it, or what it said. The plot to bring about the end of the world is suitably childish given its creators, involving a virus that makes a person's blood spontaneously drain out, the destruction of several Japanese landmarks, and a giant robot. Quite why a criminal mastermind like Friend feels the need to follow this particular blueprint, which seems somewhat impractical, is



Figure 20 – *NEO* magazine review for *20th Century Boys* (Chapter One)

(first page of double-page review)³⁹

³⁹ David West, '20th Century Boys', *NEO*, No.56 (Spring 2009), 74 – © *NEO* Magazine and Uncooked Media.



**BATMAN
GOTHAM KNIGHT**

ANIMATED ORIGINAL MOVIE

PRODUCED BY BATMAN BEHIND THE DARK KNIGHT

MONSTER

Prior to starting work on *20th Century Boys*, Naoki Urasawa created the hit manga *Monster*, a globe-hopping thriller in which neurosurgeon Dr Tenma chases bad guy Johan Liebert around the planet. Tenma saved Liebert's life when he operated on him as a boy, and now feels a responsibility to stop Liebert in his campaign of murder and mayhem. The story is in the process of being adapted into a live action feature for Hollywood by writer Josh Olson, who wrote one segment of the *Batman: Gotham Knight* anime. *Monster* has also been turned into an anime series by Madhouse Studios.

20th Century Boys **REVIEWS**



“The title, of course, comes from the song by glam rock icons T. Rex, but the tale owes a fair debt of gratitude to Stephen King.”




GO ROBO!

The most outlandish of the predictions in *The Book of Prophecies* is the giant robot attack on the city of Shinjuku. Kenji can not figure out how Friend will pull it off, but when it happens, the rampaging mecha creates the best “Wow!” moment in *20th Century Boys*.

another box left unchecked at the end of the movie. Similarly, Friend's followers have infiltrated the police, yet when he wants to wrap up Kenji's niece, he does not send the cops in blue, but dispatches his hopeless, brainwashed minions. Their attempted abduction is remarkably half-assed and further undermines our main man's status as Civil Genius.

Toshiki Karasawa is likeable in the lead role – and this helps to hold the movie together, since there is a large supporting cast and enough plot threads to make a very comfy king-size duvet. He never quite rises to the occasion that fate has forced him to confront, and his motivational speech to the gang before they head out to foil Friend's dastardly plot is so moronic that if William Wallace had been equally inarticulate in *Braveheart*, all the Scots would have gone quietly home. Takako Tokiwa provides a minor love interest as Yukiji, who was the only girl in the childhood gang thanks to her proficiency at judo. Teruyuki Kagawa, who was excellent in *Tokyo Sonata*, is underutilised as one of the childhood chums, and gets lost in the mass of minor players in the story.

The title, of course, comes from the song by glam rock icons T. Rex, but the tale owes a fair debt of gratitude to Stephen King. There are shades of *IT*, particularly in the plot device of a group of friends getting back together to confront an evil with roots in their childhood, and nods along the way to *Stand By Me*. That said, the movie lacks the bite of King's work. The tone is generally playful, and there are several moments sure to tickle your funny bone, particularly involving the mishaps of the kids.

After the lengthy and occasionally confusing set up, the movie settles down in the middle as Friend tries to piece together the puzzle of Friend's identity. Director Yukihiro Tsutsumi keeps a light touch until the final act shifts to action movie territory as the old school-mates team up to try to stop Friend's scheme. It is not easy to switch between the comedic style of the first two-thirds of the film and the melodrama of the final act, and Tsutsumi does not quite pull it off. It also hardly helps that, as the script builds towards its climax, the story bounces back and forth chronologically with ever increasing rapidity. Just trying to remember where you are in the timeline demands considerable acuity.

Tsutsumi shamelessly shoots for a cliffhanger ending and wraps up the proceedings with a trailer for part two to entice you back. So much is left unanswered that it may only be when the trilogy is completed that it will become clear whether *20th Century Boys* is either a very effective set-up for the sequels or an entertaining but sporadically befuddling movie unto itself.

DAVID WEST

DVD EXTRAS

At the time of writing the final line-up of extra features for the DVD release has yet to be properly nailed down, but expect a two disc Special Edition with lots of behind the scenes goodies, and a 24 page Book of Prophecies of your very own. From what we at NEO have already seen, this will be a keeper for fans of the flick!

Confusing, often funny and, for one glorious moment, even robo-tastic. A cult caper in waiting...

FILM ★★★★★

www.neomag.co.uk NEO 075

Figure 21 – NEO magazine review for *20th Century Boys* (Chapter One)

(second page of double-page review)⁴⁰

⁴⁰ West, '20th Century Boys', *op. cit.*, 75 – © NEO Magazine and Uncooked Media.

For example, in Issue 56, the film's release is listed in the review as 'theatrical', yet David West still provides a thorough list of the expected extras on the *20th Century Boys* DVD.⁴¹ The review stresses that the extras may only interest fans of the film, though it also implies that the disc release is worth waiting for if audiences happen to prefer the DVD format. Not only is a 'Book of Prophecies' booklet included (referencing a key text in the film's narrative, about former childhood friends trying to stop apocalyptic events), but the high volume of behind-the-scenes footage is labelled as 'goodies'.⁴² The follow-up review in Issue 57 then categorises the film as the start of a '*Lord of the Rings* style fantasy trilogy', and suggests that it is a 'bum-numbing epic' for those who watch both the films and the numerous extras (similarly, the *Lord of the Rings* DVDs have a large amount of extras).⁴³ However, parallels are most evident when comparing West's assessment of the films and the DVD extras in his final review of the trilogy. In Issue 72, he states that the trilogy is 'long, complicated, perhaps inevitably patchy due to its size, but *20th Century Boys* is unflinchingly faithful to Urasawa's original epic [in reference to the *manga* the films are adapted from]'.⁴⁴ The DVD extras are described as comparably 'epic', through the use of the words 'generous package' and 'boasts' in regard to the four hours of content contained within the special features.⁴⁵ The extras scored 5 stars, suggesting they are everything DVD viewers could wish for, as well as being worthwhile material that will appeal to all fans of the film. In essence, 4Digital Asia is being praised for its actions in distributing the *20th Century Boys* films, and appropriately supplementing their 'epic' content.

⁴¹ West, '20th Century Boys', *op. cit.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Hight, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ West, '20th Century Boys: The Complete Saga', *op. cit.* – West's mention of Urasawa Naoki is a reference to the original *manga* that the film is based on, which is also explained on the 4Digital Asia website: '20th Century Boys: Introduction', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 17/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The *NEO* reviews therefore see the DVD release as a means to add to the experience of watching a particular film, and believe that all discs should meet this expectation, in addition to praising discs that do so. For example, several reviews do not simply give a low score to DVDs that include few extras, but state outright dissatisfaction at their minimal contents. Earlier, the *Cyborg She* review was mentioned as discussing 4Digital Asia's actions as a distributor, but this followed an emphasis that the DVD contained 'nothing'.⁴⁶ Similarly, Third Window's release of *Lala Pipo* (dir. Miyano Masayuki, 2009) is summarised as containing the 'original theatrical trailer and that's yer lot'.⁴⁷ This colloquial phrasing infers that the reviewer was expecting much more than the trailer in the DVD's contents. However, both these DVDs did contain several special features when they were released.⁴⁸ The review of the 4Digital Asia disc release of *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess* (dir. Higuchi Shinji, 2008) reveals why some reviews are not always able to correctly confirm the content of the DVD extras. In the assessment of the extra content, Waddell says: 'Nothing confirmed at time of going to press.'⁴⁹ This statement does not simply reveal the lack of information that the reviewers sometimes have to contend with before a DVD's release. An expectation for the disc's contents is still created, implying that those who wish to seek out the film should also keep an eye out for what extras may be contained. Nonetheless, in a coincidental contrast to the *Cyborg She* and *Lala Pipo* reviews, the *Hidden Fortress* DVD did in fact only contain trailers within the content of its special features.⁵⁰

In its reviews, *NEO* magazine reveals that it believes that the digital format of DVD is capable of offering viewers more than just a film-viewing experience. The reviews are

⁴⁶ Waddell, 'Cyborg She', *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ Calum Waddell, 'Lala Pipo', *NEO*, No.66 (December 2009), 77.

⁴⁸ Appendix One confirms the extras included on the DVDs released by both 4Digital Asia and Third Window. Both the *Cyborg She* and *Lala Pipo* DVDs contained making-ofs and interviews with the cast, among others.

⁴⁹ Calum Waddell, 'Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess', *NEO*, No. 74 (August 2010), 73.

⁵⁰ Confirmed in Appendix One.

therefore not limited to only emphasising the appeal of certain DVD releases to niche tastes within the UK. The magazine's reviewers do not presume the knowledge and expectations of their readers, and they often fully explain how a film and its DVD extras can appeal to any potential viewer. As mentioned earlier, this parallels critical views of DVD media, such as Aaron Barlow's.⁵¹ Moreover, the appraisal of the extras demonstrates appreciation of the distributors' practices, in addition to recognising and discussing their actions. The reviews for the 20th Century Boys films have particularly illustrated how the content of the extras can be compared with the characteristics and qualities of films. In other reviews, the expectation and comparative assessment of the DVD content can become more prominent, especially in regard to films that are believed to have distinct genre traits. The next section will highlight how prolific the discussion of horror is in the reviews, and how it demonstrates *NEO* magazine's views of 4Digital Asia.

Horrific Expectations: Parallels between Genre Traits and Disc Content

Meatball Machine (dir. Yamaguchi Yudai and Yamamoto Jun'ichi, 2005) is another 4Digital Asia DVD release that is given a double page review in *NEO* magazine (see Figures 22 and 23). *Meatball Machine* is principally assessed according to its visual elements, which are used to compare it with other films characterised by particularly gruesome horror effects. The double-page review capitalises on these visual elements by printing several still images of the film's gory scenes. Evidently, the critical assessment of the film takes up most of the space within the two pages of the review, alongside the column of text dedicated to the DVD extras. However, the special features' content appears to benefit from the gruesome elements within the film, as they are often the focus of the interviews and making-of. *Meatball*

⁵¹ Barlow, *op. cit.*, p.27 and p.159.

Machine is also not the only gore-filled film that *NEO* has reviewed, and the expectation that DVD extras should emphasise gruesome visuals is evident within other examples. The reviews of DVD releases from 4Digital Asia reveal parallels between the traits of horror films and the content of the discs' extras. In essence, the critical reception of the films in *NEO* can lead to expectations of the discs' content, which generates discourse that affects the perception of a distributor as much as a particular film.

The prominence of genre within the critical reception of films has been revealed in many investigations of film reviews, and horror is regularly discussed within critical evaluations of Japanese cinema.⁵² But correlations of critical evaluation with the format in which the films are viewed are not so prevalent. Genre categorisations are points of debate not just between film critics, but also fans. Mark Jancovich has illustrated this with reference to fans of horror and science-fiction films, where the lines between the two are constantly challenged, in both printed publications and online forums.⁵³ However, critics can heavily influence how genres are perceived. Daniel Martin has charted how reviews for the film *Ring* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 1998) helped shape perceptions of subsequent Japanese horror films as superior, or at least equal to, horror films produced by Hollywood studios.⁵⁴ As a result, the influence of such reviews was seen to impact on perceptions of the wider Asia Extreme trend that *Ring*, and several other films, instigated.⁵⁵ In contrast, only very broad genre traits have been emphasised within examinations of what films are likely to receive elaborate special features on their DVDs. Barbara Klinger claims that: 'younger, well-to-do white men

⁵² Jay McRoy (ed), *Japanese Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Tom Mes and Jasper Sharp, *The Midnight Eye Guide To New Japanese Film* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2005), pp. xi-xiv; Julian Stringer, 'The Original and The Copy: Nakata Hideo's *Ring* (1998)', in A. Phillips and J. Stringer (eds), *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp.296-307.

⁵³ Mark Jancovich, 'A Real Shocker': Authenticity, genre and the struggle for distinction', in G. Turner (ed), *The Film Cultures Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.469-480.

⁵⁴ Daniel Martin, 'Japan's Blair Witch: Restraint, Maturity, and Generic Canons in the British Critical Reception of *Ring*', *Cinema Journal*, 48:3 (2009), 35-51.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 35-6.

continue to be important purchasers of DVD players, [therefore] their tastes, which lean toward such high-octane fare as *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and *The Fast and The Furious*, continue to exercise strong influence on the ancillary market.⁵⁶ High octane fare could signify anything from action to science-fiction, but the reviews in *NEO* frequently emphasise the DVD extras content in relation to 4Digital Asia's horror releases. While the reviewers initially appear to characterise the distributor as a horror label, they are actually highlighting 4Digital Asia's treatment of all of its DVD releases.

Despite the three star-score that is awarded to *Meatball Machine* (see Figure 23), and some negative comments, reviewer Calum Waddell does give the film a significant amount of praise. For instance, the film is emphasised as having 'cash-starved origins' and 'cheap-as-chips production values', in addition to appreciation of the film's qualities:

For hardened genre buffs, though, *Meatball Machine* has plenty to offer. Yes, it might not always be pretty, but for fans of the *Tetsuo* series, and indeed the body horror nightmares of legendary Canadian kook David Cronenberg, this raucous low budget romp delivers the groceries and then some – especially in regards to its imaginative sequences of alien transformation and outlandishly kinky clothes-wear.⁵⁷

The genre categorisation of *Meatball Machine* undoubtedly falls within a particularly gruesome vein of horror cinema. However, Waddell goes further, and says this is a film that stands alongside both the gory visuals of Asia Extreme releases, such as *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (dir. Tsukamoto Shinya, 1989),⁵⁸ and those found in the work of director David

⁵⁶ Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (University of California Press, 2006), p.64.

⁵⁷ Calum Waddell, 'Meatball Machine', *NEO*, No.60 (July 2009), 74.

⁵⁸ Chi-Yun Shin confirms the gory contents of most Asia Extreme films (which include the *Tetsuo* films) in the following article – Shin, 'Art of branding: Tartan "Asia Extreme" Films', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* (website), No.50 (2008), accessed 20/05/2013, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/TartanDist/index.html>.

Cronenberg, such as *Rabid* (1976).⁵⁹ This is not a film that appeals only to connoisseurs of Asian and world cinema, but also the horror genre in general. Waddell's comments then extend to his assessment of the DVD's special features, and match the emphasis of the film's generic elements.

Many special features are listed in the DVD extras' section of the review, as the *Meatball Machine* disc does contain a high volume of content alongside the film.⁶⁰ Following this, Waddell states:

In addition to these, *The Making of Meatball Machine* is an extensive look at the movie's production, and a series of trailers for this, and other 4Digital releases, rounds things off. Picture and audio is sharp, the latter being particularly strong – but you cannot polish a turd and it is difficult to deny that, based on what is onscreen, this is one film seriously short on finance...⁶¹

As mentioned previously, Waddell says the film is an enjoyable watch despite its low production values, as are the special features, according to his comments. Not only is the review praising DVD content that is as varied as the film's visuals, but the extras are also scored higher than the film. *Meatball Machine* receives three out of five stars, whereas the DVD extras receive four. A similar score was given in the review of the *20th Century Boys* trilogy, where the films scored three stars and the extras scored five. Therefore, the extras of horror film DVDs are not necessarily of special interest to the *NEO* reviewers – but they do provide further evidence of the expectations that the critics have for 4Digital Asia's releases.

⁵⁹ Cronenberg is noted for making films that have often depicted gruesome transformations of the human body - Ashley Allinson, 'David Cronenberg', *Senses of Cinema* website, accessed 20/05/2013, <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2002/great-directors/cronenberg/>.

⁶⁰ The DVD's content can be confirmed, and compared to the other DVD releases, in Appendix One.

⁶¹ Waddell, 'Meatball Machine', *op. cit.*, 75.



BALLS!
Meatball Machine was co-directed by Yūdai Yamaguchi, the man who was behind cult action favourite *Battlefield Baseball*. Joining this auteur of extreme at the helm of *Meatball Machine* is first-time filmmaker Jun'ichi Yamamoto.

Meatball Machine



AVAILABLE: 6 July
 LABEL: 4Digital Asia
 CERTIFICATE: 18
 NO. OF DISCS: 1 Disc
 RETAIL PRICE: £14.99
 RUNNING TIME: 86 mins

A number of hard shelled, super-nasty, insect-like alien beasts land in Tokyo wherein they begin to possess human bodies and seek out one another for a fight to the finish. Caught in the middle of this mayhem is a virginal young whippersnapper named Yoji – a daydreamer who is desperate to ask neighbourhood hottie Sachiko out on a date...

Unlike last month's bout of blood-filled freakiness, *The Machine Girl*, 2005's *Meatball Machine* actually manages to flesh out its central characters before letting rip with scenes of rib cracking, eye gouging gore. As a result, even in spite of its low budget, shot-on-digital origins, this tale of a shy loner who finally comes to "win over" the girl of his dreams (albeit only minutes

before she is attacked and overcome by an extraterrestrial oddity) manages to be surprisingly involving. Indeed, you actually want to see this mousy, emo-looking lad come up trumps from the trials and tribulations that the narrative throws in his path – but, just so you are forewarned, some of the special effects wizardry highlighted in *Meatball Machine* might not sit well with soft stomachs...

Consequently, anyone who can happily live without seeing an alien xenomorph penetrate and possess a prone female, or a bloke wrestle with pulling a patently phoney, Muppet-like Martian out of his shoulder (amid a flurry of spurting blood) might want to give this title a miss. For hardened genre buffs though, *Meatball Machine* has plenty to offer. Yes, it might not always be pretty,

but for fans of the Tetsuo series, and indeed the body horror nightmares of legendary Canadian kook David Cronenberg, this raucous low budget romp delivers the groceries and them some – especially in regards to its imaginative sequences of alien transformation and outlandishly kinky clothes-wear. Playing out like the bastard son of Shinya Tsukamoto and HR. Giger, the art direction in *Meatball Machine* is decidedly eye-opening and difficult to turn away from. Hell, just take a look at some of the pictures accompanying this very review. Intrigued? You should be!

Barrel of Laughs

Additionally, unlike the more mean-spirited strand of Japanese splatter-horror (such as the aforementioned *The Machine Girl*),



WIZARD OF GORE

Meatball Machine features the special effects work of Yoshihiro Nishimura, a gentleman who seems to be a friend of any low budget horror maestro working in the Japanese fringe. His credits include *The Machine Girl* as well as the likes of 2002's *Suicide Club*, 2007's *Extreme Hair Extensions* and 2008's *L: Change the World*. Nishimura has also become feted as a genre filmmaker in his own right, most famously overseeing the torrid terror of last year's acclaimed outing *Tokyo Gore Police*. Next up for him will be the intriguingly titled *Vampire Girl vs. Frankenstein Girl*. We can hardly wait; we're sure it will be the epitome of fantastic special effects.



Figure 22 – NEO magazine review for *Meatball Machine*

(first page of double-page review)⁶²

⁶² Waddell, 'Meatball Machine', *op. cit.*, 74 – © NEO Magazine and Uncooked Media.



AN EYE FOR AN EYE...

Eyes have often been the focus of drawn out set pieces in horror movies (from the works of colourful Italian maverick Lucio Fulci to the more recent *The Haunting in Connecticut*) and *Meatball Machine* is no exception. Take heed folks – you may want to turn away when the alien hybrid populates the body of a hapless femme and immediately goes about drilling into her peepers. It is a moment of stomach churning schlock...



“Meatball Machine is an above average 90 minute, cyberpunk thrill-ride that blends carnage and comedy to the best of its budgetary abilities”

this is much “lighter” in tone and, at choice moments, even something of a laugh riot. From our hero engaging in a sprightly bout of self-abuse in the opening five minutes, to a later moment when he is gobbed on by a porn-loving transvestite, it is difficult to deny that *Meatball Machine* has been devised to elicit some serious giggles. Certainly, it is hard to imagine many people not having a smile on their face as two barbarian-like Neanderthals, armed to the teeth with oversized drills, swords and machetes, clash heads in a perverse (and somewhat perverted) WWE-type smackdown to the death. In fact, even in spite of the 18-rating, *Meatball Machine* sometimes feels akin – at least in tone – to an especially madcap *Road Runner* cartoon, wherein no one really appears to be hurt or horrified by their various bodily mutilations and malfunctions. In some ways this stops the viewer from connecting emotionally with the numerous

bouts of brutality but, given that the spurting arteries and exploding noggins are staged with such aplomb, it still remains crudely effective. That said, what stops this admittedly rapid venture from becoming a true classic of B-movie wackiness is that it never really manages to overcome its cash-starved origins. Sure, the special effects are top notch, but many scenes – especially those shot in daylight – serve only to remind the viewer that, yup, this venture has cheap-as-chips production values. It is a shame because, had this ambitious outing been lensed on higher end technology (or film), we may have been presented with a true successor to legendary eastern bloodbath *The Story of Ricky*. As it stands, however, *Meatball Machine* is an above average 90 minute, cyberpunk thrill-ride that blends carnage and comedy to the best of its budgetary abilities.

DVD EXTRAS

No less than three short films are included here (one of which is 1999’s 8mm promo that eventually got this puppy funded), each of which has something to offer. The best of them is definitely *Reject of Death* – a sort-of sequel to the main feature that highlights a femme fatale with a breast-exposing outfit and a nasty streak a mile wide. Oddly enough, there is also a ‘making of’ to accompany this particular short: perhaps a DVD first! In addition to these, *The Making of Meatball Machine* is an extensive look at the movie’s production, and a series of trailers for this, and other 4Digital releases, rounds things off. Picture and audio is sharp, the latter being particularly strong – but you cannot polish a turd and it is difficult to deny that, based on what is onscreen, this is one film seriously short on finance...



Ideally approached (and probably designed) as part of a Friday or Saturday night, post-pub, drunken viewing experience, *Meatball Machine* should suffice just fine. Nevertheless, do not even think about asking us to explain the title...
CALUM WADDELL

Considering its Z-budget roots, this machine works shockingly well – but the narrative could have done with more meat and less gristle...

FILM ★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Figure 23 – NEO magazine review for *Meatball Machine*

(second page of double-page review)⁶³

⁶³ Waddell, ‘Meatball Machine’, *op. cit.*, 75 – © NEO Magazine and Uncooked Media.

For instance, Waddell notes that the making-of for *Meatball Machine* is extensive, suggesting that this is appropriate for a film with such gory content. Subsequent reviews have then stated similar expectations. 4Digital Asia released several more films with gruesome visuals following *Meatball Machine*. In issue 61 of *NEO*, Waddell reviews *Tokyo Gore Police* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008 – 4Digital Asia). The scores here are exactly the same as with *Meatball Machine* – three for the film, and four for the DVD. Waddell states that the ‘exhaustive two-disc special edition includes a making-of, lots of interviews, footage from the Japanese premiere and numerous trailers. Job well done!’ Alongside the four star score, Waddell’s comments also point to an appreciation of two-disc editions, suggesting that one or more discs containing extras will automatically score highly in *NEO* magazine.

Another film of a similar type to *Meatball Machine* is reviewed by James Kloda in issue 66. *Samurai Princess* (dir. Kaji Kengo, 2009 – 4Digital Asia) is commended for its horrific imagery, as it ‘gleefully delivers by the gore-sodden bucket load.’⁶⁴ But, in contrast to both *Meatball Machine* and *Tokyo Gore Police*, Kloda ends up expressing disappointment at the disc’s missing extra content: ‘With all the extra stuff that adorns the androids, you’d have thought something could have been included to beef up the disc. Pity’ (although a making-of was included on the disc).⁶⁵ Two interpretations can ultimately be made concerning the expectations for the contents of 4Digital Asia’s DVD releases from the reviews of *Meatball Machine*, *Tokyo Gore Police* and *Samurai Princess*. For films that contain various special effects and diverse visual images, it is presumed that this content will be reflected with an extensive range of special features. Furthermore, it is apparent that this expectation is linked to 4Digital Asia’s treatment of all of its discs.

⁶⁴ James Kloda, ‘Samurai Princess’, *NEO*, No. 66 (December 2009), 76.

⁶⁵ *Ibid* – The DVD extras for all 4Digital Asia releases are confirmed in Appendix One. As can be seen, the DVD for *Samurai Princess* did in fact contain a making-of. However, this content is comparably minimal to the extras listed for the *Meatball Machine* and *Tokyo Gore Police* DVDs.

The review for *Death Note: L Change The World* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 2008) is further evidence for the latter conclusion, as it provides the biggest contrast between an assessment of a film and its DVD extras. David West writes that the film '[s]ucks like a Dyson on overdrive', and only awards it one star, despite the fact that it is noted for having a famous director, Nakata Hideo (who was behind the celebrated horror film *Ring*). West then awards the disc's extras four stars, and therefore seems to decide that they are worth watching out of context from the film. His assessment of the special features confirms this supposition:

While no amount of extras can compensate for stinky movie, you cannot fault 4Digital Asia for trying. The two disc set comes with a booklet, an interview with Kenichi Matsuyama [the film's lead actor], the obligatory 'Making Of' documentary and lots of features from the Japanese press campaign.⁶⁶

West is aware that UK audiences are unlikely to buy the film for the extras alone, but he still makes the case for the DVD's content, showing that there may well be interest solely in the special features. However, his comments also suggest that this is an unusual case, as well as indicate the expectations that *NEO* reviewers have for DVD releases – particularly for those from 4Digital Asia. As the comments show, this label can provide extras of a higher quality than an individual film (in West's opinion).

Comparisons and differences to the comments in the *Meatball Machine* review have revealed more about the overall opinions expressed in *NEO* magazine, both in regard to 4Digital Asia's film releases and evaluations of their DVD extras. As a result, such correlations seem to highlight a parallel between the qualities of a film and the range of special features offered on a DVD. But there is more of significance in the reviews than this correlation alone. Following the praise the DVD format receives in the *NEO* reviews, which was noted earlier in the chapter, standards of expectations for the discs' content are now evident. Though the volume of extras appears to be linked to a film's genre (specifically

⁶⁶ David West, 'Death Note: L Change The World', *NEO*, No.53 (January 2009), 72.

horror), the reviews of 4Digital Asia's horror releases have instead illustrated the magazine's expectations for all of the distributor's discs. Examples discussed in the next section of this chapter demonstrate similar correlations between comments for both the films and DVDs. Third Window's DVD releases are assessed by comparable standards, demonstrating that the same expectations exist for their releases. The distributor's films are recognised as having specific characteristics (that contrast with horror film releases), though the reviews clearly signify that *NEO* sees DVD distribution practices as a form of authorship – which correlates with the expectations the critics have for 4Digital Asia's discs.

Authored Expectations: Judging the Films through their Directors and DVD Labels

Comments concerning authorship are frequently found within the review for *Kakera* (dir. Ando Momoko, 2009, released by Third Window – review in Figure 24). This is in reference to both the director and their decisions in making the film, as well as the story's origins as a *manga*.⁶⁷ However, the DVD extras are also noted as providing 'viewing pleasure', implying both an appreciation for their content and the effort that Third Window has gone to in putting together the disc release.⁶⁸ This review supports claims made throughout the chapter, regarding criticism of the DVD labels as a whole, in addition to the individual films and disc releases. Examples, such as *Kakera*, illustrate expectations within the *NEO* reviews regarding the distributors' actions and the special features' content. *Kakera* is not the only review that refers to a film's authorship, and the director can even be used as a basis through which to provide comparisons for a film's characteristics (as was found with *Meatball Machine* and David Cronenberg). In addition, the authorship of the DVD releases is frequently attributed to the distributors, confirming the *NEO* reviewers' expectations of the

⁶⁷ The review explains that the film is an adaptation of the manga *Love Vibes* by Sakurazawa Erika – David West, 'Kakera', *NEO*, No.73 (July 2010), 74.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

discs' content. Moreover, these standards are found to stem from the critical opinions of the films and the director's influence, especially in the case of Third Window's releases.

References to authorship are not only prominent in *NEO*, but also in previous studies of reviews, which helps to highlight its significance. Opinions and comments that circulate around particular directors have often been examined to chart perceptions of a certain filmmaker as well as their films. For example, Klinger has charted how critical opinions of Douglas Sirk's films changed over time, signifying how he was first identified as a specialist in a specific genre (particularly melodrama), and later as an established auteur.⁶⁹ Parallel views have then been found within studies of Asian film directors. Oliver Dew argues that critical perspectives of directors as either genre specialists or artistic auteurs are regularly evident within reviews of films from Asian countries.⁷⁰ However, analyses of DVD media have revealed other potential authorial influences that affect films. Brookey and Westerfelhaus conclude that Pixar reinforces its brand image as a production company within the content of the extras found on DVDs of its films.⁷¹ Tom Brown later made a similar argument following the study of certain disc releases of Disney films.⁷² While brand image and media promotion are the focus of both of these articles, essentially they are referring to the authorship of the DVDs as well as the films. The *NEO* reviews discuss both the Japanese filmmakers and their UK distributors in several instances. Such comments demonstrate how influential each of these factors can be when assessing a DVD release, as well as illustrate particular expectations and preconceptions associated with the authorship of both 4Digital Asia's and Third Window's discs.

⁶⁹ Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning...*, *op. cit.*, 69-96.

⁷⁰ Oliver Dew, '“Asia Extreme”: Japanese cinema and British hype' (53-73), *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 5:1 (2007), 53-7.

⁷¹ Robert A. Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus, 'The Digital Auteur: Branding Identity on the *Monsters, Inc.* DVD', *Western Journal of Communication*, 69:2 (2005), 109-128.

⁷² Tom Brown, '“The DVD of Attractions?”: The Lion King and the Digital Theme Park', in J. Bennett and T. Brown (eds), *Film and Television after DVD* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp.81-100.

REVIEWS ASIAN FILM



ANDO
Actress Hikari Mitsushima is not the only link between *Kakera* and the four-hour epic of party shots, lust and religion that was *Love Exposure*. Sakura Ando, who plays the crazy religious cult recruiter Koike in *Love Exposure*, is director Momoko Ando's sister.

Kakera - A Piece Of Our Life



AVAILABLE: 21 June
LABEL: Third Window Films
CERTIFICATE: 15
NO. OF DISCS: 1 Disc
RETAIL PRICE: £14.99
RUNNING TIME: 107 mins

Haru (Hikari Mitsushima) is sleepwalking her way through life. Her boyfriend treats her like a doormat and is unashamedly cheating on her. Riko (Eriko Nakamura) is a prosthetics artist who sculpts replacement body parts. When the two cross paths in a café by chance, Riko is instantly attracted to Haru, who is unsure how to respond to the advances of another girl.

Adapted from the manga *Love Vibes* by artist Erika Sakurazawa, *Kakera* is a touching love story, although director Momoko Ando does stumble occasionally with her film debut.

Leading lady Hikari Mitsushima was last seen in Sion Sono's epic *Love Exposure*



playing angry schoolgirl Yoko. Her character here (named Haru) is the polar opposite of that memorable turn, though, and she bends whichever way the wind is blowing – even seeming incapable of making active decisions for herself. It is certainly frustrating watching her let her no-good louse of a boyfriend take advantage of her – both emotionally and physically. Her pal Riko, by contrast, is gregarious and outgoing. "It's not that I like girls. It's just you I like," she tells Haru. "Men and women are all human. It's only hard when we categorise ourselves."

After Haru and Riko begin their tentative romance, Haru is uncomfortable with being affectionate in public with her new lady, who responds by becoming increasingly covetous. This leads to much social awkwardness – especially when Riko gatecrashes a student party in a scene that captures the intensity of young love in all of its ill-considered power.

Shot by veteran cameraman Hirokazu Ishii, *Kakera* has a very traditional Japanese visual style that brings to mind the films of Yasujiro Ozu. Each frame is meticulously composed, camera movement is selective and sedate, while the colour palette is subdued. This fits the tone perfectly, as does the melancholy score by former Smashing Pumpkins guitarist James Iha. What is less successful are director Ando's attempts to inject moments of magic into the story. For instance, a soda bottle turns into a two-headed dove and flies up into the sky in a jarring sequence that does not sit comfortably amongst the naturalistic style of the rest of the film. Much more charming is a scene in which a swimming

pool is transformed into a field of stars, which communicates the dizzy optimism at the start of a love affair far more elegantly than a mutant bird.

While the centre of the story is the relationship between Riko and Haru, there are two important supporting players. Tohiko (Rino Katase) is a middle-aged woman for whom Riko creates a replacement breast. Ryota (Tasuku Nagaoka) is Haru's awful boyfriend, a thoroughly unlikeable figure so lacking in any redeeming qualities that you wonder what Haru ever saw in him to begin with – although that seems to be the point. Sadly, there is not much for young actor Tasuku Nagaoka to do with the loathsome character other than play him as an irredeemable scumbag. It might not be ideal but it is certainly effective.

However, despite these minor criticisms, the two leads are excellent, and *Kakera* is an affecting tale that brings to the screen the promise and pain of a new love liaison.
DAVID WEST

DVD EXTRAS

For your extra viewing pleasure there is a 28 minute conversation between film critic Jasper Sharp and Momoko Ando, plus a 22 minute Q&A session from when the film played at the ICA in London. On top of that you get the theatrical trailer for *Kakera* plus trailers for other Third Window releases.

A strong debut from Momoko Ando about an unconventional romance that is sure to seduce.
FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Figure 24 – NEO magazine review for *Kakera*.⁷³

⁷³ West, 'Kakera', *op. cit.*, – © NEO Magazine and Uncooked Media.

Authorship, regarding both the film and its DVD disc, is noted most often within the review of *Kakera* (seen in Figure 24). At the top of the page, before any other details of the film are mentioned, director Ando Momoko's family ties to Japanese cinema are explained through the fact that her sister is an actress (Ando Sakura, who stars in *Love Exposure* – dir. Sono Sion, 2008). David West then integrates several other facts about the film's crew within the review, before awarding the film four stars:

Shot by veteran cameraman Hirokazu Ishii, *Kakera* has a very traditional Japanese visual style that brings to mind the films of Yasujiro Ozu. Each frame is meticulously composed, camera movement is selective and sedate, while the colour palette is subdued. This fits the tone perfectly, as does the melancholy score by former Smashing Pumpkins guitarist James Iha.⁷⁴

The film is evidently being explained as a collaborative effort, and West sees it as important to identify those responsible for the elements that contribute to the four star score. Essentially, though, Ando's directorial style is the focus of this extract from the review, despite the collaborative effort that is emphasised. She is seen as the creative force that is responsible for bringing these various elements successfully together within her directorial debut. The other consequence of this is that her filmmaking skills are compared to Ozu, a Japanese film director who has been praised by many film critics and academic writers.⁷⁵

However, significant attention is also given to the disc's other contents, which are appreciated almost as much as the film itself. Three stars are awarded to the DVD extras, and West states:

For your extra viewing pleasure there is a 28 minute conversation between film critic Jasper Sharp and Momoko Ando, plus a 22-minute Q&A session from when the film played at the ICA in London. On top of that you get the theatrical trailer for *Kakera* plus trailers for other Third Window releases.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ West, 'Kakera', *op. cit.*

⁷⁵ Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (University of California Press, 1972); David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton University Press, 1994); Catherine Russell, *Classical Japanese Cinema Revisited* (London: Continuum, 2011).

⁷⁶ West, 'Kakera', *op. cit.*

The film's authorship is central to the extras' content, in addition to Ando being the focus within the rest of the review for *Kakera*. But West is not just utilising this coincidence as a means of linking the film's characteristics to the DVD's special features. By claiming that Third Window provides 'extra viewing pleasure', he is highlighting the distributor's efforts in releasing the film on DVD for UK audiences, as well as the extra material they were able to gather for the disc release of *Kakera*. As a result, Third Window is perceived by *NEO* as a distributor that frequently aims to provide UK audiences with unique viewing experiences on their DVDs, both because of the films they release and the extras' content. However, such judgments of the distributor mean that high expectations subsequently exist for all of the label's DVD releases. These expectations and preconceptions are illustrated within other examples of the *NEO* reviews, concerning Third Window's releases.

Another representation of further evidence of these patterns is found within the review for *Funuke, Show Some Love You Losers!* (dir. Yoshida Daihachi, 2007). Calum Waddell sums up his opinion of the film in one sentence: 'This slice of manga-inspired madness is a tad overlong, but it is still nutty enough to warrant a watch.'⁷⁷ In addition, the film is given a score of three stars, and so this statement equates to an appraising recommendation for UK viewers. Despite these comments, the extras are only awarded two stars, and Waddell explains that there is '[j]ust a series of trailers for this and other Third Window films – although, to be fair, there must be an hour's worth of previews!'⁷⁸ Therefore, though there are minimal extras, Third Window's efforts are still appreciated by Waddell. His statement symbolises the recognition that *NEO* has given the distributor's releases in the past, and this is partly because of their extra content. An example of this recognition is even found in the review above the one for *Funuke*, where the *Fine, Totally Fine* DVD is mentioned as

⁷⁷ Calum Waddell, 'Funuke, Show Some Love You Losers!', *NEO*, No.58 (May 2009), 77.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

containing ‘quality extras’ (which can be seen above the *Funuke* review in Figure 18).⁷⁹ Even when extras are at a bare minimum within their discs, Third Window is still acknowledged by *NEO* as often providing UK audiences with quality DVD releases, as much as a Japanese film director is seen as responsible for the content of a film.

4Digital Asia’s releases are occasionally discussed similarly within *NEO*, both in regards to the directors of the films and the label’s actions as a distributor (though this occurs most often in reviews of 4Digital Asia’s horror films). One particularly indicative review is for the film *Starfish Hotel* (dir. John Williams, 2006). It is not favoured by Calum Waddell, as he only awards the film 2 and a half stars, and states that it makes the puzzling films of David Lynch seem simplistic in comparison.⁸⁰ However, he does concede that the presentation on the DVD is ‘first class’, both because of the visual quality of the film, and the inclusion of a making-of and interview with the director in the extras.⁸¹ Waddell shows signs of both appreciating and regularly expecting a variety of content within 4Digital Asia’s releases. This aspect of Waddell’s opinions on the distributor is especially evident when comparing the *Starfish Hotel* review to a later example. The review of *Kaiji* (dir. Sato Toya, 2009) in issue 74 awards similar scores – three for the film and two for the extras (which consist of only a making-of and a trailer). Waddell then goes into more depth regarding the DVD features, explaining that the ‘[making-of] documentary gives a decent low-down on the film’s conception, although, like most DVD filler these days, it is not especially epic...’⁸² This contrasting comment can be interpreted in several ways. Waddell is suggesting that DVD extras, by 2010 (the year the review was published), are generally not as engrossing as

⁷⁹ Waddell, ‘Fine, Totally Fine’, *op. cit.*

⁸⁰ Lynch’s films are often noted for their puzzling content and visuals - Erica Sheen and Annette Davison, ‘Introduction’, in E. Sheen and A. Davison (eds), *The Cinema of David Lynch: American Dreams, Nightmare Visions* (London: Wallflower, 2004), pp.1-4.

⁸¹ Calum Waddell, ‘Starfish Hotel’, *NEO*, No.52 (December 2008), 72.

⁸² Calum Waddell, ‘Kaiji’, *NEO*, No.74 (August 2010), 70-1.

they used to be. By this time, a making-of and a trailer are suggested to be not particularly worthwhile (because of their two star rating). Furthermore, 4Digital Asia's efforts on this disc are not as appreciated as earlier releases, such as *Starfish Hotel*. Whether or not Waddell is providing a view on DVD extras in general, his comments regarding the *Kaiji* DVD do indicate disappointment with the distributor's assortment of extra material, signifying similar expectations to those found in relation to Third Window.

Authorship remains to be a recurring trait within the critical reception of films, though this does not only concern the authorship of the film's content. The *NEO* reviews demonstrate that the actions of a distributor can be interpreted as an authored trait within a DVD release. Moreover, expectations and preconceptions of the standards of the disc releases have been found alongside the correlations between discussions of both the film directors and distributors as authors. While this could be argued as a trait that recurs throughout all the examples discussed in the chapter, what has been demonstrated represents much more than this recurrence. Analysis of the *NEO* reviews has illustrated how much the DVD distributors are an integral factor within the various comments that can be made about both the individual films and their respective disc releases. Both 4Digital Asia and Third Window are stated as responsible for the quality of the films, as well as whether or not the discs meet the expectations that *NEO* has for the DVD format.

Conclusion

The *NEO* reviews are very revealing for several reasons. The critical reception of the DVD releases from both 4Digital Asia and Third Window has demonstrated the diverse market within the UK that the distributors were catering to from 2008 to 2010. Even the term cult, regularly used by the *NEO* reviewers, has a variety of connotations attached to it which

signify various tastes and preferences in regards to UK viewers of Japanese films on DVD. The distributors' categorisation as cult has been illustrated in addition to their releases being labelled as suited to fans of fantasy epics, gory horror, and stylistic directors, as well as numerous other niche tastes. These assessments of the films do not just signify the potential markets for these films in the UK, but also the other aspects of the DVD releases. At times, appreciation of the extras has appeared to be linked to certain characteristics within the films, such as particular genre traits or the attributes associated with a director. Moreover, *NEO* is demonstrating the wide appeal that the discs' special features can have for UK audiences.

Certain types of films have sometimes seemed to attract certain types of extras within the *NEO* reviews. Films which are part of franchises, and those with prominent visual effects or directorial influences, have often been evaluated within the examples of reviews throughout the chapter. However, the magazine's film critics have not automatically presumed that fans of these specific types of films are the only viewers of the DVDs that will appreciate their extra content. The *NEO* reviews fully detail the special features on the discs, as well as relay the critic's opinions regarding the content of each extra (or at least those that are believed to be worth watching). This tendency could signify another connotation stemming from the distributors' classification as cult DVD labels. The term cult potentially implies an audience within the UK which appreciates elaborate and well-presented DVD extras and disc packages more than the films that accompany them. While the distributors may be targeting this market, along with others, the *NEO* reviews do not actually assess the DVD releases with only this audience in mind. The critics details how the extras can potentially appeal to anyone, and highlight content that is particularly noteworthy. Therefore, the reviews place emphasis on a DVD release as a viewing experience provided by either

4Digital Asia or Third Window, which can often offer UK audiences more than the chance to watch a film.

Central to these findings has been *NEO* magazine's discussions of the distributors as companies, and not just as DVD labels defined purely by their film releases. Their treatment of their discs has meant that the *NEO* reviewers have formed expectations and standards against which to judge disc releases from certain distributors. The DVD labels' distribution practices are highly influential on the critical opinions that the reviews express for the films. The *NEO* reviews not only indicate the market for DVDs of Japanese films (and other Asian media) in the UK. The reviews have indicated how both 4Digital Asia and Third Window have met differing levels of success (according to the critics' opinions). This confirms that although the DVD labels utilised similar distribution practices, which influenced the reviews' content, these actions could not guarantee how each DVD release would be critically received. Instead, the discussions of 4Digital Asia and Third Window as distributors in the *NEO* reviews shows how effective their efforts were in distinguishing themselves as DVD labels, instead of through their films' titles alone. The review for *Kakera* highlighted the distributor-as-author perspective most clearly. However, in all the reviews the labels have been emphasised for being as influential as the films' directors and other characteristics – corresponding with the intentions of 4Digital Asia and Third Window that have been revealed in the previous chapters of the thesis. These intentions have also characterised the distributor's actions after 2010.

Chapter Six: After 2010:
Continuing Practices and Processes within the Distributors' Later Actions

The previous five chapters have analysed material associated with the DVD releases of 4Digital Asia and Third Window from 2008 to 2010. While this is the period where the two distributors predominantly released Japanese films on DVD, the distributors have continued to release films from other countries after 2010. Such facts suggest that the treatment of the DVDs by the distributors was nothing special in the three years that the thesis has chosen to focus on. However, analysis of the later actions of both distribution companies shows that the practices put in place for those three years of DVD releases were hugely influential. In these later years, certain practices continued; while some were adapted; and others can even be traced back to the beginnings of particular companies (for example, 4Digital Media's releases before the launch of 4Digital Asia). Moreover, evidence that the distributors' actions continue to be influential does not also illustrate positive outcomes for them. 4Digital Asia and Third Window were both dedicated to DVD releases of Japanese films from 2008 to 2010, but they met differing levels of success after this period.

In order to investigate these later years within the sixth chapter of the thesis, it is appropriate to utilise a reception studies approach. Though this provides a continuation of the applied method within the previous chapter, this is not the only reason to take a similar approach. In 1997, Barbara Klinger stated that a reception studies' methodology allows for the charting of the history of particular films within certain contexts and modes of distribution and exhibition:

Since films often exist in surrogate form in their post-origin appearances – that is, in broadcast, video, laserdisc and other new technology formats – the industry practices involved in producing, distributing and exhibiting films from the past are

no longer contained within the studio system, but include the operations of other formats.¹

Klinger is advocating these processes as necessary for study within the research of films, as well as suggesting that the discourse within associated material provides helpful historical evidence. Such discourse has continued to be of great interest to Klinger, as in a later study of the home-viewing of media (particularly through DVD), she ‘investigates the discourses that shape the environment in which viewing takes place’.² Though Klinger discusses ‘films from the past’ in the quote from 1997, her perspective has evidently expanded to a wide range of films, media formats and viewing environments.

Distribution practices are dedicated to shaping film-viewing environments, which has been established by several recent studies of these processes within the film industry. Julia Knight and Peter Thomas define distribution as ‘the vital link which connects producers to audiences throughout the whole [film and video] sector, from the commercial film industry to grassroots community initiatives.’³ David Sin states that it is evident because of the materials generated through licensing, marketing and logistics (specifically dissemination and exhibition), all of which are integral parts of film distribution.⁴ However, this definition is limited to commercial practices within the film industry, such as cinema exhibition and home-media releases. Some means of distribution are not only illegitimate (for example, through illegal downloads and pirated DVDs), but also more varied in certain forms, such as the multitude of legitimate sources available for downloads and streaming. Ramon Lobato takes all these means into consideration through his categorisation of distribution as either

¹ Barbara Klinger, ‘Film history terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies’ (107-128), *Screen*, 38:2 (1997), 107-128

² Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (University of California Press, 2006), p.5.

³ Julia Knight and Peter Thomas, *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), p.13.

⁴ David Sin, “What is Distribution?”, *BFI Screen Online* website, accessed 06/06/2013, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/distribution/distribution1.html>.

formal or informal (meaning those that are legitimate, illegitimate and partially one or the other). In either case, distributors ‘shape public culture by circulating or withholding texts which have the potential to become part of shared imaginaries, discourses and dreams.’⁵

Distributors therefore create discourse, which can greatly influence film-viewing, and is found across a variety of materials associated with distribution processes, which are sources of evidence within a reception studies approach. These sources have become more varied since 2010, in relation to both 4Digital Asia and Third Window. However, they still exist as satellite texts that circulate around the DVD releases. This is because of the interrelated links to the central product of the distributors’ actions (meaning the discs), as was the case with the sources within the thesis’ previous chapters (for instance, the DVD packaging, the special features, trailers, websites and reviews). Further sources will now be demonstrated as representative examples of the labels’ disc releases and associated distribution practices up until 2013. The thesis has so far examined how both 4Digital Asia and Third Window distinctively distributed DVDs of Japanese films in the UK from 2008 to 2010 through their comparable practices. The sixth chapter will now help illustrate the further significance of these practices, through their influence on the distributors’ actions after 2010.

Andrew Kirkham: Emphasising Directors from 4Digital Asia to Cine Du Monde

It is no secret that Andrew Kirkham was the central figure behind the 4Digital Media sub-label, 4Digital Asia. This information is publically available and has been used to promote Kirkham’s other associated companies following the last of 4Digital Asia’s DVD releases.⁶ His more recent businesses include the digital media services provided by Silk

⁵ Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* (London: BFI, 2012), p.2.

⁶ ‘Andrew Kirkham’, *LinkedIn* website, accessed 06/06/2013, <http://uk.linkedin.com/in/andrewpkirkham>; John Berra, ‘Acknowledgements’, in J. Berra (ed), *Directory of World Cinema: Japan 2* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp.5-6.

Purse Enterprises, the translation company Japanglish, and the distribution label Cine Du Monde.⁷ Though 4Digital Media decided to focus almost entirely on English-language films after the release of *Death Tube* (dir. Fukuda Yohei, 2010), Kirkham continued to pursue the market for Japanese cinema that his 4Digital Asia releases had aimed for. However, DVD releases from Cine Du Monde demonstrate that it has a wider remit in comparison to 4Digital Asia, as several of its titles are English-language horror films. Nonetheless, Kirkham has continued certain practices instigated at his former sub-label, while adapting others, and also emphasising and maintaining relationships with certain filmmakers.

The home page of Cine Du Monde's website contains immediate links to its film releases, their trailers, and the distributor's Facebook page. Underneath graphics advertising the label's latest releases, the mission statement for Cine Du Monde is presented:

CINE DU MONDE is an exciting new label set up by several industry veterans – collectively bringing over fifty years of experience to the table in the areas of acquisitions, production, sales and distribution.

We aim to bring to UK homes “Left-of-Centre Cinema” from Around the World. Our focus will be on interesting, overlooked or forgotten films that reflect the vast world of cinema not encapsulated by mainstream new releases. We will strive to embrace every genre in our search. Where we can we will work with directors to collate extra features to broaden the appeal of each release.⁸

Though not stated explicitly in these lines, the individual webpages for each of the label's films shows that their focus is primarily on DVD releases (which are also inferred by the intention to ‘bring to UK homes’). The statement also demonstrates how central Kirkham was to 4Digital Asia. The phrase ‘ “Left of Centre Cinema” from Around the World’ draws comparisons to the earlier label's focus on ‘Asian “cult” live action films’.⁹ Both are

⁷ ‘Silk Purse Enterprises - About’, *Facebook*, accessed 06/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/SilkPurseEnterprises/info>; ‘Japanglish – About’, *Facebook*, accessed 06/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/Japanglish.translation/info>; ‘Cine Du Monde – About’, *Facebook*, accessed 06/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/CineduMonde/info>; ‘Home’, *Cine Du Monde* website, accessed 06/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/>.

⁸ ‘Home’, *Cine Du Monde* website, *op. cit.*

⁹ ‘4DM/Contact us’, accessed 11/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/contact>.

companies that aim their releases towards niche markets, but at the same time they intend to give their releases a broad appeal by emphasising the films' diverse genre traits. To achieve this goal, the statement illustrates the colleagues and contacts that Kirkham has maintained within Cine Du Monde despite leaving 4Digital Asia. Though the names of the distributor's staff are not listed, the fifty years of experience in the company is stressed as being collective, and their close relationship with particular filmmakers is also indicated. When taking into account all of Cine Du Monde's releases, it is the ties to film directors that are most noticeable, as the films' authorship is regularly spotlighted.

The names of directors were a prominent element of 4Digital Asia's DVD releases, within the special features, trailers, websites and reviews of the films, as well as the discs' packaging. Some of these names have continued to be prominent within Cine Du Monde's releases. In 2012, two films involving Nishimura Yoshihiro were released. Both DVD covers for *Yakuza Hunters: The Ultimate Battle Royale* (dir. Nakadaira Kazushi, 2010) and *Yakuza Hunters: Revenge Duel In Hell* (dir. Okuda Shin'ichi, 2010) feature Nishimura's name on their front images, as do Cine Du Monde's webpages.¹⁰ He is noted as being responsible for the films' effects, as well as for directing the film *Tokyo Gore Police* (2008). Not only does this associate the films with the work of a particular filmmaker, but Nishimura's name and past films also place the *Yakuza Hunters* DVD releases within a specific genre of Japanese cinema. *Tokyo Gore Police* was not the only gore-heavy Japanese horror film that 4Digital Asia released, and Cine Du Monde appears to want to continue this trend, in addition to suggesting that there is still a market for these releases in the UK. However, the names of directors are not only used to promote films with these characteristics. Though Cine Du

¹⁰ Nishimura's name features heavily within the following sources: the front of the DVD cover of *Yakuza Hunters: The Ultimate Battle Royale* (dir. Nakadaira Kazushi, 2010), released by Cine Du Monde on 19/03/2012; the front of the DVD cover of *Yakuza Hunters: Revenge Duel In Hell* (dir. Okuda Shin'ichi, 2010), released by Cine Du Monde on 21/05/2012; 'Yakuza Hunters', Cine Du Monde website, accessed 11/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/yakuza-hunters/>.

Monde's number of releases is fewer than the titles from 4Digital Asia, attempts to appeal to a broader market are evident.¹¹

One significant release from Cine Du Monde was the DVD for *Suicide Club* (dir. Sono Sion, 2001), both in terms of the use of a director's name and in appealing to a wider market established by another DVD label. The packaging suggests that the film will meet the demands of UK viewers who seek gore-heavy foreign films, as both sides of the reversible sleeve for the DVD cover display the image of a blood-soaked schoolgirl (which also appears on the Cine Du Monde website).¹² But the further significance of the film and its director is also emphasised in both the DVD packaging and its website. This was a title that gained notoriety after early international festival showings, as demonstrated through details within the review by Tom Mes from the Midnight Eye website (quoted on the DVD cover). Specifically, the review alludes to the shocked audience reactions that the opening mass suicide scene provoked.¹³ Furthermore, because of the length of time between the film's theatrical release and its Cine Du Monde release (in 2011), the UK label has the advantage of being able to utilise the profile of a director already established through other UK film releases. The DVD cover and webpage both state that Sono is the 'Internationally Acclaimed Director of *Love Exposure*, *Cold Fish* and *Guilty of Romance*'.¹⁴ These films were all distributed on DVD within the UK, and both *Love Exposure* (2009) and *Cold Fish* (2010) were released by Third Window.¹⁵ Cine Du Monde was therefore able to make use of the

¹¹ Including its 2013 titles, Cine Du Monde has released 11 DVDs, whereas 4Digital Asia has 20 titles included within its catalogue.

¹² 'Suicide Club', *Cine Du Monde* website, accessed 11/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/suicide-club/>.

¹³ Tom Mes, 'Suicide Club', *Midnight Eye* website, accessed 11/06/2013, <http://www.midnighteye.com/reviews/suicide-club/>.

¹⁴ 'Suicide Club', *Cine Du Monde* website, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Third Window released *Love Exposure* on 25/01/2010, and *Cold Fish* on 27/06/2011. *Guilty of Romance* (2011) was released by Eureka Entertainment on 28/11/2011.

critical reception of Sono's other films, stemming from their release by other UK DVD labels, in order to promote an earlier film from his career.

Referring to the releases and past popularity of other DVD labels is a trait that Cine Du Monde shares with the distribution of some of 4Digital Asia's disc releases. Again, it is evident through the use of the names of particular filmmakers. On the rear of the 2009 DVD packaging for the release of *Meatball Machine* (dir. Yamaguchi Yudai and Yamamoto Jun'ichi, 2005) one statement about the film reads 'In the flesh and blood turned machine body horror tradition of Shinya Tsukamoto's *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*'.¹⁶ This line implies that the film will appeal to certain viewers of DVDs in the UK, particularly those who purchased *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (dir. Tsukamoto Shinya, 1989) when it was released by Tartan Asia Extreme in 2002. Though the Tartan DVD label went bankrupt, its film releases have continued to be disseminated on DVD through its new owner Palisades, which confirms that there is still a market for these films in the UK despite Tartan's failures.¹⁷ This is one conclusion made by Daniel Martin as a result of his research on the Tartan label.¹⁸ Though Sono's films were never associated with this distributor, the UK DVD release of *Suicide Club* is also capitalising on the continuing market for Asia Extreme titles (because of its use of the bloody image of a school girl). Another title from Cine Du Monde further illustrates this continuing interest, as well as the emphasis of the names of the films' directors.

Re-Cycle (2006) is a Thai horror film directed by brothers Danny Pang and Oxide Pang, and several of their earlier films were also distributed through the Tartan label. Both directors are most noted for their direction of *The Eye* (2002), *The Eye 2* (2004) and *The Eye: Infinity* (2005). This is not only evident from the critical reception and reputation of the

¹⁶ From the rear of the DVD cover of *Meatball Machine* (dir. Yamaguchi Yudai and Yamamoto Jun'ichi, 2005), released by 4Digital Asia on 01/06/2009.

¹⁷ 'About', Palisades Tartan website, accessed 12/06/2013, <http://www.palisadestartan.com/AboutUs.asp>.

¹⁸ Daniel Martin, *Asia extreme: the marketing and critical reception of cult Asian cinema in the UK*, PhD Thesis (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2009), p.256.

Tartan label,¹⁹ but also the DVD cover and production notes for *Re-Cycle*, which Cine Du Monde makes available on its website.²⁰ On the first page of the notes, the following extract appears:

The Pang brothers became well-known with their film *The Eye* which had an excellent box-office record in 2002. They have developed a style that is completely different from the European and Hollywood genres. They have a unique approach of filming and have gained worldwide recognition. The twins are the new blood of the Asian horror genre.²¹

The rest of the notes detail the plot of *Re-Cycle*, the different storyboards and effects that were created during production, as well as the career backgrounds of the cast and crew. But in the above extract it is clear that the film's place in the Asian horror genre is what the producers and promoters are keen to emphasise. Moreover, this recurs as a point of emphasis within the DVD special features, as well as the additional information in the production notes. The disc's extras contain an audio commentary for the film, provided by members of the cast and crew, in addition to a making-of, a special effects featurette, deleted scenes, premiere footage, a press interview with the cast and crew, and a trailer. Here, the influence of Cine Du Monde's aims for bringing more than just the films to their viewers can be seen. Furthermore, this is another similarity shared with 4Digital Asia's releases, in that special features were often included on the discs, and the webpages could also be a source of additional information for viewers of the DVDs. Central to these patterns, in regard to *Re-Cycle*, is the prominence of the directors, who are emphasised in the disc packaging, the special features, the distributor's webpage and the production notes. Furthermore, the pattern is evident in relation to the non-Asian films that Cine Du Monde has distributed.

¹⁹ Chi-Yun Shin, 'Art of branding: Tartan "Asia Extreme" Films', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* (website), No.50 (2008), accessed 12/06/2013, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/TartanDist/index.html>.

²⁰ 'Re-Cycle', *Cine Du Monde* website, accessed 12/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/recycle/>.

²¹ 'Re-Cycle Production Notes', *Cine Du Monde* website, accessed 12/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Recycle-Production-Notes.pdf>.

However, there is one exception within the label's Asian releases, which shows an attempt to broaden Cine Du Monde's appeal to this market without a predominant emphasis on authorship. It signifies a move beyond live-action films, which was not attempted with 4Digital Asia. In 2011, one of the label's earliest releases was an *anime* feature entitled *ICE* (dir. Kobayashi Makoto, 2008). Though the DVD cover and webpage for the release state that it is from the production team behind other *anime* films, such as *Perfect Blue* (dir. Kon Satoshi, 1997) and *The Wings of Honneamise* (dir. Yamaga Hiroyuki, 1987), most emphasis in the DVD's distribution materials is given to the voice cast and the film's international presence.²² On the front of the DVD cover (and on the *ICE* webpage) is the statement that the film features the 'voices and music of Japanese pop sensations AKB48'.²³ A link to another website is provided on the Cine Du Monde webpage, which explains that some of the voices, and the film's theme song, were provided by members of the all-female song-and-dance group AKB48.²⁴ The showings of *ICE* at various international festivals, such as Chicago, Sao Paulo and Pusan, are also listed on the website. As demonstrated in the earlier chapters of the thesis, especially in the analysis of the *NEO* magazine reviews, the UK market for Japanese films can intersect with interests in *anime*, Asian music and other media. The release of *ICE* indicates an attempt to appeal to UK consumers with these interests, while also utilising the context of the film's international exhibition to promote the DVD. Nonetheless, *ICE* remains to be the only animated feature that Cine Du Monde has released, and there is no indication of the label releasing any other *anime* titles in the near future, suggesting that it met with limited success. Moreover, the combination of unique online and disc contents are still being

²² The DVD cover can be viewed on the Cine Du Monde webpage – 'ICE', *Cine Du Monde* website, accessed 13/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/ice/>.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ 'Project ICE Interviews with AKB48', *World News* website, accessed 13/06/2013, http://wn.com/project_ice_interviews_with_akb48.

utilised by Cine Du Monde for its non-Asian releases, which continue to emphasise the names of the film directors.

Of the six English-language films that Cine Du Monde has released since 2011, three are American features that have been directed by the same filmmaker, Chad Ferrin. For all of these titles (*Easter Bunny, Kill! Kill!*, 2006; *Unspeakable*, 2000; *The Ghouls*, 2003 – released by Cine Du Monde in this order),²⁵ a link to a Wikipedia entry for the director is provided on the label's webpages, which also display images of the DVD covers, and emphasise Ferrin's name.²⁶ In addition to these elements, the disc contents for these releases illustrate the priority that Cine Du Monde gives to its films' authorship. Each of the DVDs of Chad Ferrin's films contains several special features that predominantly document his role in their production. The disc for *Easter Bunny, Kill! Kill!* includes an audio commentary and a making-of; *The Ghouls* contains similar extras, as well as an introduction exclusive to UK viewers; and *Unspeakable* also includes the same types of special features, as well as an early short by Ferrin. The significance of this content is that Cine Du Monde has continued to prioritise the director over all other aspects of the films. This pattern represents a figure associated with the DVD releases that the label makes central to its distribution practices. By maintaining this consistent focus on the director, Cine Du Monde can also diversify the means by which their film releases and their promotional material are disseminated.

Though Cine Du Monde's Facebook page contains announcements for all of its film releases, the majority from 2011 to 2013 concern their English-language horror films (especially those of Chad Ferrin).²⁷ Many of these posts provide links to trailers and website

²⁵ Their respective DVD release dates were 22/08/2011, 18/06/2012, and 16/07/2012.

²⁶ 'Easter Bunny, Kill! Kill!', *Cine Du Monde* website, accessed 13/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/easter-bunny-kill-kill/>; 'The Ghouls', *Cine Du Monde* website, accessed 13/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/the-ghouls/>; 'Unspeakable', *Cine Du Monde* website, accessed 13/06/2013, <http://www.cinedumonde.co.uk/unspeakable/>.

²⁷ 'Cine Du Monde', *Facebook*, accessed 14/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/CineduMonde/>.

reviews for the films, as well as retail outlets such as Amazon. However, the most frequent posts first appeared in 2012, when Cine Du Monde made its films available for online rental through digital streaming. By association with the website Dailymotion, the label has now included all its releases within the webpage's catalogue of films (including its Asian releases), and they can each be viewed for a small fee (usually £2.99).²⁸ While links to Amazon pages for the DVDs also appear among these posts, Cine Du Monde is evidently keen to equally promote the online rental option that exists for the films. This is apparent because of how often posts are made about offers on the Dailymotion website, where the label's films are available for free for a limited time.²⁹ Though these offers have only occurred around certain annual dates, such as Easter and Halloween, Cine Du Monde often provides multiple Facebook posts highlighting these offers during the days they are available.³⁰ This is also evident on the label's Twitter feed, which parallels the information and links posted on the Facebook page.³¹ Within all these posts, the director's name is consistently and regularly mentioned.

These posts on social media sites are a significant contrast to the distribution activities of 4Digital Asia, which did not have its own similar feeds. However, the sub-label's trailers for its releases were included within the YouTube channel for its parent label, 4Digital Media (as explained in Chapter Four). Cine Du Monde also created its own YouTube channel, and again provides trailers for all of its film releases through this webpage.³² Each trailer is accompanied by more information than just the film's credits and links to the label's website.

²⁸ 'Unspeakable – Video', *Dailymotion* website, accessed 14/06/2013, <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xuthni>.

²⁹ 'Free Film – Easter Holiday Treat – Chad Ferrin's Unspeakable', post dated 02/04/2013, *Facebook*, accessed 14/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/CineduMonde/>.

³⁰ 'Cine Du Monde', *Facebook*, op. cit.

³¹ 'Cine Du Monde (@CineDuMonde)', *Twitter*, accessed 14/06/2013, <https://twitter.com/CineduMonde>.

³² 'APKCineDuMonde', *YouTube*, accessed 14/06/2013, <http://www.youtube.com/user/APKCineduMonde/videos>.

For example, the extensive range of extras on the DVD for *Unspeakable* is also listed underneath the trailer on the YouTube channel (and the extras mostly document the role of director Chad Ferrin).³³ Cine Du Monde is utilising all the means it can to promote its releases through websites and online sources, in addition to its own dedicated webpages. All of these posts of links and trailers constantly emphasise the director's name as a central element of both the films and their DVD releases.

Andrew Kirkham is likely to be a key contributing factor to the regular emphasis of the director. This trait has recurred for all of Cine Du Monde's releases, and has also been the central preoccupation of the promotional campaign for the film *Sado Tempest* (dir. John Williams, 2012) – which links together the history of 4Digital Asia to Kirkham's most recent activities. The release of the film was not announced through Cine Du Monde, but Kirkham has made clear his own personal involvement with the UK distribution and exhibition of *Sado Tempest* through his company Silk Purse Enterprises (via announcements on Facebook). In particular, Kirkham's involvement was publicised as a role appointed on behalf of 100 Meter Films, the production company behind the film.³⁴ 100 Meter Films is also the Japanese production company at which filmmaker John Williams is based.³⁵ *Sado Tempest* is Williams' third feature-length film, and 4Digital Asia had released his second film, *Starfish Hotel* (2006), on DVD in 2008. Though originally from Wales, Williams now lives in Japan and has made all three of his films with a predominantly Japanese cast and crew.³⁶ His first film, *Firefly Dreams* (2001), is also noted for winning several international awards.³⁷ As a result, Williams is evidently a sensible choice for 100 Meter Films to focus on for

³³ 'Unspeakable Trailer', *YouTube*, accessed 14/06/2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oooar7-lqMI>.

³⁴ 'Silk Purse Enterprises shared a link via SADO TEMPEST – 29 April 2013', *Facebook*, accessed 14/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/SilkPurseEnterprises>.

³⁵ 'Home', *100 Meter Films* website, accessed 14/06/2013, http://www.100meterfilms.com/index_en.html.

³⁶ 'John Williams', *100 Meter Films* website, accessed 14/06/2013, <http://www.100meterfilms.com/en/about/staff/john.html>.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

distinguishing the distribution of *Sado Tempest*, regardless of Kirkham's tendency to utilise the director's role for promotional reasons. However, Silk Purse Enterprise's Facebook posts also illustrate the close personal and professional relationship that Kirkham happens to share with John Williams. On November 13th 2012, it was stated that: 'For the anniversary of the company I am pleased to officially announce taking on worldwide representation for the Japanese company, 100Meter Films, owned and run by my friend John Williams. I am looking forward to working on the company's films.'³⁸

Kirkham's distribution practices for certain film releases can also coincide with their critical reception, indicating the potential influence of these actions. Posted on Silk Purse's Facebook page, on February 16th 2013, was a link to a review of *Sado Tempest* from the website Midnight Eye.³⁹ This begins with a summation of John Williams' career, in relation to both his production company and the Japanese film industry in general:

Recurring accounts of doom and gloom notwithstanding, Japanese film remains, year after year, not only one of the most productive of national cinemas but also one of the most diverse. Take the case of director John Williams: a long-time resident of Japan, this Welshman runs his own Tokyo-based production company, 100 Meter Films, which not only produces Williams's own projects but also those of other filmmakers, Japanese and foreign, as well as making occasional forays into video art.⁴⁰

Williams' significance is therefore not only found in his role as the director of this film, but his position within the Japanese film industry as well, making him a useful point of reference for a brief critical overview of recent Japanese film productions. This also demonstrates further reasoning for Kirkham's constant focus on directors for his distribution practices, as they continue to be a figure that critics regularly comment upon. Similar evidence was also

³⁸ 'Silk Purse Enterprises – 13 November 2012', *Facebook*, accessed 14/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/SilkPurseEnterprises>.

³⁹ 'Silk Purse Enterprises – 16 February 2012', *Facebook*, accessed 17/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/SilkPurseEnterprises>.

⁴⁰ Tom Mes, 'Sado Tempest', *Midnight Eye* website, accessed 17/06/2013, <http://www.midnighteye.com/reviews/sado-tempest/>.

highlighted earlier, regarding Sono Sion in the Midnight Eye review of *Suicide Club*.⁴¹ The director's career was briefly discussed at the beginning of the review, as is the case with many other reviews of the film following its UK DVD release through Cine Du Monde, such as the double-page article on *Suicide Club* in *NEO* magazine.⁴² These moments of consistency in the critical reception of films that Kirkham has distributed (following 4Digital Asia) are another reason to continue to focus on the names of particular directors.

Despite the different ventures in film distribution that Kirkham has taken, there is consistency within his approach that is comparable to the practices implemented for 4Digital Asia. Though Kirkham was not solely responsible for these practices, he was an influential factor within them, as seen in the actions taken for the film releases from both Cine Du Monde and 100 Meter Films. The continuation of authorship as a focal point within distribution material for DVD releases has been evident in many sources, such as the consistent emphasis of the director across both social media sites and online rental services. In addition, the significance of the films' authorship is not only mirrored within the films' critical reception, but can also be emphasised when Cine Du Monde attempts to broaden its appeal within the UK market (for example, through *anime* and English-language releases). Kirkham has continued to recognise the interest in Japanese films within the UK, and still appeals to this market, while also attempting to attract broader consumer interests. The consistent patterns evident, such as the focus on the films' authorship and the treatment of the distribution of the DVDs, shows a continuation of 4Digital Asia's aims as well. Kirkham wants to offer UK audiences unique experiences through his releases, which are not defined just by the characteristics of the films. The DVD extras, the webpages, and the social media posts are all linked to Kirkham and the profile of his associated companies, such as Cine Du

⁴¹ Mes, 'Suicide Club', *op. cit.*

⁴² Calum Waddell, 'Suicide Club', *NEO*, No.89 (November 2011), 82-3.

Monde, Silk Purse Enterprises and 100 Meter Films. These factors help distinguish the DVD releases as much as the films' characteristics.

4Digital Media: Further Changes and Continuations in the UK DVD Market

While Kirkham was a significant factor within 4Digital Asia's distribution practices, he was not solely responsible for them. His actions were evidently a result of co-operation and negotiation with the other staff and processes established by 4Digital Media, as illustrated by their practices after 2010. Though Kirkham's departure brought a halt to DVD releases under the 4Digital Asia sub-label, it did not stop the expansion of 4Digital Media's catalogue. While the number of its DVDs has rapidly increased, more so than both Cine Du Monde and Third Window, evidence of its expansion is also apparent from press announcements concerning distribution deals with film-making studios.⁴³ Taken with its actions for distributing films on DVD after 2010, these activities demonstrate the continuation of many of the practices implemented under the 4Digital Asia sub-label, despite releasing very different films. 4Digital Media has still found it helpful to distinguish itself as a DVD label through its distribution practices, in order to signify that its profile in the UK market is not dependent only on the films' titles and characteristics.

The halt to 4Digital Asia's output suggests that 4Digital Media has not pursued UK audiences' interests in Asian media since 2010. However, it appears to have reached out to this market indirectly, as some of its English-language releases are emphasised as featuring elements related to Asian media and culture, if not specifically Japan. In 2012, 4Digital Media released *Broken Fist* (also known as *Attack of the Yakuza* and *Broken Path* - dir.

⁴³ 'R Squared Films signs deal with 4 Digital Media UK', *American Film Market* website, accessed 17/06/2013, http://www.americanfilmmarket.com/sites/www.americanfilmmarket.com/files/exhibitor_pr/r2pressrelease.pdf. Diana Lodderhose, 'Black and Blue launches DVD label', *Variety* website, accessed 17/06/2013, <http://variety.com/2011/biz/news/black-blue-launches-dvd-label-1118038298/>.

Sakamoto Koichi, 2008).⁴⁴ Though the director is Japanese, and the film stars several actors of Korean and Japanese descent, the film is an American production with English-language dialogue. Its links to Asian countries stem from its *yakuza* (gangster) storyline and its high content of martial arts action, which is further emphasised through director Sakamoto's history as a stunt co-ordinator in several American films and television shows (for example, *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* [dir. Terence H. Winkless, *et al*, 1993-6] and *Drive* [dir. Steve Wang, 1997]).⁴⁵ Following *Broken Fist*, one other release had elements of its production and content promoted in a similar fashion. *The Red Canvas* (dir. Kenneth Chamitoff and Adam Boster, 2009) was also retitled for its 4Digital Asia release as *Submission*.⁴⁶ The film shares similarities to *Broken Fist* in that its story focuses on martial arts, and its cast includes several actors of Asian descent (such as George Takei).⁴⁷

These DVDs signify the range of film releases that 4Digital Media maintained alongside the distribution activities of 4Digital Asia. Following an analysis of the sub-label's history from 2008 to 2010, these later DVDs could be seen as an indirect influence stemming from its disc releases of Asian films. But both *Broken Fist* and *Submission* indicate the lengthier history of the parent company, 4Digital Media. As confirmed on its website, the label was officially launched in 2006, and some of its first releases were of films that also focused on martial arts action, such as *Best of the Best* (dir. Robert Radler, 1989).⁴⁸ Not only did this lead to the release of the sequels to this film, but they were all eventually packaged

⁴⁴ 'Attack of the Yakuza', *The Internet Movie Database (IMDb)*, accessed 17/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1189432/>; 'Broken Fist', 4Digital Media website, accessed 17/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/162>.

⁴⁵ 'Koichi Sakamoto', *IMDb*, accessed 17/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0757084/>.

⁴⁶ 'The Red Canvas', *IMDb*, accessed 17/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1121986/>; 'Submission', 4Digital Media website, accessed 17/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/218>.

⁴⁷ 'George Takei', *IMDb*, accessed 17/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001786/>.

⁴⁸ 'Best of the Best', 4Digital Media website, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/21>.

into a box-set.⁴⁹ Similar films were then acquired by 4Digital Media soon after, such as *Bloodfist* (dir. Terence H. Winkless, 1989).⁵⁰ As with 4Digital Asia, the parent label's releases also seem to specialise only in fictional feature films. But the martial arts traits of some of their DVDs also highlight the label's discs that contain non-fictional media. For example, in 2010, 4Digital Media released a television documentary entitled *Bruce Lee: The Immortal Dragon* (dir. Jude Gerard Prest, 1994).⁵¹ This DVD is categorised as special interest, as are other discs that document sporting events (for example, *Grand Prix: The Golden Years*) and the lifestyles of internationally recognised celebrities (such as *Kylie: Evolution of a Pop Princess*).⁵² The special interest discs also illustrate how 4Digital Media does not just use DVD special features to distinguish its fictional film releases. The *Bruce Lee*, *Grand Prix* and *Kylie* DVDs each contain a variety of extra features, such as interviews and making-ofs, showing how this material was not unique to the 4Digital Asia releases.

Further evidence of the similar distribution practices that 4Digital Media uses for its DVD releases is found on the label's YouTube channel. Though this channel was only formed in 2010, it has had almost all of the trailers for the disc releases from 4Digital Media uploaded to it. Here, all the 4Digital Asia trailers can be selected, alongside the parent label's English-language films (including its earliest releases, such as *Best of the Best*), as well as non-fictional media (as highlighted by the trailers for the *Bruce Lee* and *Kylie* DVDs).⁵³ The trailers are also visible on the 4Digital Media webpages, but the YouTube channel allows for interactions from viewers through the options of 'like' and 'dislike' buttons, as well as

⁴⁹ 'Best of the Best Box Set', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/23>.

⁵⁰ 'Bloodfist', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/13>.

⁵¹ 'Bruce Lee: The Immortal Dragon', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/131>.

⁵² 'Grand Prix: The Golden Years', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/101>; 'Kylie: Evolution of a Pop Princess', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/search>.

⁵³ '4Digital Media', *YouTube*, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.youtube.com/user/4DigitalMedia/videos>.

comments sections. Furthermore, the number of views for each trailer is displayed on the page that lists all of the channel's videos.⁵⁴ Each trailer ranges from hundreds to thousands of views, suggesting that this relatively recent venture for 4Digital Media has met with varied success, despite providing an additional online source for the promotion of its releases. However, though the label has a varied catalogue of films, 4Digital Media has consistently focused on films containing particular generic elements and star personae within its distribution activities. The YouTube channel helps to illustrate this fact, as some of the trailers' viewing figures also correlate with how the films were promoted through other digital sources.

In 2011, 4Digital Media started its own Facebook page.⁵⁵ This provides a comparison to Andrew Kirkham's later activities in relation Cine Du Monde, although 4Digital Media does not have its own official Twitter feed as well, and its Facebook posts are very infrequent. Since 2011, there have been a total of 13 posts by the label on its own Facebook page, whereas Cine Du Monde has the same number of posts on certain dates, such as times when its films were available for digital streaming at a reduced price (for example, in April 2013).⁵⁶ This perhaps suggests that Kirkham has been more successful in utilising social media for his distribution practices, but the films mentioned in the posts on the 4Digital Media Facebook page usually have their YouTube videos viewed between one thousand to ten thousand times (if not more). For example, the most recent DVD release mentioned in a 4Digital Media Facebook post was *Night of the Living Dead: Resurrection* (dir. James Plumb, 2012), and the film's trailer received more than 16,000 views on the label's YouTube

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ '4Digital Media', *Facebook*, accessed 18/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/4Digital-Media/254267047942697>.

⁵⁶ 'Cine Du Monde', *Facebook*, *op. cit.*

channel.⁵⁷ Furthermore, this film's title clearly signifies the genre of horror, linking it to another post which helps to indicate why a film of this type has a trailer which has received a high number of views.

One of 4Digital Media's first Facebook posts in October 2011 contained a link to an article on the website for the trade publication, *Variety*. The article announced that 4Digital Media had signed a deal with a British film production company, Black and Blue, to exclusively distribute its films, which are noted for being predominantly horrors, comedies and crime films.⁵⁸ The label has obviously found success with these types of films. However, 4Digital Media does not strictly keep to these genre categorisations alone, and is happy to distribute films that mix together these various generic elements. For example, in the label's mission statement on its website, several titles are mentioned as some of its more popular releases.⁵⁹ One title from 2011, *Thugs, Mugs and Dogs* (originally titled *Six Bend Trap* – dir. Mike McCarthy, 2007), is highlighted as a crime comedy on the 4Digital Media webpage, while also emphasising its violent content through the image of a bloody hockey stick on the DVD cover.⁶⁰ Similar gruesome elements were also the focal points of webpages and reviews for many of 4Digital Asia's releases, such as *Tokyo Gore Police* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008) and *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009). 4Digital Media's actions therefore illustrate that there is a demand for films with bloody and violent content within the UK, despite the fact that it no longer releases Asian films containing these elements. While this is one potential influence on 4Digital

⁵⁷ '4Digital Media – 14 May', *Facebook*, accessed 18/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/4Digital-Media/254267047942697>.

⁵⁸ Lodderhose, *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ '4Digital Media is one of the UK's leading truly independent DVD distributors with an eclectic, cutting edge feature film catalogue that delivers great value, extraordinary home entertainment. Recent hits include two high concept British gangster films; *Triads, Yardies & Onion Bhajees* and *Thugs, Mugs and Dogs*, the art house phenomenon *INK* and the hugely popular *Big Fat Gypsy Gangster*' – '4DM/Contact Us', 4Digital Media website, accessed 19/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/contact>.

⁶⁰ 'Six Bend Trap', *IMDb*, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0482600/>; 'Thugs, Mugs, and Dogs', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 18/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/140>.

Media's post-2010 releases, the label has also taken other directions in what it chooses to emphasise within the distribution materials for its DVD releases.

Thugs, Mugs and Dogs again helps to illustrate these further directions, as Dave Courtney is highlighted as its central star. This is consistently evident within both the film's trailer and its synopsis on the DVD packaging, both of which can be seen on the 4Digital Media website.⁶¹ Furthermore, Courtney continues to be emphasised as a prolific star persona across other releases from the label, such as *Triads, Yardies and Onion Bhajees* (dir. Sarjit Bains, 2003 – 4Digital Media DVD, 2010), *Hell To Pay* (dir. Roberto Gomez Martin, 2005 – 4Digital Media, 2010), and the documentary compilation *London Gangsters* (4Digital Media, 2010).⁶² The synopsis for the latter DVD partly explains his potential appeal. Courtney is listed alongside Joe Pyle, Tony Lambrianou and Freddie Foreman as being former members of powerful criminal gangs in the UK, and the *London Gangsters* documentaries are interviews that detail their experiences.⁶³ As the other fictional titles show, Courtney has used his background to become involved in film acting, mostly for roles that require him to play criminal figures. Taken altogether, these releases featuring Courtney can be seen as efforts by 4Digital Media to appeal to both audiences for the fictional crime film genre, and those with an interest in the history of crime in the UK.

While 4Digital Asia did not use a particular Japanese star persona in a similar fashion, actors were sometimes used to help promote particular titles. The closest comparison is again provided by *Tokyo Gore Police*, whose lead actress Shiina Eihi was named in conjunction with her earlier role in the film *Audition* (dir. Miike Takashi, 1999). The film was one of the

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² 'Triads, Yardies and Onion Bhajees', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/109>; 'Hell To Pay', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/117>; 'London Gangsters', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/116>.

⁶³ 'London Gangsters', *op. cit.*

earliest releases from the UK Tartan Asia Extreme label, indicating one audience that 4Digital Asia aimed for with the release of *Tokyo Gore Police*.⁶⁴ This information is strongly emphasised in the trailer and DVD cover synopsis, as well as on the film's 4Digital Asia webpage.⁶⁵ However, it is not similarly featured in the materials produced for *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl*, which also stars Shiina.⁶⁶ Instead, the recurring name of Nishimura Yoshihiro, who directed both of the films, is given more attention. This is also the case with the *20th Century Boys* films (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008-2009). The DVD cover for the first film features the lead actors' names, whereas the trilogy cover does not include them, and the director's name is the only one repeated across both releases' packaging, trailers and webpages.⁶⁷ As Andrew Kirkham worked on the distribution for all of the 4Digital Asia DVDs, it could be argued that this tendency was a result of his influence, in addition to the continuing trend of discussing and promoting Japanese films primarily through the figure of the director.⁶⁸ In any case, the divergent emphasis of star personae helps to chart the different directions 4Digital Media's DVD releases have taken since 2010, as the use of stars is not only illustrated through Dave Courtney.

Billy Zane is perhaps most noted for his acting roles in *Titanic* (dir. James Cameron, 1997) and *Back to the Future* (Parts 1 and 2 – dir. Robert Zemeckis, 1985 and 1989).⁶⁹ However, these earlier roles are not referred to for the DVD releases of *Journey to Prometheus* (dir. Dan Garcia, 2010) and *The Secret Enemy* (originally titled *Enemies Among Us* – dir.

⁶⁴ Shin, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ 'Tokyo Gore Police', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/104>.

⁶⁶ 'Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue/120>.

⁶⁷ '20th Century Boys – Chapter 1: Beginning of the End', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/dvd-20thcenturyb.html>; '20th Century Boys Trilogy – The Complete Saga', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/130>.

⁶⁸ Oliver Dew, '“Asia Extreme”: Japanese cinema and British hype' (53-73), *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 5:1 (2007), 69-70; Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer, 'Introduction', in A. Phillips and J. Stringer (eds), *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp.1-24.

⁶⁹ 'Billy Zane', *IMDb*, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000708/>.

Dan Garcia, 2010) – which were respectively released in the UK in 2011 and 2012. Zane is used as a star persona that will instantly attract consumers to these 4Digital Media DVD releases, and help draw attention to particular generic elements of these films. This use of star personas and their multiple connotations within the DVD cover images correlates with evidence found in Chapter One, which was found to support the claims of both Jeremy G. Butler and Richard Dyer.⁷⁰ In *Journey to Promethea*, Zane plays the role of King Laypach, the villain in the medieval fantasy story, despite being pictured with a sword and shield and being the only star named on the DVD cover (as seen on the film's webpage).⁷¹ Similarly, in *The Secret Enemy*, Zane plays a supporting character while the lead actor (James Dumont) is not even named on the DVD packaging.⁷² Zane's image is foregrounded above other aspects within the DVD cover, while he holds a pair of guns, to emphasise the action elements of the political conspiracy story. Zane's profile not only draws attention to these generic characteristics, but also distinguishes these DVDs from 4Digital Media's other releases. His facial image can easily be identified from the smaller images of the discs' packaging in 4Digital Media's online catalogue, as well as on the label's Facebook page.⁷³ Images of most of the distributor's DVD covers are contained within the 4Digital Media Facebook gallery, and Zane's is one of the most repeated star images, alongside Dave Courtney. Therefore, while 4Digital Media has released films that range from medieval fantasy to action since 2010, it has also tried to keep other potentially appealing aspects constant, such as distinctly recognisable stars.

⁷⁰ Jeremy G. Butler, 'The star system and Hollywood', in Hill, J and Gibson, P.C (eds), *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.342-53; Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1998), pp.60-3.

⁷¹ 'Journey to Promethea', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/150>.

⁷² 'The Secret Enemy', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/168>.

⁷³ 'Catalogue: View All', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue>; '4Digital Media: Photos', *Facebook*, accessed 24/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/4Digital-Media/254267047942697?id=254267047942697&sk=photos>.

Certain stars are also the primary focus in another repeated DVD cover image, in both 4Digital Media's online catalogue and its Facebook gallery. The picture on the front of the packaging for the disc of *The Numbers Station* (dir. Kasper Barfoed, 2013) is shown twice on both websites, and each image is almost identical.⁷⁴ They both show the lead actors, John Cusack and Malin Akermann, standing next to each other while holding guns, and their names and the film's title is displayed beneath them. As with Zane's image, the picture of the stars with guns help emphasise their casting in the film, as well as the genre of the film, which is categorised as 'Thriller/Action'.⁷⁵ But the difference between the images is highlighted by the formats for the release. *The Numbers Station* is the only 4Digital Media DVD that is also available on Blu-Ray, since the 4Digital Asia release of the first two *Death Note* films (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006).⁷⁶ While it is yet to be seen if this will lead to more Blu-Ray releases from the label, this signifies a change in direction concerning formats for 4Digital Media's titles, while also maintaining its emphasis of stars and genres.

Therefore, 4Digital Media has taken both comparable and divergent approaches to its DVD distribution practices, when considered alongside Andrew Kirkham's activities after 2010. Within the label's distribution material, the stars in the films are often given greater emphasis than the directors, but genre is also given equal attention. Some genres have continued to be included in 4Digital Media's catalogue, which were also included in 4Digital Asia's releases, such as horrors and thrillers. But the parent label has also increased its appeal through catering to interests in other genres, such as action, crime and fantasy, as well as

⁷⁴ 'Catalogue: Thriller (Page 2)', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/genre/11/10>; '4Digital Media: Photos', *op. cit.*

⁷⁵ 'The Numbers Station', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/214>.

⁷⁶ 'The Numbers Station (Blu-Ray)', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/215>; 'Death Note 1&2 [Blu-Ray]', 4Digital Media website, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/133>; 'Death Note 1 & 2 [Blu-Ray]', Amazon.co.uk, accessed 24/06/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Death-Note-Vol-Blu-ray-DVD/dp/B003NEQ6ZS/>.

documentaries. This combination of strategies shows that 4Digital Media is maintaining its following established from its earliest releases, and those from 4Digital Asia, while also attempting to broaden its titles' appeal within the UK market. In contrast to the online digital market, though, it appears that 4Digital Media is more concerned with pursuing audiences for both Blu-Rays and DVDs. However, Third Window is also pursuing both these formats, while increasing its titles' availability through online rental websites. 4Digital Media has continued to release a large number of titles, and appeal to many preferences within the UK consumer market, whereas Third Window has instead diversified the means by which it can appeal to the market for Japanese films within the UK.

Third Window: Increasingly Visible Through Distribution Practices

Third Window's post-2010 distribution activities share similarities with both Andrew Kirkham's and 4Digital Media's recent practices, but also reveal several contrasts. Third Window has focused on releasing recent works of specific Japanese directors. The filmmakers' broad range of work has also meant that the distributor has released titles that cover a range of genres. Furthermore, Third Window has distinguished its range of films by adopting both the Blu-Ray format and online streaming services. However, the distributor has continued to release predominantly DVDs of Japanese films after 2010, and develop its online social media presence as an additional means of promotion (that does not repeat the content on its official website). As a result, Third Window has essentially increased the means by which it can interact and converse with UK audiences, and distribute its releases, which helps to distinguish the label beyond the films' titles and contents. As will be demonstrated, these further practices have been influenced by its activities from 2008 to

2010, and means that the label can offer significantly more to UK audiences than just the content of the films on its DVDs.

Illustrative evidence for Third Window's most recent activities can be found within a newsletter sent out at the end of 2011. Monthly email newsletters from the DVD label had already been sent out during the previous two years, and the December 2011 email summarises most of the distributor's activities up to that point.⁷⁷ This is because of very specific reasons, which the email details:

2011 was a strange year for Third Window Films. We started with our strongest year to date, with the successful releases of such big films as 'Confessions' and 'Cold Fish' together with hits of smaller films like 'Confessions of a Dog' and 'Sawako Decides' plus our foray into the blu-ray [*sic*] market with titles like 'Memories of Matsuko' and 'Kamikaze Girls' released in high definition alongside newer titles like 'Confessions' and 'Cold Fish'. We also started our first film festival, the East Winds Film Festival along with the CUEAFS at Coventry University, which was a huge success and we will continue next year with bigger films and talent coming over.

It was all going so great, with the 2nd part of 2011 bringing an even wider selection of Japanese titles, from the multiple award-winning 'Villain' to the small, but very unique titles such as the Christopher Doyle-shot pink-musical 'Underwater Love' and the omnibus film 'Quirky Guys and Gals'. We were very much thinking of how much more we could expand until...

Some idiots decided to burn down the Sony warehouse containing all the stock of ours and other similar sized independent film and music distribution companies.

To be honest, after that it really did look like it was over for us. We lost around 20,000 dvds [*sic*] in the fire, and it took nearly 3 months to recover them, during which time we lost a massive share of sales and saw the market for film distribution in the UK crippled with retailers like HMV showing record losses and barely placing any orders for films.

Personally, I thought strongly about closing Third Window Films down, but we received so many great messages from all our customers and thought "why give it all up after taking so many years to get to this position?". With that we've decided to keep on going, and going even stronger by attempting to expand and pick up bigger and better films and make sure that Japanese cinema is represented better in the UK than any other country in the West!

A big thanks to all of you that have supported us through these tough times. Without you, Third Window Films and Japanese cinema in the UK would be nothing, so I'd personally like to thank everyone who supported us in any way!!

⁷⁷ The Third Window monthly newsletters are all numbered, as shown with No.12, which was sent out in January 2011. This demonstrates that the first email was sent in late 2009/early 2010 – Adam Torel, adam@thirdwindowfilms.com, 'Third Window Films Newsletter 12', sent to Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers, on Sunday 09/01/2011, at 11:31. A copy can be viewed in Appendix Three.

Let's make 2012 even better for Japanese cinema in the UK!!

- Adam Torel, Managing Director.⁷⁸

In this email message, many of the distributor's activities are listed. The titles mentioned highlight the variety of directors and genres that Third Window's releases covered throughout 2011, which also illustrate the label's continuing focus on Japanese cinema.⁷⁹ After 2010, the label's only non-Japanese film release has – so far – been *Vulgaria* (dir. Ho-Cheung Pang, 2012) in April 2013.⁸⁰ All the films listed in the quoted extract are Japanese. *Kamikaze Girls* (2004), *Memories of Matsuko* (2006) and *Confessions* (2010) are all directed by Nakashima Tetsuya, and are respectively categorised as a comedy, a musical, and a drama.⁸¹ *Cold Fish* (2010) was also the latest release from director Sono Sion, following Third Window's release of his last film, *Love Exposure* (2008). All five of these films also received Blu-Ray releases. The announcement of the latest titles in this format, *Cold Fish* and *Confessions*, then allude to the success of *Kamikaze Girls*, *Memories of Matsuko* and *Love Exposure* on Blu-Ray. However, the latter part of the email message highlights reasons why Third Window changed some of its distribution practices after 2011.

The Sony distribution warehouse in Enfield was one of the largest distribution centres of media discs in the UK. In August 2011, it was one of the buildings burnt down because of fires started during the London Riots. Not only were DVD distribution companies affected,

⁷⁸ Adam Torel, adam@thirdwindowfilms.com, 'Happy Holidays From Third Window Films', sent to Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers, on Saturday 24/12/2011, at 11:23. A copy can be viewed in Appendix Three.

⁷⁹ Third Window began releasing Korean films when the label was launched in 2007, and a few were released from 2008 to 2010. However, the majority of titles released in these years were Japanese, as are the majority of that have been released since then – 'Films', *Third Window* website, accessed 25/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films>.

⁸⁰ 'Vulgaria', *Third Window* website, accessed 25/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/vulgaria>.

⁸¹ 'Kamikaze Girls', *Third Window* website, accessed 25/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/kamikaze-girls>; 'Memories of Matsuko', *Third Window* website, accessed 25/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/memories-of-matsuko>; 'Confessions', *Third Window* website, accessed 25/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/confessions>.

but also independent record labels.⁸² The loss meant that many companies lost all, if not most of their physical stock, which represented their primary sources of revenue. Third Window was one of the companies affected most, as Adam Torel explains in the December 2011 newsletter. He had also fully explained the immediate impact of the situation in the two newsletters that followed straight after the date of the fire, alongside a further message which detailed rescheduled dates for their latest releases – *Sawako Decides* (dir. Ishii Yuya, 2010) and *Quirky Guys and Gals* (dir. Fujita Yosuke, Sekiguchi Gen, Mipo O, Matsunashi Tomoko, 2011).⁸³ These messages explained Torel’s intentions to keep distributing Japanese films in the UK, and also signified an increased effort to be open and honest with the audience for its releases. Torel explains that the support and messages received from viewers of their DVDs has helped the company to keep going, as well as the purchase and pre-order of future disc releases. This has led to the development of new means of distributing the label’s titles, especially through online media and social networking websites. Many of these actions have their roots in Third Window’s practices implemented during 2008 to 2010.

For example, Chapter Four discussed the distributors’ webpages, and Third Window was noted for being active on the social media webpages of Facebook and Twitter since 2009. After 2010, the range of posts the label placed on these sites greatly increased beyond links to reviews and retail outlets. As a result, the dialogue between Third Window and its DVDs’ viewers also increased, meaning that the audience now has a growing influence on

⁸² Henry Barnes, ‘British film distributors left reeling by financial impact of Sony/PIAS warehouse fire’ (9/08/2011), *The Guardian* website, accessed 25/06/2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/aug/09/british-film-distributors-warehouse-fire>; Casper Llewellyn Smith, ‘Independent record labels fear ruinous stock loss in London riots fire’ (9/08/2011), *The Guardian* website, accessed 25/06/2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/aug/09/independent-record-labels-stock-london-riots>.

⁸³ Adam Torel, adam@thirdwindowfilms.com, ‘Third Window Films Newsletter 18: UK Riots, Villain, Support TWF!’, sent to Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers, on Saturday 13/08/2011, at 9:28; Adam Torel, adam@thirdwindowfilms.com, ‘Third Window Films Newsletter 19: Sawako Decides, Quirky Guys and Gals, Underwater Love’, sent to Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers, on Saturday 01/10/2011, at 9:28; Adam Torel, adam@thirdwindowfilms.com, ‘Third Window Films: Release Date Changes!’, sent to Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers, on Friday 07/10/2011, at 20:29. Copies can be viewed in Appendix Three.

some of the distributors' practices. Indications of this shift are found in July 2012, when the distributor posted a question on both its Twitter and Facebook pages: 'What are some Japanese films (old & new) that people here would like to see on DVD in the UK?'⁸⁴ In the responses to this question, on the Facebook feed, Miike Takashi was regularly mentioned as a director whose films were of particular interest. While it may not be a direct reaction to this interest, Third Window Films did release one of Miike's most recent films, *For Love's Sake* (2012), less than a year later.⁸⁵ There have since been no similar signs of the distributor asking its viewers for release suggestions, though its future releases have been often been indicated in other Facebook posts. For instance, in December 2012, both *See You Tomorrow, Everyone* (dir. Nakamura Yoshihiro, 2012) and *The Story of Yonosuke* (dir. Okita Shuichi, 2012) were listed as some of Third Window's favourite films of the year.⁸⁶ Several months later, their future release by the label was then announced, in addition to the film's trailers being posted on the distributor's YouTube channel.⁸⁷ Evidently, Third Window has expanded on the use of webpages to highlight its distribution practices, in comparison to the findings from Chapter Four.

The discussion of films and audience interests demonstrate some of the recurring topics on Third Window's social media sites, though there are also image selections which give the viewers influence over certain aspects of the labels' DVD releases. In August 2012, four pictures were posted to the distributor's Facebook page, alongside a request for

⁸⁴ 'Third Window Films – 12 July 2012', *Facebook*, accessed 26/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/thirdwindowfilms>; 'Third Window Films – 12 July 2012', *Twitter*, accessed 26/06/2013, <https://twitter.com/thirdwindow>.

⁸⁵ The film was released on 10/06/2013 – 'For Love's Sake', *Third Window* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/for-love039s-sake>.

⁸⁶ 'Third Window Films – 17 December 2012', *Facebook*, accessed 26/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/thirdwindowfilms>.

⁸⁷ 'See You Tomorrow Everyone', *Third Window* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/see-you-tomorrow-everyone>; 'The Story of Yonosuke', *Third Window* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/the-story-of-yonosuke>; 'Third Window Films: Videos', *YouTube*, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://www.youtube.com/user/thirdwindowfilms/videos>.

followers to 'like' which image they preferred.⁸⁸ The image choices displayed were for the DVD packaging for the label's next release, *Kotoko* (dir. Tsukamoto Shinya, 2011). These followed similar posts earlier in the month for the packaging of the director's earlier films, *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989) and *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer* (1992), both of which Third Window later re-released. This recurrence suggests that the distributor provided this choice for its Facebook followers for this particular director, but Third Window has continued to give its viewers a similar vote for later releases. In May 2013, a selection of cover images was also provided for *The Land of Hope* (dir. Sono Sion, 2012) and *Eyes of the Spider/Serpent's Path* (Kurosawa Kiyoshi, 1998). Both were accompanied by a prompt for the page's followers to 'like' their favourite image. The continuation of the viewers' vote for the films' DVD packaging suggests that Third Window is trying to increase its followers' involvement with its distribution practices, in order to both gain and maintain an audience for its releases. These actions parallel recent trends (such as Kickstarter) that instigate film production by encouraging public involvement (mainly by donations towards the funds needed).⁸⁹

The DVD releases of the *Tetsuo* films and *Eyes of the Spider/Serpent's Path* also signify other directions that Third Window has recently taken in regard to its film releases. In the distributor's mission statement, displayed on its website, it is expressed that they intend to bring to the UK 'the finest works in new Far Eastern cinema.'⁹⁰ The label has mostly adhered to this aim, as many of its DVDs contain films released not long after their theatrical run in their native countries. However, the two *Tetsuo* films and *Eyes of the Spider/Serpent's Path* represent a departure from the label's statement, because of their original release dates (1989,

⁸⁸ 'Third Window Films – 11 August 2012', *Facebook*, accessed 26/06/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/thirdwindowfilms>.

⁸⁹ Chelsea McCracken, 'The Future of Media Production?', *Antenna* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://blog.commarks.wisc.edu/2013/04/03/the-future-of-media-production/>.

⁹⁰ 'About', *Third Window* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/about>.

1992 and 1998, respectively). The *Tetsuo* films had already been released in the UK by Tartan Asia Extreme, where Third Window's Adam Torel had in fact worked for a year.⁹¹ While the double-bill of *Eyes of the Spider/Serpent's Path* has not been released in the UK before, later films in director Kurosawa's career are already available to UK audiences, such as *Doppelganger* (2003) and *Pulse* (2001) (from Tartan Asia Extreme and StudioCanal, respectively).⁹² Though it is maintaining its specialism in Asian cinema, Third Window is evidently willing to broaden the range of its releases to include those which are older, but still likely to warrant interest from UK audiences. Its release of the *Tetsuo* films also shows that it is willing to appeal to the continuing demand for Asia Extreme films, as have other distributors. This is in contrast to the financial collapse of the Tartan label,⁹³ and Third Window's intention to release films that are not 'shock horror vehicles from the Far East.'⁹⁴ *NEO* magazine particularly sees the label's release of *Kotoko* as indicative of this aim, as it recommends several other Tsukamoto films (originally released by Tartan) to UK viewers, as part of its review of *Kotoko*.⁹⁵ In essence, Third Window sees it as increasingly necessary to diversify both its catalogue and practices in order to stay prolific in the UK.

The label's most recent activities have also not centred entirely on their DVDs. Third Window has constantly promoted the presence of its films on online rental streaming sites,

⁹¹ 'Tetsuo: The Iron Man', *Palisades Tartan* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://www.palisadestartan.com/Film.asp?ProjectID=%7B32DA37BF-7FBD-4C43-99B8-CC3E0515863F%7D>; J Hurtado, 'Video Home Invasion: Third Window Films Introduction' (Dec 2010), *Twitch* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://twitchfilm.com/2010/12/video-home-invasion-third-window-films-introduction.html>

⁹² 'Doppelganger [DVD]', *Amazon.co.uk*, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Doppelganger-DVD-Region-US-NTSC/dp/B0006Q946Y/>; 'Pulse', *StudioCanal* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://www.studiocanal.co.uk/Film/Details/f28d8579-e99e-4d8b-a846-9e8b00462777>.

⁹³ Daniel Martin, *Asia extreme: the marketing and critical reception of cult Asian cinema in the UK*, PhD Thesis (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2009), pp.250-8.

⁹⁴ 'About', *Third Window* website, *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ Calum Waddell recommends the two *Tetsuo* films, and both *Tokyo Fist* (dir. Tsukamoto Shinya, 1995) and *Vital* (dir. Tsukamoto Shinya, 1995), as part of his *Kotoko* review - Waddell, 'Kotoko', *NEO*, No.101 (September 2012), 82-3.

such as MUBI, especially since 2011.⁹⁶ After explaining the impact of the London Riots in the August 2011 newsletter, Torel included the following sentences on the availability of his label's films online:

With our stock all destroyed in the Sony fire, and long delays before we can get more replicated, we have teamed up with MUBI to make many of our titles available to view online through your computer, iPhone or PS3. Not all of our titles are available yet (and some will never be due to contractual issues with internet rights), but a good chunk of the Third Window catalogue is there for you to watch and tell your friends about. You can find a list of all our titles available to buy and watch at: <http://mubi.com/distributors/167>.⁹⁷

While comparable to Cine Du Monde's recent efforts on the Dailymotion website, Torel is honest about the fact that all of Third Window's titles cannot be made available through this online streaming service. Some of the reasons are mentioned as being out of the company's hands, but taken with other steps that Third Window has implemented, the distributor's actions represent a careful approach to maintaining their position within the UK market.

For example, Third Window has been able to make more of their recent titles available through various formats and events. The December 2011 newsletter also mentions the company's success of the Blu-Ray releases for some films. This has since increased, as almost all of the distributor's 2013 releases are also available in this format.⁹⁸ But the popularity of the format has not been the only reason for this shift in distribution practices. Another major announcement was made in 2012, although only through the distributor's Facebook and Twitter posts, and was labelled as 'bad news':

...due to the resounding opening weekend failure of Himizu (and that of Villain before it), we have decided to suspend all theatrical releasing of films.

⁹⁶ 'MUBI Homepage', *MUBI* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://uk.mubi.com/films/>.

⁹⁷ Adam Torel, adam@thirdwindowfilms.com, 'Third Window Films Newsletter 18', *op. cit.*

⁹⁸ The exceptions to this so far have been *The Foreign Duck*, *The Native Duck* and *God in a Coin Locker* (dir. Nakamura Yoshihiro, 2007) and *Eyes of the Spider/Serpent's Path* – 'The Foreign Duck, The Native Duck and God in a Coin Locker', *Third Window* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/the-foreign-duck-the-native-duck-and-god-in-a-coin-locker>; 'Eyes of the Spider/Serpent's Path', *Third Window* website, accessed 26/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/eyes-of-the-spider-serpent039s-path>.

Unfortunately without being able to release films in cinemas we will not have the power to negotiate the release of any big films in the future, so will focus more on straight to DVD titles or occasional one-off's in cinemas. Unfortunately if there is no public for these films in the cinema, then there just isn't a large enough demand for them to be shown at all.⁹⁹

However, despite this negative announcement, Third Window has continued to successfully distribute and exhibit its films by diverse means. As stated already, the number of the label's films released on Blu-Ray has increased, and *Himizu* (dir. Sono Sion, 2011) was one title distributed on this format soon after the June 2012 announcement.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, while Third Window is now no longer able to finance general UK cinema releases for its films, the distributor has still maintained its presence at film festivals across the nation. A recent example is the fifth Terracotta Far East Film Festival, held in various venues across London in June 2013. Adam Torel is named as one of the staff that assisted with the programming of the schedule of films for the festival.¹⁰¹ In addition, three of Third Window's upcoming releases were shown at the London venues used for the event – *The Land of Hope*, *See You Tomorrow*, *Everyone*, and *The Story of Yonosuke*.¹⁰² As mentioned earlier, Third Window used its own webpages and social media sites to promote these future DVD releases, and the screenings have evidently been used for similar reasons.

Third Window's latest shifts in strategies illustrate an approach that now seems cautious, such as mainly focusing on Blu-Ray releases and festival screenings in order to promote its film titles. But these most recent practices also signal a diversity of approaches that the label has seen as necessary for maintaining its presence in the UK market. In

⁹⁹ 'Third Window Films – 6 June 2012', Facebook, accessed 07/07/2013, <https://www.facebook.com/thirdwindowfilms>; 'Third Window Films – 6 June 2012', Twitter, accessed 07/07/2013, <https://twitter.com/thirdwindow>.

¹⁰⁰ The film's UK DVD and Blu-Ray release date was 06/08/2012 – 'Himizu', *Third Window* website, accessed 07/07/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/himizu>.

¹⁰¹ 'Meet The Team', *Terracotta Festival* website, accessed 07/07/2013, <http://terraccotafestival.com/the-team/>.

¹⁰² 'Films: Current Asian Cinema', *Terracotta Festival* website, accessed 07/07/2013, <http://terraccotafestival.com/current-asian-cinema/>.

addition, Third Window has believed that it can achieve this by continuing to focus predominantly on Japanese films. Most of the label's recent practices have centred on increasing the means by which it can promote its DVD releases, such as through social media sites. For instance, Third Window's posts on Facebook and Twitter detail the Blu-Ray releases and screenings for its films. Communication and dialogue with the UK market, through a variety of approaches and media formats, are seen as ways of increasing and maintaining viewers' interest in its releases. Moreover, the influence of distribution practices specifically from 2008 to 2010, such as those concerning DVD packaging, websites and reviews, is prominent within Third Window's activities after 2010.

The Impact of Distinct and Visible Distribution Practices

Further analysis of the distribution practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window, after 2010, has indicated the influence that particular figures have within these companies. Andrew Kirkham is responsible for many patterns that are shared across both 4Digital Asia's and Cine Du Monde's releases. Adam Torel has been Third Window's spokesman within the majority of their newsletters, which often parallel the content of the label's social media pages. While no individual names can be identified within the later activities of 4Digital Media, the continuation of certain practices also indicates that some staff remained at the company after 4Digital Asia's final releases. Moreover, if the practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window are ultimately the result of the decisions of certain individuals, these figures can also be attributed to the diverse approaches that the labels have utilised in recent years. Therefore, the personal characteristics of Kirkham and Torel are not only likely to be responsible for how their companies have communicated with the UK market, but also for the labels' most recent

shifts in distribution strategies. However, the majority of the distribution materials produced by the labels are officially attributed to the companies, and not particular individuals.

In essence, the chapter's examples of recent practices implemented by Kirkham and Torel show that the market for Japanese films in the UK still exists, but that DVD is now not necessarily the most effective means of reaching this market. From 2008 to 2010, DVD was the focus of each individual's associated labels. However, technological developments, the availability of alternative formats, such as Blu-Ray and online streaming, and other factors (for example, the London Riots) have since affected how distributors of Japanese films operate within the UK. Looking back on 4Digital Asia and Third Window, though, the principles of their practices from 2008 to 2010 remain. The distributors still aim to give UK viewers more than an experience of a film through their DVD releases (and other media formats), whether this is through the packaging, special features, trailers or webpages. Reviews of these releases, especially in *NEO* magazine, have continued to recognise the labels' efforts. These patterns have helped make the market for Japanese films constantly visible in the UK, because of the distinctive distribution practices of 4Digital Asia, Third Window, and other labels that have followed them. Their actions have demonstrated the long-term impact that distribution has within the film industry.

Conclusion: Distinction and Visibility:
The Influence of the Distribution Practices of 4Digital Asia and Third Window

The thesis has demonstrated in what ways the DVD releases from both 4Digital Asia and Third Window, from 2008 to 2010, were greatly influenced by the companies' distribution practices. The two DVD labels both effectively made their actions visible, and therefore distinct, within the UK market. The films' status as Japanese specifically aided the distributors' actions. However, the labels' efforts to distinguish themselves as unique, through their shaping and dissemination of their DVDs and other related media, are emphasised as much as the characteristics of the films they release. The distribution materials increased the profile of the labels by explaining how their films appeal to numerous audiences within the UK market (and not just those especially interested in Japanese cinema). 4Digital Asia and Third Window applied this emphasis to each individual DVD release and their overall image as distribution companies, meaning that they are defined by their practices as well as the characteristics of their films. The materials studied within each chapter have demonstrated these traits. The conclusion will only reflect on these findings, and the importance of distribution as a research topic within film studies.

In the preceding chapters, the analysis of the distribution practices of the DVD labels led to many comparable findings. Both companies' utilised their discs' packaging to promote the characteristics of their film releases, not only in order to attribute these traits to the films, but the distributors as well. However, the experience offered by a particular film is only one element of a DVD release. The discs' special features illustrated how 4Digital Asia and Third Window both aimed to provide viewers of the discs with viewing material in addition to a specific film. Though this could be offered through making-ofs, interviews or stage greetings, one additional set of materials regularly provided on the discs (other than the films) were the

films' trailers. Even in these title-specific media texts, the promotion of the DVD labels was integrated alongside messages originally designed to promote an individual film. Furthermore, the trailers are a prolific part of the distributors' websites, which also act as evidence of material that promoted the DVD labels, the films and their discs. The webpages often confirmed means of gaining access to the films, through conveying information about the disc releases and retail outlets. In addition, they could promote the DVD releases by providing information not found elsewhere, as well as material that supplemented the contents of certain discs. Reviews of the DVD releases, within *NEO* magazine, then confirmed the significance of the distributor's actions in regard to their critical reception. Not only are the DVD labels regularly identified within the reviews, but their releases are also used to help identify the market for Asian media within the UK. Moreover, the reviews act as evidence of the fact that both 4Digital Asia and Third Window have established that a significant portion of the Asian media market's interest lies specifically in Japanese films (which was also demonstrated by the distributors' actions after 2010, detailed in Chapter Six).

It is evident that both distributors are aiming to bring a diverse range of Japanese films to the UK market. Primarily, though, the films are distinguished as DVDs released exclusively by the labels, rather than unique Japanese films. Examples of later releases from both DVD labels demonstrate this aim, and reinforce the chapters' findings. The front cover for *Kaiji* (dir. Sato Toya, 2009), released on DVD by 4Digital Asia in 2010, contains an image of some of the central characters within the film.¹ However, perhaps what are most prominent are the words, written in bold white font, at the top of the image: 'The Cast of DEATH NOTE Reunite.' The slogan refers to the fact that is the first film both Fujiwara

¹ This image can be seen in Appendix Two, as well as on the 4Digital Asia website – 'Kaiji', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 05/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/129>.

Tatsuya and Matsuyama Kenichi have starred in together since *Death Note* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006) and *Death Note: The Last Name* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006).² Both were released on DVD in the UK by 4Digital Asia in 2008.³ Therefore, the distributor is appealing to the market already established by the release of the *Death Note* DVDs two years earlier. Though this is mainly through members of the film's cast, there are further connotations attached. The *Death Note* films are heavily characterised by supernatural elements, linking them to specific Japanese film genres and *manga* adaptations, as illustrated by the synopses and genre categorisations on their 4Digital Asia DVD covers (discussed in Chapter One).⁴ Other earlier releases from the distributor have also catered to these interests, as demonstrated by the ghost-centred narrative in *Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost* (dir. Miyake Ryuta and Asato Mari, 2009). In addition, the trilogy of *20th Century Boys* films (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008-2009) are based on a popular *manga* series.⁵ The slogan for *Kaiji* therefore refers to the broad range of DVD releases that have been provided by 4Digital Asia, and not just this particular film, which in turn implies the potential appeal that this title should have in the UK market.

Third Window has exhibited similar intentions with its one and only DVD box-set release, *The Miki Satoshi Collection*. Released in February 2012, the box-set houses the individual discs and cases for *Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers* (2005), *Adrift in Tokyo*

² 'Death Note', *IMDb*, accessed 05/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0758742/>; 'Death Note: The Last Name', *IMDb*, accessed 05/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0810827/>; 'Kaiji: The Ultimate Gambler', *IMDb*, accessed 05/06/2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1309449/>.

³ See Appendix One.

⁴ The genre categories for both *Death Note* films are referred to as 'supernatural', and the synopses explain that the film's narrative is taken from a *manga* - rear of the DVD cover of *Death Note*, released by 4Digital Asia on 28/07/2008; rear of the DVD cover of *Death Note: The Last Name*, released by 4Digital Asia on 13/10/2008.

⁵ 'Ju-On: White Ghost and Ju-On: Black Ghost', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 05/06/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/110>; '20th Century Boys Trilogy – The Complete Saga', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 05/06/2013,

(2007) and *Instant Swamp* (2009) – all of which are directed by Miki Satoshi.⁶ This coincided with the release of *Adrift In Tokyo*, which was released individually in February 2012, as the other two films had been released by Third Window in 2009 and 2010, respectively.⁷ The box-set therefore signifies the market that the distributor has established through its releases, especially through the work of one particular director. All these films are categorised as comedies, in addition to the fact that they are written and directed by the same filmmaker.⁸ Therefore, Third Window is demonstrating the market that exists specifically for its DVD releases. It has repackaged these particular films, and illustrated that there is a demand for the works of director Miki, as well as Japanese comedy, within the UK. As with *Kaiji*, the box-set highlights the wide range of releases that Third Window has to offer, as well as the broad appeal its films potentially have within the UK market. However, both these releases also highlight the different fortunes that each label has faced in maintaining their distribution practices for DVDs of Japanese films. *Kaiji* was one of 4Digital Asia's last releases in 2010, whereas Third Window has continued to release mostly Japanese films.⁹

Nonetheless, it is not entirely accurate to state that 4Digital Asia failed to maintain a market for its Japanese films following 2010, whereas Third Window did. Many different factors affected both distributors' actions after 2010, and their distribution practices during 2008 to 2010 were highly influential on how they adapted to their changing situations, as found in Chapter Six. In addition, what is significant is that all the labels maintained their distinctions as individual companies, despite their varied continuing actions. This helps to

⁶ 'Miki Satoshi Collection [DVD]', *Amazon UK*, accessed 06/06/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Miki-Satoshi-Collection-DVD-Odagiri/dp/B006MJDPAU/>.

⁷ Appendix One confirms these release dates, as do the Third Window webpages – 'Films', *Third Window* website, accessed 06/06/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films>.

⁸ 'Films', *Third Window* website, *op. cit.*

⁹ Since 2010 to 2013, Third Window's only non-Japanese film release was a comedy from Hong Kong, entitled *Vulgaria* (dir. Ho-Cheung Pang, 2012), released on DVD in April 2013.

further establish the importance of the thesis' findings and what can be revealed by researching distribution within the field of film studies.

In the thesis' introduction, two quotes were placed at the very beginning – respectively, these were from the writers Julia Knight and Peter Thomas, and Ramon Lobato:

It is widely recognised by those working in the film and video sector that distribution is the vital link which connects producers to audiences throughout the whole sector, from the commercial film industry to grassroots community initiatives. But to those outside the sector, that link is largely invisible...¹⁰

Distribution plays a crucial role in film culture – it determines what films we see, and when and how we see them; and it also determines what films we do *not* see.¹¹

These quotes were used to highlight the importance of distribution within the film industry, but they are actually conflicting views. Knight and Thomas see distribution as being perceived as 'invisible', whereas Lobato implies that processes of distribution are visible because of its importance. In further contrast, the thesis' findings demonstrate how making distribution practices distinct and visible are of benefit to DVD labels. In addition to the thesis findings, distributors are also continuing to attend public events where they can meet consumers (as explained in the introduction, with reference to the MCM Expo). The increasing visibility of distributors and their actions suggests that what now most concerns these companies, media producers and audiences is how media texts (such as Japanese films) reach markets (such as the UK). This is evident from analysis of the materials produced by distribution labels, but further research is necessary to see if these conclusions can be supported (for example, does this concern media producers as well, and their audiences? Also, how much do they care?).

¹⁰ Julia Knight and Peter Thomas, *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), p.13.

¹¹ Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* (London: BFI, 2012), p.2.

The thesis' conclusions, and suggested avenues for further research, have been made evident by applying multiple analytical methods to sources that have illustrated the DVD distributors' practices. Discourses can shape environments in which films are viewed, and are generated by distribution companies, as demonstrated by DVDs of films releases in the UK.¹² However, the material that contains this evidence is not only substantial, but varied in its types. Therefore, it was necessary to adopt the approach of Thomas Austin, who describes the ancillary promotional material linked to a film as satellite texts.¹³ Such a term implies that the film is the central text, whereas the materials and practices linked to 4Digital Asia and Third Window primarily concern DVD releases. Applying the satellite texts concept to these sources – DVD packaging, special features, trailers, websites and reviews – has highlighted how the elements of the films' disc releases are emphasised as much as the characteristics of the films. Therefore, the significance of distribution practices, and the effect they can have on film reception, is evident. Even if a Japanese film has a unique set of characteristics, its treatment on a DVD, or other media format, can greatly influence how it is potentially received in a particular market, such as the UK. The satellite texts' approach has also illustrated the range of distribution practices and materials that can be examined. Through this methodology, each source has been studied in-depth, which will hopefully encourage the future analysis of the influence of particular materials, if their use within film distribution continues and develops (whether they are examples of packaging, special features, trailers, websites or reviews).

Furthermore, as a result of charting the activities of the distributors, a historical study of their practices from 2008 to 2010 has essentially been undertaken. It has examined how the distribution of the DVD releases of 4Digital Asia and Third Window effectively met the

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Thomas Austin, *Hollywood, Hype and Audiences: Selling and Watching Popular Film in the 1990s* (Manchester University Press, 2002), p.30.

demands of the UK market for Japanese films in a specific time period. Though the UK market for these films may now be changing, in terms of how viewers wish to gain access to Japanese cinema, how the distributors distinguish their releases remains paramount. The thesis has conveyed how 4Digital Asia and Third Window managed this for their DVD releases, and developments after 2010 show the influence of these practices. However, their actions demonstrate only a possible outcome for distributors within the UK market, and not a guaranteed certainty. The earlier history of the Tartan label has been frequently referred to, and though the company is now owned by Palisades, its DVD releases are much more infrequent than they used to be. Similarly, at the end of 2012, another DVD distributor, Cine-Asia, went into administration. It had released a huge range of films from Asian countries, both older and newer, but evidently its number of titles could not sustain its position within the UK market.¹⁴ Tartan had also released a large number of films from a variety of Asian countries. In contrast, 4Digital Asia and Third Window released predominantly Japanese films. This gives further credence to the fact that the distribution of the DVD releases is as influential to the DVDs' success in the UK as the characteristics and content of the films. Furthermore, the UK market for Japanese cinema is perhaps best catered to through specialist disc media and other emerging formats; which would be in contrast to other Japanese titles existing as part of a distributors' catalogue of a wide range of films from a variety of countries.

Subsequent studies could therefore investigate whether or not different types of cinema (for example, specific genres, or those from different countries) also benefit from distribution practices comparable to 4Digital Asia and Third Window. Similarly, other labels could be analysed, specifically in regard to their history, or focusing on certain successes and

¹⁴ 'Showbox Media Group Go Into Administration' (29/11/2012), *Far East Films* website, accessed 07/07/2013, <http://www.fareastfilms.com/newsPage/Showbox-Media-Group-Go-Into-Administration-4305.htm>; Calum Waddell, 'Cine Asia', *NEO*, No.106 (February 2013), 83.

failures, to reveal the effectiveness of their practices. Distribution is a potentially infinite area in Film Studies that has been highlighted as ripe for study because even distribution within niche areas, such as Japanese cinema, is constantly evolving. UK interests in Japanese cinema, through a particular media format, suggest that different practices and processes may be required for different contexts, such as in other countries around the world. Furthermore, the later actions of Kirkham, 4Digital Media and Torel suggest that distributors in general may move towards disseminating films through a greater variety of media formats.

Where such distribution labels have an established catalogue of releases, this study suggests that their future actions will primarily be shaped according to the treatment of their earlier titles, especially when they have already been disseminated on DVD. The influence of the DVD releases of 4Digital Asia and Third Window, from 2008 to 2010, has been confirmed through the findings in Chapter Six. While this chapter, and the others, have shown the specific influence that distributors have on UK DVD releases of Japanese films, it has also demonstrated the importance of distribution as a fundamental process within the film industry. Demonstrating its importance signifies how it is visible, and is perhaps becoming increasingly visible, through an increasingly varied range of materials that associated companies and labels produce. In comparison with filmmaking practices, film distribution is therefore similarly creative and distinctive.

Appendix One: DVD release details
Both distributors' DVD releases of Japanese films from 2008 to 2010

- 4Digital Asia
 - *Death Note* (dir. Kaneko, Shusuke, 2006) – 2 Disc Edition.
 - Released 28/07/2008.
 - 24-page booklet with character and actor profiles; director profile; Death Note rules; director's notes on getting the film made; interview with producers on the making of the film, behind the scenes' pictures from the film.
 - First disc – film (option to play in Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound or 2.0 stereo); scene selection; special features (UK trailer, *Death Note* anime trailer, 4Digital Media weblink).
 - Second disc – Making of *Death Note*; Video Production Diary; Press Conference; Trailers (Japanese theatrical, two teasers, 3 TV spots); Image Gallery.
 - *Black Kiss* (dir. Tezuka Macoto, 2004).
 - Released 22/09/2008.
 - Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (original Japanese trailer; Deleted Scenes; Mystery Behind *Black Kiss* with Director Macoto Tezka; Truth Behind *Black Kiss* with Director Macoto Tezka; Special Effects; Main Cast Interviews; 4Digital Asia trailers).
 - *Yo Yo Girl Cop* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2006).
 - Released 22/09/2008.
 - Disc options – film (option to play in 5.1 or 2.0); scene selection; special features (UK trailer; original Japanese trailer; *Yo Yo Girl Mission* – Making of; Press Conference; Premiere Press Conference; Stars Aya Matura and Yuki Saito Talk; Cast and Crew Interviews; 4Digital Asia trailers).

- *Death Note: The Last Name* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006) – 2 Disc Edition.
 - o Released 13/10/2008.
 - o 24-page booklet with character profiles; Death Note rules; Death Note trivia; stills and film poster image.
 - o First disc – film (option to play in 5.1 or 2.0); scene selection; special features (4Digital Asia trailers).
 - o Second disc – Making of *Death Note: The Last Name*; Video Production Diary; Tokyo Forum premiere; Press Conference; Japanese theatrical trailer; Japanese teaser trailer; 3 TV spots; Image Gallery.

- *Starfish Hotel* (dir. John Williams, 2006).
 - o Released 20/10/2008.
 - o Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (Making of *Starfish Hotel*; Interview with Director John Williams; Japanese trailer; 4Digital Asia trailers).

- *L Change The World* (dir. Nakata Hideo, 2008) – 2 Disc Edition.
 - o Released 29/12/2008.
 - o 24 page booklet with actor profiles, director profile and poster images.
 - o First disc – film, scene selection, and trailers (4Digital Asia releases).
 - o Second disc – *A Slice of L Change The World* – Making of; original Japanese trailers and TV spots; Interview with star Kenichi Matsuyama (L); Production Wrap Press Conference; Asia Promotion Campaign (Jump Fest 2007); Japan Gala Premiere; Opening Day Stage Greetings; Japan Tour; Image Gallery.

- *X-Cross* (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2007).
 - o Released 19/01/2009.

- Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (trailer; original Japanese trailer; Making of *X-Cross*; Deleted Scenes; Ashikari Village Special Language (tutorial); Cast Interviews; 4Digital Asia trailers).
- *Tokyo Gore Police* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008) – 2 Disc Edition.
 - Released 13/04/2009.
 - First disc – film; scene selection; 4Digital Asia trailers.
 - Second disc – Making of *Tokyo Gore Police*; Interview with Director Yoshihiro Nishimura; Interview with Eihi Shiina; Japanese Premiere; TV Adverts from the movie; original Japanese trailer; original Promo Reel; UK trailer; 4Digital Media weblink.
- *20th Century Boys (Chapter One)* (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008) – 2 Disc Edition.
 - Released 4/05/2009.
 - 24-page booklet on the making of the film, and interviews with director and *manga* creator.
 - First disc – *Chapter 1: The Beginning of The End* (film) (option to play in 5.1 or 2.0); scene selection; 4Digital Asia trailers.
 - Second disc – cast interviews; Japanese premiere; Paris premiere; Press Conference Promo; Press Conference Promo trailer; two different Japanese trailers; 5 TV spots; UK trailer; *20th Century Boys (Chapter Two)* trailer.
- *Meatball Machine* (dir. Yamaguchi Yudai and Yamamoto Junichi, 2005).
 - Released 01/06/2009.
 - Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (*Maximum Meatball Machine* – Making of; original Japanese trailer; original *Meatball Machine* Short Film (1999); *Meatball Machine: Reject of Death* Short Film; Making of *Meatball*

- Machine: Reject of Death; What About Doi?* Short Film; Necroborg Designs by Keita Amamiya; 4Digital Asia trailers).
- *Goth: Love of Death* (dir. Takahashi Gen, 2008).
 - o Released 21/09/2009.
 - o Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (original Japanese trailer; UK trailer; 4Digital Asia trailers; 4Digital Media weblink).
 - *Cyborg She* (dir. Kwak Jae-young, 2008).
 - o Released 26/10/2009.
 - o Disc options – film (option to play in 5.1 or 2.0); scene selection; special features (Making of *Cyborg She*; Making of VFX; Yubari International Fantastic Film Festival; Interviews with the Stars; Japanese Premiere; Opening Day Stage Greeting; Japanese trailers 1 and 2; TV Spot; 4Digital Media weblink).
 - *Death Note 1 and 2* – Complete 4 Disc Set.
 - o Released 26/10/2009.
 - o Same 4 discs from *Death Note* and *Death Note: The Last Name* releases.
 - o Same features on Blu-Ray 4 Disc Set – released 20/09/2010.
 - *Samurai Princess* (dir. Kengo Kaji, 2009).
 - o Released 26/10/2009.
 - o Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (Making of *Samurai Princess*; 4Digital Asia trailers; 4Digital Media weblink).
 - *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl* (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009).
 - o Released 15/03/2010.

- Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (Making of; Japanese Release Day Stage Greetings; original Japanese trailer; UK trailer; 4Digital Asia trailers; 4Digital Media weblink).
- *Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost* (dir. Miyake Ryuta and Asato Mari, 2009).
 - Released 19/04/2010.
 - Disc options – play film option for *White Ghost* and *Black Ghost*; scene selections for both; 4Digital Asia trailers (for these films and other releases - including weblink).
- *20th Century Boys* Trilogy: The Complete Saga (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiro, 2008-2009) – 4 Disc Box-set.
 - Released 31/05/2010.
 - First two discs – as in *20th Century Boys (Chapter One)* 2 Disc Edition.
 - Third disc – *Chapter 2: The Last Hope* (film); scene selection; special features (Making of *20th Century Boys* Trilogy Part 1; original Japanese trailer; Image Gallery; 4Digital Media weblink).
 - Fourth disc – *Chapter 3: The Final Chapter – Our Flag* (film); scene selection; special features (Making of *20th Century Boys* Trilogy Part 2; Alternate Ending; original Japanese trailer; Image Gallery; 4Digital Media weblink).
- *Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess* (dir. Higuchi Shinji, 2008).
 - Released 28/06/2010.
 - Disc options – film; scene selection; Play Trailers and TV Spots; 4Digital Asia trailers (including weblink).
- *Kaiji* (dir. Sato Toya, 2009).
 - Released 26/07/2010.

- Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (trailer; Making of *Kaiji*; 4Digital Asia trailers; 4Digital Media weblink).
- *Death Tube* (dir. Fukuda Yohei, 2010).
 - Released 20/09/2010.
 - Disc options – film; scene selection; special features (trailer; 4Digital Asia trailers; 4Digital Media weblink).
- Third Window Films
 - *Memories of Matsuko* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2006).
 - Released 12/01/2009.
 - Disc options – film; scene selection; set up (play in 5.1 or 2.0); extra features (Making of; Film to Storyboard Comparison); Third Window trailers.
 - *Kamikaze Girls* (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2004).
 - Released 12/01/2009.
 - Disc options – film (play in 5.1 or 2.0); scene selection; extra features (cast interviews); Third Window trailers.
 - *Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers* (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2005).
 - Released 23/02/2009.
 - Disc options – film, scene selection; theatrical trailer; set up (play with or without subtitles); Third Window Film trailers.
 - *Fine, Totally Fine* (dir. Fujita Yosuke, 2008).
 - Released 11/05/2009

- Disc options – film; scene selection; set up (with or without subtitles); extras (trailer; Interview with Yosiyosi Arakawa; Interview with Yoshinori Okada; Third Window trailers).
- *Funuke, Show Some Love You Losers!* (dir. Yoshida Daihachi, 2007).
 - Released 11/05/2009.
 - Disc options – film; scene selection; trailers (for film and other Third Window releases).
- *Love Exposure* (dir. Sono Sion, 2008) – 2 Disc Edition.
 - Released 25/01/2010.
 - First disc – film (with or without subtitles); scene selection; special features (original Japanese trailer and Making of).
 - Second disc – film (with or without subtitles); scene selection; Third Window trailers.
- *Kamikaze Girls* – 2 Disc Edition.
 - Released 08/02/2010.
 - First disc – film (play in 5.1 or 2.0); scene selection.
 - Second disc – Making of; Interview with director; Interview with Kyoko Fukada and Anna Tsuchiya; “Birth of Unicorn Ryuj” short film; Workprint footage; Anna Tsuchiya music video; original Japanese trailer; Third Window trailers.
- *Lala Pipo* (dir. Miyano Masayuki, 2009).
 - Released 08/02/2010.
 - Disc options – film (with or without subtitles); scene selection; special features (*Loveable People of Lala Pipo* - Making of; “What is Sex?” Interviews with Cast; trailer; Third Window trailers).

- *Instant Swamp* (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2009).
 - o Released 24/05/2010.
 - o Disc options – film (with or without subtitles); scene selection; trailers (including this film and other Third Window releases).

- *Kakera* (dir. Ando Momoko, 2009).
 - o Released 21/06/2010.
 - o Disc options – film (with or without subtitles); scene selection; special features (Interview with Momoko Ando and Jasper Sharp, Footage from London Premiere at ICA, theatrical trailer, Third Window trailers).

- *Fish Story* (dir. Nakamura Yoshihiro, 2009).
 - o Released 26/07/2010.
 - o Disc options – film (with or without subtitles); scene selection; special features (Making Of; Footage from Live Event at Shibuya Tower Records; theatrical trailer; Third Window trailers).

Appendix Two: DVD cover and website images
Both distributors' webpages from 2008 to 2010

This information as necessary to include as the distributors' webpages have changed as the thesis was written, and so they are potentially subject to change in the future. The websites therefore appear as in the images below, on the dates cited.

4Digital Asia webpages

4DIGITAL MEDIA

► Visit our *20th Century Boys* website here

► Visit our *Death Note* website here

Search: GO

HOME COMING SOON 4DIGITAL ASIA CATALOGUE 4DM / CONTACT US

DEATH NOTE

Release Date:	29/12/2008
Catalogue number:	ASIA3745
Barcode Number:	5034741374514
Certificate:	15
Running Time:	126mins approx
Release Media:	DVD
Aspect Ratio:	16:9 Anamorphic
Region Code:	2
TV Standard:	PAL
Colour:	Colour

Buy Now ►

"brilliantly effective" ★★★★★
Alan Jones - Starburst

DEATH NOTE
デスノート

"deliriously dark...
weirdly cool!!!"
Bizarre

15

The human whose name is written in this note shall die

Synopsis:
The film follows the manga story of Light Yagami, who is a brilliant but bored student with great prospects. Life changes dramatically when he finds the Death Note, a notebook dropped by a rogue Shinigami death god named Ryuk. Any human whose name is written in the notebook dies. Light sees an opportunity to rid the world of evil using the powers granted in the Death Note. The police authorities call in the help of the famous, but unconventional detective L when criminals begin to mysteriously die. Both Light and L believe themselves to be serving justice, and so begins the battle of wits to see who really is good or evil.

Buy Now ►

Genre: Thriller

Director: Shusuke Kaneko (Gamera; Death Note: The Last Name & Azumi 2)

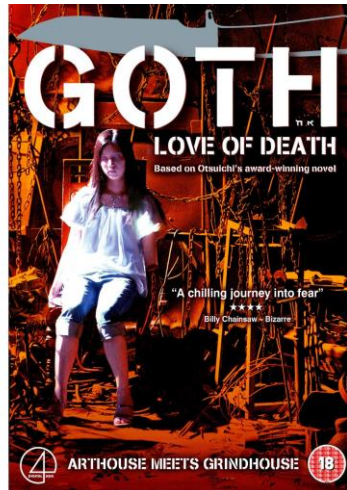
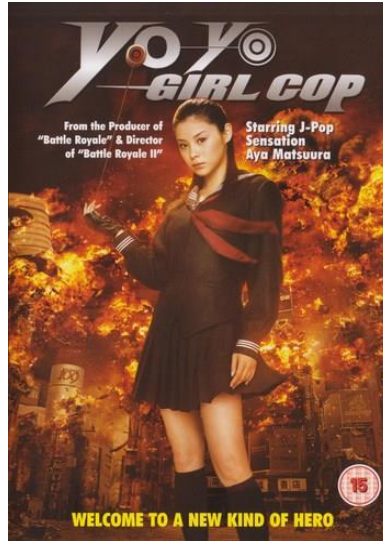
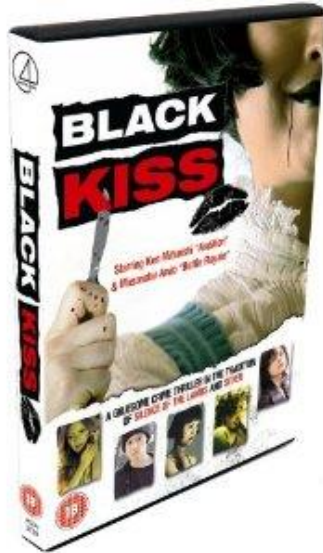
Starring: Tatsuya Fujiwara (Death Note: The Last Name; Battle Royale & Battle Royale 2); Kenichi Matsuyama ("Death Note" / "Death Note 2: The Last Name" / "Sanjuro")

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 5.1 & 2.0
Audio Language(s): Japanese
Subtitle Language(s): English

Back ►

'Death Note', 4Digital Media website, accessed 01/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/1>.



<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Black-Kiss-DVD-Reika-Hashimoto/dp/B001D94L7A/>

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Yo-Yo-Girl-Cop-DVD/dp/B001D94L7K/>

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/X-Cross-DVD-Nao-Matsushita/dp/B001DNNCV2/>

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Goth-Love-Death-Rin-Takanashi/dp/B0029ZN0YM/>

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Note: Since January 2012, pages on the 4Digital Asia site have been taken down. Currently, the pages for *Black Kiss*, *Goth*, *X-Cross* and *Yo-Yo Girl Cop* are no longer available. While no reason has been found through queries with the website administrators, logical deductions can be made. As there are no planned new 4Digital Asia releases, the 4Digital Asia section seems to have been downsized to accommodate space for new 4Digital Media releases.

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▶ Visit our *20th Century Boys* website here  ▶ Visit our *Death Note* website here 

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Death Note 2 -The Last Name

Release Date: 13/10/2008
 Catalogue number: ASIA3749
 Barcode Number: 5034741374910
 Certificate: 15
 Running Time: 141 mins approx
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16:9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour

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THE EXCITING SEQUEL TO THE THRILLING ORIGINAL

DEATH NOTE 2

the Last Name

★★★★★ THE TIMES - THE KNOWLEDGE
 ★★★★★ SFX MAGAZINE

the last name to be written in the DEATH NOTE. Whose name will it be?

15

Synopsis:
 Light and L's psychological duel enters a new phase; whoever is careless for even a split second will lose! To complicate things further, Rem, another shinigami brings the second notebook and Misa Amane, a Japanese pop star and Kira worshipper, comes into possession of it. Now becoming a Kira herself, she accepts an offer to have the Eyes of the Death. With the Eyes of the Death one can know the name of any person without being told. Misa and Light begin to work together to find the true name of L....

PURCHASE DVD HERE

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Genre: Thriller

Director: Shusuke Kaneko (Gamera; Death Note & Azumi 2); Kenichi Matsuyama ("Death Note" / "Death Note 2: The Last Name" / "Sanjuro")

Starring: Tatsuya Fujiwara (Death Note: The Last Name; Battle Royale & Battle Royale 2)

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 5.1 & 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

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'Death Note 2: The Last Name', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 01/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/2>.

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Starfish Hotel

Release Date: 20/10/2008
 Catalogue number: ASIA3743
 Barcode Number: 5034741374316
 Certificate: TBC
 Running Time: 98 mins approx
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 0 - Region Free
 TV Standard: NTSC
 Colour: Colour

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Synopsis:
 NTSC is Compatible with Region 2 DVD players. Strange things always happen in Jo Kuroda's mystery novels. There is always a sinister rabbit called Mr Trickster; ans someone always ends up dead. A man's wife disappears and he finds her working in a brothel deep in the heart of the city. There is a universe called the Darkland that can only be entered through a hidden tunnel. There is a young girl that the man had an affair with in the dead of winter, two years ago. She would only meet him in the eerie, crumbling Starfish Hotel. Now she's disappeared too. If you meet Jo Kuroda one night don't tell him your dreams.

Buy Now ▶

Genre: **Thriller**

Director: **John Williams**

Starring: Koichi Sato ("Ring 2" / "Battle Without Honor" / "When the Last Sword is Drawn"); Tae Kimura ("The Sinking of Japan" / "Train Man") & Kiki ("Vital")

Extras: **Making of & Interview of Director John Williams**

Audio Format: **Dolby Digital 2.0**
 Audio Language(s): **Japanese**
 Subtitle Language(s): **English**

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‘Starfish Hotel’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/5>.



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Death Note: L change the World

Release Date: 29/12/2008
 Catalogue number: ASIA3747
 Barcode Number: 5034741374712
 Certificate: 15
 Running Time: 129 mins approx
 Release Media: DVD x2
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour

Buy Now ▶



Synopsis:

A spin-off to the "Death Note" films featuring the character L, the enigmatic detective from those titles. The film chronicles the final 23 days of L's life, as he solves one final case involving a bioterrorist group that aims to wipe out much of humanity with a highly infectious virus, taking the sole survivor of its test run in a Thai village, and a junior high schooler named Maki Nikaido under his wing.

Buy Now ▶

Genre: Thriller

Director: Hideo Nakata ("Ring" / "Ring 2" / "Dark Water")

Starring: Kenichi Matsuyama ("Death Note" / "Death Note 2: The Last Name" / "Sanjuro"); Shunji Fujimara ("Death Note" / "Death Note 2: The Last Name"); Mayuko Fukuda ("Sinking of Japan"); Renji Ishibashi ("The Great Yokai War" / "20th Century Boys") & Youki Kudoh ("Memoirs of a Geisha" / "Snow Falling on Cedars")

Extras: 24 Page Book; Trailer; Making of L Change the World; Original Japanese Trailers & Image Gallery

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 5.1 & 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

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'Death Note: L Change The World', 4Digital Media website, accessed 06/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/7>.



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▶ Visit our Death Note website here



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Tokyo Gore Police (2 Disc Collectors Edition)

Release Date: 13/04/2009
 Catalogue number: ASIA3752
 Barcode Number: 5034741375214
 Certificate: 18
 Running Time: 109 mins
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour

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Synopsis:

Sick, twisted and full of gore this tale of the near future, has the Tokyo Police Corporation locked in a bloody war with genetically modified super-criminals known as the "engineers". Ruka, the daughter of the police chief's murdered right-hand man, Ruka is a samurai sword wielding top engineer hunter ruthlessly hunting and killing engineers in a bid to find her fathers murderer.

[Buy Now ▶](#)

Genre: Horror / Science Fiction

Original Title: Tokyo zankoku keisatsu

Director: Yoshihiro Nishimura

Starring: Eishi Shiina (Audition) Itsuji Itao (Death Note: The Last Name / Final Call)

Extras: Making-of Tokyo Gore Police
 Interview with the Director Yoshihiro Nishimura
 Interview with the star Eishi Shiina
 Japanese Premiere
 TV adverts from film
 Original Japanese Trailer
 Original Promo Reel
 UK Trailer

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

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'Tokyo Gore Police', 4Digital Media website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/104>.



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▶ Visit our Death Note website here



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Meatball Machine

Release Date: 01/06/2009
 Catalogue number: ASIA3753
 Barcode Number: 5034741376313
 Certificate: 18
 Running Time: 90 mins
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour



Synopsis:

An all out in your face gore-fest Japanese style. Meatball Machine is a wild, splatterific, experimental sci-fi/horror rollercoaster that will have your entire brain and body shaken and stirred. Capable of making biomechanical weapons out of human flesh, alien parasites grotesquely invade the Earth, turning their hosts into maniacal killers who seek and destroy each other to the bloody death! And yes, it's also a human love story, even though the budding romantics are infested with slimy, tumor-like globules. Codirectors Junichi Yamamoto and Yudai Yamaguchi (Battlefield Baseball) pull out all the stops and don't let up until the final epic battle. It's a touching testament to young love, blood, and alien ooze that leaves you screaming for more

Genre: Horror / Science Fiction

Original Title: Tokyo Zankoku Keisatsu

Director: Yudai Yamaguchi (Battlefield Baseball / Cromartie High: The Movie) wrote "Versus" and directed the fake commercials in "Tokyo Gore Police"

Starring: Issei Takahashi (Detroit Metal City / Kill Bill Vol.1)

Shōichirō Masumoto (Azumi 2 / Godzilla: Final Wars / Battlefield Baseball / Azumi / Versus)

Toru Tezuka (Ichi the Killer / Dead or Alive 2)

Ayano Yamamoto (Tokyo Gore Police)

Extras: Making of Meatball Machine

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

'Meatball Machine', 4Digital Media website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/102>.

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Cyborg She

Release Date: 26/10/2009
 Catalogue number: ASIA3792
 Barcode Number: 5034741379212
 Certificate: 12
 Running Time: 120 mins
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour

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IS THIS LOVE... OR JUST PROGRAMMING?
CYBORG SHE
 The Cyborg from the future... ...The Geek in the present

"A ROBOTIC ROMANCE THAT IS SURE TO CAPTURE YOUR HEART" - NEO
 Starring Haruka Ayase (Ichi)
 Produced by Mataichiro Yamamoto (Azumi)
 Written and Directed by Jae-Young Kwak (My Sassy Girl)

Synopsis:
 Directed by Jae-young Kwak (*My Sassy Girl*) and produced by Mataichiro Yamamoto (*Azumi / Crows Zero*) and stars Haruka Ayase (the star of *Ichi*)

A lonesome college student named Jiro (Keisuke Koide) is spending his 20th birthday alone when suddenly a beautiful cyborg girl (Haruka Ayase - *Ichi/ Oppai Volleyball*) turns up. The few hours that he spends with her are the most incredible moments of his life and Jiro is overwhelmed by his good-fortune in meeting her. But his happiness does not last for long since she disappears after that. A year later on his 21st birthday, Jiro runs into her again. At least she looks the same, but this time she is somehow different. It is the beginning of a love that would change his life forever...

Buy Now ▶

Genre: Science Fiction / Drama
 Original Title: *Boku no kanojo wa saibôgu*
 Director: Jae-young Kwak
 Starring: Haruka Ayase (the star of *Ichi*), Keisuke Koide

Extras: Guide to *Cyborg She*
 Original Japanese trailer
 Original Japanese teaser trailer
 Original Japanese TV Spots
 Interviews
 Press Conference
 Cast at Premiere
 Cast at Yuban Film Festival


Audio Format: Dolby Digital 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

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‘Cyborg She’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013,


<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/122>.

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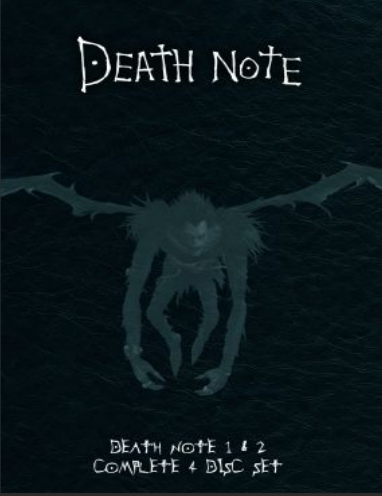
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**Death Note 1 & 2:
(Complete 4 Disc Set)**

Release Date:	26/10/2009
Catalogue number:	ASIA3797
Barcode Number:	5034741379717
Certificate:	15
Running Time:	262 mins
Release Media:	DVDx4
Aspect Ratio:	16x9 Anamorphic
Region Code:	2
TV Standard:	PAL
Colour:	Colour



DEATH NOTE
1 & 2
COMPLETE 4 DISC SET

Synopsis:
Tsugumi Ohba and Takeshi Obata's bestselling manga DEATH NOTE, has already spawned an internationally successful anime series, and now its become a bona fide film franchise. This 4 disc special edition box set comes with both feature films, Death Note and Death Note: The Last Name both individually packaged with bonus discs full of extras.

DEATH NOTE follows the story of Light Yagami (Tatsuya Fujiwara - Battle Royale) a brilliant but bored student with great prospects. Life changes dramatically when he finds the Death Note, a notebook dropped by a rogue Shinigami death god named Ryuk. Any human whose name is written in the notebook dies. Light sees an opportunity to rid the world of evil using the powers granted in the Death Note. Police call in the help of the famous, but unconventional detective L when criminals begin to mysteriously die. So begins the battle of wits to see who really is good or evil.

DEATH NOTE THE LAST NAME: Light and L's psychological duel enters a new phase; whoever is careless for even a split second will lose! To complicate things further, Rem, another shinigami brings the second notebook and Misa Amane, a Japanese pop star and Kira worshipper, comes into possession of it. Now becoming a Kira herself, she accepts an offer to have the Eyes of the Death. With the Eyes of the Death one can know the name of any person without being told. Misa and Light begin to work together to find the true name of L...

Genre: Thriller / Action

Director: Shusuke Kaneko (Gamera; Death Note: The Last Name & Azumi 2)

Starring: Tatsuya Fujiwara (Battle Royale & Battle Royale 2); Kenichi Matsuyama (Sanjuro)

Extras: DEATH NOTE
Trailer
Making of Death Note: The Last Name
Production Diary Video
Death Note Press Conference
Original Japanese Trailers
Image Gallery

DEATH NOTE THE LAST NAME
Trailer
Making of Death Note: The Last Name
Production Diary Video
Death Note Press Conference
Original Japanese Trailers
Image Gallery

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 5.1 & 2.0
Audio Language(s): Japanese
Subtitle Language(s): English

‘Death Note 1 and 2’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/121>.

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Death Note 1 & 2 [Blu-ray]

Release Date:	20/09/2010
Catalogue number:	ASIA3822
Barcode Number:	5034741382212
Certificate:	15
Running Time:	262 mins
Release Media:	2Blu-ray 2DVD
Aspect Ratio:	1080p
Region Code:	B/2 - 2
TV Standard:	PAL
Colour:	Colour

Buy Now ▶



Synopsis:
 With over 25 million copies sold, the hit manga series has been adapted into two live-action feature films directed by Shusuke Kaneko, widely known for the popular, Gamera, monster film series.

The films center on Light Yagami, a university student who discovers a supernatural notebook, the titular "Death Note", dropped on Earth by a shinigami (death god) named Ryuk. The Death Note grants its user the ability to kill anyone whose face they have seen, by writing the victim's name in the notebook. The story follows Light's attempt to create and rule a world cleansed of evil using the notebook, and the complex conflict between him, his opponents and a mysterious detective known to the world only as L.

This 4 disc special edition box set comes with both feature films in Blu-ray; Death Note and Death Note: The Last Name plus two discs packed full of extras on DVD.

DEATH NOTE follows the story of Light Yagami (Tatsuya Fujiwara - Battle Royale) a brilliant but bored student with great prospects. Life changes dramatically when he finds the Death Note, a notebook dropped by a rogue Shinigami death god named Ryuk. Any human whose name is written in the notebook dies. Light sees an opportunity to rid the world of evil using the powers granted in the Death Note. Police call in the help of the famous, but unconventional detective L when criminals begin to mysteriously die. So begins the battle of wits to see who really is good or evil.

DEATH NOTE THE LAST NAME: Light and L's psychological duel enters a new phase; whoever is careless for even a split second will lose! To complicate things further, Rem, another shinigami brings the second notebook and Misa Amane, a Japanese pop star and Kira worshipper, comes into possession of it. Now becoming a Kira herself, she accepts an offer to have the Eyes of the Death. With the Eyes of the Death one can know the name of any person without being told. Misa and Light begin to work together to find the true name of L...

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‘Death Note 1&2 [Blu-Ray]’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/133>.



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► Visit our *Death Note* website here



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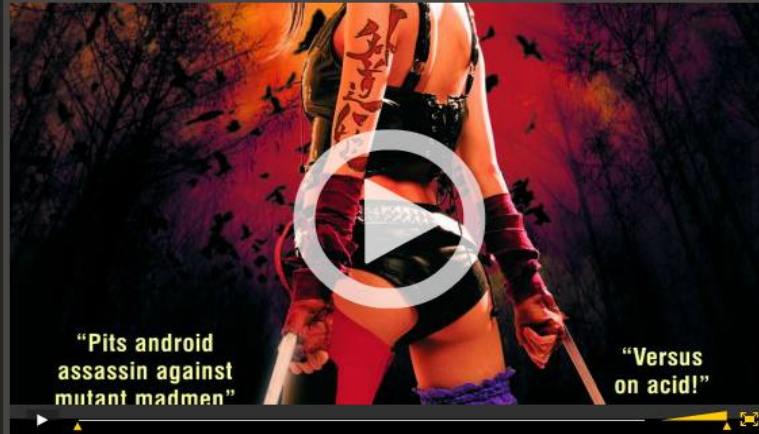
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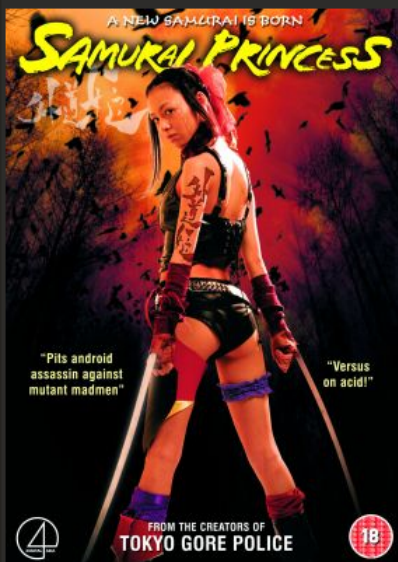
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Samurai Princess

Release Date: 26/10/2009
 Catalogue number: ASIA3798
 Barcode Number: 5034741379816
 Certificate: 18
 Running Time: 82 mins
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour



Synopsis:

Kengo Kaji, who wrote *Tokyo Gore Police*, writes and directs this new genre-bending sci-fi/fantasy gore-fest from Japan. Yoshihiro Nishimura handles the special make-up effects, as he did for *Tokyo Gore Police*, *Machine Girl* and *Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl*.

Samurai Princess pits android assassin against mutant madmen in an alternate universe version of feudal Japan. In this version of history, trainyard duels, detachable chainsaw limbs, and breast grenades are commonplace occurrences, while mad scientists twist the laws of nature to create sentient robots that can pass as human and crave souls.

Enter an android warrior with a penchant for bloodletting (AV starlet Aino Kishi) and her human partner (Dai Mizuno), whose eardrum-crushing electric guitar riffs are so loud, they're literally weapons of mass destruction. When our heroine is infused with the souls of eleven of her fallen sisters, she uses their combined power to take down anyone who stands in the way of her quest for humanity. The result is a nonstop geyser of gore, with skeletons popping out of torsos and every imaginable appendage removed from bodies!

Genre: Horror / Science Fiction

Original Title: *Samurai Purinsesu: Gedô-hime*

Director: Kengo Kaji

Starring: Aino Kishi (AV actress / Photo-gravure model)
Mihiro (Yo-Yo Sexy Cop Girl" & "Zombie Self-Defense Force")
Kentaro Shimazu ("Robo-geisha" and "Machine Girl")

Extras: Original Japanese trailer
Making of Featurette

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 2.0
Audio Language(s): Japanese
Subtitle Language(s): English

'Samurai Princess', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/details/120>.



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Vampire Girl vs. Frankenstein Girl

Release Date: 15/03/2010
 Catalogue number: ASIA3804
 Barcode Number: 5034741380416
 Certificate: 18
 Running Time: 85 Mins
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour



Synopsis:
 Voted Best International Horror Feature Film 2010 by Gorezone readers

From the man (Yoshihiro Nishimura) behind the outrageousness of Tokyo Gore Police and The Machine Girl comes this crazed response to both Twilight and Let the Right One In, a film that consistently overwhelms the viewer in its sheer dementia.....

High school student Mizushima receives Valentines Day chocolates from the new student, Monami. Little did she know that the chocolates contained traces of Monami's vampire blood. He gets infected from eating them and Monami confesses that she wants to live with him forever as vampires. Meanwhile, Mizushima decides that he wants to fully become a vampire with Monami's help. Keiko, Mizushima's girl friend, sees the two on the school rooftop kissing and in a state of hysteria, attempts to throw Monami off the roof but falls off herself instead. Keiko dies but her father, Kenji Furano, the mad scientist, resurrects her as Franken girl. Thus begins a deadly combat between Franken Keiko and Vampire Monami in the name of love. As we all know, this kind of Vampire vs. Frankenstein conflict can only be solved by fighting, beating, stabbing, chewing, clawing and a showdown high atop Tokyo Tower!

Genre: Horror

Original Title: Kyūketsu Shōjo tai Shōjo Furanken

Director: Yoshihiro Nishimura, Naoyuki Tomomatsu (and writer)

Starring: Eihi Shiina, Yuki Kawamura, Eri Otoguro, Takumi Saito, Jiji Bu, Erina

Extras: Making of Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl (65 mins)
 Japanese Release Day Stage Greetings with Stars & Directors (20 mins)

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

‘Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl’, 4Digital Media website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue/107>.

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Jo-On: White Ghost & Jo-On: Black Ghost

Release Date: 19/04/2010
 Catalogue number: ASIA3809
 Barcode Number: 5034741380911
 Certificate: 18
 Running Time: 121 mins
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour

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FROM THE CREATOR & PRODUCER OF **THE GRUDGE**
JU-ON: WHITE GHOST & JU-ON: BLACK GHOST

SHOCKING FROM THE START TO FINISH.
 BETTER THAN THE RING!
 GOREZONE

2 FILMS ON 1 DISC

Synopsis:
 Both films originated and supervised by The Grudge creator Takashi Shimizu
Ju-on: White Ghost
 A son brutally and methodically murders all five of his family members after failing the bar exam. He then hangs himself. At the moment of his death, he made a cassette tape recording in which he can be heard saying "I'll go, I'll go soon..." On the same tape can be heard the eerie sound of a young girl's voice. It is the voice of Mirai, who was a friend of Akane, whilst at primary school. Mirai was a victim of the mass family slaughter incident. Akane, who is now a senior high school student, has had a strong ESP power since childhood. Suddenly one day Mirai appears in front of her, wearing the yellow cap and red backpack of a primary school student. The terror is just about to begin...

Ju-on: Black Ghost
 Nurse Yuko is left in charge of a young girl called Fukie, and begins to experience strange things. Medical examinations reveal that there is a "cyst" in Fukie's body. The cyst is actually an unborn one that is full of hatred for mankind and curses everyone around her. Yuko's neighbour is taken by a girl in black, and Fukie's father commits a murder and goes insane. Fukie's mother has to rely on the special psychic powers of Fukie's younger sister to help drive out the evil spirit. However, the exorcism eventually fails, and the worst grudge yet begins.

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Genre: Horror

Original Title: Ju-on: Shiroi Rôjo & Ju-on: Kuroi Shôjo

Director: Jo-On: White Ghost: Ryuta Miyake, Jo-On: Black Ghost: Mari Asato

Starring: Jo-On: White Ghost: Akina Minami, Hiroki Suzuki, Marika Fukunaga, Takuji Suzuki
 Jo-On: Black Ghost: Ai Kago, Kôji Seto, Yuri Nakamura, Maria Takagi

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

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‘Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue/110>.

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▶ Visit our *Death Note* website here

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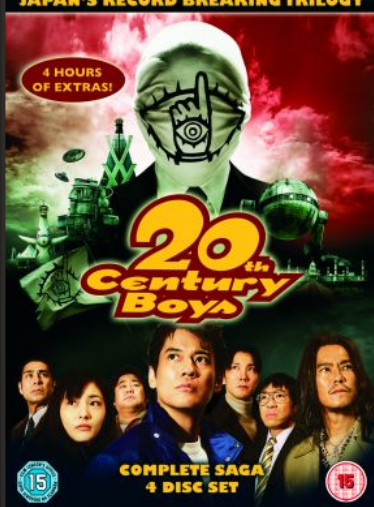
**20th Century Boys Trilogy
- The Complete Saga**

Release Date: 31/05/2010
 Catalogue number: ASIA3814
 Barcode Number: 5034741381413
 Certificate: 15
 Running Time: 437 mins
 Release Media: 4DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic Audi
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour

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JAPAN'S RECORD BREAKING TRILOGY

4 HOURS OF EXTRAS!



20th Century Boys

COMPLETE SAGA
4 DISC SET

15

Synopsis:
 A positively epic exercise in filmmaking and storytelling, the blockbusting 20th Century Boys trilogy has proven to be the most ambitious, expensive and successful undertakings in Japanese Cinema.

Director Yukihiro Tsutsumi's epic efforts to release three films in one year based on Naoki Urasawa's acclaimed manga (selling 28 million copies) has brought to life a stunning doomsday thriller that spans multiple generations and genres, and bites into conspiracy theory, pop culture, nostalgia and spectacular special effects. This DVD set comes with all three films in the trilogy, plus an extra disc packed full of Special Features totaling 4 Hours!

The 20th Century Boys saga begins in 1969 when a young boy named Kenji and his friends write *The Book of Prophecy*. In the book, they write about a future where they fight against an evil organization trying to take over the world and bring about Doomsday. Years later in 1997, a mysterious cult being led by a man only known as Friend has emerged and gained strong influence over society. A series of catastrophic events begin to occur, mirroring the prophecies made up by the young Kenji. The greatest fear is that the climax of *The Book of Prophecy* will become a reality: on December 31st, 2000, a terrifying giant virus-spreading robot will attack the entire city of Tokyo, leading to the end of mankind. The only people who know about *The Book* are Kenji and his childhood friends. Who is Friend? Will Kenji and his friends be able to save mankind and live to see the 21st Century?

20th Century Boys Chapter 1: Beginning of the End [142 mins]
 20th Century Boys - Chapter 2: The Last Hope [139 mins]
 20th Century Boys - Final Chapter: Our Flag [156 mins]

[Buy Now](#)

Genre: Science Fiction
 Original Title: 20-Seiki Shōnen
 Director: Yukihiro Tsutsumi

Starring: Etsushi Toyokawa, Toshiaki Karasawa, Takako Tokiwa, Teruyuki Kagawa, Hidehiko Ishizuka

Extras: Making of Documentary
 Japanese Premiere Documentary
 Paris Premiere Documentary
 Cast Interviews
 UK Trailer
 Original Japanese Trailers
 Chapter 3 Alternate Ending
 Image Galleries

Audio Format: Dolby Digital 5.1 & 2.0
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

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'20th Century Boys Trilogy', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue/130>.



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► Visit our *Death Note* website here



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Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess

Release Date: 28/06/2010
Catalogue number: ASIA3815
Barcode Number: 5034741381512
Certificate: 15
Running Time: 118 mins
Release Media: DVD
Aspect Ratio: 16:9
Region Code: 2
TV Standard: PAL
Colour: Colour



Synopsis:

An epic samurai period adventure tale of hidden gold bullion and a princess on the run

Makabe Rokurota, the loyal retainer of Princess Yuki-hime of Akizuki, is moving the Princess and the prefecture's ample treasury of gold bars safely to the politically stable Hayakawa area. They disguise themselves as humble firewood peddlers, hiding the gold bars inside the logs they are carrying, so as to pass safely through roadblocks, which are under the control of the local warlord.

Along the way, Rokurota comes across Takezo and Shimpachi, who have escaped from forced labour in a gold mine. They eventually agree to help out on this foolhardy mission in the hope of escaping Yamana's oppression and cashing in on the gold reward Rokurota offers them.

Genre: Action

Original Title: Kakushi toride no san akunin - The last princess

Director: Shinji Higuchi

Starring: Jun Matsumoto, Kippei Shiina, Masami Nagasawa

Audio Format: Dolby Digital
Audio Language(s): Japanese
Subtitle Language(s): English

'Hidden Fortress', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue/132>.



► Visit our *20th Century Boys* website here



► Visit our *Death Note* website here



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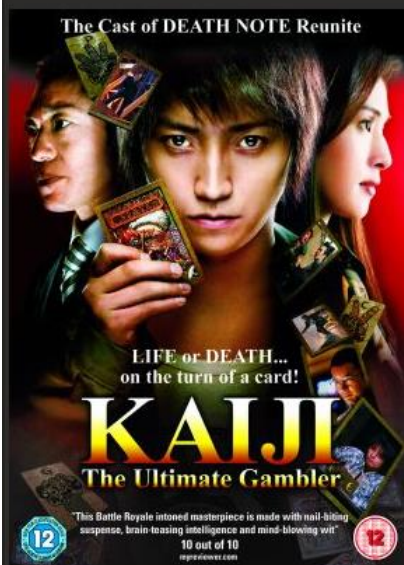
CATALOGUE

4DM / CONTACT US



Kaiji: The Ultimate Gambler

Release Date: 26/07/2010
Catalogue number: ASIA3816
Barcode Number: 5034741381611
Certificate: 12
Running Time: 130 mins
Release Media: DVD
Aspect Ratio: 16:9 Anamorphic
Region Code: 2
TV Standard: PAL
Colour: Colour



Synopsis:

Kaiji Ito (Tatsuya Fujiwara - *Death Note/Battle Royale*) moves to Japan after graduating from high school. Unable to find a job and frustrated with society at large, Kaiji spends his days gambling, vandalising cars, and drinking booze. Two years later and his life no better, a debt collector named Endo arrives to collect money. The debt collector then offers two choices to Kaiji: spend 10 years paying off his loan or board a gambling boat for one night to repay his debt and possibly make a whole lot more. Meanwhile, the unscrupulous Endo is actually conning Kaiji, believing he won't come back from his voyage. Kaiji is then up for the night of his life.....

Genre: Action

Original Title: Kaiji: Jinsei Gyakuten Gômu

Director: Tôya Satô

Starring: Tatsuya Fujiwara, Kenichi Matsuyama, Teruyuki Kagawa, Taro Yamamoto

Extras: Original Japanese Trailer
Making of Documentary

Audio Format: Dolby Digital
Audio Language(s): Japanese
Subtitle Language(s): English

'Kaiji', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 09/05/2013,
<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue/129>.

4 DIGITAL MEDIA

▶ Visit our *20th Century Boys* website here  ▶ Visit our *Death Note* website here 

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Broadcast Murder Show™



Death Tube


Release Date: 20/09/2010
 Catalogue number: ASIA3817
 Barcode Number: 5034741381710
 Certificate: 18
 Running Time: 117 mins
 Release Media: DVD
 Aspect Ratio: 16:9 Anamorphic
 Region Code: 2
 TV Standard: PAL
 Colour: Colour

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From the Producers of the "Banned" Grotesque

Death Tube

Broadcast Murder Show™



DEATH TUBE – THE ULTIMATE REAL-TIME ONLINE KILLING GAME.

18

Synopsis:
 From the Director of "Chanbara Beauty" and reminiscent of "Saw" this extreme splatter game takes place on line at the site known as "Death Tube". Tragedy begins with curiosity. The on-line killer website broadcasts scenes of death in real time. Viewers are drawn to the website through curiosity, and then are shocked by what they see. Against their will, random viewers are selected to enter the killing game. It is literally a life and death situation to survive in this cruelest of spectator sports

Buy Now ▶

Genre: Horror

Original Title: Satsujin Douga Site

Director: Yohei Fukuda

Audio Format: Dolby Digital
 Audio Language(s): Japanese
 Subtitle Language(s): English

Back ▶

'Death Tube', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 09/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/index.php/catalogue/127>.

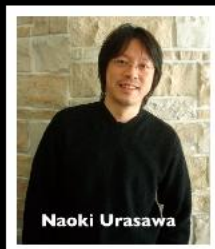
Welcome

20th Century Boys

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Introduction

Naoki Urasawa, the master manga creator of *Yawara!* and *Monster* drew *20th Century Boys* for 8 years from 1999 to 2007. It's become a national phenomenon. *20th Century Boys* consists of 22 volumes with an extra 2 volumes entitled *21st Century Boys*, altogether making 24 volumes.



Naoki Urasawa

It was serialized in Shogakukan Big Comic Spirits magazine from issue number 44 in 1999 to issue number 33 in 2007.

Approximately 25 million copies of all these volumes have been printed to date. It has been translated for 13 countries; Holland, Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and the United States of America. It is due for release in the UK this year.

Everybody had said, "It would be impossible to adapt it to the screen," because of the unusually large scale and complexity of the story spanning 50 years and involving the whole world. To make the impossible possible, an unprecedented budget of 6 billion yen was put into the trilogy project. This was unprecedented in Japanese film industry conventions. The story that covers the world demanded location shootings in New York, London, Paris, Beijing and Bangkok.



Yukihiro Tsutsumi

When production was announced in 2007, the Internet community had a heated debate as to who would be cast to play certain characters. There are some 300 major roles throughout the trilogy. When the cast for the first movie of the trilogy was announced with Toshiaki Karasawa, Etsushi Toyokawa and Takako Tokiwa to play Kenji, Otcho and Yukiji respectively, the media treated it like page-one news. It was obvious that the movie was to become an all-star movie on a scale that no one had ever been able to pull off previously.

"It's like making a movie out of the Holy Bible!" is how the director Tsutsumi reflected on his monstrous undertaking. The half-a-century long saga of *20th Century Boys* with hundreds of characters is beyond any conventional manga. It's the kind of manga that you can't put down until you've finished it. From the early stages of production, Naoki Urasawa, the creator of the original manga, helped supervise the whole story and co-write the first movie, giving a different twist to the trilogy. FRIEND, the antagonist of the trilogy is newly interpreted for the movie.

The original manga begins its long story with a scene in which Kenji hijacks his junior high school P.A. room to play *20th Century Boy* by T.Rex. The song is not only the namesake of the manga but is also significant to the story. The movie adaptation uses it as theme music, bringing back the 35-year-old rock classic to audiences today.



'Welcome - 20th Century Boys', *4Digital Media* website, accessed 06/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/>.

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Boys

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20th Century Boys – Chapter 1: Beginning of the End

Based on the award winning, best selling Japanese manga series, from Naoki Urasawa – the creator of "Monster".

20th Century Boys – Chapter 1: Beginning of the End is an epic and stunning live action adaptation which follows Kenji and friends as they race against time to stop a mysterious new cult led by 'Friend'. A series of catastrophic events appear directly linked to prophecies made by the group when they were children, prophecies that climax in an enormous, terrifying robot attack on the entire city. Friendship is tested in a world gripped by hysteria, assassination and acts of terror committed on a massive scale.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- 24 Page Book
- Japan Premire Documentary
- Paris Premiere Featurette
- Cast Interviews
- UK Trailer
- Japanese Trailers

Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic Audio: Japanese Dolby Digital 5.1 & 2.0

Subtitles: English

Catalogue Number: ASIA3751 Barcode Number: 5034741375115

Also available as part of the Trilogy Boxset.

© 1999, 2006 Naoki Urasawa, Studio Nuts, Shogakukan © 2008-2009 "20th Century Boys" Film Partners © 2008-2010 4Digital Media




‘20th Century Boys – Chapter 1’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 06/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/dvd-20thcenturyb.html>.

DVD

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20th Century Boys Trilogy

The Complete Saga

Released on DVD 31st May 2010

One of the biggest undertakings ever attempted in the Japanese movie industry...

A positively epic exercise in filmmaking and storytelling, the blockbuster 20th Century Boys trilogy has proven to be one of the most ambitious and most successful undertakings in Japanese Cinema. Director Yukihiro Tsutsumi's three films, based on Urasawa Naoki's acclaimed manga (selling 28 million copies) has brought to life a stunning doomsday thriller, that spans multiple generations and genres, and bites into conspiracy theory, pop culture nostalgia and spectacular special effects.

The title is based on T.Rex's famous song, "20th Century Boy" which is the theme tune.

Synopsis

The 20th Century Boys saga begins in 1969 when a young boy named Kenji and his friends write "The Book of Prophecy." In their book, they write about a future where they fight against an evil organization trying to take over the world and bring about Doomsday.

Years later in 1997, a mysterious cult being lead by a man only known as "Friend" has emerged and gained strong influence over society. A series of catastrophic events begin to occur, mirroring the prophecies made up by the young Kenji. The greatest fear is that the climax of The Book of Prophecy will become a reality: on December 31st, 2000, a terrifying giant virus-spreading robot will attack the entire city of Tokyo, leading to the end of mankind. The only people who know about The Book are Kenji and his childhood friends. Who is Friend? Will Kenji and his friends are able to save mankind and live to see the 21st Century?

This 4 Disc DVD set comes with all three films in the trilogy.

20th Century Boys – Chapter 1: Beginning of the End

20th Century Boys – Chapter 2: The Last Hope

20th Century Boys – Final Chapter: Our Flag

Special Features:

- Making of Documentary
- Japanese Premiere Documentary
- Paris Premiere Documentary
- Cast Interviews
- UK Trailer
- Original Japanese Trailers
- Chapter 3 Alternate Ending
- Image Galleries

Aspect Ratio: 16x9 Anamorphic
 Audio: Japanese Dolby Digital 2.0
 Cat No: ASIA3813 Barcode No: 5034741381413

Use the links below to access extra information about Chapter 2 and 3 not included on the DVD

CHAPTER 2: THE LAST HOPE

[Introduction](#)

[Production Notes](#)

[20th Century Elements](#)

CHAPTER 3: THE LAST CHAPTER - OUR FLAG

[Introduction](#)

[Production Notes](#)

© 1999, 2006 Naoki Urasawa, Studio Nuts, Shogakukan © 2008-2009 "20th Century Boys" Film Partners © 2008-2010 4Digital Media

‘20th Century Boys Trilogy’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 06/05/2013,

<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/20thcenturyboyst.html>.



HOME	DVD	CAST AND CREW	TRAILERS	Back to 4DIGITAL																										
<p>Creator NAOKI URASAWA</p> <p>Profile</p> <p>Naoki Urasawa was born in Tokyo in 1960. After winning the New Comic Award in 1982, he began his professional career as a manga artist.</p> <p>Selected works: Pineapple Army (written by Kazuo Umei), 20th Century Boys. Urasawa currently draws Pluto for Shueisha.</p> <p>Interview</p> <p><i>What inspired you to create the story of 20th Century Boys?</i></p> <p>I had an idea for a manga that was based on something that flashed in my head. It goes, "Without them we would be ladies and gentlemen, I give you the 20th Century Boys." I gave it to the editor right away. The memory of playing in my junior high school also came back to me. That was my own experience.</p> <p><i>What happened when you played T.Rex on the school P.A.?</i></p> <p>Like I drew in the manga, "Nothing changed (at least) the school P.A. would be some mellow easy listening music when he read that scene. Many readers identify with it."</p> <p><i>You once said in an interview that you wanted to look at a fragment of the past. What I meant was that we matured and some things decayed, so to speak.</i></p> <p><i>As a screenwriter, what elements did you want to include in the movie?</i></p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>Creator Naoki Urasawa</td></tr> <tr><td>Director Yukihiro Tsutsumi</td></tr> <tr><td>Producer/Screenplay Takashi Nagasaki</td></tr> <tr><td>Toshiaki Karasawa as Kenji/Joe Yabuki, The Mystery Man</td></tr> <tr><td>Takako Tokiwa as Yukiji</td></tr> <tr><td>Etsushi Toyokawa as Otcho</td></tr> <tr><td>Teruyuki Kagawa as Yoshitsune</td></tr> <tr><td>Hidehiko Ishizuka as Maruo</td></tr> <tr><td>Takashi Ukaji as Mon-chan</td></tr> <tr><td>Hiroyuki Miyasako as Keroyon</td></tr> <tr><td>Katsuhisa Namase as Donkey</td></tr> <tr><td>Fumiyo Kohinata as Yamane</td></tr> <tr><td>Kuranosuke Sasaki as Fukube</td></tr> <tr><td>Renji Ishibashi as Inshu Manjome</td></tr> <tr><td>Katsuo Nakamura as God Kami-sama</td></tr> <tr><td>Hitomi Kuroki as Kiriko</td></tr> <tr><td>Airi Taira as Kana</td></tr> <tr><td>Yusuke Santamaria as Sadakiyo</td></tr> <tr><td>Naohito Fujiki as Chono</td></tr> <tr><td>Mirai Moriyama as Kakuta</td></tr> <tr><td>Arata Furuta as Namio Haru</td></tr> <tr><td>Eiko Koike as Takasu</td></tr> <tr><td>Haruka Kinami as Kyoko Koizumi</td></tr> <tr><td>Koichi Yamadera as Konchi (Yuichi Konno)</td></tr> <tr><td>Yukihiro Takahashi as Billy</td></tr> <tr><td>Shiro Sano as Yanbo and Mabo</td></tr> </table>	Creator Naoki Urasawa	Director Yukihiro Tsutsumi	Producer/Screenplay Takashi Nagasaki	Toshiaki Karasawa as Kenji/Joe Yabuki, The Mystery Man	Takako Tokiwa as Yukiji	Etsushi Toyokawa as Otcho	Teruyuki Kagawa as Yoshitsune	Hidehiko Ishizuka as Maruo	Takashi Ukaji as Mon-chan	Hiroyuki Miyasako as Keroyon	Katsuhisa Namase as Donkey	Fumiyo Kohinata as Yamane	Kuranosuke Sasaki as Fukube	Renji Ishibashi as Inshu Manjome	Katsuo Nakamura as God Kami-sama	Hitomi Kuroki as Kiriko	Airi Taira as Kana	Yusuke Santamaria as Sadakiyo	Naohito Fujiki as Chono	Mirai Moriyama as Kakuta	Arata Furuta as Namio Haru	Eiko Koike as Takasu	Haruka Kinami as Kyoko Koizumi	Koichi Yamadera as Konchi (Yuichi Konno)	Yukihiro Takahashi as Billy	Shiro Sano as Yanbo and Mabo	 <p>hear on T.Rex would be revolutionary... but I think it was about him. 100% of it is autobiographical.</p> <p>anything we have now is the outcome of what connects past and present. Some things have started in our culture. Some things have matured and some things decayed.</p>		
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‘Creator Naoki Urasawa’ [and Interview List], *4Digital Media* website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/creatornaokiuras.html>.

Trailers

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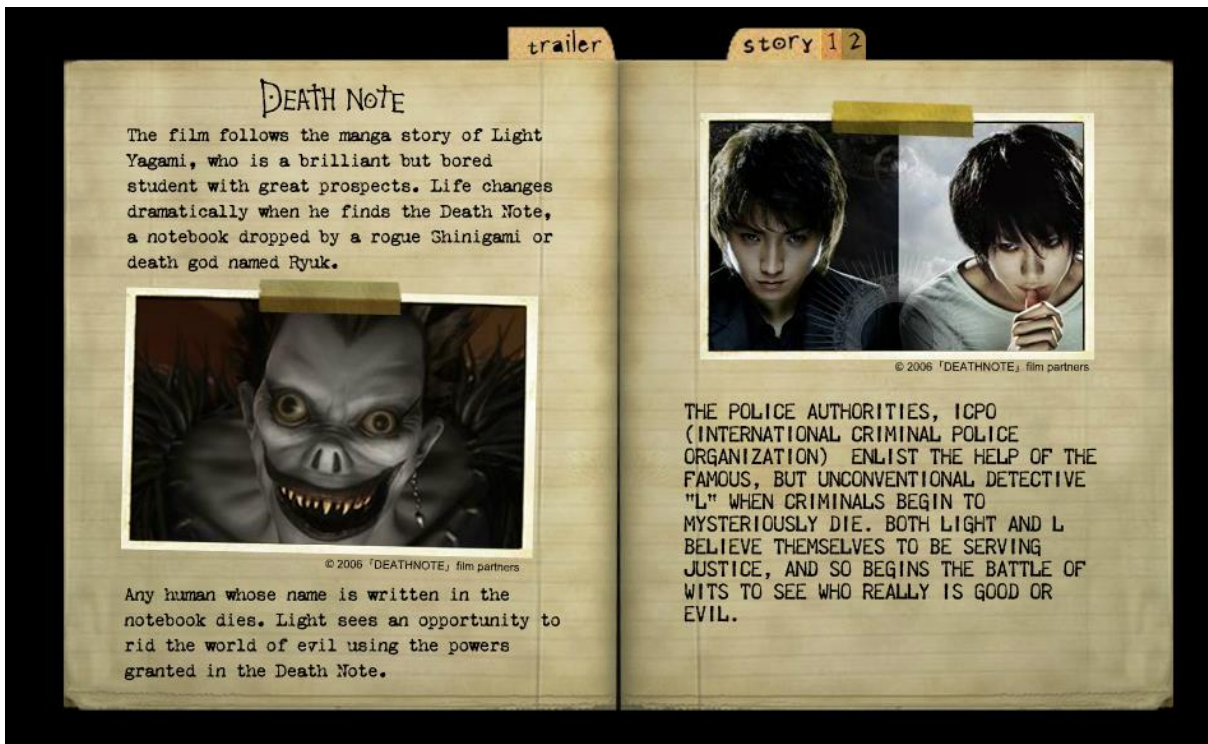
Chapter 1 Trailer

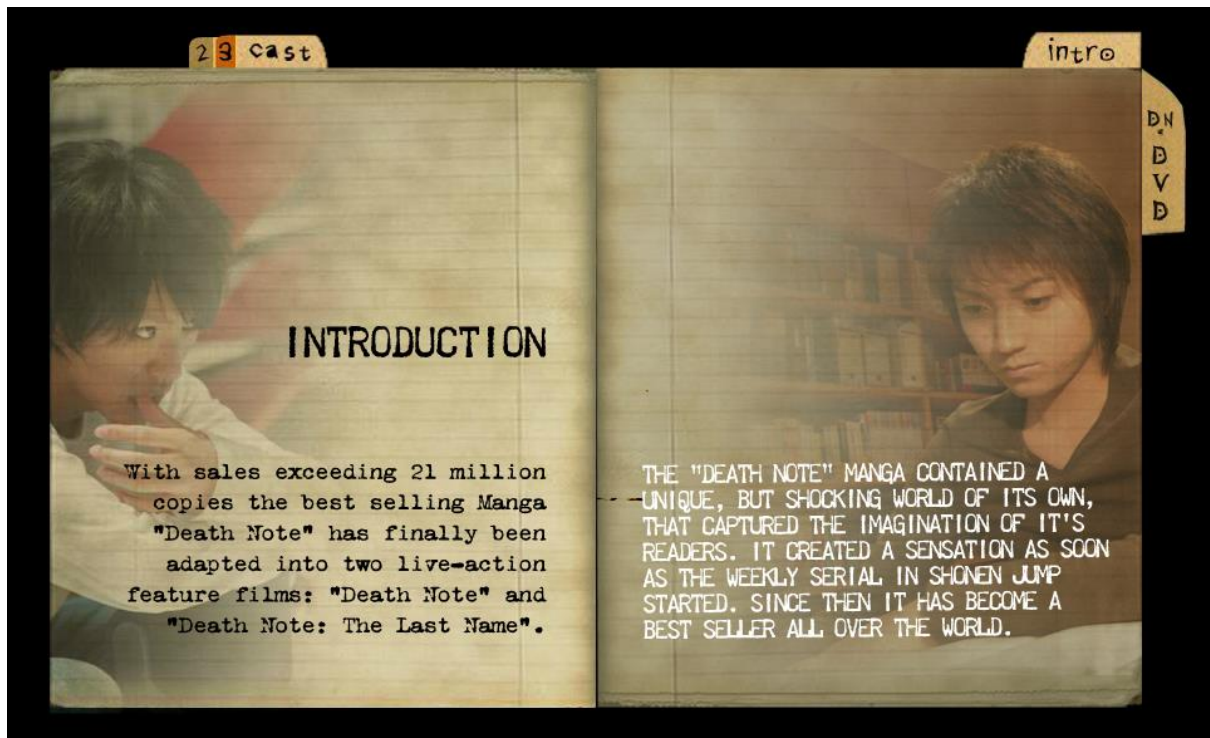
Chapter 2 Trailer

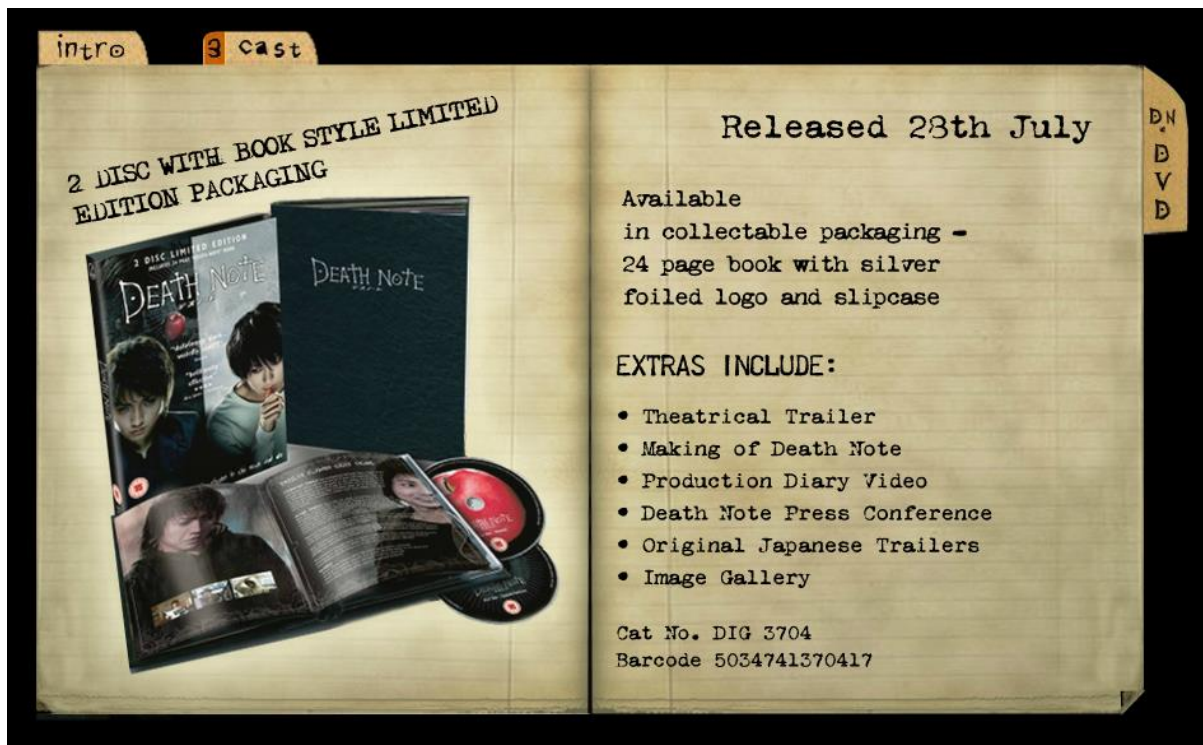
Chapter 3 Trailer

Trilogy Trailer

‘Trailers’, *4Digital Media* website, accessed 06/05/2013,
<http://www.4digitalmedia.com/20cb/trailers-20thcen.html>.







All the Death Note website images are taken from the following link: 'Death Note Site',
4Digital Media website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://www.4digitalmedia.com/deathnote/>.



Memories of Matsuko

[Play Trailer](#)

Gallery

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Original Title: Kiraware Matsuko no isshō
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2006
Rating: 15
Genre: Drama, Fairytale, Musical
Running Time: 130 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Memories of Matsuko

Dir: Tetsuya Nakashima
Writer: Tetsuya Nakashima
Cast: Miki Nakatani, Eita, Yusuke Iseya, Teruyuki Kagawa, YosiYosi Arakawa

When a bored college student learns that a long lost aunt has been found dead in a park, he begins piecing together her life to see if it had any value. What he finds is a revelation. Talented film director, Tetsuya Nakashima ("Kamikaze Girls" 04), wield a host of cinematic tools to make "Memories of MATSUKO" a memorably entertaining and emotionally powerful "fairytale tragedy," weaving together realistic human drama with offbeat comedy and spectacular (Bob Fosse-like) production numbers to tell the heartbreaking story of Matsuko Kawajiri, a starry-eyed woman who spends her entire life searching for a worthy "prince" capable of returning her limitless love. Versatile actress, Miki Nakatani, renders a virtuosic performance in the lead role of Matsuko.

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Blu-ray Disc Info



[amazon.co.uk](#)

[PLAY.COM](#)

[hmv.com](#)

BD Release Date: 14th Feb 2011
BD Specifications: anamorphic widescreen, removable english subtitles, 5.1 surround sound
BD Bonus Features: 30 minute "Making of", Storyboard to Film comparison, Interview with music composer Gabriele Roberto, theatrical trailer, trailers of other Third Window Films titles

Crew

Producer: Yuji Ishida, Hidemi Satani
Executive Producer: Masayuki Miyashita, Kunikatsu Kondo
Editor: Yoshiyuki Koike
Production Designer: Towako Kuwashima
Cinematography: Masakazu Ato
Music: Gabriele Roberto
Lighting: Taro Kimura
Make-up: Mitsue Sato
Presented in Association with: TBS, Toho

DVD Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

hmv.com

DVD Release Date: 12th Jan 2009

DVD Specifications: 5.1 sound

DVD Bonus Features: 30 minute "Making of", film to storyboard comparison, trailers of other Third Window Films titles

Recognition

Awards: Asian Film Awards - Won Best Actress, Nominated Best Production Designer, Best Visual Effects, Awards of the Japanese Academy - Won Best Actress, Best Music, Best Editing; Nominated Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography, Best Director, Best Lighting, Best Screenplay, Best Sound, Fant-Asia Film Festival - Won Best Asian Film, Hochi Film Awards - Won Best Actress, Japanese Professional Movie Awards - Won Best Actress, Kinema Junpo Awards - Won Best Actress, Mainichi Film Concours - Won Best Actress, Best Editor

More

Press: [Time Out](#)

[The Japan Times Online](#)

[Electric Sheep](#)

[Channel 4](#)

[The Times](#)



‘Memories of Matsuko’, *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/memories-of-matsuko>.



Play Trailer

Gallery

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Original Title: Shimotsuma Monogatari
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2004
Rating: 12
Genre: Comedy
Running Time: 103 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Kamikaze Girls

Dir: Tetsuya Nakashima
Writer: Tetsuya Nakashima
Cast: Kyoko Fukada, Anna Tsuchiya, Hiroyuki Miyasako, Sadao Abe, YosiYosi Arakawa, Yoshinori Okada

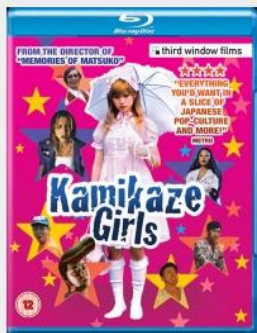
Our principal character and narrator is Momoko (Kyoko Fukada), the 17-year-old product of a highly dysfunctional marriage who wishes she'd lived in 18th Century France, during the Rococo age; instead, she and her bonnets and frilly dresses are stuck in Japan's rural outback, where she abides by a philosophy that claims, "If I can't live independently, I'd rather be a water flea."

Enter Ichigo (Anna Tsuchiya), a tough-talking, head-butting, scooter-riding thug who doesn't know rococo from rock & roll, and whom the haughty Momoko deprecates and mostly ignores--at least until they're brought together by, of all things, embroidery (Momoko's good at it, Ichigo needs some for her biker threads).

Suffice it to say that these two oddballs form a union of sorts, and Kamikaze Girls (entitled Shimotsuma Monogatari in Japanese) ultimately delivers a fairly straightforward message about independence, loneliness, and friendship. But getting there is quite a trip. Director and co-writer Tetsuya Nakashima combines live action, animation, special effects, fourth-wall asides, fantasy sequences, and more in a dazzling onslaught of images.

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Blu-ray Disc Info



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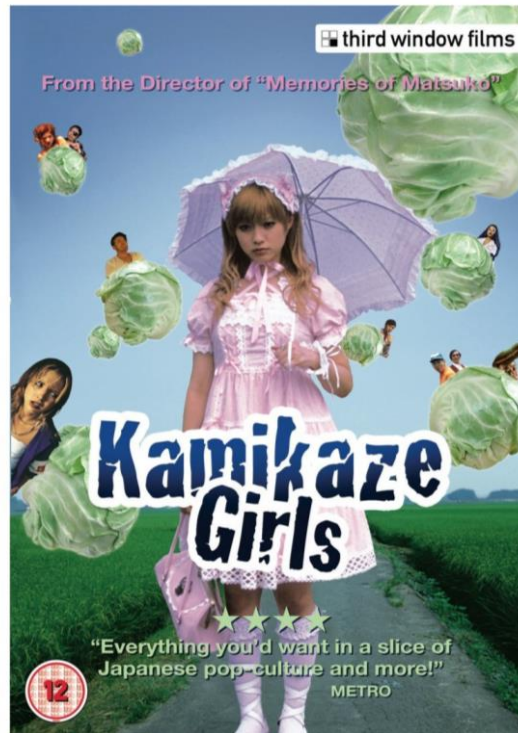
BD Release Date: 8 Feb 2010
BD Specifications: Anamorphic widescreen, 5.1 surround sound, removable subtitles
BD Bonus Features: "Making of", interviews with the cast and crew, "Birth of Unicorn Ryuji" short film, workprint footage, Anna Tsuchiya music video, theatrical trailer, trailers of other Third Window Films titles

Crew

Producer: Takashi Hirano, Yuuji Ishida, Satoru Ogura
Executive Producer: Kunikatsu Kondo, Yokichi Osato
Co-Executive Producer: Kazuya Hamana, Masayuki Miyashita
Line Producer: Yutaka Suzuki
Editor: Yoshiyuki Koike, Chiaki Toyama
Production Manager: Tadao Osawa
Production Designer: Towako Kuwashima
Cinematography: Masakazu Ato
Music: Yoko Kanno
Lighting: Taro Kimura
Presented in Association with: TBS, Amuse Soft

(Above) 'Kamikaze Girls', *Third Window* website, accessed 06/05/2013,

<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/kamikaze-girls>.



© Third Window.

The one-disc edition of *Kamikaze Girls* is no longer pictured on the Third Window website.

However, it can be viewed on the Amazon UK website – 'Kamikaze Girls [2005] DVD',

Amazon.co.uk, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Kamikaze-Girls->

[DVD/dp/B001L4I27W/](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Kamikaze-Girls-DVD/dp/B001L4I27W/).



Play Trailer

Gallery

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Original Title: Kame wa igia to hayaku oyogu
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2005
Rating: 15
Genre: Comedy
Running Time: 90 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Turtles are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers

Dir: Miki Satoshi
Writer: Miki Satoshi
Cast: Juri Ueno, Yu Aoi, Ryo Iwamatsu, Eri Fuse

Suzume Katagura is an ordinary housewife. Her husband has been sent overseas on business, and although he phones her regularly, he is more concerned with the health and welfare of his pet turtle. The days pass by monotonously. It is as though no one pays her any attention - even her husband. "Does anyone notice me? Will I just get old and die?" These thoughts scare Suzume.

8 Retweet Like 1

DVD Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

hmv.com

DVD Release Date: 23rd Feb 2009

DVD Bonus Features: Trailer, trailers of other Third Window Films titles

More

Official Website: <http://www.wilco-jp.com/kamehaya>

Press: [Midnight Eye](#)
[Mad Dog Magazine](#)
[Nippon Cinema](#)
[Eye for Film](#)
[Eastern Kicks](#)

Crew

Producer: Akiko Sasaki
Executive Producer: Naoki Hashimoto
Editor: Nobuyuki Takahashi
Assistant Director: Naoki Kawamura
Production Designer: Toshiharu Tokiwa
Cinematography: Gen Kobayashi
Music: Yoshiteru Takahashi
Lighting: Naoyuki Hori
Make-up: Fumi Takeshita
Costume Design: Mayumi Iso
Presented in Association with: Wilco Co. Ltd

‘Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers’, *Third Window* website, accessed 06/05/2013, <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/turtles-are-surprisingly-fast-swimmers>.



Play Trailer

Funuke: Show Some Love, You Losers

Dir: Daihachi Yoshida

Writer: Masakazu Ato

Cast: Eriko Sato, Aimi Satsukawa, Masatoshi Nagase, Hiromi Nagasaku

"Funuke" is the story of a countryside family struggle. After both parents die in a car accident, elder sister Sumika (Satou Eriko) comes back home from Tokyo because the family are no longer able to send her money for acting school. The other 2 members of the family are the little sister Kyomi (Satsukawa Aimi), an asthma-stricken aspiring manga writer and older brother Shinji (Nagase Masatoshi), who abuses his wife Machiko (Nagasaku Hiromi). Now that the frustrated elder sister has come back (and eager to leave again though she has no money), tension within the family hits an all-time-high. Every member of the family has a dark secret and it leads to one event after another...

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Gallery

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Original Title: Funuke domo, kanashimi no ai wo misero
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2007
Rating: 15
Genre: Black Comedy, Drama
Running Time: 112 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Crew

Producer: Shuji Kakimoto, Keisuke Konishi, Yutaka Suzuki, Daihachi Yoshida
Editor: Yasuaki Harada
Production Designer: Masato Yano
Cinematography: Souchirou Suzuki
Music: Kumi Okada
Presented in Association with: Phantom Film

DVD Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

hmv.com

DVD Release Date: 11th May 2009

Recognition

Awards: Blue Ribbon Awards - Won Best Supporting Actress (Hiromi Nagasaku), Hochi Film Awards - Won Best Supporting Actress (Hiromi Nagasaku), Kinema Junpo Awards - Won Best Supporting Actress (Hiromi Nagasaku), Marrakech International Film Festival - Nominated Golden Star (Daihachi Yoshida), Warsaw International Film Festival - Won Free Spirit Award (Daihachi Yoshida), Yokohama Film Festival - Won: Best Actress, Actor, Supporting Actor, New Director and Cinematography

More

Press: [The Japan Times Online](#)
[View London](#)
[The Times](#)
[Eye For Film](#)
[Channel 4](#)



'Funuke: Show Some Love, You Losers', *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013,
<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/funuke-show-some-love-you-losers>.



Play Trailer

Fine, Totally Fine

Dir: Yosuke Fujita
Writer: Yosuke Fujita
Cast: Yosiyosi Arakawa, Yoshinori Okada, Yoshino Kimura

Teruo, the eldest son of a used bookstore owner has a dream: to build the world scariest haunted house. About to reach his 30th birthday, Teruo is still idling away his life. One day, through the introduction of childhood friend Hisanobu, an extremely clumsy painter/artist comes to work at the bookstore. Meet Akari. A cute, attractive girl that both Teruo and Hisanobu soon fall for. This small bookstore could be in any town and becomes a refuge for these individuals that have fallen out of the mainstream society.

"Fine Totally Fine" is an eagerly awaited hilarious film that portrays an easy-going, comical and heat-warming story that unfolds in a bookstore.

▶ ReTweet f Like 1

DVD Info



amazon.co.uk
 PLAY.COM
 hmv.com

DVD Release Date: 11th May 2009
DVD Specifications: Anamorphic widescreen, removable subtitles
DVD Bonus Features: Interviews with Yosiyosi Arakawa and Yoshinori Okada, theatrical trailer, trailers of other Third Window Films releases

More

Official Website: <http://zenzenok.jp>
Press: [The Japan Times Online 1](#)
[The Japan Times Online 2](#)
[Midnight Eye](#)
[Electric Sheep](#)
[10,000 Bullets](#)

Gallery

These images are free to use under certain conditions. All images should be credited appropriately, in addition to Third Window Films.

Original Title: zenzen daijobu
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2008
Rating: 12
Genre: Comedy
Running Time: 110 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Crew

Editor: Zensuke Hori
Production Designer: China Hiyashi
Cinematography: Yoshihiro Ikeuchi
Music: E Komo Mai
Lighting: Masao Funahashi
Presented in Association with: Tohokushinsha Film Corporation, Stylejam, Pony Canyon, Yomiuri Telecasting Corporation

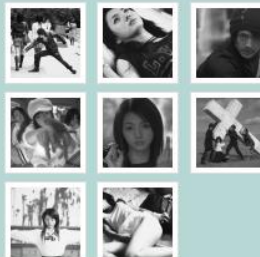
'Fine, Totally Fine', *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013,
<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/fine-totally-fine>.



Play Trailer

Gallery

These images are free to use under [certain conditions](#). All images should be credited appropriately, in addition to Third Window Films.



Original Title: Ai no Mukidashi
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2009
Rating: 18
Genre: Comedy, Drama
Running Time: 237 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Love Exposure

Dir: Sion Sono

Writer: Sion Sono

Cast: Takahiro Nishijima, Hikari Mitsushima, Sakura Ando, Makiko Watanabe, Atsuro Watabe

Tokyo teen Yu Honda (Takahiro Nishijima) is the traumatized son of a widower-cum-Catholic priest (Atsuro Watabe), who begins a sexual liaison with parishioner Kaori (Makiko Watanabe). When Dad's affair comes to a halt, he begins admonishing his son to confess to so many sins that the 17-year-old takes up new ones to appease his father's increased religious zeal. One "sin" - surreptitiously taking candid photographs of panties worn by female pedestrians - becomes a vocation. Unfortunately, a deal with a porn company comes undone when Yu turns down starring roles, because he admits he's saving himself for a Virgin Mary-like ideal woman.

On cue, the narrative introduces feisty schoolgirl Yoko (Hikari Mitsushima), who loathes men and enjoys beating them up for their moronic attitudes. Yu falls in love and tries to win her, fully aware that exposure of his superstar status will enrage her. Observing the development of this bizarre courtship is religious cult rep Aya Koike (Sakura Ando). Aya not only wants to claim Yoko for herself but aims to convert each of the protagonists to her own spiritual cause. Pointed (and pointless) violence ensues at various intervals, beginning with Aya's castration of her comatose father.

Date of Domestic Cinema Release: 31st January 2009

[Retweet](#)
[Like](#)
28

Blu-ray Disc Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

zavvi.com

thehut

BD Release Date: August 6th, 2012

BD Specifications: New high definition transfer supervised by Sion Sono, 5.1 Surround Sound, Removable English subtitles

BD Bonus Features: 1 hour long Making Of, Additional 30 minute Making Of with Sion Sono interview, Hikari Mitsushima deleted & extended scenes, Sakura Ando deleted & extended scenes, Zero Church deleted scene, Theatrical trailer

Crew

Producer: Umekawa Haruo

Executive Producer: Yokohama Toyoyuki, Kawai Shinya

Co-Executive Producer: Matsuoka Shusaku

Associate Producer: Yutaka Morohashi

Editor: Junichi Ito

Production Manager: Kaku Toda

Cinematography: Souhei Tanigawa

Music: Tomohide Harada

Lighting: Kaneko Yasuhiro

Make-up: Yoshihiro Nishimura

Costume Design: Chieko Matsumoto, Isao Karasawa

Casting: Mitsuyo Ishigaki

Presented in Association with: Phantom Films, Omega Project Ltd, Studio 3

DVD Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

hmv.com

DVD Release Date: 25th Jan 2010

DVD Specifications: Anamorphic widescreen, removable subtitles

DVD Bonus Features: 1 hour long "Making of", theatrical trailer and trailers of other Third Window Films titles

Recognition

Awards: Berlin Film Festival - Won Caligari Film Award, FIPRESCI Prize, Fantasia Film Festival - Won Best Asian Film, Jury Prize, Most Innovative Film, Special Jury Prize

More

Official Website: <http://www.ai-muki.com>

Press: [View London](#)

[BFI: Sight and Sound](#)

[Time Out](#)

[Channel 4](#)

[Electric Sheep](#)



‘Love Exposure’, *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/love-exposure>.



Play Trailer

Lala Pipo: A Lot of People

Dir: Masayuki Miyano
Writer: Tetsuya Nakashima
Cast: Yuri Nakamura, Tomoko Murakami, Hiroki Narimiya, Takashi Yoshimura, Sarutoki Minegawa, Mari Hamada

Written by Tetsuya Nakashima (MEMORIES OF MATSUKO, KAMIKAZE GIRLS) and shot in his candy-colored, hyper-surreal style, LALA PIPO is a crawl through the gutters of the porn industry in an desperate search for the hidden humanity of all the pimps, players, voyeurs, gangsters, hookers, A/V stars, and gangbang queens who make up the motley population of planet porno. Interweaving stories of the lost, the desperate, the horny and the repressed, LALA PIPO (a wordplay on "A lot of people,") ultimately finds hope in the darkest - and stickiest - places.

8 Retweet 2 Like

Gallery

These images are free to use under [certain conditions](#). All images should be credited appropriately, in addition to Third Window Films.



Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2008
Genre: Comedy
Running Time: 93 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Crew

Executive Producer: Yuji Ishida
Associate Producer: Michiyo Sato
Editor: Chiaki Toyama
Assistant Director: Katsumi Nojiri
Art Director: Yuji Tsuzuki
Cinematography: Atsushi Ozawa
Music: Yasushi Sasamoto
Lighting: Ryuji Fujii
Presented in Association with: Nikkatsu, Parco Co. Ltd, Desperado Inc., Hakuhodo DY Media, Topcoat Co. Ltd

DVD Info



DVD Release Date: 8th Feb 2010
DVD Specifications: Anamorphic widescreen, removable subtitles
DVD Bonus Features: "Making of", interviews with the cast and crew, theatrical trailer, trailers of other Third Window Films titles

More

Official Website: <http://www.lalapipo-movie.com>

Press: [The Japan Times Online](#)
[Electric Sheep](#)
[Empire](#)
[Channel 4](#)
[Beyond Hollywood](#)

'Lala Pipo', *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013,
<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/lala-pipo-a-lot-of-people>.



Play Trailer

Gallery

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Original Title: Insutanto Numa
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2009
Rating: PG
Genre: Comedy
Running Time: 120 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Instant Swamp

Dir: Miki Satoshi
Writer: Miki Satoshi
Cast: Kumiko Aso, Ryo Kase, Morio Kazama, Eri Fuse, Kankuro Kudo

After being forced to resign from her publishing company job when her magazine goes out of circulation, office worker Haname Jinchoge (Kumiko Aso) stumbles upon the name of her real father—Noburo Jinchoge. Flustered, she tries to confront her mother (Keiko Matsuzaka), but she had recently been rushed to the hospital after falling in a pond while searching for kappa. Eventually it's confirmed, and Haname decides to visit her father (Morio Kazama), who happens to be the storekeeper at an odd antiques shop called Light Bulb Co. However, she's initially doubtful, and keeps her relation to him a secret.

Haname becomes fascinated with the various oddities and charm of Light Bulb Co., and being closer to her father makes her decide to become a shopkeeper herself. Customers are hard to come by, but she listens to her dad's strange advice—like running the faucet whenever life is happy—and gains the support of a punk rocker named Gus (Ryo Kase). One day her father offers to sell her the key to his warehouse for 1 million yen to fund his next trip, which she excitedly agrees to without thinking. However, when she discovers a shocking fact about Light Bulb Co. she chucks the key away in disgust. She later realizes that she's been stubborn not telling Noburo he was her dad, but by the time she runs back to meet him he's already gone. Eventually Haname and Gus decide to find out what treasures are hidden away in the warehouse she inherited.

[Retweet](#) [Like](#) 16

Crew

Executive Producer: Takeshi Kato, Fumio Sameshima, Hirofumi Ogashi, Akira Ishi
Editor: Nobuyuki Takahashi
Art Director: Toshihiro Isomi
Production Company: Kadokawa
Cinematography: Shinya Kimura
Music: Osamu Sakaguchi
Lighting: Yauhiro Kaneko
Costume Design: Junko Katsumata, Kouko Yamase
Presented in Association with: Kadokawa Pictures, Unplugged Film, Pony Canyon

DVD Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

DVD Release Date: May 24th, 2010

DVD Specifications: Anamorphic Widescreen, Removable Subtitles

DVD Bonus Features: Theatrical Trailer, Trailers of other Third Window Films releases

More

Official Website: <http://instant-numa.jp>

Press: Myreviewer.com

[The Digital Fix](#)

[The Japan Times Online](#)

[Twitch](#)

[eFilmCritic](#)



'Instant Swamp', *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/instant-swamp>.



[Play Trailer](#)

Gallery

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Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2009
Rating: TBC
Genre: Drama
Running Time: 107 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Kakera: A Piece of Our Life

Dir: Momoko Ando

Writer: Momoko Ando

Cast: Hikari Mitsushima, Eriko Nakamura, Tasuku Nagaoka, Ken Mitsuishi, Toshie Negishi, Rino Katase

Based on the best-selling manga 'Love Vibes' by Erika Sakurazawa and featuring a soundtrack by James Iha, former guitarist of Smashing Pumpkins, the debut feature of Momoko Ando, is a delicately-nuanced portrait of two very different women. Haru, a college student, is frustrated by the lack of any real spark between her and her slobbish and indifferent boyfriend, who only seems to be interested in her for sex. One day, while brooding over a cappuccino in a cafe, she catches the eye of Riko. Riko joins her table and the two strike up a conversation in which she explains her job as a "medical artist", something slightly different from a prosthetics, in that rather than create body parts that attempt to emulate the function of those lost through accident and disease, her role is to cure the psychological traumas arising from the patient's physical deficiencies by balancing body and soul, creating parts that aesthetically make up for the loss. While Haru might be physically intact, Riko sees in her a certain emotional wanting to which she might provide a cure, and the two begin an all-encompassing relationship that draws Haru away from her dissatisfying routine and into a new and more emotionally fulfilling area of her life.

Date of Domestic Cinema Release: April 2nd, 2010

 10 [Retweet](#)
 [Like](#)
 60

Crew

Producer: Sakura Momoyama
Production Designer: Yuji Kasamura
Production Company: Zero Pictures
Cinematography: Hirokazu Ishii
Music: James Iha, Kazushiko Yokono
Lighting: Masaaki Sakurai

DVD Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

hmv.com

DVD Release Date: 21st June 2010

DVD Specifications: Anamorphic widescreen with removable english subtitles

DVD Bonus Features: Interview with Momoko Ando by Midnight Eye's Jasper Sharp, Footage from the London Theatrical Premiere with director Q&A, Theatrical trailer

Recognition

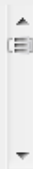
Awards: Best Camera Award - Kinotayo Film Festival (Paris)

Festivals: Raindance Film Festival (London), Kinotayo Film Festival (Paris), Stockholm Film Festival

More

Official Website: http://momoko-ando.com/kakera/index_e.html

Press: [Time Out](#)
[The Guardian](#)
[Morning Star](#)
[Empire](#)
[Total Film](#)



‘Kakera’, *Third Window* website, accessed 08/05/2013,

<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/kakera-a-piece-of-our-life>.



Play Trailer

Gallery

These images are free to use under [certain conditions](#). All images should be credited appropriately, in addition to Third Window Films.



Original Title: Fishu Sutori
Country: Japan
Year of Production: 2009
Rating: TBC
Genre: Drama
Running Time: 112 mins
Original Language: Japanese

Fish Story

Dir: Yoshihiro Nakamura
Writer: Tamio Hayashi
Cast: Atsushi Ito, Kengo Kora, Mikako Tabe, Gaku Hamada, Mirai Moriyama

Based on a novel by Kotaro Isaka, 'Fish Story' weaves together several seemingly separate storylines taking place at different points in time over a 37-year span to explain how a little-known punk rock song can save the world.

In 1975, an unpopular Japanese punk band called "Gekirin" (Wrath) starts work on their 3rd album. Unfortunately the band is a little ahead of its time; punk won't be marketable until the Sex Pistols debut in the UK the following year. Due to nonexistent sales, their record company decides to drop them and they break up soon after recording their final song: "Fish Story".

In 1982 a timid college student named Masashi (Gaku Hamada) becomes fascinated by strange rumors surrounding the song. Apparently, at a certain point in the recording there is a brief interlude where you can hear a woman scream. Later, he meets a mysterious woman at a party who inexplicably predicts that he will save the world one day.

In 2009 a teenager named Asami (Mikako Tabe) falls asleep during a school field trip and gets left behind on a boat. Initially distraught, she's eventually consoled by a kindly cook. Suddenly, men with guns storm in and attempt a boat-jacking.

In 2012 a huge comet can be seen in the sky on a path to destroy Earth. The US has failed in their attempt to blow it up and with only 5 hours left before impact, all major city streets are completely abandoned. That is, except for one record store that continues business as usual. Within the store, "Fish Story" can be heard playing on an old turntable...

Release sponsored by [Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation](#)

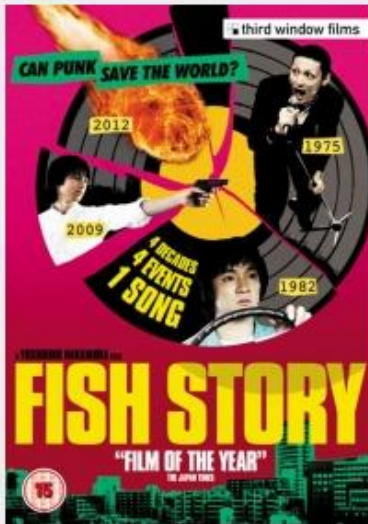
Date of Domestic Cinema Release: May 28th, 2010

11  Retweet  Like 27

Crew

Producer: Utagawa Yasushi, Endo Hitoshi
Editor: Eisuke Oohata
Art Director: Nakamae Tomoharu
Production Company: Dub
Cinematography: Takashi Komatsu
Music: Sasaki Tsugihiko
Lighting: Mastuoka Yasuhiko
Presented in Association with: Showgate

DVD Info



amazon.co.uk

PLAY.COM

hmv.com

DVD Release Date: July 26th 2010

DVD Specifications: Anamorphic Widescreen, Removable Subtitles

DVD Bonus Features: 35 minute 'Making Of' ; 'Gekirin' Live at Tower Records Shibuya ; Theatrical Trailer

More

Official Website: <http://fishstory-movie.jp/>

Press: [Time Out](#)

[Fortean Times](#)

[Viewlondon](#)

[Beyond Hollywood](#)

[Electric Sheep Magazine](#)



'Fish Story', *Third Window* website, accessed 06/05/2013,

<http://thirdwindowfilms.com/films/fish-story>.

Appendix Three: Third Window Films' Newsletters¹

Subject: Third Window Films Newsletter #12
From: adam@thirdwindowfilms.com
To: Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers
Date: Sun, 9 Jan 2011 11:31:12

Third Window Films Newsletter #12

Welcome to the Third Window Films' newsletter! Loads more from us including news on our new releases plus some great information on various Asian film going-ons happening in the UK this month.

'East Winds: A Third Window Film Festival'

From February 11th to 13th 2011, Third Window Films in conjunction with the Coventry University East Asian Film Society present East Winds: A Third Window Film Festival at the Warwick Arts Centre. Our goal is to raise awareness of Asian cinema to a university crowd who might normally not have much chance to catch Asian cinema on the big screen. With a 220-seater cinema, cheap ticket prices and a variety of films from all over Asia being shown, Third Window Films and CUEAFS hope you can all enjoy a new type of cinema and let us help you explore a window to the East!

'Confessions' out in cinemas February 18th

Confessions

'Confessions', the latest masterpiece from 'Memories of Matsuko' and 'Kamikaze Girls' director Tetsuya Nakashima starts its theatrical run on February 18th at various cinemas across the UK. In London full-runs are confirmed at the ICA, Ritzy and Genesis (with more to be confirmed soon), plus one-off screenings at places such as the Tricycle Theatre and more. Regional cinema confirmations are also coming in soon, so keep on checking the Third Window website for up to date information.

The DVD and Blu-ray release is tentatively set for April 11th, though this is subject to change.

'Confessions' will also play with 'Cold Fish' and 'Confessions of a Dog' at the Glasgow Film Festival which takes place from Feb 17th-27th. 'Confessions of a Dog' will play with the director in attendance.

¹ Five examples in total – a full record of all the newsletters could not be obtained in time for completion of the research.

'Confessions of a Dog' special one-off screening at the ICA

Gen Takahashi's controversial epic film on police corruption in Japan will have a one-off cinema screening in London on Feb 16th at the ICA. Too controversial to be screened in Japan, this critically acclaimed work has instead been distributed out of Hong Kong and has only been seen by a select number of festival crowds throughout the world, so here is your chance to catch it on the big screen.

Director Gen Takahashi will be in attendance for a Q&A session after the film.

For more information and to buy tickets please go [HERE](#)

'Memories of Matsuko' Blu-ray up for Pre-Order

Memories of Matsuko

To celebrate the release of 'Confessions', we will be releasing Tetsuya Nakashima's earlier masterpiece 'Memories of Matsuko' on blu-ray on Feb 14th, 2011. If you haven't seen it before, check out the film which made it into Time Out's 'Film of the Year' list in their 'Best of the Year' bumper issue a couple years back upon its theatrical release.

The blu-ray release will feature a true 1080 transfer with 5.1 surround sound and removable subtitles, plus will have a 30 minute 'Making of', storyboard to film comparison, exclusive interview with Gabriele Roberto - the award-winning composer of 'Matsuko', theatrical trailer and trailers of other Third Window releases.

You can pre-order it now at Amazon.co.uk

Third Window Films New Year Sale

Fish Story Kamikaze Girls Love Exposure

Right now we've got a killer sale going on at the Third Window Amazon Store

Many titles at under £5! Including:

'Fish Story' - Can punk rock save the world? Find out in this genre-bending roller-coaster ride!

'Kamikaze Girls' - Celebrate Tetsuya Nakashima with his breakout film, now in a super 2 disc special edition.

'Instant Swamp' - Another quirky Japanese comic gem from Miki Satoshi (Turtles are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers).
'Love Exposure' - The 4 hour long Japanese epic chosen by Midnight Eye's readers as 'Best Japanese Film of the Decade'.

East Asian Cinema and Events in the UK

Japan Underground February UK Tour

The UK's exclusive Japanese music club night returns, bringing the finest and most exciting rock, pop and dance tunes of Japan to the cities of London, Birmingham, Brighton and Nottingham this February. Expect authentic karaoke, a Japanese style purikura photobooth, Harajuku fashion and the first overseas performance from Tokyo's urban techno-punk act Hibari!

Full information on dates and venue on their [WEBSITE](#) or [FACEBOOK](#)

Asian Movies Meetup Group

As always the teams of Third Window and Terracotta Distribution will be joining forces to host various free Asian film screenings across London every month. We are now screening at The Life Bar in Old Street. The Life Bar is a nice little Japanese bar that is connected to a top class Japanese restaurant so you can get some great Japanese food as well as a wide variety of Japanese drinks.

This month we will be screening Miki Satoshi's wonderful 'Adrift in Tokyo' on January 11th from 7pm. Miki Satoshi directed two films released by Third Window, 'Turtles are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers' and 'Instant Swamp', so if you liked those then you're definitely going to love this one!

Copies of 'Adrift in Tokyo' as well as other Third Window DVDs will be available to buy on the night.

Please join up to our group to find out about all future gatherings. Go to www.meetup.com/AsianMovies for more details.

Remember to check us out on Facebook and Twitter.
If you'd like to buy any of our products please go to our Amazon Store.
As always you can find all information on our website www.thirdwindowfilms.com

Subject: Third Window Films Newsletter 18: UK Riots, Villain, Support TWF!
From: adam@thirdwindowfilms.com
To: Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers
Date: Sat, 13 Aug 2011 09:28:07

Third Window Films Newsletter #18

Welcome to the Third Window Films' newsletter! Loads more from us including news on our new releases plus some great information on various Asian film going-ons happening in the UK this month.

The UK Riots and their affect on UK independent film distribution and Third Window Films

Recently London and many other cities in the UK were hit by some of the worst riots in history, leaving 5 people dead, shops destroyed, mass-looting and hundreds of thousands of lives affected.

During these riots the Sony warehouse in Enfield was looted and burnt down. This warehouse was the main stockist for the majority of small to medium sized film and music distribution labels (along with some of the majors) in the UK. Third Window Films, along with Terracotta Distribution, Arrow Films, Network, Peccadillo Pictures, Dogwoof, BFI, Eureka and many more had most, if not all of their stock destroyed. We lost nearly 20,000 units of stock.

This is an undoubted tragedy and nobody is sure yet how this will affect the long-term situation for us and many of these companies, though what we can try to explain is that there will be a massive impact on the short term. While our stock was insured, it was only the number of units destroyed and units which will be replaced in terms of stock credit with Sony. Unfortunately with Sony's minimum top up of 500 units (luckily they've changed from the 1000 as previously required) we will need to pay for all the difference in units replicated against credit. For example as we had more than 10 films which had under 500 units of stock in at the time, we need to pay the difference for all stock below 500 to top it up to the minimum number. While this may only equate to around 3,000-4,000 units, it still means paying that amount at a time when we won't have been generating sales, which is another major problem with the situation...

This other major problem is that with this affecting so many companies, and right leading to the main Q4 campaigns, all other companies that are larger (we are one of the smallest in the UK) will have priority in having their titles replicated and put back into circulation. We should get a couple of our larger titles such as Confessions back into circulation quickly, but it may take a couple months before our catalogue titles get back into circulation, and with no units available for sale anywhere (Amazon is nearly sold out of all films across our whole catalogue) we will lose a massive chunk of our earnings over the next few months. Unfortunately as such a small company we don't have business interruption insurance which covers companies in the event of such situations. Ironically the larger companies have such

insurance and yet their stock will be replicated first despite the fact they're covered for the eventual losses, so this will really hit the smaller companies the hardest (as is usually the case).

We will endeavor to get through this situation and plan on keeping our release schedule of 2011 on track. 'Sawako Decides' and 'Quirky Guys and Gals' will still be out October 3rd, though 'Underwater Love' has been moved to November 21st. We can't really plan too far into the future as we're really unsure right now as to how bad this will affect us.

What we ask of you, our fans, is to get the word out about us and other small niche labels like Terracotta Distribution, Arrow Films, Network, etc and get people interested in supporting independent cinema through these hard times. We don't have any new stock to send to stores, but there are still a few copies of our films on places like Amazon, Play.com and in high-street stores such as HMV and Fopp, so if there was a title you were thinking about picking up, please go out and buy it now so that we can convince stores that ours are worth restocking sooner rather than later. Alternately, we are trying to make many of our titles available to view online via MUBI so if you want to spread the word through that you can legally watch our titles through your PC or Playstation.

Thanks for your support and we'll try hard to get through this!

'Villain' - Theatrical Release from August 19th

With the loss of DVD sales we desperately want this film to be a success so please spread the word on it and go see it in the cinema!

'Villain' was nominated for 15 Japanese Academy Awards (winning 5) as well as winning the Best Actress prize at the Montreal Film Festival and picked by the Kinema Junpo critics organisation as the Best Japanese Film of 2010. It's one of our favourite films in a while and has stellar performances by some of the leading names in Japanese cinema in Eri Fukatsu ('Magic Hour'), Satoshi Tsumabuki ('Tokyo!', 'Villion's Wife'), Masaki Okada ('Confessions'), Hikari Mitsushima ('Love Exposure', 'Sawako Decides'), Kirin Kiki ('Still Walking', 'Kamikaze Girls') and Akira Emoto ('Zatoichi', 'Dr. Akagi')

It will have a limited initial run across a few cities in the UK, but if it's popular then it will spread to more cities, so we're asking everyone to go out and see it plus tell all your friends!

You can see the trailer here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGUeUi3_rc4
and view a list of all the places it's playing here: <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/events>

Third Window Films on MUBI

With our stock all destroyed in the Sony fire, and long delays before we can get more replicated, we have teamed up with MUBI to make many of our titles available to view online through your computer, iPhone or PS3.

Not all of our titles are available yet (and some will never be due to contractual issues with internet rights), but a good chunk of the Third Window catalogue is there for you to watch and tell your friends about.

You can find a list of all our titles available to buy and watch at:
<http://mubi.com/distributors/167>

East Asian Cinema and Events in the UK

Shinjuku Diaries: Films from The Art Theatre Guild of Japan

For the month of August at the BFI, the UK's first retrospective of films from the Art Theatre Guild of Japan will have a glorious run with many classic and obscure titles playing on the big screen.

'Shinjuku Diaries: Films from The Art Theatre Guild of Japan' celebrates a period in the 1960's and 70's when Japan's film industry was experiencing considerable shifts in its development. The Art Theatre Guild of Japan (ATG), became an alternative to traditional film culture, bringing together outcasts and countercultural icons. Beginning with Imamura's genre blurring 'A Man Vanishes' and Oshima's absurdist farce 'Death by Hanging', ATG became the driving force behind a burst of creativity that molded a generation of Japanese filmmakers. The BFI season finishes with the iconic Terayama's 'Pastoral Hide and Seek' a fantastical look at a man's past, present and future.

Full information on all films playing can be found [HERE](#)

Harajuku Ball - August 20th @ The Miller in London Bridge

HARAJUKU! returns by popular demand when Criminal Records presents the Harajuku! Autumn Ball. As the latest installment of London's most notorious Japanese themed club night, the event celebrates Japanese wonders like Geishas, Lolita's, Comics, Gaming, Origami, Karaoke, Manga, Art and a mix of Live Bands, Indie Music and JPOP.

You can find out more information on their [FACEBOOK PAGE](#)

Japan Underground - September 3rd @ Bloomsbury Bowling Lanes

Japan Underground returns in London at the Bloomsbury Bowling Lanes on September 3rd as a special double-event

First off in the afternoon there will be a party in support of Third Window Films, Terracotta Distribution and other Asian film labels affected by the Sony fire with free movie screenings! Then the party goes into full swing in the evening with live music and album launch of the band Unshin (<http://unshin.co.uk/>) plus djs spinning Japanese pop, punk, techno and rock till late!

Check out all the event information on their FACEBOOK PAGE and hope to see you all there!

Asian Movies Meetup Group

Third Window Films and Terracotta Distribution run a group that gets together once or twice a month for free movie screenings in order to promote Asian cinema more in the UK

We scout locations and then show films that most of the time have not been seen anywhere else in the UK, so it's a great opportunity to find out more about Asian cinema whilst meeting people who have similar passion and enthusiasm.

You can sign up to our group at <http://www.meetup.com/asianmovies> to find out when the next one is!

Remember to check us out on Facebook and Twitter.

If you'd like to buy any of our products please go to our Amazon Store.

As always you can find all information on our website www.thirdwindowfilms.com

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Subject: Third Window Films Newsletter 19: Sawako Decides, Quirky Guys and Gals, Underwater Love

From: adam@thirdwindowfilms.com

To: Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers

Date: Sat, 1 Oct 2011 08:01:03

Third Window Films Newsletter #19

Welcome to the Third Window Films' newsletter! Loads more from us including news on our new releases plus some great information on various Asian film going-ons happening in the UK this month.

The Aftermath of the UK Riots

Here we are, nearly 2 months since the UK riots happened in which Sony's warehouse containing all the stock of ours, Terracotta Distribution, Arrow Films, Network, Peccadillo

Pictures, Dogwoof, BFI, Eureka and many more was destroyed. We lost nearly 20,000 units of stock and the impact on our business is something that still cannot be fully comprehended, except we know for sure that the next few months will be vital in deciding whether we will still be around next year.

We thank everyone for their great show of support during these times in buying what was left of our stock online and in shops plus viewing our films on sites like MUBI and others, and also in spreading the word to people who may have not heard of us in order to get more people interested in Asian cinema.

We'd also like to give a big thank out to our sales agent Murray Dibbs and his staff over at Fusion Media Sales who have had to deal with non-stop chaos trying to sort out what was going on and try to get everything back into circulation, and to Sony themselves who have worked round the clock replicating titles overseas and getting them back into the UK

About half of our titles are now fully back into circulation, with the other half hopefully within the next few weeks, so we are looking to be fully operational soon, though the loss of sales for nearly 2 months is something that has financially crippled us, so we ask again for your support in helping us and other small niche labels like Terracotta Distribution, Arrow Films, Network, etc and get people interested in supporting independent cinema through these hard times.

Titles are now appearing on Amazon, Play.com and in high-street stores such as HMV and Fopp, so if there was a title you were thinking about picking up, please go out and buy it now so that we can convince stores that ours are worth restocking sooner rather than later. Alternately, you can stream our titles via your PC, Ipad or PS3 on MUBI so if you want to spread the word through that you can legally watch our titles there.

Thanks again for your support and we'll try hard to get through this and bring you more quality Asian cinema in the New Year!

'Sawako Decides' and 'Quirky Guys and Gals' out on DVD Monday!

Sawako Decides

In our continuing attempt to bring independent Japanese cinema to the UK we will be releasing both 'Sawako Decides' and 'Quirky Guys and Gals' on DVD this Monday, October 3rd.

'Sawako Decides' (Kawa no Soko Kara Konnichiwa) comes from the young and talented mind of Yuya Ishii who was awarded the 19th Annual Pia Film Festival Scholarship to create this touching tale of a woman whose strive in life to be 'average' leads her on all sorts of strange and amusing paths. Starring Hikari Mitsushima of 'Love Exposure' and 'Kakera', 'Sawako' was picked to be in Official Selection at the Berlin Film Festival as well as winning the Fantasia Film Festival awards for Best Film and Actress and is highly recommended for all fans of new Japanese Indie cinema.

Also make sure to check out the director's latest 'Mitsuko Delivers' playing at this year's London Film Festival

Our other Japanese release this month sees production company New Cinema Workshop with a project developed to help teach young producers how to create a film. 'Quirky Guys and Gals' (Sabi Otoko Sabi Onna) brings 4 Japanese directors together to create an omnibus of films looking at 'strange' characters in strange situations. 2 of the directors involved should already be well known for readers of this newsletter, Yosuke Fujita brought us the deadpan comedy 'Fine, Totally Fine' while Gen Sekiguchi brought us the over-the-top 'Survive Style 5'.

Buy them both now over at our Amazon Store

'Underwater Love' - UK Premiere with live gig by Stereo Total!

We've dealt with some strange films in our time, but 'Underwater Love' may take the cake as the weirdest, wildest, most over-the-top Japanese film you've ever see!

The combination of Japanese pink (softcore porn) film director Shinji Imaoka (Frog Song, Lunch Box) with legendary cinematographer CHRISTOPHER DOYLE (Hero, In the Mood for Love, Chungking Express) and German/French synth-pop duo STEREO TOTAL have come up with Japan's first 'Pink Musical', a softcore porn musical!

To celebrate this epic coming together, we are having a big party on Sunday, October 16th at the Rich Mix in London from 6:30pm-Midnight

The event will see the UK premiere of 'Underwater Love' with introduction by its producer Stephan Holl.

After the screening Stereo Total will play a full set including many of the original songs they created for the film.

Tickets are £15 and available to buy at: <http://www.wegottickets.com/ThirdWindowFilms> (18 and over)

View the film's TRAILER (must be 18, contains nudity)

'Villain' - Still out in a limited regional release

'Villain' was nominated for 15 Japanese Academy Awards (winning 5) as well as winning the Best Actress prize at the Montreal Film Festival and picked by the Kinema Junpo critics organisation as the Best Japanese Film of 2010. It's one of our favourite films in a while and has stellar performances by some of the leading names in Japanese cinema in Eri Fukatsu ('Magic Hour'), Satoshi Tsumabuki ('Tokyo!', 'Villion's Wife'), Masaki Okada ('Confessions'), Hikari Mitsushima ('Love Exposure', 'Sawako Decides'), Kirin Kiki ('Still Walking', 'Kamikaze Girls') and Akira Emoto ('Zatoichi', 'Dr. Akagi')

'Villain' is still playing a few regional cinemas with upcoming screenings in Glasgow, Cardiff, Coventry, Birmingham, Manchester and other cities

You can see the trailer here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGUEUi3_rc4
and view a list of all the places it's playing here: <http://thirdwindowfilms.com/events>

Third Window Films on MUBI

With our stock all destroyed in the Sony fire, and long delays before we can get more replicated, we have teamed up with MUBI to make many of our titles available to view online through your computer, iPhone or PS3.

Not all of our titles are available yet (and some will never be due to contractual issues with internet rights), but a good chunk of the Third Window catalogue is there for you to watch and tell your friends about.

You can find a list of all our titles available to buy and watch at:
<http://mubi.com/distributors/167>

East Asian Cinema and Events in the UK

Terrorcotta Presents 'Death Bell'

Terrorcotta, the new sub-label from Terracotta Distribution presents their first release, Korean slasher-horror 'Death Bell'

Called by Chud.com "Equal parts Battle Royale and Saw with a dash of Ringu", 'Death Bell' is recommended for all fans of Asian Extreme cinema.

You can buy it [HERE](#)

Guilty of Romance at the ICA Cinema!

'Guilty of Romance' (Koi no Tsumi), Sion Sono's follow up to 'Love Exposure' and 'Cold Fish' is now playing at the ICA Cinema in London!

Make sure to go and check out the latest work from this master of cult cinema!

Check out full screening times and buy tickets [HERE](#)

Japan Underground - October 15th @ Bloomsbury Bowling Lanes

Japan Underground returns in London at the Bloomsbury Bowling Lanes on October 15th with 3 live bands (Tokyo Pinsalocks, HONDALADY & GalapagosS)!

Japan Underground has always claimed to bring the energy and sparkle of Tokyo's alternative night life to the UK, and on Saturday 15 October it'll bring the neon metropolis' indie scene too! Taking place at London's Bloomsbury Lanes in Russell Square, and within walking distance from Euston and Holborn tube stations, the event will feature live music from three Japanese artists, and feature tracks from Japan's rock, punk, visual kei and quirky pop scenes until 3am.

Check out all the event information on their FACEBOOK PAGE!

HAA-TO BII-TO ハートビート in Hoxton - New Music from Tokyo & London - 22nd October @7.30pm

A live music night including the exclusive UK debut of Tokyo-based band Lo-Fi (www.lofi-net.com) and the J-Pop/Rock influenced band Unshin (www.unshin.co.uk). All ticket-holders for the event will also enter a prize draw to win one of a selection of films from Terracotta Distribution.

Full details for this event can be found at:

<http://lofi-net.blogspot.com/> and their Facebook page

Asian Movies Meetup Group - Halloween Horror

Third Window Films and Terracotta Distribution run a group that gets together once or twice a month for free movie screenings in order to promote Asian cinema more in the UK

Being close to Halloween (well, close enough), we will be having a special Halloween Horror event at the Roxy Bar and Screen in London Bridge

Terracotta Distribution are giving the audience a chance to see one of their latest horror outings: 'Death Bell' or 'Revenge: A Love Story' by putting both titles up for a vote. You can choose which title you'd rather watch so get there, get seated and get voting on how you want to be scared!

The bar is open from 6pm with loads of great food (really nice Gastropub food) and the voting will start from 7pm. Make sure to get there early to grab a comfy seat (the sofas tend to go quickly!)

You can sign up to our group at <http://www.meetup.com/asianmovies> to attend!

Remember to check us out on Facebook and Twitter.

If you'd like to buy any of our products please go to our Amazon Store.
As always you can find all information on our website www.thirdwindowfilms.com

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Subject: Third Window Films: Release Date Changes!
From: adam@thirdwindowfilms.com
To: Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers
Date: Fri, 7 Oct 2011 20:29:27

Third Window Films: Update

Due to continuing problems with Sony we have had to move the release dates of 'Quirky
Guys and Gals' and 'Sawako Decides'

Sawako Decides

Quirky Guys and Gals - OCTOBER 10th

Sawako Decides - OCTOBER 24th

Please don't let this put you off ordering. We're in serious financial trouble here since the
Sony Warehouse Fire and these continuing problems with Sony messing up, so we really
need your support with making these titles successful!

Buy them both now over at our Amazon Store

ALSO DON'T FORGET TO COME TO:

'Underwater Love' - UK Premiere with live gig by Stereo Total!

The combination of Japanese pink (softcore porn) film director Shinji Imaoka (Frog Song,
Lunch Box) with legendary cinematographer CHRISTOPHER DOYLE (Hero, In the Mood
for Love, Chungking Express) and German/French synth-pop duo STEREO TOTAL have
come up with Japan's first 'Pink Musical', a softcore porn musical!

To celebrate this epic coming together, we are having a big party on Sunday, October 16th at
the Rich Mix in London from 6:30pm-Midnight

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Stephan Holl.

After the screening Stereo Total will play a full set including many of the original songs they
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View the film's TRAILER (must be 18, contains nudity)

Remember to check us out on Facebook and Twitter.
If you'd like to buy any of our products please go to our Amazon Store.
As always you can find all information on our website www.thirdwindowfilms.com

Subject: Happy Holidays from Third Window Films
From: adam@thirdwindowfilms.com
To: Third Window Films Newsletter Subscribers
Date: Sat, 24 Dec 2011 11:23:12

Happy Holidays from Third Window Films!

A message from Third Window Films

First off I'd like to wish everyone the best over this Holiday season and hope you all have a great New Year.

2011 was a strange year for Third Window Films. We started with our strongest year to date, with the successful releases of such big films as 'Confessions' and 'Cold Fish' together with hits of smaller films like 'Confessions of a Dog' and 'Sawako Decides' plus our foray into the blu-ray market with titles like 'Memories of Matsuko' and 'Kamikaze Girls' released in high definition alongside newer titles like 'Confessions' and 'Cold Fish'. We also started our first film festival, the East Winds Film Festival along with the CUEAFS at Coventry University, which was a huge success and we will continue next year with bigger films and talent coming over.

It was all going so great, with the 2nd part of 2011 bringing an even wider selection of Japanese titles, from the multiple award-winning 'Villain' to the small, but very unique titles such as the Christopher Doyle-shot pink-musical 'Underwater Love' and the omnibus film 'Quirky Guys and Gals'. We were very much thinking of how much more we could expand until...

Some idiots decided to burn down the Sony warehouse containing all the stock of ours and other similar sized independent film and music distribution companies

To be honest, after that it really did look like it was over for us. We lost around 20,000 dvds in the fire, and it took nearly 3 months to recover them, during which time we lost a massive share of sales and saw the market for film distribution in the UK crippled with retailers like HMV showing record losses and barely placing any orders for films.

Personally, I thought strongly about closing Third Window Films down, but we received so many great messages from all our customers and thought "why give it all up after taking so many years to get to this position?". With that we've decided to keep on going, and going

even stronger by attempting to expand and pick up bigger and better films and make sure that Japanese cinema is represented better in the UK than any other country in the West!

A big thanks to all of you that have supported us through these tough times. Without you, Third Window Films and Japanese cinema in the UK would be nothing, so I'd personally like to thank everyone who supported us in any way!!

Let's make 2012 even better for Japanese cinema in the UK!!

- Adam Torel, Managing Director

and with that, some news for what's in store for 2012...

First off, some not as good news...

In order to balance the books from the huge amount of money we lost due to the Sony fire, and in order to buy bigger and better films for release in 2012 (plus to keep releasing blu-rays of our new titles), we unfortunately have to slightly raise our prices starting from January 31st, 2012.

The price difference won't be much, most DVD titles will remain around £10 and blu-rays at £15, but it's a necessity to keep on strong in 2012. We hope this doesn't put too many of you off, but we will continue to make our releases strong value-for-money with films which are hard to find anywhere else with extras-heavy releases and exclusive extras as much as possible.

Until January 31st you can find all our titles as VERY CHEAP sale prices on our Amazon Store. Here you can pickup our dvd titles for around £5 and blu-rays under £10. Snap them up at these prices while you still can!!

Some of our big theatrical releases planned for 2012: 'KOTOKO', 'Himizu' and 'Mitsuko Delivers'

In terms of contemporary Japanese cinema, we hope to provide the best quality and variety in 2012. We have secured the rights to both Japanese films to win major awards at the 68th Annual Venice Film Festival: Shinya Tsukamoto's (Tetsuo: The Ironman, Bullet Ballet) 'KOTOKO', winner of the Best Film Prize in the Orizzonti Section and Sion Sono's (Love Exposure, Cold Fish) 'Himizu', the winner of the Marcello Mastroianni Award for Best Young Actor and Actress. We will also be releasing 'Mitsuko Delivers' the latest from Yuya Ishii (Sawako Decides, A Man of Style) which received great acclaim when playing recently at the 2011 London Film Festival.

In terms of release dates, our proposed dates will be

Himizu - April 27th

Mitsuko Delivers - May 18th

KOTOKO - TBC, but probably last week of August/first week of September

Himizu and KOTOKO will both receive blu-ray releases along with DVD. Mitsuko Delivers will come out on DVD only

Keep checking back on the Third Window website for more information

DVD Releases for early 2012

The first half of 2012 will see some back-catalogue Japanese films released onto DVD.

On February 27th we see the release of (in our opinion) the best film from Third Window Films' favourite Miki Satoshi with 'Adrift in Tokyo' starring Odagiri Joe alongside other Miki Satoshi regulars such as Eri Fuse, Iwamatsu Ryo and others.

On the same day we will be releasing a very limited edition collection to pay tribute to Miki Satoshi with a box containing his 3 best films of: 'Adrift in Tokyo', 'Turtles are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers' and 'Instant Swamp'

and on April 23rd we see the release of Keralino Sandorovich's 'Crime or Punishment?!?' on DVD' for the first time in the world with English-subtitles. Keralino Sandorovich worked with Miki Satoshi on the TV show 'Jikou Keisatsu' so you can expect a similar random and odd sense of humour in his film. Recommended to all fans of Miki Satoshi and other strange Japanese comedies!

Pre-Order now directly from the Third Window Films Amazon Page

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Periodicals

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Filmography

20th Century Boys (dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiko, 2008-2009 – 4Digital Asia DVDs, 2009 (Chapter One) and 2010 (Trilogy)).

Black Kiss (dir. Tezuka Macoto, 2004 - 4Digital Asia DVD, 2008).

Cyborg She (dir. Kwak Jae-young, 2008 - 4Digital Asia DVD, 2009).

Death Note (dir, Kaneko Shusuke, 2006 – 4Digital Asia DVD, 2008).

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¹ Not every issue of *NEO* from 2008 to 2010 was found to be relevant in discussing, as well as mentioning, Japanese films released by 4Digital Asia and Third Window. Issue 48, from August 2008, was the first of chronological significance, as it contains a review of the 4Digital Asia DVD release of *Death Note* (dir. Kaneko Shusuke, 2006). Issue 76, from October 2010, was the last of similar significance, as it contains a review of the DVD release of *Death Tube* (dir. Fukuda Yohei, 2008), also distributed by 4Digital Asia. However, between Issues 48 to 76, there were issues that did not make mention of Japanese films released by either 4Digital Asia and Third Window – these were issues numbered 49, 50, 55, and 75.

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Fine, Totally Fine (dir. Fujita Yosuke, 2008 – Third Window DVD, 2009).

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Funuke, Show Some Love You Losers! (dir. Yoshida Daihachi, 2007 – Third Window DVD, 2009).

Goth: Love of Death (dir. Takahashi Gen, 2008 - 4Digital Asia DVD 2009).

Hidden Fortress: The Last Princess (dir. Higuchi Shinji, 2008 – 4Digital Asia DVD, 2010).

Instant Swamp (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2009 – Third Window DVD, 2010).

Ju-On: White Ghost and Black Ghost (dir. Miyake Ryuta and Asato Mari, 2009 – 4Digital Asia DVD, 2010).

Kaiji (dir. Sato Toya, 2009 – 4Digital Asia DVD, 2010).

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Memories of Matsuko (dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2006 – Third Window DVD, 2009).

Samurai Princess (dir. Kaji Kengo, 2009 – 4Digital Asia DVD, 2009).

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Tokyo Gore Police (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro, 2008 – 4Digital Asia DVD, 2009).

Turtles Are Surprisingly Fast Swimmers (dir. Miki Satoshi, 2005 – Third Window DVD, 2009).

Vampire Girl vs Frankenstein Girl (dir. Nishimura Yoshihiro and Tomomatsu Naoyuki, 2009 – 4Digital Asia DVD, 2010).

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Yo Yo Girl Cop (dir. Fukasaku Kenta, 2006 - 4Digital Asia DVD, 2008).

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