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## PSYCHEDELIC, SURREALIST AND SUBVERSIVE: JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL UNVEILS PROVOCATIVE CLASSICS PROGRAM

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From 5 December 2020 – 3 March 2021, The 24<sup>th</sup> Japanese Film Festival (JFF) celebrates the subversive in *Provocation and Disruption: Radical Japanese Filmmaking from the 1960s to the 2000s*, a FREE Classics program coming to cinemas in **Canberra** (NFSA), **Brisbane** (QAGOMA) and **Sydney** (AGNSW).

From revolutionary Japanese New Wave cinema to surrealist psychedelic expressions and gritty cyberpunk, the program features boundary-shattering masterpieces from avant-garde Japanese auteurs including **Seijun Suzuki**, **Shinya Tsukamoto** and **Nobuhiko Ōbayashi**.

“From the visually audacious to the sonically shocking, the 2020 Classics program is a celebration of the visionary filmmakers that transcended the cultural conventions of their times and redefined the paradigms of Japanese cinema,” said **Japanese Film Festival Programmer, Simonne Goran**.

“Eschew traditional narrative structures and dive headfirst into the abstract with otherworldly stories that are sure to resonate long after you leave the cinema,” said **Japanese Film Festival Program Director, Yurika Sugie**.

Highlights include award-winning horror films – Shinya Tsukamoto’s Fantafestival Best Film winning cyberpunk classic *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*, a horrific, visceral story of revenge that explores the relationship between humanity and technology; and Nobuhiko Ōbayashi’s Blue Ribbon Best New Director winning experimental horror film *House*, about six school girls’ deadly visit to a supernatural mansion with a proclivity for devouring humans.

Other award-winning films include: Brisbane International Film Festival FIRPESCI Prize Winner *Pistol Opera*, a stylistic action-packed drama about a number three ranked assassin who embarks on a bloodthirsty mission to ascend to the top rank in the hierarchy of assassins at her secretive workplace; and the Fantafestival Best Film and Best Director winning *Mind Game*, a mind-bending animation chronicling the psychedelic journey of an aspiring manga writer following his murder at the hands of Yakuza loan sharks.

Catch a rare glimpse into the queer community of 1960s Japan in *Funeral Parade of Roses*, an intoxicating film following the trials and tribulations of Tokyo’s underground gay scene; explore political radicalism in arthouse biopic *Eros + Massacre*, which intertwines two parallel stories from likeminded anarchists living in different time periods; and immerse yourself in the chaotic love story between a book thief and a woman posing as a store clerk who catches him in the act in the anti-establishment New Wave film *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*.

Rounding out the program is Nobuhiko Ōbayashi’s experimental short film *Emotion*, which melds reality and dreamlike imagery to craft a bizarre love story between a young girl and an enigmatic vampire.

The Classics program is part of the annual Japanese Film Festival presented by The Japan Foundation, Sydney and made possible by The Japan Foundation Film Library.

The Classics program is free admission. See [japanesefilmfestival.net](http://japanesefilmfestival.net) for ticketing details.

**2020 Japanese Film Festival Classics films include:**

- ***Tetsuo: The Iron Man (1989)***

Marked as director Shinya Tsukamoto's (*Killing, JFF2018*) breakout film, *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* tells a horrific visceral story of the relationship between humanity and technology. Metal Fetishist, a strange contagious man with a compulsion for stuffing metal into his body, is on a mission to get back at Salary Man and his girlfriend for running him over with their car. After the accident, Salary Man starts sprouting metal parts from his body. Unbeknownst to Salary Man, his nemesis Metal Fetishist is controlling his lurid, hell-like transformation and will soon be back to exact his revenge.

- ***Pistol Opera (2001)***

The deadly Stray Cat is ranked number three in The Guild, an organisation of assassins so secretive that she herself isn't fully convinced it exists. When the mysterious Sayoko Uekyō assigns Stray Cat a new target, The Guild's number one assassin, Hundred Eyes, Stray Cat's hunger for power and status wins out and she embarks on a hunt to claw her way to the top of The Guild.

Thirty years after *Branded to Kill*, master filmmaker Seijun Suzuki returns with his signature style, complete with outlandish yet tight storylines, offbeat editing, lavish colour and over-the-top action.

- ***Funeral Parade of Roses (1969)***

A subversive take on the Greek tragedy *Oedipus*, this intoxicating and surreal film follows Eddie, played by Shinnosuke Ikehata aka Peter (*Ran*), a notorious hostess and rising star of a queer nightclub in Tokyo's underground scene. Eddie is enveloped in destructive intimacy and a violently jealous love triangle, and as a result is confronted with traumatic childhood memories. This all comes to a head with the film's dizzying climax, fuelled by a whirlwind of drugs, sex, music and undeniably fabulous glamour.

Catch a rare glimpse into the queer community of 1960s Japan through this visual and sonic cacophony of Japanese New Wave cinema.

- ***Emotion (1967)***

The dreamlike world of this experimental short film from the late Nobuhiko Ōbayashi depicts a young girl named Emi who moves from her seaside home to the city. There, she befriends a girl named Sari, and the two enjoy sun-kissed, youthful days together until both Emi and Sari fall in love with the same man, leading one to turn her jealous desire toward an enigmatic vampire played by Ōbayashi himself. But for this surreal short film, the plot takes a back seat to a cross-genre hotchpotch of cinematic styles and techniques in mesmerising succession.

- ***Mind Game (2004)***

Robin Nishi is a 20-year-old loser who dreams of becoming a manga artist. One day, he runs into his childhood crush Myon and begins to reminisce about what could have been, but his sad life is cut tragically short when he is shot and killed by a yakuza loan shark. Instead of

moving on to the great beyond, Nishi's death gives him a fresh perspective and a new lease on life.

What ensues is a psychedelic comedy road trip that takes Nishi and Myon inside the belly of a gigantic whale, with surreal sequences and montages offering insight into the background of the various characters.

- ***Eros + Massacre (1970)***

This biopic follows the life of Sakae Ōsugi, a Taishō Era (1912-1926) anarchist known as a proponent of sexual freedom. His three lovers aren't all as enamoured with his flouting of the monogamous sexual mores of the time, which, when combined with his detractors' distaste for his non-traditional lifestyle, leads to his downfall. Ōsugi's story intertwines with that of Eiko, a 1960s university student who sympathises with Ōsugi's anarchical philosophies on free love and radicalism. Japan's quintessential arthouse film, *Eros + Massacre* examines political radicalism of Japan in the 1910s and 1960s through non-linear, parallel storytelling.

- ***Diary of a Shinjuku Thief (1969)***

*Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* is a chaotic film that responds to the climate of social upheaval in Japan during the late 1960s. The ambiguous narrative centres on a man who steals from a bookstore in Shinjuku and the woman who catches him in the act. Sparks fly between the two, and they embark on a quest to achieve ecstasy through episodic moments that break down traditions of fiction and reality.

Acclaimed director Nagisa Ōshima utilises a unique cinematic vocabulary to take a deep dive into young lovers attempting to free themselves from the trappings of previous generations and paternal social constructs.

- ***House (1977)***

*House* is a fusillade on the brain cells and a smorgasbord of filmic delights, which is apt given that it's about a house that devours schoolgirls. Described as 'unhinged extreme', *House (aka Hausu)* is an experimental horror film that amalgamates 1970s pop culture with mysterious phenomenology. The late auteur Nobuhiko Ōbayashi had his 11-year-old daughter help with many of the story ideas, lending to the film's dreamy, phantasmagorical sensibilities. *House* famously employs unrealistic special effects, outrageously stylised sets, and a storyline where literally anything can happen to a group of teenyboppers vacationing at a mysterious aunt's isolated mansion for the summer.

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

## FILM SCHEDULE

Location	Dates	Film
Canberra (NFSA)	5 – 6 Dec.	<i>Emotion (That Dracula We Once Knew)</i> <i>House</i> <i>Funeral Parade of Roses</i> <i>Mind Game</i>
Brisbane (QAGOMA)	8 – 27 Jan.	<i>Emotion (That Dracula We Once Knew)</i> <i>House</i> <i>Funeral Parade of Roses</i> <i>Mind Game</i> <i>Eros + Massacre</i> <i>Diary of a Shinjuku Thief</i> <i>Tetsuo: The Iron Man</i>
Sydney (AGNSW)	2 Feb – 3 Mar.	<i>Emotion</i> <i>House</i> <i>Funeral Parade of Roses</i> <i>Mind Game</i> <i>Eros + Massacre</i> <i>Diary of a Shinjuku Thief</i> <i>Tetsuo: The Iron Man</i>

## **ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, SYDNEY**

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is the Australian arm of the Japan Foundation, which was established by the Japanese government to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and other nations. It runs a diverse range of programs and events, including exhibitions, talk events, grant programs and Japanese language courses for all levels from beginner to advanced. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with a global network of 25 offices in 24 countries. The Australian office was founded in 1978.