

JAPAN JAPAN – PRESS EXCERPTS (2007-8)

"Brilliant, cutting-edge"

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Howard Feinstein, IndieWIRE

"One of the ten best films of 2008"

MoMA's Chief Film Curator Rajendra Roy  
(for IndieWire)

"Filmmaker Lior Shamriz distinguishes himself with a quiet style reminiscent of Lynne Ramsay or Sofia Coppola, while he effectively captures the angst of the modern age...

**Those looking for innovative filmmakers that stand up to any audience of progressive cinephiles should head to Japan Japan** an Israeli film that mixes kaleidoscope imagery with understated, impressive acting and a fresh style of filmmaking."



Conor Fetting-Smith, Filmmaker Magazine

**"Shamriz's film reinvents the concept of appropriation** using a palette consisting of digital images whose origin has lost its importance: The digital is within an easy reach of any filmmaker (...) A film that seems to be the culmination of that utopian ideology of 'Do It Yourself', which was always the dream of independent cinema: the dystopia of the cinematography industry."

**CAHIERS  
DU  
CINEMA**

Jaime Pena, Cahiers du Cinema | Spanish

"(...) The first new work I caught was a low-fi Israeli effort called 'Japan Japan' (reportedly made for \$200) from young, Berlin-based director, Lior Shamriz. The opening shot of an erect penis confirmed the rumour that things were going to get explicit but didn't prepare this viewer for a scene involving a large group of Asian men lathering themselves in each other's ejaculate.

**However, what at first feels like juvenile punk nihilism soon blossoms into a fresh and tender study of teenage world-weariness, cleverly exploiting its own limitations** by featuring songs, images and corporate logos which could never be secured legally. There's scant chance it will ever be released, but here's hoping it has a rich and full following online.

(...) 'Japan Japan' caused jaws to drop in Reykjavik."



*David Jenkins, Time-Out London*

"Charming... wonderful... fascinating in form and content..."



*Yossi Brauman, Time-Out Tel Aviv | Hebrew*

“A messier experiment from Israel, Lior Shamriz's *Japan Japan*, opens in close-up with a jizz-filled condom pulled off a hefty chub. But that wasn't what sent attendees at the press screening headed for the exit—nor even, a bit later on, the streaming video of an XXX all-male bukkake that left a sticky young man looking like he'd just survived the detonation of a mayonnaise factory. Pervy 'mos are par for the course at ND/NF (cf. the revival of Gregg Araki's queercore juvenilia, *The Living End* and *Totally Fucked Up*, in this year's "Classics" sidebar). No, **the "problem" with this semi-improvised, post-everything riff on apathetic Tel Aviv hipsterdom is precisely its chief value: a defiant disregard for narrative nicety and tonal consistency.** Centered on the iLife ennui of an unfocused, under-employed Israeli (Imri Kahn) who spends his days dreaming of travel, downloading porn, and staring out the window when he isn't gazing at his (or someone else's) navel, *Japan Japan* doesn't tell a story so much as essay a condition. OK, so it's somewhat sloppy, jagged around the edges, and, clocking in at barely an hour, not the most disciplined of movies, but the thing's got real vision and vitality.”



*Nathan Lee, Village Voice*

**"(...) An original, creative and touching film that no other beginning or established filmmaker in Israel has ever done before"**



*Gitit Ginat, Akhbar Ha'ir (City Mouse) | Hebrew*

“German gay zombies notwithstanding, the remainder of the fest is not all quatsch. The stylishly cut and pasted gay male character study *Japan Japan* turns out to be **one of the most striking films of the entire festival season**. In it, a daydreaming Israeli army dropout named Imri feels out of place in bustling Tel Aviv, so he fantasizes about going to Japan — imagined as a rapid-fire mosaic of porno images cut to a Mideastern beat. It's clear Imri is suffering from "yellow fever." Is he a useless dreamer or a fish out of water? Both. The best thing about writer-director Lior Shamriz' brilliantly antsy rendition of the flat-world blues is his fantastic music track, encompassing Turkish folk tunes, Euro classical vocal, J-pop, ABBA, Béla Bartók, Benjamin Britten, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Olivier Messiaen, etc. The second best thing is that Shamriz and his circle of friends, who partly improvised the screenplay and essentially played themselves, were able to shoot the film with a mini-DV camera for 200 euros (the post-production took a bit more). Does Imri make it to Japan? Find out June 24 when *Japan Japan* plays the Castro.”



*Kelly Vance, EastBay Express*

"(...) A naughty chronicle of a Tel-Avivian who longs to Japan. With fast-motions, inserts and improvisation **he reaches a great lightness, without losing the sight of earnestness.**"



*Wilfried Geldner, Teleschau*

“A young man adrift and in search of stimulation leaves his small-town home and moves to the fertile sexual terrain of the big city. Director Lior Shamriz takes this age-old scenario and updates it for an era when the unimagined limits of adventurousness arrive and dissolve at light speed online. His hero, Imri, unable to concentrate on the frivolity of a pointless job, cruises cinemas for boys, chills with aspiring artists and surfs the Web for fantasies in foreign lands. Set in the ultimate 21st century cutting edge-city, Tel Aviv, Shamriz’s film creates a post-exotic cinema where a war zone borders a metropolis, precision redirects to chaos, and subtle grace links to graphic pornography. Japan Japan is the fabricated land that, unlike a metaphor, delivers the real potential for instant escape from the familiar. Lior Shamriz was born in Ashkelon, Israel, and studied film at the Jerusalem Film School. He is currently attending the Institute of Time-Based Media in Berlin.

**Shamriz’s provocative docu-fiction hybrid collapses the boundaries between video art, sex journal, and autobiographical narrative film. Who says cinema is dead?”**



“(...) The director Lior Shamriz works with collage of styles and pours from every-day life and from the world of phantasy and dreams to create **a totally unique and entertaining film**. On the background of the hard political situation in Israel, Imri wants to find his own way outside his internal exile. (...)”



*Nana A.T. Rebhan, ARTE | German*

**“A new narrative of note** was the extremely low budget “Japan Japan,” which employs a frantic mixture of internet pornography, Japanese pop songs of the 70s, split screen boredom scenes, a recurrent self-referential trailer, and awkward roommate fantasies to bring to life the semi-autobiographical tale of director Lior Shamriz. The protagonist Imri looks toward the exotic to spice up his humdrum existence in Tel Aviv, only to realize that his isolation and boredom are self-imposed and have little to with his geographical location. In the post-show Q&A Shamriz noted that response to his film has been very polarized, and indeed much of the Castro theater (a 1,600 seat movie palace which was packed for the showing) shuffled out brusquely as the credits rolled.

The post-Japan Japan scene was somewhat unusual. Full theaters are the norm throughout the festival, but audience support is typically extremely high, with thunderous applause and hooting typically following even the most mediocre of films.”

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*Ilya Tovbis, Indiewire on Frameline Film Festival*

**"Japan Japan admirably crams more male nudity and cinema theory into its first sixty seconds than any film in Frameline history."**

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*Frameline Film Festival's Program, Corey Eubanks | English*

"(...) Lior Shamriz describes the existence of a disoriented guy who with an escape to Japan wishes to find an escape from his current self. An Israeli who moved to Berlin, and who directed the series of 6 short movies 'Return to the Savanna', Lior Shamriz realised in 'Japan Japan' **a film densed with irony and significance, avoiding all the clichés about the place where the protagonists live.**

At the end, it seems that the dream of escaping is for the Israeli people the only way out of a daily conflicted reality. One of the more beautiful films of the section dedicated to the filmmakers of the present."

***cinemino***

*Roberto Rippa, Cinemino | Italian*

"Shamriz links the audience to this purposeful slacker through the experimentations of late youth, not crucially through the identities of being queer or Israeli; the Middle East news is just one more set of sounds and images competing for attention. (...) If the young man's construction of a 21st-century identity is a fragmented, multimedia process, its core is **a recognizable attempt to sort priorities while being guided by passions.**"

**SLANT**

*Bill Weber, SLANT*

"(...) An example of **the horror of the digital format** when it falls into the wrogn hands (...)"

**La Razón**

*Carlos Pumares, La Razon | Spanish*

**Eine stilistisch facettenreiche, freizügige und zeitweise explizite Collage über die Liebe, das Leben und das Kino. Als Entdeckung im Wettbewerb von Locarno wurde *Japan Japan* des in Berlin ansässigen, israelischen Regisseurs Lior Shamriz gefeiert – und das zu Recht.**

Mit geringem Budget und lediglich mit einer Mini-DV-Kamera ausgestattet, gelingt Shamriz ein äußerst reizvolles Porträt eines vom Land nach Tel Aviv ziehenden, jungen Mannes, der allerdings von einem Leben in Japan träumt. Hierfür braucht Imri – so der Name des Protagonisten, der von Imria Shan in einer exzellenten Mischung aus Charme und Zurückhaltung verkörpert wird – Geld, sprich einen Job, den er in einem Süßwarengeschäft findet. (...) Japan kennt Imri nur über exotische Bilder (vorwiegend Mangas und Pornos), Erzählungen und Sushi-Restaurants. Ähnlich wird auch Tel Aviv aus einer mitteleuropäischen Perspektive wahrgenommen, die der Film in stimmig eingebauten, semidokumentarischen Bildern erschließt: „I wanted to see what happens when a fictional story is structured as a documentary one would be“, so Shamriz in einem Statement. „As a filmmaker in Israel I knew that my films would often be perceived as a window to an exotic place in the midst of a political conflict. In my film I wanted to question the place exotism and orientism in cinema and in my life.“ Diese Verschiebung meistert *Japan Japan*, der ohne fertiges Skript entstand und auf Improvisationen der SchauspielerInnen beruht, mit Bravour, ohne die Politik, die zum Alltag gehört, völlig aus den Augen zu verlieren. Auch formal arbeitet *Japan Japan* abseits der Konvention: Shamriz mischt unterschiedliche kinematografische Filmstile miteinander, wodurch eine Collage quer durch einzelne Genres entsteht. Dabei greift die Erzählung mal nach vorne und wieder zurück, verrinnt teilweise ineinander, stets bedacht, die Geschichte und die formalästhetischen Komponenten in Balance zu halten. „Cinema is dead“, konstatiert Imri zu Beginn des Films. *Japan Japan* tritt daraufhin den lebendigen Gegenbeweis an. Oder anders formuliert: Sollte der Tod des Kinos wie *Japan Japan* ausschauen, ist dieser nur zu begrüßen.



Dietmar Scwärzler, *Identities* Wien | German