

The Japan Foundation Touring Film Programme 2010 Girls on Film: Females in Contemporary Japanese Cinema

German plus Rain (*German+ Ame*)

Director/Script: Satoko Yokohama

Cast: Yoshimi Nozaki, Suzune Fujioka, Ogawa

2007/ DVCAM/ 71min/ Colour/ English Subtitles



Satoko Yokohama's exuberant movie centres on an indomitable female misfit. The 16-year-old Yoshiko (Yoshimi Nozaki), nicknamed "Gorilla Man" by her boss after a manga character, has lived alone since her parents divorced; her mother is now dead and her father is in hospital. She works as a gardener's assistant alongside a young German guy and is determined to make it as a singer-songwriter. There are not many options open to a girl like Yoshiko in a small town, so she starts giving recorder lessons to three primary-school boys, one of whom wants to be a girl. She enters a singing contest but sends in her friend's photo, thinking the judges will be put off by her looks. She discovers that a local pedophile has propositioned two of her pupils and decides to take action, "emasculatation or extermination!" In the event, she settles for hush money and buys everyone treats at the convenience store ...

One-time office staffer Yokohama largely funded this film herself, using money she won at the CO2 Festival in Osaka (500,000yen) with the graduation short she made at Tokyo Film School. Other Japanese movies (even a few by other women directors) have touched on serious issues like broken families, social ostracism and child abuse. But none has this much wild humour or a heroine to compare with Yoshiko.

(Written by Tony Rayns for the 27th Vancouver International Film Festival / Part edited)