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**Nippon Connection Film Festival Goes Hybrid!
First Program Highlights**

**June 1–6, 2021 / online and (hopefully) in Frankfurt, Germany /
more than 100 films from Japan / varied supporting program**

The **21st Japanese Film Festival Nippon Connection** is planned as a hybrid event and is scheduled for **June 1 to 6, 2021**. The event is expected to take place online and at a few selected venues in the city of Frankfurt am Main. On six days, the world's largest festival for Japanese cinema presents a selection of over **100 current Japanese short and feature-length films**. All films will be available via video on demand. In addition, several filmmakers will participate in online discussions and interviews live from Japan. Digital **workshops, lectures, performances, and concerts** complement the program.

Due to uncertainties regarding the further progression of the pandemic and associated regulations, planning the festival is extremely difficult. The organizing team of the Nippon Connection film festival is hopeful, however, that it will be possible to offer on-site cinema as well. "Film festivals always live from shared moments in the cinema and the film experience on the big screen", festival director Marion Klomfass emphasizes.

In June 2020, the festival already took place online and set a new audience record with over 25,400 viewers. The digital format offered new possibilities to the audience. Also this year, many viewers outside of Frankfurt will be able to watch contemporary Japanese films.

Film highlights

Many of the films celebrate their **German or European premiere** at the Nippon Connection film festival. The program includes everything from blockbusters and arthouse to animation and music films. This year's focus is dedicated to **Family Matters – The Japanese Family Between Tradition And Modernity** and is supported by the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain. It includes films like **Family Of Strangers** by **Hideyuki Hirayama**, dealing with dark family abysses and the bliss of finding a substitute family. The low-key tragicomedy tells the story of three quite different characters living in a psychiatric ward, who find emotional backing in each other – until misfortune hits them again. The drama **Under The Open Sky** by female director **Miwa Nishikawa** continues where other films end, featuring character actor and Nippon Honor Award winner Koji Yakusho at his best: As an ex-convict he encounters helping hands but also obstacles. It is a film about what family can mean to someone. The documentary film **Me And The Cult Leader** looks at the Aum sect, which carried out the poison gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995. Director **Atsushi Sakahara**, who was

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exposed to the toxic gas then, engages in a deeply personal dialogue with a member of the successor sect "Aleph" about the past, family, and their inner demons.

Red Post On Escher Street, the new film by cult director **Sion Sono**, is a humorous and biting panorama of the film industry, with the extras ending up hijacking the film set. **Kiyoshi Kurosawa's** melodrama **To The Ends Of The Earth** was completely filmed on location in Uzbekistan. For the young TV reporter Yoko the stay abroad turns into a journey to herself. In the musical comedy **Can't Stop The Dancing** by **Shinobu Yaguchi**, Shizuka can't help bursting out in song and dance whenever she hears music, and thus stumbles from one ludicrous situation to another. **The Day Of The Destruction** by **Toshiaki Toyoda** will be screened as a German premiere. A young ascetic wants to set the world free from a monster called epidemic. With powerful visuals, a strong soundtrack and humor, the director captures the feelings of a generation between anger, powerlessness and the desire to feel alive. The festival also features another film by Toshiaki Toyoda: **Shiver** presents the famous Taiko group KODO together with avant-garde musician Koshiro Hino. Following the rhythm of the elements, the film creates an intertwining of musical performances and mythical scenes laden with sound.

The extraordinary debut **Beyond the Infinite Two Minutes** by **Junta Yamaguchi**, with actors from the famous comedy theater troupe Europe Kikaku, celebrates its German premiere at the festival. In this film, the director transfers the time travel paradox to a charming, small coffee shop and flips through the narration so entertainingly, you do not even get mixed up with the continuously changing levels of time.

A Japanese film festival without animation films would be impossible: This year, the Nippon Connection Film Festival presents, among others, the German premiere of the anime **Seven Days War** by **Yuta Murano**. On a summer trip, Aya and her friends discover a shut-down coal plant. This leads to an adventure bigger than they had ever expected, showing them what friendship is all about.

A varied supporting program

In addition to the film program, a diverse range of **workshops, lectures, concerts, and performances** invites visitors to explore the fascinating culture of Japan. Most of the events in the **Nippon Culture** program are expected to take place via Zoom and live stream. Join in and try out online cooking classes, as well as whiskey and sake tastings, manga drawing workshops, a Japanese course with film clips and much more. The cult event **Nippon Heimkino** will also take place online again this year: Underground director Jörg Buttgerit and film scholar Marcus Stiglegger will comment live on a gem of Japanese trash cinema from their couch at home. At the **Nippon Online Market**, various vendors will present handicrafts, Japanese delicacies, and other selected Japan-related products.

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The complete program is expected to be available on the festival homepage NipponConnection.com from mid-May 2021.

The festival

The Japanese Film Festival Nippon Connection is organized by the 70-member, largely voluntary, team of the **non-profit association Nippon Connection e.V.** It is under the **patronage** of Angela Dorn, Hessian Minister for Science and Art, Peter Feldmann, Lord Mayor of Frankfurt am Main, and the Consulate General of Japan in Frankfurt am Main. Nippon Connection is one of the most popular film festivals in Hesse. A **fundraising campaign** for this year's festival is currently running **on the online platform betterplace.org**:

betterplace.org/en/projects/88584.

To find further information on our festival, please visit these sites:

NipponConnection.com

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