

## Queer Cinema in Japan

Few things make it worth enduring the oppressive summer heat in Tokyo. One that makes the cut is a series of unbearable festivals, including the always exciting Tokyo International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival.

This year's event screened a total of 32 films, several of which featured the ladies exclusively. While previously a single-venue, one-weekend affair at Spiral Hall in Tokyo's trendy Aoyama neighborhood, this year's festival, with films from 13 countries, grew to include an additional weekend at a large

of Nobuko's stories were scheduled to appear in *Sparkling Rain*—a recently published anthology of Japanese lesbian fiction in English translation—but were yanked when Nobuko's niece refused to allow her aunt's name to be associated with anything that smacked of the L-word.

"Attitudes like those show that Japan still has a long way to go in terms of becoming a society where it is safe to come out," says Naeko (who asked that her last name not be used). The co-founder of a lesbian rights organization Naeko has been active in community organizing since the women's liberation movement of the 1970s. "However, the fact that this film festival has been going strong for the past 18 years gives hope that things in Japan are changing for the better."

Ai Haruta, a lesbian in her 30s, had a similarly positive view of the festival. "Seeing LGBT films from around the globe gives us a window into how others live...which ultimately gives us hope of being able to connect with people of all sorts of different backgrounds." [Kimberly Hughes]



Otsuji Kanako (center) and fans

commercial movie theater in the Shinjuku District, adjacent to the city's famed gayborhood, Ni-chome, attracting hundreds of women, including Japan's first out lesbian politician Otsuji Kanako.

The documentary *City of Borders*, which portrays Shushan, a gay bar in Jerusalem where Palestinian and Israeli LGBT individuals come together to create community against tremendous odds, played to a packed house on the first weekend and was followed by a Q&A session with the San Francisco Bay Area-based director Yun Suh.

"This audience was very muted. I worried that people were getting bored or disconnected from my story," says Suh. "But [during the Q&A session] the questions were very deep and philosophical, such as the nature of tolerance and borders."

Among the 18 programs, one stood out in particular: *Fukujusou (Pheasant's Eyes)*—a silent 1935 film that screened with live narration and music—was an adaptation of a story about a schoolgirl who falls in love with her brother's wife. Written by Yoshiya Nobuko, who lived with her female partner, the original story was included in the 1922 collection *Hana Monogatari (Flower Fables)*. Several



### TOKYO RESOURCE MINI-GUIDE

**Tokyo International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival**  
[tokyo-lgff.org](http://tokyo-lgff.org)

**Asian Queer Film Festival**  
Will make its second run next month  
[aqff.jp](http://aqff.jp)

**Lesbians of Undeniable Drive (LOUD)**  
Community space  
[space-loud.org](http://space-loud.org)

**Tokyo Wrestling**  
Trilingual international lesbian cultural site  
[tokyowrestling.com](http://tokyowrestling.com)

**Chestnut and Squirrel International ladies bar and café**  
event held every Wednesday night  
[chestnutandsquirrel.wordpress.com](http://chestnutandsquirrel.wordpress.com)

**Tokyo Pride**  
[tokyo-pride.org](http://tokyo-pride.org)  
(Japanese only)



Max Voltage in the Hot Tee of the Month

The "chemists do it on the table... periodically" tee is a perfect fit for a science-loving dyke. After all, who doesn't swoon over a woman in a lab coat? (\$19, [snorgtees.com](http://snorgtees.com))