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PUBLICATION: THE DAILY YOMIURI  
COUNTRY: JAPAN  
DATE: SEPT 2002

DESCRIPTION: ARTICLE ON THE FUTURE OF FILM

# ARTS

## weekend

SEPTEMBER 12, 2002

ART  
Installations by  
Kyoto-based  
artists' collective  
dumb type  
Page 22



Courtesy of ICC



# The future of film. Period.

By Naomi Tajitsu  
Daily Yomiuri Staff Writer

It hasn't brought about the death of analog film like the anti-celluloid set said it would, but digital film continues to push the envelope of moving images like no other medium has. Even this summer's digitally filmed *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* showed that plot and character can be tossed out the window so long as the visuals are stunning.

Which is fine if all you're looking for is eye candy, but digital film also symbolizes something more progressive and innovative than kung-fu fighting Yodas.

"Films like *Star Wars* do draw attention to the digital medium, but in a way, it sends the wrong messages out to the mass population by saying (all) digital films look like *Star Wars* or *Toy Story*," says Shane Walter, one of the founders of Britain's onedotzero, a digital film project whose film festival will make its Japan debut this weekend in Tokyo. "Some do, but there is a whole range of visual and aesthetic qualities that are ripe for exploration."

Onedotzero is out to prove the medium is neither all about digital bells and whistles nor the gritty realism of the Dogma movement, but maybe something in between. To this end, it has been championing innovative design approaches to moving images in the form of works, productions and the annual festival. Launched in 1996, the event has been recognized as the visionary force behind digital film in Britain and has traveled from Munich to Montreal to showcase the cutting edge of digital film. It's razor sharp, which is exactly the point.

"Onedotzero was created not to be a neutral showcase event," Walter explains. "It was created with a clear agenda, a definite motivation to push and promote a particular genre and range of styles of moving image."

"It's hard to define these styles," he continues, adding that the process to select the program doesn't follow a specific criteria and tends to be more instinctive. "It can't simply be classified as 'picking up on the latest styles' as it's more about predicting and shaping these styles."

The festival's first complete Japan edition features an eclectic program consisting of heavyweights from London's design media scene like Tomato, Hammer & Tongs, Shynola, Grant Gee and the Light Surgeons, as well as the advertising geniuses of Tractor Factor, animators like Bob Sabiston, who worked on the upcoming *Walking Life*, and local design darlings Groovisions, Hideyuki Tanaka, Stereotype Products and Teevee Graphics. The program comprises shorts, music videos (including a showcase of works from the Warp record label), and television projects from a series produced by onedotzero and Britain's Channel 4. Other highlights include *Meeting People Is Easy*, a

documentary that follows Radiohead during their *O.K. Computer* tour, and *No Maps for These Territories*, Mark Neale's journey into the mind of William Gibson, which follows the creator of the term "cyberspace" around North America from the back seat of his car.

The program's "fusion of creative disciplines opens up new forms of expression, and moving image is a great carrier for these new styles," Walter says, noting the diversity of disciplines, which range from animation to architecture. "It actually adds another layer of information to add to characterizations, emotion and background."

### Doctoring a new form of narration

But digital film isn't all about the flashiest graphics or the highest-tech gadgetry—sometimes the best toys are the ones that are found at garage sales and in the trunks of cars. It's not scalpels and scissors, but slide projectors and Super-8 cameras that are the secret weapons of the Light Surgeons, who use the limitations of both high- and lo-tech to search for a new viewing

"space." The design unit, which has worked for the likes of UNKLE, Ninja Tunes, Mo Wax and Cornershop, uses the latest technology to layer analog images, creating an organic feel that's often missing from its digital colleagues.

"We've found a balance between the old and the new that we feel gives our work a certain edge and soul," says Chris Allen, a member of the designers and film-makers collective. "To use music as an analogy, crossing the cleanliness of digital tools and the warmth and resonance of analog creates something that we feel is more rounded."

Like in *Thumbnail Express*, which will be screened at the festival. The short documentary explodes with a flurry of images associated with

travel, specifically the road-trip, like vanishing landscapes and car radio dials, that map out the underlying politics of U.S. society, all set to music and narrated by a wandering philosopher-storyteller. It's not necessarily about getting from points A to B here, but the process that occurs in between. This transient space, Allen says, holds a particular metaphor for the times we live in. "They are universal and pertain to a borderless world, but are also alienating and feel like something out of a science fiction set."

The result is an interesting way of telling stories that relies as much on oral narration as it does on the layering of sound and images, not just to tell the story, but to provide an experience. Walter says this is one of the aims of onedotzero, to use the medium as a tool to explore new forms of visual expression through capsule narratives and multithreaded and multilayered experiences.

"Groups like the Light Surgeons are really taking this much further and offering an amazing new form of abstract fragmented storytelling

that is powerful, emotional and narrative by drawing on many influences from hip-hop music to club visuals via installation art and documentary," Walter says. "It is theater or opera for today's generation, without leaving behind the old."

For the time being, anyway, maybe it's this distinct way of blurring old and new—be it the stories themselves or the means used to tell them—that's really beginning to shape the identity of digital film. Whatever it is, though, onedotzero certainly has its finger on it. The future is here, and it is digital.

onedotzero\_nippon runs Sept. 14-16 at Tokyo International Forum. Admission is ¥1,200 per program or ¥4,000 for day passes. For more information contact (090) 6022-2864. The festival will travel to Sapporo on Sept. 20-22 (011) 221-5561 and Shizuoka on Sept. 27-29 (054) 205-1105. [www.onedotzero.jp](http://www.onedotzero.jp) (Japanese); [www.onedotzero.com](http://www.onedotzero.com) (English).



Top from left: *Wavelength* (for White Stripes), *No Maps for These Territories* (Mark Neale), *Reel Warp*, and *Meeting People Is Easy* (Grant Gee)  
Right: *Thumbnail Express* (Light Surgeons)