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# Newsletter

## Special Articles:

- Jamie Morris is back in Japan!
- First encounters with 'Bosozoku'
- A man of vision: Masayuki Yoshinaga
- A short project



## Special Edition: Jamie in Japan

### Why I'm Back In Japan...

When I first came to Japan, I had no plans to make a movie. The idea had been to leave the U.S for enough time to appreciate it again, and to stay in a culture radically different from my own. I needed a change, and a change I got!

After only a year in Japan, I wanted to leave because I felt I had seen everything, done everything and, as a gaijin, I would never be a member of Japanese society.

What kept me another six months and has just brought me back to Japan after a year at home in the

US? I found something modern and alive in Japan: young defiant Japanese who are proud and sometimes annoying, but who carry the characteristics I have always admired in counter cultures.

In one sense they could only exist in a place like Japan but, in another they are so non-Japanese that they disrupt the "wa" or harmony essential to the functioning of Japanese culture. To the delight of many they are disappearing or becoming soft. Before that occurs, I want to share it on video with the rest of the world.

### "Bosozoku": The Speed Tribes

Within days of arriving in Japan, I experienced one of the country's quirkier phenomena – the "Bosozoku". Roughly translated, the term means "speed" ("boso") and "tribe" ("zoku"). I saw, or mostly heard, a hoard of young bikers wearing strange clothes riding in formation.

Revvng engines, waving stolen flags from some store and in complete control of the streets. A police car followed them, yelling through a loudspeaker to little effect. I wondered why they didn't just arrest them and throw them in jail...

A quite American attitude it turns out, because neither the police nor potential vigilantes seem to want to

intercede. "What about similarities with the Hell's Angels in the US?" you ask.

The Bosozoku and Hell's Angels share similar origins as biker gangs of ex-WWII pilots who missed the freedom and adrenaline of the war, which riding a motorcycle offers.

However, the phenomenon of the Bosozoku in Japan is more of a temporary phase for most of the individuals, who, usually quit by their early 20s. Most biker gang members in the U.S tend to be in for life. I recommend Hunter S. Thompson's "Hell's Angels" and Ikuya Sato's "Kamikaze Biker" as introductions into both American and Japanese biker gangs.

## Focus on Masayuki Yoshinaga



By now, most of you have visited our website and seen the extraordinary photos of the Bosozoku. Full credit for these images goes to a very talented Japanese photographer, Masayuki Yoshinaga.

The reason I have come back, and specifically to Tokyo, is to work with Mr. Yoshinaga. He has photographed perhaps the most traditional Bosozoku in Japan, and he understands them as only an ex-member can. These particular bikers are probably the last of their kind, except for rumors of hardcore groups

in Hiroshima, I have been told areas of Kanagawa, Saitama, Chiba and possibly as North as Ibaraki are the final stands of a PR and traffic-control war the Police are wrapping up in Japan.

Mr. Yoshinaga's book of photography is published through Littlemore Publishing, Tokyo. He captures the young men, both in action and with simple studio shots, a similar format to the documentary I am striving to bring to the screen. His photography will be included in the documentary and I will meet with him this month in Tokyo.

*"He is showcased for his affinity and obsession with old, female life-size cutouts of actresses and advertisements."*



## A Razor-sharp Surreal Life

"The Razor," a short story by the classic Japanese writer Shiga Naoya, struck me as a great story to bring to the screen. The idea has taken root since my return to Japan.

I am currently scouting locations for the short film before writing a script in English to be translated into Japanese later. Does this sound complicated? Not if you consider budget and time constraints, because the script must fit the limits of the location. I am trying to find a Taisho period (around 1900-1915 A.D) barber shop, which is proving to be a very challenging task...

In Takayama, in the center of Japan, an eccentric barbershop owner accosted me when I was looking at his building. He proceeded to take me inside and throw on a taped VHS cassette of him on a Japanese variety show! In it, he is showcased for his affinity and obsession with old, female life-size cut-outs of actresses and advertisements. He was shown in bed with his cardboard consorts (!?!). He then did a couple jumping-jack push ups (literally two) and forced my friend to feel his biceps.

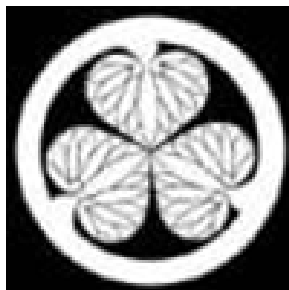
Lost in translation? Welcome to Japan... Unfortunately, the shop is not what I had in mind. I'll keep looking.

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### Jamie's on the move

While he is in Japan, you can still reach him by e-mail: [jamie@figure8productions.com](mailto:jamie@figure8productions.com)

In Jamie's absence, our Public Relations Manager, Jean-Marc Moorghen, will be glad to answer your questions.

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