

# CULTURE VULTURE



## Why you should try Japanese Cinema

Mr Heysham gives an introduction into Japanese cinema and recommends his favourite watches

Since the early days of cinema, Japanese filmmakers have been at the forefront of the art form. They developed a unique set of cinematic techniques that often utilize bold, innovative visuals and narrative structures that challenge traditional storytelling conventions.

Although many Japanese films use CGI and all the other modern filmmaking techniques, I think it is fair to say that Japanese films often focus heavily on character development, creating memorable and relatable characters that viewers can identify with and empathize with. These films frequently explore complex, emotionally charged themes such as loss, love, and social alienation, fear and violence and use them to create stories that resonate deeply.

This is to say nothing of the amazing and meticulous attention to detail, from the costumes and set design to the sound design and cinematography, resulting in visually stunning films that immerse viewers in a rich, detailed world that is often simply beautiful.

I love Japanese cinema because it often blends different genres, creating unique and unexpected cinematic experiences. For example, Japanese horror films often mix elements of the supernatural with psychological thriller elements, resulting in a uniquely unsettling and suspenseful viewing experience. In fact, "The Ring" is just too scary to even watch!

**Where to get started?**

For a couple of old-style movies (but still genuinely AMAZING) I would try:

**Tokyo Story (1953)** – directed by Yasujiro Ozu, this poignant family drama is often cited as one of the greatest films ever made.

**Rashomon (1950)** – another classic film by Akira Kurosawa, Rashomon tells the story of a murder from multiple perspectives and explores the nature of truth.

**More modern? Try:**

**Shoplifters (2018)**: This film, directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda, won the Palme d'Or at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival. It tells the story of a family who live on the margins of society and who become involved in a criminal enterprise.

**Battle Royale (2000)** – a film based on the concept of young people being forced to fight to the death in a dystopian society, directed by Kinji Fukasaku. In Battle Royale, a class of high school students is forced to participate in a government program that forces them to fight to the death on a deserted island. Remind you of anything?

**... and you can't mention this topic without:**

**Akira (1988)**: Directed by Katsuhiro Otomo, Akira is a landmark anime film that helped to popularize anime in the West. It tells the story of a young man who gains psychic powers and becomes embroiled in a power struggle in a post-apocalyptic Tokyo.

**But my personal favorite is "Ran" by Akiea Kurosawa.**

"Ran" is why cinema exists as both an art form and entertainment. You have to see it, it is simply one of the most breathtaking things you'll ever see. Just see it on a big screen!



## Masahisa Fuka - Photography

Grace Jappy explores the obsession of Masahisa Fukase's photography, which led to the downfall of his personal relationships

'Masahisa Fukase - known in the art world for his renowned photobook 'Ravens', you may know him as the man who photographed nothing but his wife. These photos come from his series 'From Window' and are widely revered for how sweet and loving they make him appear as a husband. However, these photos were the beginning of their downfall as a couple.

Masahisa was born in 1934 in Hokkaido Japan. His family owned and operated their own photo studio. From the age of 6 he began learning how to process photographs in the studio. He was being trained from a very young age to take over the family business, however this only pushed him further away. He left home to pursue a photography education at Nihon University in Tokyo and ended up staying there

after he earned his degree to experiment with more conceptual photography instead of returning home to the family studio.

Soon enough, by the year of 1964, he is happily married to his second wife Yoko. This is when the 13-year long series 'From Window' began. Yoko was a collaborator and volunteer in these images, you can see her playing along with the camera. Although over time only being looked at through the lens of a camera by your loved one can feel suffocating, as you no longer share private moments as everything is captured to be sold or put on display. One article points out "the subtext is desire driven to the point of obsession", all of Masahisa's work seems to be driven by obsession.

This obsession seems to stem from a sense of control and looking to freeze time, he says "I work and photograph while hoping to stop everything". This becomes even more clear in 1971, as he begins to frequently visit his hometown, Hokkaido and begins his series 'Family' and 'Memories of Father'. In the series 'Family' he took family portraits in the studio whenever there was a special occasion or anniversary in which everyone is gathered. This even included the day of his father's funeral, with a framed photo of his to replace his absence. He took photos to capture his father's life and death, and even his existence after death as Masahisa photographs his body post cremation.

This is what is meant by his obsession; there was not a moment too private or vulnerable for Masahisa's camera despite how much emotional damage it did to those around him. One of the key factors in why him and his first wife Yukiyo separated was because he photographed her whilst she was experiencing a miscarriage and begging for him to just put the camera down. He preserves every moment of his life with his camera, the good, the bad, and the moments that we wish we would never relive. It's almost as if he's so scared of the change he obsesses over preserving each moment with his camera so that the moment shall never grow old, and in turn maybe he won't either.

As previously mentioned, his obsession to preserve the present is what led Yoko to leave him in 1976. She said, "in the ten years that we lived together he only looked at me through the lens of his camera and the photographs he took of me were unmistakably depictions of himself". This catapulted him into a major depression, which led to him finding solace in the ravens he saw. He began photographing them with the same obsession as he photographed Yoko. His series 'Ravens' spanned from 1976 to 1986 and culminated in one of the most iconic photobooks of the 20th century, being put into the top twenty-five photo books of all time by art critics.

**LAST WEEK'S SONNET:**  
Umbrella - Rhianna feat.  
Jay -Z

Can you guess the pop  
song from the  
Shakespearean sonnet?  
Correct answer in next  
week's Culture Vulture!

In dead of night, thou wouldst me missives send –  
sweet words of love thy sleepless envoys bore.  
Those late-night calls have lately met their end,  
for now though dost a manner new explore.  
E'er since I left the city, thou hast rous'd  
coarse rumours 'round thy honour, once pristine.  
'Tis said thou'st champagne quaff'd and long carous'd  
with womenfolk I ne'er before have seen.  
O dost thou seek out countries far and strange  
or merely to attract thy newest beau?  
Thou dost not need thy character to change;  
I beg thee, stay the woman that I know.  
– A new dispatch could only mean one thing;  
'tis only love late couriers can bring.



## Simon and Garfunkel - The Boxer

Sam Barnes tells all about The Boxer, and how we can still learn from the song

The Boxer encapsulates the struggles of a young boy through life - suffering poverty and neglect. The term 'the boxer' signifies the characters strong will and determination against tough and unenviable conditions. Throughout the song we see the protagonist's struggles; 'seeking out the poorer quarters' and 'wishing I was gone, going home'. Paul Simon in this song, creates a cold image of struggle but also shows a glimmer of hope in the avalanche of despair portrayed in the song for 'I am leaving, I am leaving, but the fighter still remains' a phrase which concisely summarises how we all may face difficulty but in many cases our will and determination remains even after that. Simon's lyrics in this song are reflective of both his and Garfunkels social awareness and own opinions, clearly portraying their criticisms of society and how people can be left to fend for themselves in such a cruel way yet still praising those who go through what 'the boxer' suffers and still 'the fighter remains' in them. This song will remain a sad product of societies neglect towards the less fortunate; yet hopefully we can learn from this song and those alike about how harsh life is for some.



**Mrs McGilloway suggests:**

**The Makanai: Cooking for the Maiko House (Netflix)**

It's so wholesome, and also really interesting if you are into Japanese culture, traditions and food!

**Soundtrack to the week:**  
This week's soundtrack to the week has been built by editors and readers. If you would like to have your say, follow the QR code on page 5!

MONDAY:

**The Boxer -  
Simon &  
Garfunkel**



TUESDAY:

**Half of Mine -  
Frankie Stew  
and Harvey Gunn**



WEDNESDAY:

**Potholes in my  
Lawn - De La  
Soul**



THURSDAY:

**Sold out of  
Love - The  
Nude Party**



FRIDAY:

**Cate's Brother  
- Maisie  
Peters**



SATURDAY:

**Dead in the  
Disco - Arthur  
Hill**



SUNDAY:

**Butterflies -  
Kacey Musgraves**





# WORLD BOOK DAY

2 MARCH 2023

## Reading is a pleasure we should all enjoy

Mrs Ramsay talks of your favourite books

You cannot have escaped the fact it was World Book Day last week (March 2nd) as a number of Sixth Form assemblies and Friday's tutor time were all targeting this significant and important day. We want a culture in our Sixth Form that celebrates and enjoys great books. At Primary school pupils read: in the classroom with the teacher; for homework, (I am sure you can all recall the adventures of Biff and Chip), and always have a reader to transport to and from school in a logo emblazoned book bag. The excitement of that first read of Harry Potter or enthusiastically reciting (or shouting in my children's case) the words of 'We're going on a bear hunt' is still a fond memory in a lot of people's minds. What happens when we reach secondary school? Why does reading for pleasure tail off so much by the time students enter post 16 education? Well, perhaps this is overly dramatic as the tutor group discussion on Friday generated some fantastic suggestions for top reads. To aid our desire to have a Sixth Form that celebrates reading for pleasure, cast your eyes over the list and see how many you have read and how many you might now add to your to read list. Thank you for all the suggestions and keep them coming. Scan the QR code on the final page of Culture Vulture and send us some more!

### SF1:

Birdsong - Sebastian Faulks  
The Way of the Kings -  
Brandon Sanderson  
Enduring Love - Ian McEwan  
Shuggie Bain - Douglas Stuart

### SF3:

The Game of Thrones - George RR Martin  
Animal Farm - George Orwell  
Slaughterhouse 5 - Kurt Vonnegut

### SF6:

Where the Crawdads Sing -  
Delia Owens  
Atomic Habits - James Clear  
Games of Thrones - George RR Martin  
More than this - Patrick Ness

### SF10:

Legion of the Damned - Sven Hassel  
Normal People - Sally Rooney  
The Call of Cthulhu and other weird stories - HP Lovecraft  
The Unbearable Lightness of Being - Milan Kundera  
The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy - Douglas Adams

### SF12:

Alex Rider Series - Anthony Horowitz  
Ready Player One - Ernest Cline  
Normal People - Sally Rooney  
After the Fire a Still Small Voice - Evie Wyld

### SF15:

Solitaire - Alice Oseman  
The Family Upstairs - Lisa Jewel  
Brief Answers to Big Questions - Stephen Hawking  
The Ocean at the end of the Lane - Neil Gaiman

### SF2:

Million Little Pieces - James Frey  
Pachinko - Min Jin Lee  
The Final Empire - Brandon Sanderson  
Hell Screen - Ryunosuke Akutagawa  
The Kite Runner - Kalid Hosessni  
The Tattooist of Auschwitz - Heather Morris  
Reasons to Stay Alive - Matt Haig  
The Midnight Library - Matt Haig

### SF5/9:

Pride and Prejudice - Jane Austen  
Metamorphosis - Franz Kafka  
Rebecca - Daphne Du Maurier  
Queenie - Candice Carty-Williams  
People Person - Candice Carty-Williams  
Roots - Alex Haley

### SF7:

The Handmaid's Tale - Margaret Atwood  
The Hunger Games - Suzanne Collins  
Little Women - Louisa-May Alcott  
Noughts and Crosses - Malorie Blackman

### SF11:

Wolf Brother - Michelle Paver  
The Hunger Games - Suzanne Collins  
A good girls guide to Murder - Holly Jackson  
How to Kill your Family - Bella Mackie  
Queenie - Candice Carty-Williams  
Where the Crawdads Sing - Delia Owens

### SF14:

If I could tell you just one thing - Richard Reed  
Lord of the Flies - William Golding  
Before the Coffee Gets Cold - Toshikazu Kawaguchi  
The Great Gatsby - Scott Fitzgerald  
Neverworld Wake - Marisha Pessi  
The Tattooist of Auschwitz - Heather Morris

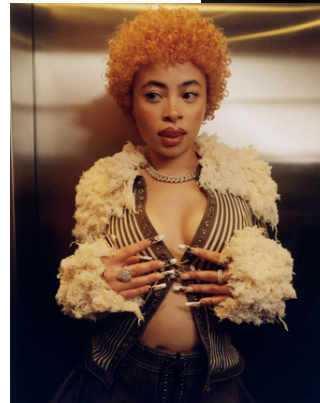
# Is TikTok Harming the Music Industry?

Molly Shillinglaw explores 'TikTok music' and its effect on the music of today

TikTok is everywhere. Its influence on the internet as we know it is undeniable. The platform boasts a user populace of over 1billion - with such large usage, it was almost inevitable that the trend-crazy social media would infiltrate the creative industries. There is no doubt that TikTok has been a useful tool which artists can utilise to promote their music however, it has also become a breeding ground for what I may personally deem as objectively bad music.

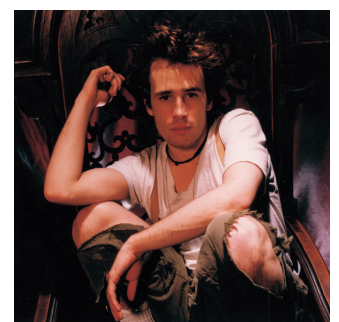
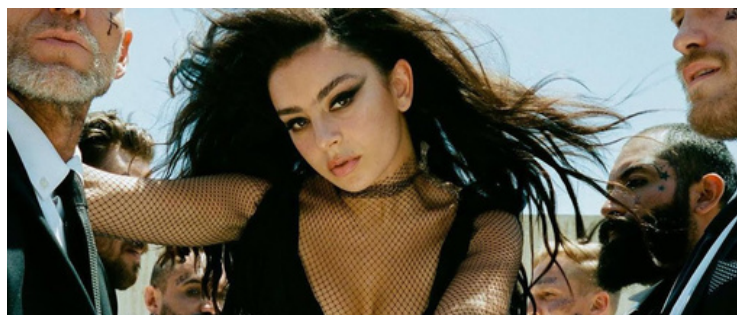
TikTok has no doubt been a success for many 'up and coming' artists who have found fame through the app's algorithm based advertisement. PinkPantheress (an artist who's soft vocals and synths contrast with the repetitive drum 'n bass used in her music) is recalled for finding fame on the app in 2021 after previewing her song 'Pain' to TikTok's users. Whilst a refreshing sound for many, the style of music which has been largely credited to her, has been turned into a bandwagon for other artists to jump on in attempts to create the next viral 15 second snippet of a song. Recently taking the spotlight is West Coast rapper Ice Spice, famous for often comical one-liners such as; 'in the hood I'm like Princess Diana'. Her catchy drill tracks led to global obsession and being hired by Kim Kardashian to appear in her teenage daughter's own TikTok's.

TikTok's supposed Elysium for music does not come without its faults. Due to the structure of videos, almost each one of them is accompanied by music. This constant endorsement has not slipped the minds of record label executives, who have made use of their artist's accounts. Artists such as Charli XCX and FKA Twigs have spoken out about their labels demanding that they post on TikTok multiple times a day, essentially placing the burden of promotion onto the artist's themselves. The effort put into the process of advertising one's music is said to have removed the modern music industry's artistic integrity.



The problem isn't just with the music of today, strangely TikTok has become obsessed with popularising music of the past. Songs such as Fleetwood Mac's 'Dreams' and Jeff Buckley's 'Lover, You Should've Come Over' have all been used in large numbers all over the app. This has incited some kind of rivalry between the 'real fans' of said music and the people using it in order to gain likes and views. A recent atrocity entails the erasure of Fiona Apple's entire music catalog after songs 'Paper Bag' and 'Under the Table' went viral. It can be assumed that it was removed after her often deeply personal music was appropriated for the means of shallow, reductive aesthetics. It is fair to say that a lot of meaningful music has been devalued by TikTok usage, which judges music by its capacity to play in the background of a video unrelated to the song itself. Fiona Apple's decision leaves us thinking how much control artists have over how their music is interpreted and used, especially after their death.

In closing, TikTok does a lot for artists who are new to the industry and therefore naïve of its inequalities and exploitation. Artists who are mature within the industry are more likely to recognise the damage that mass advertisement has on their craft, despite improving their popularity. Consequently, in my opinion, I would say that TikTok is good for artists in the short-term, yet damaging for music as an outlet for artistic expression.



# WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

As the weeks progress, we are hoping Culture Vulture will become jam-packed with student articles, recommendations and reviews. If you would like to make your own creative suggestion, or have a piece of work that you would like to see in the next magazine, scan the QR code.



Alternatively, if you would like to contribute an article, film, album, book or podcast review, or have an itching to write a features piece about a current cultural affair, email either [theysham@gordanoschool.org.uk](mailto:theysham@gordanoschool.org.uk) or [pramsay@gordanoschool.org.uk](mailto:pramsay@gordanoschool.org.uk) with your idea and they can point you in the right direction. Who knows - you may see your name in print!

Make sure to encourage your tutors and friends to get involved, and let's make creativity central to the Gordano Sixth Form experience!

