

GRACIE TORREZ 2023 – *Survive Style 5+* and the destruction of cynicism sample.

The film *Survive Style 5+* is difficult to sell. A man who must continue to kill his wife over and over again as she keeps coming back to life, an incompetent hypnotist and his girlfriend who is a creative advertisement executive, a family whose father is turned into a bird, a trio of robbers with sexual tension and an English hitman and his translator. A film with five distinct and (later) interconnected stories that seem to be unrelated and absurd. The absurdism and general strangeness of these stories work with the stylistic approaches of the filmmaker (Gen Sekiguchi) and his background in Japanese advertisement. The main theme of the film is about being hopeful and understanding that the world is as absurd as in fiction. By utilizing surrealism, Sekiguchi weaponizes the ad or commercial style in order to entertain the audience and sell them on the idea of rejecting cynicism.

The American view of Japanese commercials is very one-sided. From anecdotal experience, most people see Japanese commercials as “the weirdest thing on the internet”. I grew up seeing people react to the Little Baby’s Ice Cream commercial and Long Long Man. These ads and commercials were striking visually and sparked a conversation. I would compare them to some Super Bowl commercials like the Doritos Puppy Monkey Baby. Though not every Japanese commercial is this insane and unique, the American view is that they are because of the general exoticism seen in Japanese media.

In the article “‘Soft’ Nationalism and Narcissism: Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global’, author Koichi Iwabuchi examines the distinctions between Japan and its global compatriot, the United States, and how the U.S. interacts with the unique media that is produced in Japan and presented to the global market. I found this article very interesting, not just for the points that I’ll be covering in my essay, but also just as an article worth reading to learn about the differences in cultures due to the political and cultural complications after the war and different periods of struggle and prosperity.

The most important part of the article in relation to my argument that the styling of Japanese commercials is often misunderstood in the United States, but is important to the content of the film *Survive Style 5+* is the third section in the article “‘Grotesque Japan’: Narcissistic Observation of Globally Appropriated Japan”. This section examines “Western Techno-Orientalism” which popped up in the public consciousness around the time of Y2K and the release of this film. The “Western representations of bizarre Japanese cultural phenomenon- such as techno-culture and weird sexual practices” is something that is still common today as it was common in the 2000s and late 90s.