



Little Miss Period

生理ちゃん

2019/75min/Colour/English Subtitles

Distributor: Free Stone Productions

Director: SHINADA Shunsuke

Cast: NIKAIKO Fumi, ITO Sairi

Online screening information:

Thu 4 Mar 72 hour rental window from 6.00pm

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2 March from 12:00pm

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Little Miss Period is a feel-good comedy that whimsically addresses pervasive taboos around menstruation. It is that time of the month and *Little Miss Period* has come to visit Aoko (Nikaidō Fumi), Riho (Itō Sairi) and Hikaru (Matsukaze Risaki), making the survival of everyday life a bit more complicated than usual. This heart-shaped, anthropomorphic representation of the menstruation can be a heavy, painful hassle but also an emotional ally.

The film is an adaptation from Koyama Ken's homonymous manga, which won the Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize in 2019 (short work category). Popular and critical acclaim has led not only to the release of this live-action film but also to the manga's translation into several languages (including English) and the production of wide-ranging merchandising of the *Little Miss Period* character. The film faithfully recounts episodes found in Koyama's work and follows its episodic style but, in order to build a more coherent narrative, it concentrates the anecdotes of unrelated characters of the manga into four characters who are all connected through Aoko's personal and professional life. This, however, comes at the expense of missing out on interesting episodes on women's history included in the manga, such as one on Sakai Yoshiko, who produced the first commercial sanitary napkins sold in Japan in the 1960s. The film retains the sweet-and-sour humour of Koyama's stories, introducing us to other fabulous characters—Mr Sex Drive and Little Boy Virgin—who will surely make you laugh but also rethink the ways in which sexuality affects our daily encounters across different stages of our lives.

Curiously, the first Japanese film to openly speak of menstruation has been created by male authors: Koyama Ken, director Shinada Shunsuke, and scriptwriter Akamatsu Shin. Discussions on whether men were fit to portray the subject and whether *Little Miss Period* can be considered a feminist film have emerged in Japanese public opinion. To be sure, a man can produce a feminist work just as a woman can produce a chauvinist, male-centred film. *Little Miss Period* is inspiring because it depicts women from various backgrounds seeking to take control of their lives against the expectations held by others. It is especially good (and funny) in visualising pain and discomfort as experienced differently by different women. The tenderness and violence of *Little Miss Period* may seem naïve, but Shinada claims he wanted the cute character to function as a door opening to conversations in the family, couple and among friends to break the taboos surrounding menstruation. While he feels there is great ignorance and often shame associated with the subject in his country, the problem is certainly not unique to Japan and neither is the negative impact this silence has, especially on girls. The film adheres to dominant conceptions about gender roles to a certain extent and could be more explicit in showing, for instance, sanitary products to break the mystique around menstruation. However, it can be instructive, particularly for teenagers and those men who have intentionally or unintentionally remained oblivious to the subject,

while offering an accessible and enjoyable stimulus to meaningful discussions and new attitudes.

Little Miss Period is the first feature film of both Shinada and Akamatsu, who have previously worked primarily on television dramas—an influence that shows in the film. Nikaidō and Itō, who has acted in both television and cinema since she was nine years old, offer firmly grounded performances. Bridging the work and talent of manga, television and cinema, *Little Miss Period* bears witness of the tightly connected media landscape of Japan and of the ways in which these industries experiment with new ways to bring society into dialogue.

Dr. Irene González-López