



Mrs Noisy

ミセス・ノイズィ

2019/106min/Colour/English Subtitles

Distributor: AMG Entertainment

Director: AMANO Chihiro

Cast: SHINOHARA Yukiko, OOTAKA Yoko, NAGAO Takuma

Online screening information:

Sat 20 Feb 48 hour rental window from 10.00am

Mon 8 Mar 48 hour rental window from 6.00pm

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Chihiro Amano's fifth feature length film evolves around a dispute that may take some explaining for a viewer unfamiliar with Japanese housekeeping. "Futon beating" (*futon tataki*) involves taking the futon bedding, which is placed directly on the floor while sleeping, outside to air and remove the damp accumulated during the night. The futon is taken to some outside space around the house and beaten with an implement that looks a bit like a wicker tennis racket. For the protagonists of Amano's film, who live at close quarters in a small apartment block, the futon must be aired on the narrow balcony that runs along the front of the building. And this is where the trouble starts.

Maki, an author struggling with writer's block after an award-winning debut novel, moves to a new apartment with her young daughter and often absent partner. With work-life balance already stretched, she is dismayed to find that her older neighbour Miwako has a habit of loudly beating a futon on the adjoining balcony at all hours of the day and night. Tensions are exacerbated by Miwako's developing friendship with Maki's young daughter, as Maki struggles to fit writing around child raising. When Maki begins recording her escalating encounters with Miwako, leaked footage on the internet sends the conflict viral and the two protagonists must deal with sudden infamy.

The opening scenes of this engaging film are driven by the minutiae of everyday life in a shared Japanese apartment block - neighbours must be greeted appropriately and in a timely manner after moving into a new home, and the negotiation of privacy in small shared spaces is a delicate matter. However, the plot soon develops to larger concerns that will be familiar to viewers regardless of where they live. Maki's editor tactfully but repeatedly suggests that the characters in her recent writing are too one dimensional, rendering the plots too "light" (this echoes literary criticism of the past decade which considers whether the Japanese genre of "light novel" has become too "light", with superficial effects). One-dimensional representation appears again online when Maki and Miwako go viral, and Amano's close observation of the caricaturing effect of internet celebrity is well observed and nicely communicated. The speed at which internet users generate "backlash" against online characters is also true to life, as further revelations about Miwako change the public perception of her character.

Flashbacks show the viewer Miwako's side of the story, communicating the universal observation that we cannot know what is unfolding in the lives of others. Parallels between Maki and Miwako begin to emerge as we see them struggle with work and family, and their relationships with less than helpful partners. Yoko Ootaka's Miwako is sensitively portrayed in flashback scenes which show the issues unfolding on the other side of the balcony partition, while we begin to see an immature side to Maki that seems to confirm her editor's observations about the shallow nature of her characters and writing. As her new online fame initially swings



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in her favour, Maki attracts new young readers, a regular column in a youth publication, and an enthusiastic young editor. When the backlash begins however, it is the quiet decency of the older characters, including her mother and previous editor, that brings balance to this nuanced portrayal of daily life in contemporary Japan.

Amano's accomplished film begins from a deeply specific detail of Japanese life and expands to take on today's big issues, from the mental health struggles and precarity experienced by Miwako's family, to the gender imbalance at the heart of the work-life balance that fails to materialise for both Maki and Miwako. The characters are engaging and the pace of the film carries the viewer through comedy and tragedy to a warm hearted resolution. *Mrs Noisy* offers food for thought for viewers anywhere in the world, set within a snapshot of everyday life in Japan.

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