



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **V-Cinema: canons of Japanese film and the challenge of video**

Mes, T.P.

### **Citation**

Mes, T. P. (2018, January 9). *V-Cinema: canons of Japanese film and the challenge of video*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/61126>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/61126>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden

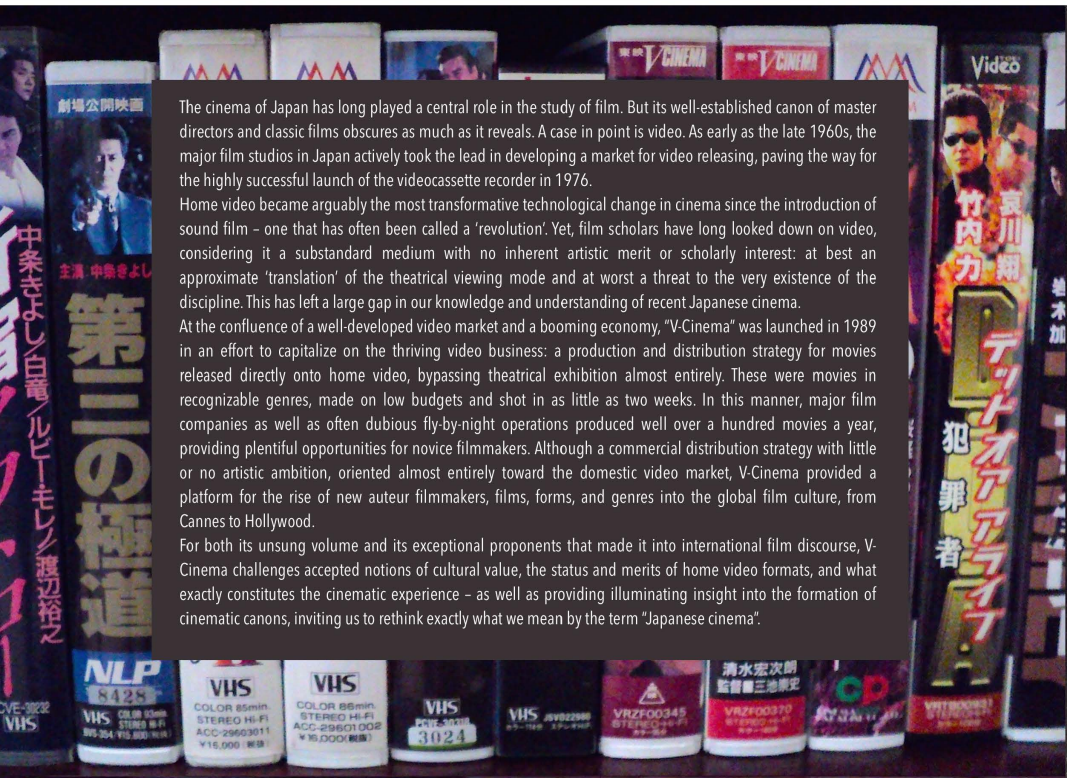


The following handle holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation:  
<http://hdl.handle.net/1887/61126>

**Author:** Mes, T.P.

**Title:** V-Cinema: canons of Japanese film and the challenge of video

**Issue Date:** 2018-01-09



The cinema of Japan has long played a central role in the study of film. But its well-established canon of master directors and classic films obscures as much as it reveals. A case in point is video. As early as the late 1960s, the major film studios in Japan actively took the lead in developing a market for video releasing, paving the way for the highly successful launch of the videocassette recorder in 1976.

Home video became arguably the most transformative technological change in cinema since the introduction of sound film – one that has often been called a ‘revolution’. Yet, film scholars have long looked down on video, considering it a substandard medium with no inherent artistic merit or scholarly interest: at best an approximate ‘translation’ of the theatrical viewing mode and at worst a threat to the very existence of the discipline. This has left a large gap in our knowledge and understanding of recent Japanese cinema.

At the confluence of a well-developed video market and a booming economy, “V-Cinema” was launched in 1989 in an effort to capitalize on the thriving video business: a production and distribution strategy for movies released directly onto home video, bypassing theatrical exhibition almost entirely. These were movies in recognizable genres, made on low budgets and shot in as little as two weeks. In this manner, major film companies as well as often dubious fly-by-night operations produced well over a hundred movies a year, providing plentiful opportunities for novice filmmakers. Although a commercial distribution strategy with little or no artistic ambition, oriented almost entirely toward the domestic video market, V-Cinema provided a platform for the rise of new auteur filmmakers, films, forms, and genres into the global film culture, from Cannes to Hollywood.

For both its unsung volume and its exceptional proponents that made it into international film discourse, V-Cinema challenges accepted notions of cultural value, the status and merits of home video formats, and what exactly constitutes the cinematic experience – as well as providing illuminating insight into the formation of cinematic canons, inviting us to rethink exactly what we mean by the term “Japanese cinema”.



# V-CINEMA

Canons of Japanese Film and the Challenge of Video

Thomas Mes