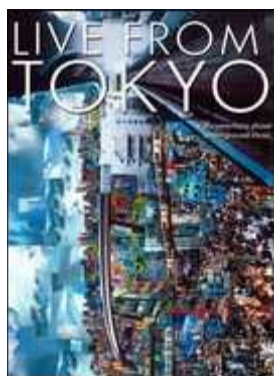



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#### Case Number 22309: Small Claims Court



### Live From Tokyo

[MVD Visual](#) // 2011 // 79 Minutes // Not Rated  
Reviewed by Judge Adam Arseneau // September 17th, 2011

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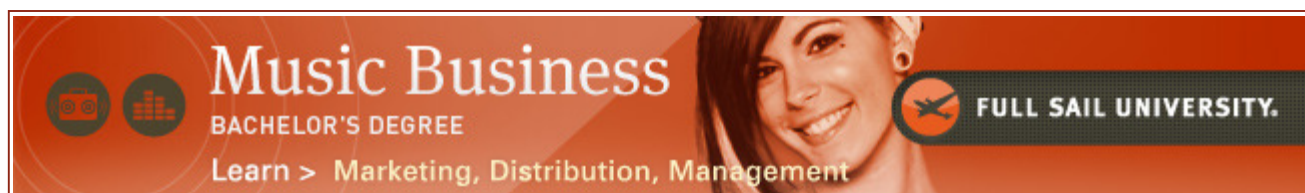
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#### All Rise...

Judge Adam Arseneau bombs with the Zoobombs.



#### The Charge

A documentary about underground music.

#### The Case

As cultural melting pots go, you would be hard pressed to find a more diverse hodgepodge of style and sub Tokyo, one of the great metropolises of the world. From the back streets of Shinjuku to the intersections of the alleyways in Koenji, Tokyo is a musical blender, appropriating world music into a wholly unique pastiche Japan. Assembled from live footage, stop-motion animation and interviews, **Live From Tokyo** takes viewers

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Internet and all, but this film features some great performances from bands that even Pitchfork hasn't heard of: Nisennenmondai, Tenniscoats, DMBQ, PARA (Boredoms Members), Shugo Tokumaru, Sexy-Synthesizer, Don Uhnellys, Sajjanu, KIRIHITO, d.v.d, Optrum, Samm Bennett, W. David Marx, Tokyo Pinsalocks and more. If you're in tune with the Tokyo sound, it is a multi-faceted mash-up of every single musical genre imaginable, often with surprising results. The Japanese consume every genre of music imaginable, throw bits and pieces into a blender, and create musical fusions and combinations of incompatible styles so outlandish that they boggle the mind.

More than a mere showcase of musical talent, **Live From Tokyo** is also a meditative reflection on Japanese society. There is a society that ingests foreign media with a ravenous appetite that borders on the voyeuristic, but in the historical, linguistic and cultural context that accompany it. Japanese teenagers, for example, might think copying Dylan with speed metal is a Good Idea, whereas Americans would instinctively reject the idea outright. In Japan a band could become fantastically popular in their native country, but such music rarely leaves the confines of the country. You try and smuggle a CD out, a gigantic inflatable balloon will chase you down and strangle you. Little J. manages to make any traction on an international scene. The total absence of cultural associations has given the Japanese musical scene totally without boundaries or borders; wild creative alchemy that exists nowhere else in the world that everyone else knows better. Nobody told the Japanese that you can't mix country music and industrial techno, or bluegrass and punk rock. They just think Western music is cool, so combining multiple kinds of styles into a single sound is even cooler.

Assembled from grainy digital footage of bands in sweaty nightclubs, mashed up with interviews and peculiar time-lapse animation of the hustle and bustle of modern living in Tokyo, **Live From Tokyo** has a dreamlike, surreal quality. The end result is an engaging multimedia presentation that enraptures all the senses. Alas, the technical presentation is a bit weak. The anamorphic transfer is subject to tremendous digital distortion, edge enhancement, jagged edges and compression artifacts. Black levels are washed out, and colors are muted. The straightforward 2.0 stereo presentation does the job done, but the live recordings of the bands leaves much to be desired. The presentation lacks fidelity, especially in the bass. Japanese dialog is hard subtitled onto the presentation, but a dedicated subtitle track would have been a nice touch.

If you don't know your Zoobombs from your Kuruucrew, then this DVD is for you. Newcomers to the wonderful world of Tokyo music will find **Live From Tokyo** to be an enlightening exploration into a strange and wonderful world.

#### The Verdict

Not guilty.

#### Give us your feedback!

Did we give **Live From Tokyo** a fair trial? [yes](#) / [no](#)

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