



WOMAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA

Black Box Diaries

Black Box Diaries

Director: Shiori Ito

©: Star Sands, Cineric Creative, Hanashi Films
A production by: Hanashi Films, Cineric Creative, Hanashi Films

In association with: Spark Features

Supported by: Hot Docs Forum, IDA – International Documentary Association – Enterprise Documentary Fund, Sundance Institute

Presented by: Dogwoof

Executive Producers: Robina Riccitiello, Josh Peters, Mitsunobu Kawamura

Produced by: Eric Nyari, Hanna Aqvilin, Shiori Ito

Co-producers: Takashi Shinomiya, Ryo Yukizane, Ryo Nagai, Yuta Okamura, Ema Ryan Yamazaki

Creative Consultant: Takeshi Fukunaga

Casting by: Rikiya Takano

Camera by: Hanna Aqvilin, Yuta Okamura, Yuichiro Otsuka, Shiori Ito

Abstract Imagery by: Keke Shiratama

Graphics Consultant: Naoko Saito

Editor: Ema Ryan Yamazaki

Co-editor: Mariko Montpetite

Assistant Editor: Mizuki Toriya

Consulting Editor: Maya Daisy Hawke

Titles and Graphic Design by: Mizuki Toriya, Keke Shiratama

Colourist: Fumiro Sato

Original Score: Mark degli Antoni

Archival Music Supervisor: John McCullough

Sound Design and Mix by: Andrew Tracy

Audio Post Producer: Laura Dopp

Special Advisers: Aiko Masubuchi, Neo Sora

Documentary Counsellor: Keke Shiratama

Publicity: Susan Norget

Japan-USA-Sweden-UK 2024

102 mins

Digital

Courtesy of Dogwoof

Woman with a Movie Camera is generously supported by Jane Stanton

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk

SIGHT AND SOUND

+ Q&A with director Shiori Ito

We are delighted to announce that following this event, director Shiori Ito will join us for a book signing located outside of the Blue Room. Copies of Shiori's book are available for purchase from the BFI Shop and we will operate a queuing system on a first-come first served basis.

Director's statement

My name is Shiori Ito, and I am a journalist and filmmaker. In May 2017, I went public about being raped by Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a former Washington Bureau Chief for the Tokyo Broadcasting System known to be the closest journalist to then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

In Japan, where speaking of rape remains taboo, only 4% of victims report their cases to police. Victims and those around them may be stigmatised and even ostracised from society. My family was against my actions. The police investigator, who had prepared to arrest Yamaguchi at Narita Airport upon returning from the US before receiving a last-minute call 'from above', warned that I was ruining a journalism career just beginning. However, I felt a strong desire for the truth to be known, and to change Japanese society in order to prevent what happened to me from happening to more women.

Our film begins weeks before, the day I began recording video diaries on my iPhone, confessing my fear about what was to come. With only a vague idea of its future use, the material for this film began with a need to protect myself. In the previous year, after my case was suppressed by various levers of power in the Japanese system, I had secretly recorded conversations with the police and others. I became not only the victim but the investigator of my own case.

My coming forward shocked the public. There was a vicious backlash from the ultra-right, with an online campaign of disparaging posts and death threats, as well as everyday Japanese who picked apart my appearance and background. Why was my top blouse button undone at the press conference? This was evidence that I was a slut. A true Japanese would not speak of such shame.

Later, when a historic change in the Japanese rape law was passed, I felt my primary goal was accomplished and that I could return to a normal life. It was too late. I had become a hero, a villain, an icon – but I could not live with myself.

I pushed myself to the limit in shooting this documentary. Upon revisiting the hotel where I was raped, I felt the damage I was doing to myself might be too much. But at the same time, my desire to change society and tell this story kept me alive. Now, four years after winning the civil case, I can with more objectivity watch the scenes of my breaking down, passing moments of joy and normalcy, and absurd comedy in my novice investigator techniques – and to conceive how they can come together to form our film.

A black box is defined as a system whose internal workings are hidden or not readily understood. Japan is a land of black boxes, and I learned what happens in this society when you start opening them. Our film is not about seeking criminal justice against my perpetrator or about politics of the left and right. Rather, it is the story of one woman's experience – my black box, laid open for all to see.

REGULAR PROGRAMME

Relaxed Screening: *Bird*

Mon 25 Nov 18:15

African Odysseys: *Mugabe and Me* + Q&A with director-producer Roy Agyemang and executive producer Andy Mundy-Castle

Sun 1 Dec 14:00

Silent Cinema: *Quo Vadis?* + intro by

Professor Maria Wyke

Sun 1 Dec 14:15

Restored: *The Roaring Twenties*

Sun 8 Dec 12:30

Seniors' Free Talk: *Writing for the Screen*

Mon 9 Dec 11:00

Seniors' Free Matinee: *In Custody* + intro and

Q&A with screenwriter Farrukh Dhondy

Mon 9 Dec 14:00

Relaxed Screening:

A Sudden Glimpse to *Deeper Things* + discussion

Mon 9 Dec 18:40

Woman with a Movie Camera:

The Widow Mimangin

Wed 11 Dec 18:20 + intro; Mon 23 Dec 18:15;

Sat 28 Dec 20:30

Film Wallahs: *Tere Mere Sapne*

+ intro by Vibhu Vaibhav Anand

Thu 12 Dec 18:30

Projecting the Archive: *The Brighton Strangler*

+ extended intro by curator Ehsan Khoshbakht

Mon 16 Dec 18:35

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop.

We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the BFI mailing list for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

About the production

Shiori Ito began accumulating the materials for *Black Box Diaries* as a means of protection, recording secret audio of the police and filming herself in a confessional style on her iPhone at home. As a journalist, she had an instinct that they might become valuable in telling her own story, though she had not defined yet in what medium. Over the years, between the rape in April 2015 and her civil case victory in December 2019, Shiori relied upon her creative partner, Swedish journalist and filmmaker Hanna Aqvilin, and the support of videographer friends to shoot her activities vérité-style while continuing to film herself in a confessional-style with an iPhone and diligently keep up her diary. She was also filmed by media outlets such as BBC and NHK, with agreements she would later be able to access the footage. It is these materials which, though varying in style and format, together comprise a viscerally raw, shocking, and ultimately human and convincing account of this period of five years in Shiori's life. In late 2020, one year after the civil court victory, she felt ready to tell her own story in the form of a feature documentary.

In approaching *Black Box Diaries*, Shiori's intention first and foremost has been to allow this powerful record of events gathered in real-time to form the spine of the film; it proceeds mostly chronologically and explicitly from the first-person POV of the director/subject. Although those around Shiori were re-interviewed to gain further context and understanding, no images or even audio from these interviews appear in the final film. Rather, information necessary to follow the story both for Japanese and international audiences is woven into the timeline using subtle techniques such as images from Shiori's diary and from contemporaneous media. Shiori also collaborated with Japanese visual artist Keke Shiratama to create a new layer of abstract imagery representing her inner experience. To enhance the immersive experience of *Black Box Diaries*, the film has a soundscape at the border of sound and music with an original score by Mark degli Antoni and sound design by Andrew Tracy.

When this film production started, Japan's rape laws had remained the same for the last 110 years, with a shorter minimum sentence for rape than theft. Rape rarely existed according to statistics, and culturally and structurally, sexual violence was not treated as a serious problem. Rape was provable only by severe physical violence or threats, not by lack of consent. The taboo and the complications involved in addressing the topic existed on all levels of society, and therefore most victims rarely came forward with sexual assault allegations. The fear of having to relive the event and the stigma led to only 4% (some studies even say as low as 1%) of sexual assault survivors reporting the crime. The chances of a female police officer being assigned to the case were very rare – less than 8% of the Japanese police force are women. When going to the police, victims often had to re-enact their incident with life-sized dolls. Tokyo only had one rape crisis centre for a city with a 14 million population – a single phone line with two staff members sharing the work burden. This is the society Shiori Ito faced when she decided to report a rape, and *Black Box Diaries* is the story of hard-won change, albeit not nearly enough yet.

Production notes