



Directed by Jessica Oreck
2009, 90 min

<http://www.beetlequeen.com/>

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BEETLE QUEEN CONQUERS TOKYO



Synopsis:

Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo delves into the ineffable mystery of Japan's age-old love affair with insects. A labyrinthine meditation on nature, beauty, philosophy and Japanese culture that might just make you question if your 'instinctive' repulsion to bugs is merely a trick of western conditioning.

Project Description:

Imagine cramming 128 million people onto an island the size of Montana – you would be pretty close to replicating the density of Japan. Not surprisingly, space is at a premium and ergonomic design is right up there next to godliness.

Yet even in Tokyo, the pinnacle of this figurative “can of sardines,” people of all ages still make room for a tiny bit of wilderness. It is only fitting that they have become captivated by nature’s most efficient invention in space, design and function – insects.

Sold live in vending machines and department stores, plastic replicas included as prizes in the equivalent of a McDonald’s Happy Meal and the subject of the No. 1 videogame, *MushiKing*, from the smallest backyard to the top of Mt. Fuji, insects inspire an enthusiasm in Japan seen nowhere else in this world. *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* discovers why Japan developed this rich and enriching social relationship with insects.

Like a detective story, the film untangles the web of influences behind Japan’s captivation with insects. It opens in modern-day Tokyo where a single beetle recently sold for \$90,000 then slips back to the early 1800s, to the first cricket-selling business and the development of haiku and other forms of insect literature and art. Through history and adventure, *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* travels all the way back in time to stories of the fabled first emperor who named Japan the “Isle of the Dragonflies.”

Along the way the film takes side trips to Zen temples and Buddhist Shrines, nature preserves and art museums in its quest for the inspirations that moved Japan into this fascination while other cultures hurtled off towards an almost universal and profound fear of insects.

Interspersed with the philosophies of one of Japan’s best-selling authors and anatomists, Dr. Takeshi Yoro, and laced with poetry and art from Japan’s history, this film becomes about much more than insects. *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* is set to the

rhythm of traditional Japanese values in its attention to detail, harmony, and the appreciation of the seemingly mundane. It quietly challenges the viewer to observe the world from an uncommon perspective that will shift the familiar to the fantastic and just might change not only the way we think about bugs, but the way we think about life.

Director's Statement:

In making *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo*, I am striking a new and unconventional approach to science education. My goal is to reach children and adults alike, and to help reframe their relationship with the natural world. My passion isn't about genetics, it isn't about global warming, it doesn't follow the latest craze in the science world – but it is critically relevant to the problems of today. It is about attention to detail, patience, and ultimately harmony - all of which are so rarely present in our modern lives.

Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo acts like a 360° virtual tour. It revolves slowly around Japan's love of insects, and in the process of capturing different angles of this micro-culture, it picks up a glimmer of something much larger. Because the film travels not just two-dimensionally around an object, but also three-dimensionally through time, this glimmer of 'something larger' ultimately reveals itself, not just as a cultural backdrop, not just as a philosophy, but as an entire way of life – as a possibility to change the most basic nature of our perspectives.

My aim is to challenge the way Westerners view nature, beauty and the hectic monotony of our day-to-day routine. It is my intention to inspire a new sense of wonder – a small sense of wonder – one that does not overwhelm, but acts, like some gentle war of attrition, to slowly but substantially coax us into rethinking how we live our lives. As with the Japanese culture, the film is subtle, but it functions as a passageway to a wholly different world of senses.

Crew Biographies:

JESSICA ORECK [producer/writer/director] works as an animal keeper and docent at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. When not at the museum, Jessica spends her time inventing new ways to create a sense of wonder in the world. "Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo" is Jessica's first feature film. She is currently in production on several animated science shows, building her own museum exhibition, and research for her next feature film.

MAIKO ENDO [co-producer] moved from Tokyo to New York in 2000. Since then she has been playing violin in bands and orchestras as well as composing and recording

music for movie soundtracks and art exhibitions. Currently, she is writing her first feature length film.

AKITO KAWAHARA [co-producer] grew up fully bilingual and bicultural, attending a public school in Tokyo for one half of each year, and spending the other half in a private school in New York City. From the age of four, Akito and his father, like many fathers and sons in Japan, spent their weekends collecting insects. Currently a Ph.D. candidate in entomology at the University of Maryland, Akito has given lectures around the country about the contrast of insect culture between his two worlds, Japan and the United States.

SEAN WILLIAMS [camera] is a well-known fixture on the NYC film rep circuit. When Sean is not at the movies, he is shooting various indie and commercial projects around the world. He is currently the chief archivist for renowned documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles and often works as his second camera.

About Myriapod Productions, LLC.

Myriapod Productions, LLC. was started by Jessica Oreck in 2008. Based in New York City, the company produces original media with a focus on education and the exploration of the natural sciences. Myriapod Productions is proud to present its first feature film, *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo*. Please visit our website at www.myriapodproductions.com to learn more about our other current projects; or visit www.beetlequeen.com to watch a trailer for *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo*.

Press, Festival Play and the Future:

Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo had its world premiere at SXSW 2009 as part of the Emerging Visions line-up. It played to sold-out theaters and received enthusiastic responses from the press.

You can check out our reviews from *Variety*, *The Austin Chronicle*, *The Austin-American Statesman*, *Filmmaker Magazine* and the blog *Hammer To Nail* on the following pages.

Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo has now played at Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, Cinevegas (where it won a **Special Jury Award for Artistic Vision**) as well as

Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival, AFI Film Festival (where it was selected for the prestigious 20/20 program) and many more.

Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo won the **Cinema Eye Honor Spotlight Award** was nominated for an **Independent Spirit Award** in the category, "Truer than Fiction."

With these accolades under our belt and more on the horizon, *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* is now looking to the future. We are planning on theatrical play at art-houses, film societies, etc, in addition to launching our 50-city museum, library, university and grassroots tour.

Since *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* appeals to niche audiences, our plan for the film is to generate word-of-mouth excitement through specific audiences associated with entomology, philosophy and religious studies. From there we hope to build an interest with the general public, eco-villages, nature preserves, ecological institutions and other grassroots organizations interested in the way that Westerner's perceive nature.

We would love to keep you apprised of the latest news about our film, so please visit our Web site www.beetlequeen.com. You can also drop us a line at info@beetlequeen.com to be added to our mailing list.

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Myriapod Productions, LLC

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| Director | Jessica Oreck |
| Producers | Jessica Oreck, Maiko Endo, Akito Kawahara |
| Writer | Jessica Oreck |
| Editor | Jessica Oreck, Theo Angell |
| Cinematographer | Sean Price Williams |
| Sound | Nate Shaw |
| Music | JC Morrison, Nate Shaw |
| Additional Music | Masami Tsuchiya, Haroumi Hosono, Mishio Ogawa, Logic System, Paul Grimstad |
| Music Supervisor | Sean Price Williams |