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Japanese Crying Boom

Forget the pint after work when you've had a stressful day, or a good old natter with your mates on the phone when your boss has doubled your workload. The latest form of stress relief to sweep Japan is being dubbed the Crying Boom. Embraced by stressed businessmen, middle-aged women and teenagers alike, the latest way to express your feelings is by settling down with a heartbreaking DVD or novel, releasing all that pent up sadness and emotion; having a good old cry!

This is a fairly recent craze that can partly be accredited to clever marketing ploys by the larger television and film companies. The ability to make you sob is the unique selling point of these DVDs, books and television series.

A Southern Korean television series entitled Winter Sonata was shown on Japanese TV. It explored the theme of lost love and was an unprecedented hit, particularly among middle-aged women who found the heart-wrenching story a refreshing change from the typically emotionally restrained dramas that they were used to. This started a trend and there has been an influx of Korean dramas onto Japanese television screens with tragedy and doomed romance taking centre stage. Since then, Japanese production companies have jumped in on the act and are competing with each other to create their own brands of tearjerker fiction, each one made seemingly more tragic than the last.

Typically, the stressed businessman will travel to a café, in which they rent out an intimate room by the hour and watch a Tear Movie. After a sob, they feel refreshed and emotionally cleansed. Some prefer to watch with

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company so that they can share their feelings afterwards. This has actually proved so popular that specific clubs have been formed, such as the Minnade Nako Kai in Kyoto and the Lachrymal Gland Club in Sendai. It costs around 1000 yen, (approximately £5) to attend one of these meetings and attendees report a terrific sense of wellbeing afterwards.



"Novels are being written with the sole purpose of making you weep"

For teenagers, the TV series Ichiritto no Namida, (A litre of tears) has struck a particular chord. It focuses on a beautiful young girl who is dying of an incurable disease and explores her relationships with family and awe-inspiring outlook on life. Movie blogs have documented youngsters reactions to the film and the resounding response is that it is an utter tragedy, yet makes them appreciate the beauty of life and how lucky they are.

Another recurring theme that is particularly poignant to viewers is nostalgia. Yamato, is based around the ill-fated World War II battleship and Sunset on Third Street is set in the 1950's. The most famous nostalgia movie is the animation Hataru no Haka, (Grave of a Firefly) which centres around Seita, a boy whose mother is killed during a firebombing and the trials he subsequently goes through.

It is not just movies and television series that have contributed to this trend. Novels are also being written with the specific purpose of making people weep. Sekai no Chushin de, Ai o Sakeb, (Crying for Love at the Heart of the World) is a love story that centres around a girl with leukaemia. It has sold over 3 million copies and is the best selling Japanese novel of all time. Tokyo Tower Okan to Boku to Tokidoki Oton (Tokyo Tower Mother and I, sometime Father) has sold over a million copies. Such successes have created the genre Tear Books; walk into a larger Japanese bookstore and you can go into the Tear Book section, choose a theme, (romance, tragedy, disease, nostalgia....) even select a book which is graded with a percentage as to how likely you are to cry.



There are a number of theories that have been put forward to suggest why this method of stress relief has become so popular in Japan. Some believe that as there is a degree of shyness and restraint when it comes to expressing emotion yet crying is considered a healthy thing. So this controlled method of stress relief is considered beneficial to health, while not contradicting the popular notion that one should remain strong.

Some believe that older Japanese women are being swept up in their emotions and have a yearning for the pure innocent love that they once experienced.

And in the ever stressful and economically advancing Japanese society, it is thought that women who are entering the workforce have little time for romance as they are concentrating on building their careers.

Either way, whether it is stress relief, a yearning for romance and nostalgia, or an exploration of their own emotions it looks as though the Crying Boom is going to be around for a while yet. It has certainly struck a chord in the hearts of the Japanese people, whatever the reason. Better grab those tissues...



Tokyocube were recently interviewed by the Metro Newspaper and BBC World Service on the subject of Japan's Crying Boom.

Reporter: **Joanne Hunt**