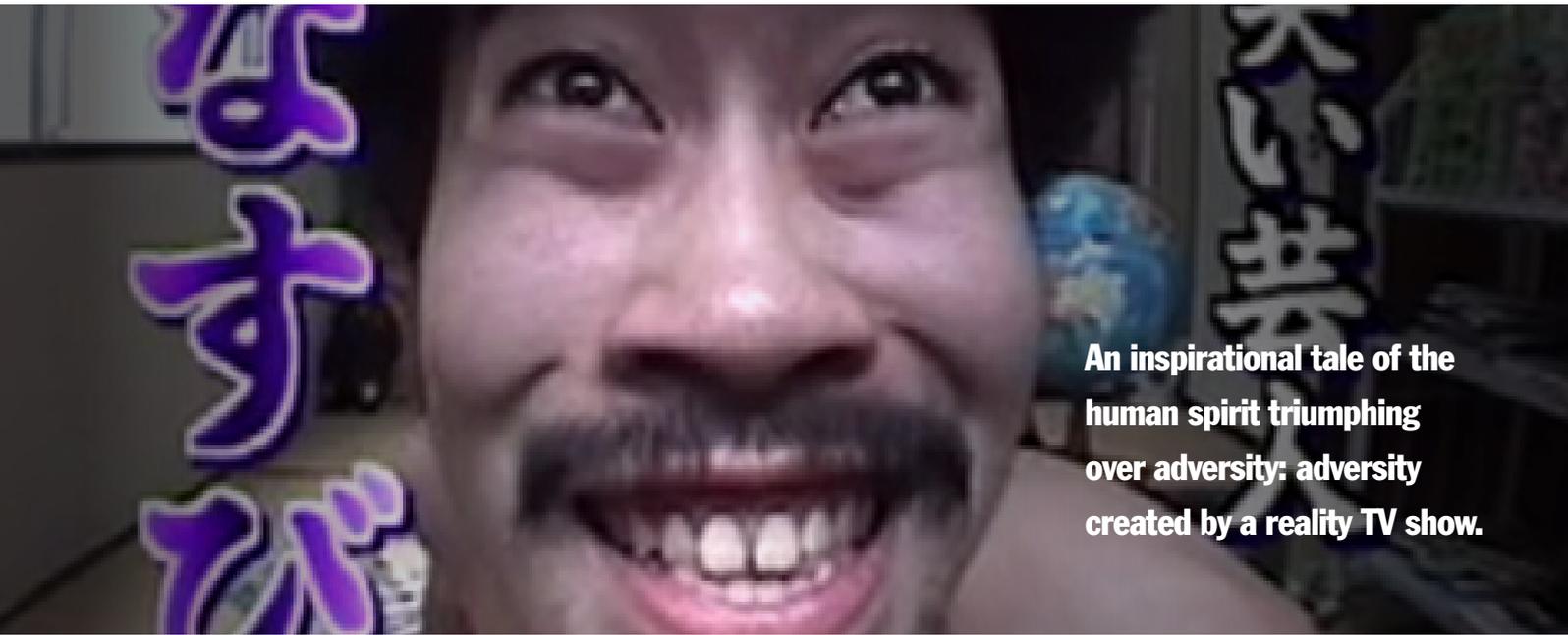


the real **TRUMAN** show

HOW ONE JAPANESE TV AUDITION TURNED INTO A REAL-LIFE 'TRUMAN SHOW'



An inspirational tale of the human spirit triumphing over adversity; adversity created by a reality TV show.

This is the incredible true story of a man who lived for 15 months trapped inside a small room, naked, starving and alone... and completely unaware that his life was being broadcast on national TV to over 17 million viewers a week.

In 1998, the same year the film *THE TRUMAN SHOW* and the TV series *BIG BROTHER* is released, a comedian named Nasubi is invited to a audition at a Japanese TV station.

When he 'wins' he is taken to a small apartment room. The show's producer tells him to take off all his clothes and hand them over. Only then, after he is naked and stranded, is Nasubi told what the show's premise is: "Can a man live on winning sweepstakes alone?" He laughs, and the door is shut.

He'll be freed from the apartment after he wins £5,500 worth of prizes. Until then he must just hope that he can win enough sustenance to survive.

Over 15 months Nasubi slowly started to lose his mind and came close to starvation – unaware that not only were 17 million people watching him, but that the diaries were bestsellers, he was the face of several advertising campaigns and had become a household name: a national symbol for the spirit of 'never giving up'!

Twenty years on, Nasubi is working on a fundraising project for his home town of Fukushima for which he needs the help of the Toshio Tsuchiya: the TV Producer who created the show. We follow Nasubi and Tsuchiya as they work together on this project, testing the limits of forgiveness and forging an unusual relationship.

In an era where we give away our data for free on social media, a world where each of us is willingly broadcasting our lives to anyone willing to watch and where product placement is everywhere – the tale of this twenty-year-old TV show is more relevant than ever.

But more than a parable about privacy and the media – this is really a film about the strength and resilience of the human spirit. Nasubi turned himself from a TV torture victim into a symbol for hope and never giving up for an entire nation.

An access-led film:

We have secured access to both Nasubi and Tsuchiya (the Producer who devised and made the show). We have started production and recorded one master interview with Nasubi and one research interview with Tsuchiya. We are currently negotiations with Nippon Television in regards to Denpa Shonen specific archive. We have a preliminary production schedule and budget in place.

THE STORY

Denpa Shonen was a show that aired from 1992 through to 2002. It was the brainchild of Toshio Tsuchiya, the 'King of Reality TV' in Japan. The series made typical reality show challenges seem like child's play, placing contestants — mostly aspiring comedians — in outrageous situations that pushed the limits of their physical and mental endurance.

One of its most famous segments was called "Sweepstakes Life." A 22 year old comedian called Nasubi 'wins' the audition. The producer then explains to him that he has a unique idea



for a show. He doesn't know whether it will air or not at this stage, but if it does, Nasubi will become famous.

Nasubi is then blindfolded and taken to a small apartment with just a table and a large pile of magazines (no bed, no chair) and told to take off his clothes. From now on he will have to win his clothes and food by entering sweepstakes in the magazines. He will be freed when he wins £5,500 worth of prizes. They then tell him to put tapes in a little camera every two hours and record himself. They would come pick up the tapes once a day and maybe, someday, the videotapes would end up on the air.

Nasubi screams "Are you for real?"

But he then did sit down and start writing. Soon he was entering 100 to 300 contests a day. And while he waited for prizes to arrive, he had no food. Nasubi got frighteningly thin very quickly.

A couple of weeks into Nasubi's challenge, before he had won any solid food, when he was hungriest, a delivery man came to the door bearing ramen and stir fry vegetables. When Nasubi admitted he had no money to pay for any food the delivery man simply left, taking with him the ramen and vegetables.

For these first two weeks the production staff gave him just a little bread and water each day, but as soon as he won something – this gesture stopped. It took him two and a half weeks to win a bag of rice. When he did, he literally danced for joy.

He was an instant hit. The show's producer, Toshiyo Tsuchiya, strongly believes that these rig-style cameras revealed something profound:

"In the States, you deal with performers who are conscious of appealing to the cameras, whereas in Japan, we take great care in having the performers completely forget that they're on camera. Audiences enjoy this chance to observe the ultimate "bare-all" aspect of people."

Tsuchiya takes pride in the level of authenticity he created:

"Like with Nasubi, he hasn't eaten anything, so when he finally wins some rice he grins from ear to ear and really expresses delight. With him, that's not a learnt technique, he truly is happy. When you see someone that pleased, it doesn't matter if you know them or not, you feel happy with them, maybe even cry with them. I like that."

Even Nasubi admits that his 'performance' was authentic:

"Well, initially, of course, I was there as a performer, and I wanted to be a comedian. But somewhere in the middle, the whole business of staying alive became my full-time occupation. So I think what you saw if you saw me dancing, it was really just a human being expressing great joy."

But Nasubi soon realised that although he now had food, he didn't own a pot to cook it in. After a couple days of failed attempts, he figured out that if he put some rice in an empty drink container and left it near his single gas burner, it eventually turned into a kind of porridge. When the rice ran out, all he had won to sustain him was dog food for 6 weeks until he won some more rice.

All this time Nasubi's ratings were going through the roof. People thought he was the funniest comedy act they'd ever seen – his joy when a package arrived was contagious. On television, Nasubi's naked groin was hidden by a purple cartoon aubergine that floated around as he moved. Everything he did was accentuated with ridiculous sound effects and puffy rainbow letters floated above his head.

But these effects popped up just as often when Nasubi was despondent. The show took every chance to poke fun at him, whether he was muttering to himself, dancing around, or doing terrible headstands – all the things you do when you think no one's watching.

Nasubi won hundreds of prizes, but many of them were useless to him, for example Spice Girls tickets, a TV with no cable, and



a bicycle. He never won anything he could wear and so was naked for the entire show. And as the weeks went by, then months, Nasubi started to look less and less sane. He grew a beard. His hair was wild. And he started talking differently, slower. He'd make really creepy faces into the camera. At one point, he won some toys, and he started talking to them. He took a stuffed seal for a walk around the apartment. An action figure became his sensei, and he got life advice from it.

When asked why Nasubi didn't try and escape, his answer is perhaps hard to relate to for most:

"I was naked, so I would have had to go outside naked and seek help. But I don't think that that's what kept me in there. The only thing I really have to say is that I said I'd do it, and I do what I say. There's a phrase, the Japanese spirit, which is just that you sort of stick through. You endure things. When you're given something, whether it's easier or whether it's hard, you just really do - you're obliged to follow it through."

It took Nasubi a year to reach his goal of £5,500 worth of prizes. The Producers didn't tell him. Instead they snuck into his apartment, blindfolded him and took him to Korea! They told him that this was his reward for winning so many prizes. He did a day of sightseeing and then they took him to a hotel room where they had recreated his old apartment inside, complete with magazines. They told him he must now win his airfare home.

Nasubi lost all energy. He felt he had reached the end. He argued with the Producer and they went back and forth negotiating until finally they persuaded him to stay and do this last leg. He says he was too tired to argue anymore.

Four months passed and then the producers snuck into his room again, blindfolded him and took him to another bare room identical to the last two. Nasubi sighed and instinctively took off all his clothes.

This would be the final episode. In a recent magazine article Producer Toshio Tsuchiya describes it as his favourite television

moment of his entire career:

"On cue, the roof of his prefab room was removed and the four walls fell down, suddenly revealing a very naked Nasubi in the spotlight on stage. He looked out at the sea of people and in that moment, he revealed a natural, basic human side to the cameras. No matter how many times I've watched his expression and reaction, I never get tired of it!"

Nasubi, frightened, says "my house fell down, and there's all these people here." He's blown away – this is the first time he's aware that the show has even been broadcast.

The producer, Tsuchiya, says he isn't sorry about the show he produced with Nasubi. He says he was enthralled by their struggle and watching them succeed. He admits he put him through a lot, but compares himself to a sports coach who runs their players through difficult manoeuvres. He suggests that the show was intended to be a sort of psychological experiment:

"The whole project was trying to reach at some very elemental simple humanity. You see, Nasubi had been sort of brought to a state where he was in such an elemental part of his existence that he danced without realizing he had ever danced. And he danced on a regular basis. The modern individual is sort of shackled by convention and expectation and all these other things that we wear from day to day. And I wanted to see them drop some of that to see this simple humanity and then to see actual gratefulness."

After the show, Nasubi had a lot of trouble holding a conversation for six months. He felt sweaty and uncomfortable in clothes for a year. Despite having started the journey with an eye on furthering his career, he rejected all the offers that came in that required him to be goofy and naked and, while he didn't turn his back on comedy altogether, he decided to concentrate on more serious acting and writing plays. However to this day he is still he ised everywhere he goes for his Denpa Shonen experience.



Nasubi sounds strangely positive about his experience and claims it gave him a long time to think about his life. He also says that anything he has had to face in his life seems easy compared to his time on Denpa Shonen.

He has become a national symbol in Japan for the strength of the human spirit and 'never giving up' and you can even buy traditional 'roly-poly' dolls that are weighted so that when you try to push them over, they wobble for a few moments but always end up upright.

In 2011 Japan experienced the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in the country. The resulting tsunami also caused a level 7 meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear powerplant in Nasubi's home town. In the immediate aftermath, when people had lost their homes and were living in halls with no change of clothes and only a cardboard partition for privacy – Nasubi was one of the few celebrities who could look them in the eye and make them laugh:

"People said, well Nasubi coped with living naked and hungry for over a year, we can cope for a while".

Fukushima's struggle to return to normalcy can be seen most visibly in its evicted towns, where abandoned and damaged houses along empty roads sit on the scarred landscape. The schools are nearly empty with only 6 or so pupils per class and even seven years on, some residents are still living in shelters. The economy which relied heavily on farming is struggling as people mistrust the safety of the area's produce. But it is the human toll from Fukushima that is most horrendous: 2,000 people have already died from the evacuations and another 5,000 are expected to die from future cancers as a result of radiation.

Since 2011 Nasubi has decided to use what celebrity he has to inspire the people of Fukushima to 'never give up'. After three unsuccessful attempts (one of which was during the Nepal earthquake of 2015) he succeeded in climbing Everest,

risking his life at the top to take off his oxygen mask and record a message of hope for Fukushima.

He now has plans for a festival in the area – but needs the help one of the country's most infamous TV producers: Toshio Tsuchiya – the same producer who trapped Nasubi in the apartment 20 years ago. This will be the first time they have worked together in 20 years and confront each other with questions that have been eating away at them for all this time.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

The film will tell the story of Nasubi's experience through testimony from Nasubi himself and Tsuchiya (producer), and with archive footage from the show itself.

It will also involve some observational sequences of Nasubi in the present day, reflecting on his experiences. He will retrace his steps and return to some of the key locations within his story; the studio where he 'auditioned' and some of the apartments in Japan (he was moved several times when the press started to get wind of his location). This will be the first time he has returned to these locations and at each place he visits he will reflect on the impact that the show had on him.

We will also follow Nasubi and Tsuchiya as they work together on this new festival project for Fukushima. For 14 years Nasubi kept his distance from anything to do with the production of the show and would never have entertained this idea, but a few years ago they met accidentally and things are slowly starting to change. Nasubi says he came away feeling he had received an apology, but in contrast to this, Tsuchiya claims he didn't apologise that day, but just explained his purpose in making the show.

Working together again now - having recently re-trodden the path that he took 20 years ago on the show - Nasubi will have some new questions to ask the man who put him through one of television history's most grueling ordeals.