

## Document Citation

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## Critic's Choice

Don't be scared off by the Japanese title: **Ei janaika** (pronounced "Ay-ja-nigh-ka") is one of the most scintillating cinematic experiences of the year. Shohei Imamura's sardonic period piece adopts a broad canvas: the popular upheavals that attended the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate in the eighteen-sixties. Imamura (*Vengeance Is Mine*, *The Insect Woman*) has always been the most ambitious of Japanese directors, making intellectual epics with startling visual sweep. If he's reminded me in the past of Welles (*Pigs and Battleships*) or Murnau (*Kuragejima*), in this film an antic Stanley Kubrick springs to

mind. The title roughly translates into "Fuck it!" or "Why not? I don't care!", and it's a chant sung by dancing masses of street people who charge across the river separating Edo into rich and poor districts, throwing amulets and flowers at the "National Guardsmen" who block their cavorting progress. Almost impossible to describe, *Ei janaika* exhibits both profound nihilism and irrepressible energy, linking sexual drives to historical change. Riotous, brooding, and wonderful, Imamura's film succeeds everywhere that *Ragtime* fails. It's at the Kokusai. —**Myron Meisel**