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Japan

A is for Aum Shinrikyo, the cult religion responsible for the 1995 sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway, and for Shoko Asahara, the cult's founder and guru... and for Hiroshi Araki, the 28-year-old junior spokesman for the cult, who struggles to maintain both his faith and his cool while he watches his leaders go on trial for their terrorist crimes. Tatsuya Mori left a job in television to make this remarkable documentary. He befriended Araki, convinced him that he was trustworthy and impartial, and gained unrestricted access to all that remained of Aum as the authorities moved to confiscate its properties – an access denied to (and much resented by) the mainstream media. Mori's film is neither an anatomy of Aum nor an investigation of the subway outrage but something more challenging and rewarding: a portrait of a young man under pressure which probes for the reasons he – and others like him – signed up to a cult religion in the first place. This line of enquiry makes it the most searching Japanese indie documentary since *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*. *Tony Rayns*

**Dir Tatsuya Mori / with Hiroshi Araki and members of Aum Shinrikyo /
Japan 1998 / 136 mins**