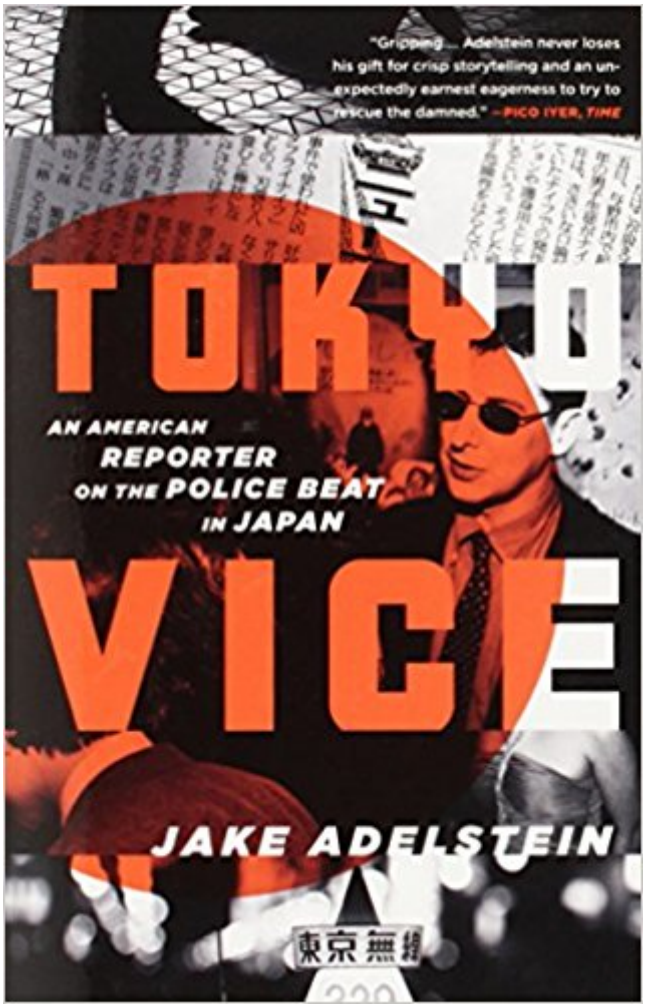
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# Tokyo Vice: An American Reporter On The Police Beat In Japan




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## Synopsis

A riveting true-life tale of newspaper noir and Japanese organized crime from an American investigative journalist.Ã Â Jake Adelstein is the only American journalist ever to have been admitted to the insular Tokyo Metropolitan Police Press Club, where for twelve years he covered the dark side of Japan: extortion, murder, human trafficking, fiscal corruption, and of course, the yakuza. But when his final scoop exposed a scandal that reverberated all the way from the neon soaked streets of Tokyo to the polished Halls of the FBI and resulted in a death threat for him and his family, Adelstein decided to step down. Then, he fought back. In Tokyo Vice he delivers an unprecedented look at Japanese culture and searing memoir about his rise from cub reporter to seasoned journalist with a price on his head.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A Q&A with Jake Adelstein Question: What drew you to Japan in the first place, and how did you wind up going to university there? Jake Adelstein: In high school I had many problems with anger and self-control. I had been studying Zen Buddhism and karate, and I thought Japan would be the perfect place to reinvent myself. It could be that my pointy right ear draws me toward neo-Vulcan pursuits--I donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t know. When I got to Japan, I managed to find lodgings in a Soto Zen Buddhist temple where I lived for three years, attending zazen meditation at least once a week. I didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t become enlightened, but I did get a better hold on myself. Question: How did you become a journalist for the most popular Japanese-language newspaper? Jake Adelstein: The Yomiuri Shinbun runs a standardized test, open to all college students. Many Japanese firms hire

young grads this way. My friends thought that the idea of a white guy trying to pass a Japanese journalistÃ¢â ¬â„¢s exam was so impossibly quixotic that I wanted to prove them wrong. I spent an entire year eating instant ramen and studying. I managed to find the time to do it by quitting my job as an English teacher and working as a Swedish-massage therapist for three overworked Japanese women two days a week. It turned out to be a slightly sleazy gig, but it paid the bills. There was a point when I was ready to give up studying and the application process. Then, when I was in Kabukicho on June 22, 1992, I asked a tarot fortune-telling machine for advice on my career path, and it said that with my overpowering morbid curiosity I was destined to become a journalist, a job at which I would flourish, and that fate would be on my side. I took that as a good sign. I still have the printout. I did well enough on the initial exam to get to the interviews, and managed to stumble my way through that process and get hired. I think I was an experimental case that turned out reasonably well. Question: How did you succeed in uncovering the underworld in a country that is famously "closed" or restricted to foreigners? Do you think people talked more openly to you because you were American? Jake Adelstein: I think Japan is actually more open than people give it credit for. However, to get the door open, you really need to become fluent in the spoken and written language. The written language was a nightmare for me. YouÃ¢â ¬â„¢re right, though; it was mostly an advantage to be a foreigner--it made me memorable. The yakuza are outsiders in Japanese society, and perhaps being a fellow outsider gave us a weird kind of bond. The cops investigating the yakuza also tend to be oddballs. I was mentored into an early understanding and appreciation of the code of both the yakuza and the cops. Reciprocity and honor are essential components for both. I also think the fact that IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m too stupid to be afraid when I should be, and annoyingly persistent as well--these things didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t help me in long-term romance, but they helped me as a crime reporter. Question: Do you feel that investigative journalism is being threatened or aided by the expansion of the Internet and news blogs, and the closing down of many printed newspapers? Jake Adelstein: In one sense it is being threatened because investigative journalism is rarely a solo project. It requires huge amounts of resources, capital, and time to really do one story correctly. Legal costs and FOIA documents are expensive things. The bigger the target, the greater the risk and the more money is required. The second-biggest threat to investigative journalism is crooked lawyers and corporate shills who sue as a harassment tactic. In general, itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s rather hard and time-consuming to be an army of one. It took me almost three years to break the story about yakuza receiving liver transplants at UCLA on my own. The costs in financial terms were immense, and so were the losses along the way. A team of reporters could have done the work much faster, probably. However, these things said, blogging is also a great

source of news that might go unreported, or be overlooked, by the mainstream media. Twitter, too, has had an interesting impact, actually helping a journalist get out of jail in the case of James Karl Buck. WeÃ¢â ¬â„¢re beginning to see kind of a public option in investigative journalism, too--such as things like ProPublica. They do an awesome job at investigative journalism, partly through donations, and they have a great web site. So the Internet is not all bad for investigative journalism, as long as we proceed with caution and forethought. At the same time, real intelligence-gathering work actually requires you to put down your cell phone and your computer and get off your ass and meet people in the real world. As odious as it may be, we have to sift through garbage, pound the pavement, and visit the scene of the crime. Not all answers can be found in front of a keyboard, or on Google, and the Ã¢â ¬Å“itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s all in the databaseÃ¢â ¬Â• mentality is the bane of reporting and often generates shoddy reporting. The individual journalist can do great investigative work--itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s just a lot harder, and usually financially difficult to do unless youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re independently wealthy, like Bruce Wayne. Most of us donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t have the time or the resources or the luxury of holding down a day job and doing investigative journalism on the side, as a hobby. Question: What do you hope your American audience can learn from your book? Jake Adelstein: I think everyone will take away something different from the book. I suppose you can learn a lot about how journalism works in Japan, how the police work, and how the yakuza work. I would also hope that people take away from the book an understanding of some of the things I really like about Japan and the Japanese, things like reciprocity, honor, loyalty, and stoic suffering. I think in Japan, I learned how important it is to keep your word, to never forget your debts--and not just the financial ones--and to make repayment in due course. Perhaps thatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s what honor is all about. ThereÃ¢â ¬â„¢s a word in Japanese, hanmen kyoshi, which means, more or less, Ã¢â ¬Å“the teacher who teaches by his bad example.Ã¢â ¬Â• At times, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m an excellent hanmen kyoshi in the book. Everything IÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve learned thatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s important to me is in the book somewhere. I hope thereÃ¢â ¬â„¢s something universal in the contents beyond just making people aware of cultural differences between the United States and Japan, or reiterating the importance and value of investigative journalism. Like a book I would choose to read to my children, I hope thereÃ¢â ¬â„¢s some kind of moral to it all. Maybe the real lesson is to be kind and helpful to the people you care about whenever you can, because itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s good for them, and good for you, and your time with them may be much shorter than you imagined. (Photo Ã Â© Michael Lionstar)

--This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Starred Review. A young Japanese-schooled Jewish-American who worked as a journalist at Tokyo

newspaper Yomiuri Shinbun during the 1990s, debut author Adelstein began with a routine, but never dull, police beat; before long, he was notorious worldwide for engaging the dirtiest, top-most villains of Japan’s organized criminal underworld, the yakuza. A pragmatic but sensitive character, Adelstein’s worldview takes quite a beating during his tour of duty; thanks to his immersive reporting, readers suffer with him through the choice between personal safety and a chance to confront the evil inhabiting his city. He learns that "what matters is the purity of the information, not the person providing it," considers personal and societal theories behind Tokyo’s illicit and semi-illicit pastimes like "host and hostess clubs," where citizens pay for the illusion of intimacy: "The rates are not unreasonable, but the cost in human terms are incredibly high." Adelstein also examines the investigative reporter’s tendency to withdraw into cynicism ("when a reporter starts to cool down, it’s very hard... ever to warm up again") but faithfully sidesteps that urge, producing a deeply thought-provoking book: equal parts cultural exposÃƒÂ©, true crime, and hard-boiled noir. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Of all things to recommend as an introduction to Japanese/American culture, this is certainly an odd choice (dealing with Japan’s rotting underbelly, rather than their clean streets or high academic standards, say), but that’s exactly what I did. A friend of mine is collaborating with Japanese colleagues at work (entirely legitimate), and I suggested he read this book as cultural background.In addition to all the TRUECRIME stuff, this book covers a lot of mundane cultural topics, transferable between journalism at a large company to other work in a large company, to relations between professionals in other aspects of Japanese life, etc.... and then there are the psychotic Yakusa, and Japan’s attitudes towards sex, etc... wild stuff.I suspect Adelstein is following a contemporary Japanese literary tradition in journalist monographs in lying his head off whenever it can improve the story without distorting the facts. Once you appreciate that this is a) to protect sources b) doesn’t change the ultimate facts c) makes for a better story and d) is (probably) what other Japanese authors are doing... I got over it, but this structure was the main draw-back for me.

True story, but probably embellished a bit on the details. Although, Tokyo came alive as seen from the eyes of a gaijin journalist clawing his way up the grimy newspaper beat reporter chain and creating a legend for himself by challenging the Yakusa on the vice beat. Colorful, crime-ridden, and some truly sad stories regarding the world of human trafficking for prostitution.

I really liked Tokyo Vice. There are a multitude of books/blogs/journals written about Japan from the

pov of a white westerner, but few have taken the hard work to really get to know the country as Adelstein has. Becoming completely fluent speaking, reading and writing Japanese is a large task for any foreigner, but bringing it up to a professional level good enough for the largest newspaper in the country? Amazing! His book is populated by colorful and memorable people from his experience living in Japan as a journalist for the Yomiuri newspaper. And of course, the main attraction, the yakuza, are present and detailed in depth, from honorable outsiders to the sadistically brutal, Adelstien explains the yakuza as real people not easily blanketed under general descriptions. People such as yakuza Cat, cop Sekigahara, and hostess Helena really fill out the book and Adelstein makes clear that his investigations into the yakuza were not a solo venture but a product of the author’s courage and hardwork, as well as the invaluable help of the friends he made in Japan.He has an easy-going, fun to read style that feels like a close friend relating his stories from abroad. Highly recommended!

This is how great Twitter can be: when I was just 20 pages into Tokyo Vice, I posted this update:"Jake Adelstein’s TOKYO VICE makes me want to be yakuza"He responded the next day with:"@calebjross It’s supposed to have the opposite effect. :)"Considering that this exchange was completely unanticipated, I was quite surprised by the direct line of contact with the author. I anticipated the exchange ending there. But, then I finished the book, and I realized how insulting my first comment could have appeared. Tokyo Vice is such an amazing story, one that, though filed under "true crime" touches on memoir. Adelstein’s position as a reporter with the unique opportunity to out certain immoral (to say the least) yakuza behavior, bleeds into his personal life in deeply affecting ways. As soon as I finished the book, I posted again on Twitter:"@jakeadelstein I must apologize for my earlier statement of wanting to be yakuza. I just finished TOKYO VICE. Incredible story, sir."And he came back with:"@calebjross Apology accepted. :)"Such a gentleman. Tokyo Vice goes highly recommended.

Pretty shocking and intense story here. The links to the US and the encroachment of the Yakuza into the grey market and legitimate financial world both in Japan and abroad is simultaneously fascinating and terrifying.Readers would benefit from some appendices at the end that detail the roles/ranks of the individuals described in the book, as the Gokudo is a very complex and hierarchical society.

This book was so interesting and fast moving that I found it hard to put down. It is well written and

describes a Japan that is unseen by most tourists. I highly recommend this book.

Jake Adelstein is one of a kind, a Jewish guy who became a reporter for the Yomiuri Shimbun, one of the largest and most respected newspapers in Japan. There has probably been no gaijin (foreigner) who has ever done that before or since. He was not just a crime beat reporter. He wrote an "anthology" that took down one of the biggest Yakuza boss in Japan. This is the story of how he did it. Along the way, the reader gets to see the underbelly of the beast, the sex trade in Japan. He captures both the best and the worst of Japan, the incredible friendships that develop in Japan vs. the callousness towards enemies and foreigners, the giri (obligation) that develops between friends and transcends generations vs. the cowardice that allows men to avert their eyes to the suffering of others, and other paradoxes of Japanese society. For example, his insightful description of the differences between Japanese restaurants and hospitals could have been only come from somebody who is both inside and outside. He is more Japanese than Jewish. He understood and conveyed the difference between guilt and shame better than any author in recent memory. It is an amazing book and I recommend it highly.

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