

JAPAN'S TOP FEMALE STAR:

A Boy Named Peter!

By SANDRA WELLS

She is by far the prettiest among the new Japanese film stars. She is the most affectionate, the most erotic girl in Tokyo. She's a girl to fall in love with. Except that she's no girl — she's a man named Peter.

Soft-voiced and sinuously sexy, Peter dances and sings in Tokyo's most important TV shows. He is a star-mannequin . . . and specializes in showing elegant, expensive designer clothes. Even his voice, walk, clothes and makeup are super-feminine. Peter's real name is Shinnosuke Ikehata, 17, and he's a former "Gay-boy" in the nightclub "Killer Jones." "Gay-boys" specialize in encouraging the lavender clientele in bars, catering to them to drink more than they intend . . . a kind of B-Girl . . . or B-Boy

Peter doesn't want to be reminded of that particular rung of the bottom of his ladder of success. He's on top now. The film "Thorn in my Flesh" has made him an instant celebrity.

In its most famous scene, the heroine, stunned with horror, stares at her dead boy friend. Then she grabs a butcher knife and gouges out her eyes.

But it isn't this shocking finale which has made the film a sensational box-office success: it's Peter, playing the heroine, who is packing the people into Japan moviehouses.

Is Peter a homosexual? He has definite thoughts on this.

"I've always been very feminine," he says. "I had to go through a great deal of teasing in school for that. Thank goodness that's over.

"But I've always enjoyed putting on and wearing makeup and women's clothing. I feel that in our time a man can do that and remain a man. To have one's hair done at a women's salon, if one was male, was impossible just a few years ago. But now no one thinks about it any more."

Does he consider himself a woman?

"Not at all. I am a man. It's just that I am a very feminine man. But why should it be wrong to be a feminine man? And who do I hurt by wearing makeup? No one. I don't want to influence people's lives. I just want to lead mine the way I want to."

Has Peter been in love?

"No, not yet. But I feel that love will be very important in my life. I don't think it will make any difference at all whether I will fall in love with a man or a woman: love is what's important, not the sex of one's partner."

Peter has been brought up by his mother and an older sister.



Formerly, Peter was a gay boy in a Tokyo gay bar.

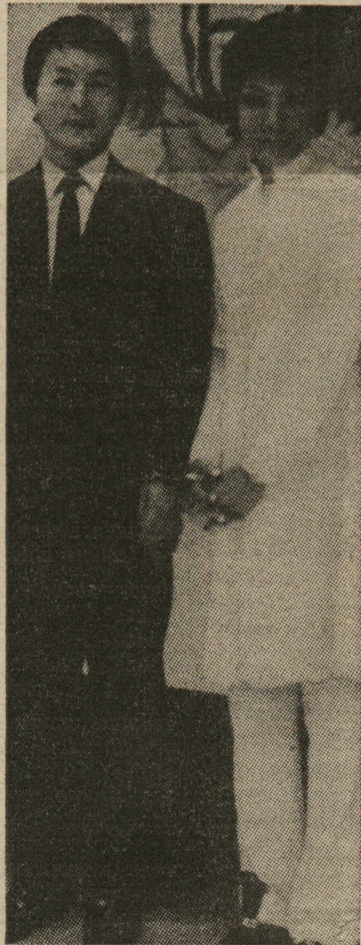


Peter's soft curves convince many that he's a she.

His father left the family when Peter was five. His mother is happy with the choices her son has made in life so far. She wants him to be happy and to remain honest, nothing else matters to her.

Peter is an easy-going kind of person. He claims, rather defensively to have no problems. He has amassed an incredible number of fans, most of them between the ages of 12 and 18, male and female.

He has overnight become the idol of a new wave in Japan, which views homosexuality as a commercially marketable fad. It is now considered chic by homosexuals



Peter (right) with Toshio Matsumoto, producer of "Thorn in My Flesh." Peter plays a girl who gouges out her eyes, as shown in the poster behind the pair.

and straight young men alike, to dress in a very feminine manner, (including dresses, made of flowery chiffon fabrics) and to use pronounced makeup. The aim is to be profoundly different from the traditionally male role—and the new wave boys manage to be different indeed.

In a recent Tokyo talk show, six housewives discussed for two solid hours whether Peter impressed them as a man or as a woman. The only thing the ladies were able to agree on: "As far as charm goes, Peter can lord it over us any day . . ."