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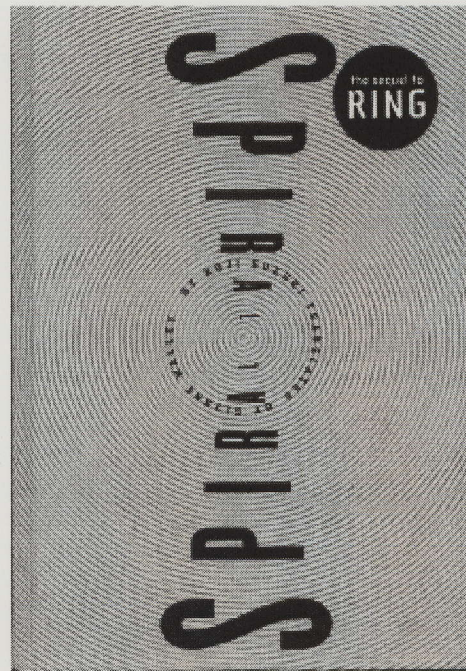
07-14-04: Vertical Recursion

The New US Edition of Koji Suzuki's 'Spiral'

Once again, our thanks go out once again to Vertical Press. And again.

Because due to their diligence and in part to the selfish indolence of Hollywood, readers are once again in the driver's seat when it comes to reading Koji Suzuki's innovative novels before seeing the filmed versions. That means we've got 'Spiral' queued up and ready to read, long before the appearance of either an easily-found DVD release of the Japanese version of the movie or the Hollywood re-make. As surprisingly different as I found the novel to be from either filmed version, to my mind, it's always best to read the book before one sees the movie. And have we thanked Vertical yet, for bringing us these wonderful versions of the Japanese novels? Well by now we have. Again.

'Spiral' starts off with Ando, a coroner, forced to dissect the body of his longtime rival, Ryuji Takayama. Readers will remember Ryuji as



Another cover by Chipp Kidd graces the SEQUEL TO RING.

Asakawa's grating counterpart in 'Ring'. Ryjui's death is certainly unnatural, and it leads Ando to the discovery of a virus tied to a now-familiar videotape. The Ring virus has been unleashed, and nothing will ever be the same in our media-saturated world.

This time around, it appears as if Suzuki is mutating the story into a rather different format than his previous novel. Numerous illustrations in the narrative give rise to this impression, as well as an extended reading of the dust jacket, once again a transparent overlay for a psychedelic pattern courtesy of Chip Kidd. (Hey Chip, where's the sequel to 'The Cheese Monkeys'?)

Suzuki writes horror fiction that has a strong current of rational science fiction running through it. Those who have seen the 'Ring' films, in any state would be well advised to give the books a read, because they're quite different in atmosphere and content. Suzuki's work is closer to that of Arthur C. Clarke or Stanislaw Lem -- particularly Lem's wonderful novel 'The Chain of Chance' -- than it is to that of Stephen King, to whom he's often compared. Try, just try to find a blurb about this author that doesn't include the phrase 'Japanese Stephen King'. See, even I, who have actually read the books and know that this is not a particularly helpful or accurate description have fallen victim to having put it in my article. As one might expect, it's a recursive effect; those who quote my article may mention that I eschew the comparison to Stephen King, and yes, they will send the 'King' virus on its next generation.

The only thing missing is a cover blurb from King himself, proclaiming Suzuki as "the future Stephen King of Japan." The horror! The Horror!

07-13-04: Graham Joyce Preview, John Powers on The Face of American Culture 'The Limits of Enchantment' Are Extended