

the plot revolves around a small group of medics and one Jedi in a M\*A\*S\*H-like unit that treats victims of the Clone Wars.

Though Del Rey holds the license for adult fiction and anything related to the *Star Wars* films, publishers such as Scho-

editor for Lucas Licensing, and Shelly Shapiro, editorial director for Del Rey.

"People love the books because the struggle of good vs. evil is timeless," says Shapiro, who edits all the *Star Wars* novels. "It's character-driven, and the Force is

anger to the Dark Side."

The first *Star Wars* planned as a series. Story ever the authors created piro, Rostoni and scien James Luceno designed

## 'Spiral' spins suspenseful tale where thriller 'Ring' left off

### Spiral

By Koji Suzuki  
Vertical, 288 pp., \$24.95

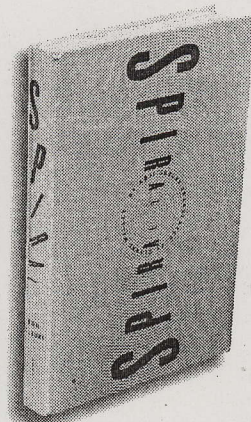
By Christopher Theokas  
Special for USA TODAY

When Koji Suzuki's horror novel *Ring* was released in Japan in 1991, it was a smash hit in a market where horror merely filled a niche. Critics hailed Suzuki as the Stephen King of Japan. *Ring* and its two sequels, *Spiral* and *Loop*, sold 4 million copies. *Ring* gave birth to a successful Japanese film franchise, and in 2002, DreamWorks released a hit remake of *Ring* starring Naomi Watts.

Published in Japan in 1995, *Spiral* is finally available in English. And it starts where *Ring* left off.

In *Ring*, a journalist named Asakawa and his friend Ryuji investigate the simultaneous deaths of four teenagers who suffer heart failure one week after watching a mysterious video. After viewing the tape, the men embark on a mission to save themselves from a similar fate. As *Spiral* opens, Ando, a forensic doctor, is performing an autopsy on Ryuji, the final victim in *Ring*.

When Ando closes Ryuji's body, he finds a small piece of newsprint sticking out of the stitching. On it are two numbers: 178 and 136. Ando later realizes that the numbers are a code that, when deciphered, translates to the word "ring." Thus begins his investigation into what he eventually dubs



the "Ring Virus." The more Ando finds out, the more he realizes that something insidious is going on.

For those who haven't read *Ring* or seen the Hollywood movie, *Spiral* stands alone as a well-written medical thriller.

*Spiral's* tone also differs from that of *Ring*. The horror in *Ring* was made more immediate and visceral by a one-week deadline for the characters who saw the video. There are no such time restrictions in *Spiral*. Instead, the fear that permeates the story steadily grows into something with larger, more deadly implications.

On the personal level, *Spiral* is a novel about how people continue to affect us even after they have died. And like memories of the dead, *Spiral's* sinister events will linger in the reader's mind, at least until *Loop* becomes available in English sometime next year.

### Excerpt

While investigating the simultaneous deaths by heart attacks of four young people in Tokyo and Kanagawa prefecture on the evening of September 5th, Asakawa had come up with the idea that the culprit was some kind of virus ... Asakawa had succeeded in finding out when and where the four had been together: August 29th, exactly a week before their deaths, at South Hakone Pacific Land, in a rented cabin, Villa Log Cabin No. B-4.

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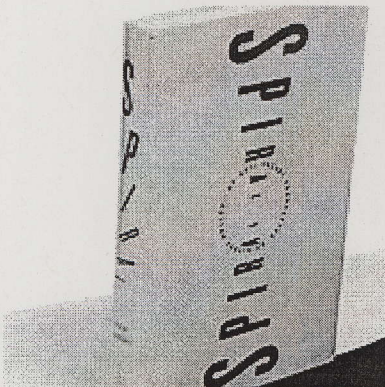
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
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