

Vertical Concedes It Went Too Far, Spent Too Much Launched two years ago with plans to bring English translations of the best in contemporary Japanese literature to American readers, Vertical Publishing reports mixed success. Micah Burch, marketing director at Vertical, says that despite, "lots of good reviews and good press, we're still looking for better sales." The house, which is distributed by NBN, has published 17 titles and will publish 15 to 20 books next year. In an interview, Burch and Vertical publicist Anne Ishii outlined some of the houses' problems and their efforts to address them. Despite being a small house (a staff of five that includes Vertical president Haroki Sakai) Ishii said "we didn't act like a startup," pointing to a lavish advertising campaign, pricey hardcovers and cutting edge book jacket designs by noted designer Chip Kidd. Now the house is doing some cost-cutting, said Burch, and taking a closer look at the kind of fiction they publish. Vertical's best selling title is *Buddha*, an 8-volume hardcover reprint of Japanese manga master Osamu Tezuka's classic manga biography. The \$25 hardcover won an Eisner, the comics industry's highest award, for the best U.S. publication of foreign material; it sold out its first printing of 10,000 copies and VP has gone back to press. Koji Suzuki's *The Ring*, a horror story (and a U.S. motion picture), sold more than 15,000 copies. But VP's more literary titles as well as *The Guin Saga* by Kaoru Kurimoto, a bestselling fantasy series with 100 volumes (VP will publish only 5), did not sell quite as well as expected. Originally, Burch said the house published "a little bit of everything." Now they plan to focus more on "general fiction with some genre, horror, psychological thrillers and crime. We're not trying to be literary."--Calvin Reid

