

**THE FALL
CLASSIC
ROCK
ISSUE**

ANVIL

**STAR IN THE
DOCUMENTARY
OF THE YEAR**

JQ
JETAANY QUARTERLY
MAGAZINE
jetaany.org/magazine



**JETAANY ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
TAKES CHICAGO**

**AT THE NEW YORK
ANIME FESTIVAL**

**ACTOR JUN KIM AND
ONE HEAVENLY BENTO**

**AUTHOR SARA BACKER
ON AMERICAN FUJI**

**PONYO, THE COVE
HIT THE BIG SCREEN**

**ACE
FREHLEY**

**TALKS KISSTORY IN
JAPAN, NEW ALBUM**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

JETAANY SOFTBALL
TOURNAMENT, THE
RETURN OF ALEXEI
ESIKOFF, AND MORE

BRINGING JAPAN A
LITTLE CLOSER TO YOU

Fall 2009 Vol. 18 Issue No. 4

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Special thanks to this issue's proof-readers for sticking to the drafts like a 2D lover on a body pillow:

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Letter From the Editor

This is our last issue of **JQ** for the year, so I want to go forward by looking back. Five score and sixteen months ago, I penned an op-ed for my school paper entitled “The New Decade in Review,” which chronicled a year-to-year list of humorous happenings that the future supposedly had in store for us. While some of that stuff remains on hold (*The Tonight Show Movie*, etc.), on a personal level, life provided me with plenty more seminal opportunities, and entering the JET Programme rates high on that scale.

If there’s a theme for this issue, it’s about chasing your dreams instead of just waiting for things to happen. I’d especially like to thank all the writers and contributors who believe in this magazine, and I’m looking forward to working with you when we return in January. See you in 2010, and good luck in Tokyo, Aya!

Justin Tedaldi (Kobe-shi CIR, 2001-02)
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Letter From the Treasurer

I’m sure all of the alumni fondly recall the first sprigs of *sakura* announcing that Japan’s season of “new beginnings” has sprung—a rightly congruous association between nature and the nation’s overall feeling of renewal. However, as oxymoronic as it may be, I for one cherish autumn and all the ways we celebrate new starts, even as the world around us begins to fade and decay. As summer’s oppressive humidity falls away and we breathe in the crisp change in the air, I’m sure many of us begin to feel that surge of excitement for the possibilities that this season brings. For some, the excitement comes in the form of embarking on a new scholastic journey; for others, it could be in the anticipation of the many fall activities that sweep through during October and November. Apple picking, state fairs, weekend escapes into fall foliage, the start of the holiday season—each week brings so many opportunities to carry on traditions, as well as opportunities for new experiences and endeavors.



I personally began a new endeavor last autumn when I applied and was accepted to begin training for JETAANY’s treasurer position. So far, this has been an invaluable experience—which has not only taught me a lot about the legalities of running a non-profit, budgeting, doing grant proposals and the like—but has also increased my dexterity, both with recordkeeping and Excel (oh, dearest love of my left brain, Excel!). As I became more involved with JETAANY, I also began contributing my first pieces to **JQ**—which, in my opinion, all of our members should consider using as an outlet for creativity, as a chance to develop published writing samples, or simply as a way to contribute to our chapter’s voice.

As usual, JETAANY has a slew of events in the works for fall, and then well on through the end of our fiscal year in March. We welcome and encourage fresh ideas from our members for events and activities which will strengthen ties across our chapter as well as with the New York community. If you have any suggestions, please get in touch with one of the JETAANY officers, so that we can discuss how your idea can be carried out (and worked into our budget!).

Once again this fall, JETAANY welcomes back our newest alumni members who have just begun the latest chapter of their lives, many of whom may be turning over a new career leaf. Knowing full well the challenges that many of our new members are facing in their career search, we are excited about the possibilities that can emerge during our upcoming annual Career Forum and Welcome Home Reception in October. Next spring (in a nod to our beloved Japan), JETAANY will bring back our highly successful and popular Meishi Exchange networking event. However, it is my hope that everyone in our chapter will find his or her own exciting new start this autumn. Then perhaps when next spring rolls back around, there will be very little need for new beginnings.

Kelly Nixon (Iwate-ken, 2003-06)
treasurer@jetaany.org



Cosplay singer Reni contributes to **JQ**. How about you?
Send your ideas to magazine@jetaany.org.

“Nothing comes between me and my hard copy of **JQ**!”
E-mail magazinesubscriptions@jetaany.org.

Nippon News Blotter

8/17/09: Japan emerged from recession when its economy grew by 0.9% in the April-to-June quarter after four consecutive quarters of contraction. Correspondents say the rise is due to a huge government stimulus package, and it is unclear whether the momentum will be sustained upon conclusion. Recent figures show other economies coming out of recession, including Germany, France and Hong Kong, a sign the global slowdown is easing. **(BBC)**

8/18/09: Sony Corp. will delay the launch of its next-generation ultrathin television organic light emitting diode, or OLED, TV because mass producing the new displays would exacerbate losses at its TV division, according to people familiar with the matter. **(Wall Street Journal)**

8/26/09: Japanese and South Korean automakers registered the biggest market share gains in the U.S. government's "cash for clunkers" program that ended this week. Overseas manufacturers dominate in car sales, while U.S. companies have been stronger in the light truck segment. Cars outsold trucks 2-1 under the "clunker" initiative, with Toyota's "clunkers" market share leading at 19.4%. **(Reuters)**

8/27/09: Former Nova President Nozomu Sashiki was sentenced Wednesday to 3 1/2 years in prison by the Osaka District Court for his role in skimming off employee funds in 2007, just before the foreign language school giant's bankruptcy that October. **(Japan Times)**

8/28/09: Japan's unemployment rate rose to a record 5.7% in July and deflation worsened, dealing a blow to Prime Minister Taro Aso on the eve of an election that polls indicate his ruling Liberal Democratic Party will lose. The jobless rate rose more than economists estimated, surpassing the previous record 5.5% last seen in April 2003. **(Bloomberg)**

8/28/09: The new H1N1 swine flu has reached epidemic levels in Japan, signaling the early start to what may be a long influenza season this year, and it is also worsening in tropical regions, the World Health Organisation said. Every year, seasonal flu infects between 5% and 20% of a given population and kills between 250,000 and 500,000 people globally. **(Reuters)**

8/30/09: For only the second time in postwar history, Japanese voters cast out the long-governing Liberal Democratic Party in elections, handing a landslide win to the Democratic Party of Japan. "This has been a revolutionary election," said Yukio Hatoyama, the party leader and presumptive new prime minister. "The people have shown the courage to take politics into their own hands." **(New York Times)**

9/2/09: Miyuki Hatoyama, the wife of Japan's next prime minister, claimed to have had a close encounter with another world in a book published last year entitled *Very Strange Things I've Encountered*, in which she wrote, "While my body was asleep, I think my soul rode on a triangular-shaped UFO and went to Venus." Her husband was once nicknamed "the alien" for his prominent eyes. **(Reuters)**

9/11/09: The number of Japanese people aged 100 or over now exceeds 40,000, the Health Ministry said. The number of centenarians rose 11% from 2008, reaching 40,399, of whom 86.5% (35,000) are women. Only the U.S., with 96,000, has more centenarians. **(RIA Novosti)**

9/16/09: Japan's new Defense Minister, 71-year old Toshimi Kitazawa, is a strong opponent of the country's military support for the U.S., making it more likely than ever that the government of new prime minister Yukio Hatoyama will withdraw its naval ships from the war in Afghanistan early next year. **(Times Online)**



9/23/09: Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama sent a letter to International Olympic Committee members assuring them that government support for Tokyo's bid to host the 2016 Olympics "remains as strong as ever." The city last hosted the Olympics in 1964, and is competing with Chicago, Madrid and Rio de Janeiro. **(AP)**

9/28/09: Japan's transport minister said he will not force the struggling Japan Airlines, Asia's biggest airline, into bankruptcy. The airline incurred its biggest-ever quarterly net loss of ¥99 billion (\$1 billion) in the three months to June. JAL has sought public funds for survival. Its request for taxpayer money came months after it received ¥60 billion (\$668 million) in loans from the government-owned Development Bank of Japan in June. **(AP)**

10/8/09: Typhoon Melor, the first storm to make landfall in Japan since 2007, damaged buildings and roads, halted train service, and canceled hundreds of flights as it swept across the country. Four people died and more than 100 were reported injured. **(AFP)**

10/10/09: China, Japan and South Korea will seek to present a united front on North Korea when leaders of the three countries meet in Beijing. China won an assurance from North Korean leader Kim Jong Il that he is willing to return to nuclear disarmament talks. **(Bloomberg)**



IN OTHER NEWS...

Congratulations to JETAANY Treasurer Emeritus CJ Hoppel on his marriage to Angela Tong!

The happy couple tied the knot August 8 in Pittsburgh with their parents and siblings in tow. After returning from an Icelandic honeymoon in October, it's off to Japan for the newlyweds as CJ pursues a career in law. We wish them the very best, and look forward to more exciting stories from Nippon in the future.

Go-kekkon omedetou gozaimasu!

Comings & Goings



Sonoda-san brings wisdom, experience and a great desk view to the JLGC.

THE JLGC WELCOMES A NEW DIRECTOR

Name: Shigeki Sonoda

Furusato: Tokyo

Interest: Public schools, parks and working style

What's your impression of New York?

It's full of discovery! I'm always inspired by people from all over the world.

What kind of job did you have before being assigned to the JLGC?

I worked for the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education.

What's your favorite place here so far?

I visited the Green Market at Union Square. I think it's the best place to see the daily life of New Yorkers.

What are your goals here at the JLGC?

I'd like to do what I can to strengthen the ties between local autonomies in the U.S. and those in Japan.

What things are you most excited about doing here in the U.S.?

I'm so excited about tackling what's happening here every day in the U.S.

JETAA U.S. Conference in Chicago

From August 20 to 23, JET alums gathered for the annual National JETAA Conference in Chicago, which invites delegates from all 19 of JETAA's U.S. chapters, along with country representatives and CLAIR and MoFA officials. Attending on behalf of JETAANY were CR Shree Kurlekar, Vice President Monica Yuki, President Megan Miller and Community Relations Officer Chau Lam, at below left. New York is hosting next year; see you then!



JET participants with Chicago Consul General of Japan George Hisaeda (front).



JETAA Softball Tournament 2009

On September 12, JETAANY dusted off its trusty banner and braved some early morning rain en route to Red Hook, Brooklyn for its annual softball tournament. Joining the New York JETs for some friendly competition were TV Japan, Mitsubishi, Quick USA, Kintetsu, Docomo, CJEB and the JLGC/Consulate. After the games and awards ceremony ended, everyone enjoyed barbecue and drinks, bringing another summer to an enjoyable close. An extra-special tip of the cap to JETAA's team captain and coordinator Monica Yuki and all participants. See you next season! *Photos by Francis Lee/Monica Yuki*



**Working the Written Word
How I Got Into Publishing
and Advice for Those Getting Started
By Alexei Esikoff (Fukushima-ken, 2001-02)**

I came to publishing, like much of what I do, in a roundabout way. Unlike many people in the publishing universe, I have an MFA in fiction, a degree solely for personal use. MFA degrees impress nearly nobody. I didn't have delusions that an MFA would lead to a well-paying job or a book contract. I just wanted to explore what made good writing.

My first real publishing job was with a small, independent press. It was less than two years old, and I was their first full-time employee. I was hired under the vague notion that an editorial assistant was needed, and I essentially made up the position as I went along. How did I even score such a job? Let's just say that you don't go into publishing to get rich. In exchange for low pay, I learned a lot: how to look at a book commercially, how to deal with distributors, how to write marketing material. Most importantly, from the publisher, I learned how to make a book readable. Often, the story is there, but the *language* of the piece is what makes a book. Is it overly dependent on passive verbs? Is the structure rich and varied?

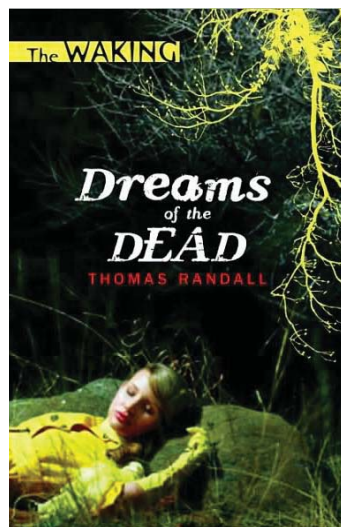
Here's what I discovered: I got a creative thrill making other people's work better. That's probably not typical of MFA graduates, who, understandably so, want to concentrate on their own writing. But I feel real pleasure at taking something that's not quite working and finding the missing piece. As a little kid, I did puzzles often; this just strikes me as a grown-up version.

I now have my second publishing job. I suppose that makes it a real career now. As the production editor at Bloomsbury USA and Walker Children's, I see everything—everything—before it goes to press, from teen novels to the simplest picture books. A production editor is basically the last stop before a book goes permanent. My job is to catch last-minute typos and check for inconsistencies. I also check art—a new experience. Are the colors correct? Has the font size changed midway through? (You'd be surprised how often that happens.)

Working with teen books lets me indulge my inner kid nerd; the girl who would rather curl up with a good read than play sports. It seems to me there is more variety in teen novels these days; certainly more

interesting books than I remember as a 10-year-old. Growing up, I read young adult classics like *Where the Red Fern Grows*, as well as commercial crap. (Oh, *Baby-sitters Club*, how much money I wasted on your monthly editions!)

Certainly, I don't remember reading anything age-appropriate about Japan. Surprisingly, my familiarity with the country has been helpful at work. With the explosion of inter-



The Waking: Dreams of the Dead and Missing in Tokyo, published by Bloomsbury.

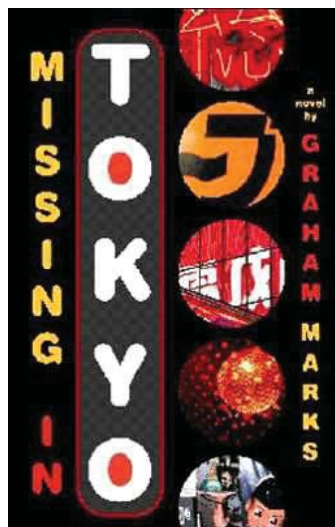
est in Japanese culture since I was a teen, it's natural that young adult novels follow suit. One of my first assignments at Bloomsbury was to copy edit a book called *Dreams of the Dead*, the first in a series of teen horror books set in Japan. The series, called *The Waking*, by Thomas Randall, follows a *gaijin* named Kara who moves to Miyazu Bay with her teacher father after the death of her mother. Kara speaks fairly good Japanese, but she still has *gaijin* moments: hey, I sure am tall here!

The author drops little cultural nuggets before veering into the supernatural. Unlike many teen horror books, the otherworldly bits are rooted in Japanese culture: a character awakens a vengeful spirit named *Kyuketsuki*. Indeed, the second book of the series is *Spirits of the Noh*.

Another book published by Bloomsbury is Graham Marks's *Missing in Tokyo*. (This was originally published by the British Bloomsbury—famous for the Harry Potter series—and all its British-isms were left intact, leaving a sort of

double culture shock for the American reader.) The story echoes the real-life case of Lucie Blackman, the English hostess at a Roppongi club, murdered by one of her clients. In this story, teenage Adam's sister Charlie has disappeared from one such club, and he travels to Tokyo to find her.

This being a teen book, Charlie does not meet the same end of Lucie Blackman. But the teenage reader gets an age-appropriate, authentic view of another culture. In a nice touch, the chapter titles are all in genuine English the author found in Tokyo, like "Food/Drugs/Fish/School/Etc." and "Flavorous and delicious communication." It's



working on interesting books like these that make me love being an editor. On any given day, I explore not just Japan, but New England prep schools, vampire lore, schizophrenia and scuba diving. So how do you earn a living like this?

Despite the low pay, editorships are hard to come by. And it's not getting any easier, with the ongoing switch from traditional print forms to digital media. (E-books are an article all their own.) That said, it can be done, even in a lousy economy. If you've never edited before, unfortunately you must pay your dues, and this usually means editing for free. Find an internship (publishing companies live on the unpaid labor of interns), or volunteer your services for a student or independent publication. You can even try this very magazine—I'm not exaggerating when I say this is where I got started.

There's also the education route. I've come across quite a few editors with MAs in English literature, but far fewer MFAs like me. NYU's Center for Publishing offers vari-

ous degrees and certificates in the field, or you could just try one of their continuing education courses in copy editing or proofreading. It might be especially helpful to concentrate on digital media, as fewer people now get their information from print. Scoring a job in editing can be dependent on who you know. Work your contacts and offer your skills to anyone who needs help. But if you don't "know" anyone in the industry, don't despair. I landed both my current and previous editorial gigs by blind application. Web sites like Publishers Marketplace, mediabistro.com and bookjobs.com all have legitimate postings.

Once you build up some experience and contacts, you may find the freelancing route is right for you. Personally, I like the comfort that comes from a steady nine to five with benefits, but there are many people who find that the flexibility of freelancing suits them more. (It must be nice to buy groceries during the day when everyone else is at work.) There's no shortage of freelancers in the JETAANY world; see jetwit.com for some bios and how to contact successful freelancers. It's not just for editing, but also translating, grant writing, etc. Be prepared when you start freelancing—many places will ask you to take a test before they hire you for projects.

Any and all experience you had while on JET can be parlayed into a writing/editing career. Think of documents you translated, or the speech you rewrote for an English contest, or the English section of your school's Web site you maintained. This is the tangible proof you need to show potential employers to prove your interest in language—even when your main job was teaching, look at everything else you did!

And you may score a project or position that on the surface has nothing to do with Japan. But the day will come when your knowledge does come back to help you: "Yeah, I'm pretty sure Akira is not a girl's name...because I had several hundred students, and only boys were named Akira. Yeah, you're welcome."

With enthusiasm, perseverance, and a bit of luck, you can make a living off the written word. Meet people and get your name out there—you never know where it will lead. And yes, my company does have internships.

Contact Alexei at alexeisensei@gmail.com.

Nihonjin in New York
JETRO's Maya Eiki-Law
By Joe Maruchek
(Iwate-ken, 2004-07)

Maya Eiki-Law is a business development representative for the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in Manhattan. JQ talked with her to learn more about her position and thoughts on life in New York.

Tell us about yourself.
 I was born in Fukuoka, and raised in Kobe, Switzerland and Kyoto. I came to the U.S. in 2001, so it's been eight years since I left Japan. When I was a university student at Fordham University, everyone said that I do not look like a typical Japanese person because of my height, and also my personality, as I am neither shy nor quiet, but outgoing and talkative. I was tall ever since elementary school, so my teachers made good use of my height on field trips and after school sports activities. If you see two 5'10" tall women speaking Japanese around Midtown, it should be my sister and me.

Can you describe your job function and what you do?
 I am a business development representative for JETRO in New York. As you may already know, JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. JETRO's Business Development Team is focused on helping North American companies set up offices in Japan quickly and cost-effectively by providing expertise, resources and industry connections to foreign companies. I believe that the strength of JETRO lies in the fact that since we are an independent agency of the Japanese government, we are able to provide many of our services for free to our qualified clients. I travel all around the U.S. to attend conventions to find companies that have plans to expand their operations into Japan, and support such companies with a wide variety of business support services to facilitate market entry and office setups in Japan. This job

provides a win-win situation for U.S. companies and Japan: U.S. companies can profit from our services, and once established, mutually benefit the Japanese economy. If you know any companies that would like to use JETRO's free services, please contact me through JETRO any time! I am more than happy to travel to support your company's future success in Japan.

What challenges has the economy presented, and how are you dealing with it?
 Because of the recession, many companies have delayed their projects to enter the Japanese market. While it's understandable in this economy, some companies have expressed that now is a great opportunity to establish an office in Japan due to the lower costs for office rent. Additionally, many talented Japanese people are looking for new careers, and this provides companies with a great chance to find highly qualified staff. In the past, JETRO's Business Development Team was focused on direct investment, but as of March 2009, we have started to provide service and support for mergers and acquisitions between U.S. companies and Japanese companies as well. We are hoping that this M&A service will open new opportunities for both U.S. companies and Japanese companies.

How do you like living in New York?
 I like the diversity of this city. I always wonder how many people in the subway are *gaikokujin*. I believe the mixture of different cultures and people makes New York one of the world's greatest cities.

What would you bring to Japan from New York and to New York from Japan?
 Mmm—this is difficult! I would rather have an airplane that could fly between Japan and New York in two hours or so. A Dokodemo Door [from the manga *Doraemon* that can take you anywhere] would be great to have.

For more information on JETRO, visit their homepage at jetro.org or jetro.go.jp.



Maya and B.O.B. talk business at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Cast Call: Actor Jun Kim
Talks heavenly BENTO
By Adren Hart
(Nagano-ken, 1998-2000)

Japan Society launched its fall 2009 performing arts season in September with the U.S. premiere of heavenly BENTO, an interactive performance that engages all five senses by showcasing live-generated projections, dance, text and real food. Based on the epic story of Sony Corp. founders Akio Morita and Masaru Ibuka, the play chronicles their dream of forming an internationally successful consumer electronics company amidst the reconstruction of postwar Japan. JQ spoke with actor Jun Kim, who plays Morita.



to develop organically. In preparing for the role, I watched a lot of his video tapes, listened to interviews, and met with his first secretary here in New York.

Tell us about heavenly BENTO.

It is based on the true story of the founding of Sony. And what makes the play special is that although there are a lot of books about Sony and its founders, Ibuka and Morita, this is the first time an American writer gives a portrait of the company and its founder.

Tell us about your character in the play.

There are only two characters—Ibuka and Morita. Ibuka is more of an engineer, not really focused on money. I play Morita, the founder of Sony. Morita is also an engineer, but has more business sense.

Tell me what you found most enjoyable about this play.

This is totally multimedia theater—lights, projections, etc. The idea behind the set is to give the audience the feeling of being in a typical Japanese-style executive meeting. The stage is set up like a conference table with members of the audience sitting around it. I won't say what's inside, but in front of each person sitting at the table is a bento box. At the end of the play, we say "*itadakimasu*," then Morita and Ibuka begin to eat. And, it's interesting to watch how the audience reacts. Some people eat just a little; some eat it all.

What were some of the challenges of making the Morita character come to life?

This play is not a portrait of Morita, but more of a telling of how these two young Japanese people try to build one of the top tech companies in the world after World War II. So, my goal was not to look or behave like my character, but rather to become him—a young, ambitious, business-minded engineer from Japan. That allowed the character

Why do you think American audiences would be interested in seeing this production?

After America won the war, it became number one in the world. Everything was "America!"; Japan had nothing. Most people thought very little of Japan and even less of its products. That's where the play begins. But, by the end of the play, everything is upside-down. Today, Sony is seen as one of the top companies in the world for technology and electronics. [Cont. on 15]

<http://jetaany.org/shop>



**Americans on Fuji
Talking with Sara Backer
By Veronika Ruff
(Shizuoka-shi, 2002-03)**

The first care package I received after settling into my new teacher housing in Shizuoka-shi included several boxes of Kraft Macaroni & Cheese, photos, peanut butter, Sex and the City DVDs, and a brand new paperback called American Fuji. Since I had flat-out asked for everything but the book, I was intrigued. My mom had tucked the write-up from the New York Times Book Review inside; the novel about an American professor living in Shizuoka-shi was written by Sara Backer, the first American—and the first woman—to serve as visiting professor at Shizuoka University. That was 10 years prior to my arrival in the prefecture known as the home of Mount Fuji, the mi-kan capital of Japan, and not much else.

I dove into the quirky story, and it turned out I wasn't the only one mystified by shops selling nothing but various measuring instruments, the man singing "o-yakiimo" from his rusty old truck, and the proper way to air out one's futon without drawing stares from the neighbors. As the Times review wrote, "there is...considerable knowledge and appreciation of the ways Japan forces the foreigner toward self-reflection, a heightened sensitivity to gesture and an earnestness unencumbered by irony." I learned more about what to expect in day-to-day life from American Fuji than I did from the entire JET orientation process (perhaps CLAIR should add it to a suggested reading list!).

Though the book went out of print a few years ago, Penguin reissued American Fuji this fall, a relatively rare occurrence in the publishing world. JQ caught up with Backer, who now teaches English at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell, from her home in New Hampshire.

I remember when I received my placement packet from JET. Shizuoka? Nani?? Nobody had heard of it! What were your impressions of the city?

When I was there, from 1990 to 1993, Shizuoka was a big city—one million people, a *Shinkansen* stop, a national university, and a huge plastics industry—but it didn't mesh with my images of cosmopolitan or rural Japan. I've decided that Shizuoka is the Palm Springs of Japan. It's a rather conservative retirement spot that's not rustic, but feels out of touch. There are no significant temples, no thriving arts community, but an intense pride in natural resources: delicious water, fresh local green tea, and of course, Mount Fuji. Living there felt like a string of firecrackers—surprise after surprise after surprise.

How closely does your protagonist Gaby Stanton's experiences teaching at "Shizuoyama University" mirror your own at Shizuoka University?

A lot of Gaby's more political interactions at the university were based on actual experiences, although I wasn't fired. My being there was much more groundbreaking than I realized going into

it—I didn't know I'd be the first American and the first woman in the position. There were only two other female professors at the entire university. One was very old-school and wore a kimono; the other became my best friend. In one scene, there's a staff meeting where the professors suggest that unmarried women shouldn't be permitted to teach at the university—that really happened! The book is set in early '90s Japan, before the recession hit. I don't think I would've been hired if Japan hadn't been rolling in yen in those days. Women were definitely the first to be fired. I also described my rather simple apartment as hers verbatim. You know, if I had been a man, would I have had university housing? But I ended up being happy about that. I had a Western toilet—squatting is fine if you grow up doing it, but I was too old to restrain my body for that! I also didn't have to deal with living among my colleagues. I bequeathed many



Author Sara Backer. (Blanche Milligan)

of my experiences to my characters. Their night climb up Mount Fuji was very much how I remembered my own.

Your Fuji climb sounded a lot like mine as well. Your details are so vivid. Did you write the whole book while you were there, or diligently journal, or...

I wrote about four chapters in Japan, but I worked on the book, on and off, for about eight years. I did keep a journal and wrote a lot of notes, but I also asked my friends for the letters I sent them while I was there—this was pre-email!—which helped remind me exactly how I was feeling and what I found strange at first. I wish I had taken more pictures, though.

Who was your intended audience for American Fuji?

I began writing it for myself, really. The isolation was tough and everything was so disorienting—things are literally smaller, the food is totally different, the language is unsettling, and the sky is never quite as blue as it should be. I needed to write the book to reassure myself that things were real. I felt like I was losing touch, like I was hallucinating even when I was totally sober. I went to the Orient and became disoriented! I think people expected more of a memoir, but this is not a multicultural good-for-you-book. It's funny, character-driven fiction. It's about Japan, but it's not just about Japan. I've found that most of the people who gravitate to the book have some interest in Japan,

but few of them have been there. Women seem to like it; there isn't much literature from the women's perspective of Japan. I've found that the one group that doesn't seem to like the book is American men who have lived in Japan—the novel is pretty tough on those *gaijin* men who go there to pick up Japanese women. As Gaby says in the book, "Japan is where men go to free their inner jerk." I wanted to acknowledge their viewpoint, and show how different it often was from that of a *gaijin* woman.

Why did you decide to come home after three years?

They asked me to renew my contract for another three years. I loved my job, but life in Shizuoka was very hard, and I knew that staying there would make me lonely forever. Those *gaijin* who stayed more than five years were basically homeless, which is a phenomenon I explore in the book.

How did your transition home go?

It was a hard period. I missed more than I thought I would. I missed those nice, deep bathtubs, and still do! I missed the ability to speak my heart in poetry, which I did because I couldn't master the language, but it worked. I hated being pointed at while I was there, but I even missed the celebrity when I got home. And I definitely noticed how fat Americans were! I didn't start teaching again for quite a few years, but being able to go back to writing *American Fuji* whenever I could helped me enormously with the transition.

What is it like to have your first novel reissued?

It's so hard to get things published these days; giving a novel a second chance is really an honor. I'm glad to know that the book has meant something to readers. But it's tough, too—I've written two other novels and felt like I had moved on. My writing has evolved, but I couldn't change a single word. And Japan has evolved as well, though it's funny: the DPJ last won an election when I was there. The marketing around books has changed a lot, too. I'm doing a blog for *American Fuji*. It's not like most blogs, though—I don't tell you what I had for breakfast, though it definitely wasn't *nattou*. It's basically a behind-the-scenes look at the real-life places and experiences that informed the book. So I put up pictures of Shizuoka and explain how the things I did led to plot points and character development. I'm running out of photos, though—I'd love to incorporate experiences and thoughts from the JET community.



Special thanks to Caitlin Mulrooney-Lyski at Penguin Group for photos and interview assistance.

For more on American Fuji, and to reply to Sara's blogposts about the book and life in Japan, visit sarabacker.com.

The JET Legacy Lives On

Int'l Visitor Leadership Program Interpreting

By Stacy Smith (Kumamoto-ken CIR, 2000-03)

Since becoming a freelance Japanese translator/interpreter/writer, one of the opportunities that I have enjoyed the most has been interpreting for the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). IVLP is an exchange program designed to build mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries through carefully designed visits that reflect the participants' (the titular IVs) professional interests and to support U.S. foreign policy goals. For IVs, it involves meeting professional counterparts and learning to appreciate America's ethnic, cultural, political and socioeconomic diversity.

IVs are established or potential foreign opinion makers in government, public policy, media, education, labor, the arts and other key fields, and after being nominated by someone they are selected by American embassies abroad. Since the program's inception in 1940, there have been over 140,000 participants (about 5,000 each year), including 290 current and former heads of government such as Tony Blair and several Japanese prime ministers. However, here in the States all IVs are considered "honorary Americans." This means that no matter what their rank is back home, everyone is of equal status during the program. This takes quite a bit of pressure off the lowly interpreter (who of course has hopes of being fondly remembered when her former participants go on to become big shots!).

Although different in nature, IVLP makes me feel like I'm continuing the work I did on JET in a new realm. As a coordinator for international relations (CIR) at Kumamoto City Hall, I was involved with our sister city, San Antonio,

and would guide Texan groups as well as other visitors during their stay. I also interpreted at various international events, thereby serving as both a linguistic and cultural bridge between Eastern and Western cultures. In my current role as an IVLP interpreter, I also perform these dual functions, so I often think back to my JET days and how they helped bring me to where I am today.

I began this work a year ago, and have completed six assignments since then. The themes have ranged from disaster prevention to female entrepreneurship to prison management, and IVs have come from all walks of life (lawyers, professors, *shachos*, civil servants, etc.) as well as locations ranging from Shimane to Hokkaido. The programs are typically three weeks in duration, kicked off by a week in D.C., and concluded with a short stay on the West Coast.

In between, there are stops in three or so cities that are selected with the purpose of incorporating geographic diversity (like with JET, IVs can submit the destinations they desire). They meet with groups like federal, state and local government agencies, NPOs and corporations, and are also able to visit with average Americans through something called Home Hospitality. This involves sharing a meal at someone's house or going out to dinner with the family at a local restaurant. If requested, one-night homestays can also be arranged in one of the cities.

As an interpreter, this is one of the most fulfilling jobs I have. As three weeks on the road is admittedly a long haul and the program is not just nine to five, it is not for everyone. However, the IVs are encour-



A nomikai is the official way to end the three-week journey. Otsukaresama, IVs!

aged to get out and explore on their own as much as possible, allowing them to make their own discoveries and give the interpreter a much-needed break. For someone who loves traveling as much as I do, this kind of work is ideal. I feel extremely lucky to be able to go all around the country, meeting many kinds of people and seeing new places that I would not have had the opportunity to take in otherwise. It's a bonus to take IVs to places as amazing as the Grand Canyon and Frank Lloyd Wright houses across the country!

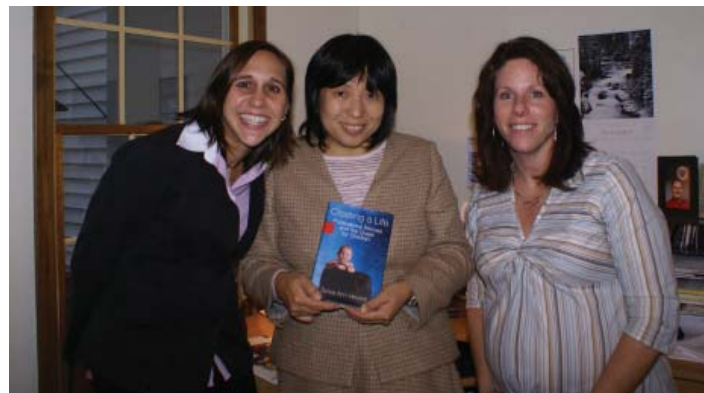
Professionally, with a different theme each time, there is extensive preparation and research that must take place before the assignment even begins. In this way, I'm able to develop a solid base of new Japanese and English vocabulary which at the start may not be familiar, but becomes like second nature by the end. I come away with a significant awareness of an area that mostly was previously unknown. Especially in the beginning of the program, I often spend nights preparing for the next day's meetings, making me feel like I'm back in school! However, this time around the payoff is greater than a high test grade; I am facilitating both professional communication and informal exchange

to enhance the IVs' experience. After my time with the prison management group, they teased me that I'm probably the only person who can give bilingual lectures on both countries' prison systems and has also had firsthand experience at such infamous federal and state correctional facilities as Leavenworth and San Quentin!

One of my favorite aspects of my chosen profession is learning about a wide variety of topics and interacting with different people, making me a perfect fit for IVLP. This program is a use of taxpayer dollars that few people know about, but I think it's a wonderful example of grassroots international exchange (sound familiar?) and soft power that will benefit America's future relationship with the world. I just received word that the theme of my next IVLP assignment is human trafficking, which promises another exciting trip and the chance to delve into a completely new field.

For more on the International Visitor Leadership Program, visit exchanges.state.gov/ivlp/ivlp.html.

Visit Stacy on the Web at stacysmith.webs.com.



A meeting of the minds between two female entrepreneurs, facilitated by the author.



Visit to an emergency management center with the disaster prevention group.

JQ&A with NY Anime Festival's Peter Tatara
By Justin Tedaldi
(Kobe-shi CIR, 2001-02)

Fans of anime, manga and Japanese pop culture gathered at New York's Javits Center for three days in September as the annual New York Anime Festival returned for another season of screenings, signings and special guest stars. JQ caught up with NYAF's Peter Tatara for a post-event recap.

What do you do, Peter?

I'm the director of industry development with New York Comic Con and the New York Anime Festival. That means I'm the guy responsible for the shows' guests, panels, screenings, concerts and special events. Basically, if it's outside the exhibition hall, I have my hands in it.

How did you get into anime?

Vampire Hunter D, *Robotech* and *Ronin Warriors*. Like any kid, I grew up watching cartoons. There were some, though, that seemed different—deeper, stronger, stranger—than most of what was on Saturday morning, and it's these titles that got me into anime, even though at first I had no clue what anime was.

Briefly summarize the history of the New York Anime Festival.

The New York Anime Festival began in 2007 as a spinoff of the New York Comic Con. We had about 15,000 attendees in 2007 and 18,000 in 2008. We also had a number of large guests in 2008 including Hideyuki Kikuchi, Yoshitaka Amano, Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto, and Baby, The Stars Shine Bright. In 2009, we aimed to top it with Yoshiyuki Tomino, the creator of *Gundam*.

How was the attendance?

2009 was our biggest year yet. We had 21,000 attendees and 120 exhibitors. The show was packed every day, with Saturday stretching the seams of the convention center. Yet for all the crowds, the show held together thanks to an amazing veteran team of staff and volunteers. For guests, the biggest name with us this year was Yoshiyuki Tomino, but he wasn't alone. Tomino-san was joined by idol group AKB48, voice actress Yui Makino, the entire U.S. voice cast of *Soul Eater*, bands Kokusyoku Sumire and Swinging Popsicle, and other luminaries, including [JET alum and *Japanamerica* author] Roland Kelts and

Misako Takashima.

What were some of your personal highlights of this year's event?

A few things stand out. First was our pre-party, held in conjunction with Del Rey Manga. Celebrating NYAF's third year and Del Rey's fifth, we featured a manga-shaped cake from Charm City Cakes, the bakery made famous on Food Network's *Ace of Cakes* TV series. We packed Dave & Buster's in Times Square on September 24 for this event with a few hundred fans and friends. The scene was intense, and the cake was delicious. Next up was our Friday *Cencoroll* screening. Looking at anime fans today, it's no secret that a large number download titles, so it's hard to do

works with a number of partners to extend the experience. We work with partners, including Kinokuniya Bookstore, Japan Society and Webster Hall to take the experience outside of the convention center and even beyond the days of the show. One of the most unique things about the NYAF community is that it's a year-long community. We host monthly meet-ups for fans so that they're never more than a few weeks away from an anime-themed event in NYC.

What makes New York's anime fans stand out from other ones?

With there being so much Japanese culture and pop culture in NYC, New York anime fans have the ability to embrace and explore their

Have you ever been to Japan? What would you do there if you were to visit for the first time?

I've never been. There are various events in Japan that NYAF is involved in, but—every time—I send another staff member in my place because I just can't get time out of the office. I will go eventually, and while it's totally touristy, Tokyo Tower is at the top of my to-do list.

To you, what's an anime or manga that's criminally over-rated? How about one that you think deserves more attention?

Golly. There's no safe way to respond to this, right? I will say that I'm very impressed that Vertical is releasing *Chi's Sweet Home* in America, and I'm hoping and praying it connects. It's a fantastic manga, and I really want it to find its audience here.

An anime that you would have most liked to have seen released here in the U.S. but never saw the light of day is...

I'd love to see more *Macross* officially in the U.S. I'd love to see *Macross Seven*, *Macross Zero* and *Macross Frontier* in the U.S.

I'm curious if you've ever seen the film *Otaku Unite*? Was Johnny Otaku ever a guest at NYAF?

I've seen *Otaku Unite*. I worked for Central Park Media when they distributed the documentary. I actually took all the cosplay photographs on the cover and in the DVD's extras, too. As for Johnny Otaku at NYAF, nope. *Otaku Unite* was made more than a few years ago while NYAF was still a very young con.

In the last two years, Hollywood has released long-awaited films based on popular anime like *Speed Racer* and *Dragonball Evolution*, but they were met with indifference at the box office. In your opinion, what should they keep in mind in order to improve the next wave of films in the pipeline?

I really want the folks helming the next batch of anime remakes to realize what makes them so big in the first place. Why are these stories so beloved in Japan? Rather than cutting out all the weird, odd, eccentric bits and standardizing the stories to traditional Hollywood structure, I hope the filmmakers digest the meaning and the appeal of these titles. Bring that something special to the screen instead of stripping the remakes of every-[Cont. on 20]



Peter (left) strikes the proper pose when sporting one's Death Note. ("TheBigTog")

an actual premiere anymore. If you're showing something at a con, odds are most of the audience has already seen it. *Cencoroll* was different—it's a half hour animation drawn entirely by one man, and we presented the U.S. premiere. This is a title that's just begun showing in Japanese theaters and isn't anywhere else yet. This is something you can't download; this was a legitimate premiere, and it was fantastic! Last up, there were at least three attendees cosplaying as our mascot. It was just so, so awesome seeing fans dressed up as this original character—not *Ichigo* or *Naruto*—coming to the con as our mascot to support us!

What kind of things make NYAF different from other anime cons held in the U.S.?

First and foremost, we're in NYC. This means NYAF has to be different to survive. Most anime cons don't shut down at night; they keep on running from Friday to Sunday. We can't do this. Instead, NYAF

fandom in a way fans from many other parts of the country can't. NYC fans live out their fandom in the streets of the city. Rather than staying home and watching anime in a friend's bedroom, NYC fans are out in bookstores, in karaoke bars, in museums, in toy stores, in movie theaters and in other hot spots of Japanese culture. Japan is part of the pulse of New York City.

What can Americans learn from anime?

I'd love more Americans to experience the works of masters like Miyazaki, Oshii and Kon. Anime is a medium to tell stories—bigger stories, grander stories, and stranger stories than you can in live action—and I'd love for more Americans to see these stories and appreciate the beauty in them. Anime isn't something intrinsically American, and I'd love to expand the minds of so many people across the U.S. for just a few hours by having them witness the works of some of anime cinema's greats.



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**Gold Metal: JQ Interviews
Anvil with Sacha Gervasi
By Justin Tedaldi
(Kobe-shi CIR, 2001-02)
Cover Photo by Brent J. Craig**



10/24よりTOHOシネマズ六本木ほかにて公開

Japanese film poster for the hit documentary *Anvil! The Story of Anvil*. (Ross Halfin)

One of the best-reviewed films this year is a documentary called Anvil! The Story of Anvil, about a down-and-out (but doggedly optimistic) Canadian metal band's quest to make it after decades of obscurity.

Their persistence paid off. After bowing at the Sundance Film Festival in 2008, the film became a sleeper hit on the art house circuit this past April, followed by a spot at Cannes in May. In October, it premiered in Japan.

Now enjoying a second shot at stardom with the rerelease of their latest studio album This is Thirteen and the DVD debut of the film, Anvil founders Steve "Lips" Kudlow (guitar/vocals), Robb Reiner (drums) and British-born director Sacha Gervasi (former Anvil roadie-turned-Hollywood screenwriter) spoke with JQ about life after the film's release and the role Japan plays in it all.

You opened three shows this summer for AC/DC. What was it like performing at Giants Stadium?

ROBB: It was like we've been living for the dream, and now we're living the dream.

How many people did you play to in all?

ROBB: Over 150,000 people—I'm still there. We made a lot of new fans, to say the least. Let's do more.

I heard that [AC/DC guitarist] Angus Young put a call through to get you guys on board.

ROBB: He saw the movie and opened his heart to Anvil. That's basically how we looked at it. Angus said that he loves Anvil.



We wish all our cover subjects were this cooperative.

The film opens with you doing a stadium show in Japan 25 years ago. What were the circumstances of you going there, and what were your feelings upon arriving?

LIPS: The label we were signed to at the time had a relationship with a man who ran a promotional company in Japan. They had worked out a deal that was able to bring the Scorpions, Whitesnake and Bon Jovi, among others, along with us over there for the Super Rock Festival. We've been lucky to have been playing festivals for a long period of time. The first time we were there [in 1983], we were supporting our first three albums.

How about being in Japan as guests?

LIPS: It was like being in a different world. To me, I was creating a history from my past. Being able to get over there was a big deal, because not everyone gets a chance to play over there. It meant a lot to me, and it still does.

What's one thing you noticed that separates the Japanese fans from everyone else?

LIPS: Their dedication, no question about it.

It must be surprising to see people who don't speak English singing along to your songs.

LIPS: They are extremely friendly over there and they are super-dedicated.

For the festival in Japan that you guys appear in at the film's climax, who else was on the bill?

LIPS: It was a festival called Loud Park ['06, in Saitama]. They had three days of acts and we ended up on one of the days. Anthrax, Dio, Megadeth, Slayer, so many bands...

Filming in Japan, was it different from any of the other countries you shot the movie in?

SACHA: Japan is really well organized. I said

to the unit production manager that I'd love to find a place where Lips and Robb can go and explore; a really traditional Japanese location. I looked at photos [of a garden] before that—we wanted a place near Tokyo where there weren't too many people around, and we needed to have the ability to do whatever we wanted. This was a public place, and luckily, the day we were there, there was hardly anyone there. It was amazing; we had total flexibility. In terms of Shibuya, it was in the movie *Lost in Translation*, and people know it very well. It's really impossible to get permits to shoot there, and we'd been warned that the local Yakuza would probably stop us from filming. We were really concerned about this—all these people [were] saying, "You've gotta pay them cash." So we had all this cash just in case, 'cause I knew that sequence was gonna be critical, and when we arrived, the light was just perfect—it was like you couldn't devise it; it was just magical. And so we caught it just at the end of the day as it was sort of turning into night, and ended up shooting for an hour and it went from day to night. But when we got that shot around them in the middle of the crosswalk, we basically stole that footage. I mean, we didn't have an official permit; we were told that we would get shut down, that the Yakuza would show up. And you know, the magic of Anvil, man: not a peep.

Anvil's return to Japan is completely unexpected watching the film.

ROBB: It was foreshadowing because [originally] there was no Japanese gig; it came out of left field. We were wondering how we were going to get the ending made, and then out comes this trip to Japan.

I was touched by the film. Usually these kinds of documentaries are about athletes overcoming obstacles and we rarely see the same thing about musicians.

LIPS: That's a great observation that I've been trying to tell everyone, especially [Cont. on 17]

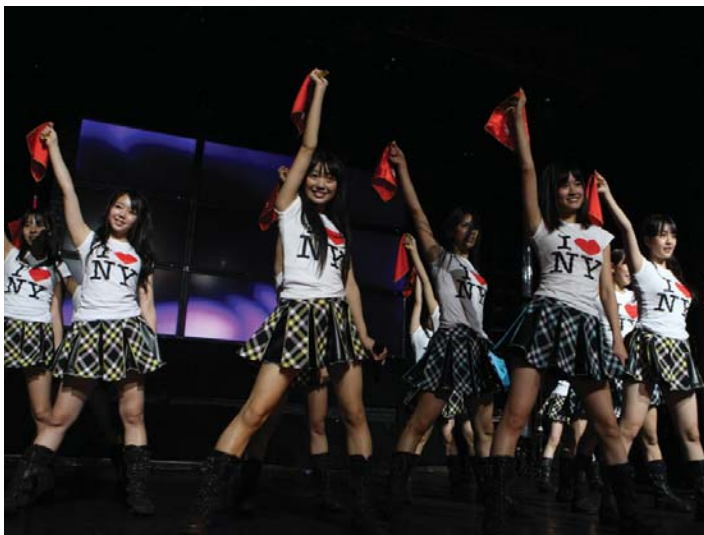
What We Did This Summer



Justin enjoys some *okonomiyaki* in Melbourne with JETAA Victoria/Tasmania/South Australia newsletter editor/treasurer Jens Rumoller, secretary Sonia Morison (left) and Friend of JET (and avid **JQ** reader) Vero Chen.



JET kayaking at New York's Pier 96. Left to right: Peter Katz, Kate Clute, Mayumi Matsumoto and Olivia Nilsson.



Akihabara-based idol/theater group AKB48 made its U.S. debut at Webster Hall as part of the New York Anime Festival, promoted by New York-Tokyo. According to one JET participant, they also sang and danced in furry animal costumes. (© AKS)



Harumi Kurihara, Japan's answer to Martha Stewart, launched a rare weeklong tour of the Tri-state area for her new book, *Everyday Harumi*, wrapping up with a lecture at Japan Society.

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[Cont. from 8] For American people to see this play, and learn how a small company from a small island nation that was defeated in war developed into a world leader, may be very interesting. Also, a lot of people know about Sony products, but they may not know how the company began. The story of Sony is a great one, because it illustrates how hunger, determination and focus can lead to success.

How did you get involved with Post Theater and *heavenly BENTO*?

They came from Berlin to New York to look for an Asian actor, and I auditioned for the part.

Really? New York and not Tokyo?

[Laughs] I guess New York is closer [to Berlin]. They were looking for Japanese actors and tried to find someone in Berlin, but couldn't. So, they researched and decided to hold auditions in New York.

Is New York a good place to find Asian actors, or Japanese actors in particular?

As an actor or performer, New York is "the place to be." Everyone comes to New York to find all different types of people. So, I think it is one of the best places to find Asian actors, other than Tokyo, who can speak English. Of course, one can find Chinese American or Japanese American actors easily. But in my case, I was born and raised in Japan, and therefore have more core Japanese culture, which is what I believe Post was seeking.

Tell us about Theatre de Moon, your theater company.

I have directed plays for theater festivals, but since *Kutsukake Tokijiro* [based on a 1920s Japanese popular literary play] was my first full production, my wife and I decided to start Theatre de Moon.

Are there many other Japanese theater groups or production companies in the city?

They are trying, but not many. And the ones that exist are still small.

Why do you think there are so few Asian theater groups or production companies in the city?

First of all, money. Second of all, putting a group together requires a lot of other things that are less obvious. In my experience, many Japanese actors come here for a short while, but then have to return to Japan. This makes it really difficult to develop a solid team of actors.

What's next for Theatre de Moon?

We are working on an Off Broadway production of *Kutsukake Tokijiro* to be done in Japanese with English subtitles. The music will be composed by Ryō Yoshimata, who also wrote the music for the 2008 NHK drama *Atsuhime*. We don't have a date set, but are looking at spring 2010.

For more on Theatre de Moon and upcoming performances, check out kurotamakikaku.webs.com.

Visit Japan Society online at japansociety.org.

Theatre Review A Recipe for *heavenly BENTO* By Adren Hart (Nagano-ken, 1998-2000)

Over the PA system, a voice proudly declares, "We want to reconstruct Japan and to elevate the nation's culture through dynamic technological and manufacturing activities." Suddenly, we hear the sound of radio static and planes flying overhead. A dropped bomb whistles as it speedily descends to its target. Then, *boom*—a loud roar is heard as it explodes on impact. Thus begins the opening scene of Post Theater's production of *heavenly BENTO*, a play based on the epic journey of the Sony Corporation's founding.

A collaborative effort by Japanese media artist Hiroko Tanahashi and director Max Schumacher, the play recounts the story of Akio Morita (Jun Kim) and Masaru Ibuka (Alexander Schroeder) from their initial meeting as engineers at Japan Precision Instrument Co., testing and producing new military equipment for World War II-era Japan, all through to their establishment of the world's leading electronics company, Sony.

The main characters appear from a hole in the center of the stage. Morita confides in Ibuka that he joined JPI to "avoid being drafted as a kamikaze pilot." Ibuka shares the fear and awe he feels when reflecting upon the weapons possessed by their enemies, the American military machine, saying, "I have seen their radios, refrigerators, their Victrolas, their planes..."

The war ends and Japan is defeated. Now it's time to pick up the pieces and build a "new" Japan. Ever the visionary, Ibuka proclaims in his prospectus for the newly formed electrical engineering company: "Now we can start some real work. We can build useful things. We will build radios...nicer and more beautiful than any of those American ones. The likes the world has



Alexander Schroeder and Jun Kim star in the multimedia play *heavenly BENTO* at Japan Society. (Thile Beu)

never seen."

Later, he saves Morita from a life of boredom as he's being groomed to become a "fifteenth generation sake brewer who doesn't drink" by inviting him to join his company. This proves to be a masterstroke on the part of Ibuka, as Morita's marketing and business savvy helps create and develop a demand for Ibuka's creations, one that would span the globe.

Worthy of the high-tech giant that Sony is today, the play is full of multimedia innovation. There are no props, just a boxing ring-sized platform onto which cutting edge graphics and moving images appear on cue, supported by high quality surround sound. It could be argued that the stage itself is the third player in this two-man show.

For this audience member, the stage is an integral part of the production. It provides visuals while the actors tell their stories; it becomes

a platform where a dancer glides across with graceful and, at times, frantic movements illustrating Sony's growth and progress; it serves as an atlas where Ibuka and Morita move from city to city across the globe recounting the company's entrance into various markets; and as the play ends, it transforms into a boardroom conference table, where members are invited to partake in the futuristic bento lunch boxes that they've been sitting in front of since the curtain opened.

heavenly BENTO gives the audience encompassing insight into the story of Sony. And it does so with a state-of-the-art, avant-garde approach, pushing the limits of the theater experience. The play enjoyed a three-day run at Japan Society in September, but will be staged in a few other countries. If you happen to be in town, *zehi mi ni itte kudasa!*

For more on *heavenly BENTO* and other productions, visit posttheater.com.

Film Review
Ponyo, An Earthbound Sea Tale
 By Lyle Sylvander
 (Yokohama-shi, 2001-02)

For three decades now, the Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki has consistently delivered his trademark phantasmagorical narratives while defying the brutal economics of the business cycle. Unlike any other filmmaker, animated or otherwise, Miyazaki is incapable of producing a flop or misfire.

Every three to four years, he and his team at Studio Ghibli reliably produce a smash hit at the Japanese box office (although nothing is likely to eclipse 2001's *Spirited Away*'s \$365 million gross, the highest in Japanese history). It is no surprise to learn that his newest film, *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea*, continued the trend and grossed, despite the global economic downturn, \$195 million in Japan last year.

For its U.S. release, Walt Disney Pictures, which has distributed all of Miyazaki's films stateside since 1997, hired the team of John Lasseter (*Toy Story*, *Cars*) and Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy (from Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment) to produce an English-language version. Released in August simply as *Ponyo*, the film had the largest U.S. opening ever for a Miyazaki film and has grossed a respectable \$15 million to date.

While most movie lovers and Japanophiles would prefer to see *Ponyo* in its native language, Disney's version is an admirable attempt at making the film accessible to American audiences. Since animation lends itself to re-dubbing more readily than live-action, the initial awkwardness of Japanese characters speaking English soon dissolves in the audience's suspension of disbelief.

Ponyo follows the eponymous character's (Noah Cyrus) quest to leave her underwater home and live on the surface as a human. Along the way, she meets Sosuke (Frankie Jonas), a boy who becomes her surrogate older brother and protector.

While this brief sketch of plot obviously recalls Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little*

Mermaid, Miyazaki fills his tale with his usual environmental concerns. *Ponyo's* father Fujimoto (Liam Neeson) is a human wizard who has turned his back on humanity for its careless treatment of the ocean and disrespect to nature.

By settling down with a sea goddess, he has created a whole species of tiny part human/part fish creatures protected from the human world. When *Ponyo* escapes from this world to live on

spirit of Andersen's original story. Unlike Disney's own film adaptation, wherein the mermaid's quest carries a positive and heroic connotation, Andersen and Miyazaki offer a cautionary tale about the naïve pursuit of childish self-interest. Humanity has its costs, and while it offers many attractive benefits, it also carries the burden of maturity and responsibility.

Miyazaki's film is clearly aimed at younger audiences compared to his past work. In fact, this film recalls *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988) in its simple, streamlined story. While this makes it more accessible for the little ones, older children and adults are likely to miss the more psychologically complex concerns of *Porco Rosso* (1992), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004). These films also offered a more engrossing visual schematic, incorporating both Eastern and Western mythological and architectural images from Miyazaki's endlessly creative mind.

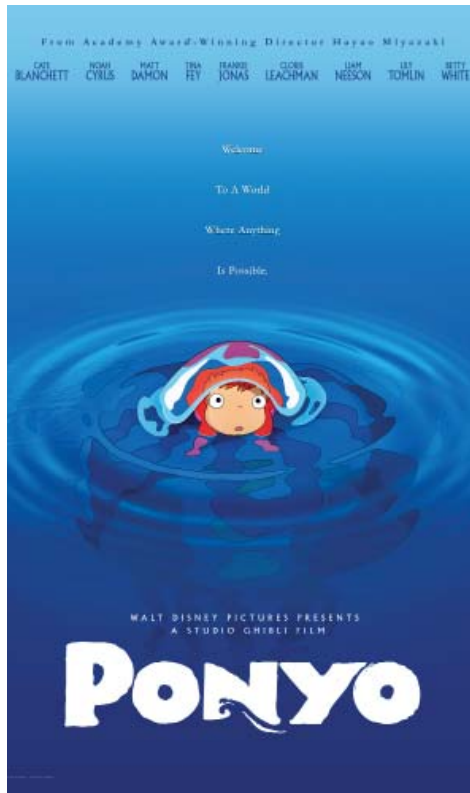
Despite these shortcomings, *Ponyo* still offers classic Miyazaki touches. The opening sequence is stunning, as it introduces us to *Ponyo's* underwater home with light blue and green filters displaying vibrant jellyfish and other colorful marine creatures.

Later, when the natural order becomes disturbed, the tides take on a disturbing look as the previously calm waves anthropomorphically evolve into dark, pitch-black beings with menacing eyes. Such scenes remind one of Miyazaki's unique brilliance and why audiences flock to his films.

Having sworn never to use 3D computer animation, Miyazaki understands that his art necessarily depends on the hand drawn craft. Despite not being among his best, *Ponyo* is a welcome respite from the overabundance of CGI animation flooding the marketplace, and reliably demonstrates that it is not the technological tools at one's disposal, but the creative mind behind the art that produces truly great animation.

Visit *Ponyo's* official U.S. site at disney.go.com/disneypictures/ponyo.

For those interested in the Japanese-language version, JAS MART at St. Mark's Place rents the DVD with an English subtitle option.



land as a human, she not only endangers herself (she can only go so long without water), but upsets the delicate ecological balance between the land, sea and sky, as well.

Ponyo's actions pull the moon closer to the Earth and the ocean's tides rise, chaotically swallowing everything in their path. When Fujimoto, the would-be villain, sets out to bring his daughter back to sea, he is in fact saving both *Ponyo* and humanity itself.

In this sense, Miyazaki remains closer to the

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**Book Corner: *The China Lover*
By David Kowalsky
(Hiroshima-ken ALT/CIR, 1991-93)**

Many years ago, I read Ian Buruma's two excellent Japan-related books *Behind the Mask and Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*. Both are unfortunately now out of print, but not impossible to find. While Buruma is better known for his 2007 book *Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo Van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance*, now out in paperback is his 2008 novel *The China Lover*, a rare departure from his career as a journalist and non-fiction author.

The book is a fictionalized account of the extraordinary life of Yoshiko Otaka. Born in 1920 in Manchuria to Japanese parents, the now-89-year-old Otaka has been a master career reinventor (singer, actress, journalist and politician) and identity changer (known by the names Yoshiko Yamaguchi, Li Xianglan/Ri Koran and Shirley Yamaguchi).

Forced to keep her Japanese identity a secret, Otaka rose to fame as a 13-year-old Chinese singer, and later, actress, making propaganda films intended for Chinese audiences during Japan's occupation of China (1932-45). After Japan's surrender from the war, she was arrested by the Chinese government, but by proving she was ethnically Japanese, was exonerated and allowed to go to Japan.

After the war, Otaka starred in some pro-American films in occupied Japan and B movies in Hollywood. In the 1960s in Japan, Otaka hosted a television talk show, and in the 1970s she served in the Japanese parliament's House of Councilors.

The *China Lover* tells Otaka's life story in three parts, by a different narrator for each. This unconventional approach starts with Daisuke Sato, a Japanese native living in Manchuria who works as a talent scout for the Manchuria Picture Association, the propaganda arm of the Japanese military government. Sato helped launch Li Xianglan's film career.

The next narrator is Sidney Vanoven, an American originally from Ohio. After a stint as a gofer on a Frank Capra movie in Hollywood, Vanoven works in occupied Japan for the U.S. Military Civil Censorship Detachment to make sure Japanese film content is pro-democratic. He gets to know Yoshiko Yamaguchi, Otaka's alias at the time.

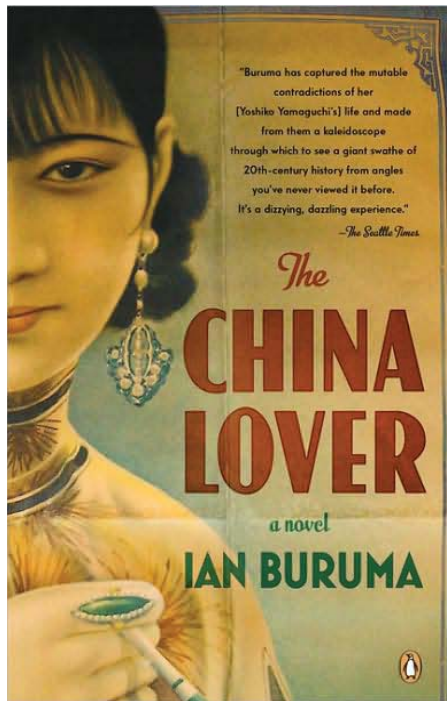
The final narrator is Kinkichi Sato, a postwar *pink eiga* (soft porn) filmmaker, who gets a job making television documentaries about world politics for Japanese housewives. He works with Yamaguchi, who by this time has made the career-changing move into journalism.

This final section of the novel, narrated by the second Sato, is the most political, with Sato being a supporter of the Palestinian cause. He becomes a terrorist with the Japanese Red Army and ends up in prison after being a participant

in a suicide attack.

The complexity of *The China Lover* cannot be overstated. One theme is the power of cinema as a political tool, first by Japan in China, and then America in Japan. Yamaguchi's own story is a metaphor for modern Japan: shifting from a military dictatorship to postwar American-controlled chaos, and finally revived as an eventual economic giant.

Throughout the book, we never get to know Yamaguchi quite as closely as we might like.



Instead we hear *about* her as the narrators dominate with their own stories. There is also a long parade of celebrity guest "appearances" including Truman Capote, Akira Kurosawa and Toshiro Mifune.

One of the real joys of reading *The China Lover* is that it may spark your interest into reading more about the last 75 years or so of Japanese history. One good place to start is with Donald Richie's *The Japan Journals: 1947-2004*. In fact, *The Washington Post's* Wendy Law-Yone noted that "Sydney Vanoven bears a striking resemblance, in character and career, to Donald Richie, the renowned American Japanophile and film critic, who is credited in the author's acknowledgments."

Another book to consider is Robert Whiting's *Tokyo Underworld*, in which the real-life Tokyo pizza restaurant owner Nick Zappetti clearly resembles *The China Lover's* Tony Lucca.

Also, be on the lookout for the eventual film adaptation of *Night-fragrant Flower*. Directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda (best known in the U.S. for 2004's *Nobody Knows (Daremo Shiranai)*), the movie focuses on Li Xianglan's Manchuria years of the 1930s and 1940s, the period she went from legendary film star to suspected traitor.

Visit the author's homepage at ianburuma.com.

[Cont. from 13] those who say, "What's so special about this movie?" I can't remember any rock band that's showed the real McCoy, as it happens. Usually when you see these types of movies, they're retrospective pieces. No scripts, all in one take. [Laughs] Whatever happens actually happens. It's really important to get the message out there. You don't have to be an Anvil fan or a heavy metal fan to get this movie. This movie's main message is all about following your dreams and living it out to the fullest extent.

Based on the way the film has been received, do you feel like a lot of those dreams have been achieved?

LIPS: I think it's going as well as I expected. It's hard to anticipate what comes next—it's getting bigger and taking on a life of its own. Trust me when I say we're enjoying every second of it and taking advantage of every opportunity coming our way. We've waited over 30 years for it, and we're going to ride the wave. [Laughs]

What places are you most excited to play that you haven't seen properly yet?

LIPS: Coming to Japan is one of the greatest experiences. There are many places we've never had a chance to visit, and I'm very excited to head there. I'm also just as excited to head to places we *have* played, now that we have a second chance to go back.

Are there any Japanese artists or films that have inspired you or influenced your own works or lifestyles?

LIPS: As far as Japanese movies, *Mothra* was a point of interest, considering we wrote a song about it [on 1982's *Metal on Metal*]. Other than that, not really. However, it's an honor that our music is so loved and revered in Japan.

Do you have any stories from previous visits? Any entertaining moments from "reverse culture shock"?

LIPS: Being caught in a traffic jam at 3 a.m. in Tokyo was pretty bizarre. [Laughs] Seeing coffee and cigarette machines out on the streets is something you don't see in America. Electronically, they always seem to be ahead of the curve. Having automatic doors in the cabs was pretty shocking—the driver can open and close the door for you without even reaching for it; I thought that was pretty outrageous. [Laughs] It's as close as you can get to landing on another planet. One interesting thing that I remember our promoter over there telling us was that Japan had the highest suicide rate amongst high school and university students; I guess there were students who weren't making their grades.

Were there any surprises or discoveries that you made while visiting record shops in Japan? Did you guys have enough time to do some sightseeing?

LIPS: I definitely had time to visit some music stores. I ended up picking up some distortion pedals for my guitars that I wasn't able to find in America. The variety of equipment that you can find over there is far superior to American stores. Seeing their 35 millimeter cameras in the 1980s was really exciting—leaps and bounds over what you could find here in America.

What have your peers said to [Cont. on 22]

Ace Frehley: Back in the New York Groove
By Justin Tedaldi
(Kobe-shi CIR, 2001-02)
Photos by Kevin Britton

*This fall welcomed the first album in 11 years from American rock legends KISS, and it also saw original member and former lead guitarist Ace Frehley release his first solo album in 20 years, *Anomaly*, which notched a top 30 debut on the Billboard charts in September. Prior to its launch, the Bronx-born Space Ace talked to JQ.*

First question—and I think everyone has been asking this one—why did it take you 20 years to do another solo album?

I've been asking myself that question for a very long time. [laughs] Originally it was supposed to come out before the KISS reunion tour [in 1996]. I was scheduled to record in Europe, but then I was offered the reunion tour and had to cancel those plans to go to Los Angeles to rehearse for the tour. Since then, I've been struggling with trying to make this happen. And—it's done. [laughs]

Congratulations on finally getting it done. As the Japanese say, you must be very tired, right?

Actually, no, I have quite a bit of energy and I'm real excited about the way the record turned out. Now I'm mainly focused on packaging and planning out a tour.

Did you consider having Eddie Kramer produce this new album since you two had great success with your 1978 solo album?

I was thinking about it, but I had trouble tracking him down. But I don't think it would've worked in this scenario, because I didn't have all the songs ready when I first went into the studio, as I was constantly writing and changing songs around.

Is there any place that you haven't played yet that you would like to hit on this tour?

I would love to play Japan, since I haven't played Japan with this lineup yet. I know it would be a treat for me and a treat for the Japanese fans.

Have you ever toured Japan outside of KISS?

The last time I was there—and I'm kinda bad on the dates [laughs]—other than KISS, I was there with [Ace's solo band] Frehley's Comet [in 1993].



"The Japanese people are passionate. I always felt very comfortable visiting Japan."

You first toured Japan with KISS in 1977. When you returned for the reunion tour twenty years later, what changed about Japan to you?

From the early times, it became a little more westernized. Whenever I go to Japan, I love to go to the electronics stores, because they have so many products that never make it to the United States.

What kind of Japanese products or technology have you been a fan of?

Sony, for one. I remember buying three Nikon cameras at one point. I remember there being a big toy store in Tokyo where I bought radio-controlled gadgets.

How about culture shocks? How did you cope with them in the beginning?

The language barrier was tricky, as was the food. I know Japanese food in America is pretty popular. Also, when we perform in Japan, the fans are a lot more reserved than American fans, who normally like to jump up and down. As time went on,

though, you would notice the Japanese fans becoming more loose and uninhibited.

What can you tell me about your relationship with Japan? Was it ever your dream to play there or see some of the sites that you've only read about?

I've been to Japan a half-dozen times and I've seen a lot of the sights. However, I've yet to climb Mount Fuji. [laughs] The bullet trains are a trip. Have you ever been on a bullet train?

Yeah. I used to live in Kobe City, but I would take bullet trains to visit friends in various places.

At first, I loved the food. I eat sushi all the time. I notice in Japan you don't see too many fat people, as opposed to America.

In the KISS DVD *The Second Coming*, you talked about a lot of the great gifts you would receive from Japanese fans. Are there any in your mind that stand out that you can tell us

about?

The first thing that comes to mind when you talk about the Japanese fans was that a lot of the female fans would bring us dolls. I still have a collection of Ace dolls that they've given me since the 1970s.

I'm curious if you've heard about the band X Japan?

Yeah, I think so.

I just thought of this now, but I remember [their late guitarist] Hide did a song called "Rocket Dive," which is his personal homage to [Ace's 1978 song with KISS] "Rocket Ride." If you can, try to find a copy of it; I think you'll get a kick out of it. Awesome. Is it hard and heavy?

I would consider it a cross between KISS, Metallica and Mötley Crüe.

Okay, cool.

Going back to *Anomaly*, were there any recording techniques that you haven't previously used that you tried out on this record?

The biggest difference was that a lot of the tracks were recorded into Pro Tools.

Did you find that easier?

As far as the editing process was, absolutely. I remember back in the early days that the editing process was so time-consuming. Once you get into digital recording, it moves things along so much easier.

I have a question about "Genghis Khan." You've listed it as your favorite track from *Anomaly*. What's the origin of the song, and why do you like it so much?

It was a song that was written on acoustic guitar, but it took a while to get together due to all the different parts in the song, using different instruments in various spots. Thanks to Pro Tools, we were able to add a lot of parts to the song, and editing it together was easier. Marti Frederiksen and Anthony Fox did a brilliant job with the mix, and I'm very pleased with the end results.

Is that a song you wanted to go into making it ambitious or did it just evolve that way?

I knew it was a special song when I wrote it. The vibe was there right away. And I thought that Anton Fig did an amazing drum track to it. He has a way of carrying just behind the beat with his playing, which I always liked.

Besides "Genghis Khan," do you have any personal favorite



Classic cosplay: Ace (second from left) on KISS's first tour of Japan, spring 1977. (Bob Gruen)

solo tracks?

One of the special songs on *Anomaly* that ties my solo work together is "Fractured Quantum," the continuation of the "Fractured" series. I'm real happy with the way it came out. I like the [end] of "Fractured Quantum"; it reminds me of the way that "Fractured Mirror" [from the 1978 album] begins.

I remember the last show you did in Japan with KISS, in 2001 with Eric Singer on drums, being a great night. The people I was standing with during the show were actually crying because they were caught up in the emotion. For you personally, do you have any special memories of that show?

I remember the vibe in the air; a lot of electricity. I remember it being a really good show.

They must've thought so, too, because I remember going into a record store the following week and I saw a whole stack of bootlegs from that tour on the shelves. Yeah, you can never get away from those bootleggers.

For the years that you weren't in KISS, did you listen to the albums that they put out? Did you follow what they were doing?

Honestly, not really. [laughs] I really didn't pay too much attention to them after I left. Not really in a bad way, but I just didn't have much of an interest.

Do you have any plans to hear the new KISS album?

I'm sure I'll check it out. Maybe they'll be nice enough to send an advance copy. [laughs]

I have a few questions about [the 1978 made-for-TV movie] *KISS Meets the Phantom of the Park*. When you first heard the idea for the film, what was your initial reaction to it?

I thought it was a fun idea. I'm kind of a silly person and I thought our fans would get a kick out of it. I actually watched it not that long ago and got a kick out of it.

When did you last see it?

About a month ago. A friend and I were watching it in our hotel room during the mixing of *Anomaly*. Prior to that, the last time I watched it was about five years ago. I think it's a period piece; it is what it is, ya know? I didn't realize that it was playing in the movie theaters in Canada when we traveled there after the movie's release. That was a trip. I think fans definitely enjoy it.

Do you have a favorite KISS costume?

I would have to say the *Destroyer*-era costumes were my favorite. Not just mine, but my bandmates, as well. And my least favorite were from *The Elder*. I thought those looked the silliest.

Since your KISS character is a popular Halloween costume, what does Ace Frehley dress up as for Halloween?

Nothing really comes to mind, although I did go out as Frankenstein one year.

Did you ever go out on Halloween as your KISS character?

Before our first album came out, we went and saw the New York Dolls on Halloween. I wore my makeup out for that.

Going back to your first tour of Japan, I noticed the band's photo shoots were at parks and shrines. Whose idea was it for you to go to those places?

We never decided; we had press people do that for us.

I remember a photo from [KISS bassist] Gene Simmons's memoirs that had you guys posing with kids.

The Japanese people were passionate, but soft-spoken. Very rarely do you see a Japanese per-

son lose their temper. I always felt very comfortable while visiting Japan.

Do you have a favorite spot in Japan?

Tokyo is the most fun for me—I love going to the shops and the different restaurants. I get crazy over there. [laughs] I have boxes of stuff from the last time I went over there. It's like no place in the world.

A buddy of mine was curious to know what your honest reaction was to play with a KISS tribute band while KISS themselves were being inducted at the VH1 *Rock Honors* special in 2006. Did it bother you to be guesting with an all-star tribute band while the actual band was being honored?

That was so much fun. It was a great time working with those gentlemen. [New York-based radio and TV personality] Eddie Trunk called me up and said that I should be represented while KISS was being inducted, and he came up with the idea for that supergroup. From the outset, everyone was very excited about it and thought it was a cool idea. It was fun rehearsing in Los Angeles, then flying to Las Vegas.

It's also great to see your relationship with Eddie Trunk still going strong after all these years, as he's been one of your and KISS's biggest supporters for decades.

Eddie is a great guy and I always love helping him out whenever I can, whether it's birthday parties or the [9/11-related] New York Steel benefit.

Any last words for the JQ readers and your fans in general?

I'm very happy that the album is done and am extremely pleased with the final product. I know my fans will truly enjoy it and I look forward to performing in Japan with my current lineup. Keep checking my Web site and MySpace and Facebook and... [laughs]

You have all your bases covered, it seems.

Absolutely. Well, you know how much I love computers. You can always teach an old dog new tricks.

Special thanks to Kymm Britton at 60 Cycle Media for interview assistance.

Anomaly is in stores now. Visit acefrehley.com for more details.



[Cont. from 11] -thing that made them special in the first place.

What anime would you most like to see get the Hollywood treatment?

I'm a huge fan of *Gurren Lagann* and *My-HiME*. I can't see how either of these would transfer into live-action, but I'd love to see some talented storytellers try.

Who's on your wish list when it comes to securing future guests?

I imagine I need to start the list with Tite Kubo [*Bleach*] and Masashi Kishimoto [*Naruto*], but the two names I'd personally love to have at NYAF more than anyone else are [J-pop superstar and **JQ interviewee**] Hikaru Utada and Shoji Kawamori [*The Vision of Escaflowne*].

Tell us a memorable cosplay story from your past.

I've only cosplayed once in my life: Akito Ten-

kawa [from *Martian Successor Nadesico*]. It was my freshman year of college. I ruined three shirts that night.

What's this I hear about NYAF and Comic Con merging next October?

Due to NYC convention center logistics and issues with securing dates, NYAF will be co-located with the New York Comic Con in 2010, and probably the next few years following it. While it means changes, it means good changes. Beyond taking over the entire Javits Center, it means NYAF gets access to the convention center's biggest room—the 3,000 seat IGN Theater—for our main events.

What do you feel is the future of anime in America?

We're in a state of flux right now. And it's not just us; anime all over the world is in a state of transition. Fans aren't consuming anime the way they used to, and the business needs to

readjust. We'll still have big tentpole titles like *Bleach* and *Naruto*, but it's going to be very interesting to see where the market is in both the U.S. and Japan in five years. Will fans still buy DVDs? Or will digital distribution have firmly become king? And if so, will the industry have successfully found a model to monetize it?

What's the first thing you do when the endless running around that goes with a new con is finally over?

Sleep. I slept until noon on Monday. After that, I spent the day catching up with my friend Netflix.

Any other message for JET alums and JQ readers?

Never stop studying.

For more commentary and photos, visit the *New York Anime Festival's* homepage at newyorkanimefestival.com.

On Location at the New York Anime Festival - Photos by Eric M. Chu (ericmchu.com)



Fans line up for a screening at the New York Anime Festival...or is it the bathroom?



Fortunately for Patty, it wound up raining on day three.



"Anybody lose a watch?"



Voice actress/musician Yui Makino.



"Of course I liked your acting! But the movie..."



That is one well-placed lock of hair.

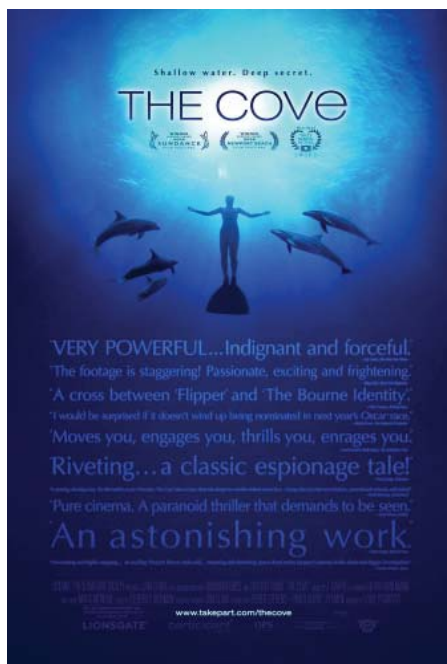
Film Review
The Cove Swims with Secrets
By Elizabeth Wanic
(Kagoshima-ken, 2003-06)

I'm sure not many people remember a few years ago when *Heroes* star Hayden Panettiere got publicity for trying to save some dolphins. The incident was barely a blip on the radar of international news, but gave headlines to the likes of Yahoo's omg! for a few days. However, nobody mentioned that she was part of a larger operation to stop the sale and slaughter of dolphins in the small Japanese town of Taiji, Wakayama. In fact, I had completely forgotten about the event until I went to see a new film from the Oceanic Preservation Society, *The Cove*.

Not quite sure what to expect, I approached my viewing of the film with some skepticism. I am not one who typically enjoys movies with a blatant agenda, and *The Cove* clearly has one. But remembering my days driving along the coast of Kinko Bay in Kagoshima, watching pods of dolphins frolic in the surf, I thought I'd give it a chance. And when the film started rolling, my skeptical attitude began to change.

Essentially a documentary of how director Louie Psihoyos's Oceanic Preservation Society and Ric O'Barry, the world's most famous dolphin trainer and activist, attempted to discover just what was happening in the hidden cove on the coast of Taiji, the film slowly changes course and its impact widens as the crew gets in deeper and deeper.

The film opens by introducing O'Barry, who began his involvement with dolphins early in his life—he was the official trainer for the 1960s TV show *Flipper*. Having caught, trained and lived with these cetaceans for decades, O'Barry understands just how intelligent and self-aware these creatures are. After a traumatizing incident with Kathy, the main dolphin who played



Flipper, O'Barry began to travel the world rescuing dolphins from cruel situations and speaking out against keeping them in captivity.

His crusade brought him to the town of Taiji, where the rest of the story begins to unfold. This tiny hamlet is the largest supplier of dolphins to aquariums and dolphinariums worldwide. When O'Barry arrived in Taiji, he had plans to push his anti-captivity campaign, but he had no idea of the horrors he would uncover in this quiet town of 3,500 people.

Aside from the problem of trapping these peaceful creatures and placing them in captivity, the film touches on many other issues and exposes a shocking array of cover-ups, deceptions and dishonesty. The fishermen and police department of Taiji, the International Whaling Commission, the Japanese Fisheries Ministry,

schoolchildren, whale eaters, dolphin lovers, surfers and you, the viewer, are just a few people affected or even indicted by this film. *The Cove* is a beautiful, sad and poignant look at a tragic situation—not just the circumstances in Taiji, but the state of our oceans in general.

Like all films with an agenda, *The Cove* comes at you from only one perspective. The makers try to offer some rationale for why their opposition acts how they do, but this clearly takes a backseat in the scheme of the film. Japanese people are interviewed throughout and some defend what takes place in the cove, while others are ignorant of this controversy. Some of the people in Taiji are made to look despicable, while others come out as heroes; for example, the Japanese councilmen who campaign to remove the mercury-laden dolphin meat from school *kyuushoku* menus.

These men risk their jobs and reputations in an effort to save their children, and those from other families, from the permanent and harmful effects of mercury poisoning. Overall, it's a one-sided film, but it doesn't pretend to be otherwise. *The Cove* gives the information that its makers want to give and viewers can, and should, of course watch and listen with a discriminating mind.

I highly recommend viewing *The Cove*, but please note that the film contains some extremely disturbing footage. At the beginning of the film, the narrator says that they tried to take all of the footage legally, but that it was not possible to do so because of regulations and restrictions on the land surrounding the cove in question. The part that's hard to get your head around, especially during the last scene, is the fact that the act of taking some of the footage was illegal, but what it shows is not.

The Cove completed a limited theatrical engagement earlier this summer in New York and Los Angeles. For more information on future screenings, visit thecovemovie.com.

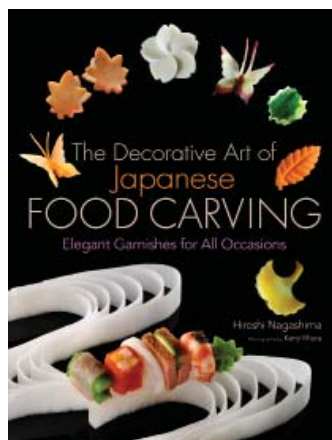
Book Corner
That's a Knife!
By Yukari Sakamoto
(Chiba-ken, 1989-1990)

Japanese Kitchen Knives by Hiromitsu Nozaki with Kate Klippensteen, Kodansha International, 2009, 160 pp., \$29.95.

Japanese knives are revered around the world and the definitive guide has just been published. Renowned chef Hiromitsu Nozaki and Kate Klippensteen have documented working with the three most popular knives in the Japanese kitchen, the *debabocho*, *usubabocho* and *yanagibocho*. Nozaki starts off not with the knife, but with the proper stance for facing the cutting board. Simply changing the way you approach the board may make a big change in how easy it is to work with the knives.



Where the book shines is in the gorgeous detailed photos showing step-by-step directions for classical Japanese cutting techniques. Cuts include *katsuramuki*, the fine cut most often seen with *daikon* as garnish for sashimi, and shavings of *sasagaki*, so you can make *kinpira gobo* at home. For those really



looking to upgrade their skills and wanting to work with seafood; *sansai-oroshi* and *goma-oroshi* for filleting fish, *hiraki* to butterfly a fish, and even complete instructions on preparing crab. If you can get your hands on sashimi quality fish, Nozaki demonstrates seven specific cuts to bring out the proper texture

depending on the species.

The book is sprinkled with recipes that are not too complicated. There is also a tutorial on keeping your knives sharp using Japanese water stones. This book will become an invaluable reference tool for any kitchen. As JET alums, we have all had the pleasure of enjoying authentic Japanese cuisine and surely have an appreciation for the technical skills of Japanese chefs. This book enlightens readers on the breadth and depth of working with Japanese knives.

Kodansha site:
kodansha-intl.com/books/html/en/9784770030764.html

Recommended knife shop:
nymtc.com (these knives are sold by New York Mutual Trading at the Japanese Culinary Center in Midtown)

The Decorative Art of Japanese Food Carving by Hiroshi Nagashima, *Kodansha International*, 2009, 112 pp., \$24.95.

The presentation of food in Japan is a skill that includes not only the selection of pottery and lacquer, but the fine detail of carved fruits and vegetables used as garnishes. The Japanese eat with their eyes, and food carving is an art that continues in *kaiseki* restaurants. Kodansha International has come out with a new book that captures this art in great detail.

The book is filled with easy to follow instructions and many photos, so that the reader can recreate these at home. Challenging garnishes from seasonal motifs of fall leaves to animals

will impress your friends. And on the practical side, there are many simple tips on cutting vegetables for quick canapés at home.

The book starts off with simple accents such as twists and curls of vegetables, progressing to knots and food cups. Much like origami, the first basic projects are easy and you quickly gain confidence working with the knife. You then quickly build on these basic techniques to more complicated designs, but the book carefully walks the reader through each of the necessary steps.

The author, chef Hiroshi Nagashima of Haganji Temple restaurant Shisui in Tsukiji, transforms fruit and vegetables into works of art. He in-

cludes photos and descriptions of tools one would purchase if you are inspired to recreate these at home.

As JET alums, if you have enjoyed creating origami or working with your hands, then this book will give you inspiration for the fine art of Japanese food carving.

Kodansha site:

kodansha-intl.com/books/html/en/9784770030870.html

Web site of Hongwanji Temple in Tsukiji:

tsukijihongwanji.jp/tsukiji/index_e.html

[Cont. from 17] you about the film?

LIPS: It somehow evokes people to reevaluate their lives and their values. Most people sacrifice their fun away and make their lives miserable, while I've refused to do it. This film has caused people to second-guess things they've been doing.

Did you guys purposely go to Stonehenge in the film as a nod to *This is Spinal Tap*?

SACHA: I wasn't even there—it came from those guys; I had actually left then.

ROBB: When we were in England, Lipps and myself wanted to go visit it anyway, just to check it out. And Sacha just sent the cameraman along. That Stonehenge piece is a good-feeling thing; there was no Spinal Tap thing about it at the time. It was really worth going to—I'd go back again.

What about the Spinal Tap comparisons?

SACHA: [The press] has been saying Anvil is the real Spinal Tap, but we've been saying that Spinal Tap is the fake Anvil. So that's true; it's based on Anvil, really.

You guys have admiration for that film?

SACHA: Absolutely, it's really funny. We love it.

ROBB: It never bothered me, you know. The movie's about what really happened. I know a lot of bands who watch it at home and say, "That's really painful to watch that," you know? Our movie is really painful to watch, too, from that perspective—it's not an all-perfect, easy, glamorous thing.

Describe your interactions with your Japanese fans.

LIPS: They are an amazing group and are a pretty diehard following. Quite honestly, they are what have kept our fires burning during all these years. They are the reason we keep toughing it out. They stick with us because we've never sold out. As other bands get older, they tend to mellow up and move on to slower things. Us, on the other hand, seem to be getting louder and faster. [laughs] They stick with us as we continue to bolster the image of heavy metal. We know that as soon as artists try to sell commercial music, their diehard fan base tends to leave them. We never did that, and we're proud of that and our legacy of albums proudly states that fact.

Would you ever be interested in doing

the Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Camp?

ROBB: I personally would love to do it.

SACHA: [laughs] I would love to see you apply to the fantasy camp!

ROBB: It's all about music and getting them inspired and showing them new stuff—I'd be perfect for that [Sacha laughs again]...I've been educating people musically my whole life.

LIPS: I guess I'd do it. It could be fun.

That belief in never changing who you are and sticking with your core fan group, did you have that from the beginning, or was that something that developed over time as you started to see what your legacy was?

LIPS: When you're involved in something like this, you're not thinking of things like that. I do it because I love it, and everything else happens naturally, you know? We forge ahead no matter what naysayers have to say. The minute you let a naysayer determine what you do, it's like swallowing poison. On the other hand, if you're hyped to ridiculous levels, you can't let that affect your style, either. You keep trying as hard as you can, as long as you can. The past is the past; it's tomorrow that counts. And you always need that attitude that every day is better than the previous and that I'm going to take advantage of what I can, when I can. We've always been ready for the future; either writing, recording, or touring. We've kept ourselves in top form because you never know when an opportunity presents itself. And if you don't take advantage of it, you may be kicking yourself later on. That's always been our motto. We have such a great relationship with our fans that, at certain places, we don't even need to stay at hotels or eat at restaurants. Fans have invited us into their homes and taken care of us and we really appreciate that. Some bands try to branch out from their core base, and I personally think that's a mistake.

Are there any bands that you looked up to in terms of the way they were run, not just in terms of music, but in terms of leadership?

LIPS: Black Sabbath, for one—they never had real commercial success. They write music for the state of the art, not for the big single. I think [guitarist] Tony Iommi's musicianship and songwriting is fantastic.

How did you get all those big-name rockers at the beginning of the film to give their Anvil testimonies?

LIPS: Sacha got in touch with [Anthrax's] Scott Ian first, and then Scott got in touch with everyone else after that. And they were very excited about getting involved, mainly because they loved our band. It's not always about how many records you've sold; it's about the legacy that you've left behind. For example, one of my favorite bands of all time is Budgie. They were never big like Deep Purple or Black Sabbath, but they were an amazing underground band.

Any plans to make a sequel about what's happened to Anvil since the first film?

SACHA: It would have to be a great movie, and we'd have to all figure out if it can be as wonderful a movie as the first one; then we'll do it. If it's just a roundup just for the sake of it, then I think that's not so interesting. It would really have to work as a movie and it has to be surprising and it has to be, again, a great story.

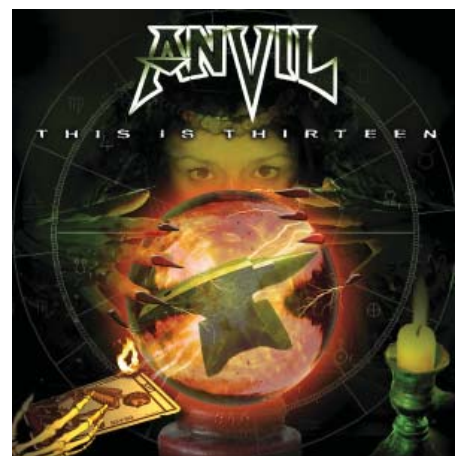
What's next for Anvil?

ROBB: We're touring the UK in November, America in January, and we're touring Australia in February.

LIPS: We are ready for anything that comes our way.

Special thanks to The Rick Sales Entertainment Group and 42West for interview assistance.

Catch "The Anvil Experience" on January 15 at the Fillmore New York at Irving Plaza for a screening of the film followed by a live concert by the band. Get tickets at livenation.com. Anvil! The Story of Anvil and This is Thirteen are in stores now. For more, visit anvilmetal.com and anvilthemovie.com.



THE FUNNY PAGE

Fall is here, and that means it's time for crazy costumes and over-the-top outfits. But even if you're not Lady Gaga, there's still Pumpkin Day for the rest of us to enjoy. Since it hasn't completely caught on in Japan yet, we at JQ proudly present the...

Top 12 Reasons Japan Needs Halloween

12. "It's trick or treat," people, let's get that *hatsuon* right if you want these mango-flavored Kit Kats!
11. They need yet another Western holiday to twist into a campy, erotically charged "date" night.
10. The Hinomaru on the national flag becomes a cute lil' apolitical pumpkin in a snap.
9. Your ultra-mint limited edition beaverskin Pikachu suit ain't gonna wear itself.
8. It's a valid reason to explain why the Japanese haven't quite grown up yet.
7. "Sugoi purple hair!" "Thanks, I've had it since '76."
6. Because *kabocha pantsu* should look more like this:
5. Three words: *onsen* apple bobbing.
4. Those Harajuku kids could use some competition.
3. If you're a *hentai*, it's Christmas too!
2. Another excuse to drink. Only now in costume.
1. Because JETs everywhere deserve one day a year when someone *else* can be pointed to and gawked at, *deshou?*



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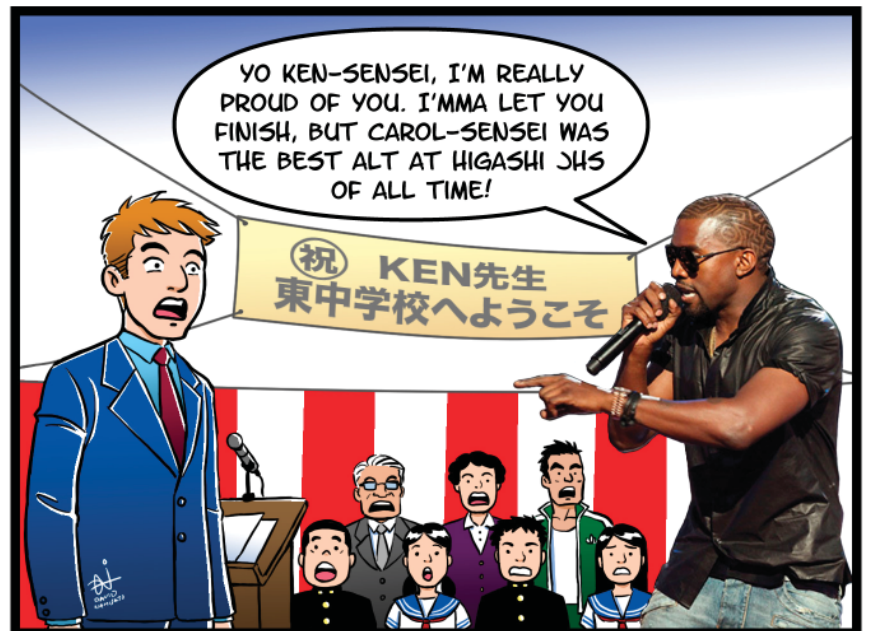
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