

THE HOT BUTTON ISSUE

JQ
JETaany NY MAGAZINE
jetaany.org/magazine

**SCOTT
PILGRIM
CREATOR
BRYAN LEE
O'MALLEY
SPEAKS**

**JETAANY NEEDS YOUR
HELP! DETAILS ON PAGE 3**



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

SAMURAI IN NEW YORK,
NICHIBEI TOASTMASTERS,
THE SOCIETY PAGE
RETURNS, AND MORE

BRINGING JAPAN A
LITTLE CLOSER TO YOU

July/August 2010 Vol. 19 Issue No. 4

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A Message from Ambassador Nishimiya



Welcome to the Big Apple, JETAA USA! As Consul-General of Japan in New York it is my profound pleasure to extend best wishes to the JET Alumni Association and members of chapters from every corner of the United States gathered for the 2010 JETAA USA National Conference.

Now in its 24th year, the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program is one of the world's most successful and innovative international exchange programs. Over 25,000 Americans have journeyed to Japan on JET, promoting English language education and internationalization, and becoming bridges of understanding and friendship in schools, local government offices and communities throughout the country.

But life as a JET does not end in Japan. In fact, a remarkable indicator of the program's success is the incredible enthusiasm and dedication of program alumni. Today, JETAA chapters not only play an essential part in the selection, orientation and return of JET participants, they are organizations composed of individuals who will be at the vanguard of the Japan-U.S. relationship for years to come. And at this time of great change and challenge in Japan, it is especially important that we make the key role JETAA plays in the broader Japan-U.S. relationship more widely known.

Finally, as cultural ambassadors you could not have picked a better time and place for this annual conference. One hundred fifty years ago, in June of 1860, a group of 76 samurai, the first Japanese diplomatic delegation to New York City, arrived to a magnificent welcome in Manhattan. That early encounter was the beginning of the rich tradition of person-to-person exchange between Japan and America. And as the JET Program so amply demonstrates, individual exchange remains at the heart of our relations to this very day.

All my best for a productive and enjoyable conference. I hope this meeting will strengthen the JETAA USA organization, ties between chapters, and your bonds with Japan. Please have a great stay in New York.

Shinichi Nishimiya
Ambassador and Consul-General of Japan in New York

JETAA NY

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At the Japan Pavilion in Shanghai for World Expo 2010.

From the Editor

The JET Program is in danger. After 23 years of producing more than 50,000 participants from around the world, Japan's new ruling party has decided to slash its spending. According to an illuminating article titled "[JET Program on the Chopping Block](#)" from [JetWit.com](#), an 11-member panel ruled unanimously in May that a comprehensive examination should be undertaken to see if JET should be pared back or eliminated altogether. Jim Gannon, the writer of the piece, is a JET alum and executive director for the Japan Center of International Exchange in New York. JETAANY has now launched an online "[Save the JET Program](#)" petition aimed at Prime Minister Naoto Kan and His Cabinet, which we encourage all supporters to sign and circulate to others everywhere to unify our voice.

Editorially yours,

Justin Tedaldi (Kobe-shi CIR, 2001-02)
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Let's go back to that number mentioned earlier. Over 50,000 participants, all of whom wanted to live and work in Japan. Some are still there, some are back home. Some have even kept the ideals of JET vital by working for and establishing relationships with public figures, embassies, consulates, local government, schools, the media, or by writing books and films on the subject ([see page 11](#) for examples featured in our back issues). These are all lives touched by their time spent abroad on JET, something we pray will be preserved for the future.

From the Executive Director, Japan Local Government Center

Hello JETs,

I am going to leave the United States at the end of July after my unforgettable three years and four months living and working in New York. A lot of things happened in the U.S. and the world during this period. I enjoyed watching and experiencing them as a New Yorker. That has been wonderful. I could even watch and be impressed with the fantastic fights by the U.S. and Japanese soccer teams in the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa.

I have loved the JET Program since its beginning in 1987. I was not a beneficiary of the program; I was too old to be taught by JET participants in my school days, so they were not at all responsible for my bad English. However, my 18-year-old daughter and 15-year-old son are clearly different. They came to America with my wife and I three years ago. Off course, they didn't speak and understand English when they went to public school. However, they were lucky because their ESL teacher was a JET alumna who had worked as an ALT in Fukui Prefecture. She enabled them to enjoy their school days, and my daughter graduated from high school and my son finished the ninth grade last month.

Although this is my personal story, it is a clear example to show how wonderful the JET Program is. We have a Japanese proverb, *nasake wa hito no tamenarazu*. Sorry, I cannot translate it into English, so you will have to look it up yourself.

I have two ambitious dreams about the JET Program and its participants from past to future. The first is that one of you will become President of the United States of America in the future. People in Japan, CLAIR and Japanese local governments will and should maintain this program until this dream comes true.

The second one is that you will become sincere supporters of the JET Program and grassroots bonds between Japan and America or other countries. Not now, not several years later after you finish your job in this program, but when you are older and retired. In your sixties and beyond, you will have much time and energy to do something good for the public and the world. You will be rich enough and have great networks to do so. I am sure of it. Maybe some of you will be super billionaires and I will welcome your generous multibillion-dollar donations to JET alumni activities and its related organizations.

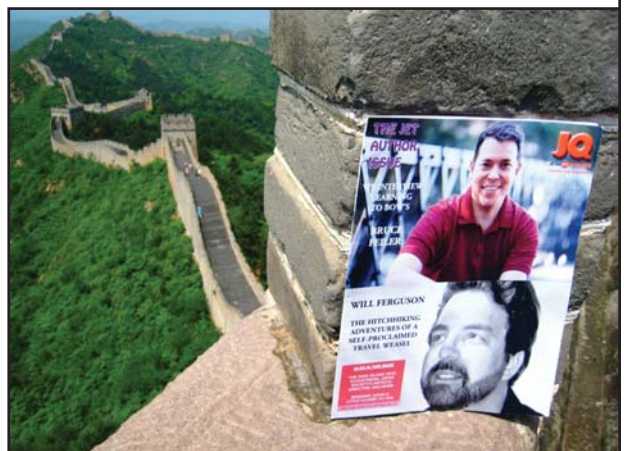
In order to realize my dreams, you have to enjoy your lives and work hard to support your spouse and raise your children and succeed in your career advancement in the U.S. Those things are more important than anything you can immediately do for the JET Program. And of course, that's the beginning of my dreams.

I hope and strongly believe that you are the national treasures of Japan in the United States.

There is one thing that I cannot realize during my stay here. It is that I cannot attend the monumental U.S. JET Alumni Association National Conference hosted by JETAANY in New York City from August 13 to 15. The City of New York, where my office, the Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR in New York) is located, is gorgeous in summer, and always expensive year-round (JETAANY, I clearly understand how hard it is for you to have the national meeting in Manhattan!).

Thank you, JETs. I have been lucky to be with you these last few years. I truly enjoyed it. Goodbye and good luck.

Hiroshi Sasaki
Japan Local Government Center, CLAIR New York



Write for the Eighth Wonder of the World!
Send story ideas to magazine@jetaany.org.

Nippon News Blotter

5/28/10: Australia has said it will begin legal action against Japan over its whaling in the Antarctic. It will argue that the annual whaling hunt in the Southern Ocean is in violation of an international ban on commercial whaling. Japan, which kills hundreds of whales every year, says the hunt is carried out for scientific research purposes. Critics say this is a cover for commercial whaling and that whale meat not used in research is sold for food. (**BBC News**)

6/3/10: Unpopular Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said he would resign, taking the blame for his Cabinet's plunging approval rate brought on by funds scandals and the row over relocating a U.S. base in Okinawa. Democratic Party of Japan Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa, embroiled in a shady transfer of political funds, will also step down from the party's No. 2 post. (**The Japan Times**)

6/4/10: Naoto Kan, Japan's new prime minister, beat his rival, Shinji Tarutoko, in a vote among members of parliament belonging to the ruling Democratic Party of Japan. Kan, Japan's sixth prime minister in four years, is the first leader in 14 years not to hail from a political dynasty. Kan has talked with more enthusiasm than his Democrat colleagues about the need to raise the consumption tax, a measure that is unlikely to go down well with voters. (**Christian Science Monitor**)

6/15/10: A team of scientists flew to the Australian outback and recovered a sample capsule from a space probe, which they hope contains asteroid samples providing clues into the evolution of the solar system. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's Hayabusa explorer, the first spacecraft to successfully land on an asteroid that returned to Earth after a seven-year, 6 billion km journey, was launched as part of an ¥18 billion project to understand the origin and

evolution of the solar system, as well as paving the way for future sample return missions. (**AP**)

6/15/10: Nearly half of Japan's commercial nuclear power reactors had problems requiring action, including the need for inspections, in their fiscal 2009 operations, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency said in its first such report. None is deemed to have had a problem that is not "tolerable," while a majority got a passing grade, the agency affiliated with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said in "report cards" on problems, malfunctions and operational status at the nation's 54 reactors in the year through March 31. (**Kyodo News**)

6/20/10: Renho, Tokyo's new administrative reform minister, said the government will remain unyielding in its quest to eliminate wasteful spending. She revealed that Prime Minister Naoto Kan asked her when she was appointed to focus on *jigyo shiwake*—the ongoing review of shadowy government-backed entities—to eliminate financial waste. "As long as I am in charge, we will be giving all our efforts to reduce wasteful spending," Renho said. "I don't think going through the process while simultaneously launching discussions for a tax hike is contradictory." Renho goes by her first name only as she used the name while working as a model and TV newscaster before becoming an Upper House member. (**Japan Times**)

6/29/10: Paraguay joined three other South American nations in the World Cup quarterfinals, outlasting Japan, 5-3, in a penalty kick tiebreaker after 120 scoreless minutes in front of an announced 36,742 at South Africa's Loftus Versfeld Stadium. Japan missed an opportunity to become the first Asian team to defeat a South American opponent in World Cup play, dropping the continent's record to 0-9-2. (**Washington Post**)



7/1/10: Japan relaxed its visa requirements for Chinese tourists, hoping to attract more well-heeled travelers from its giant neighbor and cash in on demand for electronics, cosmetics and luxury goods. Around 600,000 Chinese tourists visited Japan between January and May, a 36 percent jump from the same period last year, Japan's National Tourism Organization said. (**Reuters**)

7/4/10: Competitive eater Takeru Kobayashi was arrested at the 95th annual Nathan's Famous Fourth of July International Hot Dog Eating Contest on Coney Island after attempting to storm the stage. The 32-year-old Nagano native was barred from competing over a contract dispute with Major League Eating, the sanctioning body of the Nathan's event and other food-related contests. Kobayashi's archrival, American Joey Chestnut, clinched his fourth win in a row, downing 54 dogs in 94-degree heat. (**New York Daily News**)

7/11/10: Japanese voters handed a stinging electoral defeat to the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, exit polls showed, rejecting a proposal to increase taxes and handicapping a fledgling government struggling to keep the world's second-largest economy from financial meltdown. Estimates showed the Democrats ended up with 110 seats, well below its goal of maintaining a majority in the 242-member upper house. (**AP**)



JLGC Welcomes New Assistant Director

I came here in the beginning of April. Actually, I have been to this exciting city three times so far, but I never could have imagined becoming a New Yorker myself.

Learning English with native speakers is a very eye-opening experience for me. When I was a junior high school student, there were some young native speakers from overseas. They didn't just teach me pronunciations, but they gave me the motivation to keep on studying English!

Years later, I am here to assist JETAA. I cannot help thinking that I am linked by fate to this mission. Making good use of my years of experience working for the Inbound Tourism Promotion Section, and later, the International Affairs Division in Tokyo, I hope to do my best as a liaison at the Japan Local Government Center.

Dozo yoroshiku onegaishimasu.

Tomoya Suzuki, JLGC

JETAANY Society Page By Goshippu Garu

The Society Page is back! We know you have missed the all-knowing, all-seeing Yoku Shiteiru's accounts of JETAANY life. So to pick up where we left off, please welcome Goshippu Garu! Read on for updates about (almost) everything JET-related from the past two months.

EVENTS:

Two successful Nihongo Dake Dinners in a row: May 26 was at Vietnamese beer hall Bia Garden on the Lower East Side, organized by **Liz Bass** (NDD planner **Kendall Murano** was out of town). Despite the inexplicably intense heat inside, a good time, lots of great food and a few ice buckets full of beer were enjoyed by all in attendance—an even split between JETs and *Nihonjin*, several of whom were from non-profit **NY de Volunteer** (see article on [page 8](#)), the non-profit group that brings Japanese cultural programs to NYC classrooms. Part II took place on June 30 at Ramen Setagaya in the East Village. A fantastic turnout with a slightly higher number of native Japanese speakers had the *Nihongo* flowing (almost) all night long!

On June 8, NYdV had a successful FUNdraiser at Top Tunes Karaoke bar with a few JETs in attendance, including **Ann Chow** as the first prize raffle winner, winning a giant Kitty-chan. At **Japan Day @ Central Park** on June 6, **Carleen Ben** and **Amber Liang** organized a group of JETs to help run a yo-yo fishing booth with the JLGC and Japan Society, much to the delight of hundreds of children hopped up on sakura-flavored *wagashi*.

The **Pre-departure Seminar** at the **Nippon Club** on June 26 was a success with around 60 soon-to-be-leaving JETs attending the daylong event. Playwright and JETAANY board member **Randall David Cook** opened with an energetic and fun keynote speech. This was followed by workshops on job training, city/suburb/country placements, Japanese language, etiquette, women's issues and more.

JETAANY President **Megan Miller Yoo** put on a terrific event, enforcing a strict dress code ensuring that female presenters wore black-and-white patterned dresses. The day was followed by drinks at JETAANY favorite Faces & Names, where new and old JETs alike consoled



Amber Liang assists at the Pre-departure Orientation.



Liz Bass and JETAANY VP Monica Yuki at Japan Day, each other over Ghana's triumph over the U.S. in the World Cup.

Mie-san of **Mie, Inc.** has been great for hooking up JET alums with Japanese cultural events around the city. Following the success of the taiko drumming event in May with amazing Taiko dance group **COBU**, she's put on events such as sake tastings at Soba Totto and Decibel, *yakitori* at Robotaya, and learning about *wagashi* at Minami Kitchoan.

FOJ **Jon Hills** of **Hills Learning Institute** has teamed up with **Yasushi Sasaki** of **Two Rivers Associates** to present monthly **Japanese and Asian networking events** in the city. *Yoku deki-mashita* to the hardworking JETAANY event coordinators!

JETS IN THE NEWS:

Rick Ambrosio took over **JETAANY's Twitter page** from Secretary **Janelle Jimenez**. **John Gauntner** (a.k.a. "the Sake Guy") gave the lecture "Amazing Leverage: The Final Steps of Sake-Brewing" at Japan Society on May 19. American Enterprise Institute Director of Japanese Studies **Michael Auslin** testified before Congress in April about the current state of U.S.-Japan relationships.

Also, **David Boling**, lawyer and former Congressional chief of staff, announced his **candidacy** for the 2nd District Congressional seat in Arkansas. Current Wakayama JET **Theo Thourson** was featured in the *Japan Times* for a site called [takumisheart.com](#), which seeks to help his Japanese friend with a severe heart disorder. Minna-san, *gambatte!*

WEDDING PLANS:

David Flynn, who was one of the pioneers on the first year of the JET Program and a Kintetsu Essay Contest winner, has some happy news. His daughter **Caitlin**, also a former JET, tied the knot in July. *Omedetou!*



Justin shows new JETs the secret to a good haircut.



Nicole Bongiorno chilling with a local celebrity.

JETS IN THE ARTS:

In theater, **Ann Chow** starred in the musical comedy show *Help Us Go Away* at various locations around Lower East Side and the West Village, including the Living Theatre and the Stonewall Inn throughout April and May.

Another JET vet, *Learning to Bow* author **Bruce Feiler**, wrapped a two-month speaking tour in June for his new book *The Council of Dads*. Earlier this spring, **Malena Watrous** published her debut novel, *If You Follow Me*, about an English teacher living in Shika-machi (Malena's real-life JET placement) in rural Japan. And in May, **JQ** contributor **Yukari Sakamoto** published *Food Sake Tokyo*, a guide to the very best cuisine and eateries of Japan's capital city.

Speaking of **JQ**, this publication's very own editor **Justin Tedaldi** has been writing a **New York Japanese Culture page** for Examiner.com since the start of May, and has worked and spoken with a lot of interesting people on the Nichi-NY scene, like **Bon Jovi's David Bryan**. You can subscribe for free alerts to all of his newly published stories, and if you're a JET looking to promote something, contact Justin at magazine@jetaany.org. *Otsukaresama* to all!

JETAANY wants to know your business! E-mail goshippugaru@gmail.com with your news and/or photographic documentation and it just might end up on the Society Page of JQ. We look forward to hearing from you!



JETAANY President Megan Miller at the orientation.



This issue features JETAA Tokyo Chair Byron Nagy (Miyazaki-ken CIR, 2006-07).

After a stint as a CIR in the mountains of Miyazaki, I followed in the footsteps of the many JETs before me making the trip to Tokyo in search of a career. Without a job lined up and lacking a specific plan on how to get one, I began the arduous task of randomly applying for job openings, attending career fairs and essentially flashing my résumé to anyone who would care to look. Like many JETs fresh off the program, I was overzealous regarding my job prospects (not yet jaded about working for a Japanese company) and generally lacked direction in terms of what I wanted to do or was even capable of. All I knew was that I wanted to do something “international” using my linguistic ability and prior cultural experience in Japan. I was probably not the first one to think this way.

It wasn't until my first trip to the bathroom in the Shin Marunouchi building that it finally sunk in how far I had come from the *yakuba* back in Kyushu. The high-tech Washlets looked like they had been lifted from the Death Star and were so clean and shiny that you could eat your *bento* off of them. I contemplated the bygone days of squat toilets and *inaka* work uniforms as I made my way back to my desk alongside the other immaculately dressed Japanese salarymen and OLs. I had finally hit the big time, landing a post-JET job doing new business development at a flashy Japanese HR firm.

My firm saw JETs as a potentially valuable human resource for Japanese companies looking to internationalize and expand business abroad. While many JETs fresh off the program possess great po-

tential, without any formal career resources or support only a handful are able to make the jump from teaching to a business career in Tokyo. As a JET alum myself, it naturally fell to me to put together a training and development program that would help my compatriots get a piece of the Tokyo pie.

After months of research and development, I was all set to roll out the new training program, dubbed JETSET, just in time for the economy to collapse in the wake of the Lehman Brothers crash. In the face of budgets cuts, hiring freezes and corporate red tape, it slowly became clear to me that JETSET wasn't happening and that all my work had been for naught. In retrospect, this was for the best.

A diehard idealist, my primary concern was putting together a program that would help my fellow alumni to develop a career in Tokyo and create value for the JET community here. This conflicted with my company's objective, which was of course to make money and benefit from the positive PR associated with “internationalizing” Japan, one *gaijin* at a time. The realization of this fact compounded with my growing frustration with being a cog in the corporate machine led me to hand in my resignation in search of a better way to achieve my vision. Thus ended my days as a salaryman and marked the start of one of the most turbulent yet productive and enlightening years of the rest of my life.

I realize now that I am essentially unemployable. As company employees, we are given just enough autonomy to make our jobs bearable and discourage us from risking uncertainty. We are lulled into a false sense of security and anesthetized with a cash injection on



the 25th of the month. We tend to never consider just how precarious our employment situation is until we find ourselves suffering from paycheck withdrawal, scraping for unemployment benefits and sleeping on our friend's kitchen floor.

But once we wean ourselves off a salary; once we learn to innovate, network and collaborate; once we begin to think outside the box and work across boundaries; once we shoulder the risk of real freedom and develop a taste for the rewards, it is almost impossible to go back to working as a mild-mannered salaryman. The knowledge that there will be no payday unless we go out and make it rain can be a fantastic motivator. If we can develop the skills necessary to work for ourselves, we grow stronger by the day as real security becomes within our reach.

Naturally, I cannot advocate this lifestyle for everyone, yet it was undoubtedly the right choice for me at the time. Over the last year, I worked as a freelance independent contractor taking on any project that captured my interest. Through avid networking, I had the opportunity to work in marketing, HR recruiting, PR consulting, business development, translation and interpretation, event planning and journalism. I learned more in the last year as a freelancer than in all my years as a salaryman combined. I have been bitten by the entrepreneurial bug and fear my symptoms might be terminal in that I will never be content working a regular job again.

As a result of the challenges I faced, the experiences I had and the people I worked with along the way, a year later I was able to come full circle to fulfill the vision I almost gave up on. Thanks to the help and dedication of countless other JET alumni in Japan and abroad, JETAA Tokyo was created and approved as an official chapter of the JET Program Alumni Association. With the original ideals of the JET Program and a vision of a someday truly international Japan in mind, JETAA Tokyo is charged with the goal of creating positive value for JET alumni and the society we live in through the three pillars of Career, Community and Service. Although we have officially estab-

lished JETAA Tokyo, the real challenge begins now as we attempt to grow our membership, develop meaningful programs, officially register as an NPO and make good on our lofty goals.

To all prospective JET alumni who find themselves looking for opportunities in Tokyo, there is unfortunately no perfect instruction manual that shows the path to career success. However, it is my sincere hope that JETAA Tokyo will serve as a resource of knowledge and support, helping JET alumni network with those who came before them in order to find their own personal path to success.

Learn more about JETAA Tokyo at www.jetaa-tokyo.org.

Yankees, Meet Samurai
By Mark Brandstetter
(Yamaguchi-ken,
2005-07)



Photo from Samurai in New York: The First Japanese Delegation, 1860

“Over sea, hither from Nippon,
Courteous, the Princes of Asia
Swat-cheek'd princes,
First-comers, guests, two sworded
princes...”

—Walt Whitman

Thanks in part to contributions from The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry of New York, Canon U.S.A., Daiwa Capital Markets America and NTT Docomo, the Museum of The City Of New York is presenting a special exhibition through Oct. 11 entitled Samurai in New York: The First Japanese Delegation, 1860. At the museum, you can learn about the origins of New York City, from the pre-Columbian era to the very recent past. In this case, Samurai in New York commemorates the 150th anniversary of Japan's first diplomatic en-

voys to the United States, displaying rare artifacts and ephemera for the public as well as photographs of the event. According to director Barbara Livenstein, the museum has loaned these vintage relics from the Kato San Museum in Gifu Prefecture just for this exhibition.

June 16th, 1860 saw nearly 500,000 New Yorkers crowding along the sides of Broadway to catch a glimpse of over 70 Samurai from Japan with their traditional kimono and swords. This special diplomatic envoy from the Far East met with then-President James Buchanan, attended balls held in their honor, and the occasion of the Japanese procession down Broadway was marked with a poem penned by Walt Whitman. The *New York Times* described it as "One of the most novel and imposing spectacles ever witnessed in this City." For our readers unfamiliar with the historically momentous event for New York City, some background information for context:

The island nation of Japan held a strict policy of isolation from the outside world from 1600 to 1850. After decades of contact and trade with visiting Portuguese and Dutch traders, Japan's most powerful martial group was able to unify other warring clans across Japan into one empire. The new system of government ruled by a military dictator, called a shogun, began a strict hierarchical class system that heavily taxed its peasants and brought about the emergence of the warrior caste of samurai. The shogun, Tokugawa, banned all contact with the outside world for the next 250 years. Japan's policy of isolation prohibited, under penalty of death, any Japanese person from leaving the nation and any foreigners who may have found their way onto its shores either by navigational error or bad weather. This period of isolation came to be historically referred to as the *sakoku* ("locked country") period. This extended period of cultural isolation has played a huge role in shaping Japan's history and forming its people's customs, language, perception of things foreign, and its national identity.

Under the general sentiment of its emperor and its people, Japan ushered in an era of rapid scientific and military advancements unseen in modern history. The six years between United States Naval Commodore Matthew C. Perry's arrival in 1853 and the first diplomatic envoy to New York City were marked with a furiously paced acquisition by Japanese nationals of all things foreign. As Japan was [\[con't on 9\]](#)

Bryan Lee O'Malley: The JQ Interview By Justin Tedaldi (Kobe-shi CIR, 2001-02)

Growing up in Canada, Bryan Lee O'Malley did what a lot of 10-year-olds in the late '80s did—play Nintendo. Fast forward to today: kids still like Nintendo, but O'Malley's hit the big time with Scott Pilgrim, a six-volume manga-styled series that began in 2004, fusing elements of old-school video games, classic anime, slacker comedies and indie rock.

The final volume, Scott Pilgrim's Finest Hour, was released in July, and the live-action film adaptation, Scott Pilgrim vs. the World,



opens in August, starring Michael Cera and directed by Edgar Wright (Shaun of the Dead). O'Malley talked with JQ in the midst of moving to his new home in Los Angeles.

Now that the *Scott Pilgrim* series is winding down, what are you planning to do next?

Nothing! Hoping to nap, or drop dead.

How did you get into video games and anime/manga? What were some of your earliest influences from both fields?

The first Nintendo game I ever got was *Clash At Demonhead*. I got into anime and manga thanks to that Canadian classic, *Sailor Moon*.

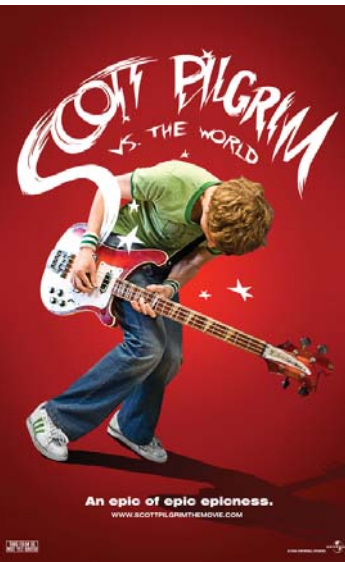
When you have time, what do you play now?

Haven't had time for a while, but looking forward to playing *Red Dead Redemption* when things settle down. I bought it, at least.

For *Scott Pilgrim*, what individual scenes/character developments in the series are you most proud of?

I'm not sure! I'm pretty disgusted with the whole thing, really. It's pretty much a wash. Better luck next time as they say.

Your drawing style for *Scott Pilgrim* reminds me of Rodney Greenblatt's work for *PaRappa the Rapper*. Were there any other styles or artists that influenced its evolution?



It was heavily influenced by the googly eyes of [1964 Christmas TV special] *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, to be completely honest.

Lately, there have been heated discussions online about whether or not video games are art. What's your take on that?

I think they can be art. I've certainly played games that provoked a real emotional response or serious thought processes. I think [Roger] Ebert et al. are being completely silly when they say that this one particular medium can never be art. I also don't care enough to read their arguments, so I'm not sure if they're right.

Have you ever been to Japan? What places/things would you want to see if you get the opportunity to go?

I've always said I'll never go to Japan unless some major company—publisher, movie studio, game developer, whoever's reading this,

etc.—is flying me out for business reasons. I want it to be a trip with a definite purpose, not just a pleasure cruise, because I know I'll just geek out too hard and get lost in some used manga store or whatever and it'll be really embarrassing. Or I'll get stuck in a ramen shop and have to eat ramen until I explode. The whole thing is sad, really.

In addition to music, the *Scott Pilgrim* series has a wealth of insider game references like *River City Ransom*, *Drummania* and *Clash at Demonhead*. Are all of these planned in advance, or do you drop them in based on how the story develops?

It's a bit of both, I guess. A lot of the video game stuff just gets thrown in while I'm doing the art or the lettering, but the larger, more structural references like the *River City Ransom* stuff in volume 2 or the *Ninja Gaiden* scene in volume 4 were a bit more premeditated.

What can you tell us about the *Scott Pilgrim* film now that it's complete?

Nothing. It's a secret.

Many recent anime- and video game-turned-Hollywood films have films bombed at the box office. What do you think the studios should keep in mind when developing future projects?

They should continue to try to make films that don't suck. You know, I don't think anyone ever sets out to make a crappy movie, but there are a lot of forces working against those people who are trying to make something decent. There are a lot of fine lines to walk and small battles to fight. It takes a lot of balls to make a good movie, I think.

What are some of your favorite experiences from your guest appearances at anime and comic book conventions? Seeing people cosplaying my characters is always a blast.

Any other messages for our readers?

Stay out of school and don't not do drugs!

Scott Pilgrim's Finest Hour *hits stores July 20, and Scott Pilgrim vs. the World opens in theaters Aug. 13.*

Visit [Oni Press](#) for more information on the book, and [www.scottpilgrimthemovie.com](#) for the film site. Visit Bryan online at [http://radiomaru.com](#).

Nihonjin in New York
NY de Volunteer's Noriko Hino
By Stacy Smith
(Kumamoto-ken, 2000-03)

Noriko Hino is the founder of the groundbreaking Japanese volunteer group NY de Volunteer. The slogan of this non-profit organization is "uniting global citizens in translating goodwill into action," and it truly makes this a reality. JQ talked with Hino about NY de Volunteer's activities, as well as her personal background and goals.

Where are you from in Japan and what brought you to the States?

I was born and raised in Ota City, Tokyo in 1967, and following graduation from a junior college I worked at a Japanese event production company as an event coordinator and planner. I came to the States in 1993 at the height of the Internet bubble, so I began to work at an IT company as their Web designer and art director. The event production and Web design skills that I gained from these experiences came in handy when I decided to enter the volunteer arena. The first activity I joined was as part of the NPO NY de Volunteer—known as NYdV—which I established in 2002, where I am currently the executive director.

Can you tell us a little bit more about your organization?

With the promotion of both international mutual understanding as well as activities that contribute to society as our goals, we are dedicated to expanding our activities while trying to remain flexible in regard to our thinking. To be honest, the Japanese community in New York City is often thought of as having a weak presence, but with our societal contributions we are hoping to hold strong appeal to the local community on behalf of the Japanese. In diverse areas like education, medicine and the environment, we have carried out as many as 700 activities with about 7,000 volunteers, such as cleaning up bathrooms and other facilities at public parks. In doing this, we have especially focused on involving the Japanese community, a group which tends to not be as familiar with the idea of volunteering. We do this with an operations staff of around 30 and 15 advisors.

With such a wide variety of activities, is there one in particular that you focus on?

In 2007 we began a program called Explore Japanese Culture After School in response to a request from New York City. We implement it at recreation centers throughout the five boroughs during the school year from September to June, and it is the only cross-cultural understanding educational program here in the city. Our program has the goal of creating "global citizens" whose horizons are broadened by interacting with different cultures. Hundreds of children each year have the chance to take part in this program, where Japanese culture is introduced after school for the purpose of promoting Japan-America mutual understanding.

Over the years, this program's innovative planning ability and strong leadership has received great acclaim from several sources. For ex-

ample, I have been honored by the TV channel NY1 as "New Yorker of the Week," and we have received awards from New York City on two occasions. The first was in 2007 when I was an honoree at Comptroller William C. Thompson's Asian Pacific Island Heritage celebration. Then this year NYdV received a Volunteer Appreciation Award from Parks and Recreation in recognition of our dedication and commitment to the after school program. In Japan, I was designated a "Lifestyle Expert 2005" by the Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau Division.



"JETAA members are role models for the children we teach at Explore Japanese Culture After School."

Very impressive! I'm curious as to what inspired you to form NYdV?

It actually emerged from my first trip to Coney Island in 1994. I was disappointed by the beach which was overflowing with garbage, and began picking some pieces up myself. Then some people joined me and began to help, and I was moved that we were able to share this feeling. I was also greatly struck by the power of what you can accomplish due to the strength of many individuals working together.

Also, for a big city like New York where connections between people can be tenuous, volunteering serves as a bridge to strengthen these bonds by allowing you to overcome differences in age, race and social status. It turned my attention to the fact that it could help with community formation, and I wanted to share my experience with as many people as possible. This is why I began volunteer activities and how I got to where I am today.

What kind of collaboration has taken place with JETAA up until this point?

The origin of NYdV's and JETAA's collaboration was when one of our founders, Ms. Kazumi Terada, knew about JETAA and thought it would be a perfect match. So in 2004 we went to a JETAA gathering at Coney Island where I met several members. Since then, we have participated in some of the New York Cares cleanup events together, and NYdV members have attended Nihongo Dake Dinners. This is one

of the most popular gatherings for us because most of our members are new to New York and do not speak English well. But JETAA members are so friendly and are used to hearing broken Japanese English, so it feels much easier to communicate with them. We have joined some of the happy hours as well.

Since 2007, many JETAA members have come to our Explore Japanese Culture After School Program as guest speakers, and some have even become advisors for NYdV and helped out with writing grant proposals. So I feel very lucky that JETAA and NYdV have met and enjoyed lots of activities together, and I look forward to building a stronger relationship. *Arigato*, JETAANY!!

What have the challenges been for NYdV due to the economic downturn?

Fundraising has been difficult for us. We actually were supposed to have a big summer festival which would have called for over 200 volunteers, but we were forced to cancel due to the economic situation. So times like this are tough, but we are getting by thanks to our companionship and passion!

What is the direction you hope to take NYdV in the future?

I have become more active in the field of social marketing projects, and expect to continue this. Due to the favorable reception that the after school program has received, we are looking to cultivate other places where we might be able to offer it. Let me know if you have any ideas! We are also hoping to develop more advanced programs.

So how do you spend your free time, assuming you have any?

I like samba, shopping and walking, so I am pretty active during my down time as well. However, I also enjoy reading, visiting museums and beauty salon treatments when I want to relax. As for food, I love going out to eat for cuisines as varied as Korean, Turkish and dim sum, and brunch is a favorite meal. I am also interested in Japanese flower arrangement.

How about your favorite haunts in New York?

That would have to be the Neue Galerie New York, MOMA, the Guggenheim, Riverside Park, the West Village and rooftop bars.

And your go-to spots back home?

Onsen! In Japan you can enjoy all four seasons, and each region has its own culture. For this reason, I think that the localities have more charm than Tokyo—though when I lived in Japan I had absolutely no interest in countryside areas.

Any other final thoughts you want to impart to our JETAA readers?

JETAA members are role models for the children we teach at Explore Japanese Culture After School. I would love for more of you to come and share the valuable experiences you had in Japan with them! If you do, you will help their dreams grow. Come try any NYdV activity! I promise that you will have fun as well as enjoy giving back to the community.

For more info, visit New York de Volunteer at www.nydevolunteer.org.

**Book Corner: *Nintendo Magic*
By David Kowalsky
(Hiroshima-ken ALT/CIR, 1991-93)**

I'm no gamer, but there is still a certain mystique even for me about Nintendo, the phenomenally successful Japanese video game company. Only in the last year have I discovered Vertical, a New York-based publisher that specializes in English translations of contemporary Japanese books. When I noticed earlier this spring that Vertical was publishing a book about Nintendo, it was an easy choice to select as my first book to read from this publisher of popular novels, non-fiction and graphic novels.

Nintendo Magic: Winning the Videogame Wars is the first book by Osamu Inoue, a correspondent for Nikkei Business Publications in Japan, which publishes *Nikkei Business*. As explained in the prologue, the book grew out of a special series of articles that ran in *Nikkei Business* based on interviews with leading Nintendo executives. There were constraints on the amount of the material from the interviews that would fit in the magazine format, leaving the door open to take lots of unpublished material and write a book, which is what Inoue has done.

The book jumps around in time, covering everything from Nintendo's early history as a maker of traditional *hanafuda* playing cards in the late 1800s, all the way up to and then past the new era of portable gaming wars that started in 2008 when the Apple iPhone App Store download service opened for business. The focus of

the book really centers on explaining Nintendo's surprising rise in the video game industry with the release of the dual screen Nintendo DS handheld console in 2004 and Nintendo Wii home console in 2006, and that these two releases were actually Nintendo's brilliant response to the realization around 2002 that the company was in serious trouble as fewer people were playing games.

There is no question this is a very pro-Nintendo book with no shortage of praise for Nintendo. What makes the book worth reading is Inoue's weaving in and really bringing to life the highly entertaining profiles of several key people, including Satoru Iwata, the current president and CEO; Shigeru Miyamoto, the senior executive deeply involved in the creation of both the DS and Wii; Gunpei Yokoi, the first head of Nintendo's R&D section, who was responsible for laying a large part of Nintendo's foundation; and finally, Hiroshi Yamauchi, the third president of Nintendo, who is still an active advisor to the company since retiring in 2002.

There is no easy way to end a book trying to cover the never-ending competition in the home console wars between Nintendo's Wii with Microsoft's Xbox and Sony Computer Entertainment's PlayStation series. Plus don't forget the Nintendo DS family versus the Apple's iPhone for portable games. Inoue wrote an epilogue to the Japanese edition of the book in 2009, and then an update for the newer English edition in February 2010. Both provided quality analysis, but unfortunately, are already out of date.

In the English version, Inoue speculated that "it seems likely that at the June 2010 E3 (the

annual trade show for the computer and video games industry) Nintendo will outline its plan for Wii Relax, which will be packaged with the Wii Vitality Sensor (a device capable of sending vital information like one's heart rate to the Wii) and released in time for the 2010 holiday season." Well, E3 2010 came and went, and the Vitality Sensor was nowhere in sight, but at the show Nintendo *did* introduce glasses-free 3D gaming with a new handheld console—the Nintendo 3DS—intended for release by April 2011. If there is a future paperback edition of *Nintendo Magic*, I look forward to reading yet another update: this one on the 3D gaming wars!

From Geek.com:* According to Nintendo's Executive VP of Sales and Marketing Cammie Dunaway, the Wii Vitality Sensor has not been cancelled. She told **GameSetWatch that the reason they didn't show off the Vitality Sensor at E3 was because Nintendo already had too much other stuff to show off, and that E3 itself didn't seem like the best environment to introduce a product that's really about relaxing.

Read more about Nintendo Magic at Vertical's home page: www.vertical-inc.com/books/nintendo.html.



[con't from 7] beginning to form its self image of modernity, small groups of Japanese envoys, scientists and officials crisscrossed the Western world, taking notes and acquiring as much knowledge as they could to bring home, notably in the fields of construction, fashion and military tactics.

The envoy's purpose was not only to establish Japan's first diplomatic mission to the United States after Commodore Perry's arrival, but to ratify the new Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, which saw the United States benefiting from a trade partner in the Far East, and Japan acquiring new scientific and military technologies from the West.

In 1860, New York City had a population boasting over 800,000 residents, with a surge of immigrants from Western Europe. This was America's largest and most developed city, and while it may have been young compared to its European counterparts, New York was the bustling symbol of a promising and exceedingly robust new nation. The new country was full of self-pride for its country's successes and



Ambassador and Madame Nishimiya with MCNY directors. (Andrew Hinderaker)

the promise of a Manifest Destiny.

The delegation's arrival symbolically linked the two nations, and while the average person living in New York at the time knew very little about Nippon, the customs, language and clothing elicited great curiosity. Some of the most interesting pieces from the exhibition displayed the cross-cultural influences that the visitors elicited. A Japanese-style folding fan with the image of President Buchanan and

a Victorian-style dress decorated with Japanese patterns are just a few rare pieces the museum offers.

This significant anniversary has been celebrated and commemorated in other areas as well. The fourth annual Japan Day @ Central Park was held in the East Meadow on June 6, comprised of local members of the Japanese community and its supporters to boost a greater understanding of Japanese culture and to strengthen relation-

ships within the Japanese grassroots community. Japan Day's main aims to educate New Yorkers about Japanese culture through food, entertainment and traditional games boasts an annual average attendance of nearly 50,000 people. The Big Apple commemorated the historic moment between Japan's community and the City of New York with a reenactment of the original samurai procession. The parade, led by the NYPD marching band, had about 180 people dressed as feudal era lords, ladies and warriors.

And on June 16, the Empire State Building was lit up in red and white from sunset until 2 a.m. to mark the anniversary to the day of the first Japanese envoys who came to New York all those years ago.

Check out *Samurai in New York* at The Museum of The City of New York, 1220 Fifth Avenue at 104th Street, open Tue.-Sun. For more info, visit www.mcny.org/exhibitions/future/Samurai-in-New-York.html and www.ny.us.emb-japan.go.jp/150JapanNY/en/index.html.

Nichibeï Toastmasters Tout Speaking Group By Pamela Kavalam (Shiga-ken, 2007-09)

When I returned from Japan last summer, I found myself jobless and looking for things to do. My sister recommended joining a Toastmasters public speaking club, and I found the Nichibeï Toastmasters, a group that links Japan and the U.S. Its members recently answered questions for JET alums or anyone interested in learning more about this unique club.

What is Toastmasters?

Toastmasters International is a non-profit organization designed to help people develop their public speaking skills in a friendly but formal group setting. While its reputation grew because of interest from people in the business industry, with 76 clubs in New York City alone, the organization has evolved. Local clubs include Humorous Toastmasters, Pride Toastmasters, Greenspeakers and numerous corporate-based clubs such as the Ringers (Verizon) and Bullish Expressions—seemingly a reference to Wall Street.

How did Nichibeï Toastmasters get started?

Misako, a project manager at a large bank who has been a member since 2002, says, “The club was started in 1991 by a Japanese American who studied public speaking both in English and Japanese in San Francisco. She created a group for those who are interested in both languages and cultures to improve communication skills and foster friendship. We are going to celebrate the club’s 20th anniversary next January.” Misako is also the regional Toastmasters contest champion, which is no small feat for New York City!

How is Nichibeï different from other Toastmasters clubs?

Terry, an environmental consultant and member since 2006, explains, “Nichibeï is the only Toastmasters club on the East Coast using both Japanese and English. Because of its uniqueness, we have many different kinds of people who want to make a contribution to society. It is a really inspiring and fun experience to be in the club, and everyone is willing to help create bridges between the two cultures.”

What is a Toastmasters meeting like?

Meetings take place on the second

and fourth Tuesday of each month at the American Association of University Women headquarters—a really beautiful space. The first hour-long English session is divided into parts: an introduction by the Toastmaster, which includes a welcome of any guests; a word of the



Nichibeï Toastmaster members on Halloween. (Courtesy of their homepage)

day to be used throughout the session; a joke; and three impromptu speeches about a timely topic. Then we move into one or two prepared speeches, which vary in length from five to 10 minutes. Then each speech is evaluated in front of the group. Next, the timer lets us know who went over and under time; the “Etto Counter” tallies filler words for each speaker; a grammarian offers insight on both mistakes and successes; and the Toastmaster and general evaluator conclude the session. The Japanese session has the exact same procedure. The meeting is brought to a close with the business section, which deals with club matters such as upcoming speech contests, roles for the following week, social events, feedback from the guests, etc. After the meeting, a group goes out for dinner at a nearby restaurant.

What level of Japanese is necessary to be in the club?

To be a part of the English session, you don’t need any Japanese at all. Actually, no Japanese is allowed. In the Japanese session, you can serve as an observer or take part in smaller roles, like the timer or Etto Counter, which require minimal Japanese. As someone who studied Japanese informally for about two years while on JET, I use the second half to hone my listening skills, while making sure to use my elec-

tronic dictionary. If you are fluent or have intermediate or advanced level Japanese, this would be a great opportunity to strengthen your skills, through formal prepared speeches or brief, impromptu public speaking. Also, it’s a great opportunity to meet not only native speakers but other advanced Japanese learners.

What are the costs/requirements of joining the club?

To join Toastmasters there is a one-time \$20 initiation fee. This

and my palms tend to get sweaty [when I speak in public], but I try to obtain an effective level of confidence in speech by practice as well as trying to steal others’ techniques on how to make my speech more unique, attractive and believable. Another thing, which is also very important to me, is to maintain good Japanese. As you may notice, many Japanese who live abroad are prone to using ‘Janglish’ even in Japanese conversation. They can’t process or translate “correct” Japanese into Japanese conversation because they have used English so frequently. At Toastmasters, many people’s ears can pick up even a tiny mistake—this makes my sense of Japanese much more sharpened up ever than before.” However, this is not something to be afraid of—the atmosphere is congenial but it is no doubt a strong learning-centered environment.

How have you improved since being in Toastmasters?

Miki is a product designer who joined the club in 2008: “Nichibeï Toastmasters has helped me not only improve my English and Japanese speaking skills, but it has also helped me build confidence significantly! People understand what I say much more easily now, and I can communicate more effectively at work and at social occasions. There have been only benefits being a Nichibeï Toastmasters member.”

What are some challenges for the club?

I think the main issue we have is time. What I love about the club is how everyone is so accomplished in their fields and personal lives—we have multilingual people who work in TV production, organic farming, European exports and textile design who also love to travel and have families. However, this also means that people sometimes need to miss meetings because of work or other obligations. We have one member who is currently on a six-month backpacking trip around the world and another who is taking an intensive Japanese class for the next few months. This has been such a great opportunity to make friends while also improving my public speaking and Japanese skills. I’d really love to see some new members (especially fellow JET alums!) so we can keep our meetings going strong throughout the year.

For more info, visit Nichibeï Toastmasters online at <http://nichibeï.freetoasthost.us> or e-mail Pam at pamela.kavalam@nyu.edu.

What is the Nichibeï community like?

Teresa, who works in animal care, is a visitor hoping to join soon: “The people are welcoming and warm. I was surprised, because it’s hard to find places like this especially in New York, with these types of people and also a club that has Japanese and English in it. Plus, you can learn about the culture and language, and hopefully find language partners and friends too! *Sugoi desu!*”

What do you like best about being in the club?

Akira, who works in global product development at a major cosmetics company, joined Nichibeï in 2009. She says, “I still get nervous

THE FUNNY PAGE

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to see how JET alumni worldwide have benefitted their communities back home by promoting Japan and deepening internationalization.



JQ&A: The Heiz Rocks On By Hugh Prysten (Shimane-ken, 2005-08)

Firstly, thanks for your time! For our readers, would you mind telling us a bit about yourselves?

Yes! We are the Heiz! Let me introduce our members...

Shaku Keiji (guitar and vocals)
Watanabe Asako (bass and vocals)
Kimura Takashi (drums and vocals)



What's the story behind your band name?

As a group we really liked the word "Heiz," but there isn't any meaning behind it.

How long have you been playing together?

For two years.

What was the main reason you started playing together?

We all came from playing in different bands. We met five years ago and had a jam session. Then two years ago we decided to get together and make a band. We wanted to make "rock soul"...and that's how we started as the Heiz.

I know your band was on tour and did 45 dates! Well done! Can I assume that NYC was your favorite city?

New York is an amazing place. It has a similar skyline to Tokyo. You should definitely go check out Double Down Saloon NYC.

Any crazy stories you could share about your time on the road?

We got arrested at the Texas Border Control. It was the first time I had to put my hands in the air and then against a wall. It was a pretty crazy day and it was hella cold.

Who were your favorite bands that you played with?

The Vermin. We played with them in Las Vegas. They are really kind. They covered one of our tracks. We totally want to tour with them one day.

How did you find the crowds you played to compare with what you are used to in Japan? What are your Japanese fans like?

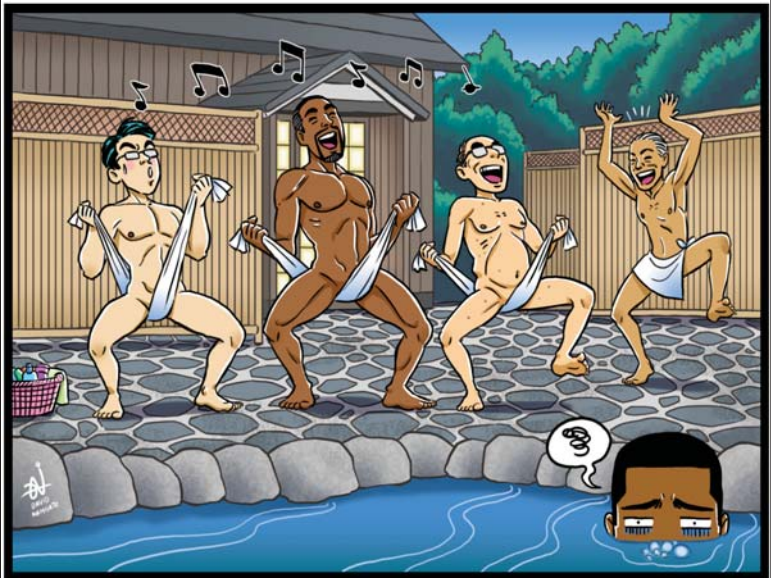
American fans are really great. They really listen to our music and when they are having a great time, they dance and sing with us. They bought our CDs and T-shirts and even bought us drinks! We love American fans! Japanese fans tend to be pretty shy and quiet.

Did you have any favorite restaurants that you ate at in NYC?

Double Down Saloon NYC, of course!

Life After the B.O.E.

BY DAVID NAMISATO (AOMORI-KEN CIR, 2002-04)



You were worried that your dad would be weirded out by your office at the onsen. Unfortunately, he fit right in.

For more *Life After the B.O.E.*, visit www.lifeaftertheboe.com.

How about a favorite neighborhood?

We didn't get to sightsee much but we all thought Manhattan was amazing.

Mets, Yankees or...Cubs?

Yankees!

Can you tell us about your album?

Our latest album is a self-titled album that has the influences of Chuck Berry, the Beatles and the Ramones. It's the "Rock Soul" sound we were talking about. We think American people will really like it.

Are you planning on touring the U.S. again?

We think we will be touring again this year!

How can our readers find out more about your band?

Check us out at www.myspace.com/theheiz.

Thanks for your time!

Thank you! Rock 'n' roll!!

Check out the Heiz's self-titled debut CD on Tokyo No Records at www.tokyonorecords.com.

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