

# hyogo times

March, 2008



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## On the cover...



Photo illustration by Jeff Morrice

**This month we've gone with a photo illustration for the cover page, by design editor Jeff Morrice. If you have a picture or piece of art that you want to share, send it in to the address below, and you could see your art on the front page. Chip Boles, I'm looking at you.**

**Remember — all photos and artwork must be sent in at the highest resolution possible!**

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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, photos, musings, poetry, prose and any ideas to contribute or improve the *Hyogo Times* for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community.

Submit by the 15th of each month to:  
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<http://hyogoajet.org>



# From The Editor...

Welcome to the March issue of the Hyogo Times. It was great to hear some of the positive comments about the February issue and even to see a discussion about one of the articles appear on the message board of the Yahoo Groups.

This month we have two articles on a similar topic which hopefully you will find just as interesting. We have Darcy Garrity outlining the reasons he is staying and then an interesting article from an anonymous JET telling us why they are breaking contract and leaving early. Whether or not you are staying, both are worth a read as they give good insights into how other people experience JET.

We also have a wonderful article from Daniel Carter about the Naked Man Festival which really captures the magic of the night. The only criticism about the article is that it doesn't mention singing 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' accompanied by an 80-year-old drunk but very merry Japanese man. For all those who missed on the festival I cannot recommend it highly enough. It is one of the best things you will ever do in Japan (just remember to stay well away from stone pillars and steps!)

Japan really does offer some truly incredible experiences. The festivals and celebrations here are some of the most magical and special in the whole world. But as I sit here in my little fishing village I realise that isn't why I love Japan. It is really everyday life that makes me want to stay. If I didn't have such nice co-workers or didn't live in a nice house or had to take the train for 1.5 hours to see my nearest JET (all things which could quite easily have happened) I wouldn't like Japan nearly as much.

However above all else what makes Japan wonderful is the kids I teach. It is impossible to feel depressed when you've got the softball team waving madly whenever they see you or the football team



ringing your doorbell on Saturday morning begging you to join them. I don't think the kids realise just how much they've influenced my life. Watching the 3rd years graduate, knowing I may never see them again, I felt privileged to have known them. They'll probably forget me soon enough but I won't forget them. They are why I love Japan. So this issue of the Hyogo Times is dedicated to all my 3rd years and to all your 3rd years. I hope that in some, even small, way we have helped them.

And on that note I'll end this editorial. Happy reading!

P.S: If you would like to respond to any article please do. We'd love to read what you have to say and maybe even publish your response the next month. Write to us at [submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com](mailto:submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com).

—Kevin

# And From The PR...

Happy March, Hyogoites! I see the light at the end of the dark tunnel we call winter, and I hope you are as happy as I am!

Soon we will be out of this cold, depressing season and will be surrounded by warmth, flower blossoms, beaches and sunshine. Celebrate! Even if that season will soon be followed by humidity, rain, bugs, and clothes soaked with

sweat.

For me at least, anything beats losing the feeling in your fingers and toes inside your own house!

At this time of the year, along with the changing of seasons, is the annual changing of the guard of the Hyogo AJET Committee. The time has arrived for a new group of fresh faces to bring together the large group of Hyogo JETs as best as they can.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank everyone in the last committee, both those who were permanently on board and those who helped out at any point during the year.

I have really enjoyed working with everybody during my time as PR. This last year has been a great year which has seen the organization of many great events, fundraising that brought in a good amount of money for various charities, and the Hyogo Times' survival after nearly being stamped out.

There are many things we could have done better, but everyone pulled through and did a great job, especially considering everything is done on a volunteer basis on top of a full-time teaching job. Thanks again for your hard work!

If anyone has any recommendations, comments, or criticisms of Hyogo AJET in the past year, your opinion is definitely welcome! Please let us know so we can help the next committee make AJET even better!

Until next time, take care of yourself (and each other!) See you at Hanami!!

—Brandon





## Love and Relationships:

# Romantic time in a K-Car

By MacKenzie Roebuck-Walsh

"Never have I ever made romantic time in a K-car."

It is Friday night and the party is just getting started. Everyone's in the mood to drink and looking for an excuse to get their buzz on fast. What better game to play than "Never have I ever?" We can all get to know each other, learning embarrassing and dirty stories and hope we get the chance — just once — to be the only one drinking. In the farmlands of America you are a sex novice until you can drink to having sex on a tractor, but what holds the trophy in Japan? The K-car apparently!

K-cars present several logistical challenges but none that can't be easily solved.

One: you may not own a car nor know any one that does. Solution? Two words — Test drive.

Two: parking spaces. Living in such a compact country, private spots can be hard to come by. Solution? Wait until it is dark and then anywhere is ok!

Three: where do you find room for four legs, four arms and two heads on one side of a K-car? Solution? Google Kamasutra, get yourself into a yoga class and all your problems will be solved.

Already made romantic time in the



Editor's note: Do not do a Google image search for "back seat car" while at work, especially if you have the family filter off. Sorry kyoto-sensei!

K-car? Or wondering where else you might spice-up your love life without taking several yoga classes to prepare yourself? Well grab a mini-skirt, easy access boxers and your sense of adventure and try these seven hot spots.

## Ferris Wheel

Why not go up and down as you turn round and round? Most major cities in Japan play host to one of Mr. Ferris' great inventions, with rides taking approximately five to 10 minutes and costing under 1,000 yen. So jump on board and enjoy yourself.

## Janitor's Closet

This classical favorite is best with the lights left off. Watch out for mops and falling toilet paper. And lock the door!!! As much as our students think they want to know the sizes of our more private parts we don't need to cause any life long trauma.

## Elevator

Conveniently there is a nice little stop button in every elevator. Push it and live it up as you are going down.

## Museum

Planetarium anyone? In these cold days of winter it would be a little frigid to drop your drawers under the starry sky. However in the planetarium you can enjoy the romance of a clear night, in a nice heated building. Just don't forget to play the quiet game!

## Gondola

Give quickie a whole new meaning and warm each other up! Night skiing might be the best time to try this bit - but props to you if you can make it happen on a leisurely Sunday afternoon.

## Airplane

Currently, it is a felony to make whoopee in an airplane. However with two private seats by a window and a nice blue blanket tent you can pitch your own tent in no time.

## Phone booth

Cell phones are quickly rendering good ole fashioned booths obsolete so grab 50 cents to call your best friend and brag after the sex is in the bag.

Get out of your bed and into the world — love is free so live it up! (Just don't forget to wrap it up as well!). Next month: HPV — why safe sex isn't just about making sure you don't get pregnant.



# These aren't yo mama's paper dolls

By Rupa Patel

Japan is the epitome of all things bright and cute, and its elegantly and beautifully handcrafted dolls are emblematic of this.

*Hinamatsuri*, Doll Festival (also known as *Momo no sekku*), is held on March 3. On this day Japanese families pray for girls to live a happy and prosperous life.

The tradition dates back to the *Heian-jidai*, Heian Period, which lasted from 794 to 1185. People from this period believed that dolls possessed power and held bad spirits inside them, so they began the practice of *hina-nagashi*.

This involves setting *hina* dolls made of straw on a boat and sending them down a river, supposedly taking their bad fortunes with them. On March 3 many families also display *hina-ningyo*, (a special type of doll made for the *Hinamatsuri*) and offer the doll peach blossom.

Recently, I was lucky enough to book myself into a ordinarily fully booked doll-making lesson in Seki, Gifu Prefecture, with a lady named Chisako. When I got to her house, I was amazed at all the wonderful *washi* paper



dolls she had made over the years. The dolls she makes are based on Japanese history or *Kabuki* and are made in order to remember how important home-grown culture is. I was feeling somewhat ambitious and decided to make the advanced doll — *Machi-musume* and *Adasugata*.

It started off looking like a relaxing day with the cutting of templates. Then came the fiddly bits — wrapping the *washi* paper around the templates, carefully gluing bits and pieces together,

making sure not to use too much glue and making sure everything is being folded in the correct order!

As the day progressed it became clearer than ever that correctness, accuracy and attention to detail are what good doll makers need. Thankfully Chisako was very patient and helpful!

Completing the dolls was a very satisfying accomplishment. The smiles in the photos are definitely expressing the word used by my students after a test —

*dekitta!* Overall the doll-making was a wonderful experience and it gave me a great souvenir gift too. It also makes you appreciate all the cute things around us here and realize just how much time and effort goes into them.

For more information check out: [washingtonyou.spaces.live.com](http://washingtonyou.spaces.live.com).

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# Gaijin Ryori Time

## The monthly recipe for bring happy life!

### Roasted Bell Peppers Bruschetta By Emerald Huang

I am passionate about food. It's not unusual for my friends to catch me taking notes as I slowly chew all the weird things from a Japanese bento box, attempting to recognize the ingredients used. There isn't a day that goes by without me thinking about how to indulge my taste buds.

Since my childhood, I have always loved to eat and try new foods. Going to the supermarket or the traditional market with my mother has always been one of the most pleasant things to do. However, when friends come to the market, it is quite annoying for them as I spend so much time reading every label, wondering how I can create my next dish with new ingredients.

After working in the newspaper/magazine industry for many years, my mother became a gourmet food critic/writer, and has since published eight books about the culture and art of international cuisine and wine.

When I was a little girl I remember that during our holidays, she was always presented with expensive food, rare wines or 'omiyage' from well-known chefs. I



never realized how much influence her profession had on my life, or how obsessed I was with cooking until I moved to Japan.

About ten years ago, my mother introduced me to my first *Kaiseki Ryori* (Japanese haute cuisine). It opened my eyes to the artistic world of Asian cuisine and the intimate relationship between edible materials and the hands of a chef.

I have to admit that my initial intention of coming to Japan as a JET was more to explore and experience Japanese cuisine rather than to teach English!

Enough said about my passion for food...here I have something that is easy to prepare and great for hosting little wine parties! Most of the ingredients can be found in your local supermarket.

The Kita area of Kobe (near Nishimura Coffee) has really good shops that stock dried/canned foods as well as reasonably priced cheese blocks. Try to use the bell peppers imported from Korea (it will say so on the label) instead of the ones grown in Japan.

For some weird reason, the Japanese-grown bell pepper is so tiny that for a moment I thought it was oversized chili.

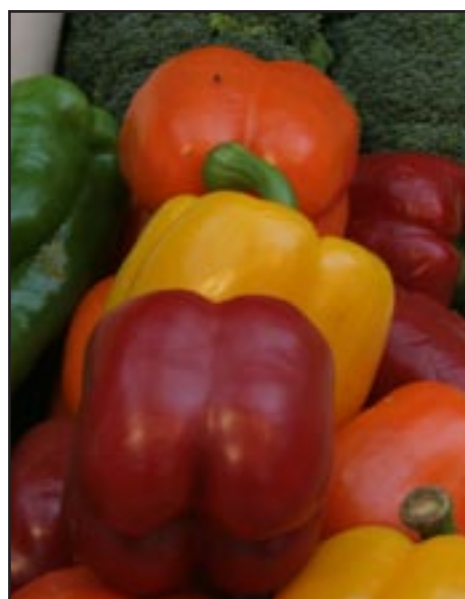
### Roasted Bell Peppers Bruschetta

#### Ingredients:

- 1 baguette or some sour dough bread
- 3 large bell peppers (red/yellow/orange)
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp of finely chopped basil
- 3 tbsp of freshly grated pecorino cheese
- 2 tbsp of roasted pine nuts or chopped walnuts
- Salt
- Black pepper

#### To prepare:

- Cut the bread into 1.5cm slices
- Roast the bell peppers directly on a fire until the skin starts bubbling and turns black.
- After removing them from the fire, put the peppers in a plastic bag and seal it.
- When the peppers have cooled, remove the seeds and burnt skin, and then chop them into thin strips.
- Mix the roasted pepper strips with the rest of the ingredients.
- Put the mixture on the slices of baguette and bake in a toaster oven (or under the grill) for 1-2 minutes or until the cheese melts.



# Stealth Gaijin

## Life as an ASIAN JET

Hello to all you lovely Hyogo JETs! Our new editor, Shannon-san, has asked me so nicely for a monthly contribution to this publication that I just had to oblige. (I immediately regretted that decision. Only joking, Shannon-san!)

As only a Stealth Gaijin can do, I will be writing about my life as an Asian JET. Well, I'll try anyway. Any other "stealth gaijins" (as well as non-stealth gaijins!) are welcome to comment on what I write because, as we all know "Every situation is different." (How many times has that been rammed down our throats?)

On to more important matters — I hope this article finds you warm, *genki*, and most importantly, sane. I myself am quite warm in my abode (though my electric/heating bills are suffering), but unfortunately I have a cold right now.

I have just come back from the Yuki Matsuri in Sapporo, Hokkaido, where I had an amazing time. Unfortunately, that's where I caught this cold. Luckily, I now know how to stealth gaijin-smash my way through this problem. Last time I had a cold, it was in October. I didn't have any of my normal drugs from home and I had no idea what kinds of cold medicine were available here.

After about two weeks of being sick of *being* sick, I finally went to my local pharmacy to get some cold medicine. At the time, my Japanese reading skills were quite low, but I was decent with kanji (one of the benefits of being a stealth gaijin!) The pharmacy choices — wow! I don't know if I was astounded by the kinds of medicine they have here or that I was horrified by the lack of "normal" choices. It's nice to know that you can get a "cure" for other strange ailments I may encounter in my time here, but really disappointing when you can't find something as simple as acetaminophen for a headache.



If you encounter a Stealth Gaijin, the best defence is to speak Japanese very rapidly.

I went through the shelves and found the cold medicines through my *stealth* use of kanji, but then I was stuck trying to figure out what symptoms each one treated. I asked the man at the counter for some help and he did try his best to help me, but he kept asking me questions very quickly in Japanese even though I clearly didn't speak Japanese very well. This brings me to the point of this article.

In the western, English-speaking world, when someone doesn't understand you, you (generally) tend to speak louder and slower to that person. We think it helps, but it doesn't. Only the wild gesticulating helps, and that's still no guarantee. In Japan, the rules are flipped. When a Japanese person realizes you can't understand them, they start to speak quicker and mumble "dousho kana" a lot.

Most Japanese strangers I've encountered get this doe-eyed expression on their face, followed by confusion, when they hear English coming out of my mouth. Sometimes they think I do it to impress them, but really, I just don't understand them! It would be much more

impressive if I could speak to them in their language, but how can I relay that message to them? It's also slightly irritating when they think I'm being snooty by not speaking Japanese (since I look Asian and all). Generally they all realize I'm not joking after about five minutes of me "*wakarimasen*"-ing everything they say.

After about 10 minutes of getting nowhere with the (by this point, very patient) man at the counter, I gave up and called a Japanese friend. I told them the problem and then gave the man the phone whereupon my friend told the man what I needed. After all that fuss, he picked up a bottle of pills that were right in front of me and said that they would do fine. I almost felt slightly cheated in my quest for cold medicine because I had just spent 15 minutes staring at the same bottles of pills wondering what they were. At least now if I need to go back, the guy won't think I'm entirely stupid... or will he?

I'm not entirely sure that was gaijin-smashing or stealthy in any way, but at least I got my cold medicine. Now, to take some of those pills and get over this last bit of a cold!



# English Sensei Spirit

## Our monthly guide to better lesson planning

By **Tori Lowe**

As you should all know, the Japanese school year starts in April. If you have been feeling a bit discouraged in your work-life then start preparing now for the turning of a corner, the dawn of a new day... the spring after a long winter, if you will.

This is the perfect opportunity for you to make changes in the classroom — to try new things or to implement new ideas. By now, you should have an idea of what works for you in the classroom and what doesn't, who you work well with and who you want to punch in the face, which classes like to do what etc.

I remember that by February of my first year as a JET my classes had taken on a whole routine that I was not happy with. I was frustrated in class, annoyed that all of my ideas had pretty much been rejected, and just generally feeling a bit disillusioned about my job. I don't know how many of you can relate to this, but I was told that my feeling was normal. Thankfully I was able to overcome my initial frustrations and I hope that my solution might work for some of you out there!

(Of course, I have no idea about your individual situations; you might have already tried this... I could just be pointing out the obvious... you might want to punch me in the face...)

Anyway, what really worked for me was writing down exactly what was wrong with my work day. Mainly I did this in bitchy emails to my friends back home, but the important thing was pin-pointing exactly where — and why — I was getting upset and frustrated. So if you have been having any troubles at work, the first step to overcoming these problems is to clearly list what they are. Once you have your list, you can begin to come up with a plan of attack.

Some problems, such as just not liking your halitosis-affected bigoted co-worker, really have no easy solution — except maybe begging the person in charge of class schedules not to give them classes with you. You might find that they don't like you either, and are also pressing for an ALT-less classroom. Who you are going to take classes with is really a bit of a lottery. But HOW you do classes you can really affect.

If you have a clear idea of how you want your classes to work, you have to make sure that all of your co-workers have a clear idea of what your ideas are. If you have some ideas, type up a document clearly stating your ideas, why you think they would work and how you would like to implement them. This will be your "Proposal." Don't just give this document to



Beware the stubborn JTE.

the head of the department — you want every single English teacher in your school to have a copy. More importantly, you want them all to read and understand it. So keep it simple.

When I wrote my proposal, I made it look as professional as possible with a creative use of the variety of bullet points (I really liked the one that looks like a tick). Basically, each point I wrote in "Issue → Reason for issue → My solution → Implementation of solution → Possible outcomes" order. For example: Students don't listen to me → Waiting for JTE translation → No translation in class → Lessons in "classroom English" and basic instructions to begin the semester; lower workloads in the first classes so students can adjust to "only English" classes → Students improve spoken English and listening. My proposal went into a little more detail, of course!

Whatever you do, do NOT personally attack another co-worker!!! It is rude and uncalled for to do that. Plus, no

one will take the rest of your proposal seriously. It's called *professionalism*, I'm told.

At the bottom of my proposal, I suggested that we discuss the new semester of Oral Communication lessons at the next department meeting. This assured me an invite to the department meeting — a meeting I had never been invited to before. Prior to the meeting, I also gave the teachers examples of my first three lesson plans for the new semester — pretty much written as scripts — highlighting how my changes could work.

I think it is important to include all of your English-staff co-workers in your proposal for three reasons. The first is that you don't know who you will be working with after April, so it's best to keep everyone in the loop. Secondly any comments — negative or positive — can help you refine and improve your ideas. And finally, even someone that generally pretends that you are not there will feel compelled to read your proposal if everyone else is reading it.

I think after seeing the effort I put into the proposal, my co-workers were more willing to let me run with my ideas. It was that or the fact that no one else really cared as much as me. Either way, when the new school year started, I was able to try all of my ideas with minimal resistance. Yatta!

So, if you want to make any changes to your classes, now is the time to start lobbying your teachers. Get yourself

organized and launch your attack before spring break- you won't regret trying!

It worked for me!

As a PS, while I'm in my "so full of great ideas" mode, I will tell you about a couple of things that I recommend preparing for the new first-year students.

I have 14 classes spread among five different JTEs and they are all meant to do the same lesson. It is often hard to remember which classes have done which lesson plan! At the beginning of the year I recommend making a chart with the class numbers and teachers names along the top, and lesson plan numbers running down the side. Then at the end of each class, tick the relevant box. That way, you don't have to rely on the other teachers telling you what lessons you've taught to which class.

Also, get your JTEs to make a seating plan (in romaji if you can't read Japanese) for you for every class you attend (or get them to give you the class lists so that you can make your own seating plans). That way you can call on the students by their names.

I take a seating plan to every class, and write any notes on it for the next class (if you didn't finish the lesson plan, if you set impromptu homework, if the students were particularly annoying, etc). You might want to make a couple of copies of the seating plans before you do that, though!

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# SECOND CHANCE

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# Notes from the Underground

## Inside the Kansai Local Music Scene

By Ryan Trio

It's now my third year in Japan but I must admit that by the end of my first year I'd had my fill of gorgeous temples, onsens, coloured leaves and cherry blossoms and the other traditional aspects of Japan. Not to say they're not nice. They are. It's just that they don't really kick my ass. Not like boozing the night away in a smoky, frenetic "livehouse" does. Thus, since the end of that first year I've felt it is time to do it my way.

So here I'd like to introduce the Kobe/Osaka live music scene and offer some friendly recommendations, in particular to those who may be curious about Japanese music or those wondering if it's any good. Is it any good? In a word, YES!

WARNING: Permanent hearing loss may occur....

### Venues

The Kansai local music scene is very diverse. Japanese are pretty crazy about music and you can be sure there's a following for almost any kind of music you can think of. I've seen bands of nearly every genre imaginable and then some. Accordingly, many of the venues I've been to cater for a wide variety of musical styles



and will often mix different style bands on the same bill. This can be good because it sometimes exposes you to music you normally wouldn't go to see.

In Japan I also like the way there are usually no bouncers or security to be seen, which I suppose is owing to small size of most venues. I can't help smiling to myself when I see some lead singer poised to jump into the seething crowd after scaling a two meter speaker stack followed by scaffolding tangled with electrical wires and no one's doing a damn thing to stop them. This gives the show a real underground, cozy

feel which is particularly evident at long established venues such as "**Fandango**" in Osaka, which has been in operation since 1987. Other good places in Osaka include "**Pipe69**" in America Mura and "**Hard Rain**" in Umeda.

For those in and around Kobe, I recommend "**Helluva Lounge**" or the nearby and albeit more mainstream live house, "**Varit**". Also, walking east along the train line from Sannomiya station will bring you to "**Starclub**", a cozy place tucked under the train tracks.

### Bands

The following are those that have really stood out to me either music-wise, performance-wise or both. In any case, well worth a look.

If you're in the mood for heavy distortion, squealing feedback and all out, balls-to-the-walls rocking, be sure to check out "**Electric Eel Shock**" and the legendary "**Guitar Wolf**" - both of which have been together for some time and done significant damage overseas.



Another rockin' band I've recently been introduced to are called, "**Meat Eaters**". They're sort of like Japan's answer to "Dinosaur Jr".

For a good, fun time you can't go past Osaka's own, all-girl, cute-sy punk rock 3-piece, "**Shonen Knife**" (also of significant international renown after touring with Nirvana in late '91). For odd-ball, theatrical punk, check out ザ50回転ズ ("**The 50 Kaitens**") who, admittedly, I enjoyed a little more visually than musically. Think of a cross between the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" and the "Ramones".

Psychedelic/stoner rock, experimental rock and weird, ambient style stuff have a strong following here in Japan. In this vein, I've enjoyed "**Land**", "**Squizmen**", "**Squimaoto**" and "**Acid Mothers Temple**". There are also some really good Alternative rock bands here like "**Hunting Pigeons**" whose songs are mega-catchy and quite reminiscent of "The Pixies". "**She Border Picture**" is another good call as is the all girl 3-piece "**Mass of the Fermenting Dregs**". (Gotta love those names!)

On a side note, I've noticed that the local scene here is not the male-dominated affair it is back home. More than half the bands I'm mentioning here are either all-girl bands or have female members. It's nice ;)

For a quirky new-wave stuff there's "**Blond New Half**" and "**Ultra Jr**". I'm constantly impressed by

"**Midori**" whose frantic jazz-punk music coupled with psychotic stage-diving, sailor or uniform-clad lead singer is always a spectacle to behold.

Hard to categorize (usually a good thing) but nonetheless awesome are "**Umlaut**", "**Yoltz in the sky**" and "**Nayuta**" who

have a very unique sound incorporating some unusual time signatures. "**8otto**" are a band I've only seen once but really enjoyed. They have an ultra groovy, bass-driven sound and are becoming quite well known these days.

Then there's "**zOoOoOm**". See this band by all means! They are dual-drummer 3-piece band with pounding, relentless tribal rhythms and a kind of ethereal, chanting, female vocal over the top. Very in-



teresting!

"**Extacy & My Friends**" is probably my all time favourite band - I can't explain their sound (does 'no-wave' mean anything to anyone??) Anyway, just see them!

So! I urge all people lucky enough to be situated near one of the big cities to take advantage of

it and check out the excellent live music they have to offer. Chances are you'll be the only gaijin in the place but not to worry! A few beers and some good music do wonders to smooth out any inhibitions. My Japanese ability is at best questionable but I'd say I've managed to cross a few cultural barriers, meet some interesting people and have a hell of a good time. And hey, isn't that what JET's all about?

Rock on!

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# Rage Against the Machine

By **Brandon Kramer**

On a cold, snowy winter day when you are sitting under your kotatsu, have you ever wondered what it would be like to bring an old love back into your life for just one night of pure, consequence-free excitement? I had this chance, and I will never forget the passion that blossomed between us on that night in February. It was not unlike hanami — short and beautiful. Here I will tell all about that wonderful night; a night with Rage Against the Machine.

It wasn't long after I found out that Rage was coming that I had tickets in hand. This was the chance of a lifetime and I wasn't going to miss it. Rage Against the Machine back together! I thought this day would never come, especially not in Japan!

The lead up to the concert was beer-filled (and wonderful!). The air outside was clean and crisp and the excitement easily felt as we approached the Osaka-jo Hall. It had been a long time since I'd seen so many rock fans in one place — it felt like being home once again. Finding our seats we braced for what we knew was going to be an intense experience.

The band started a little bit late, unusual in Japan, but no one cared. They opened with *Testify*, setting the tone for the rest of the night. They progressed through their more popular songs, with the crowd going crazy at each one (I don't think anyone in the audience had their full voice the next day!). They did give a pretty unique version

of *Sleep Now in the Fire*, with a drum solo incorporated in the middle, and then ended on a high note with an amazing 15-minute version of *Freedom* from their first record. It left everyone wishing they would play for another hour.

The main thought floating in my head during the show was how deep and full the whole experience was. I have realized that Rage Against the Machine is definitely a band that must be seen live in order to be truly appreciated. There is no way I would pass up an opportunity to see this band again, and they are definitely on my list of Top 5 live bands. All of you out there lucky enough to see them with me no doubt understand. Everyone who missed out, well, you had better just hope that this is more than just a one-time reunion tour.



# Kansai Concerts

## April Listings

4TH

Punkspring '08 Day 1 — feat. Me First and the Gimme Gimmes, Bowling for Soup, Angels & Airwaves and Plain White T's  
7,500 yen, doors @ 3 p.m. @ ZEPP Osaka

5TH

Punkspring '08 Day 2 — feat. Rancid, Flogging Molly, Pennywise, Gallows and the Buzzcocks  
7,500 yen, doors @ 2 p.m. @ ZEPP Osaka

8TH

Modest Mouse  
6,300 yen, doors @ 6 p.m.  
Club Quattro, Osaka

12+13TH

Jack Johnson w/guests  
8,000 yen, open @ 2 p.m.  
Akarenga Park, Nakaku, Yokohama

15+16TH

Foo Fighters  
8,000 yen, doors @ 6 p.m.  
Both Shows @ ZEPP Osaka

20TH

Oki Dub Ainu Band  
3,500 yen (adv. w/ 1 drink)  
doors at 6 p.m.  
Club Quattro, Osaka

23RD

Hawaiian6  
2,500 yen, doors @ 6 p.m.  
Big Cat, Osaka

23RD

James Blunt  
7,500 yen, doors @ 6:30 p.m.  
Koseinenkin Kaikan, Osaka

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# Getting to know some random JETs

❖ **Name:** Rupa Patel

❖ **Please call me:** Roops.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Mihara Senior High School, Minami Awajishi.

❖ **How we know you:** By reputation??? Errr this survey I guess.

❖ **Birthday:** 21/11/1984

❖ **Born and raised:** Leicester, England.

❖ **Family:** Parents, one lovely younger sister.

❖ **University and Degree:** University of Manchester, BA Honours in French and Italian. Still contemplating doing a Masters in Translation – anything to avoid the real world!.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** First ever job was an assistant in a photography studio for six months, sales assistant for two years, translator in a call centre in Lyon, France, Assistant English teacher in Milan, Italy and now an ALT in Japan. My ultimate ambition is to present Blue Peter, be a newsreader or editor for Vogue.

❖ **Travels:** Scotland, Wales, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Monaco, Malta, Japan, Thailand (this Christmas), Korea (the motherland of Taekwon-do) in 2008....to be continued. My dream is to go to India.

❖ **Shumi wa nan desuka:** Sport - back home I go to the gym four times a week and do Taekwon-do two or three times a week. Art - I have started drawing again in Japan. At school I do kendo and Japanese calligraphy. Shopping and travelling! I love studying languages, although the Nihongo is not going all that well. I also think biking in all types of weather could be considered a shumi.

❖ **Favorites:**

**Food:** Indian curry with basmati rice oh yeah! I also love Italian, Mexican and Spanish and French food — ba-

sically anything tasty and vegetarian.

Here it is kappa maki, my students take the Mickey out of me for being a veggie.

**Sports:** Taekwon-do, kendo, running, tennis, football.

**Music:** Rolling Stones, Kinks, Kasabian, Radiohead, the Killers, Stone Roses, Smiths, Coldplay, Portishead, Razorlight, Faithless, Take That.

**Shop:** Mango, Zara, H&M, Primark.

**TV Show:** Sex and the City, Friends, Peep Show, Office, Quantum Leap.

**Movie:** Pulp Fiction, the Goonies, Back to the Future, Indiana Jones, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Amelie, La Dolce Vita, Auberge Espagnol.

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Getting my degree and surviving 2 months in my old flat in Japan!

❖ **Best life experience:** Living in Italy and right now in Japan.

❖ **Motto to live by:** Live each day as if it's your last!

❖ **I remember when...** I first arrived on Awaji Island and when I got attacked by the hairy jumping spider in the shower!

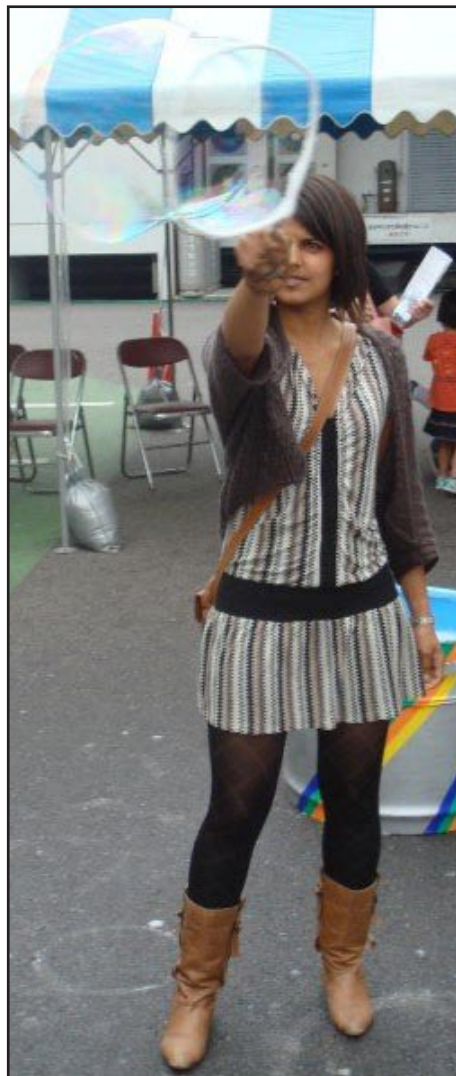
❖ **What are you drinking?** Coffee (milk

and no sugar).

❖ **Best thing about JET so far?** All the amazing friends I have made, the beautiful places and the 100 yen store.

❖ **Why should we elect you King of the World?** I don't think that would be wise, I wouldn't like all that responsibility.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student?**



I was writing the list of winners on the board and one of the teams were called a hard c\*\*\*, which I thought was a Japanese name and not a rude word. My JTE, (who is a male) had to explain it to me in the middle of the class. I was embarrassed but I was laughing inside.

❖ **My biography will be called:** Hold on guys, I'm too young to be thinking about that just yet!

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Is to play a quick game to relax the students. This is best at the beginning of the class.

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...**

Break the silence by saying something in French or Italian. The kids go mental.

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Defo would have to be YES! Stickers and cute things motivate the kids and I like seeing their smiles when they win a prize. Though I am disturbed by some of my 3rd year male students asking for Hello Kitty stamps.

❖ **Name:** Paul Chase

❖ **Please call me:** Paul

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Yabu-shi, Tajima. I go to four schools: Oya and Sekinomiya Elementary and Junior High Schools.

❖ **How we know you:** I doubt you do

❖ **Birthday:** 1/31/84.

❖ **Born and raised:** Concord, Massachusetts, (20 miles outside of Boston) USA.

❖ **Family:** Mother Barbara, father David, and older brother Dan.

❖ **University and Degree:** Tufts University, BA Psychology, Masters in Teaching.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** This is my first job outside of summer/part time jobs. I was a paperboy as a kid and did construction work for a summer. I thought I was on my way to being a psychologist and did two clinical psychology internships and one research psychology internship during my senior year of undergrad. I also taught a year of psychology and history at a Boston area high school.

❖ **Travels:** I studied abroad in Spain for six months. I loved it so much, which is why I wanted to live abroad again. Too



bad they don't speak Spanish here... my Japanese is awful. I've also had a couple family trips to Europe. I have visited the old country (Ireland), Scotland, England, and had a 15 day trip to Paris, Rome and Greece. I've also been to most of the U.S.

❖ **Shumi wa nan desuka:** Camping, watching movies over and over again, occasionally getting addicted to a video game, trying new sports.

❖ **Favorites:**

**Food:** Lasagna, nachos, steak.

**Sports:** American football, golf.

**Music:** 90's rock, since that's what I grew up on.

**Shop:** I guess Banana Republic for nice stuff, Eastern Mountain Sports for outdoor gear.

**TV Show:** Simpsons, as anyone who has spoken to me can vouch for. **Movie:** Shawshank Redemption (I spoiled the ending for my dad, and now he refuses to watch it...grr)

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** Hmm, well I'm proud to be an Eagle Scout, but I was also happy to learn that I'd done the two things people wanted to do in Fight Club — paint a self-portrait, and build a house. Haven't nuked any credit card companies yet.

❖ **Best life experience:** Hiking in the Sierra Nevada range, New Mexico. Not shaving for those two weeks was also key.

❖ **Motto to live by:** "Look into the storm and shout, 'Do your worst, for I will do mine.'" — Dumas

❖ **I remember when...** I arrived in my little town in Japan, and had to eat a nasty meal by myself in a hotel restaurant. That day I had no car, no clue, and no friends in Japan. I was thinking, oh F\*\*K, this is going to suck. I've never been so happy to be proven wrong.

❖ **What are you drinking?** I think drinks that don't have an effect on you are a waste of time. I usually drink coffee. On

the weekends, I'm on the lookout for Spanish red wine, Rioja if I can find it.

❖ **Best thing about JET so far?** People are considerate of each other. Most places in the world are cynical about human nature. In Japan, people expect more of themselves, and each other.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** You shouldn't. I can't imagine having to choose something that would anger 49% of the population, just to please 51%. Having 3 billion people hate me is not my idea of a dream job!

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** Skydive. Then eat a lot of goat cheese nachos and eat at Morton's steakhouse. If I could get on to the space shuttle, that would be on my list too. Maybe a helicopter ride around the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone? I haven't been to any of those places yet.

❖ **Interesting Fact:** I can't decide if I'm right-handed or left-handed. I bat righty in baseball, but was a lefty pitcher. I bowl lefty, but play tennis righty. I eat with my fork in my left hand but my chopsticks in my right. That last one actually works out well in Japan — I just do both at the same time.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** I always feel like someone should be talking in class, but I have to remind myself that a lot of information requires a moment to take in. Bombarding students with too much information is not the best way to teach.

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** Do something goofy. I'll always remember at the marine world in Kinoshita when one of my fellow ALTs saw an actual clown playing with the dolphins. "Hey look, that's us in class!" he said. I laughed, but it is true.

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Of course. I have a smiley face stamp that I've been using all year, and I can see that the students love getting their homework stamped, and feel sad when they get passed over. Stamps and stickers are really all you need.



# Better Know a Ken: Tottori

By Erica Callery

Part 3 in our ongoing 47-part series highlighting the lives of JETs living in other prefectures. Yes, we blatantly stole the idea from Stephen Colbert's 434-part *Better Know a District*. If you know someone living in another ken, have them send in their story and pics to submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com.

Welcome to the REAL Inaka!

Home to the infamous 20th Century pear, Tottori prefecture is one of the least well-known & accessible prefectures in Japan. It holds the dubious mantle of being the least populated prefecture in Japan (and you thought Hokkaido JETs had it bad!) as well as being famous for a desert (well sprawling sand dunes to be precise) and the general derision of more cosmopolitan Japanese citizens.

As a Tottori JET, revealing your home town to Japanese from outside the prefecture, results in guffaws, looks of bewilderment and the exclamation of 'but there is nothing to stimulate you there!' Despite all this I am here to prove that Tottori really is a hidden gem and but a hop, skip and jump away for you Hyogo-jin.

Tottori, like Hyogo is a land of mountains and sea and both are easily accessible within the prefecture. In fact, you can combine



both, with either a spot of sandboarding at the vast Tottori sand dunes (10 minute car or bus ride from Tottori-shi) or snowboarding on Mt. Daisen (a short train ride from Yonago) where you can enjoy fantastic views of the sea and beach whilst hitting the slopes.

After such exertions a spot of relaxation is called for in the form of onsen. Tottori prefecture is home to countless onsen, the most famous being in Misasa, a

town close to Kurayoshi in central Tottori. The waters at this pretty onsen town, nestled in the mountains, purport to have cancer beating properties, due to their high radium levels. The free, open-air onsen situated in the river, just below the main bridge, where men and women can bathe together without the usual obligatory bathing suits, brings a whole new meaning to internationalization. Also for the braver amongst you, Misasa is home to Mt. Mitoku-San, a UNESCO heritage site and purportedly the most dangerous temple in Japan. Don't be put off though, the climb up to the little mountain retreat is really not too strenuous and is well worth it for the beautiful views of the valley and the temple itself.

Close to Misasa is Kurayoshi



which is home to a pretty old town and a comprehensive pear museum, which tells you everything you could ever want to know about Tottori's infamous pear farming. Further West is Mount Daisen which is not quite Fuji-san but does make for a nice Spring or Autumn hike and

skiing or snowboarding in Winter.

In Summer things hot up in Tottori. We cool off from a sweaty day in the teacher's room with a dip in the clear, clean Sea of Japan and relax on the unspoilt beaches of Uradome, Higashiyama and Kozomi, all very close

to Tottori-shi. In July Tottori's most famous annual event amongst the gaijin community takes place: No, not the Shan-Shan umbrella matsuri but the San-in Beach Party. The three days of music, fun and frolics on a picturesque beach just outside Tottori-shi, hosts big name DJs from Tokyo, Osaka and overseas and attracts Japanese and foreign visitors from across Japan. Its reputation is legendary and as you lucky Hyogoites live just around the corner you have no excuse not to join the fun.

Other slightly less sporty highlights of the prefecture include, shopping at the newly expanded Kita-Jusco just outside Tottori-shi and nights out in Tottori-shi and Yonago. Tottori JETs and the people here have all the charm of inaka dwellers and are always overjoyed to see new, foreign faces, so please come and grace our lovely prefecture with your presence!





# Travel Japan

## The villa treasures of Okayama-ken

By Jeff Weese

Okayama is well known for Momotarū-san (the little peach boy), Korakuen (apparently one of the top three gardens in Japan) and even a few naked running men (well, up to 10,000 naked running men at the Hadaka Matsuri), but it has other treasures.

By heading out of the hustle and bustle of the city-center and into the rice fields of the countryside, you will experience the peacefulness and tranquility of rural life. Often this is easier said than done due to transportation and accommodation, but Okayama Prefecture does have something special for us foreigners.

Thus the Okayama International Villas cordially invite you to take a few days to rest and relax amongst the beauty of Okayama's countryside. The Okayama International Villa Group was formed in 1988 to offer foreigners an opportunity to "get away from it all" and experience rural lifestyle in Okayama in five different,



uniquely designed villas spread out across the prefecture.

They wanted to share this with



as many people as possible, so they have made the cost extremely affordable with rates as low as 2,000 yen per person, per night! All of the villas can accommodate 10 people (with the exception of Hattoji, where

you can squeeze 13) in a mix of western- and Japanese-style rooms. The five villas are Hattoji, Fukiya, Takebe,



Ushimado and Shiraishi Island, and I'll explain a bit about each below.

### Hattoji

Hattoji was built over 120 years ago as a kayabuki thatched-roof farmhouse. It is set among the majestic mountains where Sangaku Buddhism (mountain Buddhism) took hold more than 1,200 years ago!

While Hattoji has a modern kitchen and bathroom, it still holds its rustic charm with a goemonburo (traditional Japanese bath) and an irori (traditional Japanese fireplace) in the center of the room. The irori is perfect for gathering around at the end of a tiring day hiking in the surrounding mountains.

### Fukiya

Fukiya is modeled after an old shoyu gura (soy sauce storehouse), and is set in one of the seven villages in Okayama that are designated "Furusato Villages." This villa is high up in the central mountains of Okayama so plenty of snow falls in the winter and plenty of sun shines in the summer.

You may want to head up there in the cold winter months rather than



the summer heat because the wood burning stove (not common in Japan!) gives you the cozy feeling of a warm winter retreat. You can sit beside it and watch the snow fall delicately to the ground through the large windows in the common area.

### Ushimado

Ushimado is a modern looking building sitting high up on the hills overlooking the Seto Inland Sea. The massive windows that cover the entire length of one side of the villa afford sweeping views of Ushimado Town and its beautiful sea.

The beaches are close (it's no Okinawa, but they are still good for a nice swim) and the olive groves are closer. Tour buses deliver hordes of Japanese tourists to this place that is known as the Aegean of the East, but the olive trees are only worth a glance as there are better things nearby (like olive-flavored ice cream at the café down the road!)

### Takebe

Takebe is a uniquely designed wooden building with vaulted ceilings, hard wood floors and a large comfortable area to gather. The town of Takebe is well known for fishing, cherry blossoms and onsens!

Quite possibly the biggest perk to staying at Takebe is the access to the riverside onsen which is no more than

10 metres from the doorstep of the villa. There is also a modern kitchen complete with proper oven for all the cooking fantasies you've accumulated over the last eight months! Takebe is definitely a fantastic spring or autumn retreat!

### Shiraishi Island

Shiraishi Island is accessible only by ferry and is a secluded haven on the Inland Sea. You can choose to spend your time exploring the hidden treasures of the

island or relaxing on the covered patio in the refreshing sea breeze. The sandy beaches invite you out for both warm summer days in the sunshine and nights out under the stars!

### Getting There

All of these villas are accessible by public transportation, but some require a bit more planning than others. For example, Takebe can be reached just by train, but Fukiya would require a few trains and then a very long bus journey up into the mountains. However with either careful planning (or a car!) any one of these villas can



be yours for the weekend. While it is possible to rent out just one room, the most fun can be had when the entire villa is booked out by you and your friends. Then you don't need to worry about being considerate to others that may be staying in the villa with you.

### Other Information

The prices differ just a bit between the different villas (it depends if you book out the whole place or not) but the standard price is 2500 yen per person per night! Yikes!

That's cheap!

Most of the villas (all but Fukiya I think) come equipped with a modern kitchen and an oven so you can make a trip to Costco before hand and stock up on oven essentials like brownies and roasts! By picking up a few other things there the food part of the trip becomes very reasonable.

So when you are looking for something to do but just don't want to fork over the cash, give some serious thought to the Okayama International Villas! For more information see: [www.harenet.ne.jp/villa/](http://www.harenet.ne.jp/villa/).





**Editor's Note —** Last month the Hyogo Times ran an anonymous editorial detailing the why the writer was not recontracting with the JET Programme, which

lead to some enthusiastic discussion online.

This month we have two more opinions for our readers: Darcy Garrity's reasons

for staying, and an anonymous account of one JET's decision to break contract.

Let us know what you think. Email us at: submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com.

# Why I'm Recontracting, or Hey Japan - let's stay together for the kids!

**By Darcy Garrity**

A year ago I was unsure what the future held — I was preparing for my JET interview and besieged by an over-active imagination of daunting scenarios.

I was sure that Japan was where I wanted to be; with JET and teaching Japan's youth. Despite any uncertainties, I was confident I could handle the challenges of living in a foreign country with its own culture and language — all alone. Since then I have experienced a gamut of challenges and emotions but have come through them all. I have even committed myself to another year of trials and tribulations.

Why am I re-contracting? Simply, it comes down to the kids. I am busy forming relationships and one year is far too short a time. Just as I begin to gain my students' trust, establish a routine and niche in this foreign environment, learn names, and gain opportunities to actively contribute to classroom lessons, I am asked if I am ready to leave. I realize now that one year is too soon to shuttle back.

Time will not guarantee the making of a wonderful teacher but an effective teacher evolves with time. The exchange between teacher and student is naturally a combination of investment and progress. Growth is not apparent overnight. As one instructs children, their wealth of knowledge compounds until eventually progress can be noticed.

This applies to teachers, too. Teachers learn the students' strengths and weaknesses, as well as balancing the difficulties of teaching material versus the students' capabilities. Our efforts and time are investments into the teachers we can become. Although I sometimes feel I'm in a stagnated environment, I maintain expectations for the future. I want to invest more time and effort with the kids. I want



to see my Ichi-nensei graduate from junior high school. Their futures will reflect our mutual relationships.

More exists for me to learn about myself, about my students, and about teaching. I want to learn how to serve. I want to do my best for my kids. Can I be what they need or want? I want to meet and exceed expectations. I want to be better than they can imagine.

As a foreigner I must confront the frustrations of being an outsider. Japan seems to be a country that emphasizes the collective rather than the individual. There can be feelings of great pride and safety to belong to the whole. Acceptance can be a difficult state to achieve.

I know this because I come from the "melting pot" nation where various cultures and languages are evident. Not necessarily through assimilation, America has garnered its own distinct identity in its variety. The product of a lifestyle that emphasizes individuality and uniqueness, my background, manifested in looks and

attitude, challenges Japanese people to accept me.

So how do I integrate into my community? I do things that I would do in America. I do not mean stubbornly holding on to what I know as right and true. Rather, I let my personality and sincerity resonate within community parameters. I live in the inaka where there are not obvious attractions or places to go. So I do silly things like deliver treats to my inaka's local convenience store. I do aerobics with a JTE. I participate in community activities like being in the summer matsuri parade, attending the annual sake festival, and playing mammasan volleyball with older members of the community. I am making a conscious effort to be seen so people can realize I am here and so I can construct communal bonds.

It's likely my teaching schedule will change in April due to budget constraints and ALTs who returned home early. While we ALTs share similar professional goals, we come from different backgrounds and abilities and this contributes to how we integrate

within our new homes. I am currently feeling the insecurity of having to start anew and losing time with the students I have now, but I know I have to overcome those doubts and embrace the new students.

The job is always challenging and fun lessons can be lacking in classes. I have to intensify efforts to inflame fun. Some of it involves making a fool of myself but I don't mind. I do what I can in the limited opportunities I have: an enthusiastic greeting, some personal attention, chit-chatting, exchanging a high five — all in the efforts of trying to form and build relationships.

I've heard my students describe me as "tension takai" but I know I am making an impact. I caught their attention for a second. Maybe some English will stick in their minds because of it. Enticing a smile is the best reward. Laughing with me (or at me!) the students are *there*. They aren't spacing out or lifeless automatons.

When I was deciding whether to re-contract or not I asked myself why I came here? I want to make a difference.

Am I making a difference? Yes — I am. I measure it by the spontaneous hugs I receive; students' extra efforts to speak with me; hand-written Christmas and nengajyoo cards; surprise Valentine's Day chocolates; omiyage from the students' school trip; and recruitment to help with students' personal projects.

I sometimes feel uncertain and lost in a culture that favors indirect communication and that I can't form relationships within. But the students' small gestures dispel my anxieties — they let me know that I am making a difference.

For every setback or failure I encounter, I have success. It's absolutely worth it for these small bits of time. Just one such moment is enough to make it all worthwhile. One second (a smile), one minute (a conversation), one hour (interaction and integration in a class) is enough for one year.

I love my kids. I'm not alone. I'm still unsure of the future but now I know my kids. I want to see my kids level up. What I do, I do for my kids.

## Why I'm Breaking Contract Hey Japan - I'm getting the hell outa here!

This question plagued me for months. I arrived in Japan last August full of hopeful uncertainty. I applied to JET because I enjoyed living abroad in Europe as a college student and I liked the thought of continuing that lifestyle in Asia while being paid. I also had an interest in teaching and building relationships with new people. I figured that the combination would make me a good candidate for JET.

August was boring for everyone. I went to work, did nothing, and came home. My apartment was a disaster because the men who lived there before me had not cleaned in years. I stayed optimistic though. I worked hard to make my apartment at least semi-livable and I looked forward to the return of the students.

September came and went with sports day and culture day and a couple of random holidays. I still had nothing to do and felt extremely disconnected from the teachers and students, especially at my base school.

Unhappiness started to creep into my daily routine. In October I found myself angry and frustrated by Japanese customs. I hated sitting alone at my desk day after day. The only words people spoke to me were "good morning" and "good-bye." Little things started upsetting me more than they should have. I stopped finding comfort in the company of my friends and started to fear that Japan was turning me into a horrible person.

I also made the mistake of thinking that I was trapped. I dreaded asking my teachers about the repercussions of breaking my contract. I barely had the opportunity to approach them for simple questions, let alone big ones. I also remembered reading that the JET Programme required you to pay them back for the flight to Japan as well as

the rent for the remaining months of that contract. There was no way I could afford all of that and my ticket home.

Instead of acting rationally and investigating my options by talking to people, I sat alone every night in my dirty and cold apartment, paralyzed with anxiety. I blamed myself and reasoned that I needed to wait this out because I hadn't given the experience a fair chance.

I went home for Christmas and returned to Japan more despondent than ever. I hated being in my apartment. I hated being at school. I wasn't happy with other people. I wasn't happy when I was alone.

Finally after many discussions with my friends and family I worked up enough courage to say something to the JTE at the school I liked best. She looked at me and said, "If you are unhappy—you can go! Let your heart relax!"

I admitted to her that I was lonely and that I found the job mostly unfulfilling, especially at my base school. I also said that I was sorry that I had to leave early. She was extremely understanding and supportive.

As my departure draws near I feel more and more confident in my decision. I do not consider the last six months a failure or a waste of time. I've learned that sometimes you find yourself in situations that simply aren't what you want and that it's healthy to admit your frustrations.

I wish I had not waited so long to share my feelings with my JTEs and thereby avoided months of angst, but I gained an important lesson that will undoubtedly help me in whatever I do next. If you find yourself in a situation like mine please tell the people you work with no matter how distant they seem.

There are a lot more options than you might realize and plenty of happiness to be found.



# I want to ride my bicycle

## A cautionary tale: bikes found in trash heaps are not free

By Joe Luff

The other night as Chad and I were returning from Japanese class something interesting happened. We were at the train station unlocking our bikes when we hear "Konbanwa." We turn around to see two policemen standing there with their patrol car, flashing lights and all.

At first I thought that they were checking to see if we had lights on our bikes, because that has happened before. Then they started asking Chad about his bike. They were trying to talk to me in Japanese/broken English and I am trying to talk to them in English/broken Japanese.

They asked Chad where he got the bike and I tried to explain to them that I found the bike lying in a trash pile three months ago. As any logical person would do, I took the bike out of the trash and saved it for my buddy Chad, who was moving to Japan. Well, apparently the bike was stolen, and whoever stole it ditched it in the trash.

After much difficulty in speaking, translating, and hand gestures they tell me that I have to get in the back of their patrol car and go to the police box. We get to the police box, which is basically a big tin-shed with a desk and two chairs. They start questioning us, asking all this stuff about the bike, about us, etc. They take my gaijin card and Chad's passport and copy down the information.

They try to get a translator on the phone, but there is some problem. Apparently the translator is busy so they want us to come back tomorrow to talk about it, but I tell them that I am working.



While he denies stealing the bike, Luff-sensei's back yard tells a different tale...

After about 20 minutes here, they explain to us that we have to go down to the police station. I think, "Shit, this is getting serious, no longer are we chilling in a police box, now we have to go to the real station!"

We get to the station and they ask me all about the situation again. Where did you get the bike? When did you take the bike? What day? What time? I even had to point out on a map where I found it. Meanwhile, they are writing frantically in Japanese on some document. After I finally get on the phone with a "translator" (I use the word loosely) he explains to me that the document says that I am admitting to stealing this bike and I am accepting the crime they are charging me with.

Crime? What? This is where I start to get a little worried. I try to explain to the translator that I found the bike in the trash and it was parked in front of my apartment for three months before Chad starting using it. And he says, "Well, don't worry, they will send your case to the prosecu-

tor and he will decide what to do from there." What!!

"But it is only a petty crime, so usually the prosecutor won't pursue." So I am thinking, ok, this may be true, but that word "usually" makes me sweat and I really don't want to sign something that I cannot even read and that has been translated into broken English over a 1980s telephone on the third floor of a Japanese police station.

I hand the phone back to the policeman and they talk for a bit in Japanese. Then I get the phone back and the translator explains that they will let me off with a warning. Nice! That sounds more like it!

Of course, there are conditions for this: I have to sign documents saying that I forfeit the bike the police, that I understand what happened and I will never do it again, they have to take my fingerprints and photo, and last, and probably the greatest, I have to call one of my Japanese co-workers to come pick me up at the station!

I give them one of the P.E. teach-

er's numbers and they tell him that Luff-sensei is down at the police station and he needs to come and get me.

Then — this part makes me laugh — my co-worker says he can't because he has been boozing all night and can't drive. After much deliberation the cops decide to drive me to my co-workers house, have him sign some stuff, and then they will finally take me home.

My co-worker looks really ner-

vous and concerned. Apparently they hadn't told him what happened, they just told him they have Luff-sensei with them and that he needs to come save me. He signs some stuff acknowledging he knows who I am, and then he asks me what happened. I explain to him about the bike and the trash and the whole story.

He responds with a smile and a laugh: "What, you got this bike in the trash?" "Yeah," I reply, "in the trash near my house." My co-worker starts

laughing his ass off and explains this to the policeman.

Here is my translation of their Japanese... what I think it would have sounded like, had they said it in English:

Co-worker: "Haha! Yeah, he didn't steal this bike, he found it in the trash, so he picked it up, thinking it was OK."

Cop: "Haha!! What!? Really? Oh man, that is funny! We totally thought he stole it."

# Wheel of Jeopardy!

Time for the H.T. Quiz: no room for a photo edition! By Joy Feddes

## 1. Hello! How are you?

- a) I'm fine thank you, and you?
- b) How are you?
- c) I'm cold. So friggen cold.

## 2. February has how many days?

- a) 28, obvi!
- b) Ahh, make that 29 sucker.
- c) Once again, so last month.

## 3. Did you know now is the season of lent?

- a) Do you mean lint? Because I cleaned out my bellybutton yesterday.
- b) Lent: the past-tense of lend.
- c) I gave up chocolate for Jesus, it's the least I could do.

## 4. If you could change one thing:

- a) You'd get rid of the GD one yen coin. Bain of your existence.
- b) You would change the word sensei to ALSO mean "wickedly awesome!"
- c) I'd make this quiz funnier.

## 5. The latest trend for spring is:

- a) Floral! Because things aren't cute enough already in Japan.
- b) Wearing your clothes backwards, KrissKross style, woot!
- c) Uniqlo.

## 6. Do you have a Facebook addiction?

- a) No, I took a quiz on Facebook and it said I was fine.
- b) Yes.

## 7. I saw:

- a) Your ass! Get that waxed if you want your lady friend to stay around.
- b) My kids cutting each other's bangs in class. Teenage boys these days, sheesh.
- c) KrissKross will make you Jump! Jump!

## 8. St. Patrick, patron saint of:

- a) Let's enjoying no more snakes!
- b) Green beer.
- c) Leprechauns.

## What your answers mean:

**Mostly A:** You're Irish, aren't you? Yea, I can tell. No, I don't have your lucky charms, buy you don't need them, you're charming enough.

**Mostly B:** I haven't seen the movie *Bee Movie*, but I hear it sucks. Don't watch it. You're way better than that movie. But maybe not as funny as Jerry on Seinfeld. And I'm sure you're a better dancer than Elaine.

**Mostly C:** Get me something good for White Day, OK? Just not chocolate. My friend sends me Mars Bars in the mail, and I am waiting in pain for Easter so I can enjoy them. Don't taunt me Mostly Cs, don't taunt me.



# A Primal Battle

## Surviving the Naked Man Festival

By Daniel Carter

I could hardly feel my wet, numb feet slapping against the ancient stone pavement as I ran. I shivered as a drop of cold water slid icily down my back, a remnant of the freezing cold fountain that had shocked my body and senses, and claimed the tabi from my feet. Blindly, I followed the naked white back in front of me as if my life depended on it. The massive, excited crowd parted before us like some kind of bizarre Red Sea, and we came, at last, to the steps of the temple.

As my senses gradually returned, I began to notice the excited, grinning faces of the crowd around us. They were bursting with energy and joy, and were screaming something at the tops of their voices. As if in a dream, that magic word seemed to linger forever in the crisp, cool air. I suddenly realised that I was shouting it too — “WAS-SHOI!” The ancient Japanese battle cry rang out of my lips as if I’d known it since I was a child.

This was our first purification run through the temple grounds. As I switched to the front and led my friends back through the bustling crowd to the changing tent, I was struck by a feeling of absolute elation. Once again, Japan had sur-



prised and humbled me by offering me the chance to participate in an experience like no other — the Saidaiji Hadaka Matsuri, or Naked Man Festival. Hundreds of men from all over Japan come to participate in this particular holy festival. They were only a simple loincloth (fundoshi) and socks (tabi) as they battle for lucky sticks, called shingi. Held in the middle of winter, it's cold, it's wet and it's nothing short of an awesome experience.

At just after 11 p.m. we began our final purification run. Hundreds of men were now streaming through the temple grounds in preparation for the coming battle. Without hesitation, we all plunged through the purification fountain together, churning it into a storm of splashing mud. All around us, the cheering crowds watched from the safety of their seats, ready for the mayhem that was soon to be unleashed.

As we emerged from the fountain, I

was struck by the beautiful and ethereal atmosphere of the temple grounds. The cold water from the fountain was steaming off the warm backs of the tightly packed group of men surrounding me, and then illuminated into a ghostly mist by powerful floodlights. It heralded adventure, and through this mist we eagerly ran, to say our last prayers and to take our final positions before the shingi were dropped.

The temple platform was already crowded and overflowing by the time I reached it. Despite this, hundreds more men continued to climb the steps on all sides, somehow managing to push and wedge themselves into the crowd that moved and flailed like some kind of rabid sea monster. As midnight approached, the tension and anticipation in the air grew, and jostling and fighting began to break out.

Whenever this occurred, a sea of police officers would charge up the steps like a furious tsunami, sending fundoshi clad men scattering in all directions. A group of hawk-eyed priests presiding over the madness from the safety of a ledge high above the platform would guide them, with a red



spotlight that looked like a beam straight from hell. It spelt impending doom for anyone it rest upon, who were immediately swept down the steps and away.

At exactly midnight, with the temple platform a surging mass of men about to explode, the temple lights went off. Everybody screamed with delight, as this could mean only one thing — the shingi had been dropped. The men all around me instantly kicked into action, surging up the temple stairs as if assaulting a final enemy stronghold. I saw several shingi fly through the air, hundreds of hands flailing and grabbing, and then men were cascading down the stairs in front of me like water.

The sheer amount of people and movement dazed me for a split second, and before I had time to react I was hit by a wall of writhing, mostly naked men. All around me I could feel bare, cold, wet skin, as I fought to maintain my balance. Then there were voices behind me and I could see more and more men joining the group from all sides, pressing in on those in the middle who had acquired

a shingi. I was completely absorbed into the throng, and we spiralled around and around the arena like some mad amusement park ride.

Suddenly there was a thump, and I felt a new sensation against my back — cloth. To my amazement, I saw that the throes of our battle had taken us on a crazy, winding path across most of the arena. It had ended when we smashed into a long, well-organised line of sturdy looking policemen. They were hell-bent on stopping us from absorbing a group of spectators like a human snowball, and despite our fervour, they did a good job of it.

As a result, the pack of men around the shingi compressed even further. My arms became tangled with those around me and I felt every movement as we jostled, letting my legs bend and shift in order to keep my balance. Somewhat surprisingly, I wasn't at all cold, as the heat from the battle was fairly intense. However, it was nowhere near as intense as the look of concentration etched onto each man's face as he struggled to simultaneously

reach for the shingi, watch his team mates and enemies, and fervently try to keep his balance.

As we continued to press up against the police line, the eight or so men grouped directly around the shingi fell, dragging many more with them. The next layer of men, seeing an opportunity to claim the ultimate prize, immediately pressed forward, some even jumping onto the unfortunate fallen men. Yet none of the fallen men would yield even the slightest bit of their advantage despite being unable to get up, and continued their desperate struggle, albeit horizontally.

Eventually, through some magical, unspoken group consensus, everyone backed up slightly and the central men were able to pick themselves up. This disrupted some holds on the shingi, and it wasn't long before someone managed to get an advantage and make a break with it. The circle instantly spiralled with them, and the battle was back on. Wanting to leave with my flesh and bones intact and figuring I'd been pretty lucky to do so up to this point, I unlinked myself and stepped back into the refreshing embrace of the cold night air.

My heart was pounding and my knees felt slightly weak, but somehow I felt elated. I felt as if I had the strength of a hundred men.

Continued on Page 28





**Continued from Page 27**

The raw energy and primeval nature of the battle had shocked and enthralled me, filling my veins with adrenalin. The sharp contrast to today's "civilised" society had taken me back thousands of years. I felt like I had gotten in touch with a different, powerfully primitive part of myself. I threw my arms up and jumped into the air, shouting loudly and excitedly.

I was soon joined by some of my friends, who, I could tell from their eyes, had experienced a similar thing. Together, we made our way through the temple gate with hundreds of other exhausted men, while the battle for the final shingi continued to rage behind us. None of us were lucky enough to get a shingi, but there were many satisfied smiles nonetheless.

As I changed clothes in the tent, I thought about what I had experienced. A lot of people said I was crazy for participating in the Hadaka Matsuri. After all, it meant walking around nearly naked on a freezing cold winter night, and it was clearly dangerous. I didn't feel crazy though. Australia, where I have spent most of my life, is often called a cultural desert. For me, much of life is about making up for that lost time. So given the opportunity to participate in the Hadaka Matsuri, I simply couldn't pass it up.

The festival was so much more than a bunch of naked men running around after some magic sticks. It offered an unusual viewpoint into the mindset of both ancient and modern Japanese people. Being able to not just understand the ancient reasons behind the inception of the festival and its events, but also feel and experience them was a wonderful introduction to how the Japanese of old thought and acted. It was also an opportunity to observe the reactions of modern Japanese people to an ancient part of their culture. For many, it seemed to be perfectly natural, but there were some who appeared to be experiencing and learning as much as I was.

I can say one thing for certain — it's a memory that no participant will soon forget. There aren't many people in the world who can claim to have battled hundreds of nearly naked men, and lived to tell the tale!



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# Disecting the J-drama

By  
**Tuwhakaroa Biddle**

When I first arrived here there was a lot of downtime, so to occupy myself I'd switch on the TV (and the air-con of course!). The hours would then dissipate while I watched the TV in a mindless state of fascination. Never had I seen anything so randomly entertaining. Despite the fact that I understood none of what was said, I instantly became a fan.

In the overly muggy evenings of August I would watch TV and be genuinely entertained. The first weekly drama I watched was called 'Hanazakari no Kimitachi e' (For You in Full Bloom). I brought it up with my students and it turned out to be their favourite show starring the girls' current crushes. Each week after the episode aired the students and I would talk about it and they would tell me about the characters and what happened in the episode. It was a good way to bond with the students and made settling in much easier.

After the season ended a new program started called 'Yukan Club' (Leisure Club). After watching this for a couple of weeks I decided to try and find it somewhere on the internet with subtitles. I put a fair effort into this and



Tu really likes Cutie Honey, but why?

eventually discovered the best website ever: [www.veoh.com](http://www.veoh.com). If, like me, you don't like torrents then this site is for you!

It is in English and allows you to watch (or download) TV shows and movies through Veoh Player (a download programme). The downloaded file can then be watched in Veoh Player (or any other program of your

liking). I was wary of downloading a free download programme, but I've never received an email from them, had pop-ups or downloaded a file that wasn't exactly what I expected it to be.

The amount of foreign programs on here is amazing and I have had no problem finding Japanese, Chinese or Korean shows and movies with subtitles. Even the latest episodes of currently airing shows can be downloaded each week with subtitles.

The majority of TV shows are fan-subtitled so they may contain some English and not be entirely accurate, but it still does the trick. Some Japanese words, popular slang and foods talked about in various shows are also explained with another subtitle so you know what/who they are referring to and why.

This can give some interesting insights into Japanese culture — especially youth culture. It's also fun to



The Yukan Club — my Lord, what acting! You can taste their surprise!



Death Note —Light-kun and the Death God do some writing.

use the slang I've picked up from a program on the kiddies the next day.

Here are some of the shows I have enjoyed:

## Hanazakari no Kimitachi e

This drama/comedy is set at an all-boys boarding school where students are accepted for their looks rather than their grades. The main character is a Japanese girl who disguises herself as a boy and leaves her family in America to attend this all-boys school. Being based on manga this show is quite ridiculous with magic, ghosts, over-acting, under-acting and of course J-hair everywhere. As my students say 'It's so rare!'

## Yukan Club

This high school-based drama is about the student council who are all very wealthy and popular (and all are singers/models in real life). They are too cool for school so they don't go to classes and are therefore very bored.

To fill their days and waste their parents' money, they interfere in other people's business and invariably end up saving the day. Light hearted fun without the magic.

## Gokusen

This is a very popular drama/comedy in Japan and will start its third season this year. It follows Yamaguchi sensei, a high school teacher, who for her first job is made home-room teacher for the badass third year students of the school. They try to intimidate and discourage her from caring but she has a secret — she is

next in line to become the fourth generation boss of a yakuza family — so she doesn't scare or back down easily. This show is pretty funny and a good way to learn some yakuza speak to impress or, if the need should arise, scare your students.

## Cutie Honey – The Live

This manga franchise has been long-running and is very popular in Japan. It has been made into several anime versions, a live action movie (do not watch this!) and now a live ac-

tion show. The theme song has been covered many times, most famously by Koda Kumi. In this version Cutie Honey, a cyborg, is a school girl who battles an evil criminal organization known as Panther Claw. In no way should this be taken seriously — it is Sailor Moon meets Power Rangers (but definitely better than Power Rangers!). The manga is pretty explicit (as is one of the older anime versions) so you can expect revealing costumes, dirty talk and a lesbian Kocho-sensei.

## Life

Another high school drama here but this time a little darker. It is about bullying in a co-ed senior high. I found this pretty hard to watch as it is a pretty nasty show. However it really makes you think about what could be happening at our schools and how life is for some students. The reason I keep watching is the hope that there will be a happy ending...

## Death Note

This story is brilliant! A race of reaper-like beings have murderous



High school dark drama Life

notebooks. When somebody's name is written in these notebooks they will die and their remaining life will be transferred to the reaper. How they die is at the discretion of the writer. These death notes can be given to and used by humans. Death Note is about one man using his Death Note to make the world a better place by killing criminals while the police and FBI try to stop him from playing God. You can download both the anime series and the first movie from Veoh. Definitely worth a watch, just ask the Hyogo Times Design Editor!

{Design editor's note: I'm not normally into anime, but the Death Note anime is F'ing AWESOME! Watch it!}



# Do it in a Purikura Booth!

By Erin Greer

After a few months in Japan, you could call me and some of my friends purikura-fanatics. However I must admit that when I first saw a purikura booth, I was a little skeptical. After all, I did get over my photo booth stage back in the eighth grade. Little did I know the fun that purikura (short for “photo club”) had in store for me until I gave it a “shot.”

For me purikura is now much more than just a photo booth — it is a way to pass the time in the inaka, establish close purikura bonds with friends or remember special days. It also gives me a long-lasting memento to share and trade with friends or to decorate my rather boring JET Diary with. When I look ahead to life after JET I often wonder, “Will my purikura-free life ever compare to my life now?”

Unfortunately the answer is NO, but hopefully this article will inspire you to hop in a purikura booth, take some crazy photos and send them in to the Hyogo Times for all to see. So grab a couple of friends, show off that photoge-



nic smile of yours and get your creative juices flowing — all for only 400 yen!

## Tips for a Purikura Virgin:

Lose this whole virginity thing quickly. Grab your nearest friend (of either sex), drag them to the purikura booth and just do it right there and then. Purikura virginity is a terrible thing.

Not all purikura booths are created equal. Some have an awesome selection of backgrounds ranging from cute to goofy to girly to funny, while others choose the backgrounds for you or only have different color options. After you take the photos, you get to decorate them using a touch-screen panel and a wide variety of pictures, lettering, borders and sparkles.

If you are a Japanese-illiterate person like me, some of these decorations stations can be much easier to use than others. But remember: the more glitter, the better. No explanation needed.

## Share

The best kind of purikura booths are the ones that allow you to send a

photo to your keitai. Once you can get a photo on your keitai, you can email it to your computer and post it on facebook for the entire world to see! All of your friends back home can realize just how cool you have become since arriving in Japan. You will leave them asking just how crazy is Japan, and wondering what the heck is happening to their long-lost friend who is “working” in Japan.

## Pay attention to the countdowns

For better or for worse, much of the purikura experience is timed. So pay attention when choosing backgrounds, decorating your photos, and choosing which photos to print. You don't want to end up with boring purikura!

## Ridiculous is good, tame is boring

Part of the purikura experience is the thrill of the countdown, the spontaneous position changes, the funny faces, and of course, the photo decoration. So have fun with it... add some “poo,” make a face, sit in a stranger's bikini bottoms — the options are endless. And for goodness' sake, LIVE A LITTLE!

