

4000 TITANS

MAY 09



Contents

Messages

4.....

From the Editor

Every Month

6.....

Recipe of the Month: Pasta & Booze

8-9.....

Wheel Of Jeopardy!

14-15.....

Best of the Block

16-17.....

Getting to Know Some Random JETs

20-21.....

Travel Japan: Finding Yakushima's Fabled Forests

Features

7.....

A Culinary Delight... Sometimes

10.....

How To: Getting a Drivers License

11.....

Getting Your Art On in Kyoto

12.....

Ramentary: Road Noodlin'

13.....

A Comic by James Williams

18-19.....

Surviving Elementary School

19.....

Grief in Japan: Experiencing Loss Miles from Home

26-27.....

Fool: A JET Playing Card Phenomenon

Four-page Special Feature

22-25.....

San-in: Bringing the Club Down to the Beach

On the cover...



Chip Boles returns again with a new cover entitled *Sumo Wrasslin'*. For those interested, Chip has not only begun selling prints of his work, including the Hyogo Times covers, but he recently held an art show

Cover art by Chip Boles at L&L Bar and Restaurant in Shinsaibashi, Osaka. If you missed the main event, fear not — the art will remain on display through the month of June. Visit his site at www.chipboles.com for more details.

Hyogo Times Staff

Editor: Ann Chow

Design Editor: Jeff Morrice

Contributors: Chip Boles, Daniel Carter, Clay Eaton, Kate Emory, Joy Feddes, Robert Hollands, Daniel Knowlton, Brenda McKinney, Alison Miller, Emma Nicoletti, Matthew Stott, Andrew Tamashiro, Camaron Voyles and James Williams.

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:
submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

Visit us online at:
<http://hyogoajet.net>

From The Editor...

I can taste it in the air. No, not my dinner, which is currently about to be eaten once I finish writing this, nor the scare of a pandemic waiting to happen that basically crippled the lives of everyone in Osaka and Hyogo, but summer, summer, summertime!

The sun is out most days and I'm quite looking forward to the rest of my time in good ol' Nippon.

Last month I asked for articles that were under the heading of, "anything particularly useful and everything that isn't." Guess what? You've exceeded my expectations because this month, we have an extra-big edition for you to enjoy!

Topics range from useful things such as how to go about getting your Japanese driver's license to an illustration/photoshopped work of the week all teachers in Hyogo and

Osaka Prefecture had to spend at student-less schools. Plus we have the usual staples of Best of the Block and Wheel of Jeopardy, making this issue one of my favorites.

We also have a special article and interview of DJs from Daniel Knowlton, an ALT at Hyogo Senior High School last year, about one of the biggest (if not THE biggest) beach party in Japan. Whatever am I referring to? The San-In Beach Party in Tottori, of course! While I still think the world of Hyogo-ken, Tottori IS our neighbor to the north, so here's some Tottori love! (Also, who can't love a prefecture that sounds like, "Totoro," the anime character, you know?)

From what I know and hear, the San-In Beach Party is an absolutely crazy (in a good way) party with good food, good scenery, and most importantly, good music! And from Daniel's description,

seems like a good time was had, so make sure to mark your calendars for the first weekend of July (which, coincidentally, is Independence Day weekend for the US folks, like me)!

I really can taste it in the air — summer. But as I am reminded by the itchy, swollen bug bites on my feet, summer also brings the mosquitoes out to play. Also, as it is June, the rainy season will be upon us shortly. So here's a reminder to you: get some insect-repellent, carry an umbrella, and get ready to slather on some sunscreen to go out and have fun once that sun starts coming back out!

Of course, by then, you'll be lucky if that sunscreen doesn't melt right off you the minute you put it on from the intense humidity that makes a Japanese summer what it is. ☺

Until next time!

— Ann Chow



学校教育課長 様

中学校名 高砂市立荒井中学校
中学校長 印

平成 年 月 日から平成 年 月 日までの英語指導助手の勤務状況を
下記のとおり報告します。

記

5 月分

英語指導助手名 (Ann Chow)

月 日	内 容	
	午 前	午 後
5/18 (月)		
5/19 (火)		
5/20 (水)	It's a problem when everyone wears a mask. It's a BIG problem if DORAEMON wears one.	STRUCTURE OF AN ANIMAL VIRUS
5/21 (木)	STRUCTURE OF A SIMPLE VIRUS	NEW!
5/22 (金)	OINK OINK BACON'S REVENGE	If you think I may have had some free time, you'd be correct! Unfortunately, you don't win a prize. Try being at school without students. It's called summer vacation!

Recipe of the Month:**By Robert Hollands**

Pasta & Booze

Get your drink on with Penne a la Vodka

To be honest, I doubted how good this dish would be when my step-dad (who, as you might recall, is also the source of last November's Recipe of the Month) served it to me the first time. I mean, vodka? Really? I had heard of cooking with wine, sake, even tequila and whiskey, but I always assumed that vodka, being flavorless, would make for an amusing dinner conversation topic ("Hey, guess what I put in the pasta?") but would add little else to the sauce.

How wrong I was. In an article published January 5th in the New York Times Science section, columnist Kenneth Chang talks about the science of food and touches on the addition of alcohol to various dishes:

"Alcohol dissolves both fat-soluble compounds and water-soluble compounds. You're pulling flavor compounds out...so that they can contribute to the flavor in the sauce. Why is it that a little vodka in a tomato sauce makes such a huge difference in the taste of the sauce? I boil it after the vodka is added so most of the vodka is gone. But there's obvi-



ously a compound in tomatoes that alcohol dissolves and pulls out into the sauce. And then it doesn't matter what happens to alcohol. It's done its job."

The same is true for any other alcohol, but for obvious reasons the very nature of vodka allows you to enjoy the base flavors of the sauce — the beautifully sautéed pancetta and garlic, tart tomatoes, and silky cream.

Penne with vodka sauce has

become an Italian staple and this particular recipe is sure to please. I recommend making a double batch for your next dinner party, but it's also well-suited to individuals in a hurry: in addition to being shockingly easy to prepare, it holds up extremely well in the refrigerator and — dare I say it — tastes even better the next day. A quick word of caution, though: always take the skillet off direct heat before adding alcohol!

Penne a la Vodka

Ingredients:

- 1 - 1 1/2 cups plain tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup butter
- 100g pancetta, diced (you can substitute regular bacon).
- 1/3 cup plain vodka
- 1/2 cup whipping cream
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 400g macaroni - penne with grooves works
- grated parmesan cheese

Directions:

- Melt butter in a large skillet.
- When butter begins to foam, add pancetta and garlic and sauté over medium heat until the pancetta is lightly colored.
- Add vodka and stir until it has evaporated (lightly sniff the fumes - when you smell little alcohol the vodka has evaporated enough).
- Stir in tomato sauce and cream.
- Simmer uncovered 8 - 10 minutes.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Cook macaroni in boiling water according to manufacturer's directions. Do not overcook.
- Drain macaroni and toss with sauce until coated.
- Serve immediately with Parmesan to taste.

A Culinary Delight... Sometimes

By Awaji Kate

When I found out that I would be getting school lunch at my lovely junior high school, I was excited. I didn't have to wake up any earlier to make a lunch, nor did I have to stop by the *konbini* each day. Instead, I could sit and wait till the bell and then waltz over to the kitchen area and pick up my delicious lunch. Well... that's what I thought at least!

Granted, school lunch isn't all that bad: you get Japanese staples as well as a good variety of different dishes. Some of these are things you might not order in a restaurant and so might have missed out on during your stay in Japan. Such delights as chicken-cornflake, or egg, tofu and chicken soup. Let's not forget everyone's favorite: spaghetti with orange sauce and peas! (I don't joke; it's seriously the best lunch EVER).

But every now and again something happens to make me question what exactly someone was thinking when they put A in with D and mixed liberally with X. A being fruit, D being pickled cucumbers, and X being vinegar with cinnamon. Cue barf sounds.



Or my FAVORITE lunch of shishamo (dried whole fishes), with ume rice, and little-fishy salad (You know, the ones that look like noodles? Only, they're not?). Cue my devastated and hungry face. NOT.

Like the memories of my own high school days, I often pull out the lunch menu sheet and peruse it during the day. I highlight good dishes in yellow, and bad ones in red. I also circle the mega, mega calories that are packed into these innocent-looking school lunches. Curry udon day? 1050, more than a Big Mac! Or the healthy-seeming temakizushi day? 867. Half your daily diet in one swoop sometimes. It may seem like a lot, but when I look at how much activity all of my students do, I can't imagine them being any more fit.

Now I said a bit on the good and the ugly, what about the bad? The bad would be trying to sneak out without eating everything on your lunch tray — or even refusing it. This can be met with questions about dieting or losing weight or even comments that you must dislike all

Japanese food if you don't like ume (sorry!). A former ALT I know had a great deal of trouble explaining to her school that she did not require the school lunch because she was a vegetarian. The concern about her "not eating enough" or even "being un-nutritious" resulted in the school still serving her school lunch- and if she didn't eat it they would pack it up for her to take home. Kind and thoughtful, yes, but did they really understand?

This past month with the swine flu closing all schools, it couldn't have come at a worse time. My school was closed during the week of PERFECT lunches. The disappointment I felt when I learned that those lunches were done and gone and shall not return was equal to when my favorite sports team loses. When classes began again it was during the week of hit and miss lunches (tandoori chicken: hit. Cold rubbery slab of pork: miss).

Alas my stomach may never recover! Well... not until curry and rice this Friday!

WHEEL OF JEOPARDY!

Time for the H.T. Quiz: The Double-Shot Edition! By Joy Feddes

1. What's the fastest way to make friends?

- a) Buy the assembly kit from Ikea.
- b) You know... being nice and stuff?
- c) Guilt.

2. Trains, planes or automobiles?

- a) I travel by camel.
- b) Trains, how I'll miss you when I leave Japan.
- c) Auto cry, auto laugh, auto know there is no train line in my town.

3. Did you enjoy the cherry blossom season?

- a) By "enjoy," you clearly mean did I drink under blossoms. Yes.
- b) Yes, me and a bajillion others enjoyed them in Kyoto.
- c) Mostly, but I'm still annoyed that there will be no cherries.

4. What's on your "must-do in Japan" list?

- a) Go to Okinawa and ride around in a pineapple-shaped cart at a pineapple plantation.
- b) Eat the grossest things possible. Still looking for that still-writhing octopus tentacle.
- c) Find a Japanese child to take back home with me.

5. How goes the new school year?

- a) Let's just say I'm no relying on my Japanese ability to communicate with my supervisor.
- b) Hottie supervisor, yesssss!!!
- c) More classes to keep my busy means more facebook withdrawl.



6. Will your family visit you in Japan?

- a) Irrational fears of fish smell and an allergy to rice has kept them away.
- b) Yep!
- c) My parents, cousins, friends of friends, and that girl I had an intro-to-English in first year have all visited.

7. When's the last time you actively studied Japanese?

- a) Right now. I'm translating this as I read.
- b) Um, I think it was a Tuesday, and it was raining.
- c) I don't need to study, I'm fluent.

8. Are you ready for the "real world?"

- a) I've watched all of the MTV series, so I must be.

- b) No, making a CV blows.
- c) The real world, of living in Japan another year? Yes!

9. What's your favourite mistake?

- a) Skinny jeans.
- b) Tequila.
- c) Konbini chicken.

10. Would you do anything for love?

- a) As long as no spiders are involved, yes.
- b) Likely not.
- c) Obvi!

11. So tell me what you want:

- a) The weather of May, all the time.
- b) Angelic students who love English.
- c) A reconciling between students not having classes and teachers having to go to school.

12. I'm dreaming of:

- a) Unicorns.
- b) Napping.
- c) A steak.

13. Sweet Caroline!

- a) Holy bananas!.
- b) Sandra and Rita, and as I continue, you know they're getting sweeter.
- c) Wait, b) doesn't fit with this

scheme...

14. "I'll be carpeting the landslide."

- a) Ah, don't you mean "Caught beneath the landslide?"
- b) That sounds really hard. How could you even do that?
- c) Let's go drink champagne.

15. Just a small-town girl, living in a lonely world:

- a) I love trains!

- b) I need a small-town boy to make this better.
- c) Small town pfft! It's all about the city's bright lights!

16. I just called:

- a) No you didn't, it was a wrong number.
- b) You did, and you whispered sweet nothings in my ear.
- c) Who calls people? I texted.

What your answers mean:

Mostly As

Rainy season is approaching, be wary of rainy season. But don't be wary of wearing navy with black — it's a perfectly appropriate fashion decision! Fashion can be tricky, but not nearly as tricky as calculus.

Ugh, math!

Mostly Bs

Is your washing machine as violent as mine? I like to think it beats the dirt out of my clothes. On the plus side, I'll have less to take home because a third of my clothes will have been washed to death.

Go do some laundry Mostly Bs, I know you've been putting it off for a while.

Mostly Cs

Do you remember the part of "Pretty in Pink" where grandpa says "Where is my AUTO-MOBILE?" to Long Duk Dong? I hope you do, because I do, and often want to say it but no one knows what I'm talking about. You should go watch some classic Molly Ringwald 80s cinematographic magic, and then get my references.

We Want Your Stories! ...and pictures, and opinions, and poems, and artwork, and essays, and....



Submit by the 15th of each month to:
submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com

A Hyogo Times How-to:

Getting a Drivers License

By Awesome JET

It's that time of year again, when all of those convenient international drivers licenses begin to expire. Not so convenient now, are they? This is your HAJET reminder that if you are staying in Japan another year, and plan on driving, it is time to change to a Japanese license.

For those who are from the following 22 countries, it is your LUCKY DAY: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom — you lucky bastards. All you need to do is get your home license officially translated by the JAF (Japan Automobile Federation) and pop into the Driver's License Center in either Himeji or Akashi and POOF! License GET-O.

For all you sorry suckers who are from countries not on that list, there are several things you must do to get the licenses (and no, one of them is not jump through hoops — though it might feel like it!). You also must get the official translation of your license which you can then take to the Driver's License Center with a handful of other documentation and apply for the test.



Americans are you listening?

At least two days *nenkyu* may be required for this! Go as early as you can get there to save yourself from twiddling your thumbs waiting your turn. Once in, and after they look over all your paperwork to make sure that everything is in order, you'll be given the written portion of the test. These questions can be ridiculously easy, but study up anyway! Japanese road rules can officially be rather convoluted.

If you pass the written portion, you are now eligible to take the practical. Now, though I have heard it can be all done in one day, I do not know a single person who has taken written and practical on the same day. I had to wait nearly a month between tests because the DLC was so booked up. Again, be prepared for at least two days *nenkyu* for this!

The practical part also benefits from early arrival. You'll be given a map of the course and time to walk it. This is important because you must memorize the course they give you! I was a bit thrown by that. The instructor will not tell you where to drive, turn or

stop.

If you arrive and register early enough, you may be able to sit in the back of the vehicle when the person in front of you is taking the test. This is very, very, very good. You can see how well or poor they do. I lucked out going third out of six applicants. The driver in front of me was horrendous enough that the instructor stopped the test within two minutes. Compared to him I looked awesome! (And I passed the first time!)

The one practical bit of advice I can give you is to practice S-curves and reversing. You may need to do both.

If you do not pass the practical, you can reschedule for another day to go back and do it again, but you won't have to re-take the written exam. If you pass, they herd you into another room for you to sign some more forms. After you get your picture taken, the license is only minutes away! Voila!

If you need more information on obtaining a license or where to get the forms and JAF contact information, check out the Hyogo AJET website at http://www.hyogoajet.net/wiki/Living_Guide.

Get Your Art On in Kyoto

By Alison Miller

Zen Buddhists believe in attaining enlightenment through experience rather than through words, and until May 10th the Kyoto National Museum is offering an experience in Zen art with the exhibition *Masterpieces of Zen Culture from Myoshinji*.

The exhibition celebrates the 650th memorial of Myoshinji's founder Kanzan Egen by bringing together a wealth of objects from Myoshinji-affiliated Rinza school temples to trace the history of the temple complex.

Myoshinji is full of objects listed under the National Treasure and Important Cultural Property system, and Buddhist painting is definitely a highlight of the show. Included are many portrait scrolls, important to Zen Buddhists because of the emphasis placed on teacher to student lineage. The repetition of images of stoic priests, seated in a chair, legs crossed, robes draped, flywhisk in hand, and shoes sitting atop a small footrest give museum visitors an idea of the many generations who dedicated themselves to the temple.

Another visual treat are the two life-size portrait sculptures of the Myoshinji founders, the Cloistered Emperor Hanazoro and the Seated Portrait of Kanzan Egen, both dating from the 1650s. As one examines the creases on their foreheads, the asymmetrical nature of their cheeks, and the slight sense of gravity in their flesh it is easy to forget that these are wooden sculptures and not real people. Interestingly, as these are portraits of the founders and still an important part of the ritual life of the temple, each morning a priest from Myoshinji comes to the museum before opening hours to read sutras in the exhibition hall.

The second half of the exhibition



includes the lighthearted works of Hakuin Ekaku, who worked to reinvigorate the popularity of Zen during the Edo period (1600-1858). Hakuin emphasized portraits of Daruma, the founder of Zen Buddhism. Daruma (Bodhidharma in Sanskrit) was an Indian monk who traveled to China, where he meditated in a cave near Shaolin for many years, tearing off his eyelids to keep himself from falling asleep during meditation, and allowing his arms and legs to atrophy due to lack of use. Many of Hakuin's portraits of Daruma are in a bold, calligraphic style, and emphasize the founders wide-open eyes and Indian ethnicity.

Lastly, fans of secular painting will find many stunning landscape works that decorated the abbot's quarters of the temple buildings. Stunning large-scale works of the Kano school, one of Japan's best known painting lineages, grace the exhibition halls. Kano Motonobu's *Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons* and Hasegawa Tohaku's *Monkeys in a Withered Tree* both warrant a few minutes of contemplation. The economy of line and the variety of brushstrokes visible in these works

show the skill and dexterity that each artist had with their brush.

If the Zen art at the museum piques your interest and you are looking for an even more in-depth Zen experience, why not try a temple stay at Myoshinji? The temple complex is located in the northwest corner of Kyoto, and is easily accessible by the extensive city bus system. The sub-temple Shunkoin offers temple stays in comfortable, new, private guesthouses, along with a temple tour and zazen (seated meditation) session in English for about 5,000 yen per person. More information is available at <http://www.shunkoin.com>, don't forget to ask for the JET discount!

To access Kyoto National Museum take bus number 100, 206 or 208 from Kyoto Station, the museum is across the street from Sanjusangendo, also a must-see sight in Kyoto. The museum is open from Tuesday-Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and has extended hours on Friday evenings. Entrance to the Myoshinji exhibition is 1,300 yen. Currently the permanent exhibition hall is closed for renovations, and will be until 2013. Further information is available at <http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/>

A Hyogo Times Ramentary Restaurant Review:**Road Noodlin'****By Andrew Tamashiro****Korean Ramyun**

If you were like me, in college you threw all kinds of stuff on top of a Maruchan or Sapporo Ichiban ramen noodle pack in the hopes of making it better. Things like egg, spam, cheese, hot sauce, leftover turkey, corn, blah blah.

Well, that's more or less how I experienced it in Korea. They call it ramyun, but just like the average college student, they use the packaged noodles instead of something,

well, tastier. It starts out as a block, then sort of melts into the soup as you cook.

Just like the randomness and excitement of exploring these flavors back then, it was quite a trip doing it in restaurants... unfortunately, just like those days, the actual taste is so hit or miss that I look back on it more as a novelty and would probably refrain from eating it as much there as I do here.

**Toudai-suki! 東大好き!**

Took a road trip down to Tokushima and Kagawa before Golden Week and we were referred to a spot called Toudai, both by folks that work at a buddy's school and by the guy at the cap-

sule hotel desk. We showed up about 30 minutes before opening and there was already 7 or 8 people in line. We decided to come back just before it opened, and when we did, there were 20-25 people in line.

Unfortunately, unbeknownst to us, the place doesn't sit that many at a time, so we had to wait for a bit. But the ramen was absolutely worth it. A thicker soup than I've had in months, without the specks of fat that so often dot the more *kotteri* soups out there, and it absolutely reeked of pork. Somewhere between the consistency of soup and gravy, it coated the noodles and toppings, hugging to them for dear life. The *menma* was firm and chewy, and the pork was of a chopped style instead of being sliced. Everything about this dish worked well, from the firm noodles, to the crispy green onions to the succulent pork. Probably the best bowl I've had in 2009.

**うめ〜だ! in 梅田**

While on a weekend trip to Osaka, I had time to kill in Umeda and went to the Yodobashi Camera store to pick up a new bag strap. While there, I noticed they had a Chabuton, a chain of ramen restaurants so big they have a branch in LA (called Chabuya). Even though I had dinner plans in a little over 4 hours, I had to grab a bowl when I had the chance.

A fine bowl of noodles, but nothing really amazing. Everything about this meal really seemed very intentional, very refined, very established. Nothing ground-breaking, but nothing lacking either, and I really enjoyed the sesame seeds.



And in America,
everyone has
three houses!

A Comic by James Williams

And five guns!



Job Satisfaction

Discover the World at

World Express TRAVEL

KOBE'S POPULAR TRAVEL AGENCY

LOWEST AIRFARE!

*If you find any cheaper price than
ours, we'll try to beat it!*

Call us! Fax us! Mail us!

*Travel insurance, hotel and rental car booking also
available.*

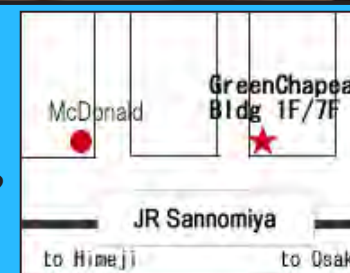
www.wexp.co.jp

TEL: 078-222-5050 / FAX: 078-222-5030 / EMAIL: info@wexp.co.jp

Government-approved Travel Agency Licence No: 2-250

Super convenient location in front of Sannomiya Station, Kobe.

Open: 9:30 a.m.-7 p.m. weekdays, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sundays and holidays



The Best of the Block

By Brenda McKinney

They say April showers bring May flowers, and it certainly is beautiful outside! I don't know how long this humid-free weather is going to last, but I hope the rest of you are making the most of it as much as I am trying to (swine flu or not!).

This will be my last installment of the Best of the Block and also my last month as your National AJET Block Representative. One year ago, when I first took over this position from Luke Wevers, I was going into my 3rd year as an ALT. It was sort of a strange time for me because many of my JET friends were leaving, I was getting a new school and I knew there would be a lot of changes.

A year on, however, I can honestly say it was a fabulous decision and that I owe a lot of the positive experiences that I have had this past year to all of you and National AJET. Maybe a bit cheesy, yes, but everything from our JET Orientations in Tokyo and Yashiro to AJET events has been a lot of fun. As the largest prefecture for JETs in Japan (we beat out Hokkaido by 1!), I also cannot say thank you enough to everyone that has supported National AJET as we prepared for Opinion Exchanges with CLAIR (by filling out surveys) and those who have been so awesome about making the community what it is.

As you may know, Brandon Kramer will be taking over as the new Block 6 rep this month (*go Hyogo!*) and I'm really excited for what he and the new council (both in Hyogo and at the National level) have in store.

On a final note, best of luck to all of you that are leaving JET and I hope those of you that are staying have as great of a time next year as I have this year (or these past three years).

Yoroshiku, with love - Brenda ☺

The Best of... HYOGO PREFECTURE

Hyogo AJET Sayonara Beer Garden

The time has come to bid farewell to those JETs leaving J-land (or at least the Programme)



Google "Kobe Beer Garden" and Nate Lepley is the first pic that pops up. The guy is a legend!

and to send them off with style. Yes, it's the annual Sayonara Beer Garden, held on the roof of the SOGO Department store in Sannomiya (across from JR Sannomiya Station, just take the elevators to the top!). We'll be there all evening and AJET will be offering a discount. Yukata are optional and please check out the Facebook page for further details on what we'll do if it looks like it might rain. See you there!

Himeji Yukata Festival

This is your chance to see hundreds of people (mostly girls, but also guys) dressed in yukata and to try one for the day yourself! Before I condone going to this event, however, let me just preface this recommendation by saying that this event is notorious for local yakuza issues and that my teachers have repeatedly told me to avoid it. Now that you have been warned, let me also tell you that I've been twice, plan to go again, and that I think you should go, too, because this matsuri is AWESOME. There are almost 1,000 food stalls and it's a rare chance to wear a cotton kimono for the day and totally fit in.

The festival is held all over the city (centered around Osakabe Shrine, however) and is being advertised as June 22-24. As these are weekdays, however, I'm a



little suspicious of these dates and recommend you watch for posters as the dates get closer, contact the Himeji Tourist Office at 0792-87-3655 in mid-June or email block6@ajet.net for more info closer to the date.

The Best of... KYOTO PREFECTURE Taue Rice Planting Festival

Do you feel like you've spent too long in the city and maybe yearn for some REAL Japanese experiences? Or maybe you live – no, breathe – the rice fields in your humble, inaka abode and have more than noticed the changes with the seasons but have yet to really get a feel for what goes into the whole process? Well, folks, this is your chance! My favorite shrine in the Kyoto area, Fushimi Inari Taisha, will be hosting the annual Taue Rice Planting Festival on Wednesday, June 10th.

The planting ritual, which is held to ensure a good harvest, will start at 14:00, with about 30 women (who need some help) dressed in traditional farm worker clothing planting rice seedlings. Women dressed in traditional Heian period costume perform an elegant dance from 13:00. For more info, please contact the shrine at 075-641-7331.

Nagoshi Oharai Festival

Every year around the end of June, many shrines hold an ancient Japanese purification rite called Nagoshi no Harae. In this ceremony people atone for their sins in the first half of the year, and then pray for their health in the remainder of the year by walking through a giant wreath (that some steal parts of to make their own take-away wreaths). Sometimes people also receive a human-shaped piece of paper to make the same purification ritual.

The ceremony generally starts around 17:00 and Minazuki (traditional sweets that also ward off misfortune) will be distributed for free at some places (such as [Shiramine-jingu Shrine](#) [Shiramine-](#)



[jingu Shrine](#), Tel:075-441-3810). Monday, June 30. Please contact the Kyoto Tourist Office for more details, but Kamigamo-jinja, Kenkun-jinja, Shiramine-jinja, Yoshida-jinja, Jishu-jinja, Umenomiya-taisha, Nonomiya-jinja, Kurumazaki-jinja, Jonangu-Jinja and Heian-jingu are among those joining the party.

And, finally, the Best of SHIGA PREFECTURE

"Green Drinks"

A fundraiser for BEE Japan

Want to do something for the environment, but aren't sure what to do? Shiga's favorite, Yabs Sport's Bar (seriously, the "Cheers" of Shiga!), and BEE Japan are going to bring your favorite activities (like drinking) and your passion for the environment together to make it even easier to enjoy both at the same time.

Come out to this event on Friday, June 12, which supports BEE Japan and their cross-country cycling ride this August-September. The Deko-Boko (featuring Salem and John in Shiga) will be playing from 19:00-21:30 (plenty of time for last train), but they're hoping to add some other great musicians to the lineup. If you're interested, email block6@ajet.net. For more info (including cover price), check out the Shiga Events page on www.esllwell.com or email block6@ajet.net. Hope to see you there!

Getting to Know Some Random JETs

❖ **Name:** Emma Nicoletti.

❖ **Please call me:** Emma or Em.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Mai-ko High School and Seiryo High School, which are both in Tarumi (a stop on both the JR and Sanyo lines).

❖ **How we know you:** I'll be the one talking about cats (I do love furry little creatures), or as that parenthetical aside reminds me, the one lacing sentences with sexual innuendo.

❖ **Birthday:** 23rd of May, 1982.

❖ **Born and raised:** In Perth, Australia.

❖ **Family:** I grew up with my father who was born in Italy, my mother who was born in Ireland, and rounding out our little Italo-Celtic-Australian household is my older brother.

❖ **University and Degree:** University of Western Australia; Arts - Music, English, Communications and Cultural Studies, Diploma of Education.

❖ **Other jobs you have had:** Sub-human shit kicker (McDonald's worker), piano and singing teacher, high school English teacher.

❖ **Travels:** Australia, North America, Canada, England, Ireland, Wales, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Thailand, China and South Korea.

❖ **Hobbies:** Playing piano, playing with cats and reading.

❖ **Staying another year?** Yes.

❖ **Favourites:**

Food: Ichigo-daifuku, Matt's spaghetti and meatballs (I'm trying to be good and keep this clear of innuendo, but the latter dish is most commonly referred to as Matt's balls).

Sports: Frisbee, but only when rest time and umeshu are included.

Music: Radiohead, Coldplay, Lily Allen, Sarah Blasko, Chopin and Debussy.

Shop: For food: Gyomu supa (cheap bulk food); For dining: Nijumaru and

that 280 yakitori place; For clothes: G.U. or Uniqlo; and for books: Amazon.

TV Show: *Deadwood*, *Flight of the Conchords*, *Seinfeld* and *Scrubs*.

Movie: *Fight Club*, *American Beauty*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, *Cube* (the list goes on...)

❖ **Most Proud Achievement:** I actually managed to return serve in an impromptu badminton game last week. I really suck at sports.

❖ **Best life experience:** Traveling around Japan with Matt.

❖ **Motto to live by:** Freeze before the use-by date.

❖ **I remember when:** Big Brother was a novelty.

❖ **What are you drinking?** Tap water from a Crystal Geyser Natural Alpine Spring Water bottle. Nobody is fooled.

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** Virginia Woolf, I think I could have cheered her up a bit.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** I am good at not directly answering the question and I am efficient at moving towards enhanced goals.

❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** Free time on the weekend to meet friends and travel.

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** be hoping that the spacecraft's fuselage will remain intact as it leaves the stratosphere, and making sure I'd packed enough socks and underpants for the estimated remaining years of my life.

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** I have two fake teeth.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** Write objec-

tive statements before planning your lesson (By the end of this lesson students will be able to...), then work out the learning activities that will help students to achieve that objective.

❖ **When class is TOO QUIET I...** In Australia, I cry with joy. In Japan, I'd try and work more simple vocabulary games into the lesson to lighten the atmosphere (Hangman, Pair Scategories).

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Yay, an extrinsic motivator is a good way to win the students' affection so they are more willing to try what you've planned rather than resist.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** While playing a game of hangman in the last five minutes of class, I discovered one very polite but outgoing boy had grasped how to appropriately use swear words to express exasperation. He excitedly raised his hand thinking he knew the word, and upon finding he was mistaken, called out, "Oh, FUCK!" I was amused.



❖ **Name:** Matthew John Stott.

❖ **Please call me:** Matt.

❖ **School and Location in Hyogo:** Akashi SHS in Akashi, Kobe Takatsuka SHS in Seishin-chuo.

❖ **How we know you:** Chances are you don't, although those who attended Yashiro Orientation in 2007 may recall my travesty of a performance as Steve Irwin.

❖ **Birthday:** 29th October, 1976.

❖ **Born and raised:** In Perth, Australia.

❖ **Family:** My girlfriend, Emma (also a JET). And back in Australia: parents, siblings, cousins, etc. ❖ **Other jobs you have had:** I have had several teaching stints, both as a high school teacher and a sessional academic. Besides that, a long history of coming home reeking of pickle juice.

❖ **Travels:** Since coming to Japan, I've been to Beijing and Seoul. Prior to JET, I had never even seen the inside of an aeroplane, and the furthest I had traveled overseas was Rottneest.

❖ **Hobbies:** Reading, a bit of blogging, listening to podcasts and traveling when I can. I also dabble in Japanese calligraphy, rather unsuccessfully, and my not being able to read or write kanji hasn't helped matters.

❖ **Staying another year?** Absolutely!

❖ **Favorites:**

Food: Pasta with meatballs (an old family recipe, affectionately referred to by my friends as "Matt's Balls").

Sports: "Matto" is not programmed for that function.

Music: I don't listen to music very often, which is weird because I love karaoke. My musical tastes haven't really progressed beyond the stuff they were playing on Triple J in the 1990s (alternative music).

Shop: Uniqlo, where I have never met a 1,500 ¥ t-shirt I didn't like.

TV Show: A tie between *Flight of the Conchords* and *Deadwood*. **Movie:** Too difficult to pick a favourite, I'm afraid, but I never tire of watching *Aliens*, *LA Confidential*, *The Shining*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Godfather*. Oh, and *Monty Python's Holy Grail* and *Life of Brian*.

❖ **Most proud achievement:** There was about a ten-year period, from my mid-teens to my mid-twenties, when I would read *The Lord of the Rings* at least once a year, so I was pretty chuffed to have been able to write an honours thesis on it.

❖ **Best life experience:** Ascending and descending Mt. Fuji. Mostly exhausting, in parts scary as hell, and climbing down the scree was like trudging over the ash-heaps of Mordor. But nothing beats that view of the sun ris-

ing over a sea of clouds.

❖ **Motto to live by:** "*Sapere aude!* Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own understanding!" That's not mine — it's from Immanuel Kant (a real pissant who was very rarely stable) — but I think the species would profit enormously from its universal acceptance.

❖ **I remember when...** so-called "humorous" email forwards were the new black. That time has long passed, and the sooner my mother gets the message, the better.

❖ **What are you drinking?** Blendy instant coffee, though I'd rather not be.

❖ **Who would you like to meet?** It's not so much who I would like to meet as who I would like to meet again: my grandfathers. Both were such great storytellers; I was too young, sadly, to appreciate it.

❖ **Why should we elect you President of the World?** To create a new Army of the Republic.

❖ **Best thing about Japan so far?** The *onsen*. Especially since I learned (the hard way) to always wear band-aids over my tattoo.

❖ **If it was my last day on earth I would:** probably be pretty depressed about it (Wouldn't you?).

❖ **Interesting fact about me:** My grandfathers fought on opposite sides in the Second World War.

❖ **My top tip for teaching:** To paraphrase William Carlos Williams: so much depends ... on a lesson plan.

❖ **When the class is TOO QUIET I...** tend to panic.

❖ **Bribery for students...YAY or NAY?** Nay. I like to reward students for their efforts, but that's not the same thing.

❖ **Funniest story involving a student:** Recently I gave my third-year students English haiku and asked them to draw pictures illustrating the meaning of the poem they were given. One group's depiction of a cicada's shell bears a remarkable resemblance to a hairy penis. I imagine that's going to look pretty funny on display at *bunkasai*.



Surviving Elementary School

Step #1: Make 'em Cry

By Camaron Voyles

Hello everyone! I'm back after a long hiatus to give you another glimpse into the sometimes ridiculous life of an elementary school ALT. Today's topic: crying children. As you no doubt remember, at least if you have no job, hobbies, or any other aspects of a life to occupy your brain with, in my last article I related an anecdote in which one of my lessons, an ill-advised Red Rover session, resulted in a small girl crying. You will be happy to know that this is not the only time I've made a student cry.

One of the most important aspects of an elementary school teacher's job seems to be constantly coming up with innovative ways of making students cry. This is not overly difficult, as young children always seem to be on the verge of tears anyway, just waiting for something to set them off, but this does not stop me from taking my responsibility seriously. I take a certain measure of pride in my high success rate — rarely does an English class end in which all eyes are dry.

I work just as hard outside of class. Take, for example, a recent game of dodge ball. I *hate* playing dodge ball with my students, because it damages my fragile ego. Remember the nice, soft balls you played dodge ball with as a child growing up in a country with some common sense? They don't use those in Japan. They use what are basically small, hard basketballs.

Even I have enough of a conscience to realize that I can't throw those with my full strength at eight-year-old kids, but they expect me to be merciless. When they ask me to play, they want to witness a sparkling golden dodge ball god in action! What they get instead is, in their eyes, a confusingly pathetic spectacle, a tragic attempt at dodge ball that destroys their faith in the athletic abilities of foreigners. And then



they ridicule me.

This particular game took place after I had already endured several days of this ridicule. My self-esteem was shattered. A particularly skillful child, a dodge ball prodigy, if you will, had chosen me as his only target; he knew I would not respond to his force in kind, so he assaulted me with impunity.

But on this day he hit me one too many times, and unwittingly let the tiger out of its cage. I had to make him pay for his hubris. A different child threw the ball at me — a pathetic attempt! — and I caught it effortlessly. With this ball, I vowed to myself, I would show these kids the god they wished to see. I told the other children to step away from my target. I didn't want any innocents getting hurt. They obeyed in silent awe and expectation. I aimed for my target's legs (his face had gone deathly pale as he stood alone on the court) and let fly.

The tragedy unfolded in horrific slow motion. The kids watched with wonder as my ball rocketed majestically, six feet over the head of my target, only to crash into the face of a tiny girl, standing yards away, who *wasn't even part of the game*. Without going into details, there were tears and the girl's friends wouldn't let me speak to her for the rest of recess, but there was no lasting damage, except to my ego. With great power, it turns out, comes great inaccuracy.

While I would say I have a talent for making kids "turn on the waterworks," Japanese elementary school homeroom teachers have turned it into an art. For example, the other day I walked into my English room, only to see the entire sixth grade class sobbing uncontrollably in front of their stern-faced teacher, a diminutive young woman. She had achieved a coveted 100% cry-

Grief in Japan

Experiencing loss miles from home

Submitted anonymously

Dealing with the death of a loved one is hard enough when you are in the thick of it, but imagine trying to deal with it far, far from home. When signing that contract to come on JET, you never think of what might happen back "home" and only imagine the excitement of living and working abroad. When that contract comes around again and you decide to stay another year, you don't really consider, "Well, my aunt is sick. Maybe I'll go home..." You think mostly about how your own life is here. That life back in your home country almost seems to stop existing while in Japan. You are moving on here, but are they there?

I am currently a third-year JET in Hyogo, and over the past year and a half I have lost several family members and friends back home. While some of the deaths were expected, several were complete surprises. Living so far away almost doesn't make it seem real. You can't see what is going on back home. You can hear it on the phone or read it in an email, but that feeling of helplessness and grief still remains, and more so, because you truly are helpless in this situation.

You might want to return to your home country for the funeral, but the cost and the time off as well as the distance make you hesitant. My family firmly told me to stay put. That only adds to the helpless feeling. It is also hard to describe grief to those who don't seem to share your same thoughts. One of my teachers lost her husband last year, and she returned to work a week later and nothing seemed amiss. I am sure she was still grieving, but it made me feel that I could not externalize my own grief. When my uncle died, I didn't

tell anyone I knew. None of my JET friends or teachers. It was awful. But it was also a learning point.

You can't just pretend that nothing has happened, though you are well away from the tragedy. I learned this and when a childhood friend died a few months ago, I immediately called one of my close JET friends. It helped a lot knowing that someone out there knew that I was going through an emotional process at the moment. We went out to eat and chatted, and that helplessness I originally felt was gone. There was someone looking out and talking to me about it.

While on JET I have met many others who have had tragedies happen while they've been here. While many people do not want their grief to become gossip, they agree that just having one person physically near to them knowing helped. They could call that person up or go out for dinner or coffee with them and talk about it. It is much easier to have face-to-face conversations about grief than it is to pretend that nothing is wrong and that everything is peachy-keen.

Tips for dealing with grief in Japan

- Tell someone close to you. A teacher, friend, neighbor — someone. It helps to talk about it in a face-to-face setting.
- Call the JET helpline at: 0120-43-7725. It's here for a reason and sometimes talking with a complete stranger frees those inhibitions you have when with someone you know.
- Contact a local counseling center, or talk to your school counselor. You can find more information at: http://hyogojet.net/wiki/Counseling_and_Support_Groups

ing rate in her class, a worthy goal of any elementary school teacher. I don't know what she said to them to evoke such a reaction, but she clearly has a gift. I also don't know what the children did to deserve a punishment of such severity, which seemed uncalled for unless the transgression involved drugs, a large amount of money in duffel bags, and corpses.

Even the most unassuming Japanese teachers can display this talent on occasion. One youngish male teacher I worked with was possibly the nicest

person I've ever met. He was always soft-spoken and gentle, the quintessential perfect elementary school teacher... until Sports Day practice. For some reason, the fact that the first graders (let me remind you that these children are six years old) were standing up too slowly threw him into a demonic rage.

He would give the command and they would snap to attention in what I thought was an impressive manner, but his eyes would bulge and spittle would fly as he screamed "TOO SLOW!" They'd try again. "WHY ARE YOU SO

SLOW?!" Again. "SLOW!" After a few minutes of this, the children were reduced to a sobbing, quivering, terrified mass. At the time, I remember being angry with him. Why did he have to be so cruel? Now, however, I understand completely. He was just trying to meet his tear quota, and first graders are easy targets.

I surely still have a lot to learn, but hopefully soon I too will be able to successfully turn an entire class of reasonably happy children into a snotty, tearful mess, just like a Japanese teacher.

Travel Japan

Finding Yakushima's Fabled Forests

By Clay Eaton

Japan isn't really known to the rest of the world for its natural beauty. The first thing that pops into mind for most of those who haven't been here is the sprawling cityscape of Tokyo.

Now, those of us who have been here a while (especially those of us up in Tajima), know that there is plenty of countryside to go around. Still, there's nothing in Hyogo that quite lives up to natural wonders like the Redwoods or the Great Barrier Reef. However, if you're up for an adventure there is one place in Japan where you can find both primordial forests AND pristine marine environments: on a small island off the coast of Kyūshū called Yakushima.

There are two main islands in the Ōsumi Archipelago south of Kagoshima: Tanegashima (種子島) and Yakushima (屋久島). While Tanegashima is long and flat (and a great trip if you like surfing, sugar, and outer space), its neighbor, Yakushima, is almost perfectly round and its mountains shoot straight out of the ocean to vaunting heights.

Located at the receiving end of the Black Current, Yakushima is first in line to most of Japan's rain, and its high elevation assures that it catches a lot of those rain clouds. This has made Yakushima the wettest part of Japan, with all the lush forests and spectacular waterfalls that come with. The elevation of the island has also contributed to a diverse set of ecosystems running up the island, from subtropical beaches at the shore to alpine rhododendron meadows at the top. The end result of all this is utterly stunning, and it's no wonder that Yakushi-



ma was one of Japan's first entries on the World Heritage List.

While Yakushima looms large in Japan's popular imagination, its isolation keeps it *relatively* free of tourist crowds. At the same time this isolation makes getting there a bit of a trip in itself. To get to Yakushima, you have to pass through Kagoshima (鹿児島) first. This is the capital of the prefecture of the same name on the southern tip of Kyūshū, and you can easily get there by plane or night bus from Kobe (a particularly long ride).

From Kagoshima, you can either fly to Yakushima's tiny local airport, or get there by boat. I highly recommend going by hydrofoil (2 hours/¥7000), because it's awesome. Rolling in to Yakushima feels almost like arriving at Jurassic Park. You'll arrive at either the tiny town of Anbō or Miyaura (depending on your boat or flight), both of which hug the coast against the backdrop of huge mountains shrouded by clouds. Look for the information cen-

ters in these towns; they're run by old ladies who work past any language barriers with sweetness and good humour. These towns also have rental shops to outfit you for whatever your trip has in store, though I recommend bringing your own gear if you can.

For those interested in a more leisurely trip (with hot running water), the small towns along the coast have plenty to offer in terms of quaint guesthouses, restaurants and counter-culture Japanese residents to talk to. You can easily circumnavigate the island by rental car, bus, or bike, and there is quite a bit along the coast to keep you entertained.

On the southern end of the island are small villages famous for the Kaichū (海中) and Yudomari (湯泊) Onsens. As the name of the first implies, it is actually in the ocean, and only accessible during low tide, though this novelty makes it more crowded. You can easily jump out of either of these onsen for a dip in the ocean,

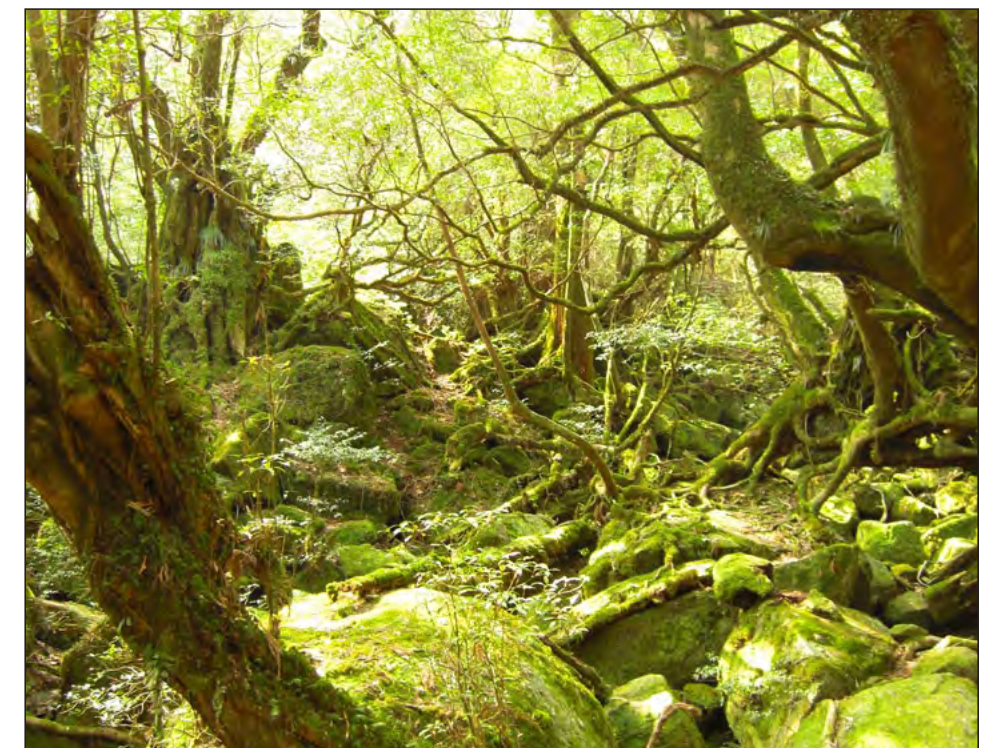


and you can get food and beer nearby. On the remote western side of the island is the spectacular Ooko-no-taki (大川の滝) and pristine sandy beaches where hundreds of sea turtles come to lay their eggs. The best time to see the sea turtles is between May and August, though they only nest in the middle of the night and you can only use red flashlights that won't scare them away. There are a couple eco-tours that are probably your best option for this.

Yakushima is most famous, however, for its towering cedars, the Yaku-sugi. There are a couple of spectacular forests that are easily accessible by bus, such as Yakusugi Land and the Shiratani Unsuiyō Forest (白谷雲水峡). In these places, you can spend 30 minutes to a couple hours hiking around the primordial forests. The former has a number of stately cedars to see, while the latter has cedars and the lush forested valley that provided the inspiration for the Forest of the Gods in *Princess Mononoke*. Accessible as these places are, expect to share the trail with a number of Japanese tourists.

For a less touristy experience, I strongly suggest taking a couple days to hike through the mountains in the

center of the island. There are a number of trails that criss-cross through the heart of Yakushima and all offer amazing views and solitude. Definitely choose a route that takes you to Miyaura-dake (宮之浦岳) and Jōmon Sugi (縄文杉). Miyaura-dake is the highest point in Kagoshima (1,900m) and offers the best view of the island and the ocean beyond; while Jōmon Sugi is the most ridiculously massive tree you may ever see (some estimate



that it's 7,000 years old).

While these trails are spectacular, they are also grueling, and will be difficult for anyone who has not backpacked before. Give yourself at least three days to get across the island, and remember to pack lightweight, high-energy food (peanut butter is your friend). There are small huts along the trail so there's no need to bring a tent. However, these huts can get very cold at night, so make sure you have a good sleeping bag and extra layers that you wouldn't wear during the day. All that said, the trails of Yakushima are very user-friendly and the experience is well worth the effort!

One last note for all visitors to Yakushima: it will rain. Be sure to dress accordingly and don't be discouraged, the island is still spectacular (in the forests even more so) when it's a little soggy.

Here's a link to a map of the places mentioned in this article: <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=112532395887906187594.00044acaa8c858bd29b43&ll=30.369321,130.524445&spn=0.373229,0.501251&z=11>. As always if you have anything else to add about Yakushima please let us know! Happy travels!



San-in Bringing the Club Down to the Beach

By Daniel Knowlton

In 2000, when Steve Bell and his friend Tom organized a gathering of fellow English teachers at a beach in Tottori, Japan, he couldn't have imagined that eight years later, his seaside BBQ would spawn the San-In Beach Party of 2008, which saw over 1,200 guests come from around Japan and around the world for a weekend of sun, sand, and dance music headlined by internationally renowned DJ Kentaro. Year by year, San-In has grown from its modest beginnings to an event that both Japanese and foreigners look forward to each summer. Although last summer's party was the largest yet, Steve and Tom make sure to preserve the intimate atmosphere that made their original beach BBQ such a success.

Party-goers began arriving by car and by bus in the afternoon of Friday, July 4th. Some dropped their bags in nearby guest houses or hotels, and others set up camping gear on the sand in what would become a communal hippie town of over 150 tents, complete with BBQ fires and guitar circles. As night fell, local vendors opened up their shops further up the beach selling pizza, taco rice, and fried chicken, and the Beach Bar

served up cold beer and cocktails. Fireworks erupted from the town of tents in honor of American Independence Day, and non-Americans gladly joined in on the fun. At 8:00, S.O.C. kicked off the night with a Hip Hop set, drawing the guests towards the blue light of the performance tent. Thus began the thumping bass that would run almost continuously through the background of everything that weekend.

For those who wanted to relax between sets, there was Beach Stage at the ocean's edge emanating, low, smooth trance music. Tiki torches lit

the way, and an ocean breeze fluttered through Tibetan prayer flags. I took a breather from the party and listened to music as the waves lapped at my feet.

By 1:30 AM, the crowd at the main tent had swelled and the dancing was just getting started. The Dexpistols, the DJ pair who made a splash at the previous year's Fuji Rock festival, took to the stage and lit up the night with electronic beats. In an interview after the show, The Dexpistols told me the simple message they wanted to give through their music: "dance" and "party"!



That's exactly what the crowd did, many people staying until the sun rose over the sea.

Some tried to sleep through Saturday afternoon, but there were plenty of events going on for those who stayed awake. A Capoeira group held workshops and performances. Lisa's School of Belly Dance taught an open dancing class. Didgeridoos hummed in the background and a Djembe drum band led a group of guests in a drum circle. Even the mayor showed up bearing gifts of watermelons. Others took to the waves for a swim, played frisbee or football, and explored the rocky coast and nearby islands, one topped with a small red Shinto gate as if to remind everyone that, yes, this was still really Japan.

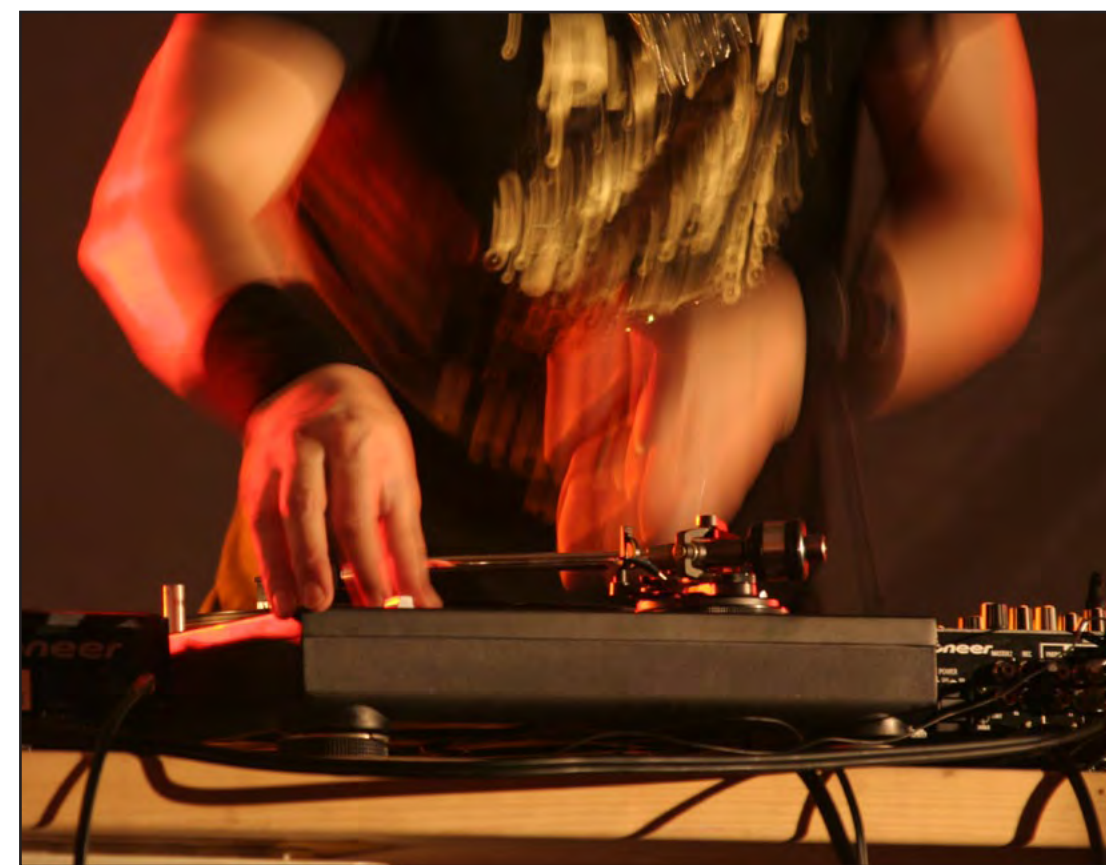
In the early evening, local rock bands Arcade and Nerd kicked off the night, and then the DJs

took to the stage as the sun set. Once again the crowd gathered for an all-night party. DJ Jin of Rhymster fame wowed the audience with a diverse set of Hip Hop tracks.

Then came the man everyone wanted to see, the only person to

ever win the DMC competition with a perfect score, DJ Kentaro. He lived up to his reputation, juggling beats and mixing tracks with unbelievable speed.

Continued on the next page



Bringing the Club to the Beach cont.

A large screen on the left of the stage displayed a close-up view of his handiwork on the turntables intermittently mixed with swirling psychedelic colors and patterns. As Kentaro always likes to say, “音楽は音楽だし、壁なんてない” (Ongaku wa ongaku da shi, kabe nante nai) which translates to, “Music is music. There are no walls.” I certainly didn't feel any boundaries in the audience as I let myself fall into a kind of trance with the rest of the crowd of Japanese and foreigners, those who love the dance music scene and those who have never been to a live DJ show.

The next morning I headed home, sandy, sun burnt, and exhausted, but when evening came, I caught myself looking for the DJ tent again, wishing for another night of music and danc-



In early July 2008, a group of DJs took their turntables out of the clubs and brought the music down to the waves of Tottori for the San-In Beach Party, keeping the crowd of Japanese and foreign guests alike dancing until dawn two nights in a row. We had the opportunity to interview three of the biggest DJ acts at the event: The Dexpistols, DJ Jin, and DJ Kentaro. We asked them similar questions in three separate interviews, and this is what they had to say:



DJ Kentaro

In one phrase, can you tell us how you felt when it was first decided that you would perform at this event?

Dexpistols: (Daruma) “I don't know.”

DJ Jin: “I have no idea what this will be like.”

DJ Kentaro: “Yes!!”

So now that your set is over, what are your impressions about the event?

Dexpistols: (Daruma) It was really interesting. Because there were a lot of foreigners in the audience, the response to our music was great. We got this pure and direct reaction to the music. No thinking, just music.

(Maar) Just feeling.

DJ Jin: It was fun, really great. At first, I had some trouble with my equipment - my turntables weren't working right. But other than that, it was great!



Dexpistols

DJ Kentaro: There were Japanese people and people from all over the world, and I think it's great to have everyone dancing to the same music. And playing with the ocean in sight was amazing. I was really hot [laughs], but I had a lot of fun.

Tonight's audience was about a half and half mix of Japanese people and foreigners. Did you feel any kind of different response or impression?

Dexpistols: (Daruma) Japanese people think first, before they dance.

(Maar) It's like, “Hmmm... okay, this is good! Now I'll dance.”

(Daruma) Not just feeling.

(Maar) Of course, we are shy, Japanese people. I'm not sure what the reason is. [laughs]

DJ Jin: I think I'm better at playing for foreigners. When I DJ in Tokyo, the foreigners are usually the most fired up, so this wasn't too different from other shows. And if everyone is feeling the music, you don't really make a separation between the different groups of people.

DJ Kentaro: Yeah, I've been on tour in Europe and had audiences of only foreigners, and I've had shows in Japan with only Japanese people, so this was the first time performing in front of a half and half mixed crowd, and I felt pressure to perform well, but it was a lot of fun.

What kind of message do you want to give through your music to the people who came tonight?

Dexpistols: [in unison] (Daruma) Party! (Maar) Dance!

(Maar) Dance, party, and enjoy yourself because we only have this one life to live.

(Daruma) And this night will only happen once, right now.

DJ Jin: I think people came here to have fun and enjoy themselves, but for me,

more than just partying, I'm happy if the audience can really feel and be moved by the music.

DJ Kentaro: What I always want to say is that this is music, and music has no walls. Like today, not just the music but the audience was without borders, and there were no walls between the different nationalities.



DJ Jin

Do you have any plans for your next project?

Dexpistols: (Daruma) Mixing music.

(Maar) Starting a new label.

(Daruma) We want to connect to the world outside of Japan.

DJ Jin: I'm in the midst of a few things, but I don't have a one specific project next. Just a few small things you can read about if you Google me on the web.

DJ Kentaro: I have a tour across Europe, and then a tour in America, and then I'll probably come back to Japan and think about the next album.

Okay, and lastly, we have one fun question for you. If you could have one super power, what would it be?

Dexpistols: (Maar) I would make curry. The best curry in the world!

DJ Jin: Super power? I have a wife now, so I would like to be able to do things more leisurely, and spend time with her. [laughs] I'm always so busy!

DJ Kentaro: I would DJ up in the sky, and the clouds would be like the dance floor for the audience.

The Gospel of Fool: A JET Playing Card Phenomenon

By
Matthew Stott

Just thinking about the subject, my hands shake. The 100-yen deck of cards burning a hole through the drawer of my desk where I keep them, as I look around for potential fellow players. Anyone. The other teachers in the office scuttle about in the same nervous fashion as they would on any ordinary school day, like the harried protagonists in Kafka's tales, despite the fact that we are in the middle of a flu epidemic and there will be virtually no students on school grounds for at least the duration of the week. There is no joy to be had from that quarter. (Thankfully, none of them are sporting antennae or carapaces.)

For an Australian like me there is very little reason to become bored with life in Japan, but when it does happen, there are few cures like a game of "Fool." Developed by JETs Goran Seletkovic and Daniel Knowlton from the half-remembered rules of a game called "Shithead," the aim of Fool is to get rid of all of your cards: or rather, to avoid being the last person to do so. We don't enforce the "Shithead" convention of making the losing player abase him or herself by declaring, "I am the Fool," though we like the idea. Goran and I rarely go anywhere without a deck



of playing cards on our person, and wherever two to five of us ALTs are gathered in the name of Fool, be it at the beach, on a long Shinkansen commute, or in Mister Donuts, there is always a good time to be had.

Dealing

Each player is dealt a row of three face-down cards, three face-up cards placed on top of the face-down cards, and three hand cards. The remaining cards (the Deck), minus the Jokers, are placed faced-down in a pile on the table. At this time, players are permitted to exchange cards in their hand with their face-up cards.

The order of play

Special cards notwithstanding, a 3 of any suit is the lowest-ranked card, and an Ace of any suit is the highest card. (That's right: 2s are special cards, but I'll explain that later.) The player holding the lowest-ranked card goes first; if this applies to more than one person it can be resolved by *janken*. If there are more than two players, the starting player also gets to decide the direction of play.

Playing Fool

After a card is played, the next card to be played must be of equal or higher ranking (e.g. a 3 cannot be played on a 5.), except when a 9 is played. The cards that are put down accumulate into a Pick-up Pile, so called because if a player cannot put down a card, he or she must pick up the entire pile.

While there are still cards in the Deck, players must always have three cards in their hand, unless they have been



forced to pick up. Therefore, as cards are put down, they must be replenished from the Deck. Two, three or four cards of the same rank may be played in a single turn, and players should replenish their hands accordingly. If a player having been forced to pick up is holding more than three cards, that player may not replenish from the Deck.

If a card can be played in order to avoid picking up the Pile, it *must* be played.

Face-up Cards

These come into play only after the Deck has been used up. Players must get rid of any remaining cards in their hand before they may play a face-up card. Two or three face-up cards of the same rank may be played in a single turn. Players who are unable to play any of their face-up cards must pick-up the Pile.

Face-down Cards

These cannot be played until the player has no remaining face-up cards or hand cards. Players may not peek at their face-down cards before playing them, and they may only choose one of them to play at a time, using a method we like



to call "the Force." If a card is unplayable, that player must pick up the Pile, though this card need not be shown to the other players.

Special Cards

2 "resets" the Pile to the lowest ranking. It can be played on any card.

7 is an "invisible" card, and can also be played on any card: the next player must play on the card underneath the 7.

9 "reverses" the order of play for the next player, who must play a 9 or lower. A 9 can only be played on 9 or lower.

10 can be played on any card, and it clears the Pick-up Pile. The player then replenishes from the Deck (if possible) and plays another card, starting a new Pile.

If four cards of the same rank are played in sequence, the Pile is cleared and the player completing the sequence wins an extra turn.

Strategies

Most of these you can figure out for yourself, but I'll tell you the most important one. At the start of the game, after cards have been dealt and you are allowed to swap cards in your hand with face-up cards, you should aim to have the strongest possible combination of cards, such as 10s, 7s and Aces, in your face-up suite. This will help you to burn through your cards more swiftly.

Using Fool in the English classroom

Even if I can't entice my fellow public servants to play, I've always found Fool to be a rampaging success with the ESS kids. Teaching Japanese students how to play the game is an intensive speaking-and-listening activity in itself, as is getting students to teach other students how to play. And once they are familiar with the rules, I like to incorporate sets of conversation questions into the game.

