



04.14

ht

hyogo times

.....*Inside*.....

Travel: Yakushima

A guide to Japanese school uniforms

Miso Green: Savotem's story, Part Two



## Features

- 12** Hyogo AJET Ski Trip  
**26** A guide to Japanese school uniforms



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>3</b> Hello!: Message from the Editor | <b>16</b> Current Affairs: Wage Hike      |
| <b>4</b> Hello!: Message from the PR     | <b>18</b> Review: Explosions in the Sky   |
| <b>5</b> Kicchiri: Miso Salmon           | <b>20</b> Miso: Savotem's story: Part Two |
| <b>6</b> Travel: Yakushima               | <b>24</b> Kannon: Kokawadera              |
| <b>8</b> Review: Otsuka Museum           | <b>28</b> WATN: Kevin Shannon             |
| <b>11</b> Promotion: WhyNot              | <b>32</b> Calendar                        |
| <b>14</b> Just Ask Ava                   |   |

## Hyogo Times Staff

**Editor:** Charlotte Griffiths  
**Online:** Dana Warren  
**Designer:** Karen Cornish  
**PR:** Ryan Hertel  
**Cover:** Charlotte Griffiths

**Contributors:** Claire Bronchuk, Savotem Fujiwara, Charlotte Griffiths, Takeshi Hara, Ava Hart, Ryan Hertel, Emily Lemmon, Whitney Litz, Uluwehi Mills, Sean Mulvihill, Paige Ngo, Cherie Pham, Kylie Pinder, Kevin Shannon and Taylor Wettach.

All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, poetry, prose and any ideas to improve the Hyogo Times for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community. Submit by the 15th of each month to: [hyogotimespublications@gmail.com](mailto:hyogotimespublications@gmail.com).

## Message from the Editor

### Greetings!

I hope you are reading this sat on a river bank under a cloud of pink blossom, because spring has finally sprung! Yes believe it not, after the months of shivering it is time to bid a bittersweet goodbye to the kotatsu, burn the over-worn HeatTech and break out the blue tarpaulin and picnic basket. Hello hanami season!

In this time of new life bunnies hop jovially in rice paddies as baby birds cheep in their nests – at least that's what I imagine happens in the inaka. In the urban sprawl between Kobe and Osaka spring is truly signaled by the arrival of the sickly sweet and pink sakura Frappucino at Starbucks which tastes more like fragrant hand soap than its true inspiration.

April sees the arrival of a fresh bunch of malleable students, all eager and excited to learn English – yes, spring is also the season for excessive optimism. It is time to wipe the dust off your textbooks, dig out the stickers, get back out there and internationalise! And if the first week of ceremonies, health checks and tests trips you up in your eagerness to get back to the classroom, then look no further than our April issue which is fit to bursting with interesting articles to distract you until it's your time to shine once again with that perfectly polished self-introduction.

This month Kylie is teaching us about the Japanese school uniforms we know and love, Taylor's talking money in Current Affairs, intrepid explorers should have a look at Paige's tips for Yakushima and culture vultures can learn about the intriguing Otsuka museum and an exciting band, soon to arrive on our shores. We also have regular features including part two of Savo's inspiring story in Miso Green, the Kannon pilgrimage, a tasty recipe, Where are they now? and more!

To coincide with the new school year Dana, manager of all things HT web-related, has given the HT website a swoosh makeover. However, as with the teacher changeover at school, it is time to bid farewell to our stalwart designer, Karen. Thank you for your tireless commitment to the Hyogo Times, it has been a pleasure to work with you and I wish you all the luck for the next stage in your career – hopefully no one will email you in the early hours of the morning as I have done!

Now, readers, remember that cherry blossom season is short, sweet and spectacular, so make the most of the seasonal delights this month with breakfast, lunch and after school picnics.

Until May!

*Char*



Hello ~ a!



## Message from the PR

### Spring is happening on Awaji, and love is in the air!

Oh and pollen, mostly pollen...

As a grumpy old dude trapped in a 27-year-old's body, I find excuses to hate on things for no other reason than to feel superior in a miraculously childish way. Example: Baseball caps are dumb. With simple unfounded opinions I can make anything look stupid inside my own amazing head! Sorry baseball cap dudes, I'm now cooler than you.

I bring this up, because one thing I'm having a hard time trying to make stupid is the beautiful land of Awaji Island. This makes me believe that maybe it actually is a place/thing/object/idea that isn't bad, and therefore, it's good! Now, about this time, you are probably asking yourself, "Ryan, why are you bringing this up? Also, does this look infected to you?" Well, I'm bringing it up because, this coming May, there will be an awesome opportunity for you to come see the wonders of Hyogo's best island, Awaji, and yes, that does look infected. Get to a doctor yesterday.

"Tell me more about this Awaji-tunity you mentioned!" you say.

Well, reader, Awajishima has an awesome cottage campground, next to a dolphin park and fishing park which is also quite near Awaji's famous puppet theatre

and Naruto whirlpool-viewing boat port. You, yes you, and up to 19 of your JETiest friends will have the opportunity to see these things, BBQ with cool people (and me, a moderately decent people), sleep in a cabin with said people, and see many more awesome things!

But, that's not all! Awaji is home to the Awajishima Monkey Center, where you can frolic amongst the primates like your inner-nature desires. And the food, don't get me started on the food (it's good - that was the purpose of my usage of that cliché). Keep an ear out for more information on the [Hyogo AJET Facebook](#) page, so you can be first on the list to participate in the campingness on May 31st!

Also, about that pollen I mentioned in the title, sorry spring hay-fever sufferers! I don't really have any thoughts on pollen, but that title was funny, right? Right?

*Ryan Hertel*

**P.S.** April is pretty cool too, so don't forget about it! Get outside and enjoy the increasingly nice weather. However, continually remind yourself that it can't possibly be as cool as camping on Awaji in May will be!



## Toaster Oven Miso Salmon

### Ingredients

**Prep time: 30 mins plus\***

**Cook time: 12 mins**

**Makes 2 servings**

- 2 salmon fillets
- 4 heaped tsps white miso paste
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp mirin
- 1 tsp sugar
- **Optional** 10ml sake

While most of you may have the luxury of a fish grill tucked under your 2-set stove, I, among others, do not. But daijoubu, I have an ever-so convenient 860W toaster oven to save the day. This month I'll show you how to easily transform salmon into a bento lunch or fish supper.

### Step one

Mix all the ingredients together in a bowl (except for the salmon!).

### Step two

Pour marinade over the salmon fillets and leave in the fridge for 30 minutes – overnight.

### Step three

Wrap each salmon fillet in a separate foil parcel and put on a tray in the toaster oven.

### Step four

Cook in foil for 8 minutes.

### Step five

Open foil parcels and cook for a further 4 minutes.

Enjoy one immediately with rice and seasonal greens and save the other for the centerpiece of your bento tomorrow!

*Cherie Pham*

\* for marinating



## The Do's & Don'ts of Yakushima Hiking

**Do** greet and be greeted by every single hiker you pass.

**Don't** wear regular sneakers to climb the highest mountain in March (you will have sad wet and cold feet).

**Do** use the free huts to sleep in.

**Don't** expect running water or electricity at the huts.

**Don't** forget your camera.

**Do** take the ferry to Yakushima if you have time (equipped with manga library, sauna, restaurants, and sleeping area).

**Don't** forget to close the curtains when using the ferry's sauna.

**Do** buy the ferry tickets' from Lawson for a discount.

**Don't** forget to pack enough food to sustain your exhausted hiking body for all hiking days.

**Do** avoid peak season if possible (namely GW, August and September).

**Do** be prepared to be awestruck by the sheer beauty of your surroundings.

**Don't** be deterred by the promise of rain (as legend has it, it rains 35 days a month)

**Do** act out scenes from Princess Mononoke.



### Essential knowledge for your hike

○ Transportation to Yakushima

○ Everything can be hired at the shops at Miyanoura port on Yakushima, and the supermarket close by also has gear for sale (Suggested packing list: warm sleeping bag, first aid kit, portable stove if you want hot meals, hiking gear, emergency blankets, many pairs of socks, flashlights, and a sense of adventure).

○ Paid accommodation is available on the island, in addition to the free huts. Free booking available here (mountain huts are first come first serve).

○ There are two seaside, essentially free, outdoor onsen, but both are on the south side of the island. You should allot three days of hiking if you would like to hike to them. There are other indoor onsen facilities littered around the island.

○ In August, you could be lucky and see sea turtles laying their eggs on the north-west beaches.

○ There are virtually no garbage bins on your hiking trail, so be prepared to lug your rubbish around (add garbage bags to your shopping list).

○ Terrific maps are provided by the Kagoshima tourism website (hard copies can be picked-up at the tourist info desk)

○ English bus time table and fares (not available at the tourist information desk)

*Paige Ngo*



## The Otsuka Museum, an Education in Art

### You may visit Tokushima prefecture

for the impressive Naruto whirlpools in the strait between Awaji and Shikoku, but whilst there you can also enjoy an unexpected cultural extravaganza thanks to the Otsuka Museum of Art (*Otsuka Kokusai Bijutsukan*).

On a bright day in February my friend and I were taken to this museum by her colleague. He suggested we 'pop in for lunch' after a boat tour of the kraken-esque vortices in the strait. A pricey entrance fee of ¥3,150 and the incredibly long escalator to the entrance served to intrigue us as to the museum's contents. We were in no way prepared for what we would see.

At the welcome desk we were handed floor guides, but as bad gallery-goers we paid no heed and continued nattering away as we entered the first room.

We stopped mid-sentence: we had just walked into the Sistine Chapel. Totally unprepared, I certainly did a double-take, wondering if I were wrong and this magnificent room a special commission reminiscent of Botticelli and Michelangelo. But no, there it was, a scale replica of the most famous chapel in the world. What was better, we were the only ones in the room, and we entered facing the breath taking fresco behind the altar, Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement*. The Vatican chapel itself is always packed with tourists and you enter through the altar wall so are forever craning over your shoulder to see the magnificent fresco.

Confused and a little overwhelmed we turned to our formerly ignored museum brochure in search of an explanation. As my friend read thoroughly I browsed the rest of

the collection and exclaimed "Oh! They have Vermeer's *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, I was so sad to miss that when it came to Kobe, aren't we lucky it's here now! But wait, they also have Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, several Renoirs, *The Birth of Venus* and the *Mona Lisa*! Wait a second..." The cogs whirring slowly I finally realized that the museum must be full of copies just as I was informed the Otsuka Museum of Art prides itself in creating exact replicas of great works of art on ceramic plates. Digital images of the original are transfer-printed onto ceramic tiles before being fired and retouched. Barring earthquake damage, these ceramics will not suffer ageing as paintings do, so preserving our most revered paintings for future generations to enjoy. Confused? Me too. Details of the process can be seen in the museum itself or on their website [here](#).

Otsuka Museum of Art is Japan's largest exhibition venue. Its five expansive floors enjoy a prime position nestled into the cliff and are fit to bursting with the greatest works of art in history. With over one thousand pieces of European art from 190 museums in 25 countries, chronicling the development of Western painting from its origins to Pop art. A visit to the Otsuka Museum of Art is like stepping into History of Art for Dummies.

We often see Japan creating its own version of foreign things: Paris has the Eiffel Tower, Tokyo its red replica; the Netherlands has its windmills, clog museums and tulips, Nagasaki prefecture has *Huis Ten Bosch*. Otsuka takes this penchant for replication to a whole new level. However, Disneyland for art lovers it is not. Thanks to

its hefty price tag and slightly obscure location the Otsuka Museum remains uncrowded even on weekends; and is certainly no Louvre experience - you can touch, yes touch, the Mona Lisa. Fans and students of art make the pilgrimage to Tokushima to submerge themselves in the ultimate gallery tour; where else can you go from medieval mosaics to Andy Warhol in the space of an afternoon?

The science and technology involved in creating these reproduced works is impressive in itself. Perhaps more so is the tenacity and persuasive skills that must have been employed to obtain the rights to make and display these copies. You cannot argue that the museum is an incredible feat, one which took its creator, industrialist Masahito

Otsuka, and his team of European Art historians over seven years to accomplish.

Having been lucky enough to see some of the originals of those displayed in the museum I can attest to their incredible replication; every brush stroke is visible and the sizes are precisely the same as their forebears. However, there is a certain loss felt, particularly evident for me with the Impressionist paintings. Whilst the ceramic surface does allow for some texture (unlike a simple poster copy), the pronounced brush strokes which were so important to and, at the time, unique to the Impressionism movement are not rendered as clearly as in the originals.

On the large canvases you also see clear splits between the ceramic panels. Personally I think this is a





positive thing, representative of the museum's attitude that they do not seek to make replacements for the original pieces, but to create a space where one can experience celebrated works of art far from their homes. Being able to see the panels also fetes the science behind the project. However, whilst commendable, this can mar the viewing experience, for example with the four Monet *Nymphéas* (Water Lilies) which are displayed outside (it is said that by viewing the paintings in natural light you can relive Monet's experiences at the garden in Giverny, viewing the lilies at different times of day, in different lights). The full-sized original canvases are spectacular, and this is unfortunately lost as

each canvas is split into panels at Otsuka. Despite these issues, the Otsuka Museum of Art is definitely worth a visit for those interested in Western art. The originals of the works on display are scattered across the world, many on permanent display and some in private collections. It would take years, unlimited funds/air miles and very good connections in the art world to see the originals of all these masterpieces. Otsuka brings the pages of an art encyclopedia to life and has the potential to do so long after we lose the originals to ageing.

*Charlotte Griffiths*

**P.S.** If you do make the trip to Tokushima for the gallery, watch out for the tour-guide robot who roams the halls, an interesting contrast to the 'antiquity' surrounding it.

*Tell me more!*

[www.o-museum.or.jp/english](http://www.o-museum.or.jp/english)

[www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4716544/The-biggest-repro-job-in-the-world.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4716544/The-biggest-repro-job-in-the-world.html)



Looking for a *misty meditative* getaway?  
Or for *fun weekend* nights now the weather's warming?  
You should take a look at *WhyNot's* events for this month!

On April 27, temple hop, try your hand at meditation, and eat traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine, high above it all in Wakayama's Mount Koya.

Hyogo AJET has teamed up with **WhyNot** to get special discounts for members. When booking, simply write "Hyogo AJET" in the "How did you know about this trip?" box on the booking form. On the day of the trip show your Hyogo AJET card to a **WhyNot** representative on the day of the trip to receive ¥500 cashback!

Not got your Hyogo AJET membership card yet? Click the card above!

Hyogo AJET's membership card is a new venture which aims to get discounts and deals for JETs across the prefecture. Keep an eye on the website for more participating businesses.

And don't forget the **WhyNot** parties! With something on in Osaka or Kobe every weekend night in April, show your Hyogo AJET card at the door for a special entry price; including three hours' nomihoudai! (Men: ¥2,000, Women: ¥1,000)

See [WhyNotJapan.com](http://WhyNotJapan.com) for more details on the month's events!



## Hyogo AJET 2014 Ski Trip

**Most people in northern Hyogo** know of the old wives' tale about stink bugs: an autumn with many of those pests guarantees a winter with much snow. When the leaves began to change color, stink bugs invaded school rooms and the homes of the innocent. Sapporo was frosted in picturesque white for the Yuki Matsuri. The so-called Polar Vortex gripped North America in harsh sub-zero conditions for months. Indeed, this year promised to be a winter wonderland. Yet the weather in the quaint towns of Yabu and Kami, which boast the best ski slopes in the Kansai region, remained curiously mild.

For the Hyogo AJET ski trip on the first weekend of March it was not the snow that turned out to be the trouble. Thick fog settled on the mountainside on Saturday and seemed content to stay. It was so dense at times that skiers and boarders found themselves blindly speeding through milk with only the sound of others passing by to remind them that they were not alone.

The man versus wild experience was not easily forgotten. Back at Furusato lodge, after a trip to the local onsen and a delicious sukiyaki dinner, the group's newfound

wilderness survival skills became inspiration for an intense game of Mafia. Peter Johnson crafted a gripping story that featured treacherous moguls, feral bears, and skiers betraying one another.

The night ended with good laughs and good company. I thank all of the ALTs who came from faraway places to spend a weekend in Tajima. I hope to see you all back up here sometime soon.

*Whitney Litzy*

photo courtesy of Claire Bronchuk

photo courtesy of Claire Bronchuk

photo courtesy of Claire Bronchuk



photo courtesy of Takeshi Hara



photo courtesy of Claire Bronchuk



## Just Ask Ava

Dear Ava

It is right after lunch, my stomach is full, and as I lean back in my seat to stretch I scan the staff room and notice most of my coworkers seem to be scanning the backs of their eyelids. In that moment I realize my own desire to snooze on the warmth of my computer. Yet as with most days I can never actually go through with a nap and instead release a heavy sigh on my walk for yet another cup of coffee.

Throughout my time here in Japan I have complied with most, if not all, of the cultural behaviors expected of me, whether that is hollering, “おはようございます” louder than a rooster caws to everyone in the office, or owning three pairs of shoes so I can walk everywhere on my school’s campus. However, I have not been able to fully embrace the afternoon (or, as I have sometimes witnessed, midmorning and late afternoon) nap. From my own cultural background I worry that it will be considered unprofessional. Even worse, as the only foreigner and someone who tends to have a lot less work and who leaves far earlier than most of my colleagues,

that I will be scoffed at because really, how much work have I done to deserve a nap? Although arguable, the fear of being perceived in that way prevents me from attaining a nice 20 minutes of rest. What are your thoughts, do I continue the way things are or go ahead and pursue just another cultural norm here in Japan?

Thanks for the help!

*Sleepless in Shingu*



Dear Sleepless,

I believe there are two issues to address here; the first being your self-consciousness regarding school-time sleep, and the second your naivety about coffee in this country. I shall begin with the second as it is certainly the most grave.

Let me tell you in no uncertain terms that coffee here is abominable; the stuff in the staff room only a marginal improvement on the pigswill from vending machines. You simply cannot expect this dishwater to give you the buzz and caffeine injection a true coffee should. Nor, if premade in a plastic cup, can you ever recreate the perfect elegance and sophistication a true Italian espresso brings naturally to the consumer. Please do not even consider replying that your caffeinated libations are of Seattle origin and thereby real, a ‘cawfee shop’ doth not a caffè make. And whilst we are on the subject, cappuccinos after 11am are sacrilege. But I digress. Your problem here is that the substance you are relying on is completely unsuitable and this is why you must imbibe “yet another” cup. The solution here is simple; bring Italia to you by shipping in vast quantities of Lavazza, or similar. Not only will such powerful beans keep you awake and chirpy, but

their very scent will induce admiration for your coffee commitment in your Suntory\* swilling colleagues.

Finally, your catnap paranoia: the office snoozing phenomenon is intriguing and the potential for drooling, snoring and sleepwalking can cause concern for potential sleepers. British army psychiatrists actively encourage napping because in the field one never knows when an opportunity to sleep will come, and it is arguably a similar situation with teaching schedules here. However I personally refuse to nap, I take siestas – and then only on silk sheets. If you are less discerning about your place of repose I would refer you to this succinct list of [napping pros](#) to place clearly on your desk whilst you catch your forty winks. Of course it might be an idea to translate them first so that the entire staff room will understand your conscious decision to reap the benefits of a doze – the task of translation will also put off the inevitable day you do admit defeat and succumb to slumber.

With espresso in hand,

*Ava Hart*

Do you have  
a **burning question**  
or cultural conundrum?  
Well, the Hyogo Times  
is proud to introduce the  
scintillating and savvy  
Ava Hart, here to answer  
all your concerns in  
her new column  
**Just Ask Ava.**

\*Suntory produces Boss, which they like to describe as coffee. Ignorant fools.

HT: The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the original author and intended for entertainment. Any advice is taken at your own risk. There is a fine line between being independent and a social pariah.



## Wage Hike Shows that Abe Government Means Business for Labor

While Japanese business has boomed under the policies of Abenomics, doubts have persisted for the average wage earner. Recent developments, however, suggest that the Abe government means business in strengthening the position of labor.

Since sweeping back into office in December 2012's lower house election, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has pursued an aggressive plan to revive Japan's long-stagnant economy and create a "virtuous economic cycle" of increased corporate earnings, wages and consumption.

The first half of 2013 saw Abenomics rousing Japan's economy from two decades of lethargy, with a dramatic weakening of the yen driving export competitiveness, GDP annual growth above 4%, and the Nikkei 225 increasing 57% – its best performance in more than forty years. While Japan's economic growth slowed to an annual rate of just 0.7% by the fourth quarter of 2013, record corporate profits and business confidence suggest that Abenomics still has some fight in it.

In context of rising consumer prices, however, this bright spot is perhaps most telling for who it has left in its shadow: the average Japanese wage earner. While company

confidence is on the up, declining base earnings and real wages had weighed down consumer sentiment to a 29-month low as of February. Cautioned by years of stop-start growth and continuing concerns about the health of the global economy, Japanese executives have been reluctant to share their profits in the form of hard-to-reverse base wage increases.

The Abe government has responded to this bottlenecking of profits by aggressively lobbying business leaders in support of a wage increase. Major corporations have long dominated Japanese business, and the Abe government hopes that a wage raise by Japan Inc. will lead to a pay increase for workers across-the-board. In spite of these efforts, however, a February Reuters survey of big companies found more than 80% were not planning to raise base pay.

As such, the March 12th announcement that many leading automakers, electrical appliance manufacturers, shipbuilders and heavy machinery manufacturers would raise pay scales has provided hope to Japan watchers, if not Japanese workers. Toyota Motor Corp., which has a strong influence over other companies, will raise its average monthly pay scale by

¥2,700, while Honda Motor Co. is planning a ¥2,200 increase. Additionally, six major electronics firms, including Hitachi Ltd. and Panasonic Corp., will raise their wage scales by ¥2,000 per month, the highest on record for the sector. This response, stronger than analysts' expectations, represents a win for the Abe administration's efforts to help end Japan's long-standing deflation.

The focus now turns to whether wage increases will trickle down to medium-size and small companies, and well as increasingly-common non-regular workers. This is particularly a concern in light of a 3% sales tax hike due to take effect in April, as wage increases by large companies are already relying on bonuses to make up for the difference between greater taxes and what amounts to 2-2.3% greater base pay. Compensation is likely to be less generous for the thousands of companies below the top tier, and particularly slow coming for the almost 40% of Japanese who work informal jobs.

As noted by Rikio Kozu, Secretary-General of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, "This is just a start." It is encouraging that companies increasingly seem to realize this, with Hiromasa Yonekura,

the head of influential business lobby Keidanren describing the recent positive developments as the "result of firms sharing recognition that (a wage increase) is needed to overcome deflation and realize a virtuous economic cycle."

Even more encouraging, though, is the hard-edged commitment of the traditionally business-oriented Liberal Democratic Party-led government to make a "virtuous economic cycle" a reality: the government has threatened to take the unprecedented step of shaming big companies that do not raise wages. The Abe government appears to mean business in its efforts to right the Japanese economy – and not only for business.

*Taylor Wettach*



## Explosions in the Sky

### When asking friends if they

happen to be fans of Explosions in the Sky, one of two reactions often occurs. The first, and often more awkward of the two, is that a friend will slightly turn their head in puzzlement, cock an eyebrow, and nervously laugh while they ask for clarification, "You mean like fireworks?" All of this transpires while simultaneously worried thoughts race through their head that perhaps they aren't the best judge of character and how in the world have they accidentally befriended someone who is about to share with them the intricate details of a plan to in fact create explosions in the sky. Reaction number two, however, is drastically different and results in a broad smile spanning the friend's face followed by a flow of emotional expressions declaring their undying love for what is, and will forever, be the extraordinary musical talent of the band, Explosions in the Sky.

Following this second reaction, conversation ensues about when and where the band was first heard and in what ways they have positively impacted the lives of their listeners. Stories have been shared by friends back home who have used them almost therapeutically while driving through empty deserts after dealing with a tough break up and by college friends who used their songs to recover after Hell Week. Yet, the once obscure band from West Texas that increases it's following with each passing year is hard to categorize. Emotional, yes, but far from what is considered emo. Rock, of course, but infused with string work that is symphonic in its way. Perhaps the difficulty is due to their instrumental nature where three of the four members play electric guitars (although a bass guitar is substituted when needed) and the fourth member is on drums. Analogous to the works of El Ten Eleven, Godspeed You! Black Emperor,

and Mogwai, Explosions offer their own signature sounds to the genre and each new album, although foundationally similar, offers refreshing original compositions.

Their full length albums, currently numbering six, typically have between five and seven songs that range in length from three to twelve minutes. These lengthy songs are filled with relentless buildups and ebullient climaxes that are almost impossible to express in words, that is until the songs titles are reviewed and you are again left speechless at the band's ability to brilliantly capture the essence of their work in a few words. Beautiful titles such as "Glittering Blackness," "Be Comfortable, Creature," "What Do You Go Home To?" and, most famous, "Your Hand In Mine" provide words for the wordless rhythms. Their musical ability has also led to their music being used in a number

of movies and television shows and has provided them the opportunity to perform entire soundtracks for three movies, *Friday Night Lights*, *Prince Avalanche*, and *Lone Survivor*.

Although the time in which you could feel a sense of superiority over your friends for knowing about the band before them is quickly coming to an end, the chance to see Explosions is still something to pursue and then flaunt. Often only performing at expensive concert events like Bonnaroo and Coachella, catching them on tour is not easy. Luckily, they will be starting their tour of Asia in late April and have scheduled two shows for Japan in May, including Osaka, (click [here](#) for concert details). It is a strongly recommended experience and one you will not regret.

*Sean Mulvihill*

### *Favorite title from each studio album*

#### **"Time Stops"**

How Strange, Innocence

#### **"Yasmin the Light"**

Those Who Tell The Truth Shall Die, Those Who Tell The Truth Shall Live Forever

#### **"Your Hand in Mine"**

The Earth Is Not A Cold Dead Place

#### **"Day Five"**

The Rescue

#### **"It's Natural to Be Afraid"**

All Of A Sudden I Miss Everyone

#### **"Let Me Back In"**

Take Care, Take Care



## Girzo, Koji, and Dirt Savotem's Story, Part Two

### Continuing on from last month's

Miso Green is part two of my friend Savo's life story. It's a really good one, so check out [last month's](#) piece if you need to catch up.

I had another huge decline in my condition when I was 28... I was swollen, feverish, and couldn't even get up to use the bathroom. This time, my parents came to my rescue and took me to the hospital. I wasn't living with them, so I had been lying to them, saying that I was still just being treated for back pain. In front of the X-Ray room, I tearfully told them the truth. I was checked in to the hospital that night, only to receive more inconclusive test results. I still had a fever, and sitting up in bed took all of my strength. In such a state with an unknown cause, the doctors put me into quarantine as a precaution. I spent a month there. One day the doctor came in to tell me that a test had finally come back with results: a genetic test showed that I had a collagen disease that was causing the rigidity and pain in my muscles. "It's incurable," he told me.

I was ecstatic. I thought that all of the alternative treatments had eliminated my cancer. Despite the collagen disease being incurable, I knew I could handle it. My future

opened up in front of me after having been limited for so long. For so long, I had been living for the moment. All the time that I had spent drawing I thought, I have to finish this before I die. I can't afford to wait until tomorrow; it has to be done today. This was the real turning point for me. I now realized how important it was to *enjoy* my life.

The kanji for "collagen disease" are quite complicated. They look like this: 膠原病. But I prefer to use a different set of kanji: 幸源病 (happiness-origin-disease). This disease gave me a new perspective. I had never had any interest in agriculture, but I began thinking about getting my hands in the dirt and growing my own vegetables. My illness means my body is often cold, but growing vegetables in the sun covered in dirt always warmed me up. Once I started, I began to feel better right away.

Then, I developed an interest in fermented foods traditional to Japan. Realizing that I was growing soybeans, I thought I could perhaps make miso, and if I could make *miso*, I could certainly make *shoyu*, and it kept growing from there.

My drawings also changed. When I first started, they were all about my imminent death. Now, they were about my aspirations.

The three mouths in the kanji for cancer now came to represent the new, good things in my life: one circle for my illustrations and carvings, one for agriculture and fermentation, and one for therapy through warmth. I've been living this way ever since.

On the back of an American one dollar bill, there's a pyramid. Japanese society is a lot like this. The ones who work the hardest are the ones who rise to the top, but not everyone can do this. In school, I was always at the bottom of the bottom of the pyramid, and I beat myself up over it. Things like cancers and collagen diseases are autoimmune disorders: diseases where your body attacks itself. All of the time that I spent in this pyramid, I told myself that I couldn't study, that I was scrawny and dim-witted – I hated myself. I think that those thoughts, in some way, brought on my illnesses. But from my experiences travelling and working in the fields, and through the treatments that I received, I began to find the good in myself. I discovered what I enjoyed doing.



In economically modern societies, like Japan's, everyone works hard (頑張っている). The more energy you put into your work, the more likely you are to reach the top of the pyramid. The money moves upward, too. The majority of the money that major corporations like Aeon, Jascom, and McDonald's make, is converted to dollars and goes to the US. For me, it wasn't

a fun life, being inside that social pyramid. Of course, some of the people in the pyramid say that they're happy, but I wasn't.

Later, I realized that by achieving self-sufficiency, I was in effect removing myself from that pyramid. Think about it: if I grow my own food and prepare it at home, there's no change of hands. Everything stays

within my house. That's not at all a part of the socioeconomic pyramid.

We, my family and I, manage to use very little money. The four of us spend about ¥3,000 a month on foods that we can't grow. The house we live in is owned by a family friend, and in exchange for the work I'm doing on renovating it, he's reduced our rent to a mere





¥1,500 a month. We also have some utility bills, so outside of my home routine, I work part time at night. This way, my family can live a well-balanced life for about ¥80,000 a month. In the economic sense, we're poor, but we're rich in happiness.

When I was inside that pyramid, I thought that the people outside of it were the oddballs, and yet somehow over the course of 13 years, I myself have left the pyramid. I've only had to buy rice three times in that time, during a period of depression. The rest of the time, I eat rice when it's given to me by neighbors. In the countryside, when you have a surplus of something, you take it to your neighbors. Everything rotates between people. Somehow, without owning a purse or pulling out a wallet, you are able to get everything you need to live. There's never a reason to overwork, and never the feeling that you have to be more than you are.

People with goals to be powerful, famous or wealthy end up in the pyramid. Those kinds of values are inherently linked to it. But my family and I have different values. There's a folk tale you might have heard of called "Kasa-Jizo." In the story, there's an old couple that makes *kasa* hats, and the old man goes into town to sell them, but with little success. Then, on his way home, it was snowing, and he came across these six *Jizo* (bodhisattvas that protect travelers) statues, and he thought, "Those poor things! They have nothing to protect them from the elements!" So he took the five *kasa* that he couldn't sell and put them on the heads of the *Jizo*, and for the sixth one that he didn't have a *kasa* for, he gave the *tenugui* he had wrapped around his own head, and came home with nothing. When he got home, he told his wife the story, and she praised him for doing such a good deed. But surely, if it had been the woman next door, she

would have berated him for giving their hard work to statues.

My wife is sympathetic and supportive like the old woman in that story. She went out with me despite my health, and moved to the countryside with me despite growing up in a city, but every day she tells me how happy she is, how wonderful our place in the country is for raising our children. We've only been married for a few years though, so who knows what she'll think down the line!

Anyway, the point that I want to make is that humans need to be connected with nature. In the confines of a socioeconomic structure, you really have to work hard. I myself worked far too hard. I started thinking, "Hey, the word 'cancer' (*gan*) is linked to the phrase 'work hard' (*ganbaru*), isn't it?" I learned the hard way that if



you work too hard (頑張る), the cancer sticks to you (癌貼る), or you pull the cancer toward you (癌張る). But I also discovered another sense of 'work hard': the kind of hard work that puts a smile on your face (顔晴る). With this sense of *ganbaru*, enjoyment becomes the foundation of your work. Enjoying your life and smiling is what brings good health. My current condition is the best testament to that. Laughter really is the best medicine, the best remedy, and my family has truly allowed me to put this idea into practice. People on the outside who have no idea how we survive surely think we're strange, but the truth is, by living this way, our lives are so rich and filled with love.

*As I said last month, if you think of anything you'd like to ask Savo, leave it in the comments! I'm going up to visit them soon and if I gather enough to ask, perhaps I can also do an interview for a future Miso Green. Or you can always email me with your questions.*

*Uluwehi Mills*  
miso.green.ht@gmail.com



## 粉河寺 Kokawadera

**Continuing on the Wakayama-ken**  
portion of the pilgrim trail, we arrive  
next at the temple numbered 3 of  
33: Kokawadera.

This temple is not too far from our  
previous temple, Kimiidera, and the  
two make a good combination trip.  
The image enshrined in Kokawadera  
is a truly secret image and never put  
on display, called Yakuyoke Kannon  
(厄除観音), a senju (thousand-armed)  
Kannon dedicated to protecting all  
beings from disaster. The original  
image was once destroyed during  
the Kii offensive, and only the head  
survived, giving it a stronger

association with disaster prevention.  
Although the image is never shown,  
it is believed that Donan Gyoja was  
a living manifestation of Kannon,  
and his image is enshrined in the  
Donan-do, open to the public every  
year on December 18th. As a  
manifestation, the images are  
said to be the same.

Otherwise, the main attractions  
of Kokawadera are mostly artistic  
in nature.

Perhaps the most famous is the  
rock garden in front of the Hondo.

Created during the Momoyama  
era, it's an important example of  
the karesansui (dry arrangement)  
style of garden sometimes seen  
at Zen temples. Most Zen gardens,  
however, are simple in comparison  
to the busy and contrived nature of  
Kokawadera's Teien Garden; using  
many rock formations and stylized  
shrubby in close proximity, the  
garden at Kokawadera gives a  
rather baroque impression. The  
rocks come from all over Japan,  
and the formations are designed  
to tell stories from the "Eight Scenic  
Places of Omi"—places of noted

scenic beauty around Lake Biwa  
and other famous gardens like the  
Katsura palace in Kyoto. The cycad  
plants are also striking, and are said  
to be the original ones brought in  
from Okinawa some 400 years ago.

The Hondo is the largest on the  
route, rebuilt in 1720 by Yoshimune  
Tokugawa and extra-large because  
it needed to accommodate the  
large number of pilgrims as the  
center of a popular Kannon  
movement in the 18th century  
once Yoshimune became shogun.  
If you pay 300 yen, you can go  
into the Hondo and walk around  
behind the zushi where the main  
image is enshrined; back there you  
will see many artistic artifacts like  
the tiger by Hidari Jingoro, and a  
wooden version of the 16 arhats  
(seen outside at Rokkaku-do).

The temizuya (hand-washing  
station) before you get to the  
temple is also striking: it's in the  
shape of a lotus blossom, which  
I hadn't seen at any other temple  
before, pilgrimage or no. Outside  
the Hondo, not far from the Teien  
garden, you will see an ancient

camphor tree, thought to be  
over a thousand years old. It's called  
Kyobokuchi, meaning "crouching  
tree," and legend says that Otomo,  
founder of Kokawadera, crouched  
beneath this tree while stalking  
the deer.

In 770, Otomo Kujiko was in the  
mountains hunting for deer when  
he saw a bright light coming from  
Mt. Kazaraki. The next day, he  
tracked the location of the light,  
and found a dead deer; he repented  
of his hunting ways and built  
a hermitage on the mountain  
to practice austerities and atone  
for his killing of so many animals.

Later on, he was visited by a  
mysterious child who said he  
would carve an image of Senju  
Kannon, but must be left alone  
for seven days. Seven days later,  
an exquisite image of Kannon  
was found, but the child had  
disappeared – it is believed that  
the carver became the carved. It  
is this image that is said to be the  
one enshrined at Kokawadera. The  
Donan-do, dedicated to this child,  
is found on the temple grounds

and houses the image that is  
open yearly on December 18th.

As at many temples, you will find  
a Mizuko Jizo, and a temple bell.  
The gates are carved almost entirely  
of precious zelkova wood, and  
house our familiar gate-guarding  
Nio kings. A garden and shrine  
on the hill behind the Hondo  
add to the beauty and gentle  
feel of the grounds.

To get to Kokawadera,  
take the JR Wakayama line to  
Kokawadera station (not far from  
Wadayamamachi or Wadayama  
stations), then walk about 10 mins.

Happy trails!

*Lemmon*

[www.kokawadera.org](http://www.kokawadera.org)



# a fighting fit: a guide to Japanese school uniforms

## One of the negative aspects to

an extended stay in Japan is the normalisation of Japanese life that would draw the stares and cameras of many a foreign tourist. Never is this more evident than in the casual acceptance of students dressed in some of the most distinctive school uniforms in the world, a relic from Japan's rapid and fanatical adaption of Western culture at the turn of the century.

Students began wearing uniforms, or *seifuku*, in the Meiji Era, to prevent their clothes and appearance from revealing their family background. Originally the uniform consisted of a more formal *hakama* kimono, the *andon bakama*, chosen by the Ministry of Education to increase the profile of its students. However this traditional garb wasn't spared the Westernisation of Japan in the early 20th century, and the *hakama* was replaced with the more functional and practical

Western style, based on military uniforms from Europe.

## Let's hear it for the boys

Arguably one of the most recognisable school uniforms in the world, the black, brass-buttoned, high necked *gakuran* is worn by most male junior and senior high school students. *Gakuran* is a composite word, formed from "*gaku*" (meaning study or student), and "*ran*" (meaning the West). The uniform is based on formal military dress from the Meiji era, which itself is based on European style military uniforms. Depending on the attitude of your school, it is not uncommon to see boys with their top buttons unbuttoned, or otherwise subverting the system with their trousers worn low and rolled up at the ankle.

And what of the buttons? Usually decorated with the school emblem, the second button from the top of the *gakuran* is often given away to the object of a young man's affection, being the button closest to his heart, and containing all the emotions from three years at school. However given the Japanese propensity for shyness, it is not uncommon for enterprising girls to instead ask their crush for his *dai-ni* button, knowing their love is reciprocated if he obliges.

This tradition may come under difficulty in the future, as many schools have since adopted a Western style uniform consisting of white shirt, tie, blazer with school crest, and trousers.

## Girls just wanna have fun

Whether from watching Sailor Moon in the early nineties or your own eyes you will be familiar with the British navy inspired, "*sailor fuku*" uniform. Worn by junior and, traditionally, senior high school students, the uniform was introduced in 1920 to a Fukuoka girl's college, influenced by the headmistress' stay in Britain as an exchange student. Modelled after the British naval uniform at the time, the *sailor fuku* incorporates a blouse with attached sailor collar, worn with a low, pleated skirt. A ribbon, or some other variation, is tied in front.

Again, schools, especially high schools, have gradually moved away from this style to a more western style uniform, consisting of a white blouse, school ribbon, and tartan skirt. Allegedly

this is because *sukeban*, or "delinquent girl" gangs, began modifying the traditional *sailor fuku* to project a tougher look, with longer skirts and shorter shirts. It is also partly due to the fetishisation of the uniforms in Japanese popular culture. Having a more western uniform, however, hasn't exactly prevented the same sort of uniform delinquency that caused the *sailor fuku's* demise, and it is common for students to wear skirts rolled up at the waist to an indecently short height.

So what is next for Japanese school uniforms? Eager to prevent the uniform "vandalism" that occurs at any attempt to suppress the individuality of youth, companies have increasingly created and marketed interesting new uniform gimmicks. This includes a skirt with an elastic snap device (which automatically returns a shortened

skirt to its usual length), or shirttails that display the school's name if left untucked; whether this would act as a deterrent or simply invent a new uniform fad remains to be seen.

As our increasing interconnectivity and internationalisation eases the introduction of Western culture into Japan, it remains to be seen whether the *gakuran* and *sailor fuku* will survive in the face of the more practical Western style uniform. Are these anachronistic outfits so distinctively Japanese they will stand against this second wave of westernisation? Or will our global homogenisation see their end, leaving only hasty snapshots of Japan's young soldiers as a reminder of what was.

Kylie Pinder



## Where are they now?

This month, alumnus Kevin Shannon from Ireland tells us about his 2007-2008 Hyogo experience when he worked 'up north' in Hamasaka and Kasumi, and how it has affected his life and work post JET.

### *What did you do immediately after leaving JET?*

A lot of not very much really. I did the JLPT level 3 pretty much straight away. Then I helped sell nuts and seeds for my brother-in-law in shops and at festivals while I applied for jobs – everything from reporter to car driver to supermarket manager. Eventually I decided to do the New York Bar exams and spent a couple of months studying for them. A week after I paid my course fees I got offered a job at a Japanese company. Had it been offered a week earlier I would have taken it and my life would have been very different.

After the New York Bar Exams I moved to London and did the English Bar before taking a year out to teach English in Honduras.

### *Why did you decide to teach English in Honduras?*

Very simple really. I had a year before my law job (aka 'the real world') started to London so I wanted a last adventure. I couldn't afford to just travel and I liked teaching so that was the job decided. I figured I'd been east (Japan) before so now it was time

to go west. I applied for lots of jobs in South and Central America and the job in Honduras was the first one to get back to me. I didn't know anything about any of the countries in South or Central America so I thought 'Honduras – why not?' The answer was, of course, 'because Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world', but I'd arrived in Honduras before I discovered that!

### *What were the main differences between teaching English in Japan and Honduras?*

In Honduras I was a proper teacher – classes all to myself with curriculums and textbooks etc. I was no longer the 'fun' teacher who made exciting games to play but the teacher who told all the students to sit down and learn grammar. It was hard teaching things which I knew were boring and to keep control of a class where the students' behavior was pretty terrible. The level of responsibility was much higher and the successes and failures of each class much greater.

The whole school organization was complete chaos which was so different to the regulated system in Japan where the bureaucracy would drive you mad. School trips appeared without warning, students would disappear because the school needed them to make chairs, I lost my last two classes each day for a month so the children could practice Christmas carols and we had so many random school holidays; School Anniversary, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, Independence Week and (my personal favourite); the 'Clean-the-Roof' Day.

The other big difference was the students. In Japan all the students were so cute and seemed so young; the 18 year olds acted like they were 15 and the 15 year olds acted like they were 12. In Honduras it was the opposite. The young people grow up very quickly and it is common to have 15 or 16 year olds with their own children and it was easy to forget that the students were so young. Also, while the Japanese

culture is shy and reserved the Honduras culture is loud and brash. If trying to get my Japanese students to talk was a challenge, trying to get my Honduras ones to shut up was an even greater one.

### *Did you experience the dreaded reverse culture shock upon returning home?*

Not really. After the first time I'd been away (a year studying in Australia) I did experience

massive reverse culture shock and was very depressed for a long time but this time I felt I left Japan with my eyes open and ready for what was back home.







### *What are you doing now?*

Working as a barrister (the type of lawyer you see in the silly wigs) in London. I'm also trustee of a charity called Football Action.

### *How has the experience of living in Japan helped you?*

In many different ways. Once I learnt how to sell the experience it was very helpful in terms of getting jobs – it set me apart and made me more different and interesting than other candidates. However, the real difference it has made has been personally. My openness to other cultures, to different ways of thinking and doing things and my patience with other people has increased and it has opened up my horizons. Without it I would never have gone to Honduras, would never have met my wonderful JET friends and I wouldn't have the same lack of fear of new places and new challenges.

### *How do the skills learnt on JET help with your work as a barrister?*

Firstly, as regards speaking in court, other barristers sometimes struggle with nerves of speaking in public but after giving speeches

to the whole school in broken Japanese those nerves are gone forever!

Secondly, as regards thinking on my feet, a skill vital for every barrister as you never know what the judge might ask you. There is nothing like standing in front of forty children looking expectantly at you after your JTE has, with no warning, just said 'Teach fun game' or 'Make grammar lesson' for teaching you to think on your feet.

Finally, as a barrister self-control and patience is vital. No matter what the judge, the other side or your client says you need to remain calm and professional. If there is any better training at patience than JET I've yet to find it.

### *What did you hope to gain doing JET? Did you?*

I wanted an adventure. I definitely got one. Naked man contests, drunken BBQ parties, Fuji Climbs, weird road-trips, my village and its beautiful oddness – it was an absolutely cracking adventure.

### *What do you miss about Japan?*

So much. My wonderful students (and the not so wonderful ones), my little fishing village, country life, the daily adventures of Japanese life, the newness of everything, learning Japanese but, probably most of all, my amazing JET friends. I had such a wonderful group of friends and I really, really miss them.

### *What is your favourite memory of Hyogo?*

A Friday near the end of my time there I had a near perfect day. My classes went amazingly well, I was chatting away in Japanese to my co-workers all day and then had a great English club meeting with some of my favourite students. Then in the evening some friends came over and we had a campfire on the beach and got drunk and it was absolutely wonderful. Had I been given the re-contracting form then I would signed straight away.



### *Do you have any advice for ALJs moving home?*

Leave on your own terms and make sure you do and say everything you wish to before you go. I spent almost two weeks at the end of JET in Japan saying goodbye to all those people who meant so much to me as I knew that I might not see them again. I gave some co-workers/friends presents, I took others out to dinner and with others just went to the local izakaya and we got really, really drunk. It was all different but it meant that, though I was incredibly

sad when I left, I felt I left on the best possible terms I could and had very few regrets.

Questions by  
Charlotte  
Griffiths





The calendar for Hyogo Times is designed and maintained by Paige Ngo!

# April

Hyogo AJET event

Hanshin

Harima






Kobe

Tamba

Awaji

Tajima

Outside of Hyogo

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Registration for the JPLT starts	2	3 	4 	5 
	Mitsuyama Taisai (Himeji) Mar 31 <sup>st</sup> - Apr 7 <sup>th</sup>					
6  Firefly squid festival (Hamasaka)	7 	8	9	10	11	12  Tamba Sasayama Sakura Festival
13  Tamba Sasayama Sakura Festival	14 	15 Takayama Matsuri	16	17	18	19
20 Book Club: Ender's Game (Kobe)  HAFU Screening (Yabu)	21 Nagano sake messe (Osaka)	22	23 Kinosaki Onsen Festival	24 Kinosaki Onsen Festival	25	26
	Seishun 18 Kippu valid for all of April					
27	28	29 Showa Day  Mai Asian music festival (Osaka)	30			



ht

Things are  
finally  
heating up in  
Hyogo!

MITSUBISHI  
BO-P1

860w  
THERMOSTAT

トースト 2-3

ピザ 4-5

もち 4-5

グラタン 6-9

OFF

15

5

10

5以下のときは、8以上に  
してからもどしてください  
↓ ぐず受けトレイ