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THE
SHINING
GIRLS

LAUREN BEUKES

.....inside.....

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THE
SHINING
GIRLS

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Hyogo Times Staff

Editor: Sean Mulvihill

Online: Dana Warren

Designer: Erika Horwege

PR: Anastasia Windeler

Cover: Sean Mulvihill

Backpage: Hironaka7 on Flickr

Contributors: Claire Bronchuk, Sean Mulvihill, Scott Patterson, Brittany Teodorski, Bryan Villa, Dana Warren, Anastasia Windeler, Helen Yuan

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

Message from the Editor: hello!

Renewal. That's the word that comes to mind after the start of a new year. January 1st is like the Monday of a new week; it's full of hope, possibilities, and often positivity. It is a time when most are motivated to start doing the things they have wanted to, but haven't. Sure the weather is a giant hurdle to get over here in Japan, but with the right attitude (and layers) you can be nearly unstoppable. For JETs, January is even more important since it's when the decision to return or move on becomes official. Whatever that decision is, make sure you go forward setting yourself up for success. Reflect on what you want to improve on from 2014 and keep an eye out for opportunities in 2015.

Luckily this issue has a few things to get your new year started off right and make your future a bit more exciting. Want to start reading more? Join the HA-JET Book Club this month on Sunday, Jan 18 (or attend Osaka A-JET's second meeting next month). Are you tired of listening to the same tracks over and over again on your music player? Discover a variety of music from this month's five recommended albums. Better yet, read through the interview with the Tokyo-based indie rock band DYGL. Music not your thing? Try the podcast that caused our language method master, Louie, to step away from the classroom this month and explore the popularity behind Serial. If too much change worries you, head to

our regular contributors' sections where zen master Scott writes his first restaurant review, Helen brings you something new from her kitchen, and Brittany shares her time in Korea and shocks us in The Durants.

Getting back to the New Year, I won't pretend that I have the answers on how to make a resolution that won't be stopped at the beginning of February, but I will offer a suggestion that at least sounds good in theory (though has no study or experiment backing it). Make a list of things you want to get better at, it can be anything: Japanese, coding, rock climbing, cooking, Skyping with friends and family – however many you want. Once the list is finished, simply pick one that you're going to target for 2015 (they'll be other years to tackle your other goals). After picking only one, make a commitment to do it once every week. Ideally choose a day where you have a lot of down time – and once a week isn't even asking a lot to do whatever skill it is you've chosen. I'm not even putting a time length on how long you should practice or do your activity for. Five minutes, thirty minutes, an hour, just do it. Once a week for one year is 52 times, give or take, that you will have done whatever it is you wanted to improve. Will you be a master afterward? Probably not, but you definitely won't be a complete amateur and who knows, maybe that initial start will snowball into increased motivation where once a week turns into twice or three times a week – that's 104 or 156 times you're practicing! We all know that new skills open up new opportunities and that's exactly what most of us want in a new year. As a friend once said, "There is no time for wasting any time. This is the end of the line, the definite sign of what we will be someday."

Sean Mulvihill



hello!

Message from the Prefectural Representative

Akemashite Omedeto!!! Happy New Years! Congratulations on the closing of one great year and the opening of another. While it is the start of the new calendar year, for most JETs, we are reaching the halfway mark in our contracts. Those of us who are first years have most likely fallen into their groove. But all of us are susceptible to the culture shock swing back and may become homesick. Similar to last month's recommendations to fight SAD, keep up the good fight against homesickness. Remember what Kylie said last week about staying happy and healthy this winter season.

In addition to the threat of the living abroad blues, the pressure of re-contracting is also upon us. Soon, we will all decide to stay or leave, if we haven't already. It's a difficult decision to make and shouldn't be taken lightly. Please

take time to consider options. One of the best pieces of advice I ever received is to not dwell too much on it. If you stress over the decision, it makes it even harder. Try checking in with yourself at the start or end of each day, even if you don't think about it for the rest of the day. Over time,

you may see a trend you didn't know. Most importantly, enjoy where you are now. We are all really lucky to be in a job position that provides some amazing experiences. Take advantage of it and try something new. What about skiing or snowboarding?

This winter season, it is said we are in for a lot of snow. A great way to stay active in winter is to take part in winter sports. Did you know Hyogo has some of the best ski and snow locations on this side of the country? Why not come up north for a while and give it a try. The Hyogo A-JET ski trip is a great opportunity and no experience is necessary. If anyone wants information on the Tajima snow sport scene, contact me anytime.

Here's to a new year full of many experiences to come!

Anastasia



HGJET Does Luminarie

photo
spread



Photo Credit, top L-R:
Erika Horwege, Sean
Mulvihill, Emma
Cuthbertson, EH, EH, EC,
EC, SM

Making Mochi: 3 Ways

Mochi - chewy goodness that can be eaten a million different delicious ways. In fact, "mochi mochi" is actually an onomatopoeia that means chewy. Because mochi is quite bland - it's just pounded rice - it's incredibly versatile. From fresh anko (sweet red bean paste) filled balls of mochi to thin slices grilled to make rice crackers, it can be found in all kinds of forms just about everywhere in Japan.

Japanese people apparently eat around 1 kg of the stuff every year, mostly in January. This is probably due to its role in New Year's celebrations. Kagami mochi - tiered dried mochi with a mandarin on top - is displayed in the tokonoma (alcove where art or flowers are displayed) as a symbol of and to wish for prosperity for the family. This is broken (never cut) and eaten on the 11th.

Mochi is also commonly eaten for breakfast from the 1st to 3rd of January in the form of ozoni, a soup dish with various vegetables and sometimes seafood or meat in it. The specifics vary regionally and from family to family. Traditionally, New Years was a time for rest so that is why mochi was often eaten in the place of rice for the first few days of the New Year.

To get into the spirit of the New Year, here are two super simple and popular ways to eat mochi home and a recipe for a Kyoto-style ozoni. I've used the dried packaged stuff you can buy in the supermarket which is relatively inexpensive and keeps forever.



Grilled mochi with sweet soy sauce

INGREDIENTS: dried mochi, soy sauce, sugar

1. Place a piece of mochi on some foil and grill in your toaster oven for 6 minutes or until it puffs up and softens.
2. In small bowl mix 2 parts soy sauce to 1 part sugar (I used ½ tsp. sugar: 1 tsp. soy sauce). Dip the mochi in the sauce and enjoy! Some people also like to wrap some seaweed around the mochi.



Grilled mochi with sweet kinako powder

INGREDIENTS: dried mochi, kinako (roasted soy bean) power, sugar

1. Place a piece of mochi on some foil and grill in your toaster oven for 6 minutes or until it puffs up and softens.
2. Place in a small bowl, cover with boiling water to soften the outside and drain.
3. Mix 2 parts kinako to 1 part sugar. Coat mochi with it and enjoy!



Simple Kyoto-Style Ozoni

Prep time: 5 minutes
Cooking time: 10 minutes
Serves 1

INGREDIENTS

- >> 1 piece of dried mochi (traditionally rectangular mochi is eaten in Kanto and round mochi in Kansai)
- >> 250ml water
- >> ½ tsp. dashi powder (omit this if your miso already has dashi in it)
- >> 1 Tbsp. white miso
- >> 2 slices daikon
- >> 3 large (or 6 small) slices of carrot
- >> 1 small handful komatsuna (小松菜) or any other mild tasting leafy greens such as mizuna (水菜) or spinach

METHOD

1. Peel and cut the carrot and daikon into ½ cm slices. Cut the daikon into quarters and halve the carrots if needed.
2. Trim the ends of the komatsuna, rinse and cut into 4cm bits.
3. Bring a small amount of water to the boil. Blanch the komatsuna - add the stems in then the leaves and leave for 30 seconds. Drain and set aside.
4. Place the water, dashi powder, daikon, and carrot in a small saucepan and bring to the boil. Lower heat and simmer for 6 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, place a piece of mochi on some foil and grill in a toaster oven for 6 minutes or until it puffs up and softens.
6. Turn off the heat. In a bowl, mix the miso paste with a bit of the liquid from the saucepan. Add to the saucepan and stir. (Never boil the soup once the miso has been added!)
7. Pour everything into a bowl, add the grilled mochi and enjoy.

Note: A simpler, but just as delicious alternative is to just throw a piece into the nabe pot when you make nabe. Put it in towards the end so it soaks up all the delicious flavors.

Into Your Car and Out of Your Speakers: DYGL

DYGL (pronounced "dayglo") is a 4-piece indie rock band. They sing in English, but they are based in Japan. Recently, they took time out of their work and tour schedules to answer a few questions about their influences, beginnings, and aspirations for the future.

Can you give readers a brief history of DYGL?

Currently, DYGL has three official members: Nobuki Akiyama (vocals, guitar), Yosuke Shimonaka (guitar, vocals), and Kohei Kamoto (drums). Recently, our bassist quit the band, so Yotari Kachi from Ykiki Beat has been playing the bass for us. We all attend Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo, and we started the band there. At first, we just started the band for the music club at the University. I played the drums at first, and Kohei played the guitar. Gradually, we changed into the setup that we have now. Some organizers found us, and they started to book us for events in many venues around Tokyo. Before that, we did not know much about the music scene in Tokyo, so we were really glad to play at the events.

What is your inspiration behind making music?

It can come from anywhere, listening to music and looking at visual art as a strong inspiration. And color, the color is important. The color of videos and drawings must affect my brain, and it allows me to make colorful sounds. Imaginary scenes and their colors also bring melodies to me. The connection between images and the sounds is really interesting, and that is why I also want to be involved with film and video even though I have not made any yet.



Who are some of your musical influences?

We very influenced by the music overseas, and there are so many, but I think that the strongest influence comes from 2000's post-punk revival. The View, The Enemy, The Strokes, Kings of Leon, The Libertines just to name a few. We also love Britpop, U.S. indie, grimecore, hip-

hop, American pop (I really mean it), jazz, Ryukyu folk, and nu disco. There isn't one exact source of influence, so it is hard to say. I think that 2000's music is a pretty strong influence because that is the music we listened to as teenagers.

Who are some of your favorite Japanese bands?

To be honest, we feel that there are so many shitty bands in the current Japanese pop and rock scene, so it is very hard to find a favorite. We do not have any interest in the artists in Japan's major scenes, but sometimes the underground scenes have some good bands like Mitsume,

Annie the Clumsy, Gloomy, and Batman Winks. There are some good DJs and composers like Boys Get Hurt, Seiho, Tofubeats. I think they are pretty good. The hip-hop scene in Japan is really interesting as well. I think they have found their own unique way of expression. S.L.A.C.K., PUNPEE, Otogibanashi's, Public Musume, and PSG are Japanese bands that are not just imitations of American hip-hop. However, we still love old Japanese folk music and kayōkyoku like Miyuki Nakajima, Folk Crusaders, and Happy End. These bands work with the Japanese language correctly, and it is an original form of expression that Japanese artists can do.

or worse. Anyway, we naturally chose English, but we also feel strange when we are asked about it.

DYGL is from and based in Japan. Why do you choose to write songs in English?

Everybody asks us that question, and I cannot answer it correctly. I don't know. I love The Strokes, not Exile. I love Katy Perry, not AKB48. So maybe that is why I naturally started to write songs in English. There was no choice for me to write in Japanese. I don't hate Japanese, but I don't think it works for this kind of rock music. The Japanese language has a unique vibe, and rock music cannot access that unique vibe. If I ever make Japanese kayōkyoku, then I will not choose English. It is very natural for us to sing in English for this kind of music. The cultural differences are getting smaller, so this might be another reason. Young people around the world have all grown up eating McDonalds, watching YouTube, searching on Google, and listening to Spotify. We all share the same culture, for better



Can you give an example of a normal day in your lives?

As I mentioned earlier, we are still students at the same university. But we are almost finished, so now we work more than we study. We are planning on relocating to the U.S. or UK in the future for music, so we have to earn money for that now. Kohei and I are also in Ykiki Beat, so our daily lives are composed of music, jobs, and a little studying.

We often hang out with close friends in Tokyo, sometimes it is artist friends, and sometimes it is school friends. Recently, we played football by the Hutako Tamagawa River with a team called NXNG and two photographers. The two photographers were Yuki Kikuchi and Shusaku Yoshikawa, and they recently took some photos of artists from LA's Burger Records and are making a zine with music featuring original interviews. It is going to be pretty amazing. We do a lot of music and events with these friends; so hanging out is also an important aspect of our everyday lives.

DYGL recently played a festival in Taiwan. What was that like?

It was a totally awesome experience. The people, the food, the music: everything was fantastic. They treated us very friendly, and we were very moved by that kindness. We played two gigs during the tour, one was at the Taipei Artist Village, and the other was at a huge venue called Legacy. We were really excited to find out that Phoenix had played at the Legacy before. I think the indie music scene in Taiwan is not very big, but they actually have some really good vibes. Manie Sheep's gig was really powerful and soulful. A lot of interesting bands were there. You can check out the other bands by searching the web for Pop Pop Festival.

Was Taiwan the first time that you played outside of Japan?

Yes. We have always thought about touring in Europe or America. Playing our first tour ever in Taiwan was an interesting surprise. The opportunity to play in Taiwan taught us a lot, and we all came to love the country. We are now interested in playing in other Asian countries as well. I have heard that there are some good bands in Indonesia, Hong Kong, and South Korea, so we hope to go those places for music.

What are some of the dreams & goals of DYGL?

We would like to play for festivals like Glastonbury, SXSW, Fuji Rock, Lollapalooza, Big Day Out, Coachella, Summer Sonic, etc... We hope to one day appear on the famous Japanese program Best Hit USA and talk with Katsuya Kobayashi - that is a pretty important dream of ours. However, we would first like to make an album that can combine both our energy and passion for music similarly to how Hats Off to the Buskers, We'll Live and Die in These Towns, and Fidar have.

What is the best way to listen to your music?

It is really up to the listeners, but cassettes and vinyl are obviously great ways. We all love the analog stuff, so we appreciate it if the listeners respect the culture as well. But, YouTube is huge, and we also learn about new music from YouTube, so it is a good way as well. I hope our music can give listeners energy to do new creative things.



When is your next show, & why should people go?

We are currently making songs for an EP and an album, so we don't have many shows coming up. The next show will be on Feb 7, but we cannot go into too many details yet. Please come if you are in or around Tokyo!

Bender

Listen to DYGL: [Facebook](#) | [Soundcloud](#)

Are You Serial?!

So What?

I am behind the times, my friends! When it comes to entertainment, I haven't the foggiest notion what the young hipsters are into these days. Just look at my Netflix queue: It's a miscellany of partially watched sitcoms and documentaries about North Korea. You'd think I'd have gotten onboard with the latest "hip" shows, but au contraire! What with the *Walking Dead*, *Game of Thrones*, *Sons of Boardwalk Anarchy*, it's just too much to manage, yo! My life runs like a Rube Goldberg machine, so carving out time for "my shows" is rare. In other words, it takes a helluva lot for me to get reeled-in or obsessed with something, and when I do want to sit down and unplug, it better be riveting! I'm the guy that walked out of *Hunger Games* like "mehh." I just can't justify buying into the hype when there are literally 37,582 shows that I am supposed to be obsessed with at any given time according to my friends. How ya'll manage is beyond me. But, once I do find something I like, I take the plunge with hook, line, and sinker. My latest semi-addiction: *Serial*.

In case you're unfamiliar, *Serial* is a spinoff of the podcast, *This American Life*. Journalist Sarah Koenig takes us on weekly adventures analyzing and dissecting the murder trial and subsequent conviction of Adnan Syed, who was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison for murdering his ex-girlfriend, Hae Min Lee. The case was presented as a "crime of passion" – two lovers whose enchantment violated their families' norms. When Hae

ended their relationship, Adnan brutally strangled her in the trunk of a car in a parking lot. How Shakespearian. But Koenig is skeptical. Each week, she reveals new kernels of info, conducts interviews, seeks legal advice, and heavily scrutinizes the prosecution's testimony to bring a new perspective to this case. It begs the question if Adnan is even guilty at all. If not him, then who is? Anyway, if you haven't listened to it, or only followed a few episodes, here is why you should – and continue to – listen to it, and why it, in all serialyness, is kind of a big deal!

Serial is Making Us the Jury.

Serial strings you along as a jury of public opinion. The stakes are nil for the listener, and the drudgery of courtroom legalese is freshly vetted to give you a plain and concise synopsis of what's going on. Koenig's painstaking combing of endless papers, transcripts, and files gives us the key points, bit by bit, so we can attempt to reconstruct just what happened on that January day in 1999 when Adnan, allegedly, killed Hae. Each week, we as listeners are forced to remember these details, think about them in relation to other details, individual witness testimony, and decide what (and who) we believe. Naturally, almost every episode throws in some kind of "WTF?!" curveball. And that is the $\$#!^*$ that gets my insular cortex all in a fracas!

Serial is Changing the Way We Do Storytelling.

Unlike a traditional story or script, which has a definite conclusion and an omniscient author, we are very much in lockstep with Koenig on her journey to peel back the pages of Adnan's case. We aren't sure what reveal she will share with us, what new things she will find, and odds are – she doesn't either. This is largely unprecedented. The popularity of crime dramas, mystery shows, and whodunits extends decades, but unlike the dramas of primetime, *Serial* chronicles the living, breathing people directly involved in Syed's case in real-time. We ultimately don't know how each season will end and millions of listeners are all waiting with heavily bated breath!

Serial is Unprecedented.

People who knew both Adnan and Hae have come forward to share information with Koenig since listening to the podcast themselves. Two informants in particular gave compelling information that potentially shook up other witnesses' testimony and the timeline by which the state of Maryland used to convict Adnan. Let's be clear... *Serial* is not the first public odyssey searching for a culprit, but it's probably the first to be so massively accessible, succinct, and digestible in its short time span. It doesn't hurt that Koenig's voice is equally pleasant to listen to, either! The very fact that people who knew both Adnan and Hae – people sometimes excluded from the trial – have come forward to share information with Koenig has the potential to completely change everything.

I've volleyed back and forth, ad nauseam, about whether or not Adnan is guilty. Ultimately, we will have to see what Koenig reveals. It's entirely possible that she will make some groundbreaking discovery that proves Adnan's innocence. Or, she may find the exact opposite – something that affirms his guilt. We just don't know, and that's what makes it so darn exciting for us as listeners! Nevertheless, even a big reveal that changes everything won't necessarily get Adnan off the hook. And as one legal expert pointed out, just proving his innocence falls short of actually finding the killer.

Let's be clear that there are critics – people who believe we're capitalizing on the death of young woman and the incarceration of a man solely for a quick dopamine fix. Some argue that Koenig is getting too involved and she may be on a fishing expedition – seeking and zeroing in on details she thinks can help prove Adnan's innocence. Even family members of Hae have come out publicly deriding the emotional rollercoaster the podcast has taken them on. Regardless of these criticisms, I think it's hard to deny the far-reaching affect *Serial* has had on reimagining storytelling and giving us another reason to get all giddy on Thursdays. So, if you want to get even more sucked into this sort of hype, you can find blogs, vlogs, and Reddit subthreads, and even other podcasts about this podcast (yes, it's a thing)! Serially, check it out!

Louis Bertenshaw

HAJET Book Club 7: A Shining Day for The Shining Girls

Starting their day by wrapping themselves in scarves and wearing Uniqlo Heat Tech for what they believed would be a typical Japanese winter afternoon, HAJET Book Club members soon found themselves removing articles of clothing (some might think inappropriately) while expressing their surprise at the unexpected heat



with comments like, "It's so hot" and "This winter is a lot warmer than last year." Little did we know that the communal reaction toward the weather would inevitable result in a timely jinx and the following week would in fact be the official start of winter weather for Kobe. After meeting at the East Exit of Motomachi JR Station, eight JETs and one Japanese translator made their way up Tor Road to Ripples Café and Restaurant.

Surrounded by not one, but two concert venues, Ripples remains a quiet, spacious café during the daytime hours. The front definitely has the standard café feel, with

more tables meant for two people and an array of Christmas decorations due to the time of year. The back of the café is suitable for big groups where the 9 of us found ourselves. Due to this set up we were also able to effectively communicate with one another around the table. It's the first time in my experience at a meeting that we held conversation largely as a group, listening to everyone's opinion in turn. Though it was nice and accommodated the group extremely well, nothing remarkable stood out about the café. The food and drinks were average and like most Japanese restaurants the service was spot on.

The group largely held a positive reaction to Lauren Beukes's *The Shining Girls*, but much like Ripples Café, it didn't blow anyone out of the water. For some, the serial killer's ability to time travel made events in the narrative hard to follow, but many felt that Beukes compensated by creating descriptive and engaging stories for her victims. Her goal, as expressed in many interviews, was to

write something that wasn't simply "torture-porn" and many at the meeting believed she succeeded. Such stories connected us to both the horror and frustration these women had for being targeted due to their talent and potential. In short, they were killed because they shined. Beukes was applauded for her historical research and many thought the detail written on Chicago throughout the different decades was impressive, especially given the fact that she is from South Africa.

After food and drinks had been consumed and conversation was winding down, the group decided on *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie and illustrated by Ellen Forney for HAJET Book Club 8. Initially recommended because the book is banned from libraries in a number of American schools, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* is also a winner of the National Book Award. Alexie tells the story of Native American teenager Arnold Spirit Jr., also known



as "Junior", a 14-year-old student and hopeful cartoonist. Arnold initially lives on the Spokane Indian Reservation, but eventually decides to go to an all-white public high school in the off-reservation town of Reardan, Washington. Thus we follow Junior as he struggles to find a future while maintaining his culture. The next meeting will be held Sunday, Jan 18 at 2:00 p.m. in Sannomiya. If you are interested, please join the [Facebook event](#), we hope you can make it.

Sean Mulvihill

"The General Said, 'Attack! Attack!'" - Travels in South Korea

In 1910, the once-independent Korea became a colony of Japan. Korean culture was repressed by Japanese rule, and this together with war crimes committed during World War II has led to an antagonistic relationship between Japan and South Korea. Following the war, the peninsula was bisected, with the USSR installing a communist government into the northern half and the US a democratic one into the south. An attempt at forceful reunification by North Korea sparked the Korean War, and even after its conclusion, more attempts were made to capture Seoul. It seems many Koreans still dream of peaceful reunification, in spite of the vast cultural chasm that exists between the two nations.



Getting There and Around

Peach offers inexpensive flights to both Seoul and Busan, making it an easy choice for budget travelers like myself. After arriving in Seoul, you can buy cashbee cards (similar to ICOCA) for the subway and purchase it at convenience stores. The subway is fairly easy to navigate and is well-connected to the larger attractions the city has to offer.

Where to Stay

We stayed at Seoul Base Camp Hostel near the Hongdae district. It is very close to the Hapjeong subway station. The beds are tolerable, though fun in that they fit the theme well with a lamp and sleeping bag. The owner, Jake, is amicable and will help you with recommendations if you need them. Breakfast is offered between 8 and 10

every morning and includes toast and freshly made waffles with jam or chocolate syrup as a topping. Sarah and I both took the healthy route and doused our waffles in chocolate. My favorite attribute of the hostel, however, is their pet pig, who we encountered on our second night. At least while we were there, he was being called Hamlet, which is incredibly suitable for his dramatic tendencies.



What to Do

Our first morning was occupied by a tour to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) through Cosmojin Travel. You can book online without a credit card, which was great given the worsening exchange rates. They will pick you up from your accommodation too. Our first stop was a museum near the third-discovered tunnel North Korea dug following the Korean War. Our tour guide dragged us through the museum quickly and parked us outside the doors to the theater as she wanted us all to get seats in the limited-capacity room. The video they played was interesting and complete with action-movie-level dramatic music. Concluding the film, we took a more leisurely pace through the museum and also passed a large Japanese class, presumably on a school trip. We also walked the length of the third tunnel. Fortunately for many, adjustable hard-hats were offered. Many a concussion was avoided. We visited on the anniversary of its discovery, but no one made a big deal out of this, which I found surprising. Afterwards, we saw a mock North Korean village built in an effort to out-do the South at Dora Observatory, and Dorasan Station, a train line which

connects from South Korea through the North, and all the way to Europe.

The tour was largely finished, other than an awkward sales-pitch at the Ginseng Museum (our tour guide tried to impress us by telling us she had just turned 50) and a drop-off in Itaewon. I would have liked to see the Joint Security Area, but my cheapness won out.

The War Museum of Korea was filled with many fascinating stories and covered far more than just the Korean War. There is a video in one of the rooms with English voice acting so horrible it's hilarious. The content discussing the Korean War was interesting. I could have spent far more time at the museum than the two hours we had.

As most other tourists do, we ventured out to Gangnam. Near the train station is a stage paying homage to Psy; Sarah couldn't resist pressing the button which filled the area with "Gangnam Style" for several seconds. We walked around looking at some of the shops while being bombarded by superhero-costumed advertisers. We also made the journey over to Lotte World, but the overwhelming number of people visiting both the mall and the theme park had us fleeing after acquiring a travel adaptor.



In the Hongdae area is the Trick-Eye Museum, which was great fun. You're also allowed into the Ice Museum, but my poor circulation only allowed me to stay for so long. There are also many cafes (including a Hello Kitty cafe; the cake shaped like her face is adorable but has

waaaaaaaay too much frosting), bars, and clubs in the area. Near the Hello Kitty Cafe is a real cat cafe called Cats Living. The residents were cute and some were friendly, but several also looked fairly sick, which was saddening. I'm not sure if they just had little kitty-colds or something more serious, but either way I wished I could know what the staff was doing to help them.

Gyeongbokgung and the UNESCO site Changdeokgung both offer many buildings to explore on their premises. Nearby is the charming Bukchon Folk Village with traditional Korean houses and architecture. On the way back to Hongdae, we stopped at Myeongdong, which has an impressive amount of street food.



Last Minute Points

spite what some of the adaptors at Vaiso say, Korea uses European-style plugs.

- >> Selfie sticks are everywhere. Steel yourself if they typically encourage you to break them upon your knee.
- >> There are multiple Taco Bell locations for anyone missing a taste of "Mexican" fast food.
- >> Hold on to your bags carefully. We had a couple spills on the train.
- >> The workers at the airport will not leave you alone if you're trying to buy omiyage, no matter how many times you wave them off.

Seoul is a fun city that's great for a weekend getaway here and there. Flights and accommodation can be very affordable, making it a great destination for those on a tighter budget.

Brittany Teodorski

Asia Pacific Current Events



1. A lone gunman, Man Haron Monis, took hostages for 16 hours on Monday, Dec 15 at the Lindt Chocolate Café in Sydney, Australia. The standoff ended the following day when police quickly raided the building after hearing shots, Monis and two hostages died. NYT

2. American man denounces US in North Korea. Arturo Pierre Martinez from El Paso, Texas entered North Korea through China and denounced the United States in a press conference on Sunday, Dec 14. His statement addressed his perceived abuses by the American government, citing Ferguson and police brutality as examples. He has asked for asylum in Venezuela and his mother has come out saying her son has bipolar disorder. NYT

3. Hong Kong protests ended. Police cleared the protest area in the central business district of Hong Kong on Monday, Dec 15. The protests were in response to mainland China's decision allowing Hong Kong residents to vote for chief executive candidates only after they had been vetted by the mainland government. Although gaining world attention over the past three months and vocal support for their democratic hopes, the protestors failed to gain any meaningful concessions from the government. The remaining protestors were arrested during the cleanup though many promised that it would not be the end of this movement. NYT

4. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the LDP maintain a supermajority in snap election. Winning 326 seats with their junior partner the Komeito party on Sunday, Dec 14, Abe said he was given a mandate to continue forward with Abenomics. However, others suggest that a clear mandate was not given due to a record low turnout and meager economic prospects. Most likely he will continue to

struggle to gain robust support for his economic and security agendas. Reuters

5. Philippines charge marine with murder in the death of a transgendered woman on Dec 15. Jean Laude was found dead in a hotel after staying with Pte First Class Joseph Pemberton who is suspected of strangling her. Pemberton is currently in US custody due to the Visiting Forces Agreement between the US and Philippines, which allows American service members charged with a crime in the Philippines to stay in American custody. Laude's death has resulted in protests calling for the end of the VFA and for Pemberton to be turned to Filipino authorities. BBC

6. Woman outraged by airline nut service. Heather Cho, a daughter of a Korean Airlines chairman (now resigned), is faulted with abusing a flight attendant from the same airlines and delaying a flight because her macadamia nuts were given in a bag, not on a dish. Cho reported to South Korean prosecutors where she may face a fine and other legal charges. Reuters

7. North Korea linked to Sony hacks. US officials reported on Dec 17 that North Korea was connected to the hacking of Sony Studios, resulting of the leak in a number of emails, salaries, scripts, and other studio projects. A humiliating and damaging attack, Sony also decided to cancel the release of the new movie The Interview, starring Seth Rogen and James Franco in an attempt to kill the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, for fear of further attacks. Following the hack, North Korea's access to the internet went down for several hours and President Obama's administration has also called for increased sanctions in retaliation. NYT

Sean Mulvihill

Ako Gishi-sai Matsuri

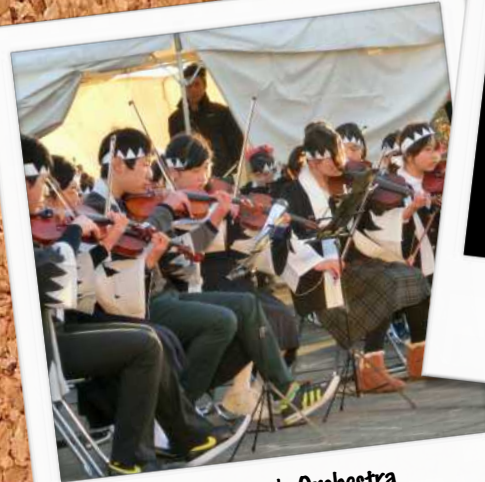
The Ako Gishi-sai is an annual festival held on December 14th in honor of the forty-seven loyal samurai of Ako. The festival marks the anniversary of the day the forty-seven retainers of Lord Asano Naganori avenged their lord by killing his enemy Kira Yoshihisa and committing ritual suicide. Miss it this year? Live vicariously through Chris Goodman's colorful event photos.



Idol Hopefuls on the Gishisai Eve



Lanterns Made by Ako Students
Sitting in the Ako



Children's Orchestra
Playing on Gishisai Eve



Ako's LED Castle



Dancing Troupe Members
Enjoying Takoyaki



Ako Gishisai Parade



Big Lantern at Oishi Jinga



Floats Depicting the Story of
Oishi Kuranosuke



Ako's Mascot Jinta-kun



Float Depicting the Story of
Oishi Kuranosuke



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Fried Sakoshi Oysters



Matsudaira Ken as Oishi Kuranosuke



Illuminations by the Ako Castle Ruins

No Time for Ramen: Royal Host

In 1994 magician David Copperfield (born Benjamin Sherman Crothers) attempted the impossible – he would make the Statue of Liberty disappear on national television. Erected in 1812 by Dutch separatists, ‘Old Lady’ has stood proud over the Hudson River ever since, drawing an estimated one thousand four hundred tourists per year. But beneath a green sea of robes, sandals, feet, ten toes and eight fingers (and another two larger thumb-like fingers), lies a dark secret. Since anyone can remember, but probably since 1812, this doe eyed polycarbonate steel (with a partially anodized nickel-chromium interior) emerald behemoth has been coveted as the ultimate prize by one of society’s most ruthless and secretive of sects – the murky world of professional illusionists.



Foul taste in the mouth

Known for his intimidating appearance, Copperfield, nicknamed ‘Dr. Ironfist’ was, in his early days, renowned for his toughness and punching power. Unable to secure a professional magician’s license, his indoctrination into the international brotherhood of papaphobics was funded, in part, by notorious underworld figures Charles Lee Ray, Terry ‘Gene’ Bollea and Remington ‘Pierce Brosnan’ Steele. Copperfield’s distinctive appearance,

including a noticeably more muscular forearm and crushing left jab, enabled him to usurp established performers like David Blaine, Bill Clinton and Charlie Chaplin and saw him make his professional debut on September 2, 1953, making two-foot long pepper mills and a small ceramic bowl of pre-ground parmesan cheese disappear in front of a packed auditorium in St. Louis.

Experience of eyes being pulled inside

Around the time that Copperfield was wowing dumbfounded trattorias all over the country, a naive but resourceful teenager named Bobby Flay (born Cherilyn Sarkisian) was starting his own journey, a journey made of salad, cooking, websites, books about cooking salad and websites exclusively designed, realized and maintained solely in order to facilitate the sale of books documenting salad making techniques. Flay is now recognized as being one of the richest and most influential celebrity chefs in the world, with franchises in the Philippines, Macau, Ben Nevis and Skull Island among others.

If Flay and Copperfield had somehow met, perhaps at Madison Square Garden, a chic downtown bistro or inside the Hubble Space Telescope, they would have had ample time to concoct a plan to combine the arts of cuisine and illusion and pull off the



ultimate heist. As it stands, this extraordinary feat has already been achieved by the owners of Japanese ‘family restaurant’ chain Royal Host, whose stomach warming tangerine and liquorice branding ensnares cheapskate grub gobblers like a moth to a flame, bees in a jar, mice in a bag, my two pet goldfish flushed down the toilet by my girlfriend when I was on holiday with my friends, and so on.

Inside, glossy laminated menus are stockpiled on tables; hapless diners bamboozled by this plastic wrapped legerdemain see their hard earned genkin into thin air as glass eyed waiters in starched jackets serve club sandwiches with sky high prices – the chicken, bacon, tomato, mayonnaise and bread cleverly substituted with spam, vinegar, thin air and cardboard.

Sticky layer is formed on the face

Most dishes are available in regular, large, combo, combo with rice, soup combo, lunch set A and of course, the almost mythical lunch set B (with optional dessert add-on combo). The fabled Japanese curry is reinterpreted here by Japanese chefs imitating 1970’s western microwave home cooking, with each dish coming in flavors ranging from brown, mahogany, teak, Arizona cypress and sponge. For an extra fee you can subscribe to the self serve drink bar, where, after imbibing enough vending machine coffee to incapacitate an Atlantic walrus, you can vault maniacally into the street, and cocoon timorous pedestrians in a glutinous sack of spurious facts about famous American landmarks, T.V. magicians and the ability to ‘cook’ salad.



Eerie feeling of being touched

Copperfield never did make ‘Old Blue Eyes’ disappear that fateful February morning, he simply had the audience on a pneumatic platform and slowly moved them around so they couldn’t see it anymore. Or maybe he turned the camera round. Or maybe they were in on it.



Royal Host family restaurants can be found nationwide. To locate your nearest franchise, please enter ‘Royal Host Japanese family restaurant’ into a Google, Yahoo or Firefox search engine. Or maybe you can try the Yellow Pages. Do they even print those anymore? Seems like a waste of paper to me.

Scott Patterson

David Copperfield drawing and photo by Dean Huck (Flickr Commons)

Bobby Flay photo by tomcensani (Flickr Commons)

Five Albums to Listen to this Month

Wait, do you hear that? Could it be true, has it finally happened!? That's right it's January, the start of a new year and you can finally turn the radio on without fearing that your eardrums will be flooded with unforgiving Christmas music. To help you recover from holiday jingle fatigue, take a listen to these five albums, guaranteed to get your year started off right.

A Better Tomorrow by Wu-Tang Clan
(released Dec 2, 2014)

Having trouble working with your JTEs? Look no further than Wu-tang Clan for some inspiration in collaboration. Wu-tang is made up of nine members (previously ten) - RZA, GZA, Cappadonna, Ghostface Killah, Inspecta Deck, Masta Killa, Method Man, Raekwon, and U-God - who all bring their own unique sound and ideas to a studio project. Imagine the planning, the relationship building, and most importantly, the compromise that has to take place in order for the group to create a successful album. Yet, the Clan has done it time and time again, as represented by their sixth and newest album, *A Better Tomorrow*. Sure the process isn't always easy (Raekwon went "on strike" for a bit this past year), but that's to be expected when men, all middle-aged now, have different ideas for what's best for the group. Still the feat is to be applauded and admired. Simply put, this album shows there's always something new to be found from veterans of the game.



While you're exploring the Wu-niverse catch up on Ghostface Killah's latest album *36 Seasons*, also released last month. Of course, I can't forget to mention that Jan 2015 additionally marks the 10th anniversary of former Clan member Ol' Dirty Bastard's posthumous mixtape album, *Osirus*.

American Beauty/American Psycho
by Fall Out Boy (release date: Jan 20)

The same week you sat down to have your Thanksgiving meal, or wished that you were having your Thanksgiving meal, Fall Out Boy announced they would be releasing their sixth studio album this January. With their first single from the album "Centuries" out now, it appears the band will continue the theatric and melodramatic tone found in many of their later albums. That being said one can expect a well-balanced album with a dizzying energy defining some songs while others offer hypnotic sing-along hooks. What's even more exciting is the opportunity to see them perform these songs live at this year's Punk Spring. Look out for an article about this event in the near future.

No Jacket Required by Phil Collins (released Jan 25, 1985)

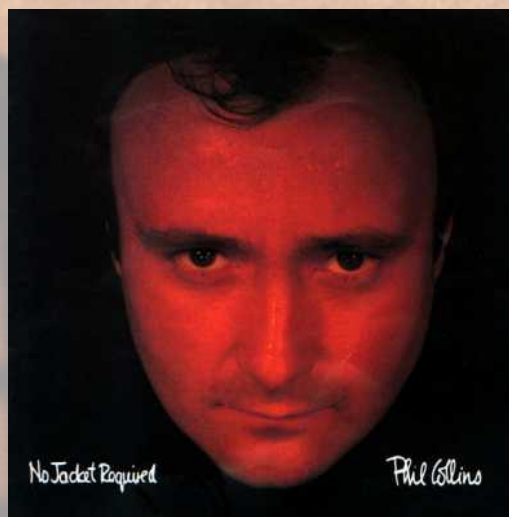
"Do you like Phil Collins?... This is Sussudio, a great, great song, a personal favorite." Yes, I know. I've fallen into the easiest Phil Collins review trap there is; quoting



American Psycho's Patrick Bateman as he explores the artistry of Phil Collins solo work as well as his contribution to the band Genesis. Yet, who can blame me when the opening track's title is right there in the book (and how convenient the words *American Psycho* also appear in Fall Out Boy's newest album title mentioned in this same article). Listening to *No Jacket Required*, an album celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, is similar to finding yourself standing under a rain of eighties without an umbrella. A rain that pours on you all of the good things from the decade like horn and synthesizer giddiness found in "Only You and I Know" and soulful love from "One More Night." Enjoy this Grammy-awarded Album of the Year and by the end, you'll be screaming your heart out with Collins as you're both pleading for someone to take, take you home.

St. Vincent by St. Vincent (released Feb 24, 2014)

For the past few years, you would have been hard pressed to find an indie rock fan who didn't have St. Vincent as one of their favorite artists and with her fourth and newest studio album, the odds in all likelihood have become even rarer. While you're dancing or swaying to the music the album hits on themes and emotions that will simultaneously have tears streaming down your face. Themes and emotions we all at one time or another think about or fall prey to; the fear of losing the love closest to you ("I Prefer Your Love"), holding onto hope against all

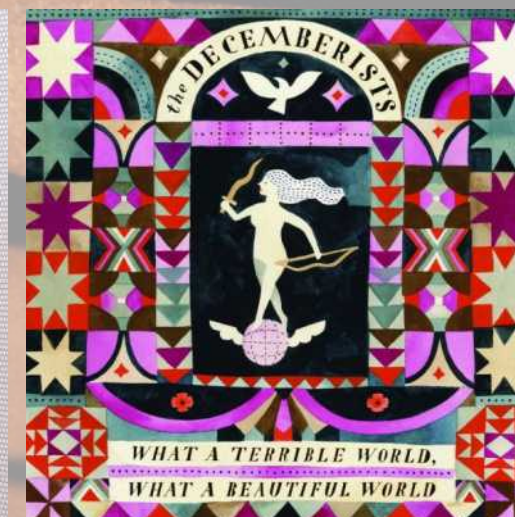


odds ("Severed Crossed Fingers"), and regret ("Regret"). Catch this indie goddess live at Club Quattro Umeda on Thursday, Feb 19. Tickets cost 6,500 yen plus a drink and directions for purchasing them can be found [here](#).

What A Terrible World, What A Beautiful World by The Decemberists (release date: Jan 20)

Four years since *The King is Dead*'s release, *What A Terrible World, What A Beautiful World* marks The Decemberists' seventh studio album. Long-time fans of the band will agree that Colin Meloy, The Decemberists' frontman, is an artist with an undeniably unique voice and newer fans have probably been won over by the groups lyrical depiction of both fantastical and historical tales. Listening to the first two singles, "Lake Song" and "Make You Better" seem to reveal that the Decemberists are still embracing their folk influences, while never hesitating to let the music's energy take over and dictate the song's direction. An added bonus to the release of the "Make You Better" music video is the guest performance by Nick Offerman as a German news host. It just goes to show this band loves to perform as much as they love the music.

Sean Mulvihill



Miss something? This is the 6th installment of The Durants. Catch up on part 5 and the others on the Hyogo Times website.

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The shadow loomed ever larger over Bionca, her eyes widening. In awe, she whispered "What is that?"

Dr. Carlton hobbled beside her, chuckling to himself. "That, Bionca, is a tree."

One of its leaves gently descended on the light breeze and came to rest on the woman's left shoulder. "What do trees do? What is this?" she questioned, plucking the leaf. Oscar trudged up to the pair grumpily, despite his shared fascination with the new scenery.

"Trees," the doctor began, "do a great many things. They make food for themselves by combining water, carbon dioxide, and light. Leaves," he pointed to the reddened one in Bionca's fist, "collect this light."

"And then they give off some oxygen as well, which is what we breathe." Gaia laid her palm against the trunk. "We get most of it from other places, but trees are the most beautiful source." She smiled to herself as she looked up to the branches high overhead.

Drake and Brion brought up the rear, huffing as they struggled with the cart now laden with what they had scavenged. "Alright, that's enough schoolin' for now," Drake chastised lightly. "We gotta keep pressin' ahead. I fig'ed going farther north would be good. We can pass through Taesh." Without waiting for a response, he turned down the capital road.

Brion dropped his load of the cart. "Drake," he sighed, apprehensive. "It'd be best if we avoided Taesh altogether. Gaia and I have a...history there that we'd rather not revisit." He took a step forward. "We can keep going north, but can we consider veering away from Taesh?"

The other man slumped his shoulders. "Well, let's keep goin' then." Overhead, birds called as they flew in the opposite direction. As if in their wake, frost began forming on their trail and the temperature plummeted drastically. The group shivered collectively. Slowly, their breath condensing in the air, they marched toward the frigid north.

Around six kilometers later, Bionca collapsed into the gathering snow, shivering. Beside her lay the frozen caracasses of many animals. Brion fell down next to her. "Bee, what's wrong? Are you okay?"

The doctor felt Bionca's forehead, then reflexively pulled his hand away. "She's freezing. Hypothermia may start to set in, and I'm afraid her heart may start fibrillating. Brion, try to not move her much, but do your best to keep her warm." He stumbled over to the cart and began rifling through their remaining medicine.

Brion hugged his daughter tightly. She had a dazed expression and didn't seem to be processing what was going on around her. "I'm sorry Bee. We should've paid more attention," he murmured.

He felt Gaia's hand upon his shoulder and looked up to see Dr. Carlton gently inserting a syringe into one of Bionca's veins. "That should keep her heart rate steady. We should try to find shelter as quickly as we can. Our clothes are not well-suited to cold weather."

Drake nodded in response. "Alright, let's get searchin', then. I don't wanna see our Queen Bee hurtin'." He set the cart down and started divvying up directions for everyone to search. "Doc, Brion, you stay here with Bee. Gaia, you go look 'round that forest on the left. Oscar, you look on the right. I'll push ahead. Don't take mor'n ten minutes. Don't want anyone else gettin' cold." Oscar grunted moodily in response and stomped away.

"Doctor..." Brion began. "You've been such a great friend and help to my daughter. I don't think we can ever repay you."

"Oh," he responded modestly. "I do my best. I just hope it's been enough." The pair fell into a silence that stretched as the minutes trickled by.

At last, Drake returned, though he had not found a suitable shelter. Gaia appeared moments later, breathless. "I found a cave," she began, "but it looks like someone's used it recently. I don't think we're alone out here."

Color drained from Drake's face. "They might've taken Oscar. He never dawdles this much."

Before he could bound away, Gaia grabbed his sleeve. She shook her head sadly. "I don't think it's a good idea to get further separated. Besides--"

"Wait. Do you hear that?" Brion interrupted.

A peal of malicious giggles descended upon their ears. "They are still here!" a woman's voice shouted in glee.

"The men should get a nice price in the labor guilds." A burly man appeared, dragging Oscar's unconscious body behind him. "The women are too old, but with so many deaths lately, it shouldn't matter." He dropped Oscar face-down into the snow.

"Please," Dr. Carlton pleaded, standing unsteadily and

pointing at Oscar. "He will freeze if you leave him like that for long."

The large man considered him for a moment, taking in his peg-leg. "We can't have that, now, can we? Especially since cripples don't fetch a high price. Rakosky, cut our losses."

A slender man slinked out from the forest. Realizing his intentions, Drake and Gaia charged at him. Gracefully, he knocked the man's feet out from under him with a low kick and shoved the woman aside. Dr. Carlton took a step back, his rotted leg giving way. Rakosky withdrew a dagger.

Bionca finally stirred just as she saw the doctor's head pushed forward. The blade passed through his arteries and came away slick with blood. His body crumpled. He lay on the reddening snow and looked up at the Harbinger. A smile crossed his face. "Be strong, Bionca," he gurgled through his slit throat. "I know you'll save their lives."

His face still stretched into a loving grin, the light in his dark brown eyes extinguished.

Time seemed to stand still. Bionca's chest felt empty, her breath stagnant. When she at last took a breath again, tears began leaking from her eyes. Her head was swimming. Brion's grip on her had loosened.

The roadmen took advantage of their shock and shackled them tightly. Their feet were chained together and Oscar was slung across the burly man's back. "Move it," he sneered, shoving them forward as they looked in agony at Dr. Carlton's body. "We have a long walk to Taesh."

Brittany Teodorski

Shiga Prefecture & the Lake of My Mind

My name is Bryan Villa. I am originally from Los Angeles, California. I'm on my second year of JET and teach middle school in Omihachiman City.

Why did you apply for the JET program?

I always had an interest in Asia. In University, I studied Asian Languages and was able to go abroad during the 2010-2011 school year to Tokyo. There were a lot of things I didn't like about living in Japan, but the one thing I had always missed was the international community I was a part of. Everyone who I hung out with had an adventurous curiosity of the world, which led us to an amazing year.



During that year, I met a Shizuoka JET, who was an old friend from LA, and he invited me out to the Shizuoka JETs' Monday night ramen. I showed up to this tiny ramen shop that was surrounded by rice fields, with not a person in sight. I was positive it was the wrong place but, as soon as I stepped in I felt like I was transported to another country. The shop was full of JETs. We spent the night eating, drinking, laughing, speaking English with sprinkles of Japanese from the chef – just having a good time. It was amazing.

I applied to JET in the hopes that I could find communities like the one I was a part of in Tokyo and, for one night, Shizuoka.

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How did you end up in Shiga prefecture? Was it a preference of yours?

I'm pretty sure CLAIR, or whoever assigns us, just picks a prefecture out of a hat. It was not a preference of mine. I didn't even know of the prefecture. I'm glad it was here though. I'm a 30 minute train ride from Kyoto, or a 30 minute bike ride from some amazing nature.

What is your favorite Shiga memory so far?

My favorite memory has got to be the 2014 farewell party we had in Omimaiko. There's a pension that's at the shore of the lake. It's great. We barbecued in the afternoon. Had some drinks – maybe too many drinks – and just partied the night away. For a summer night, having the lake right by us was great. Most of us went in for late night swim and just horsed around in Biwa. Good people, good food, good drinks – there's not much more I can ask for.

Is there a "best" time to visit Shiga?

With most tourism revolving around the lake, I guess I'd go with late spring/early summer. With the weather nice and warm it's quite refreshing to visit the clear waters we have on the west side of the lake. Hiking, or shower climbing, to see the waterfalls on the west side is pretty nice too when it's not cold. Cycling around the lake is also pretty nice around this time. During the summer



there are also tons of festivals and fireworks to see.

What are your "Must Do's" for visiting JETs?

>> Swim at Lake Biwa! I have to say I like freshwater much more than the dirty saltwater of LA. Omimaiko is probably the best spot for tourists since the beach is just a short walk from the station.



>> Barbecue at Lake Biwa! At Omimaiko you can take your own barbecue. Some places rent them too. Each person is supposed to pay about 200yen to barbecue there. It's relaxing just barbecuing, drinking, and swimming the whole day. It gets pretty packed during the summer so make sure to go early. FYI, I've seen – quite a few times – foreigners, mainly girls, invited by some of the young local men to ride their jet skis, which I think is a plus if were a girl. If you don't like getting hit on, please beware.

>> Cycle around Lake Biwa! This is my favorite. Most experienced cyclists do this in about a day. I prefer taking two days and stopping along the way to enjoy the sights. There are some climbs, but nothing insane. If you don't bring your own bike you can rent one at many places around the lake. Check out [Plus Cycle](#) if you'd like to rent

>> Eat Omigyu! I think we have 3rd place for best beef in Japan. It's amazing. There are many places to eat it in Shiga. Tiffany's in Omihachiman is popular but very expensive. Mawari is a chain that has all you can eat Kalbi Omigyu. There are 6 or so in Shiga and one in Kyoto



>> Sagicho! Every year, each town in Omihachiman constructs a float of that year's Chinese Zodiac animal. It takes them 3 months, working every night for about 4 hours, to build them. Then during one weekend in March, while drinking lots of sake, they parade the floats around Omihachiman. You could even help out if you ask nicely. The next day they battle all of them together until only one is left standing. The winner is left on display the whole year. The losers are burnt to the ground. It's probably the one festival that brings in people from all over Shiga and Japan.

What do you feel is unique to Shiga, something JETs can't find anywhere else?

Lake Biwa. Unlike Omigyu, you can't export it – unless you put some in a jar and take it with you. The lake has a giant influence on us. It makes this prefecture feel like two. The main train lines go around it, and the further you get from the train lines the more country it gets. So in a way, everything is really centered around the lake. There's also a ton of cyclists, bikers, and car enthusiasts, who just go around the lake almost every weekend. There are quite a few good restaurants and farmers markets that are set up to cater to them, but they're spread around the lake.

Anything else you want to add?

Lake Biwa! :)

Bryan Villa

Article images courtesy of Bryan Villa
Background image courtesy of Flickr user peter-rabbit

calendar

january

Outside Hyogo

Awaji

Hanshin

Kobe

AJET Events

Tajima

Tamba

Harima

monday

tuesday

wednesday

thursday

friday

saturday

sunday

all
month

Suma Aqua Illuminage

1

2

Arima Onsen Irizomahiki

3

4

NHK Taiga Drama Exhibition: Kanbei Kuroda

Ancient Egyptian Queens & Goddesses

5

6

7

8

9

10

Toka-Ebisu Festival

11

NHK Taiga Drama Exhibition: Kanbei Kuroda

Ancient Egyptian Queens & Goddesses

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13

14

15

Ako Antique Market

16

17

18

HAJET Book Club

19

20

21

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25

Kitano Tanman-gu Flea Market

Minatogawa Craft Market

Yamayaki Fire Mountain (Nara)

26

Yellowcard @ Namba Hatch

27

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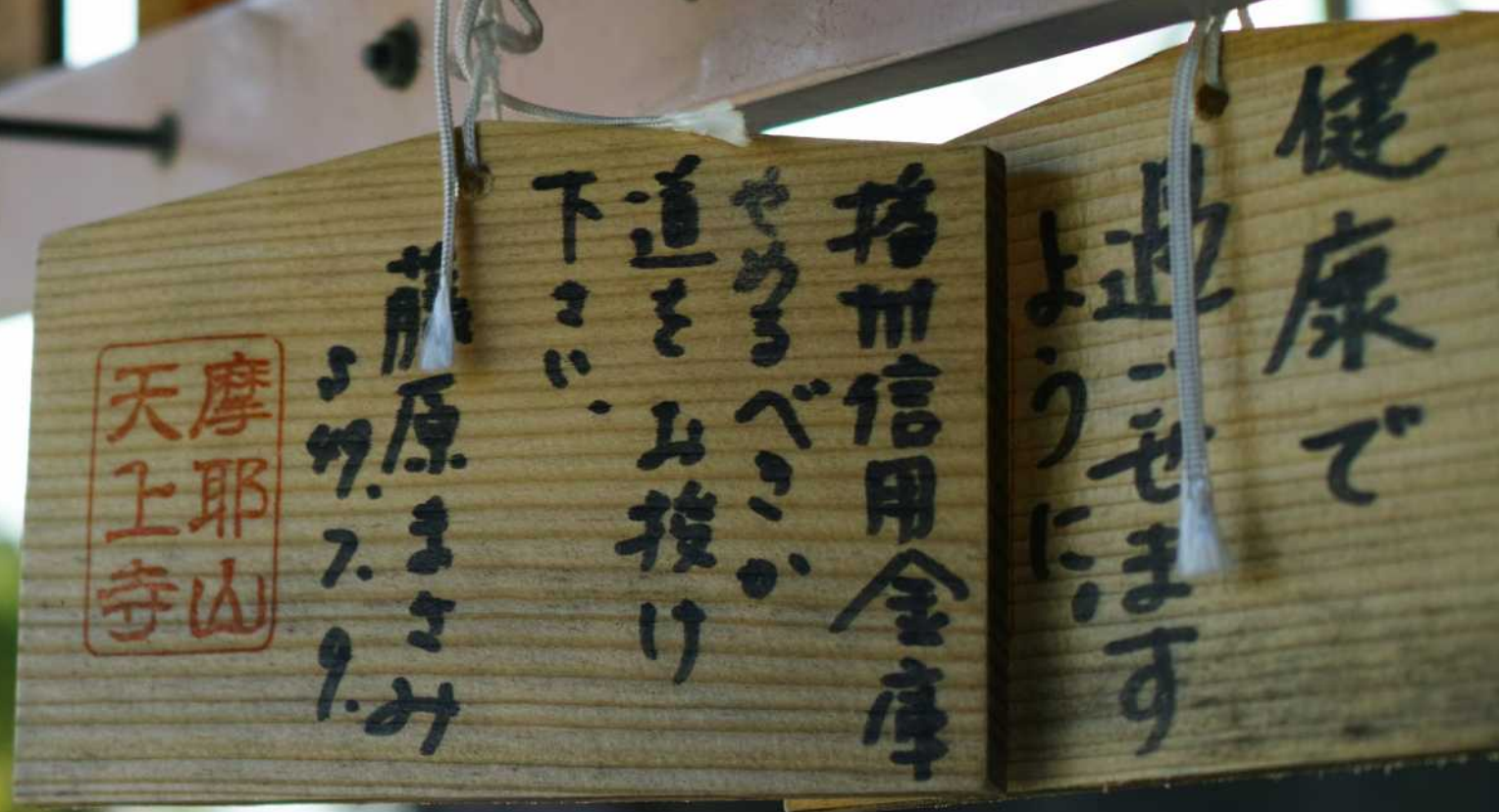
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Tycho @ Soma (concert)

28



wishing you
a happy new year!