

nagaZasshi

VOL 2.2 APR-MAY 2010

Lifestyle
Culture
Japanese
Music...
and more

Happy Birthday!
NagaZasshi Celebrates
Its First Anniversary

The Symbolism
Behind Shinto Shrines

Nila Kamal: Sasebo Thai
Restaurant Review

Japan's Peculiar
Kit Kat Palate

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NAGASAKI'S INTERNATIONAL WRITERS' DIGEST & EVENT MAGAZINE
2010

Letter from the Editor

Congratulations! You've made it through winter. Those bone-chilling days are behind us, but don't worry, no one's going to judge you for keeping your *kotatsu* out a *little* while longer. We know you're obsessed with its magical charm, so take your time saying goodbye to prevent separation anxiety from overcoming you!

Spring is a wonderful time to be in Japan, as *sakura* are able to cast a spell on Japanese people, the majority of whom seem to be truly enchanted by the flower. Your appreciation for *sakura* may not be of the same intensity, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy all the fun activities that come along with *hanami*. Head over to your local 100 *yen* shop for a cheap tarp, raid a *conbini* for snacks and drinks, plop yourself down in a park, and soak up the joyous atmosphere of cherry blossom viewing with your friends and coworkers!

As you sit under those canopies of pink and white, you might want to take note that April is the start of the financial and school calendar in Japan. This being the "new year" and all, it looks like you'll actually have the chance to start over with any failed New Year's resolutions! Thank you, Japan, for second chances. Here's to a "new year" and a new you! Cheers!

nagaZasshi Editor-in-Chief
Mutia Adisoma

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Cover Art



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photoshop artwork by Adriene Giese

What's Happenin'

4

LIST ME TENDER

The Symbolism Behind Shinto Shrines

5

Photo contest

"Celebration"

6

chokotto dake

Sakura Slang

8

thererealdeal

You've Come a Long Way, Baby

On the Road Again

Kabuki

10

12

14

16

Break Me Off a Piece of That...Miso Kit Kat

My 2 YEN

Restaurant Review: Nila Kamal

Movie Review: Love Exposure

18

19

Rock DA house

Electro DJs

20

3



APR

10 - 18

Tsutsuji Festival

Isahaya Park

Surrounded by beautiful azaleas, come and relax next to Isahaya's *Megane* Bridge.

APR
11

Kiteminsai Festival

Nagasaki City

A *yosakoi* festival featuring original dance performances from teams around Nagasaki-ken.



APR 29
- MAY 5

Pottery Market

Yakimono Park, Hasami



A must-see event for all pottery enthusiasts.

MAY
2

Ryukyu Dance Exhibition

アルカス Dance Hall, Sasebo

Traditional Okinawan dancing with that distinctive southern flair.



MAY
7 - 29

Tea Market

Haiki

Experience a traditional Japanese market which dates back almost 400 years.

MAY
21

Spitz Jamboree Tour

Brick Hall, Nagasaki

Spend the evening rocking out to some good tunes.



The Symbolism Behind

Shinto Shrines

Robin Uhle

Shinto is all about *kami*—the gods and spirits. *Kami* are all about purification. They will only visit pure places, and will only interact with pure people or objects. Here are six symbols of purification in Shinto shrines:

1 The place: Shinto shrines are often located on the top of a hill or mountain. In Shinto, height is associated with purity—the higher the place, the more pure it is. Nature is also very important. Shrines try to be in areas that keep as much of an untouched sense of nature about them as possible.

2 Torii: No Shinto shrine is complete without the *torii*—the entrance marker. Walking through a *torii* gate is an act of purification before entering a sacred area. The more *torii* gates one walks through, the more pure one becomes.

3 The paper: White is a symbol of purity in Shinto. Pure white paper not only embodies this idea, but when cut in a zigzag fashion, it recognizes pure places and helps keep the purity “inside” the spot, and the impure “out.”

4 Sakaki tree: These evergreen trees and shrubs are purifying agents, and are sacred because they appear to have everlasting life, surviving full and green even in winter.

5 Water: Many shrines will have a little fountain and a small pool of water at the entrance, with ladles laying on the edge. A person entering the shrine is supposed to take the ladle and rinse first their left hand, then right hand. Finally, they are to take a sip of the water, swish it around in their mouth, and spit it out on the ground. Water is used to actively rinse away impurities, so by rinsing your hands you are washing away the impurities on your outer body, and by rinsing your mouth you are washing away the impurities in your inner body.



6 Komainu: Also known as *Shishi*, or *Shisa* in Okinawa, these are the Chinese guardian lion-dogs that are often on either side of a shrine. One's mouth is always open, the other's closed. This represents 「あ」 (“ah”) and 「ん」 (“n”) the first and last sounds of the Japanese alphabet, and thus the beginning and end of the world. One is thought to be male, the other female. The male protects the “outer world,” while the female protects the “inner world.” In other words, they keep the bad out, and the good in.



photo contest

This issue of the NagaZasshi marks our one year anniversary as a magazine. It's a time to celebrate the support we've received from our readers and sponsors, the hard work and dedication put in by our staff, and how much this publication has grown and improved within a year. In honor of this, we wanted to know what the word "celebration" means to you. We received many excellent submissions from both current and former residents of Nagasaki Prefecture, and though it was difficult to choose, we were finally able to narrow them down to one winner and two honorable mentions. Here are the photos along with each photographer's explanation of how their photo portrays "celebration."

You can view all of the photo submissions at our website, nagazasshi.com.

Brendan Thornton



Location: Sasebo

Yosakoi is a great example of celebration. It celebrates the high energy and excitement of dance and performance while also being a celebration of traditional Japanese dance styles fused with modern characteristics.

Carol Stanton



Location: Hasami

This weeping sakura tree is a famous sight in the small pottery town of Hasami. A beautiful representative of sakura trees all around Japan, it is a celebration of the ephemeral, reminding us to enjoy the things in life that are soon to pass.

Ray Arcega



Location: Emukae

Taking place during the 2nd day of our popular Sentoro Festival, townsfolk (and mostly children) parade the Ojizou-sama all around town, where spectators splash it (and the parade participants!) with water. This event celebrates the Ojizou-sama watching over the children and granting them good health.

Sakura Slang

I imagine this: You are at your local vegetable stand buying some oh-so-tasty eggplants, when a Japanese woman walks over and starts perusing the tomatoes. You happily tell her that you often come to this stand and that the tomatoes are とてもおいしい。She stares at you for a moment and asks, 「さくら?」 Now you are confused. "Why is she calling me a cherry blossom?" you ask yourself.

Meghan O'Connell

Actually, the word *sakura* (桜) doesn't always refer to the beloved cherry blossoms in the park. The other meaning of *sakura*, written with the kanji 偽客, means "false customer" or "decoy." A "*sakura*" is a person who pretends to be a regular customer and praises a certain product, urging other customers to buy it.

Sakura also refers to a "claqueur," or hired applauder. In this case, a "*sakura*" is someone at the theatre who is paid to clap wildly for the actors on stage and arouse the audience's enthusiasm.

Here are some other Japanese phrases containing the word *sakura* (桜).

桜島大根 (*sakurajima daikon*): Native to Kagoshima prefecture, this is the largest type of radish in the world.

桜散る (*sakura chiru*): To fail an exam.

桜咲く (*sakura saku*): To pass an exam.

桜肉 (*sakura niku*): A poetic name for *basashi* (馬刺し), or raw horse meat.

There are also many Japanese expressions using the word for flower, *hana* (花). Do you know these?

花嫁花婿 (*hana yome hana muko*): Bride and groom.

花金 (*hanakin*): TGIF! (Thank God It's Friday!) Saying this phrase will surely elicit a few chuckles (and 「日本語上手ですね！」) from your Japanese co-workers.

高嶺の花 (*takanenohana*): Literally, *takane no hana* is a gorgeous and expensive flower. This phrase expresses the idea of "a prize that is beyond one's reach / a goal which is unattainable."

For example: ブライアンはちょっと高嶺の花なんじゃないの？ Translation: Don't you think Brian's a little out of your league? 

1周年記念に
乾杯!

Nathan Stackpoole

paraphrased and translated from pages 10-11

今月で NagaZasshi は創刊1周年を迎えることになりました。1年前長崎に住む少数の外国人（スコットランド人・アメリカ人など）が、意欲的に雑誌作りに取り組みました。はじめは、自分たちの経験について書いていましたが、いつの間にか長崎で経験したこと・感じたことを掲載するようになりました。これを読めば、外国人は日本について、日本人は外国人の日本に対する見方について知ることができます。

お誕生日おめでとう、NagaZasshi! この1年で本当に成長しました。

ボランティアの皆さんのご尽力に心から感謝します。広告主の皆さんにも感謝しています。皆さんは資金だけでなく、私たちを仲間として迎え入れてくださいました。県内にお住みの皆さん、よろしければ私たちの活動に参加してみませんか？ いつでもご連絡ください。

NagaZasshi に幸あれ！

NagaZasshiの起源についてもっと読みたければ(英語で!)、次のページへ！

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You've Come a Long

Mutia Adisoma

I was sitting at the end of a long table on the second floor of a towering Skylark Gusto, and I remember having a strong urge to order fries. It was a couple hours past lunch but not quite time for dinner. I ultimately decided against the fries—not so much due to the odd hour, but because I was worried the people at my table would think I was unprofessional. We weren't there, after all, to eat. We were there to take care of business.

Doing my best to ignore my craving, I focused on the discussion which ensued. Among those present were a Scotsman, a Trinidadian, a Japanese, some Canadians, Americans...and a baby. A motley crowd no doubt, we had all come together with the same objective in mind. For the next couple of hours we threw around ideas and offered opinions. Some people swished their arms in the air to drive points home. Others listened with their chins resting in upturned palms (except for the baby, of course). I looked around and saw thoughtful faces. Confused faces. Apathetic faces. *Hopeful* faces. There was anticipation in the air...and a tad bit of fear for the unknown.

These are the memories I have of the day the *NagaZasshi* was born. On that day roughly one year ago we didn't yet have a name, nor did we have a real team, a regular meeting

To find out how you can help raise our baby, email nagazasshi@gmail.com

NagaZasshi | April-May 2010

place, or anything close to a website and printed copies. All we had was an idea birthed from the minds of an American and a Scotsman who loved to write, and some people who had gathered together to make this idea into reality.

It's hard to believe that so much time has passed since that very first meeting, but there's proof that makes it hard to deny it has. The design of the magazine has changed,

the website and blog have transformed, the number of contributors has grown, and in place of black and white copies

we now have glossy, full-color issues!

But it hasn't always been easy. Our team of volunteers expanded and shrank with every passing season, and it was sometimes difficult not to take criticism personally. The *NagaZasshi* is our baby, and when people make negative comments it feels a bit like someone



Way, Baby

came off the street, took one look at it cooing innocently in its polka-dotted stroller, and said, "You are doing a horrible job parenting this child. It is going to grow into an awful human being—that is, if it grows up at all."

This makes for a gut-wrenching feeling, and it's hard to know if what you're doing is right. But we've accepted the fact that a baby's first steps are *always* going to be wobbly, so it's okay to fall on its face every once in awhile. We just try to move forward by focusing on the positive. I like to believe that for every person who has ever said something positive about the *NagaZasshi*, there are at least five others who feel the same way but haven't expressed it to us directly. This might be an overestimation, but it *is* possible. And that's what I hope people focus on: not on our weaknesses, but on the *possibilities*, which are endless.

So Happy Birthday, *NagaZasshi*! You've come a long way, baby. What once started as a place for foreigners to write about casual experiences and their interests in Japan has now expanded into a place for the Nagasaki

community as a whole to share knowledge and



broaden their horizons. Foreign readers can hopefully learn things about Japan that will help enhance their experience here, and Japanese readers can get a glimpse of what their country looks like through a *gaijin* lens.

Regardless of what people say (or don't say), I'm proud of how much the *NagaZasshi* has grown. There's still a long way yet to go but I believe in my heart there's tons of potential for progress and improvement. I'd like to thank our readers, as well as those who have supported us by attending our fundraising parties. A big thanks also goes to our valued sponsors, not only for their support, but also for welcoming the foreign community into their businesses with open arms. And a special thanks goes to everyone who contributed to the growth of the *NagaZasshi* throughout the past year. We really do appreciate all the time and effort that's been put in.

Here's hoping the Nagasaki community won't hesitate to lend a helping hand in the future, especially when the time comes for the team to change over. If you're interested at all in helping, please do contact us! We need you so that the *NagaZasshi* can develop to its fullest potential in the years to come.

It's about time we celebrated the *NagaZasshi*'s past, as well as its future. I'm craving fries... Skylark Gusto, anyone? 



This article is dedicated to Andrew Morris and Matthew Nelson, the American and the Scotsman from whom the idea for this magazine first originated.

On the Road Again

Let's face it—we live in the *inaka*. Embrace it! The NagaZasshi officially declares spring 2010 the time to explore Kyushu's beautiful coastline, gorgeous mountains and treasures off the beaten path. What's the best way to do that, you ask? Although JR provides a commendable train service throughout Japan, there are many places where it does not go—especially in Kyushu. This article features practical advice and personal anecdotes about alternative ways to travel. Now is the perfect opportunity to broaden your Kyushu horizons, so get out there and do it! As Willie Nelson says, "Goin' places that I've never been / Seein' things that I may never see again / And I can't wait to get on the road again."



レンタカーで

Danelle Elliott



バスで

Ashleigh Allen

There's nothing better than hitting the open road with some buddies, a great soundtrack and four wheels. You know, that perfect combination of both planned destinations and spontaneous pit stops which always makes for a great time, or at least results in some good stories.

The most essential part of your road trip is obviously the wheels—both for getting around and, if need be, accommodation. For those without a car, renting is actually quite affordable, especially if you're traveling with a full car. Most rentals even come with a handy GPS system to help you find your way. A great English website for rental car reservations anywhere in Japan is ToCoo! (<http://www2.tocoo.jp>). It's convenient and their prices are discounted.

In my opinion, if you really want to see Kyushu, try to stay off the major highways. Also, if you're not in a hurry to get anywhere, the drive from Oita up to Honshu along the coast is well worth taking.

Buses provide a hassle-free alternative for those who aren't keen on deciphering Japan's *kanji*-filled road signs or dealing with highway tolls and traffic.

If you're traveling around Kyushu, I suggest you invest in a SUNQ bus pass. Covering local, highway, and overnight buses, this unlimited ride pass is a great deal. SUNQ offers 3 types: a 3-day pass in Northern Kyushu (8,000円), a 3-day pass for all Kyushu (10,000円), and a 4-day pass for all Kyushu (14,000円). All passes include Shimonoseki in Yamaguchi prefecture, and the Northern Kyushu pass includes all prefectures in Kyushu except for Miyazaki and Kagoshima. The pass booklet also contains coupons for select restaurants and tourist destinations.

You can purchase a pass at most major bus terminals, travel agencies, and airports. For more information, visit <http://www.sunqpass.jp/english/sp/index.html>



Standing on the side of the road, backpack on the curb, thumb in the air—hitchhiking isn't just a way to travel; it's a way to experience life.

During Golden Week 2007, my friend and I embarked on a memorable four-day hitchhiking trip around southern Kyushu. At first we felt a bit silly standing there holding out our thumbs, but after that first car pulled over and offered us a ride, all of our anxieties melted away. Each new car brought a new adventure. We were picked up by some of the friendliest, most generous people on this side of Mt. Fuji. Unforgettable rides included those from a truck driver, a surfer, and a retired elementary school teacher and his family. They told us stories, offered us food, and showed us many of the lesser known (but equally impressive) sights of the area.

Things to remember when hitchhiking:

- Always smile while sticking out your thumb: people will pick up happy-looking people.
- Bring some small *omiyage* for your drivers—they'll love it!
- Stay off the highways and use local roads.
- Take a picture with each person and car before going your separate ways: it will be a great memory.
- Be safe, and *bon voyage!*



Bikes are more than just a cheap and eco-friendly alternative form of transportation. Bikes can become a tool for developing self-knowledge and self-sufficiency, meeting fascinating people and learning about your surroundings.

My bike adventures in Japan began last year when I decided to ride my *mama-chari* from Omura to Obama-cho. I discovered places you'd never see on the public transit route, my favorite being an old country road that snakes along the coast through abandoned railroad tunnels and small fishing villages. Since then I've biked through almost every prefecture in Kyushu, and even to the remote island of Yakushima.

You too can bike Kyushu! Just follow these tips:

- Take a few bike tools with you, and learn to fix a flat before you leave.
- Lube your chain, and when necessary, lube your booty!
- You can take your bike on the trains. However, you must take at least the front wheel off and put it in a bag...or a futon cover!
- Travel light, eat well, sleep in beautiful places, visit lots of *onsen*, and don't be afraid to go slow and take in your surroundings. 

kabuki

Guy Acres

With makeup by the bucketful, costume changes galore, cross-dressing, sexual innuendos, violence and impromptu dancing, you may be forgiven for thinking this isn't Japan. Welcome to the world of *kabuki*, where the women are men and the men are also men—and sometimes women.

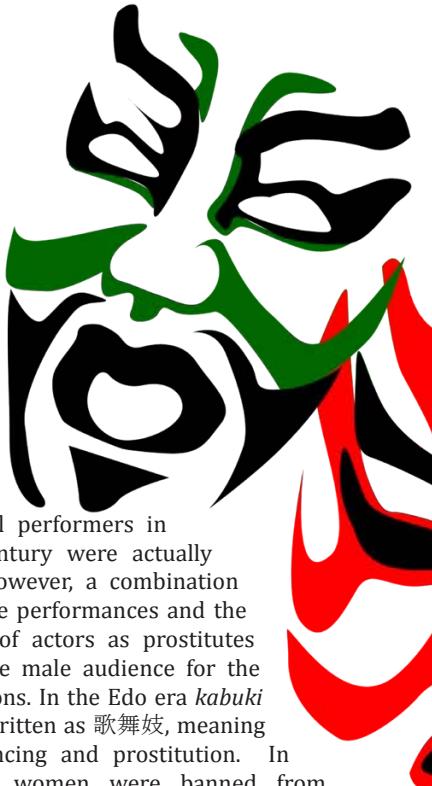
Kabuki is one of Japan's many traditional forms of culture that can be found on stage. Combining traditional thespian narrative with quirky and sometimes bizarre traits, *kabuki* has formed its own unique genre. Similar to the plays of Shakespeare, there is a wide variety of genres. The main categories are *jidai-mono* (時代物, historical stories), *sewa-mono* (世話物, domestic stories) and *shosagoto* (所作事, dance pieces), so don't let yourself be confined to a single mode.

A product that has been molded and morphed by the effects of Japanese government and society, its popularity has fluctuated due to strict censorship and the oscillation of its mass appeal. On reflection, the history of *kabuki* has been a tumultuous one, to say the least.



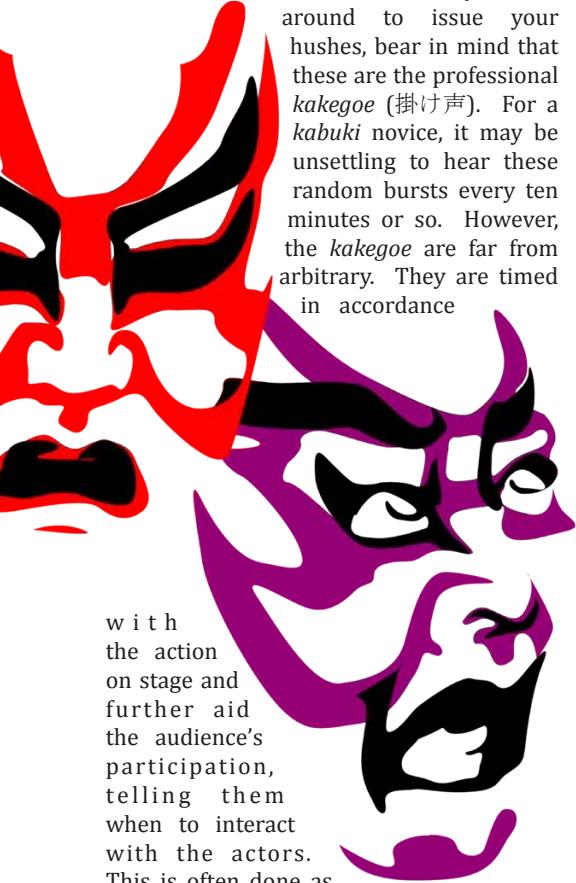
The original performers in the 17th century were actually women. However, a combination of suggestive performances and the availability of actors as prostitutes attracted the male audience for the wrong reasons. In the Edo era *kabuki* was often written as 歌舞妓, meaning singing, dancing and prostitution. In accordance, women were banned from performing, and it still stands today that only men can perform the archetypal style. Nowadays, although only men act out the main variety of plays, other types of theatre have broken the chauvinistic mold and have placed women in *kabuki*-style shows.

After World War II, *kabuki* suffered a severe dip in popularity. Stemming from the fact that many cities in Japan had been destroyed by the war, people were reluctant to return to past ways that they partially blamed for their current state. So how did *kabuki* regain its grasp on popular culture? Like many other things, television played a major part. Although you won't find *kabuki* on television, you may see its actors there. Names like Bando Tamasaburo have become household names. Building



popularity on screen has undoubtedly lured audiences out to see the actors on stage since the post-war period.

The many eccentricities of *kabuki* give it that quirky feel, a great novelty for people who are looking to be entertained. Once in the theatre, your attention is immediately drawn to the people behind you shouting out random oddities, but before you turn



around to issue your hushes, bear in mind that these are the professional *kakegoe* (掛け声). For a *kabuki* novice, it may be unsettling to hear these random bursts every ten minutes or so. However, the *kakegoe* are far from arbitrary. They are timed in accordance

with the action on stage and further aid the audience's participation, telling them when to interact with the actors. This is often done as the actors strike poses known as *mie* (見得). It effectively enhances the audience's appreciation.

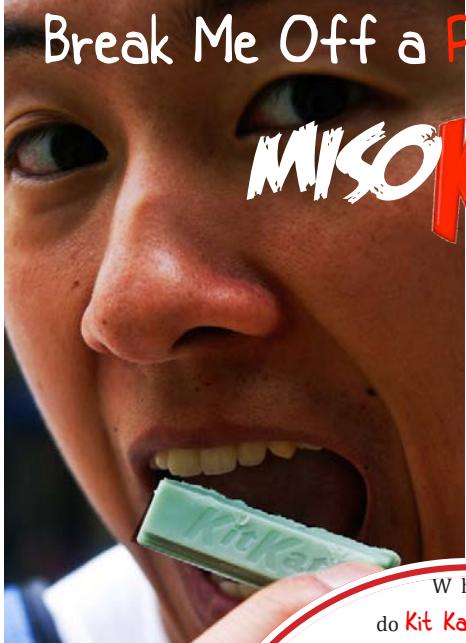
As intriguing as the sounds are, the visual displays are far more prominent. These include the *chunori* (ちゅうのり), wires allowing the actors to fly around the

auditorium, or the *hanamichi* (花道), a path that leads into the audience, allowing those lucky to be close enough to the actor they can smell the caked-on makeup. This makeup is the most striking of all, with each color representing a different nature of the character. Red indicates passion and righteousness. Black and blue have negative meanings such as jealousy and evil, while green indicates the supernatural, and purple stands for nobility.

My introduction to *kabuki* was exceptionally entertaining. The visual displays were engrossing. The makeup was comparable to a KISS concert. The on-stage costume changes, signifying a change of a character's personality or outlook, are a welcome flair and aid for those who don't understand Japanese. Furthermore, the final sword fight was enough to dispel any worries I previously had before that the language would limit my enjoyment. A flowing rapid series of stunts, flips, stablings and—of course—costume changes, combined with the rousing applause, were the long-lasting impressions *kabuki* left on me.

So if the plays have the action level of a James Bond movie and the campiness of a burlesque show, why doesn't *kabuki* attract more foreigners? The simple answer is the language barrier. The combination of honorific, humble and old-fashioned Japanese makes it difficult for even the most astute student of Japanese to completely comprehend everything. While the theaters in Tokyo and Osaka may offer earphone guides in English, the Hakataza theatre in Fukuoka only provides a brief synopsis that can be confusing at first, especially if the terms *kakegoe* and *mie* don't mean anything to you. Most information can be found on the theatres' or performing group's websites. *Kabuki* is only around for a couple of months in the year and tickets do sell out, but with a bit of preparation you will inevitably be able to see a uniquely entertaining form of Japanese culture. 

Break Me Off a Piece of That...



MISO KitKat

Emily Koh

Ironically enough, the strangest foods I've discovered since moving to Japan do not have much to do with traditional or culturally exotic cuisines. I barely bat an eyelash now when I see whale meat on sale at the supermarket, and I've become quite the fan of *basashi*, or horse sashimi. Blowfish on the menu is just another fish to me; *tororokanten* (minced kombu agar) got less exciting when I found out it isn't as quirky as it sounds.

Actually, the more curious edibles that keep boggling my mind are accessible to all of us, hiding right under our noses in the candy aisle. If you thought candy could only come in the flavors of vanilla or chocolate, I'm sorry to say your taste buds are pathetically sheltered. Japan takes the cake when it comes to offering an overwhelming plethora of flavors—some logical, others downright offensive (I'm looking at you, mutton-flavored caramel). Combined with the trend of offering limited edition flavors based on region

W h a t
do Kit Kats and the
Japanese educational system have in common? The answer might surprise you! Kit Kats are considered to be Japan's "lucky charm" candy because the name Kit Kat resembles the Japanese expression "*kitto katsu*" — meaning "You will surely win." Third-year high school students who are about to take the feared センター試験 (university entrance exam) interpret this as "You will surely pass this test," thus receiving Kit Kats from family and friends wishing them good luck. What's the luckiest meal a student can eat the night before a big exam? *Katsudon* for dinner and Kit Kat for dessert, of course!

and season, you sweet-tooth fanatics have got a pretty robust and exciting industry to sample.

With entrance exam season recently behind us, we decided to take a look at Nestle's **Kit-Kat** (*make sure you check out the center bubble on why Kit-Kats are related to entrance exams in Japan!*). If you thought these were only your standard milk chocolate-enrobed crunchy wafers, you may need to take a "break" and do some serious taste testing.

Going beyond your garden variety of recycled dessert-y flavors, Kit-Kat in Japan has racked up quite a reputation for offering some creative (and heinous) variations. Remember that



soy sauce flavored Kit-Kat you foolishly bought at Narita Airport? Good luck finding it here in Nagasaki: it's only sold in Tokyo. On the other hand, those Kanto folk don't have our Kyushu-only *yuzu kosho* (a citrus-y pepper condiment). Or maybe we should lament the bizarre-ness of our regional flavors and instead be jealous of the people in Hokkaido, who get to have the pleasant *yubari* melon as their Kit-Kat flavor.

Here are some of the **STRANGER** flavors we've come across...



Potentially Pleasing

- Maple syrup
- Green tea
- White coffee (tastes like coffee made by people who don't really appreciate coffee...you know, the ones who drink "milk with a bit of coffee," not "coffee with a bit of milk")
- Roasted sweet potatoes
- Iced tea, jasmine tea
- Ginger Ale

Souvenirs to Pick Up on Your Travels

- **HOKKAIDO:** Yubari melon, café latte with Hokkaido milk, beet, haskapp (a type of Hokkaido berry), grilled corn
- **TOCHIGI:** Tochiotome (high-quality strawberries... your guess is as good as mine as to what the difference is between this and regular strawberry Kit Kats!)
- **TOKAI AREA (NAGOYA & TOYOHASHI):** Miso
- **NAGANO:** Cayenne chili pepper, blueberry cheesecake
- **TOKYO:** Soy sauce
- **YOKOHAMA:** Strawberry cheesecake
- **KOBE:** Kobe pudding
- **YAMAGATA:** Zunda (mashed edamame beans)
- **KYOTO:** Uji matcha (Uji is a city near Kyoto, known for tea)
- **OKINAWA & KYUSHU:** Mango, "southern bananas," beni imo (purple potatoes), yuzu koshō



Someone Ran Out of Ideas

- *Ume* (pickled plums)
- *Wasabi*
- Apple Vinegar
- Cucumber
- Watermelon and salt
- 1 full serving of vegetables ("the worst Kit Kat ever," according to the Kit Kat Addict blog)
- Sports drink
- Muscat of Alexandria (for those of you with a sophisticated Kit Kat palate)

Keep your eyes peeled and drop by a *conbini* or two when you're traveling around Japan—you never know what's lurking in those candy aisles. Maybe it's time they make a Nagasaki-only flavor too...how bad could a *kasutera*-flavored Kit-Kat be? Or maybe even...*champon* Kit-Kats?!

Nila Kamal

little thailand in sasebo

Qi Yang

As a first-year Assistant Language Teacher in Sasebo, I wanted to seek out one restaurant to which I would be a returning patron. Thankfully, it wasn't a difficult task as my friends, on my first night in town, recommended Nila Kamal, a Thai restaurant located on the hills of Sasebo City.

Nila Kamal prides itself on being one of the most authentic Thai restaurants in the city. It doesn't disappoint. The chef is originally from Thailand and takes effort to provide delightful and authentic renditions.

Upon my first visit, I was pleasantly surprised to see that the restaurant and its services are foreigner-friendly. The waitresses give kind greetings and are quick to hand English speakers an English menu. In addition, the décor reminds me of a rustic cabin set upon a hill, giving the place a homey feel. When the sun sets, the hillside lights up to reveal a sparkling landscape.

Due to its hidden location, the restaurant is a bit difficult to access without a car. Luckily, ask almost any taxi driver in the city and they will take you there easily. It is about a fifteen minute drive from the Sasebo train station.

The menu contains all the popular favorites such as pad thai, shrimp rolls, red and green curry, and Tom Yum soup, all with authentic flair. The pad thai may be one of the best items on the menu, and I have heard from those who have been to Thailand that it captures the flavors perfectly. The Tom Yum soup can be ordered as an appetizer, and it also comes as part of the lunch special. It is savory broth with rice noodles, with sprinkles of peanuts and scallions. One thing of note: for those who are sensitive to spicy food, you might want to order the lighter selections. For those who love things hot, there are plenty of dishes

to choose from. There are also spices (dry and wet red chili peppers) on tables for those that want to add extra flavor to their food. Pricewise, lunch and dinner are reasonable, with most meals ranging between 1,000 and 2,000 yen.

Whether you are looking for a perfect date spot, a relaxing lunch, or a dinner celebration, Nila Kamal is a suitable place. With delicious food that tastes like it's right from Thailand, and a calm and friendly atmosphere, it will certainly have you coming back for more. 



NILA KAMAL
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Brendan Thornton

I will begin and end this review with the same statement: You absolutely, most positively have to see this movie. Let me explain.

First off, writer and director Sion Sono's *Love Exposure* (愛のむきだし *Ai no mukidashi*) is too long. By long, I mean 237 minutes long. That's 36 minutes longer than the epic *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. You could excuse *The Return of the King*, as it was wrapping up a great trilogy, but how can *Love Exposure* get away with such a considerable runtime?

With a great story, it can.

However, this story is too convoluted. How can a tale involving love, family, lust, religion and the art of up-skirt photography hold your attention successfully for over four hours? Some viewers might find these themes to be inappropriate as well.

Well, perhaps these problems could be forgiven with strong characters and powerful performances from the actors portraying them.

Upon inspection, though, even these *dramatis personae* seem questionable. The hero of the story, Yu Tsunoda, is a good young Catholic boy growing up with his father, a devout priest. His father loses his faith after falling in love and being abandoned by a devil-may-care woman, and he becomes obsessed with sin and confession. He turns this disillusionment upon his son, constantly criticizing the angelic

state of Yu's soul. In order to earn his father's approval, Yu has no choice but to become a real sinner by becoming a literal ninja master of taking up-skirt photographs. In the middle of this new profession he meets the love of his life, Yoko, while she is beating up a group of thugs. Yu leaps to her aid, but at that moment is dressed in drag as the result of losing a bet. Things become even more complicated with the introduction of villainess Aya, a sinister schoolgirl with ties to the ominous Zero Church cult, which has an agenda for Yu and his family.



A film that attempts to encompass so much in terms of theme, and express so much in terms of story and character is bound to either fail dramatically or succeed triumphantly. *Love Exposure* falls under the latter. The character performances are earnest and vibrant across the board. The complicated story is skillfully rendered simple and poignant, and when the final credits roll, you will wonder where the 237 minutes disappeared to. One of the most powerful scenes involving a reading from Corinthians 13 left me trembling.

The only other thing I can say is this: You absolutely, most positively have to see this movie. 福

愛のむきだし (Japan)
(Love Exposure)

2008 | 237 minutes
Director: Sion Sono
Writer: Sion Sono
Starring: Takahiro Nishijima, Hikari Mitsushima

In the last decade or so, the term “dance music” has in many circles turned into an all encompassing term for any form of electronic music played by a DJ in a club atmosphere. The somewhat awkward consequence of this is that it leaves many listeners (yours truly included) mystified as to how exactly they are meant to move our bodies to the music. Much of modern day techno/electro/acid/house/whateverthehellyouwanttocallit I find “interesting” or “beautiful,” but I can’t really see myself getting down to any of the recent strains of minimalist beat manipulation.

Thankfully, there are still a few pockets of electronic music artists focused solely on turning each and every party they rock into a maelstrom of rhythmically flailing appendages. Two of this month’s artists, **Shinichi Osawa** and **Denki Groove**, are just such Disc Jockeys. Attend one of these veteran DJs’ gigs and you will most assuredly tumble out of the venue a sweaty mess with a wild grin strapped across your face. The final artist, **Goth-Trad**, is stylistically coming from an entirely different headspace, but the music (and scene) he’s creating (that would be dubstep) deserves special mention thanks to its relative uniqueness here in Japan.

Shinichi Osawa originally came to the music world’s attention as Mondo Grosso, his ’90s acid/jazz/house live act that saw a fair amount of international success. Starting in 2000 however, Osawa decided that he was finished with making cocktail party soundtracks. His new direction, taken under his nom de birth, was infinitely more PARTY-oriented with a capital everything. His tunes are maximalist beasts of nonstop dance floor mayhem. If you enjoy the euphoric electro-pop rushes of groups like Basement Jaxx, Digitalism, Justice, and their ilk,



Andrew Morris

but you haven’t heard of Shinichi Osawa yet, then stop. Head to Youtube and search for either “Star Guitar” (a cover of the Chemical Brothers song) or “Our Song (A lonely Girl Ver.”). No, really, I’ll wait...

Okay, so do you see now? Can you imagine what would happen with that song in a club packed with sweaty bodies? I was lucky enough to attend Shinichi’s Birthday show at a club in Kyoto last week, and let me tell you, the place goes ape nuts. Pretty much everything Shinichi’s done in the last few years is gold, so check out last year’s album, *One*; the collection of remixes of that album, *One+*; and *Teppan-Yaki*, a collection of fantastic remixes that Shinichi has done for other artists. Also, it’s not uncommon for him to show up at clubs in Fukuoka. It’s worth the train fare, trust me.

Denki Groove has been around for over 20 years now, which should make them walking fossils in the ever morphing dance music world, but the duo of Takkyu Ishino and Pierre Taki are showing no signs of slowing down any time soon. In fact they have released three new studio albums in the last two years alone. Most young pop stars under label contract





pressure can't even crank out new releases at that rate!

As their music (and name) spells out loud and clear, Denki Groove deal in energetic electronic music that is aimed at more of the mainstream techno-ingesting audience. Not that this is a fault in any way shape or form. In fact, it has helped them to achieve a decent following even outside of Japan, especially in Germany (no Hasselhoff jokes, please). Another aspect that never hurts in the international love fest game is that their songs have been used a few times as opening/closing theme music in some popular *anime*. For the most part, though, Denki Groove kick it domestic style and routinely collaborate with fellow Japanese artists, producing some rather funky results. The most fruitful of these team-ups been a series of tracks they made with rap group Scha Dara Parr in 2005.

On the whole it's just impossible to sum up 20 years of genre shifts and experimentation, except to say that if you like pop oriented techno, you'll love these guys and their playful trips down poptronica lane. If you find yourself intrigued, then there's a best-of collection of sorts called *Singles and Strikes* that is a great place to get acquainted.

ELECTRO DJS

And now for something completely different... first let me ask you: do you know dubstep? In short, it's a thematically dark, bass-heavy strain of electronic music spawned in Britain a few years ago that pretty much caused the critical dance music community to collectively soil themselves. Takeaki Maruyama, aka **Goth-Trad**, is the premier Japanese purveyor of this particular genre. I've got to be honest: I think his name is ridiculous. However, his music is not—it's fantastic and he takes it very seriously.

Dubstep—by extension most of Goth-Trad's current tunes—deal in what could be described as wobbly bass tones and skittering drum patterns laced with various creaks and squeals (in a good way). It makes you think of dark alleys and deserted nocturnal cityscapes. Think of it as noir-ish dance music, which Goth-Trad has fused with his Japanese roots to create his self-assigned genre, mad-rave, which is also the name of his 2005 album *Mad Raver's Dancefloor*. In 2006, Goth-Trad turned this new style he'd birthed into a monthly dubstep centered club night called "Back to Chill" in Tokyo. The popularity of this club night made him the Japanese scene's de facto figurehead and also began to steadily increase his worldwide recognition. Thus far, there has been no follow up album to MRD, although there has been plenty of output as far as 12"s and near constant touring. He's also been keeping busy with his other project Rebel Familia (again with the naming...), a longstanding project with his creative partner Takeshi "Heavy" Akimoto, although they lean a bit too much in the Drum & Bass direction for my personal tastes. I'm sure there'll be more to hear from Goth-Trad in the near future, so scour the Internet for available tracks now and be sure to take note if you see his name appearing in any events you may happen across.

21



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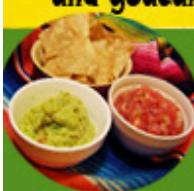
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