

tokyo

weekender

NOVEMBER 2013

Japan's number one English language magazine

CHRISTEL TAKIGAWA

*Up close and personal
with the face of the Tokyo
2020 Olympic bid*

HOME RUN HERO

*Interview with record
breaking baseball
superstar, Vladimir
Balentien*

KANSAI YAMAMOTO

*From Aladdin Sane to high-speed trains:
We talk to the man who dressed David Bowie*

ALSO: Akita in Gold, Craft Beers, a Taste of Nagoya Cuisine, Movies, Events, and much more . . .



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF "THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM"
T O M H A N K S
CAPTAIN PHILLIPS

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FROM THE EDITOR

November, a month of mostly cloudy skies, isn’t necessarily the best time for stargazing. But those infrequent days when it’s clear enough to see Mt. Fuji can turn into nights when, even under Tokyo’s bright lights, you might see a heavenly body or two.

This month at the *Weekender*, we’re sharing a constellation of Tokyo’s best and brightest with you, whether skies above are foul or fair. First up is Kansai Yamamoto: this “Star Man” of fashion and design has run the gamut from David Bowie’s glam rock costumes to the sleek lines of the Keisei Liner to dance and art Super Shows that draw massive crowds worldwide, and we talked with him on his way to his London revival.

Our next star was a member of the bid team who helped bring the Olympics’ five rings to Tokyo in 2020. Christel Takigawa, a television journalist who was born in Paris and raised in Tokyo, spoke to Buenos Aires and the world, in French, about *omotenashi*, the Japanese sense of hospitality that will make the city a great destination for the Games as it hosts a second time.

Up next, ready to knock it out of the park yet again, is Wladimir Balentien—but you can call him Coco. This Caribbean star of the baseball diamond broke a home-run record that has stood for nearly half a century, and he joins us to talk about the road he has taken to reach his milestone season.

Then we hit the road, fixing our telescopes to the northern prefecture of Akita, and this time we’ve got our sights on gold. We spy a golden girl by a fabled lake, a glittering mask that decorates a dance whose history goes back over a millennium, and can almost taste the sun-kissed tones of Akita’s culinary gold mine: sauces, the exotic flavor of chrysanthemums, and a bird that just may lay golden eggs.

Finally, we consider the eel. Many of us wouldn’t look twice at the humble creature, but this dark star of Japanese cuisine is more than deserving of a taste, and we sit down to tuck in to some *hitsumabushi*—Nagoya’s version of unagi, grilled over oak charcoal and eaten in three stages. If president of the Hitsumabushi Bincho franchise Hiroshi Suzuki has his way, the world may become even more familiar with it.

And to our readers, happy November holidays: well wishes for Guy Fawkes Night, Remembrance Day, Thanksgiving, and Hanukkah—and apologies to anyone we left out.

Alec



Fried Sushi by Liam Akin. To see more of Liam’s work check out www.friedsushi.net

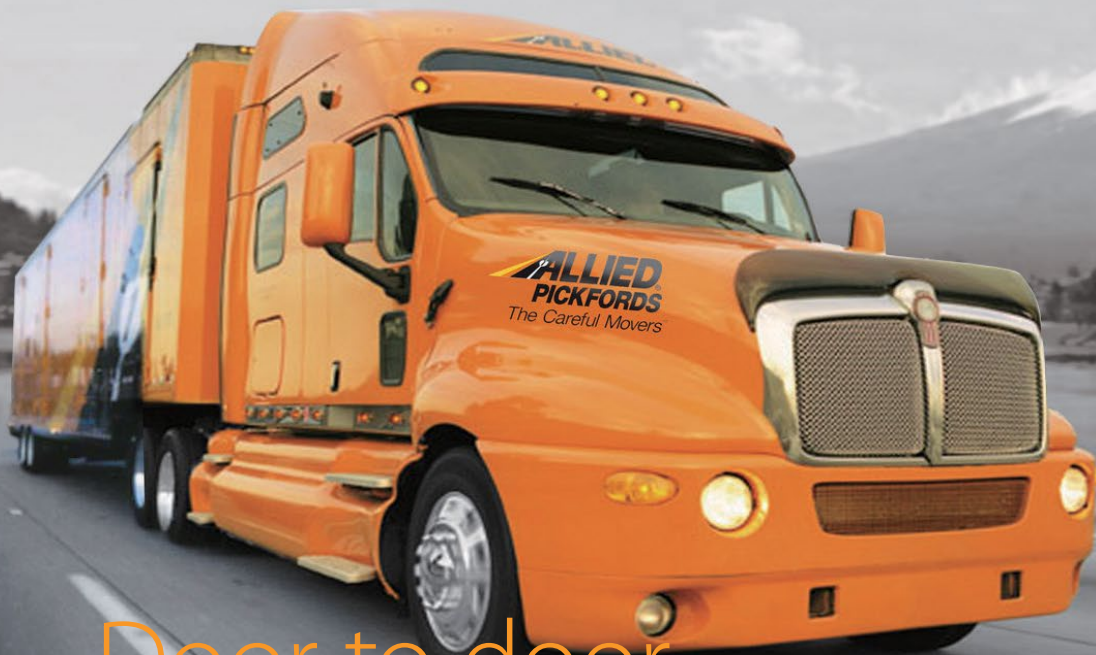


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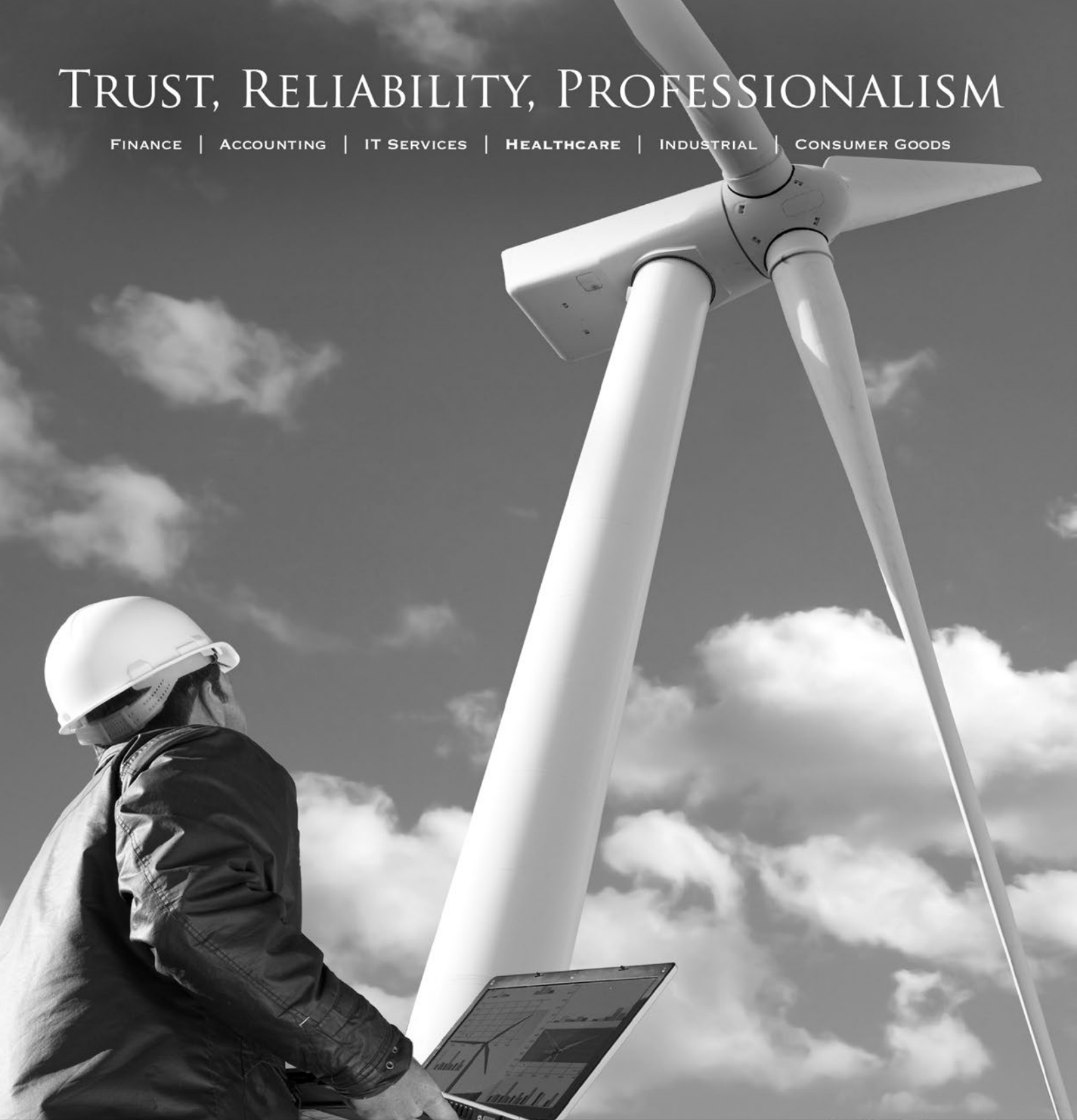
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KANSAI YAMAMOTO

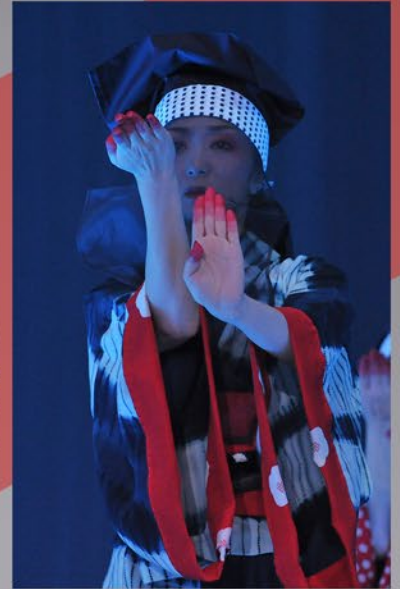
STAR MAN

By Matthew Hernon

One of the most flamboyant designers Japan has ever produced, Kansai Yamamoto is as eccentric as the shows he creates and as colorful as the clothes that he makes. From David Bowie's avant-garde costumes in the Seventies to the recently designed Keisei Skyliner express train, it seems that everything Yamamoto touches turns to gold.

Now aged 69, the Yokohama-born artist is showing no sign of slowing down and has decided to return to the world of fashion after a more than 20 year hiatus. Keen to hear more about his comeback, David Bowie and his Super Shows, *Weekender* recently met up with the legendary figure at his office in Aoyama. Dressed in one of his trademark psychedelic outfits, he appeared confident as he attempted his first ever interview in English.

Photo by Masayoshi Sukita



THE COMEBACK

"I never really quit the fashion industry," he tells us. "I continued making clothes for myself and the stage, but I just stopped creating collections for Paris and New York. Those shows took six months to prepare for, requiring all my energy and focus. I felt stuck within a framework and that is not how I like to work. You might say I am not very professional, I can't stick to just one thing, I constantly want to be moving around, trying something new. That is why I started organizing the Super Shows and working on other projects like the Keisei Liner and the Asakusa Temple.

Everything has been going great, yet at the same time, I am a designer and last year I got that buzz for fashion again. It was during a trip to Shanghai, a city that has developed massively over the years. I sensed a real vibrancy to the place and an enormous amount of energy. It seemed like the right time to start creating collections once more."

He presented his latest collection at 'HELLO CHINA!!' last September followed by 'HELLO JAPAN!!' in March. It is the fashion show in London's Victoria and Albert Museum at the start of November, however, that will truly mark his return. Having made his international debut there in 1971, it is clearly a city that holds a special place in his heart.

"I recently visited London after a long absence and walking down the streets, not one day passed when someone didn't call out to me, shake my hand or ask for a photo," he tells us. "It was nothing to do with who I am: nobody knows who I am, it was about what I was wearing. I have a real affinity with British people. They love a little bit of craziness and this made me realise that, more than forty years on from my first show there, this was the ideal place to showcase my new collection."

It was during that first show in England's capital that the world first sat up and took notice of this unconventional designer. Slightly strange, but also captivating, the technique of *hikinuki* (taking the outer costume off to reveal an inner one) had never been seen on the catwalk before. The clothes, inspired by kabuki, were bright, bold and adventurous. Certainly not the kind of items you would expect an ordinary person to be walking around in.

"My aim was to make clothes that nobody else was attempting," he says. "Costumes that would look great on artists who really want to express their individuality, not necessarily the general public. I have a crazy mind, always looking to have fun and generate a good atmosphere. I think this was reflected in my collections."

“My aim was to make clothes that nobody else was attempting. Costumes that would look great on artists who really want to express their individuality”

MEETING BOWIE

His style was perfect for the glam rock scene that was emerging in the UK at the time. Stars such as Marc Bolan (T-Rex) and Elton John were often seen in his costumes, though it was David Bowie who was most drawn to them. Describing Yamamoto's work as “way off the board,” the charismatic singer, who would go on to become one of the most successful and revered recording artists of all time, personally commissioned the Japanese designer to create his outfits for his Aladdin Sane tour in 1973.

“I remember one of my producers, who was with me when I was doing my collection in London, she called me in the middle of the night from New York to tell me about David Bowie's concert at Radio City Music Hall,” says Yamamoto. “Honestly speaking I didn't have a clue who he was, but it seemed important so I changed my schedule and flew out to see his concert.

Seeing him descending onto the stage from the ceiling on a huge mirror ball wearing clothes from my female collection really surprised me. Here was a person without borders. I had never seen that androgynous look before, it was really amazing. Over the next few years I worked with a number of artists, but it was Bowie whom I forged the closest relationship with. Out of all of the designers he worked with he liked my collection the best which makes me very proud.

I don't meet him anymore, but after listening to his new album (*The Next Day*) over and over, I get the impression he has matured a lot over the years. A truly unique person, I can hear his soul when he sings.”

Collaborating with David Bowie helped to raise Kansai Yamamoto's international profile even further. Through the Seventies and Eighties the world's biggest stars, like John



1 Performance from the 'HELLO JAPAN!!!' collection 2 Kansai Yamamoto ready for action 3 Spectacular finale from the 'HELLO JAPAN!!!' collection.



Lennon and Michael Jackson were pictured in his clothes. In Japan, he and his own teachers, Junko Koshino and Hisashi Hosono, were seen as mentors and an inspiration to younger generations. Yet the man himself wasn't satisfied, he felt that he had more to give.

KANSAI SUPER SHOWS

Wanting to entertain people, he decided to launch his own Super Shows, which began in Moscow's Red Square in 1993. It was the first time a foreigner had been given permission to stage an event there. Attracting a crowd of 120,000 people that included Russia's President at the time Boris Yeltsin, it was the largest gathering at the Square since the victory parade in 1945 following WWII.

Featuring acrobats, dancers, musicians and various other entertainers, the shows proved to be immensely popular wherever they went. 200,000 turned up in Hanoi, Vietnam (where he proceeded with a fireworks display even though he was denied permission by the Ministry of Culture), while the show in New Delhi, India, was broadcast in 54 countries. Last year's show in Beijing was also a huge hit, in spite of the simmering tensions between Japan and China.

All together around 3.5 million people, from all kinds of backgrounds, have been to see his spectacular events and he is not planning to stop there. He wants to produce more and is particularly interested in doing one in the Middle East.

MOVING FORWARD

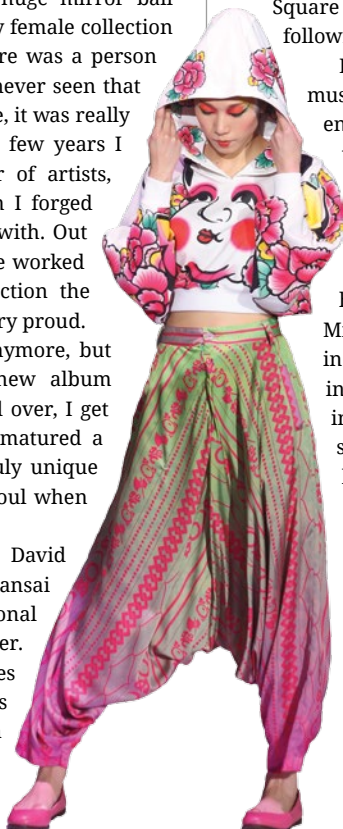
Looking to the future, Yamamoto is constantly setting himself new challenges, one of his latest being to vastly improve his English. In the past he believed it was not that important as his clothes did the talking for him. These days, however, he wants to be able to explain his collections and answer questions about them. Consequently he has been taking English lessons at Berlitz for the past seven months and it seems to be working.

Despite his secretary's reservations he decided to do the interview in English and coped with it very well. Unprompted he veers through topics, including his vast book collection, his admiration for explorer Naomi Uemura, the two movies he watched this week (*Hara-kiri* and the Japanese remake of *Unforgiven*, both of which he highly recommends) and stories about his grandchildren. He is clearly a man that likes to talk.

“I think sometimes I speak too much,” he says laughing. “You have actually caught me on a relatively calm day. I can be like a volcano ready to erupt. Of course in some ways I have changed as I have got older, but I think in essence I have remained the same. It is very important that I keep my identity.”

He's a larger than life character who is bristling with energy, and it is great to see Kansai Yamamoto creating collections again. Whether he can make the kind of impression he did 40 years ago remains to be seen, one thing is certain: the world of fashion is a lot more colorful with him in it.

To watch a live stream of Kansai Yamamoto's November 1 show at the Victoria and Albert Museum, please go to: www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/ff/fashion-in-motion-kansai-yamamoto/



CHRISTEL CLEAR

By Alec Jordan

The worlds' eyes are on you. The hopes of your country are weighing on your shoulders. Your heart is racing and the butterflies in your stomach have traded their wings in for jet engines. These are just a few of the sensations that athletes at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo might be feeling when they get ready to compete. But before the races can be run and before that torch is lit, a city has to be chosen.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) weighs many concerns well before its decision. But the final push is delivered by the cities' bid teams, which should represent the best facets of their cities: what they are now, and what they have the potential to be. Without a doubt, the members of the team are feeling the pressure, just as an elite athlete might when it comes to that crucial moment.

This was the pressure that Christel Takigawa felt, getting ready to speak in Buenos Aires on behalf of Tokyo's Olympic bid. As she told the *Weekender*, although she wasn't setting herself in front of the blocks like a sprinter or visualizing her floor routine like a gymnast, she was feeling more than a bit of nerves: "If we fail, what will happen? That was the thought that kept running through my mind."

Her speech, delivered in French—Takigawa was born in Paris to a French father and a Japanese mother, and she grew up in Tokyo—went over without a hitch. She spoke about *omotenashi*, a word that combines the concept of hospitality with a sense of giving the other person space. But what stood out most in her speech was her delivery of the word at the beginning. Each syllable said with a pause and a gesture of her hand, it came out o-mo-te-na-shi, and she repeated it again with a bow.

Despite some joking about the speech in the media, Takigawa explains that the positive response from the public that she has received has far outweighed any criticism. In fact, it has been overwhelming: "I got so many emails from people just saying 'Thank you; on Japan's behalf, thank you so much.' I've never experienced anything like that in my life."

Photo: Shugo Takemi





FROM THE NEWS TEAM TO THE BID TEAM, AND WHAT THE OLYMPICS CAN BRING TO JAPAN

As we continued our conversation about her role as a representative of Japan, her thoughts on how the Games might help influence the city, and how she felt about being half French and half Japanese, she responded impartially, befitting her position as a television journalist. Takigawa was a newscaster for Fuji Television's evening and Sunday news until last year, when she began working on NHK World TV Channel's international affairs news program, *Global Debate WISDOM*.

Each bid team presenter focused on one reason that Tokyo should host the Games, and Takigawa tells us that she chose to speak about *omotenashi* because it's an aspect of Japanese culture that is always close to her heart: "Regardless of what generation a person might be from, or where you are in Japan, you will encounter that spirit of *omotenashi*: it outweighed all of the other things I could have spoken about. Even when I come back to Japan from being abroad, that feeling is one of the first things that hits me."

An avid tennis player, Takigawa was active in many sports as a student, and she looks forward to seeing the top athletes of 2020. When we asked her which event she'd compete in if she could, she said she wanted to try the equestrian events—even though she hasn't tried them before. She adds, laughing: "With horse riding, I might still be able to compete in 2020!"

Beyond the focus on sports, Takigawa hopes that hosting the Games will give back to the country: "One thing I hope is that they will help Japan become a more international country. Right now, the fact that fewer and fewer young Japanese people are choosing not to study abroad is a pity. As a host

country, we can't have Japan be a place for 'Japanese only'. So what I hope will happen is that younger Japanese will study abroad, but also that English education overall will improve."

In addition to raising Japan's overall English level—and she plans to improve her own English—Takigawa says that it is just as important for Japanese, young and old, to expose themselves more to a variety of different foreign cultures, even through events like the cultural festivals around Tokyo: "Even getting involved in events that introduce other cultures is important, and they can be enlightening for the people who take part in them."

AN AMBASSADOR OF COOL, AND A SYMBOL OF JAPAN'S FUTURE

Takigawa was declared the Ambassador of "Cool Tokyo" when she joined the bid team in June, so we wanted to hear her thoughts on how the city could keep its cool edge going into the future. She acknowledged food, pop culture, and fashion as areas to watch, but she has big hopes for a greener Cool Tokyo, with some inspiration from abroad: "It would be cool for Tokyo and Japan to become even more ecological: we already do a lot, but to be able to look to the Scandinavian countries and emulate the sort of things they are doing, that would be great too."

The other things Takigawa sees for the future have a lot

“Regardless of what generation a person might be from, or where you are in Japan, you will encounter that spirit of *omotenashi*”

to do with her presence on the bid team: as a mixed-race Japanese woman, she represents a lot of what Japan would like to show the world: "One image of Japan is of course, the *ojiisan* (the old man), and to show that this is not the only thing in Japan, we had women there (she and Paralympian Mami Sato, who presented her speech in English) in important positions, showing that Japanese society also places a value on women in society. I believe that the power of women is definitely growing in Japan!"

Finally, as a person of mixed race, Takigawa acknowledges that she can stand as another example of what Japan can be: "I come from two different cultures, but I've lived most of my life in Tokyo, doing this work, being the person I am: this is what Japan is becoming. Tokyo can begin with this image too." In Japan, people who have mixed parentage can sometimes have a hard time fitting in, but Takigawa's experience has been one that has allowed her to celebrate the full measure of her identity, which she sees as "double," not "half": "If I didn't feel Japanese, I wouldn't have been able to express what *omotenashi* really meant. I understand it because I've lived here a long time, I know this culture. I'm 'double' but also Japanese."

Of course, we can't say what storylines will develop as Tokyo prepares to host the Games of the XXXII Olympiad, but as a journalist, Christel Takigawa will continue to be in the position of being someone who covers the news and has made news at the same time.



Christel Takigawa celebrates the decision with bid teammate, Tokyo Governor Naoki Inose

IN THE DRIVING SEAT WITH STEVE ENGEN

Part 2 of The Lexus 6 Series

Steve Engen never planned to study Japanese. In fact, it was a love of golf—and the fact that a morning Japanese class at the University of Utah allowed him to play his favorite sport in the afternoon—that got him started with the language. After graduation, a three-month stay in Kobe followed, as did a stint at Ezaki Glico in Osaka, where he was the only foreigner working at the company. In the years since then, he has moved into a career in the pharmaceutical industry, gotten married (he and his wife Maki recently celebrated their 20-year anniversary) and had two children, Nicole and Rachael.

Success in the pharmaceutical industry, particularly in the field of specialty drugs, demands innovation and forward thinking as well as close attention to detail and quality in order to develop medicines that can make lives

easier or save them. Engen, currently the Vice President and Representative Director of Shire Japan, has been at the helm of several pharmaceutical companies in Asia and seen the industry transform drastically—particularly in Japan—during his 20-year tenure.

A respect for innovation and a focus on quality was also what inspired the Engen family's search for their next car, and they found it in the sporty design, performance, and handling of the IS300h. But they weren't impressed with the car just for its good looks: state-of-the-art electronics, an eco-friendly hybrid engine, and Lexus's well-known service made for a complete package.

The Engen family owned a Toyota sedan before, so they were very familiar with the company's quality and service. But the first thing that got their attention was





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the car's styling. As Steve explained, they were taken with it even before they saw it in person: "we saw the IS300h when we were in the Lexus dealership. It was only in a brochure at that time, but we fell in love with the look of it. When the car came to the dealers, we took a look at it and confirmed our interest. It's just a gorgeous car."

Because this was the first time they had bought, rather than leased, a car, Steve was also looking for a reputation that he could trust. He had heard good things about Lexus from the owner of the first company in the US that he worked for, who said that "it was the best service he'd ever had. And this kind of stuck with me—I think it stuck with my wife too—so we already had a good idea about what kind of car we wanted."

The looks and the reputation of the car were important, but the technology—for music, convenience, and safety—inside that attractive design was also part of the IS300h's charm. Both the ease of playing music over the Bluetooth connection and the Pre-Collision system make driving more enjoyable and safer for the Engens, but the convenience of the Lexus Owners Desk is what really stands out. This concierge system, with service available in English, can provide emergency assistance when necessary, but it can also be used to make hotel or restaurant suggestions and reservations. As Steve explains, "you press a button and it immediately connects you with a live person. For example, we could connect with Owner's Desk and say 'we want to find an Italian restaurant close to Meguro Station; can you make some recommendations?' We can choose one

and they'll make the reservation for you, put it in your GPS, and you can just drive right to it."

When we asked Engen what Lexus meant to him, he replied, "Robust quality: I hold on to certain brands. Apple is one. ANA is another. And I think Lexus fits into that. It's a brand that you can trust because of the craftsmanship and the feeling that you get, kind of like when you're holding an iPhone in your hand. I don't know any other way to explain it. Lexus is simply one of those brands that stands for real quality."

Despite his long time in Tokyo, Engen admits that Kobe, his gateway into Japan, is still one of his favorite places, and he

“The IS300h was only in a brochure at that time, but we fell in love with the look of it. When the car came to the dealers, we took a look at it and confirmed our interest. It's just a gorgeous car.”

is impressed with the way that the city has recovered from the 1995 earthquake. When he is not traveling outside the country, much of the family's life (Nicole and Rachael attend an international school in Tokyo) is spent driving around the city, where the IS300h's nimble handling and compact size make it easy and comfortable to get around. And, if they're not looking for a recommendation from the Owners Desk, two of their favorite restaurants are Biffi Teatro in Shirokanedai (Italian), and the modern sushi restaurant Taki, in Ebisu.

Engen had three pieces of advice for newcomers and veterans alike. The first is never to be too proud to ask for advice from people who have been in town longer than you have. Next, you should recognize that it is easier to get out of the city and into nature than most people realize. And finally, even in the city, don't let yourself get into a rut, even when things get comfortable: "I encourage people, 'don't stick around your neighborhood, go out and explore.' Explore with your kids, explore with your family, because there's so much to see."

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Field of Dreams

By: Sami Kawahara

At the beginning of each season for the past 49 years, the thought of breaking the Nippon Professional Baseball single-season record of 55 home runs hardly crosses anyone's mind. And when the chance to break the record does come up, it seems to "mysteriously" disappear. But when Vladimir Balentien hit his 49th and 50th home runs in a single game, with 33 games left in the season, any doubt that the record was unattainable turned into excitement that history was about to be made.

Balentien started out as an undrafted free agent on the Seattle Mariners at the age of 16. He played his first few seasons in the minor leagues before he was called up in 2007, and played three seasons in the major leagues. Life in Japan began in November 2010 when he signed with the Yakult Swallows.

Moving from his hometown of Willemsted, Curacao, to the US as a teenager, and then to Japan at 26 was hardly a smooth transition. "It was tough," Balentien says, "The language; I didn't know if I could survive. I came here by myself, with no family," he continues. "But I have a dream, so that kept me going and allowed me to adjust to the Japanese lifestyle—food-wise, how to treat the people, how to communicate."

With time, Japan grew on Balentien. Fans especially helped him adapt to and enjoy the game. "I like the fans here in Japan. They support you anytime and in any situation. They are with you not just when you are doing well, they are with you when you are struggling. If your team is losing 10-0 in the 9th inning, they don't leave the stadium, they stay there. They keep cheering for you, they keep singing your song until the last out," he explains.

BREAKING THE UNBREAKABLE RECORD

In fact, Balentien attributes part of his record-breaking success to the fans' dedication and their "Coco Meter." "I think the fans pushed for it too, they were so excited and wanted someone to break the record. Even they weren't happy when I was walked sometimes," he observes.

Controversy has surrounded the record in the past, as three different foreigners—Randy Bass, Alex Cabrera, and Tuffy Rhodes—all neared the record, and all, it has been said, were intentionally walked in the last few games to preserve the record set by Japanese star, Sadaharu Oh.

Eleven years after Alex Cabrera tied Oh's record in 2002, it was Balentien's turn—and this time it was different. "Two weeks before I broke the record, it was amazing," he describes. "I was nervous every time I went up there. You got the whole stadium cheering for you. It doesn't matter what the score is: they just want to see a homer. Even the fans from the other team cheered." Balentien points to his arm, "Ah my hair stands up. It's something people dream about."

On September 15, Jingu Stadium erupted in cheers and chants as fans watched Balentien hit a three-run

Wladimir Balentien
 HT: 185CM | WT: 100KG | THROWS: LEFT | BATS: RIGHT
 BIRTHDAY: JULY 2, 1984
 HOMETOWN: WILLEMSTAD, CURAÇAO
 DRAFTED: SEP. 4, 2007 BY THE SEATTLE MARINERS (MLB)
 TEAMS
 SEATTLE MARINERS (2007–2009), CINCINNATI REDS (2009)
 TOKYO YAKULT SWALLOWS (2011–PRESENT) (NPB)

Year	G	PA	AB	R	H	GDP	AVG
2011	140	555	486	63	111	15	.228
2012	106	422	353	58	96	14	.272
2013	130	547	439	58	145	14	.330
	376	1524	1278			43	.275

Wladimir Ramon Balentien is a baseball outfielder with the Nippon Professional Baseball Major League Baseball for Cincinnati.

homer into left field, marking his 56th—and record-breaking—home run.

Home run #57 followed in the same game, and Balentien completed the season and set the record at 60 home runs in a single season.

THE NEW BALL

But the record was not met without controversy. Critics have credited the broken record to a “livelier, hitter-friendly” ball. “I know a lot of people say I hit 60 home runs because the ball was juiced or they changed the ball. But I think the new ball doesn’t make a lot of difference for power hitters. If you go around the league, and you look at the power hitters, they all have the same amount of home runs they usually hit.”

A comparison between the performance of the top three hitters this season and last suggests a low impact of the new ball: While Abe Shinnosuke hit 32 runs, up from 27 last year, Takeya Nakamura hit 14 this season, significantly less than his 27 runs last year. And Dae-Ho Lee hit 24 HR in both seasons.

Balentien himself hit 31 home runs last season, when he played only 106 games, 38 games fewer than he played this season: further suggestion that nothing should be taken away from his record-breaking performance.

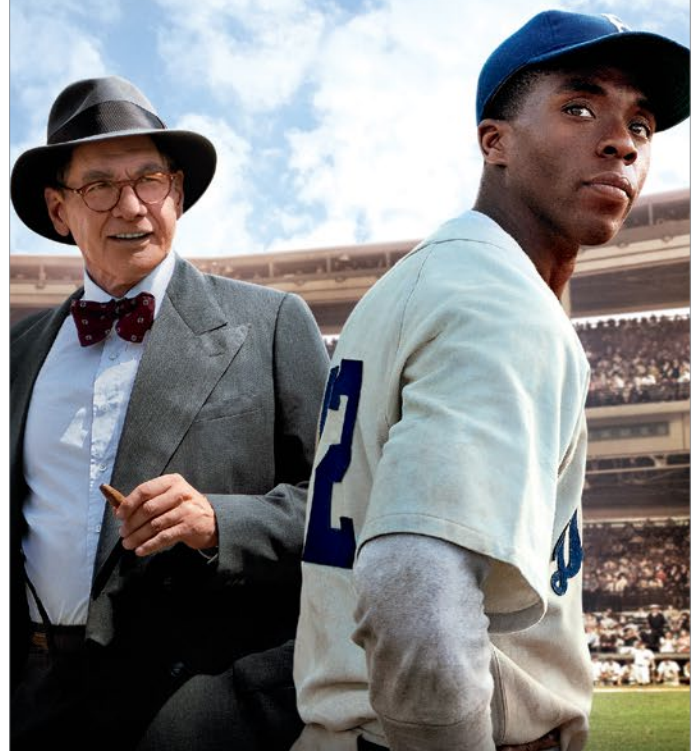
With the regular season over, Balentien heads back to his home in Miami. He will be training in the off-season before heading back to camp on February 1. Does he want to play in the Major League again? Not at all: “I love Japan. I want to stay. They gave me an opportunity, a new opportunity in my baseball career.”

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AKITA

A GOLDEN HERITAGE

Though few may realize it today, gold has long been a part of Akita's history and culture. 1300 years ago, a millennium before full-scale mining began, the town of Kazuno in northeast Akita struck gold. In the 1800s it was home to nineteen gold mines. Although the mines have long since closed the legacy of Akita's gold lives on in the landscape, the culture, and even the food of this northern land. Autumn light from the northern sun transforms fields of rice into a sea of gold, ripened stalks flowing heavily with the breeze. Local legends of a girl in search of everlasting beauty and a radiant god come to life in sculpture and dance. Culinary delights ranging from chrysanthemum sushi to heirloom chickens to local beer show that all that glitters is not gold, though for epicureans it may as well be. Below is just a taste of Akita's golden heritage.

LAKE TAZAWA'S SHINING BEAUTY

In the mountains of Akita sits Tazawako, the deepest of all Japan's lakes. Lake Tazawa has long been regarded with wonder and has birthed its share of legends. Just off the southwestern shore, surrounded by the lake's crystalline waters stands a shining tribute to the most famous of these legends. Tatsuko Hime, as one common version of the tale goes, was



a stunningly beautiful girl from a nearby village. Believing that the clear waters of Tazawa would grant her everlasting beauty, she gorged herself on it and incurred the wrath of the gods who then turned her into a water dragon and eternal guardian of the lake. Though sentenced to a scaly underwater existence, in 1968 Tatsuko emerged from the waters, in the form of a glittering golden statue. Against the backdrop of the deep blue lake and forested mountains, the statue radiates a wistful and lonely beauty. However, Tatsuko Hime's wish—it seems—has been granted at last.

“The legacy of Akita’s gold lives on in the landscape, the culture, and even the food of this northern land.”



DANCE OF A RADIANT GOD

On the second day of the New Year, thirty-five men and boys of Kazuno wake before dawn to purify themselves and prepare for their roles in a 1200-year-old ritual of the Dainichido Bugaku dance. After washing in icy water, and carefully wrapping their headband-like snow caps and tying on hand-woven thatch sandals, they are nearly ready for the dance. A single dancer is chosen to receive a gold-leaf mask, a mask so sacred that even he must handle it with a sacred cloth. This gold-masked dancer becomes, for one morning, the representation of the Dainichi-nyorai, the god of Dainichi Temple.

From eight until noon the dances continue, each telling a story of the region. A gold-maned lion head is used to appease a dragon, the mystical tengu of the mountains help an ancient lord, and at last the gold-masked god of the temple makes his appearance, fending off evil for the coming year. Registered as an Important Intangible Cultural Property by the Japanese government, the dance is open to visitors. Although learning the history of each dance can add to the experience, simply watching the dancers feels like being taken back in time, to an age where it feels that the new year really did begin with the light of a golden-faced god cutting through the winter dawn.

But even more than it does in its sights, the golden warmth of Akita shines from its cuisine. Here are a few treats to warm the stomach and heart.

AKITA'S GOLDEN EGGS

One of Japan's three famous heirloom chickens, Akita's Hinai-jidori are sought after by top-end restaurants for both their succulent meat and rich, flavorful eggs. Bred and raised in Akita's central highlands, these free-range chickens feed on the area's natural grasses and produce.

An order of Akita *oyako-don* is one of the best and simplest ways to sample Hinai-jidori. This steaming, combination of golden



1 A golden-masked dancer performs the Dainichido Bugaku 2 Akita's famous Shottsuru sauce 3 Golden chrysanthemums: a treat for the eyes and the taste buds.

heirloom eggs and tender steamed chicken over rice is a perfect comfort food for long cold months in the north. *Oyako-don* may be a well-known staple nationwide, but when made from Akita's very own Hinai-jidori it is in another class altogether.

THE TASTE OF BRIGHT FLOWERS

Chrysanthemums may be the best-known flowers in Japan. They are nearly ubiquitous at flower shops nationwide, and their golden petals even form the imperial crest. Akita, though, has turned them into a treat not only for the eyes, but for the taste buds as well. *Hana-zushi*, or chrysanthemum sushi, is a unique delicacy of the region. While it looks like a sushi roll, instead of seaweed, *hana-zushi* fills a young eggplant with sticky mochi rice and is topped with a bright golden-yellow pickled flower and sliver of hot pepper. The result is a bite-sized treat that is at once lightly sweet, sour, and with just a hint of bitterness that perfectly complements the heartier fare of Akita's winters.

AKITA'S GOLDEN BREWS

No stranger to craft brewing, Akita offers up a tasty selection of local beers to complement its various delicacies. The oldest of Akita's breweries, Tazawako Beer serves up golden brews worthy of a toast to *Tatsuko Hime*. Using the famed local waters, Tazawako's beers may not grant eternal beauty, but can certainly make



2



3

one feel young again for an evening. Two of the brewery's highlights are the Alt and Pilsner beers, both gold medal winners. Newer on the scene than Tazawako, Aqula Brewing is Akita City's contribution to the area's craft beer scene. While Aqula has a selection of microbrews, it is best known for its Akita Ginjo (a play on sake labeling) and Akita Bijin (Akita Beauty) beers. While you can find local Akita beer in the area's stores, visit the onsite brewery restaurants or *izakaya* serving these local beers for the best tasting experience.

A SHIMMERING GIFT FROM THE SEA

Akita's Shottsuru sauce makes an excellent souvenir for any home chefs wanting to take home a taste of Akita. This golden-hued sauce is made exclusively from Akita's hatahata fish and sun-dried salt. While it takes roughly a ton of fish to make just 500 liters of sauce, the hatahata catch is carefully monitored to prevent overfishing and ensure the sustainability of the catch. Shottsuru's careful, three-year-long fermentation process and natural ingredients result in a taste both rich and refreshing. The sauce adds a unique flavor and smoothness to dishes as varied as salad dressings, stir-fry, winter nabe, and Akita's Shottsuru stew.



ELANA JADE: A SEASONAL CLEANSE

As the humidity subsides and the cool, dry weather breaks through, I find my skin in desperate need of attention and refreshing between seasons. A quick Google search and a browse through Elana Jade's bilingual website told me that the 60 minute Icsi Peeling Facial would be best to renew my post-summer, dull skin.

After a short walk from Azabu-Juban Station, I felt myself completely relax as I came in from the busy streets of Tokyo to the calm and peaceful spa. As I waited for my treatment in the front room, the relaxing background of soft nature sounds and the Australian-themed décor had me ready to begin the facial experience. Elana Jade Spa was originally started in Australia, inspiring the wicker chairs, clean white walls, and rocks and stones lining the products on display.

I was enthusiastically greeted by the aesthetician and led to one of the three spacious, private treatment rooms. Before we began, she asked questions about my skin and what I was looking to improve, and took the time to thoroughly analyze my skin type. For me, the part that makes an experience worth every penny is this personalized service and care from the staff. At

Elana Jade Spa, it is more than just a 60 minute service—Elana Jade and her highly trained staff make sure to educate their clientele about their skin type and possible ways to optimize skin through treatments and at-home care.

After learning more about my skin and the products I use on a daily basis, the peeling facial began. Elana Jade offers individual peeling facials or an intensive, 4-treatment course—one treatment per week for four weeks. This allows for a deep, intense regimen, spread out to prevent damaging skin cells.

Three to six weeks after the course is when the skin is at its brightest and best. And as I plan to go back to the US for the holidays and want to look my best, beginning the course in November was optimal timing.

The aesthetician further assessed my skin's dehydration and mild damage before starting the cleansing and steaming process. She



“For me, the part that makes an experience worth every penny is this personalized service and care from the staff”

then proceeded with a graceful progression of masks, creams, peels, and moisturizers. In between each process was a relaxing scalp, hand, foot, or shoulder massage. I was blissfully at ease—and sad when the hot stones on my body were taken off, marking the end of the treatment. I lightly touched my face and felt an immediate improvement to my skin's texture and complexion with zero signs of irritation.

The fully organic and fresh products Elana Jade uses, replaced every two months, were effective and soothing. The spa also sells products that are ranked as at least 95% organic—they are available for women and men, and there is an entirely organic baby line.

As the aesthetician finished the last touches of my facial, she offered various kinds of hot and cold tea so I could relax and slowly come back down to reality. I sipped my Japanese green tea in the front room as she explained the after care and how my skin should feel in the next couple days. The overall experience was relaxing, yet productive for my skin. I left feeling pampered, fresh-faced, and glowing—ready to combat the cold weather and enjoy the holiday months. The thoroughness and careful attention of the staff makes me look forward to going back for more services Elana Jade Spa has to offer.



For more information on Elana Jade Spa:

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HITSUMABUSHI BINCHO



Spreading the gospel of Nagoya cuisine one eel at a time

One of the things that Nagoya is best known for is great food: some of its famous dishes include *tebasaki* (fried chicken wings), *miso-katsu* (pork cutlet covered with a thick miso sauce), and *tenmusu* (shrimp tempura riceballs). Another favorite dish in this central Japanese city is *unagi*, or eel, and the local style of preparation is distinctive for two reasons: it is grilled, not steamed, and it is traditionally served as *hitsumabushi*, which is eaten in three different stages, each one highlighting a different aspect of the flavors and textures of the charcoal-roasted unagi.

Hitsumabushi Bincho is the first franchise to take this cuisine outside of Nagoya, and president Hiroshi Suzuki explained to us that he isn't satisfied with just spreading this style of cuisine—and the dedication and attention to detail that goes into it—around Japan. His aim is to share this dish with the world.

DIGGING IN

And it is definitely a cuisine worth sharing. The eel is grilled over high-quality charcoal that is made from oak wood (*bincho*), and grilling, rather than steaming—the way unagi is often prepared, especially around Tokyo—is part of Hitsumabushi Bincho's secret. Of course, this gives the unagi a smoky flavor that perfectly complements the complex sweetness of the *kabayaki* sauce it's glazed in, but it also makes the meat slightly crunchy on the outside, and soft yet solid on the inside.

The other thing that makes hitsumabushi unique is the way you eat it. At Hitsumabushi Bincho, you can order *unadon* and *unajū* (a bowl or a flat box filled with rice and topped with eel, respectively), but our recommendation is to eat the dish that gives the franchise its name: the eel cut into small pieces, and served over rice in a large round bowl. You eat it in three steps: First, you scoop about a third of your portion into a smaller bowl and mix the rice and eel together. Next, you then take another third, this time topping it with wasabi and green onions. Finally, you serve yourself the last helping, add seaweed, wasabi, and green onions, and finally pour *dashi* (broth) on top of all of it. Each stage lets you savor different qualities of these seemingly simple ingredients.

“The unagi has a smoky flavor that perfectly complements the complex sweetness of the kabayaki sauce it’s glazed in, but it also makes the meat slightly crunchy on the outside, and soft yet solid on the inside.”



INGREDIENTS AND SKILL MAKE THE MEAL

As Suzuki explains, there is a tremendous amount of depth that goes into cooking something as seemingly simple as an eel, and one of the things that makes a good unagi cook is knowing how to prepare different varieties. This is one of the reasons that Suzuki is so particular about the eel that he uses in his shops. Even within the same species (in Japan, it’s mostly *Anguilla japonica*), there are many varieties of eel and each one, depending on how much fat it might have in its body, requires a different amount of heat to cook properly. And each eel needs to be turned at precisely the right time on the grill.

Steaming eel is a different process. “Part of what makes the tradition of steaming eel is that it can be simpler: you can usually be sure of how the eel will turn out,” Suzuki explains. “But grilling requires more precision, and therefore more training. Many places that prepare eel around Tokyo have hitsumabushi on their menus, but this eel is steamed, not grilled. If it’s steamed, it’s so soft that you can cut it with your chopstick. When it comes to the third step of hitsumabushi (adding the

dashi), the eel will just fall apart.”

Suzuki explained the importance of timing by comparing it to something that might be more familiar to the western palate: “Just like if you are cooking a steak, depending on the amount of fat, you have to know how high of a temperature you should use, and you have to know just when to turn it. That’s part of what it means to be an artisan. It’s the same with eel. You have to be able to look at it and recognize how quickly it needs to be turned over.”

He explains that quickly perceiving these different elements isn’t something that you can really teach: “it’s something that you come to understand by yourself with experience. That’s the technique of any craftsman.” He adds that many elements of his ten years of training were trying, “but that was to be expected: if you’re truly putting your all into it, there will always be difficult elements, whether it’s managing people, or cooking, or doing anything else.”

EXPANDING THE HITSUMABUSHI BINCHO BRAND

After ten years of working under master cooks, Suzuki opened his first shop in Nagoya in 1992. He launched a second location 13 years later and took a major step in spreading the Hitsumabushi Bincho brand when he opened his Ginza shop in 2007. Last year brought a location at Sky Tree Solamachi, and this year was the franchise’s first step into Osaka.

The franchise now has eight locations, from Fukuoka to Ikebukuro, and Suzuki shows no signs of slowing down. Being able to share this Nagoya cuisine with greater Japan was his original idea, but he also wants to share hitsumabushi with a global



audience. Suzuki explains that reaching international customers is the next step to opening shops outside of Japan.

New York is first on his mind, but he is also considering Singapore, Jakarta and Taiwan. Eel is getting to be more well-known at Japanese restaurants worldwide, but Suzuki is looking forward to seeing foodies recognize the subtle differences that go into making hitsumabushi stand out the way it does: “If this food culture can be passed around Japan and to other countries, I would be happy; it would be my dream. I would love to hear people in New York say, ‘I know hitsumabushi!’”

Finally, he explains, being able to take the time to enjoy food that has been prepared with skill and consideration isn’t just a luxury, it’s a need from time to time. And it certainly tastes better: “If you just pop something in the microwave and punch a few buttons, you’re not going to get something real, something delicious.” After being able to enjoy the flavors of Hitsumabushi Bincho’s signature dish, we agree wholeheartedly, and hope that Suzuki’s dream of sharing flame-grilled unagi with the world comes true.



Address: Tokyo Skytree Town, Solamachi 6F, 1-1-2 Oshiage, Sumida-ku, Tokyo
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With a variety of Chicago-style meat and vegetarian pizzas as well as a fantastic selection of craft beers, DevilCraft was destined to be a success from the outset. Brainchild of beer enthusiasts Jason Koehler, John Chambers and Mike Grant, the company first opened its doors to the public at its location in Kanda in 2011 and has been packed ever since. Their new shop opened in Hamamatsucho this August and it is already drawing crowds as big as its first location does.

DevilCraft stands out from its rivals because the owners are all brewers with a wealth of knowledge about the industry. They go to great lengths to ensure a high quality line-up of craft beer, both Japanese and imports. From time to time they even collaborate with some of the breweries that supply their beers to create special house beers. The same care goes into their menu, which has been curated to provide the best food and drink pairings possible.

With 20 craft beer taps in Hamamatsucho, 15 taps at their location in Kanda, and a beer menu that changes daily there is something for every beer drinker—from hoppy IPAs to dark stouts, or from traditional-style beers to fruity, spicy or exotic offerings, you can find a beer to satisfy any palate. The changing menu makes it a great place for regulars who enjoy trying something new every time, and even people who say that they hate beer might find themselves tempted by what they have on tap. For those who really don't like or can't drink beer, DevilCraft offers a variety of cocktails and soft drinks as well as wine, by both the bottle and the glass. Their aim is to have something for everyone.

To go with their wide selection of drinks, DevilCraft offers a complete food menu, ranging from small appetizers and quick snacks to healthy salads and decadent desserts, and of course their famous pizzas. With painstaking care, DevilCraft has truly mastered the art of the deep dish Chicago pizza pie. There are six Chicago-style pizzas on the menu, from the "Veggie Works" to the movie-monsteriffic "Meatzza," also known as "Meatzilla!" Rounding out the pizza menu are four classic pan pizzas. To make sure that all of these tastes can be enjoyed to their fullest, both restaurants are strictly smoke-free. And make sure to call ahead: tables are said to fill up devilishly quickly.

DevilCraft Hamamatsucho

Risewell Bldg 1F, 2-13-12 Hamamatsucho, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0013
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Whether you've just arrived in Tokyo or you've been here since the Showa period, you can probably remember first trying to get something to eat in town. Without strong Japanese skills, stepping into a nicer restaurant and really eating like the locals was probably intimidating. Now add to that the difficulty of finding vegetarian (or even vegan) fare, and you've got a tall order.

This is where Japan Food Kitchen comes in. The new site, which launched in October, aims to offer a complete listing of English-friendly Japanese restaurants around Tokyo, as well as restaurants with vegetarian options. Japan Food Kitchen researches the best Japanese restaurants around Tokyo's 23 wards, offering you a variety that runs from sushi to yakitori and everything in between. Make sure to check out the Editor's recommendation for seasonal food suggestions.

The Japan Food Kitchen team checks directly with their restaurants, providing a three-star system that rates each restaurant's level of English: you'll know whether they've got English menus or English-speaking staff. And for vegetarians, or mixed groups, you can find a dining experience where everyone will be satisfied. For some restaurants, you can even make an online reservation through Japan Food Kitchen—in English.

As Sae Domichi, Sales Manager of Japan Food Kitchen explains, "sites like Tabelog and Gurunavi have been around for a while, but the English versions of these sites are often an afterthought and they can be tough to navigate. Because Japan Food Kitchen is dedicated to Japanese restaurants and restaurants with vegetarian and vegan only options, you can be confident of the attention to detail and quality of their listings, which are constantly being updated."

Japan Food Kitchen's mission is to make it easier for English speakers to enjoy the tastes of authentic Japanese cuisine. "Start your journey with us and return home with a full stomach and good memories!"



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Contact: info@ljhookerniseko.com or **Tel:** 01-3655-8880

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PEOPLE, PARTIES, PLACES

TOKYO'S LONGEST RUNNING SOCIETY PAGE, WITH **BILL HERSEY**

Sorting out material for this column, and the DJ I'm listening to on the radio is playing Sonny and Cher's hit, "The Beat Goes On." They were right on about Tokyo's always super social scene.

November means cooler weather, and that pretty much cuts down the cultural festivals in Yoyogi Park. I really enjoy these and spent considerable time at the Vietnam evening of song and dance and two-day festival, and the big "Incredible India" two-day event. Philippines Ambassador Manuel Lopez, his wife Maria Teresa, and Bill and Charo Ireton not only got down to Yokohama for the Annual Barrio Fiesta but I got to sit with them in special seats right by the stage for the musical program. Top Filipino vocalists Martin Nievera and Gabby Concepcion and several other popular singers' performances were positive proof of why Filipino entertainers are considered some of the world's best.

I spent considerable time just tooling around Tokyo recently—mostly Shibuya, and have really enjoyed meeting good people, and discovering new places as always. Fun fashion outlets include the seven-floor Men's 109, and Sakazen (formerly Zen). Men's 109 is really the in store for fashion-minded young Japanese. Now the big trend is basically skull print T-shirts, sweaters and jewelry. Christian crosses and other Christian religious symbols are also popular with the young trendies. I was happy to find a couple of shops that have American Indian-inspired fashion. Men's 109 is a very relaxed complex. The staff, both young guys and girls, are all really cool, and so helpful. You may have a few problems finding some fashions in your size, but the selection of watches, accessories, sunglasses, and other items at reasonable prices are very special.

Near by—close to the ABC shoe shop—you can visit Sakazen, a shop that has all sizes in just about any style (beachwear to tuxedos) on their well-stocked five floors. The first floor is mainly for young Japanese, and the upper floors are for the more conservative (and sometimes not so conservative) who need bigger to huge sizes. The store also carries a

good selection of imported top designer clothes, which are often offered at discount prices. I recently bought an Armani blazer there for just ¥12,000. Once again: all worth checking out.

After walking and shopping, you'll probably need a coffee break and it's just a short walk to the very popular Shibuya Segafredo Zanetti which is between the super-electronics store Labi and Don Quijote right across the street from H&M fashion store. In addition to what many consider the best coffee in town, Segafredo Zanetti recently introduced Napolimania with its deli set, panini deli set and pasta deli set—all under ¥1,000, and available for in-shop eating or take-out in Shibuya and Hiroo.

France Masset's Spectacular Bastille Day Blast

I was sure French Ambassador Christian Masset and his wife Hélène's reception *a l'occasion de La Fête Nationale* of France would be very special and it sure was that and more. The colorful event was held in their beautiful residence and huge garden which were both packed with Tokyo's beautiful people from all over the world and all walks of life. The program in the garden included meaningful speeches by Ambassador Masset and Dr. Lutz Gorgens of the German Embassy, the singing of the Japanese and French national anthems by the students of L'École Gyosei, and a toast by a local dignitary.

In addition to the National Day celebration, the Massets were joined by their neighbors, German Ambassador Volker Stanzel and his wife Mei Fang, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty.

International Festivals—Yoyogi Koen

The annual Vietnam Festival was really happening this year. It started out on a Friday night in Shibuya Kokaido Hall. The two-hour show featured top Vietnamese entertainers and a group of beautiful models who showed amazing collection of Vietnamese fashion—mostly updated in bold, bright, well-coordinated colors. The girls all had long black hair



15th Arab Charity Bazaar Huge Success

1. Atsuko Umeda (Egyptian Embassy) 2. Abeer Al Muslahi, her daughter Areej, Yasmine Tsamados (Greece) 3. Palestine Amb. Waleed Siam, and his wife Maali 4. Kuwait Amb. Abdul Rahman Al-Otaibi and his wife Jamilah 5. Oman Counsellor Ahmed Araimi his son Abdul Aziz 6. UAE Ambassador Saeed Al Nowais his wife Zahra.

Masset's Big Beautiful Bastille Day Blast

7. Midori Nishiura, Japan Aerospace, and Indian Minister Sanjay Panda and his wife Minati 8. French Amb. Christian Masset with Movie tycoon and Mrs. Tom Yoda 9. Netherlands Amb. Radnik Jen Van Vollenhoven, his wife Beatrice,

Grand Master of Ceremonies for the Imperial Household Nobutake Odano, his wife Tamayo 10. German Amb. Volker Stanzel's wife Mei Fang, French Amb. Masset and his wife Hélène 11. Colombian Amb. Patricia Cardenas French Amb. Masset and his wife Hélène.

National Azabu Renovation Anniversary

12. Tohokushinsha Press's Tetsu Uemura and one of his top executives Kentaro Yoshida and his beautiful family 13. Tetsu and Warner Brothers's Mark Fritz 14. Canadian Friends . . . Haig Oghgian and National's Dale Toriumi 15. Daniele Model Agency Pres. Aya Yoshizawa her son Jesse and National's COO John Ito.



Hilton Worldwide Celebrates 50 Years In Japan

1. Malaysian Amb. Datuk Shaharuddin Mhd. Som., his wife Datin Norasikin, British Air's Vishal Sinha 2. Hilton Hosts and top executives Martin Rinck, Jamie Mead and Timothy Soper 3. Delta Airlines Regional Director of Finance David Spence and Hilton Tokyo General Manager Jamie Mead 4. British Air's Vishal Sinha and Thai Ambassador Thanatip Upatising 5. Sumo great Chiyonofuji's wife Kumiko Amimoto, Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawks GM, Christian R. Baudat, Aki Sakamoto.

At Yoyogi Park—International Cultural Festivals

6. Atul Parekh, Ken Kuroda, his mother Mumbai Restaurant owner Pipo Kuroda,

Farida Rahman, and Kazuo Kuroda 7. Moti's Restaurant Paul and wife Kamal 8.

At the musical concert: Thai Minister and Deputy chief of Mission Singtontony Lapisatepun and his wife Porndee 9. At the concert Vietnam 2nd secretary Chu Cong Hoang and his wife Huyen 10. At Yoyogi Park co-organizer of the Vietnam festival Matsuda Iwao and Vietnamese Amb. Doan Xuan Hung 11. The wife and daughters of Ambassador Hung: Le Nguyet Nga, Doan Nguyet Ann, and Doan Thu Mai 12. One of the Sri Lankan beauties helping with the traditional candle lighting 13. Japanese dignitaries join Sri Lankan ambassador Karannagoda in the candle ceremony 14. Ambassador Wasantha Karannagoda and his wife Srimathi with some Shibuya Government officials 15. Charo Ireton, Maria Teresa Lopez, Philippines Amb. Manuel Lopez and Bill Ireton at Yokohama Barrio Fiesta

and gorgeous smiles. The national Dress 'Ao dai' never looked better.

The following two-day festival in Yoyogi Park was full of mid-morning to early evening performances by the top talent Vietnam Air had flown in for the event. These included models, dancers, top singers and several really hot bands. Vietnamese restaurants in Japan are popular and most had booths at the festival selling all their country's food at really reasonable prices. It all brought back a lot of great memories of my visit to Hanoi and Sapa in the north to spend time with the mountain tribes. Meanwhile, congratulations to Vietnamese Ambassador Doan Xuan Hung his wife, Doan Nguyet Anm, their staff and many friends on this great cultural exchange.

Next, the Sri Lanka festival, titled Sri Lanka: Wonder of Asia. To open the celebration, the Sri Lankan Ambassador Wasantha Karannagoda was joined by a group of Japanese dignitaries in the lighting of a big beautiful candle. This was followed by a dance performance by one of the country's top dance groups. As with the Vietnam Festival, there were two beautiful girls who walked among the VIP guests at the "breakfast tent," or a buffet of home-made Sri Lankan specialties. It was a busy, event-packed two days that went on until quite late Sunday night. The show closed with a dynamic performance by a top Sri Lankan singer who could really do a great impersonation of Michael Jackson. His singing and dancing was awesome, and the joy and enthusiasm of the huge crowd there were awesome as well. Sri Lanka is a fabulous place to visit and you should try and get there while you're in this part of the world. A week after the Sri Lankan festival, it was back to the park for one of the biggest cultural happenings of the year—the Indian Festival.

It was two full days of song and dance by visiting artists from India as well as Japanese students of Indian dance. There were many tent shops offering a huge variety of handicrafts, fashion, jewelry and art. There were also dozens of the best Indian restaurants present, and I really appreciated owners of the most popular places—including Moti's, Mumbai and Siddique—making sure I had plenty to eat. As I've said before, I love the festivals at Yoyogi. You learn about different cultures, make new friends, enjoy the festival mood and an interesting variety of food, and truly get a lot for so little.

New National Azabu Supermarket Celebrates 1st Anniversary

It was a packed turnout—about 350 people in the National Azabu Supermarket's parking lot on Saturday, September 7th. The occasion was to celebrate the 1st anniversary of the reopening of the popular store. Good food (barbecue, maguro show, Honey Baked Ham, party platters), a variety of drinks, fun and games, and music by a very talented five-piece Japanese band that played Cajun music all added up to a relaxing and thoroughly enjoyable community atmosphere event.

Busy People

After 8 years in Japan, British Air's Vishal Sinha and his family have relocated to New Delhi where he'll continue as top manager for the airlines. Vishal and his wife, Juhee are good friends who really supported the *Weekender*. They'll really be missed. We wish them all the best, and would like

to welcome his replacement Jonty Brunner here, and wish him all the best as well.

Kudos to a very busy lady Dewi Sukarno who just hosted her 16th Annual Grand Imperial Charity Banquet at the beautiful Meguro Gajoen. More on this great evening with photos later.

Macho actors Michael Douglas and Matt Damon both deserve the awards they won for the acting ability they showed in the controversial HBO film *Behind the Candelabra*. Michael plays the part of the legendary super flamboyant and openly gay pianist Liberace and Matt Damon plays his lover. The Jerry Weintraub production won 11 prime time awards. Tohokushinsho is distributing the film in Japan, and I just heard Jerry will be visiting here soon. I actually met Liberace in an elevator in Rome's Excelsior Hotel one time, and we talked about shopping and Italian designers.

Also, congratulations to the many Arab ladies on the success of their 15th Arab Charity Bazaar. Proceeds went to several worthwhile charities.

I recently got a very original birthday card from Cirque du Soleil's founder and owner Guy Laliberté. I really appreciate his friendship and thoughtfulness. This card features a photo of guy in clown makeup with a gift and reads "a little laughter, a little magic and many many little pleasures for your special day." What a special and thoughtful friend.

Hilton Celebrates 50 Years In Japan

It was a very special night over in Shinjuku when Hilton Worldwide held a glittering dinner party to celebrate their 50th anniversary in Japan. The program opened with short and very meaningful speeches.

Hilton Tokyo's dynamic General Manager Jamie Mead (he's Australian) talked about the \$50 million renovation currently going on at Hilton Tokyo. I see the many changes every time I visit the hotel. The beautiful new executive and deluxe rooms will be completed in the near future, plus three new restaurants, a new lounge and an informal dining space in 2014. They're replacing all guest and service elevators. This work, which is pretty much completed, offers the ultimate in safety.

The sports center and swimming pool has also been beautifully updated and really offers excellent facilities and service. The multi-course dinner features food and beverages from several Hilton Properties and it was as always at Hilton: truly excellent. During dinner, three opera singers/comedians put on a very enjoyable crowd pleasing show.

I have a long history of staying many times at Hiltons all over this old world of ours. I have some great memories of these stays in New York, Istanbul, Tunis, Seoul, Vienna, Rome, Hong Kong, The Philippines, Thailand, Kuala Lumpur, and more. One of the world's top hoteliers, the late great Richard Handl was a good friend and I still sometimes see his wife, Baby, who lives in Hawaii. She visited here recently. The Hiltons are also very community minded and generous. I'm a lifetime Golden Key Club member there and will have my 16th annual Japanese orphans party there this year. My thanks to Jamie Mead the General Manager and the PR Manager Momoko Gonohe and the great Hilton Staff who have been so kind and helpful over the years.



Jen Mariano, the Lopezes' daughter Margarita and her mom Maria Teresa



Warner Bros. Executive Director of Marketing Taka Odaki and TV personality Matthew Ireton



Konishiki, with a new hairstyle, and tycoon Yasuyuki Nambu at The Oak Door Midtown

MOVIES

COMING TO A CINEMA NEAR YOU IN NOVEMBER



NOV 29

CAPTAIN PHILLIPS

Tom Hanks walked the green carpet at The Tokyo International Film Festival last month in support of his latest action thriller *Captain Phillips*. The film depicts the real-life hijacking of an American cargo ship, a story first told in the book, *A Captain's Duty: Somali Pirates, Navy SEALs, and Dangerous Days at Sea*. Hanks stars as merchant mariner Captain Richard Phillips, who was taken hostage when his ship, the Maersk Alabama, was attacked off the coast of Somalia. At the helm is director Paul Greengrass who is more than capable of tackling intense action and drama, having previously steered *The Bourne Ultimatum* and *United 93* to success. To shoot the movie nine weeks were spent at sea, all aboard a ship almost identical to the one which was originally hijacked. Watch out for Somali-American actor Barkhad Abdi, who turns in a striking performance as the leader of the pirates and who has already been tipped for Oscars success. Hanks himself is no stranger to Oscars glory: he won the Best Actor award for two consecutive years, first in 1993 for Jonathan Demme's *Philadelphia* and then in 1994 for Robert Zemeckis's *Forrest Gump*. Hanks shares this rare back-to-back feat only with Spencer Tracy.



NOV 16

FILTH

When a film is based on a novel by author Irvine Welsh it should give you an idea of what to expect. *Trainspotting*, Welsh's tale of heroin-addicted friends became a cult classic when Danny Boyle converted it into a film in 1996. Now director Jon S. Baird is having a go at turning *Filth* into a similar hit. James McAvoy, who will be reprising his role as Professor X in next year's *X-men: Days of Future Past*, plays the corrupt and bigoted Detective Sergeant Bruce Robertson who will stop at nothing to get a promotion and beat his similarly scheming colleagues. Sex, drugs and violence abound in this grubby tale of filthy cops. Jamie Bell and Jim Broadbent co-star.

THE TALE OF PRINCESS KAGUYA

The *Tale of Princess Kaguya* (*Kaguyahime no Monogatari*) will be the second Studio Ghibli release of the year after July's *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*). Until this work was delayed the two films were originally planned to be released together, for the first time since the joint release of *Grave of the Fireflies* and *My Neighbor Totoro* all the way back in 1988. This animated feature will be directed by Isao Takahata, the man who co-founded the Ghibli company with animation legend Hayao Miyazaki. The director's first film in 14 years is based on the classic Japanese folktale, "The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter" and tells the story of an old man who finds a baby girl inside a stalk of bamboo. Visually the picture is most similar to Takahata's previous feature *My Neighbors the Yamadas*.



NOV 23



NOV 8

CARRIE

Brian De Palma's 1976 film *Carrie* is a stone-cold classic of horror cinema and its infamous pig-blood prom finale once seen isn't soon to be forgotten. Based on Stephen King's first novel, this remake was intended to be a more faithful adaptation of the original book. Reprising the role made famous by Sissy Spacek is young up-and-comer Chloe Grace Moretz who rose to fame after playing eleven-year-old super hero Hit-Girl in *Kick-Ass*. *Carrie* is a student approaching the final few months of high school, where she is the subject of vicious bullying. When the troubled youngster starts to manifest telekinetic powers it leads to devastating results after a prank at the school prom pushes her over the edge. Julianne Moore plays Carrie's religious fanatic mother.



NOV 1

42

Few sporting heroes' achievements transcend the game they play and make a mark on history but Jackie Robinson is one of those few. The player, number 42, was signed to the Brooklyn Dodgers by general manager Branch Rickey in 1946 when there was an unofficial code that black players would not be signed to Major League teams. Instead they played in separate leagues informally known as the "Negro leagues." Robinson suffered abuse from players, fans and even teammates as he broke the color barrier, but he showed tremendous courage by not reacting to the hate thrown his way. Instead, he let his performance do the talking. *42*, written and directed by Brian Helgeland, is a biographical sports drama based on Robinson's life, and it focuses on his move from the Negro league Kansas City Monarchs to his first season with the Dodgers. Television veteran Chadwick Boseman stars as the great player with screen veteran Harrison Ford taking the role of GM Rickey. Keep an eye on Boseman as he gets ready to play James Brown in the biopic *Get On Up*, set to film next year.



NOV 1

BEHIND THE CANDELABRA

Originally aired as a TV movie on HBO in its native America, *Behind the Candelabra* proved a huge ratings success and has gone on to theatrical release around the world to much critical acclaim. It premiered at the Cannes festival this year where it competed for a Palme d'Or, and it was among the films shown last month in the Tokyo International Film Festival's "Special Screenings" section. The film is an account of the life of renowned pianist Liberace and his relationship with Scott Thorson, on whose autobiography (*Behind the Candelabra: My Life with Liberace*) the film is based. Liberace was an icon of Las Vegas, where he performed for decades, and the film is directed by Stephen Soderbergh—a man who knows his way around the casinos of Las Vegas from his time directing the *Ocean's Trilogy* series. Matt Damon plays Thorson, an animal trainer who becomes the lover of the famous showman who escorts him into a world of opulent wealth and sensual excess. Liberace himself is played by Michael Douglas, who is in top form as the over-the-top and out-of-this world performer.

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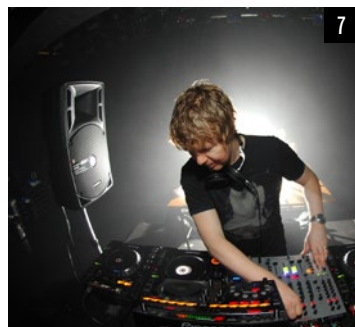
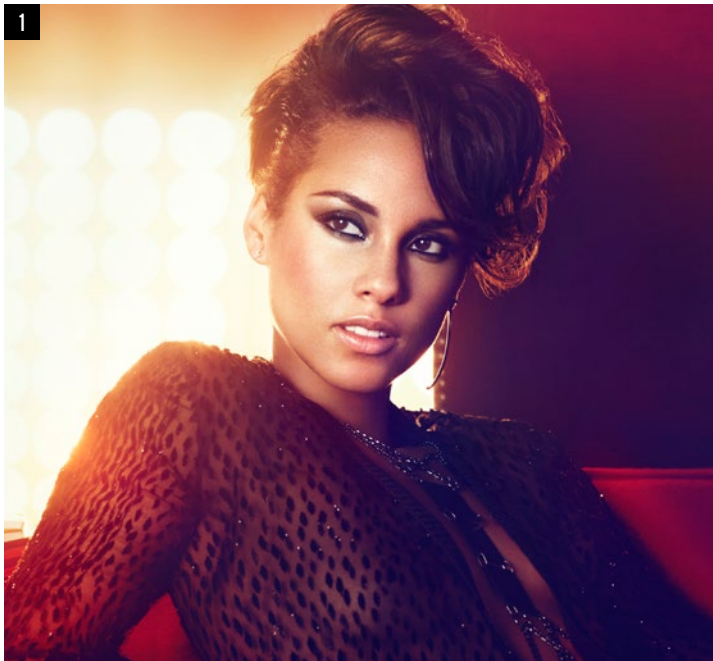
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AGENDA



AGENDA: THE WEEKENDER ROUNDUP OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN NOVEMBER

1 NOV 18
18 **Alicia Keys**
 Her latest album, *Girl on Fire*, was released last November, and she promises to do just that on stage in Yokohama.
Where: Yokohama Arena, Yokohama
How much: ¥9,000 | **Time:** 19:00
More info: www.creativeman.co.jp

2 NOV 30-DEC 1
30 **Hostess Club Weekender**
 This indie festival presents a solid lineup: Deerhunter, Okkervil River, Sebadoh, and Neutral Milk Hotel.
Where: Ebisu Garden Hall, Ebisu
How Much: ¥7,900 (1day)/¥13,900 (2 days)
More info: www.ynos.tv/hostessclub

3 NOV 29
29 **Electraglide 2013**
 This all-night electro extravaganza is back again, this time featuring the multitalented 24 year-old musician James Blake.
Where: Makuhari Messe, Chiba
How Much: ¥8,800 (adv.)/¥9,800 (door)
More info: www.electraglide.info

4 NOV 9-DEC 8
09 **Festival/Tokyo 2013**
 A cutting-edge lineup of domestic and overseas artists, and a program of interactive events at this performance arts festival.
Where: Various venues, Ikebukuro
How much: ¥9,900-¥15,000
More info: www.festival-tokyo.jp

5 NOV 17
17 **Tequila Festa**
 Taste some tequila-based cocktails mixed by Japan's top bartenders, and dance away to Cuban tunes if you're still standing.
Where: Billboard Live Tokyo, Roppongi
How Much: First event ¥5,000 - ¥6,000
More info: www.tequilafesta.com

6 NOV 19-20
19 **Franz Ferdinand**
 If you're lucky, you might catch the pop-indie troupe hanging out around Shibuya's hottest spots post-gig.
Where: Zepp Divercity, Odaiba
How Much: ¥7,000 | **Time:** 19:00
More info: hww.smash-jpn.com

7 NOV 22
22 **Transitions feat. John Digweed**
 Progressive house DJ John Digweed is headlining this celebration for Vision's second anniversary.
Where: Sound Museum Vision, Shibuya
How Much: ¥3,000 - ¥3,500 (men)
More info: <http://iflyer.tv/ja/event/157011/>

8 NOV 21-23
21 **Atoms for Peace**
 Nothing but greatness is expected when a band includes Radiohead lead singer Thom Yorke and Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea.
Where: Studio Coast, Shin-Kiba
How Much: ¥9,000 | **Time:** 19:00
More info: www.creativeman.co.jp

NOVEMBER



9



10



11



12

9 NOV 7



Ra Ra Riot

The Brooklyn squad is back for a solo gig at

Liquidroom this time, bringing along their baroque pop, violins and tunes from their latest release, Beta Love.

Where: Liquid Room, Ebisu

How Much: ¥5,500 | **Time:** 19:00

More info: www.liquidroom.net

10 NOV 15-19



Tokyo Ramen Show

Hardcore ramen fans and novices just learning about this Japanese “soul food” are all welcome to sample a wide variety of noodle styles.

Where: Komazawa Olympic Park

How Much: Free entry, ¥800 ticket/bowl

More info: www.ramenshow.com

11 NOV 23-24



Fiesta de España

Join the queue for paella and tapas, watch flamenco performances, and browse handicrafts at this Spain-themed festival.

Where: Yoyogi Park

How Much: Free

More info: www.spainfes.com

12 NOV 21



Neo Stall Beaujolais Night

A gathering of food trucks for nibbles priced under ¥500, and much-awaited free-flowing Beaujolais Nouveau.

Where: Tokyo International Forum

How Much: Free | **Time:** 17:30-22:00

More Info: www.w-tokyo.com/neostall



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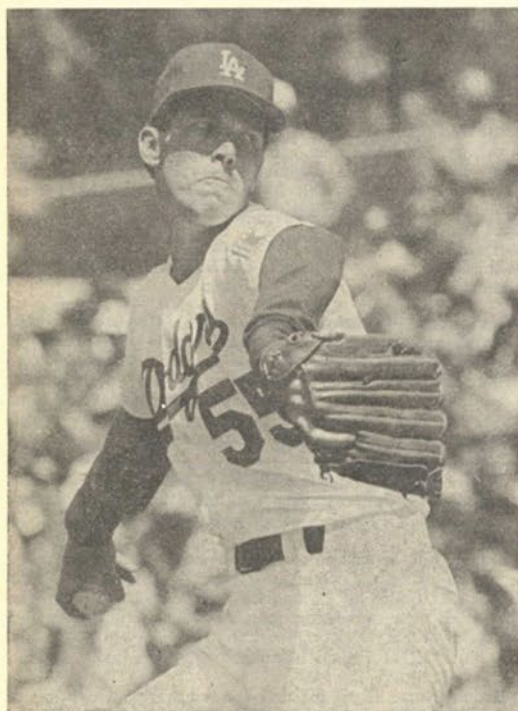
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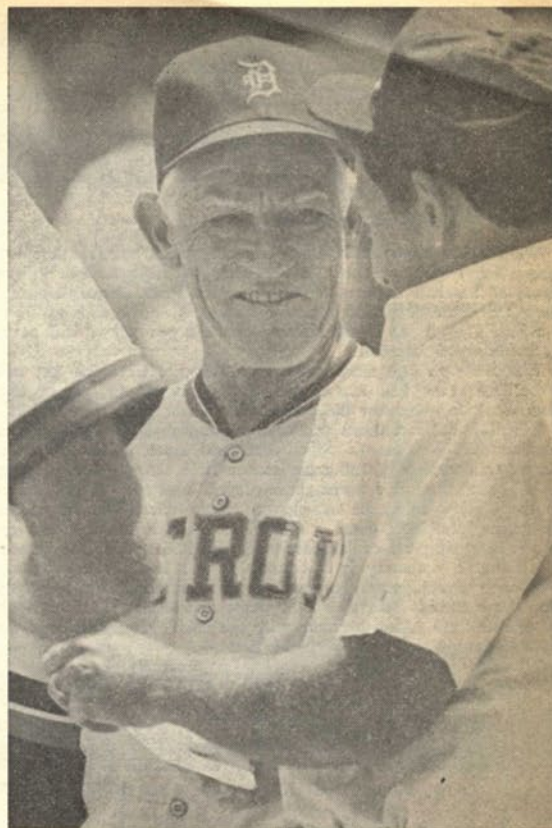
WORLD SERIES MVP OREL HERSHISER

By Wayne Graczyk
Weekender Sports Editor

DETROIT TIGERS MANAGER SPARKY Anderson and 1988 World Series MVP Orel Hershiser of the Los Angeles Dodgers will be the main attractions as a team of Major League Baseball All-Stars kicks off a seven-game tour of Japan tomorrow. Some of the top players from the National and American Leagues will face the best of Japan pro ball in the first edition



* TIGERS' ALAN TRAMMELL



MLB ALL-STARS SKIPPER SPARKY ANDERSON

Major League Baseball All-Star team in Japan for seven-game showdown

of *Nichiei yakyu* at the professional level since 1986.

Anderson, veteran manager who led the Cincinnati Reds on a 17-game tour here in 1978, will pilot a 26-man squad which will play a similar group from the Pacific and Central Leagues. The action opens with games at the Tokyo Dome on Saturday, Nov. 5, and Sunday, Nov. 6. Following a day off Monday, the teams travel to Fukuoka for a meeting at Heiwadai Stadium on Tuesday, Nov. 8, and to the Osaka

area for a contest at Koshien Stadium on Wednesday, Nov. 9.

Then it's back to the Tokyo environs for a game at Seibu Lions Stadium in Tokorozawa on Thursday, Nov. 10. Friday the 11th is an off-day and the series will conclude with games at the Big Egg on Saturday, Nov. 12, and Sunday, Nov. 13. All games start at 1:30 p.m., save for the finale which is set for a 12:30 tipoff.

Joining Hershiser on the MLB All-Stars will be such notables as Minnesota Twins outfielder and the runnerup for the 1988 American League batting title Kirby Puckett, Detroit shortstop and 1984 World Series hero Alan Trammell, Chicago Cubs flycatcher Rafael Palmiero, Cincinnati infielder Barry Larkin, New York Mets star pitcher David Cone and 1988 All-Star game home run hitter Terry Steinbach, the catcher on the American League champ Oakland Athletics.

Others on the team are pitchers Danny Jackson of the Reds, Mark Gubicza of the Kansas City Royals, Jimmy Key of the Toronto Blue Jays, the Texas Rangers' Jeff Russell, Mark Davis of San Diego, Greg Maddux of the Cubs and relief specialist Doug Jones of Cleveland.

Sharing the catching duties with Steinbach will be Tim Laudner of the Twins and Benito Santiago of the Padres. The first basemen are Fred McGriff of Toronto and Andres Galarraga

(Continued on Page 14)



TWINS' PUCKETT (L); REDS' LARKIN (C); CUBS' PALMIERO (R)



Seen on Continental to Guam and Saipan.

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BACK IN THE DAY: NOVEMBER 1988

Check out the scene in Tokyo from 1988! You can read the rest of this issue (No.44 1988) and view Weekender's 42 year archive online. www.tokyoweekender.com/weekender-archives/

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