

ゴブルー月刊

GO BLUE

The Monthly *Go Blue*

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MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS
 Left: Kamishibai, Ontaku performs, Wasabi Maki Challenge participants grimace in pain.
 Right: JCF volunteers pose for a photo.



Photo Credits: K. Bassett and other JSA members.

JAPAN CULTURE FESTIVAL - Our favorite event returns - by Kristine Bassett

More than 200 people turned out to the Trotter Multicultural Center on March 31st to attend JSA's annual Japan Culture Festival, an event designed to promote Japanese culture to the University of Michigan and greater Ann Arbor community. Being that this year's JCF theme was Japanese art forms, booths for visual, audio, literary and culinary arts were set up throughout Trotter, with each one having a different activity for in which guests participated. One booth featured a haiku writing activity, while another had a Japanese music guessing game. Several visiting organizations such as the the UM Japanese department, Center for Japanese Studies, Iki-gai Connections, and others also had popular booths. The Michigan Go Club, for instance, drew many curious guests who wanted to learn about the traditional East Asian game of go.

As with every year, this year's JCF also boasted a wide variety of performers, including members of the Japan Society of Detroit Women's Board, who read the classic Japanese tale of Kaguyahime; Ontaku, who performed a collection of anime theme songs such as Neon Genesis Evangelion and K-On; and JSA's own Soran Bushi, a modern take on a traditional fisherman's dance, and spicy wasabi maki eating contest. But the fan favorite by far was the AKB48 boys dance group produced by LSA freshman Sabrina Tsoi. LSA senior Hidetaka → *Continued to page 2*

Editor's Note

The current *Go Blue* edition you're reading is the last one I'll supervise as editor. I'd like to take this moment to thank all of my writers and anyone who was interviewed by or gratefully donated photos to our publication. Christa (pictured beside me) will be your next editor; please continue to read and support JSA's newsletter under her, she'll do a superb job! -IM



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Kanazawa said he was impressed by the high-quality performance that the six-person team displayed despite only having less than a month to practice, telling us they did an “amazing job.”

This event was also a favorite among JSA members. LSA freshman Christa Plamondon shared her experience, saying that “it definitely lived up to my expectations. The food was great and the activities were really fun.” Christa participated not only as a general JSA volunteer, but also as a Soran Bushi performer, and so had been involved for months before the day of the event. She especially stressed how “fulfilling” it was to finally be able to perform Soran Bushi on the day of the event after weeks of practicing. Δ

END-OF-YEAR POTLUCK by Ellie Carl

On April 6th, JSA members gathered in Mason Hall for an End-of-Year Potluck. Participants brought all kinds of dishes, ranging from Japanese and American favorites like karaoke and mac and cheese to Chinese classics like spring rolls. But the most pleasant surprise was exchange student Suzuna Shiomi’s omurice onigiri (fried rice in the shape of a ball with a thin layer of omelette covering it).

As everyone ate to their heart’s content, JSA board members handed out paper plate awards to members, recognizing them for achievements and quirks they displayed throughout the past year. Notable awards included the “Cutest Smile” Award for LSA freshman Jackson Schodowski and the “Legs for Dayzz” Award for Engineering senior Ritsuma Inaba, referring to his toned

Above left: JSA members dance Soran Bushi, finishing off the performance with an elaborate formation | Above right: Members enjoy each other’s food at the End-of-Year Potluck Dinner | Below left: old and new members study together during Study Party | Below right: boys dance members perform to an AKB48 song.

calves that were showcased during the boys dance at the Japan Culture Festival.

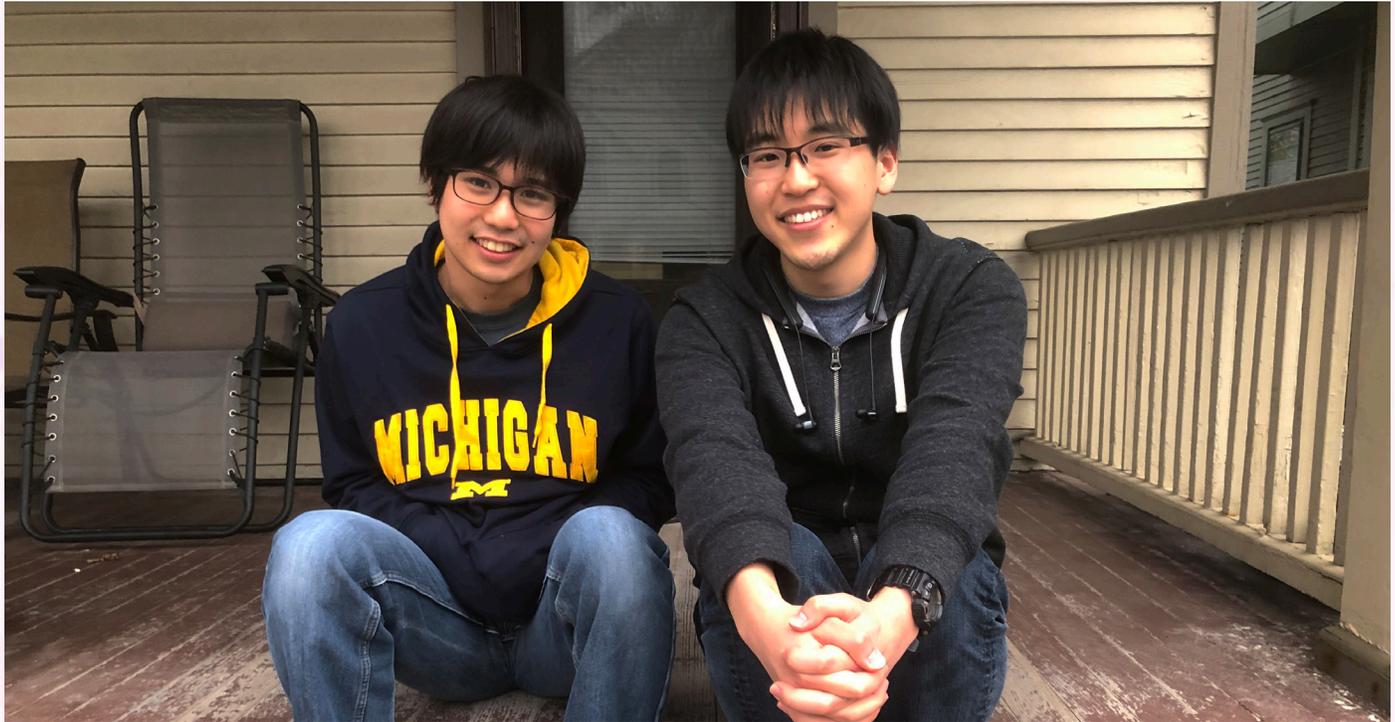
Suzuna said the event was a great way to cap off the year for JSA, which was the first community she joined when she came to the US. “I loved everyone’s food, especially yakisoba and baumkuchen,” she said. “Also I’m glad that everyone liked my omelet rice balls. Let’s do it again!” Δ

STUDY PARTY by Vivek Peri

JSA members gathered for a Study Party at Mason Hall on April 14th. Though it was a rainy day, thirty members came to study together for their final exams and papers.

Some JSA members were facing their books the entire time while others occasionally took a break from their studies to reminisce over some of their favorite events this past semester like Asia’s Got Spice, Undokai, and the Japan Culture Festival. Seniors teased the freshmen for having to take three more years of finals, but when the underclassmen bid them a final farewell, some teared up realizing this was their last official JSA event.

Engineering sophomore Natalie Halphen said the event was a great opportunity to meet members she may not have interacted with over the past year. “I thought it was a great way to study with people you don’t usually study with,” Natalie said. “I still got a lot done, though!” Δ



HUMANS OF JSA *with Ritsuma Inaba & Shuta Suzuki*

The Go Blue interviews members of JSA so we can learn more in depth about each other. Our last issue this year features two members who are practically JSA legends, Engineering seniors Ritsuma “Ricchan” Inaba and Shuta Suzuki. I (Ishi), a dedicated K-pop fan, interview the two about their widely known love for Japanese girl groups (known as idols) and seeks to understand their idol philosophy. I hope you enjoy this expanded interview, which is translated from Japanese.

Ishi: What’s your favorite memory in JSA?

Shuta: I think it was when I met Ricchan. It was at the first JSA party I ever went to. [Then Engineering freshman] Erika Tsuchiya introduced me to him. I told her I like idols, and she told me that there’s someone who’s just right for me. And Ricchan was just chilling in the corner so I went up to him and we immediately became friends.

Ishi: What was so memorable about it?

Shuta: I was shocked there was someone who I vibed so much with about idols haha. I didn’t even know idol fans existed in JSA.

Ishi: How about you, Ricchan? What’s your favorite memory?

Ritsuma: Hmm... nothing really haha.

Ishi: [laughing] That’s sad af dude!

Shuta: Really though.

Ishi: Hmm... then what is JSA to you Ricchan?

Ritsuma: I’d say it’s the only reason to come to central campus now.

Everyone: [laughs]

Ritsuma: I used to have a Smash Bros. tournament every Friday so I came to central but I haven’t been recently, so JSA is the only reason now haha.

Ishi: ... wait really?!

Shuta: You okay Ricchan?

Ishi: Aight let’s move on from this question haha.

Shuta: Yeah you have to go into our expert field.

Ishi: What do idols mean to you?

Ritsuma: Oh I can talk about this for days.

Ishi: Two minutes per person please.

Ritsuma: I think it’s a combination of many elements.

Ishi: Didn’t you just hear what I said?

Ritsuma: I like all of it, lyrics, choreography, composition and all.

Ishi: But those things exist in other genres.

Ritsuma: But I really like Akimoto [Yasushi; 1958– Japanese record producer best known for producing some of Japan’s top idol groups] sensei’s songwriting style. Like I probably wouldn’t have been this into idols if it weren’t for him.

Ishi: But Akimoto writes songs for other artists too, like

the respectable kind.

Ritsuma: The other songs aren't as interesting.

Ishi: He wrote Kawa no Nagare no yō ni ('Like the flow of the river'; best-selling 1989 song by Hibari Misora)!

Shuta: He did, but Akimoto sensei puts meaning into his lyrics by making them about each individual member. So he writes songs that perfectly fit every stage of the group's development so the members' motivation increases and they are able to continue racing to the top. I really love watching that.

Ritsuma: [laughs]

Shuta: Idols really work hard, man. When I see that, I'm like, "I need to work hard too." I get so much motivation from that. It becomes my reason to live.

Ishi: ... wait, you're joking right?!

Ritsuma & Shuta: No we're not kidding you.

Ishi: Like, you can get that same motivation from something like sports.

Ritsuma: Hmm... I think for me at least, the lyrics and composition and choreography... scream art.

Ishi: Scream art, eh?

Ritsuma: Akimoto sensei truly challenges old methods and invents new ones.

Ishi: But in terms of trying new things, K-pop and American bands are doing that too. How are they different?

Ritsuma: They try different things though.

Shuta: Japanese idols culture really has this idea of racing to the top. So underground idols want to be nationally recognized like AKB48 one day.

Ishi: So you really like seeing this intense battle among the idol groups.

Shuta: Yeah, they say it's the 'warring idol era' of idol groups in Japan. That's how many idol groups there are, from the underground all the way to the mainstream. Watching all those young women battle through that intensity... that's where my satisfaction comes from.

Ishi: [cringes]

Shuta: Like no joke, Akimoto sensei completely changed the game. He let fans actually meet the idols one-on-one and put tickets for events in CDs, which has been unheard of before his time.

Ritsuma: He also started elections within groups to see who gets the center position too.

Ishi: ... This is not gonna end so let's move on haha.

Ritsuma and Shuta: [laughs]

Ishi: Do you have any words of advice for underclass-

men?

Shuta: Advice? Don't be prejudiced towards idol fans.

Ishi & Ritsuma: [laughs]

Shuta: Oh and let me recommend this idol group...

Ritsuma: Yeah, I have a rec too...

Ishi: You didn't even offer any advice yet!

Ritsuma & Shuta: [laughs]

Shuta: So my rec is...

Ishi: Bruh...

Ritsuma & Shuta: [laughs]

Shuta: Fine, Ricchan?

Ritsuma: Oh my advice? Same as Shuta I guess.

Ishi & Shuta: [laughs]

Ritsuma: No like really there's so much prejudice dude!

Shuta: Yeah, you tell em Ricchan!

Everyone: [laughs]

Shuta: Just because we like idols doesn't mean we lust over these girls. It's not 'like,' it's more like 'support.'

Ritsuma: Yeah, we don't really have any inappropriate desires for these girls.

Everyone: [laughs]

Shuta: It's different, we swear.

Ishi: I understand though. I don't see (K-pop girl group) TWICE in that kind of way.

Shuta: Yeah, see? We have more in common than you think.

Ishi: Pls no. So, you have recs I heard?

Shuta: Of course. I tell people Keyakizaka 46, so let me recommend "Masshiro na kyanbasu (Pure white canvas)," or "Shirokyan" for short. I'm really into them right now.

Ishi: So, what's so good about them?

Shuta: What's so great about idols is watching them working so hard, as I've told you before. Shirokyan debuted in 2017 and they're still underground but they're really rising up the ranks right now, and they're really ambitious, and they even give regular fans likes on Twitter.

Ritsuma: Oh there's something else I want to say, there's prejudice against idol fans but there's an even worse prejudice against Akimoto sensei.

Ishi: Just tell me your recs bruh.

Ritsuma & Shuta: [laughs]

Ishi: Recs...

Ritsuma: Like I really want JSA members to not be preju-

diced against Akimoto sensei.

Ishi: Did I not tell you to give me your recs?

Ritsuma & Shuta: [laughs]

Shuta: This your advice for JSA underclassmen, right?

Ritsuma: Yeah.

Ishi: You're a little late there, aren't ya?

Shuta: We ask that you please stop the prejudice against us idol fans and also against Akimoto sensei. We really respect that man.

Ishi: Well what's the prejudice against Akimoto sensei in the first place?

Shuta: What? You're right, what is that prejudice...?

Ishi: [laughs] Are you serious.

Ritsuma: Like for example, some people ask, "isn't it kinda weird that a middle-aged dude is producing a girl group consisting of teenagers?"

Shuta: Akimoto sensei mastered the art of entertainment, so he's not doing it because of any underlying motives.

Ritsuma: Totally correct.

Shuta: He really creates art of entertainment. Art. That's my conclusion. Idol equals art.

Ritsuma: Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you my recommended idol group. Hinatazaka 46 is really good. They're on the rise right now.

Ishi: Let's move on. You guys did a dance performance at JCF. What did you think of Sabrina as producer?

Shuta: Sabrina's really good at dance.

Ritsuma: She is.

Shuta: I was really impressed by how she was able to get us complete novices at dancing to that level of performance. We only had three practice sessions.

Ishi: That is impressive.

Shuta: Oh, and she instinctively knows what expressions look cute and whatnot.

Ishi: She's very particular about her art, is what you're saying.

Shuta: Yep. And like she's not just trying to make us memorize the choreography like a robot, she really encouraged us to bring out the best features of what an idol is, so I really respected that.

Ishi: I see.

Shuta: I wouldn't have chosen the songs she had chosen though.

Everyone: [laughs]

Shuta: I wouldn't use AKB48 songs, haha.

Ritsuma: I rate her choice of 'Tashika ni suki nanda (I like him for sure)' very highly, actually. I really like that song. Like if it was only 'Koi suru fortune cookie (The fall-in-love fortune cookie),' I would've been meh since that song is overused, but I personally like her taking the extra step to put "Tashika ni sukinanda" before that.

Ishi: Interesting. Well, this concludes our interview. That took eighteen minutes in total.

Ritsuma and Shuta: That's so long [laughs]

Ishi: Thank you so much you two. I'm really glad I got to have such an amazing interview before graduation.

Ritsuma and Shuta: Of course! Δ

