

Book Review

Tōru Mitsui, ed. 2014. *Made in Japan: Studies in Popular Music*. New York: Routledge. 254pp. ISBN 978-0-415-63757-2 (hbk)

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Made in Japan: Studies in Popular Music is a collection of thirteen essays by Japanese and non-Japanese scholars. Edited by one of Japan's leading scholars of Japanese popular music, the book is divided into three main parts: (1) Putting Japanese Popular Music in Perspective; (2) Rockin' Japan; and (3) Japanese Popular Music and Visual Arts. A Preface and Introduction set the scene; a Coda is included on Japanese music reception; and an Afterword closes the book. The editor has included a particularly useful summary for each of these sections.

The book is intended to offer to English readers a taste of some of the distinct features of Japanese popular music (xiii). In his introduction to the volume, Mitsui provides an overview of some of the main genres that have either influenced Japanese popular music or have been a style within it. The author comments that these styles help to show western influences on Japan, which have then been blended with local music styles to produce popular music that is distinct to Japan. These styles include *gunka* (military music), *shōka* (children's songs), *enka* (sentimental ballads), dance-band music, Asakusa opera, Takarazuka Revue, *Ryūkōka* and *kayōkyoku* (types of popular song), music of occupation forces (i.e. post-World War II), western popular music, rock, folk, idol *kayō* and new *enka*, and new music. Mitsui also offers an outline of popular music studies in Japan. While several publications appeared in the 1980s, it was in the 1990s that a marked increase in popular music scholarship was seen, which included studies by Japanese and non-Japanese researchers.

Part 1 offers five essays that put Japanese popular music in perspective. The first of these chapters is by Naomi Miyamoto and is on the Takarazuka Revue. Emerging out of a result of French influence from the late 1920s, the Takarazuka Revue developed as an all-female performance extravaganza that soon became an established popular musical act and household name

throughout Japan. The author focuses on Takarazuka fans and the star system in this entertainment spectacle. The star system that goes with this troupe of five companies provides a hierarchy of key entertainers with a turnaround of performers rising through the ranks of each company every few years. Hand in hand with the star system are the fan clubs that offer Takarazuka supporters distinct social groups, through which fans can celebrate key performers who participate not only in public entertainment but also in support activities. It is with a “community consciousness” (35) that the fans operate, especially in the highly organized clubs where fans are devoted to particular stars.

While Miyamoto sheds light on a style of popular entertainment, Shelley Brunt’s chapter on the 60th annual *Kōhaku* song contest provides insight into an end-of-year television show that features numerous popular entertainers. Propelling itself from year to year by building on nostalgic sounds of the past and at the same time the trendy styles of the present, *Kōhaku* is presented as a television music contest. Dividing into two teams, represented by the colours red (for women) and white (for men), this end of year celebration by NHK-TV of pop culture has a firmly established place in the annual cycle of media entertainment and television spectacle. The author offers a brief background to the event in the context of the rise of post-war development, and explores the contest as an expression of *uchi* (in-group) and performer relationships, each offering comprehension of the performance phenomenon through a sociological lens. Brunt mentions some of *Kōhaku*’s key performers and music styles, which include the *kayōkyoku/pops* genre and represent over 55 per cent of performances. Also significant is *enka* (nearly 30 per cent). Key themes in the contest include nostalgia for Japan and nationalism, and the author concludes by noting that the contest “serves to regenerate the national community by confirming its people’s cultural identity” (49).

The book then moves into a slightly different direction with Mamoru Tōya’s chapter on the culture of popular music in occupied Japan. The author focuses on the clubs that were established as a result of the American bases that were set up from 1945. Offering social insight on the music that became a part of the occupier’s and many of the local residents’ lives, Tōya provides in-depth historical data on the impact of the clubs and their provision of a microcosm of “America” in Japan. As a “contact zone” (61), where different cultures expressed their own and sometimes blended musical ideas, the clubs were incubators for a new popular music culture that emerged as part of Japan’s post-World War II defeat and rise of a new democratic and capitalist society. Those who frequented the clubs “received American popular music ... on their own terms and for their own purposes, absorbed it, and used it to lay the foundation for new cultural creation” (61).

A particularly influential and very commercial form of popular music that emerged in the twentieth century in Japan was *enka*. A sentimental ballad song style, it was in the 1970s that the term *enka* began to be used more widely for this style. Yūsuke Wajima argues that *enka* is an example of an “invented tradition”, in the Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) sense of the term (71), noting also that the purpose of this chapter is to build on some of the gaps in Christine Yano’s (2003) work on the style by referring especially to *enka*’s historical process of development and in connection with “*enka* nationalism” (71).

The last chapter in this part of the book is by the editor and is an analytical musicological essay showing how some songs written in triple time are actually sung by Japanese in duple time. Mitsui looks back to the mid-1920s by enquiring as to why the song ‘Kago no Tori’ had an irregular passage in its fourth bar in recorded music. The author’s “discovery” eventuated into a hypothesis that the passage in question, along with some other songs, has two written bars in triple time that are actually sung as three bars of duple time.

Part 2 has three chapters that look at Japanese rock music from the 1950s to the present day. The first, by Terumasa Shimizu, explores how rockabilly from the latter half of the 1950s to 1963 gradually changed from being a genre consisting of covers to one of originals. (A remark on page 103 noting “the late 1930s of the Shōwa period” [1926–89] is actually referring to the early to mid 1960s.) The author shows how Japanese pop musicians soon attached importance to the playing of originals over covers, which reflected a broader trend in Japanese manufacturing that began to produce original products for sale in the western world as opposed to cheaper copies of western goods. The second chapter in this part is by Katsuya Minamida and is an analysis that applies theoretical ideas of Bourdieu to the development of Japanese rock music. Attention is given to rock from the mid-1960s, where the author rejects such dichotomies as “commercialism/anti-commercialism” and “Tokyo/regions”, and applies a three-way model to help explain cultural contradictions and interactions between musical styles. This analysis moves the book away from history and musical analysis and more into the realm of social and critical enquiry, and explores the social and cultural dynamics of the various music genres and sub-genres that developed in Japanese popular music. The last chapter in this part of the book provides a history of Japanese rock festivals and live music venues. Jun’ichi Nagai offers much data on these phenomena and provides an informative history of Japanese rock. The author puts forward a media analysis on the development of Japanese rock and covers such topics as festivals, live performances, entertainment, “homemade” concerts, folk/rock encounters, foreign musicians in Japan, new music, live houses, indie and air jams.

The last part of the book has three chapters that explore Japanese popular music in the context of the visual arts. The first of these, by Kyōko Koizumi, is a study of one of Tōru Takemitsu's film scores: *Seigenki* ("Time within Memory"). Takemitsu composed numerous film scores, but is primarily known for his concert works outside the genre of film. Koizumi explores Takemitsu's contribution to the popular genre of film and offers an outline analysis of the main themes in *Seigenki*. Following on, Hideko Haguchi's chapter is a study of the interaction between music and visual in animated movies. The author focuses on the *anime* *Akira* of 1988 and offers a study of the film's music in terms of production along with the function of music on screen. The *anime* draws on diverse sounds, including *gamelan* (percussion) and *kecak* (a vocal form) from Bali, Bulgarian polyphony, and Japanese Noh and Buddhist music, thus reflecting an eclectic and outward looking Japanese culture of the late 1980s. The last chapter in this part of the book continues the animation theme and focuses on the emergence of singing voice actors/actresses in the music industry. Aki Yamasaki explores such "animation songs" (*ani-son*) (191), which are very popular in Japanese pop culture, by looking at their development in both the music industry and animation industry. The characters/singers "have the attraction of bringing characters in *anime* works to life and making them look and sound very real" (205).

The book's Coda is entitled "Japanese Music Reception", and this chapter by Yoshitaka Mōri looks at the flow of J-pop on a global level in the age of digital media. The emphasis of the chapter is on the way Japanese popular music has been disseminated from Japan in the contemporary era through digital media. The author uses survey analysis to discern the reception of J-pop in a range of countries. Mōri concludes that while J-pop has undoubtedly made an impact outside Japan as a result of globalization, "the globalization project of J-pop in general has not as yet been hugely successful" (221). An Afterword by Kiyoshi Matsuo and Tōru Mitsui is presented as the last chapter, which is entitled "Maintaining Artistic Integrity and Creative Control: A Conversation with Tatsurō Yamashita". Born in 1953, this male singer-songwriter provides insider insight into the Japanese popular music industry, with much of the discussion on his hit 'Christmas Eve'. While such a conversation offers intriguing information, its place as the last chapter in the book leaves the reader wanting more. Might other Japanese pop stars have been interviewed? Could this interview (and others) have been included in one of the main parts of the book, or elsewhere, and with a detailed discussion? That said, these last few pages provide some poignant words that are worthy of special mention:

We all, including the bands and solo musicians mentioned so far above, belong to the new generation who raised their heads and gained power in the mid-1970s, being driven on by the social and political conflict (the

struggle over the Japan-US Security), and being armed with musical idioms which were still in embryonic state in the mainstream of Japanese popular music in those days. (232)

Made in Japan: Studies in Popular Music is a valuable contribution to the study of Japanese popular music. While the topics of some of the chapters might be found elsewhere in pertinent literature, there are some topics that are especially valuable in terms of their originality and insight. Mitsui has produced a collection of essays that fill many gaps in pop music history in the comprehension of some of the aspects that make Japanese pop music what it is, and has compiled some well-researched chapters that provide fascinating historical, social and cultural knowledge on the stars that make Japanese pop, using a broad definition of the term, what it is today.

References

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