

# No stereo- types: a music festival for the social networking age

**Q: WHAT DO THE OSAKA MUSEUM OF HISTORY, THE BLARNEY STONE IRISH PUB, JAPAN TRAVEL ADVISOR, UK GUITARIST AND YOUTUBE STAR DALE CAMPBELL, AND THE SWISSÔTEL NANKAI OSAKA HAVE IN COMMON?**

**A: A FIRM BELIEF, THAT OSAKA NEEDS THE KANSAI MUSIC CONFERENCE.**

TEXT: ALEXANDER MICHAELSON

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE KANSAI MUSIC CONFERENCE

In a decade when the word 'indie' has lost the clear meaning it once had, the Kansai Music Conference (KMC) lets good music get personal again: it is not an aggregation of artists, enticed by a large corporation to play one-off shows in an impersonal environment. Rather, KMC embraces Osaka and flows through it, encouraging a real dialogue between musicians, industry professionals, and music fans. What's more, it's all done in a fun, friendly, personable, and international setting.

Further supported by the Osaka Convention and Tourism Bureau, KMC is about anything but stereotypes. Whatever your image of the music scene of Osaka, Kansai, or even Japan in general, KMC breaks new ground and is fresh and exciting.

With international guests hailing from five continents,

KMC is all about opportunities. By the numbers, that's four days, ten venues, over 50 artists, only ¥1,500 for admission to the opening party, and ¥0 for entry to the two-day main event. In addition, this year's conference also features showcases at myriad venues around the city and in neighboring communities.

Explains Canadian singer-songwriter and KMC attendee Katie Rox, "It is not often that global events are created for independent artists." No stranger to Japan, Rox previously hit the top three on the Japanese pop charts, and she calls KMC a "match made in heaven" for independent music. Australian Jeremy Cook will be attending KMC for the second time with his band Blakhatz, thanks to a very positive experience last year. "[We were] impressed with the broad range of musicians we met and their open attitude," he said, calling KMC a "great chance to network." He added, "Japanese audiences [were] quick to connect with the sentiment of our songs," dispelling any notion that the language barrier could be a hindrance. Tokyo rockers Honeydew will be there as well, and guitarist K-G Mizutani agreed, praising the "amazing community" in the Kansai music scene.

With a history of reflecting the friendly and caring "Osaka spirit" as defined by founder and lead organizer Duane Levi, KMC also stays up to date. Last year the festival paid tribute to quake victims in Haiti, and this year the festival will mark six months from the March 11 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami with a memorial tribute show. In keeping with the personal theme of the conference, the show fits perfectly with that close-to-home spirit.

This year's conference also features many new workshops, networking sessions, and panels, with intriguing titles such as "Panel Discussion: The Future of Indie Music in Japan," "Workshop: Mind & Body: Oriental Belly Dance," "English Rakugo Show," and "Workshop: Jambo Kenya."

In addition to Japanese natives, KMC also attracts an international audience and is a great opportunity for mingling. "I love it," exclaimed Levi, "because music fans can meet people from different countries! There are not a lot of opportunities where you've got a conglomerate of musicians from 20 different countries in one place."

Guitarist Campbell sums it up: "[KMC] is a wonderful way to meet musicians from all over the world. I'm really looking forward to visiting Osaka again, not least for the food and the great atmosphere."

**KMC starts with the Opening Party at 6:30pm on Friday, September 16, at Flamingo the Arusha. For more information on performers, access, and schedules, check [www.kansaimusicconference.com](http://www.kansaimusicconference.com).**

