



# HYPER JAPAN 2011

22-24 JULY at OLYMPIA TWO in London

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## FRIDAY FOCUS

### HYPER JAPAN: MORE THAN MANGA

Thursday, 04 August 2011 09:00



UK-based blogger Ai Muskett aka **Haijugirl** tells us all about her impressions of HYPER JAPAN 2011, and picks a few favourite moments from the three day show.

#### HYPER JAPAN 2012: More Than Manga

Hyper Japan was advertised as an event which included "food, technology, fashion, games, film, music, anime, manga, art, cosplay, and more", and it was the "more" that I found particularly interesting. It's probably fair to say that the majority of people attending Hyper Japan were there for the pop culture – manga, anime, cosplay, computer games, etc. However, I felt that Hyper Japan really did offer more than manga, and more than pop culture.



HYPER JAPAN, "the UK's biggest J-culture event", provided the chance to sample not only modern Japanese culture, but also traditional Japanese culture (and sometimes delightful mixes of the two). Many people attending the event may not have even known about certain aspects of traditional Japanese culture, such as "Nihon buyo" or "enka", but there they were alongside the latest in computer game technology and Tokyo fashion.

For me, the "Nihon buyo" display on the main stage on Friday was one of the highlights of the event. "Nihon buyo" (literally "Japanese dance") is a slightly different kind of traditional dance, which is made up of a combination of Kabuki buyo, Noh and folk dances, with hints of European and American influences. The display on Friday was by the Hiroko Tanaka Nihon Buyo Group, who are based in London. The performers were not all Japanese, but were all dressed in beautiful, traditional kimonos. It was a real pleasure to see such delicate, intricate dances performed by people who had clearly studied and practiced very hard to continue this



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What was the highlight of HYPER JAPAN 2011 for you?

- Cosplay
- Food food & more food
- Anime
- Manga workshop
- Street fashion shopping
- UK Kawaii Star of the Year
- Sushi Awards 2011
- Kanon Wakeshima
- Jaru.Jaru
- Sake sake sake!
- Maid Cafe

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#### Friday Focus Backnumber

HYPER JAPAN: More than Manga

Friday 22nd July at HYPER JAPAN

Villain from Third Window Films

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Katie's take on HYPER JAPAN via Vogue UK xx



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tradition.



Much like a magpie is attracted to shiny things, I'm always drawn to colourful kimonos and can't resist traditional Japanese fabrics and accessories. The stage costumes worn by the Hiroko Tanaka Nihon Buyo Group were gorgeous. One vibrant orange and purple kimono especially caught my eye. Dancers moved slowly around the stage, using fans as props, coyly peeping from behind, or tossing them up in the air, only to catch them effortlessly seconds later. One held a classic red parasol, while dressed in a pale, floral kimono. Her clear, bright skin and red lips just added to the "Japanese" image she portrayed. Watching the dancers, I felt like I was watching butterflies flit through the air on a summer's day.

As I mentioned above, another aspect of traditional Japanese culture which I was fortunate enough to experience at Hyper Japan was "enka". "Enka", a kind of Japanese folk music, isn't actually that old. In fact, it has only really been popular since the '50s or '60s. However, on first impression, "enka" seems to be worlds apart from the J-pop which was also being played at HYPER JAPAN.



There were a number of "enka" performances by Aika Mochida in the show area on the lower ground floor throughout the event. Aika Mochida has been singing "enka" since she was just three years old, and has been performing as a professional singer since 2009. I have to be honest and say that when I first heard "enka" in Japan I really wasn't very keen on it. The sound was so unusual to me, and I couldn't understand the music. It wasn't that I didn't understand the lyrics - I liked J-pop and I couldn't understand that either. It was more that I couldn't understand where the music was coming from, or the feeling behind it. However, after watching Aika perform a number of times recently, I've grown to be quite fond of "enka".

When Aika performs, she also takes a little time out to explain the songs, and I found that very informative. She explained that a lot of "enka" songs talk about the virtues of Japanese females' patience, and I could suddenly understand this through the sound of the music and the sound of her voice. "Enka" sometimes has this really throaty, passionate sound which is called "unari". We can hear the same sort of sound in pop songs by people like Mariah Carey, but I had never thought to associate "enka" with Western pop music before. Perhaps "enka" isn't so different from J-pop after all?



It wasn't just traditional music and dance that were being showcased at Hyper Japan. I also caught glimpses of a tea ceremony, kimono wearing, and martial arts, to name just a few things. In addition, there were times when I discovered traditional Japanese culture being curiously mixed with modern culture. This was most apparent in the intriguing exhibition of bonsai trees which featured tiny plastic figurines in humorous poses. Mambonsai by Paradise Yamamoto was exhibited by the [ICN gallery](#), and showed how the ancient art of bonsai could be taken to a more modern level.

I hope that even those who came along with a one-track mind for manga managed to discover a different angle from which to look at Japan. Japan is a country which is full of rich traditions, but it's easy to overlook those when there are also so many exciting, modern elements. When visiting Japan, let's try to appreciate both sides of the country, and find a balance between cosplay and kimonos.

**Author: Ali Muskett**



Ali is a London-based blogger and Japanophile, who lived in Japan for three years. Her blog, [Haikugirl's Japan](#), covers all aspects of Japanese culture from ancient traditions to modern pop culture. She's particularly interested in festivals, food, and really big Buddha statues. Since returning to the UK, Ali has been looking for Japanese culture in the UK to photograph and write about. As well as writing [Haikugirl's Japan](#), Ali writes freelance articles for other publications. [Read her blog here.](#)

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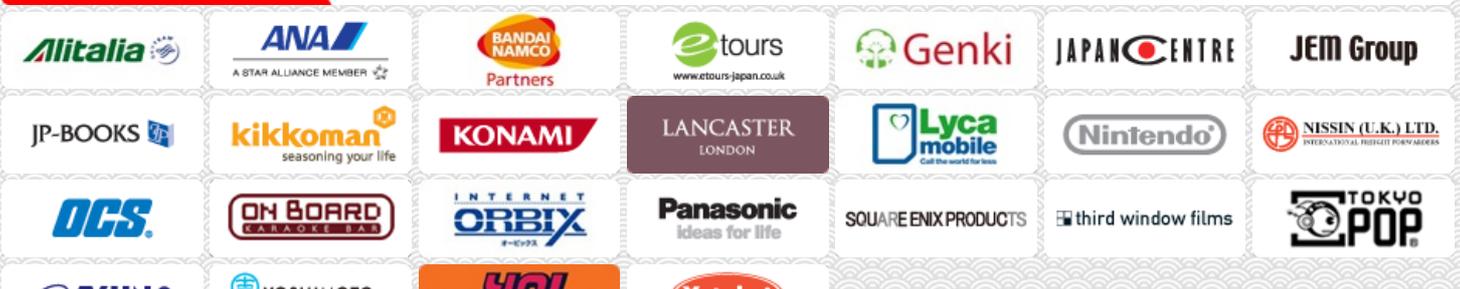
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