

THINK PINK!

BONNIE PINK IS CONSIDERED AS ONE OF JAPAN'S MOST TALENTED ARTISTS. A SINGER, SONGWRITER AND MUSICIAN WHO IS LOOKED AT BY MANY FANS AS THE ANTI-IDOL OF JAPANESE MUSIC AND AN ARTIST DOING THINGS HER WAY. BY DENNIS A. AMITH

[WHAT'S HOT IN MUSIC]

“Whatever music I create, I’d like to become someone down to earth and remain unaffected by the unique world of the music industry.”

WHAT'S HOT IN MUSIC

LET'S FACE IT... Japan has been a country that has been dominated by many female idol pop artists.

Similar to the United States with female artists such as Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Jennifer Lopez and many others who have dominated the charts with their catchy tunes and sexy image, there has been a change in the past few years with the spotlight on a unique breed of female artist.

She doesn't need to shake her body in skimpy clothing to wow her audiences. They have their own style, do things their way and passion for music and wanting for it to be heard.

This anti-idol spotlight in the United States has been focused on artists such as Michelle Branch, Avril Lavigne, Vanessa Carlton and several others who showcase their talent as songwriters, musicians and beautiful, catchy vocals to match.

In Japan, there have been a few female artists who have been looked at respectfully for their talent and for being different than what is currently mainstream.

One artist that has done this for over a decade is Kaori Asada, known to many Japanese music listeners as BONNIE PINK.

BONNIE PINK has been described as an artist that writes music with lyrics so poetic and deep that shows a happiness and also a sadness communicated to the listener with her beautiful vocals and guitar playing.

She released many of her albums with tracks that feature her singing in Japanese and also English. A direction that no solo artist has really pursued but has helped her gain a growing international audience and fans hoping one day to catch a performance.

She has worked with several talented producers such as New York-based producer Mitchell Froom (Bonnie Raitt,

Suzanne Vega). Sweden-based producer Tore Johansson (Cardigans and Saint Etienne) and Matt Cooper (Outside, Incognito and Jelisa Anderson).

In Japan, she has recently released a new album titled "REMINISCENCE" in June 2005 and will be releasing a new CD single titled "So Wonderful" in August. She's currently celebrating her 10th year anniversary as a music artist.

In the United States, her albums are now available via the iTunes Music Store courtesy of Rightsscale, Inc. and has performed at the recent SXSW (South by Southwest) 2005

in Austin Texas, a live performance in New York and also Canadian Music Week 2005 in Toronto, Canada.

I recently had the opportunity to interview BONNIE PINK.

DENNIS: Let's start with the basics. Many music fans are curious by your nickname "BONNIE PINK". Can you explain to our readers how you got the name?

BONNIE PINK: Well I liked the word "BONNIE" because it sounded cute. As for "PINK", I didn't really like the color back then but it also sounded nice so I decided to combine the two words. There's no special mean-





ing behind it, but I decided to use it because it's easy to remember.

DENNIS: Growing up in Kyoto, was it always your dream to become a music artist?

BONNIE PINK: I've always had a passion for singing but didn't really have an aspiration to become a musician. I was the type of person that would create mix-tapes out of favorite songs; listening to it by myself at home.

DENNIS: Was there a certain moment in your life back then that you just knew that music was something you want to pursue completely?

BONNIE PINK: Not really. A lot of my friends and staff supported me prior to my debut, and once I began writing songs I started to think, "maybe this is the right thing for me". A lot of people are surprised to hear that I've never written a song before my debut. I guess I'm a late

bloomer, as it took a while for me to recognize myself as a musician.

DENNIS: An album of yours that I still listen to quite a bit today is your debut album "Blue Jam" and also "re*pink". So much has happened in your career since the release of your first album. What kind of state of mind as a music artist were you in back then compared to now?

BONNIE PINK: I've been writing diaries and poems since 10 and was a member of the choir, so I remember being real happy and excited about having a job that combines the two together. Now I'm very thankful that I can make a living out of music, but I was very naive before; the slightest bad thing would prompt me to think of ending my career.

DENNIS: Your lyrics are poetic and many fans through the past have talked about your writing.

Here in the US, music artists like Jewel have gone on to release a book on poetry. Have you ever released a book on poetry in Japan and if not, would you ever consider doing so?

BONNIE PINK: I hope that one day I can publish a book that features a collection of poems, songs, lyrics and photographs that I made.

DENNIS: You worked with the producer Tore Johansson (Cardigans, Saint Etienne) since 1996 in Sweden. What is like to work with him and how much influence has he had in your music?

BONNIE PINK: I met Tore with hardly had any recording experience, so he gave me some advice on how to sing in studios. He gave me ideas like sitting and singing in a small voice. He made me realize that my

WHAT'S HOT IN MUSIC



voice has many different faces. At times our discussions got very heated over the arrangement but we moved forward by stimulating and inspiring each other. I respect him as a producer and the speed in which he works at is just amazing. His selection of equipments and setups during the recording session is very original and professional. I believe Tore is also an extremely talented Mix-engineer too.

DENNIS: A few years later, you worked with Mitchell Froom (Bonnie Raitt, Suzanne Vega) in New York and also Matt Cooper (Incognito, Helisa Anderson) in London. With many Japanese artists working with Japanese producers, you had awesome opportunities to work with producers outside of Japan. Did things just happen that way or was working outside of Japan, something that you wanted to pursue?

BONNIE PINK: I grew up listening to more western music than Japanese music so it naturally

flowed towards working with artists overseas. I occasionally write English lyrics, so I'd say my music is Japanese Music with a strong influence from foreign music. Right now I'm working hard to establish a new genre called BONNIE PINK. I also aspire about eventually signing with an overseas label and producing a CD outside Japan.

DENNIS: You are one of the few Japanese artists that has a very good connection with American fans and one major reason is because of your knowledge of English. Was it your plan to use English in your music for your music to reach out to listeners worldwide?

BONNIE PINK: My first English song was written after it was decided that Tore would be the producer. I thought it would be easier for Tore to understand, so I wrote nearly half of the album in English. It eventually became a habit and I began creating albums that are half Japanese and half English. I've always had a wish for my songs to be heard by people over-

seas so I'm glad that my career has reached a point where that has become possible.

DENNIS: Americans will now get to experience your music as several of your albums are now available on the iTunes Music Store. How do you feel about your albums being released on the iTunes Music Store.

BONNIE PINK: I'm very interested in how American audiences would react to BONNIE PINK, including my Japanese songs. I'm very happy to see my works becoming available on the iTunes Music Store.

DENNIS: What are the chances of an all-English BONNIE PINK album for release in the United States?

BONNIE PINK: I'd eventually like to create an all-English album, but that will be completely aimed towards the English-speaking regions so it'll have to wait until I sign with an American record label. My current career would not have existed if it weren't for my fans in Japan so I'd like to continue singing in

Japanese. One of BONNIE PINK's originality is created through the unique worldview that only exists in Japanese, therefore I'd like the audience overseas to experience that when they listen to BONNIE PINK.

DENNIS: Not too long ago, you performed at SXSW in the United States. How was that experience?

BONNIE PINK: Frankly, I was thinking "what if not many people show up?" right until the live began. But once the performance started, I was surprised to see that a lot of non-Japanese fans showed up to hear me sing. A U.S. live was something I've been yearning for so I'm glad to have accomplished it, and would like to continue to perform overseas.

DENNIS: For J!-ENT, we give the fans a chance to ask a question. The following questions were submitted by your fans from around the world. Here are five questions:

I really love your music! Will we ever see a United States tour or will you perform in New York City or California or even in Europe anytime soon?

BONNIE PINK: Unfortunately there are no lives scheduled at the moment. I've performed in Cannes this January and at Toronto, New York and Texas this March. I will work hard to arrange my next overseas performance!

How was your first experience performing in front of a large audience?

BONNIE PINK: It was great! My first stage performance was in a high school assembly hall when I appeared as a guest vocalist to sing a song for my friend's band. I'm usually fairly quiet but recall feeling different as if I switched into a different person.

You have had many collaborations with many famous acts in the Japanese music industry.



Do you have any future plans for more collaborations? Is there anyone you'd like to work with in the future in the Japanese music industry? How about the American music industry?

BONNIE PINK: I can't think of any musicians to name right now, but if there are opportunities to meet interesting artists I would like to collaborate more with them. There are so many artists in and out of the states whom I want to meet with. One such artist is the New York-based band Ida, who I met during their live gig at this year's SXSW in Texas. I'm a big fan of theirs and they invited me to their studio afterwards, so I hope that there will be an opportunity to collaborate with them in the near future.

I first heard of your music from the anime "Rurouni Kenshin" and "GANTZ" and fell in love with your music. By any chance

do you watch anime or read manga and if so, what is your favorite?

BONNIE PINK: I grew up reading girl comics and love watching manga and anime. I used to watch TV anime like "Gundam" and "Macross" with my older brother. For manga, my favorites are the works of Satoru Makimura, Yukari Ichijou and Yumiko Oshima.

Bonnie, I just want to let you know that I love your music because you are so different from many Japanese artists and very talented. As a music artist, is there any goal that you still want to accomplish or something that you still dream of?

BONNIE PINK: This was the first year that I did performances overseas so I'd like to expand on that more.

TAKING A LOOK AT THE MUSIC OF

BONNIE PINK

In 1995, BONNIE PINK debuted in Japan with the album "Blue Jam". As of June 2005, BONNIE PINK has released 12 albums, 26 CD singles, 12 album projects and 2 DVD's.

ALBUMS:

Blue Jam (September 21, 1995)
Heaven's Kitchen (May 16, 1997)
evil and flowers (April 17, 1998)
Bonnie's Kitchen #1 (December 17, 1999)
Bonnie's Kitchen #2 (January 19, 2000)
Let Go (April 5, 2000)
Just a Girl (October 24, 2001)
re*PINK BONNIE PINK REMIXES (February 27, 2002)
Present (February 19, 2003)
Pink in Red (August 6, 2003)
Even So (May 12, 2004)
REMINISCENCE (June 22, 2005)

CD SINGLES:

Orange (October 20, 1995)
Surprise! (April 19, 1996)
We've gotta find a way back to love (June 28, 1996)
Do You Crash? (September 20, 1996)
Heaven's Kitchen (April 18, 1997)
It's gonna rain! (June 18, 1997)
Lie Lie Lie (October 3, 1997)
Forget Me Not (March 4, 1998)
Goldfish (May 20, 1998)
e.p. (May 20, 1998)
Dog and the Moon (October 21, 1998)
Daisy (October 16, 1999)
You Are Blue, So Am I (March 1, 2000)
Fish (April 5, 2000)
Past and Reality (June 7, 2000)
Sleeping Child / Remix 1 & 2 (July 12, 2000) [3 diff. versions]
Take Me In (February 7, 2001)
Thinking of You (May 9, 2001)
Sleepless Night (August 29, 2001)
Tonight, the Night (January 22, 2003)
Private Laughter (January 21, 2004)
Last Kiss (April 7, 2004)



DENNIS: In many past articles, I've read that Aimee Mann has been a idol of yours. Have you had the opportunity to meet with her?

BONNIE PINK: I've attended her live at a club in LA but never really had the chance to speak with her. I've spoken with Aimee Mann's guitarist, but Aimee herself is someone who seems to be reachable but hard to reach. I'd definitely want to meet and speak with her someday.

DENNIS: Who were your musical influences back then? What music are you currently listening to now?

BONNIE PINK: The first record I bought with my own money was "Purple Rain" by Prince. I liked bands like U2, The Bangles and The Sundays during my teenage days. On the other hand, I also listened to 70's singer-song writers such as James Taylor, Joni Mitchell and Nick Drake. Jackson 5, Stevie Wonder and Sly and the Family Stone were my favorites too. In recent years, I've been listening to artists like Jonantha Brooke, Amel Larrieux, and, of course, Prince. I'm a big fan. I also like dance tunes, such as songs by Destiny's Child and Amerie.

DENNIS: Your fans have seen you grow from being an Independent artist and signing with a major record label and now becoming more mainstream. Several of your fans worried about the transition of

your music from Indie to mainstream and possible changes with your music. Was that ever a concern for you?

BONNIE PINK: I just make music that I feel like making at that moment, so if it matches the mainstream it will sell, and if it seems to oppose it then the song will simply be treated like an underground track. But I don't really have a desire to be famous so I probably won't become a musician that makes frequent media appearances. Whatever music I create, I'd like to become someone down to earth and remain unaffected by the unique world of the music industry.

DENNIS: What makes Kaori Asada/BONNIE PINK happy?

BONNIE PINK: When I re-decorate my room. I love interior design and furniture and the time I spend watching DVD while sip-

ping on some coffee. It's the best. I'm not really that social but I love to go sunbathing. I like watching children play in the park with dogs running around. I also love to cook and eat.

DENNIS: Before we conclude this interview. In all my interviews I have a section where I give you 5 words. For these five words, I would like you to give me the BONNIE PINK definition of the word.

BONNIE PINK:

1. **LOVE** - Something to both give and receive.
2. **SUCCESS** - A combination of luck and hard work.
3. **SEX** - A supplement for the body and mind.
4. **SADNESS** - Something that will eventually be cured.

5. **BONNIE PINK** - "Happy-Sad". Because people say that the chords and melody lines which I frequently use in my songs sound "happy-sad".

DENNIS: What final words would you like to leave with your fans?

BONNIE PINK: You guys are my inspiration and support. The next album came out great. I can't wait to play it for you guys! ■

For more information on BONNIE PINK, please visit: www.bonniepink.jp/english_index.html. For more information on Rightsscale, Inc., please visit: www.rightsscale.com/

DENNIS A. AMITH is a nt2099/J!-ENT entertainment writer-at-large.



NEW YORK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

AMERICA'S LEADING FESTIVAL OF POPULAR ASIAN CINEMA

NYAFF
 "THE CITY'S FAVORITE VOLCANIC PULP-FILM FESTIVAL"
 - the Village Voice

Presented by

Subway Cinema

"...the premier purveyor of Asian films in NYC"

- Time Out New York

June 17 - July 2, 2005

WWW.SUBWAYCINEMA.COM

[Selected as the *Best Movie Website* by TIME.com]