

A J!-ENT SPECIAL FEATURE



BY DENNIS A. AMITH & DAVID HICKEY (courtesy of AVEX ENTERTAINMENT, INC.)
IMAGES COURTESY OF AVEX ENTERTAINMENT INC.

ZZ OFFICIAL WEBSITE: www.avexnet.or.jp/zz/
PURCHASE ZZ MUSIC ON iTUNES. [CLICK HERE!](#)

J!

- ENT

LIVE PERFORMANCES: COMING TO THE UNITED STATES

The rock/rap band from Japan known as ZZ will perform in San Jose, Calif. for Fanime's MusicFest and Toronto, Canada's Anime North 2007 in May.

Rock-rap group ZZ formed in the industrial city of Fuji, about 100-km west of Tokyo, in 1998, soon relocating to the much larger Shizuoka where they built up a local following playing the city's clubs.

Within two years the band were playing at venues in Tokyo's Shimokitazawa district, an area that is a mecca for underground bands, sharing the bill with the likes of popular rap-metal act RIZE.

Even so, ZZ's pop sensibility means they have more in common musically with the sound of the mega-selling, self-styled "mixture hip-hop" group ORANGE RANGE than the harder, alternative metal of RIZE.

After independently releasing a mini-album and single in 2000, the career of ZZ (comprised of vocalist SOTARO, guitarist KOHSUKE, pianist ERICHI, bassist KYAMA and drummer MATSUURA) gained momentum when Japan's biggest monthly rock magazine ROCKIN' ON, glowingly reviewed their second single, "Brightest" in early 2001.

It's follow-up "Himawari (Sunflower)" went top 75 in the USEN charts (a request chart) and was picked up by one of Tokyo's major commercial radio stations, BayFM.

The station would go on to grant the group their own regular program, titled "Na Na Na Now Young" in October of that year, but not before they had dropped their debut album, "Absolute Beat Complex."

ZZ made the step up to large independent label Avex in 2003 for the release of the single "Rhythmist," which was the band's biggest hit to date, going top 10 in the Usen charts. The single was a taster for the album "Definitive Energy Flow," which the group supported by going on their first nationwide tour.

Having had a couple of songs featured as opening/ending songs on Japanese television programs, the group scored a minor coup when their tune "A to Z" was chosen as the ending song to the animated adventure television series "ONE PIECE," which, like many popular anime, has been adapted into English, Chinese and Korean.

Appropriately, ZZ played their first live shows in South Korea in 2004. (Two years earlier they had played to 8,000 people at a music festival in Dalian, China.)

For the 2004 single, "Just Only One," ZZ collaborated with Kaori Ueda, aka DJ KAORI, a hip-hop DJ who has played at parties for the likes of P. Diddy (aka Sean P. Combs).



PHOTO: ZZ (from L-R): KOHSUKE (guitar, leader), MATSUURA (drummer), SOTARO (vocals, songwriter), KYAMA (bass) and ERICHI (pianist). Photo courtesy of Avex Entertainment, Inc.

The track was featured on their second album for Avex, 2005's "Generation Hip Innocence."

Following its release, the band performed their first shows in the United States, capitalizing on their anime associations by playing at the anime conventions FanimeCon in San Jose and Dallas' A-Kon, one of the three biggest such conventions in the U.S.

Not even an association with the Japan national team's ill-fated 2006 World Cup campaign – having recorded the supporters' song "SAMURAI BLUE" (replete with terrace-friendly "oh oh" chants and cries of "Nippon! Nippon!") – dimmed the group's prospects, the band continuing to play regular live shows through the year.

In addition, online ZZ are joining an increasing number of Japanese bands by uploading their songs – in the case of ZZ the majority of their back catalog – to the U.S. iTunes Music Store.

In 2007, ZZ will be performing in May at Fanime's MusicFest 2007 in San Jose, Calif. and at Anime North 2007 in Toronto, Canada.

- DAVID HICKEY (courtesy of Avex Entertainment, Inc.)

For more info. on ZZ, please visit: www.avexnet.or.jp/zz/

Purchase ZZ music on iTunes by clicking here

FANIME MUSICFEST INFORMATION

DATES: May 25-28

LOCATION: San Jose Convention Center, San Jose, California

ADMISSION: Admission is free to all FanimeCon attendees! All you have to do is register at the convention or pre-register online

For more information, please visit: <http://www.fanime.com/musicfest/>

ANIME NORTH 2007 INFORMATION

DATES: May 25-27

LOCATION: Doubletree International Plaza Hotel, the Toronto Congress Center, and the nearby Renaissance Toronto Airport Hotel in Toronto, Canada

ADMISSION: Admissions to Anime North 2007 can be purchased at the door of the convention, via mail or registration site.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.animenorth.com>



PROFILE

NAME: SOTARO

DUTY: VOCAL/SONGWRITER

BLOOD TYPE: A

LIKES: U2, FUTSAL, U.S.
BOARDER (Street Brand),
Bagdad Cafe (movie) and
SNOWBOARDING Yeah!





PROFILE

NAME: KOHSUKE
DUTY: GUITAR/BAND LEADER
BLOOD TYPE: A
LIKES: RED HOT CHILI
PEPPERS, THE SMASHING
PUMPKINS, LIMP BIZKIT,
HOLE, Surfing (only a Ero-
website), bbnr (brand)





PROFILE

NAME: ERICHI

DUTY: PIANO

BLOOD TYPE: O

LIKES: YMO (Yellow Magic Orchestra), Interior, The Goonies (movie) and drinking!





PROFILE

NAME: KYAMA
DUTY: BASS
BLOOD TYPE: A
LIKES: BOB MARLEY, DJ
BASS, HARLEY (street b),
I'm a real surfer (not
Ero-website)!





PROFILE

NAME: MATSUURA

DUTY: DRUMS

BLOOD TYPE: O

LIKES: LED ZEPPELIN,
Cheap Trick, James Brown,
Scuba diving over the sea!

ZZ

DEFINITIVE ENERGY FLOW (DEF)

Avex Trax

AVCD-17325

Duration: 1:04:45

RELEASE DATE: September 10, 2003

For more info. on ZZ, please visit:

www.avexnet.or.jp/zz/

Purchase ZZ music on iTunes by clicking here

1. Rhythmist
2. Wish You Joy
3. Yorokobi no Uta -pNM Version- (feat. NAOYA MATSUOKA)
4. Walk into the light (feat. KEN from DA PUMP)
5. -party time-
6. Step Forward
7. Circle
8. What is Life?
9. -chonmage time-
10. I call this love
11. Any Angels, Any Devils
12. -funky time-
13. 4
14. Everybody Yo!
15. Saiken (feat. KEN from DA PUMP)
16. Yorokobi no Uta Landmark Walker's mix (remixed by Madbavoo & DJ TAJJI)

The rock/rap band known as ZZ has been around since 1998 and have released CD singles and albums on independent labels up to 2003 when the group was officially signed with Avex Trax.

After the release of their first two CD singles "Rhythmist" (Rel. April 16, 2003, AVCD-30435) and "Yorokobi no Uta" (Rel. Aug. 6, 2003, AVCD-30473), the group's first major album "Definitive Energy Flow (DEF)" was released in September.

With a good balance of hard hitting rock music and pop rock in conjunction with lead vocalist Sotaro's rap, "DEF" is an album that is habit forming with each listen .

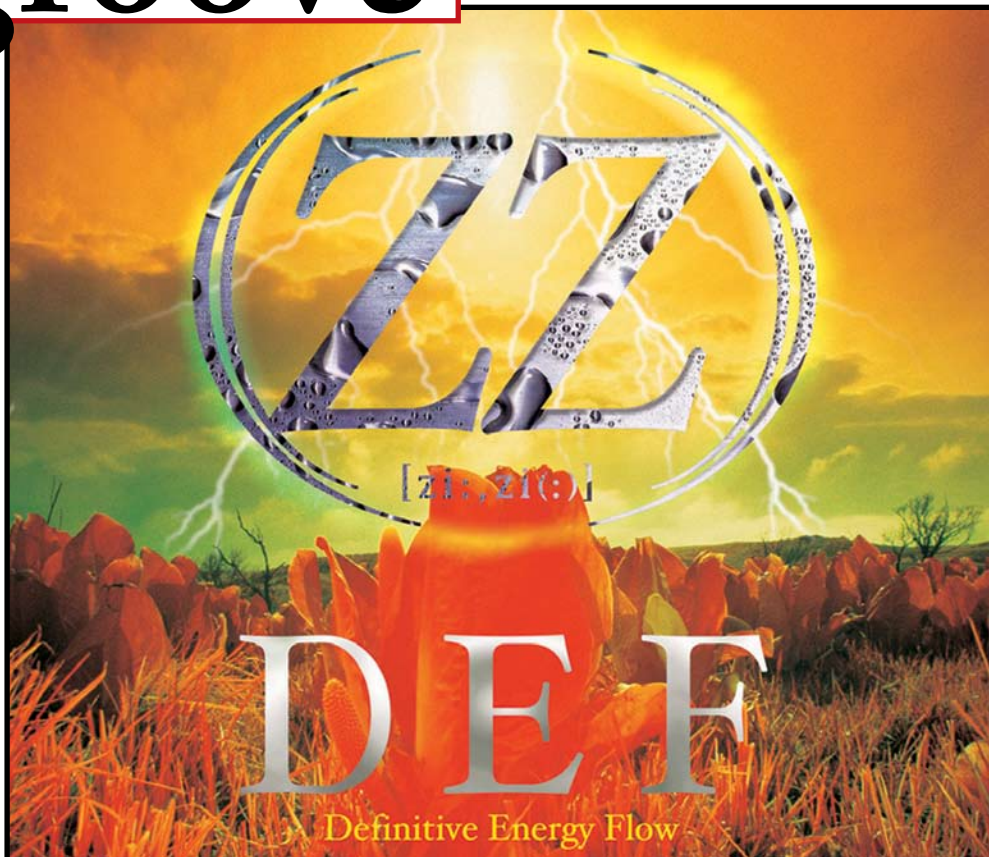
The album starts off with "Rhythmist" (used for TBS "CDTV" April 2003 opening theme and peaked at #9 on the Yusen Chart) has nice serene guitar lines that make one want to bob their head. Vocals are more on the hip-hop side but you get to tracks like "Wish You Joy" and "Any Angels, Any Devils" which have a whimsical and breezy sound that seems inspired by American alternative bands like Blink 182.

Then there are songs like "-funky time-" with a funk style and "4" which is very reminiscent to old school Red Hot Chili Peppers.

As for "Yorokobi no Uta" (used as an ending theme for TBS "Shin Unnan No Kibun wa jojo" as with the CD single which has two different versions, the album gives you two more with an acoustic guitar pNM version featuring NAOYA MATSUOKA and a Landmark Walker's mix which was a nice addition to the album.

All in all, ZZ's first album is a good mix bag of enjoyable music that takes the fusion of rock and hip-hop but takes it even further with its integration to different styles of music.

— DENNIS A. AMITH



< A Great Balance of ZZ!

ZZ releases their first album and showing us perfect harmony between rock and hip-hop.

A LIMITED ONE PIECE EDITION OF "A TO Z"

ZZ

A to Z (Limited Edition Pressing)

Avex Trax

Duration: 24:33

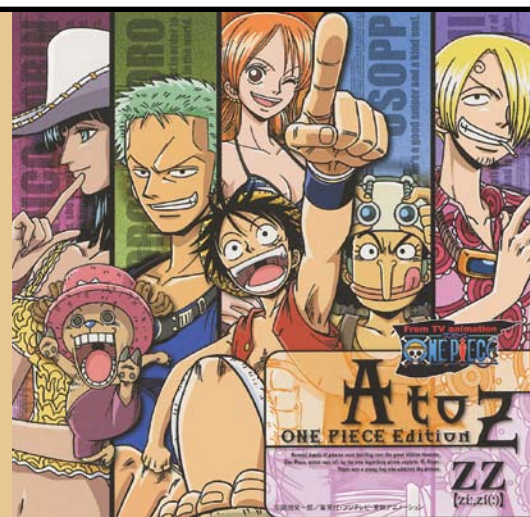
AVCD-30527 / Rel. Nov. 12, 2003

ZZ gained the attention of anime viewers when their third CD single "A to Z" was featured as an ending theme for the immensely popular anime series "ONE PIECE".

There are two versions of the following CD single, the first which features a total of eight tracks and the limited edition pressing which features the characters of "ONE PIECE" on the cover and features six tracks.

The normal version features two more extra tracks: "Over the rain, Over the pain" and it's backing track (instrumental).

Essentially, the main reason for people to purchase the limited edition pressing is for the "ONE PIECE" trading cards and poster but if could care



less about the anime or manga series, then the normal version is the way to go because of the two extra tracks.

Fortunately, both CD single versions do include "A to Z" (One Piece Edition) and the normal version which are slightly different.

All in all, a very good anime tie-in that has given the band worldwide exposure.

- DENNIS A. AMITH

ZZ

A to ZZ

Avex Trax

AVCD-17400/B

DURATION: 38:59

RELEASE DATE: February 11, 2004

For more info. on ZZ, please visit:

www.avexnet.or.jp/zz/

Purchase ZZ music on iTunes by clicking here

1. Put Your Hands
2. BRIGHTEST
3. Himawari
4. Aijo
5. NO WAY OUT
6. Rhythmist
7. Yorokobi no Uta
8. A to Z -Edition #3-

DVD:

Region 2, 4:3, Duration: 44 minutes

1. Put Your Hands
2. Brightest
3. Himawari
4. Aijo
5. NO WAY OUT
6. Rhythmist
7. Yorokobi no Uta
8. A to Z - Edition #3-
9. Step Forward

With the release of ZZ's first album "Definitive Energy Flow" in 2003, many may have not known that the rock/hip-hop band ZZ had been around since 1998 and have released several CD singles and albums previous to being signed on the Avex Trax label.

With their first maxi-single "Put Your Hands" released back in November 2000, the group had a string of single releases which many may have not heard of.

That was until the release of "A to ZZ - Complete Single Collection".

Since their debut, the group has remained consistent with fusing rock and hip-hop and have not strayed far from it.

The first track "Put Your Hands" was the band's first maxi single released back in August 2000.

But their second indie maxi-single "BRIGHTEST" gave the band great reputation when it received stellar reviews from the publication "Rocking on Japan".

The group released their third maxi single on April 2001 with "Himawari", a slow song that raised attention as viewer's wondered who was that girl singing the duet with SOTARO on the music video.

The CD single was #75 on the Yusen charts and also picked up for Bay FM's "Power Play". This eventually led to the group hosting their own show for Bay FM's "Na Na Na Now Young".



< A Collection of Past Hits

A collection of ZZ's past Indie CD singles and their first three major label releases

In November 2001, the band released "Aijo" (affection).

The song featured a reggae style vibe and showcased the musical interests from the band members in their music.

Their next CD single "NO WAY OUT" (January 2003) would be used as theme for the sport fighting event Pride Heavyweight Championship at Tokyo Dome and was the theme song for champion Antonio Rodrigo Nogueira who was featured on the music video.

The final three remaining songs "Rhythmist", "Yorokobi no Uta" and "A to Z -Edition #3-" were the band's first three CD singles (when they signed with Avex Trax) which complete the eight tracks on this album.

To make this single collection even more special is the inclusion of the music videos for all eight songs and also the music video for "Step Forward" which is a track from their first major label album

"Definitive Energy Flow".

What I enjoy about this album is that it includes the band's indies work.

Many record labels do not want to include music from a bands past, mainly because many tend to be recorded badly but I will be the first to say that the quality of their older indie music is good and is consistent with their sound today.

Although, I must say that the older music videos is where things may look a bit aged or low-budget versus the music videos shown after "NO WAY OUT", but seriously, you can't help but know that you are really getting a great deal with this collection.

No more need to find those hard to find indie ZZ CD singles, you get it all on "A to ZZ" plus the music videos. Can't beat that!

- DENNIS A. AMITH

J!-ENT worldgroove

A JI-ENT MUSIC REVIEW

ZZ

Generation Hip Innocence

Avex Trax

AVCD-17567

Duration: 1:10:54

RELEASE DATE: January 1, 2005

For more info. on ZZ, please visit:

www.avexnet.or.jp/zz/

Purchase ZZ music on iTunes by clicking here

1. 1st GAP -Opening Lap-
2. Nobody Knows
3. GH1
4. Just Only One - GH1 Version-
5. Haraderumaneywa Ashiare
6. Christmas Rose
7. 2nd GAP - Tamakiya -
8. Limiter Cutter
9. Change the World?
10. Samurai Crew
11. Bye-Bye My Girl
12. 3rd GAP - OX7 -
13. LOVE maintenance
14. Endless Driving
15. Pride Yourself
16. Let's Go Everybody
17. Final GAP -Closing Lap-

With ZZ's first full length album "Definitive Energy Flow" showcasing the band's talents of fusing rock and hip-hop and also not scared to incorporate other genres to their music, ZZ returns with their second full length album "Generation Hip Innocence" (GHI).

"GHI" stays close to the band's rock roots. Also, the music focuses a little more on SOTARO's singing voice where as the earlier works were very rap driven, you will hear more of SOTARO singing (especially for the track "Christmas Rose").

Featured on the album is the band's fourth through sixth CD singles.

Included is ZZ's fourth CD single "Nobody Knows" (AVCD-30573, rel. April 2004) which was used as the opening theme for TBS "U-CDTV".

Also included is the band's fifth CD single "Pride Yourself" (AVCD-30599, rel. July 2004) and their hit songs from the anime series "Samurai Gun", "Just Only One/Samurai Crew" (AVCD-30635, rel. Nov. 2004) is also featured on the album.

Non-single standouts on this album include the track "GHI" showcasing SOTARO's smooth, competent flow of rhymes.

"Haraderumaneywa Ashiare" is one of the "Linkin Park" like songs on the album.

The track is a good jolt of rock, rap and singing vocals combined with great music.

Whereas the music is what I come to



< Are You Hip to GHI?

ZZ's second full-length album shows listeners how hip they truly are!

expect from ZZ, I've been wanting to hear more of SOTARO's singing vocals and "GHI" is a good album to feature that.

It was definitely refreshing to hear SOTARO do more singing on this album and another refreshing song I enjoyed outside of "Christmas Rose" featuring his singing is "Bye-Bye My Girl" which showcases ERICHI's piano skills (actually, I want to hear more of ERICHI's piano/keyboard playing) and has a nice, smooth acoustic laid back feel as you receive a barrage of rap from SOTARO.

An FYI that the band's hit "Samurai Crew" was re-released as a GHI Re-Cut single on Feb. 16, 2005 (AVCD-30688) and featured the coupling song "LOVE maintenance" which is included on this album.

And just when you think you are all done listening to "GHI", the album features a 10-minute additional bonus

track which seems like a jam session among the band members at the studio.

All in all, "Generation Hip Innocence" is a cool album and unlike "DEF" which was a well-balanced album featuring different musical styles, "GHI" stays consistently in rock mode throughout.

It took me awhile to get warm to this album because I enjoyed "DEF" so much for being different but there are quite a good number of musical gems on this album that ZZ fans will definitely enjoy.

With each listen, I rediscovered songs on "GHI" that I realized are pretty awesome and eventually I started to listen to this album quite a bit more.

For those that wanted to hear ZZ stay more towards their rock sound will definitely enjoy this album.

— DENNIS A. AMITH

ZZ

ZZB - ZZ BEST

Avex Trax

AVCD-17796

Duration: 1:09:42

RELEASE DATE: December 14, 2006

For more info. on ZZ, please visit:

www.avexnet.or.jp/zz/

Purchase ZZ music on iTunes by clicking here

1. Rhythmist
2. Nobody Knows
3. Yorokobi no Uta
4. A to Z - ONE PIECE Edition-
5. Stand Alone
6. Lyric without gimmick
7. Samurai Crew
8. NO WAY OUT
9. Over the rain, Over the Pain
10. Just Only One -GHI Version-
11. It's Days
12. Pride Yourself
14. Walk into the Light (feat. KEN from DA PUMP)
15. Tonight Beside

The band ZZ has come along way since their Indie years and later signing with Avex Trax.

The group which comprised of vocalist SOTARO, guitarist KOHSUKE, pianist ERICHI, bassist KYAMA and drummer MATSUURA have released a total of six CD singles, two albums and one single collection and now have released their first best album titled "ZZB - ZZ Best".

One of the things that I've wondered about ZZ is that with each CD single they had released, the coupling songs have not been featured on any album.

Fortunately, some of those cool coupling songs are included on their best album plus you get a few new songs.

Included on this album is the band's first CD single "Rhythmist" (AVCD-30435, rel. April 2003) which was used for the opening of the TBS top 40 show "CDTV" (CountDown TV).

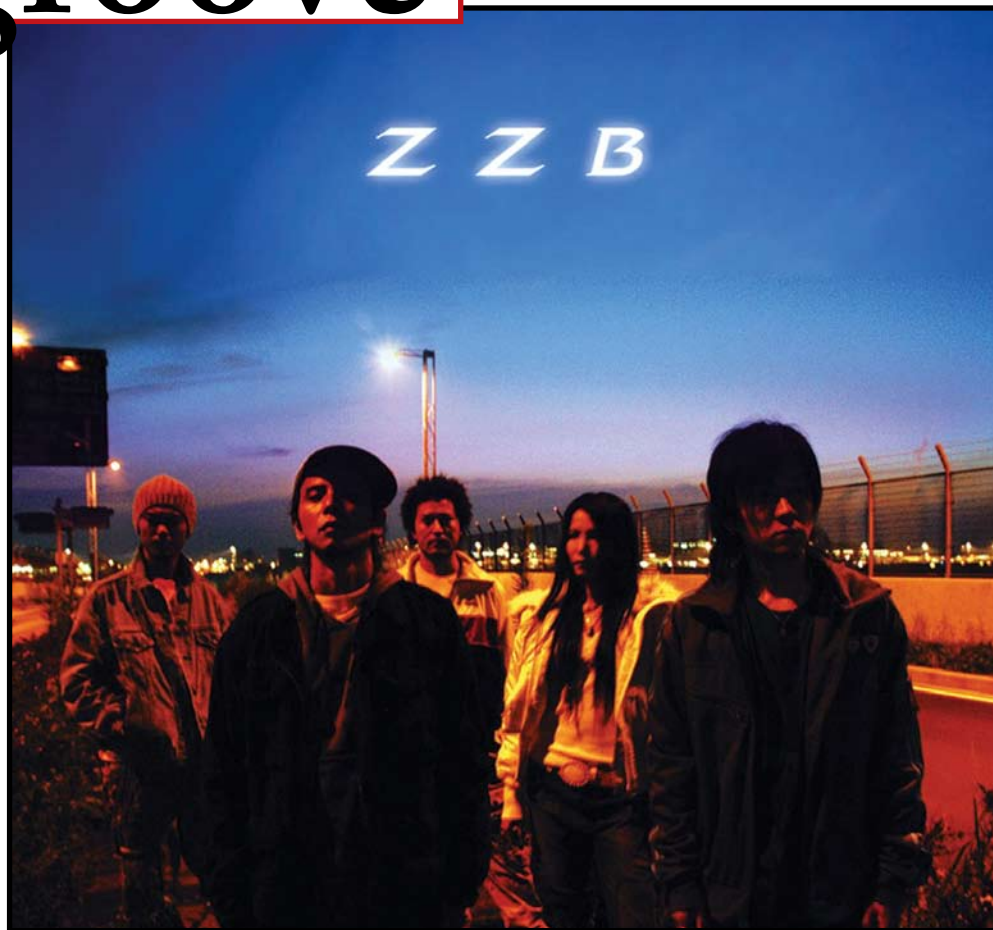
Also featured is the coupling song for the first CD single "Walk into the Light" featuring DA PUMP's KEN which was used as the ending theme for UHB's "NORTH GATE".

Plus the inclusion of the other two coupling songs for the first CD single "It's Days" and one of my favorites "Stand Alone" (feat. Tomoe Maeda).

Their second CD single "Yorokobi no Uta" (AVCD-30473, rel. Aug. 2003) was used for the ending theme for TBS "Shin Uन्नan no Kibun wa Jojo".

Unfortunately, the two coupling songs "Circle" and "We can get the goal" are not included on this album.

The group's third CD single which may be more familiar to anime fans of the series "ONE PIECE" will be happy that the group's "A to Z" (One Piece Edition) is included



< ZZ's Personal Best

ZZ releases their first best album includes previous hits and coupling songs

on this album, including the coupling song "Over the rain, Over the pain" (which was not included on the One Piece Edition version of the CD single).

Although, the other coupling song "I'll be back again" for their third single is not included on this album.

ZZ's fourth CD single "Nobody Knows" (AVCD-30573, Rel. April 2004) was used as an opening theme for TBS "U-CDTV" and the coupling song "Lyric without gimmick" is included on this album.

But the second coupling song "Sun goes down" from the same single is not included.

The band released their fifth CD single "Pride Yourself" (AVCD-30599, rel. July 2004), which was a more harder song that featured memorable hooks and was used as an ending theme for a TV Asahi program and also for "MUSIC ON! TV Channel D".

Unfortunately the two coupling songs for that CD single "Lucky Go Loose" and "Summer Time Blues" are not included on "ZZB".

The group's sixth double A-side single "Just Only One/Samurai Crew" (AVCD-30634/B, rel. Nov. 2004) became ZZ's second major anime tie-in for the anime series "Samurai Gun".

To round things off for the balance of the album is the inclusion of their indie classic "NO WAY OUT" which was the theme song to Pridge Heavyweight Champion Antonio Rodrigo Nogueira.

Also, the inclusion of two new songs "Be SURVIVOR" and "Tonight Beside".

All in all you do get a good number of tracks including the main CD singles on this best album.

Although I wished all coupling songs were included, that is just me being a bit nitpicky.

If you are looking for an album that showcases ZZ's music, this album is the best album to get hand's down.

— DENNIS A. AMITH

ZZ

A to ZZ 2 - Sound & Vision Extra-

Avex Trax

AVCD-23166/B

Duration: 20:46

RELEASE DATE: January 24, 2007

For more info. on ZZ, please visit:

www.avexnet.or.jp/zz/

Purchase ZZ music on iTunes by clicking here

1. Samurai Blue
2. Find Your Own Way
3. Kagirinai Sora
4. Ride on Precious Time
5. Afureru Ai Wo

DVD:

4:3, Region 2, 19 minutes

1. Nobody Knows
2. Pride Yourself
3. Just Only One
4. SAMURAI BLUE

ZZ latest album "A to ZZ 2" is quite an interesting album.

Where the first "A to ZZ" featured five of the band's first indie CD singles and their first three CD singles with a major label, "A to ZZ 2" features songs from their last three albums that were only released on iTunes (iTunes only albums).

Right after the release of the band's re-cut single of "Samurai Crew" in Feb. 2005, ZZ had released a total of four albums on iTunes.

The albums were somewhat recycled albums of their CD single releases and songs released on previous albums spread out into four albums.

The four albums "LOUD ROCKS" was rel. on Oct. 26, 2005, "Positive Vibes" rel. on Nov. 2, 2005, "BRIGHT ROCKS" rel. on Nov. 9, 2005 and "Mellow Grooves" rel. on Jan. 25, 2006.

So, "A to ZZ 2" features their popular seventh CD single "SAMURAI BLUE" and a few new songs that were on those iTunes albums.

It was a bit dissapointing that for a long awaited album release from ZZ, that there are only five tracks featured on the album.

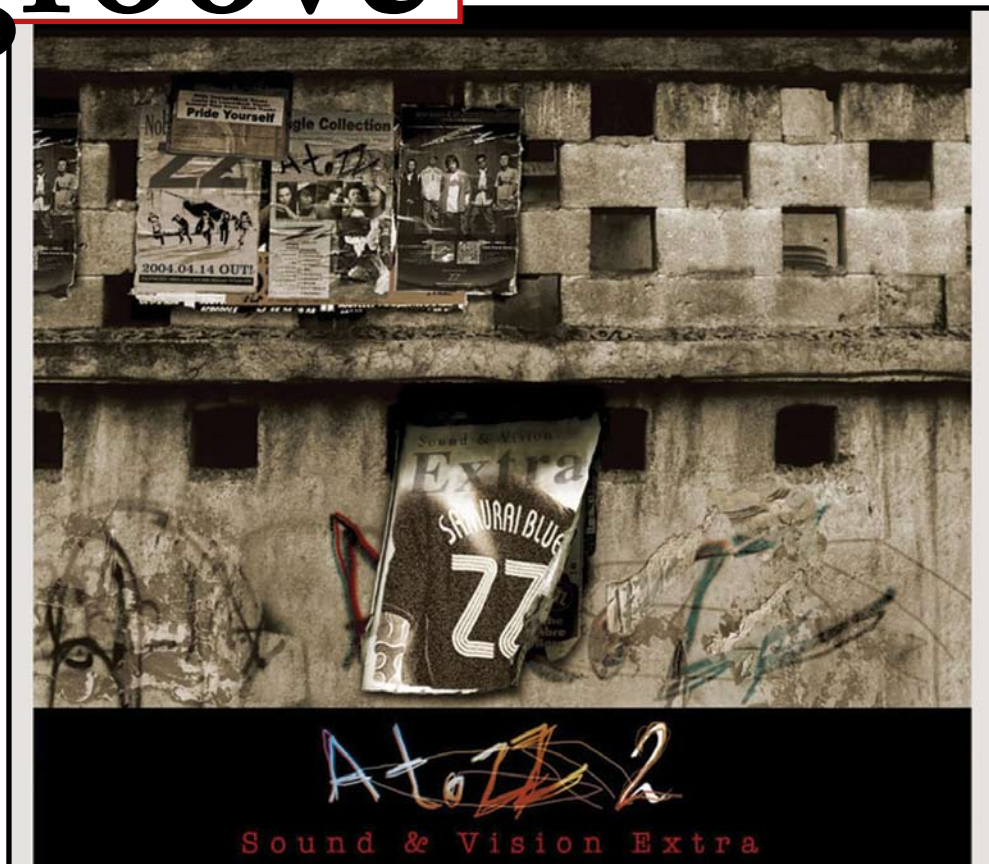
All in all, I was a bit shocked to see less songs on this album since the past album releases from ZZ tend to have more songs than I expected from an album. This one has far, far less.

Fortunately, there is a DVD included with the album which features the four music videos for their fourth through seventh CD singles "Nobody Knows", "Pride Yourself", "Just Only One" and "SAMURAI BLUE".

As much as it is difficult for me to recommend an album with only five tracks, take into account that if you do want the music videos for their later CD single releases, this is the only way to obtain it.

So, if you are a ZZ completist, then definitely check it out!

— DENNIS A. AMITH



< Awesome Songs, But Very Short

ZZ's long awaited album features new songs but only five tracks?

A Great Soccer Fight Song!

ZZ

SAMURAI BLUE

Avex Trax

Duration: 17:10

AVCD-30955/Rel. May 17, 2006

ZZ is back and their latest song "SAMURAI BLUE" (which resembles their sixth CD single "Samurai Crew") is an energetic song to highlight the futbol (soccer) season.

The song has done well on several rankings but I have to admit that I was surprised by the arrangement of the song because it's very similar to their last hit.

Nevertheless, "SAMURAI BLUE" is definitely the better of the two and much more energetic.

As everyone sings together "Saa Ike! Samurai Blue!" and join together in unison with the "oh-oh", definitely a cool sports song.

As for the coupling song "Dang



Dang", the song was used for the opening theme for their third major anime tie-in for "EYESHIELD 21" (which is another song for a sports animation dealing with America's football).

A very fun and addictive song that I definitely recommend checking out if you are a ZZ fan!

- DENNIS A. AMITH

anime
north

WWW.ANIMENORTH.COM



avex
group

WWW.AVEX.OR.JP

J-ROCK NORTH CONCERT PROJECT
PRESENTS

ZZ LIVE AT ANIME NORTH



WWW.EUCLIDAGENCY.COM/ZZ

SATURDAY - MAY 26, 2007 / 7 PM / HALL A - TORONTO CONGRESS CENTRE