

カラフィナ *Kalafina*

KALAFINA, the Japanese group known for their music for the Japanese animation "Kara no Kyoukai" was formed by Japanese composer **YUKI KAJIURA** ("Mobile Suit Gundam SEED", ".hack/SIGN", "My-HiME", "Noir", "Xenosaga" and many other works for popular anime series and video games) makes their US debut with a new album and a live performance in Boston. J!-ENT recently interviewed Yuki Kajiura and the women of Kalafina (pictured L-R: Wakana, Keiko and Hikaru) after their first US live performance. **BY DENNIS A. AMITH**



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From Japan to the United States and worldwide, the group Kalafina has won over many Japanese music fans worldwide with their unique style.

The group was formed in 2007 by well known Japanese composer Yuki Kajiura known for her musical work for many Japanese animation and video game series (“Mobile Suit Gundam SEED”, “Madlax”, “Noir”, “.hack//SIGN”, “Aquarian Age”, “My-HiME”, “My-Otome”, “Tsubasa Chronicle”, “Xenosaga”).

Kajiura also worked as the musical director on the film “Akiresu to Kame” (Achilles and the Tortoise) which was directed by Takeshi “Beat” Kitano.

For the group’s initial startup, Kalafina featured composer Kajiura and vocalists Wakana and Keiko who released their first CD single in Jan. 2008 titled “oblivious” which featured three tracks used on the animated films titled “Kara no Kyoukai”.

The single was followed by a remix mini-album in April 2008 titled “Re/oblivious”.

Auditions were then held by Yuki Kajiura and Sony Music Japan for a project titled “FictionJunction” which brought in over 30,000 participants.

Among those participants, Maya and Hikaru were selected and the two would later join composer Kajiura, vocalists Wakana and Keiko as additional vocalists for Kalafina (Maya left the group in May 2009).

The group released their second single titled “Sprinter/ARIA” on July 2008 and the song was used as the theme for the fourth (ARIA) and fifth chapter (Sprinter) of the “Kara no Kyoukai” films.

With the release of their third CD single “fairytale”, the track was used for the sixth chapter of “Kara no Kyoukai”.

The group then started 2009 with their fourth CD single “Lacrimosa”, the ending theme of the anime “Kuroshitsuji” which was simultaneously released with their first full length album “Seventh Heaven”.

The group was then announced as the musical guest for the Anime Boston (May 2009) which would be their first US live performance debut and are set to release their upcoming CD single titled “storia” on July 1st.

J!-ENT recently interviewed Yuki Kajiura and Kalafina members Keiko Kubota, Wakana Ootaki and Hikaru about their music and performing in the United States.



Kalafina (from L-R): Keiko, Wakana and Hikaru (Image courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Japan)

J!-ENT: Before I ask questions in regards to the music of Kalafina, let’s get to know more about the group. How did the group get the name “Kalafina”? And is there a deep meaning behind the name?

YUKI: Actually, there is no meaning with the name. It’s a coined word from the image of the music.

J!-ENT: You make your American debut at Anime Boston. Were you aware that you had many American fans and how do you feel about your fans from around the world who are passionate about your music?

KALAFINA: We were aware through the message board on our website, but we were not totally aware that there were this much! It was much more than we expected, and we are very thankful.

J!-ENT: I’m curious, When you arrive to Boston, were there any restaurants or any type of food that you wanted to eat?

KALAFINA: Clam chowder!

J!-ENT: Here is a question for each of you. If we got to hang out with Kalafina for the day in Japan, what place would you recommend visiting?

HIKARU: Onsen (hot spring).

KEIKO: You should go visit Shibuya and check out the Japanese girls!

WAKANA: You should go to Fukuoka and try out the street food, especially the ramen noodles!

J!-ENT: When growing up, what kind of profession or job did you imagine yourself when you were younger?

HIKARU: I’ve always wanted to become a singer, but I didn’t think that I was able to start out with such a big project like this. I feel very honored.

WAKANA: I’ve always liked singing since I was a little kid and I wanted to sing for someone, and also for many people.

KEIKO: I started singing and dancing as a child because I wanted to become a singer who could do both.

J!-ENT: Who were your musical inspirations while growing up?



Yuki Kajijura and Kalafina performing at Anime Boston (from L-R): Yuki Kajijura, Hikaru, Keiko and Wakana (Photo courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Japan)

KEIKO: My first big influence was Amuro Namie and I also have an influence from Yutaka Ozaki, when it comes to singing from the soul.

HIKARU: "Dreams Come True". Their expression is so wonderful.

WAKANA: I really like the Japanese musical group called "Gekidan Shiki", which I've been watching since elementary school. I also like the film "Sister Act". It made me get into singing in a gospel choir.

J!-ENT: Let's go ahead and discuss the music of Kalafina. How would you describe your music to the public?

YUKI: That's a very difficult question... I can only say that it's "Kalafina Style".

J!-ENT: Let's talk about the making of your first album "SEVENTH HEAVEN". How was the experience of recording this album for each of you? Did it take long to create this

album?

YUKI: It took 2 years to finish the album.

KALAFINA: During our first single, we didn't fully sing all of the background vocals by ourselves, but from the second single and on, we were able to sing and express all of the parts, and that made us very happy.

J!-ENT: Of all the songs included in "SEVENTH HEAVEN" which track was the most challenging or took the longest time to put together?

KEIKO: "Kimi ga Hikari ni Kaete Iku". Since this song is from the first single, I remember being very nervous. Also, this song starts out with just the vocals and piano and that was very difficult.

HIKARU: "aria". This is the first song I've recorded. I remember being very nervous and my hands were even shaking, but I wanted Kajijura-san and the other members to feel that Kalafina was able to step up by me joining the group.

WAKANA: "serenato". I was nervous at the time and I was getting emotionally connected to the song. And that was very difficult. It took so long to record this song...

J!-ENT: For each of you, which song on the album is your favorite and why?

WAKANA: It often changes for me, but it would be "serenato" now. Like I've mentioned earlier, I had such a tough time when we recorded this song, but I always have to drop tears because of the lyrics.

KEIKO: "Ongaku". The more we perform this song live, the more I become in love with this song.

HIKARU: It would be "Gloria". I like the simple structure and the melody.

J!-ENT: Along with the music of Kalafina, you also have a fashion style that is absolutely fantastic and unique for your group. From your CD covers, to your live performanc-



Kalafina performing at Anime Boston (from L-R): Hikaru, Keiko and Wakana (Photo courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Japan)

es and your music videos. How did the overall concept of the fashion style for Kalafina happen?

YUKI: Generally, the concept is to simply match with the musical direction. We've selected their each fashion from the overview image of the songs. However, I've been recently leaving that up to the girls, so some of the fashion is actually coming directly from them.

J!-ENT: I had a chance to watch the live performance and the music videos from your DVD. And the first thing that came to mind is that your music videos are just as elegant as your music. Which music video was your favorite experience to work on and why?

HIKARU: "Lacrimosa". I was very surprised when I saw the finished video for the first time.

KEIKO: I agree. The strong energy and the passion from the music is really reflected in the video.

WAKANA: I also like "Lacrimosa".

YUKI: Me too! (laughing)

J!-ENT: You just finished your first American debut at Anime Boston. How was the experience for each of you performing in front of an American audience?

KALAFINA: It was great! We were very happy to see all the warm fans here in America.

J!-ENT: Did you find any major differences performing in front of an American audience versus a Japanese audience in terms of participation or reaction?

KALAFINA: In Japan, the audiences usually make the same moves, like waving hands together along with the song. But it was very interesting to see the American fans just enjoying individually in their own way. It felt very free and we were happy to see that.

J!-ENT: You have many fans in America, how was the experience for you in meeting them?

KALAFINA: We were very happy to

meet them all! During the autograph session, some of the people told us they've just become fans from the concert and that made us feel very happy.

J!-ENT: I know that it may be a bit unusual for some Japanese performers to come to America and perform at an anime convention but how was your experience performing at an anime convention and seeing the various cosplayers?

KEIKO: Cosplay has been popular in Japan, so I wasn't so much surprised, but what I was most amazed was that in America, people make their own weapons! I thought that was very unique.

HIKARU: Even though it was my first time to go outside of Japan, I felt the affinity to see all the cosplayers dressed in Japanese anime characters.

WAKANA: I felt that the cosplayers in America are very free! In Japan, people usually dress up in anime characters but I even saw someone dressed up as a spider that was not Spider-man!

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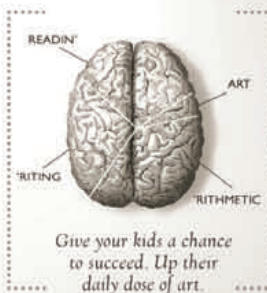
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Kalafina performing at Anime Boston (from L-R): Hikaru, Keiko and Wakana (Photo courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Japan)

J!-ENT: Many people would love to have Kalafina perform in their city but curious if there were any countries that you would love to perform at?

WAKANA: Egypt and California

KEIKO: Los Angeles

HIKARU: I would be happy to perform anywhere!

J!-ENT: If you each had to describe "Kalafina" in one word, what word would that be and why?

KALAFINA: That's a very difficult question... Let's just ask Kajiura-san to answer that question. (laughing)

YUKI: Wonderland. (smiling)

J!-ENT: If I was to look into your MP3/CD player right now, which artists or song would you be listening to at this time?

WAKANA: Spitz

KEIKO: Ken Hirai. I've recently went to his concert and have become a fan.

HIKARU: I only have our music in my iPod!

YUKI: Asian Dub Foundation

J!-ENT: In every interview we have a section called, word play. We give

you one word and you give us your definition of that word. Here's the first word:

a. LOVE

KEIKO: Patience

HIKARU: Warmth

WAKANA: Sharing everything from pain to happiness

YUKI: Service

b. SUCCESS

KEIKO: Effort

HIKARU: Failure

WAKANA: Something that I'm always picturing, but somewhere that's even higher than that

YUKI: When I feel that I was able to just slightly go over my capacity

c. FAMILY

KEIKO: Treasure

HIKARU: Bond

WAKANA: Precious treasure

YUKI: Treasure

d. SEVENTH HEAVEN

KEIKO: Starting line

HIKARU: Starting line

WAKANA: Finally able to meet up

YUKI: A piece that I was able to accom-

plish what I really wanted to do. I really love it.

e. Kara no Kyoukai

KEIKO: Destiny

HIKARU: Miracle

WAKANA: I've re-realized in Boston, but it's such a unique film. I was able to get connected with everybody through this film.

YUKI: I really like it as a piece of work.

J!-ENT: What final words would you like to say to your fans?

ALL: Thank you very much for all your support! We will continue to make our music. We hope to come back to America, as well as all the other countries in the world! ■

Kalafina's album "Seventh Heaven" is now available on iTunes (US). For more information on Kalafina, please visit their website at: <http://www.sonymusic.co.jp/Music/Info/kalafina>

For Yuki Kajiura, please visit: <http://www.fictionjunction/index2.html>

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Kalafina

Seventh Heaven

Sony Music Japan

RELEASE DATE: March 4, 2009

Format: CD+DVD (SECL-763~764)

Digital album can be found on iTunes USA.

TRACKLIST:

1. overture
2. oblivious
3. love comes down
4. 夏の林檎
5. fairytale
6. ARIA
7. また風が強くなった
8. 傷跡 (Scar)
9. serenato
10. 音楽
11. 明日の景色 (Kimi ga Hikari ni Kaete Iku)
12. sprinter
13. 君が光に変えて行く
14. seventh heaven

DVD TRACKLIST:

1. oblivious (Live)
2. 君が光に変えて行く (Live)
3. 傷跡 (Live)
4. ARIA (Live)
5. sprinter (VIDEO CLIP)
6. fairytale (VIDEO CLIP)
7. seventh heaven (VIDEO CLIP)

Kalafina is a group formed by well-known Japanese composer Yuki Kajiura known for her Japanese animation and video game works which include "Mobile Suit Gundam SEED", ".Hack/Sign", "Noir", "My HiME", "Xenosaga" and many more popular titles.

The group consists of composer Yuki Kajiura and vocalists Keiko, Wakana and Hikaru (the fourth member Maya who can be seen on the live performances on the DVD left the group in May 2009).

The group's first full-length album "Seventh Heaven" is an album that showcases Kajiura's beautiful compositions and there is a whimsical, enchanting balance with the vocals of the women.

The album contains the group's first three CD singles "oblivious", "sprinter/ARIA" and "fairytale".

With each track, you get a variety of music but what is consistent is the dreamy presentation and elegant, harmonious vocals.

From whimsical music to upbeat pop and even rock n' roll, you get a good amount of diverse tracks on "Seventh Heaven".

The album kicks off with "overture", a beautiful harpsichord that is played with whimsical vocals playing with the ambiance of the world playing in the background.

The second track "oblivious" (the first



< "Beautiful, enchanting music and vocals with a wonderful presentation."

CD single released by the group and all three songs were used for the first three "Kara no Kyoukai" animated films which both "Kimi ga Hikari ni Kaete Iku" and "Scar" are included on this album) is an upbeat pop track.

The third track "love come down" features a up tempo pop track which captures your attention by its chorus.

The fourth track "夏の林檎" is a perfect example of the diversity of the tracks on this album as this track uses acoustic guitar, light percussion and flute.

The fifth track "fairytale" (the group's third CD single which is used for the sixth chapter of "Kara no Kyoukai") is a beautiful fairytale like ballad. The coupling song for that single "Serenato" is also included on the album.

The sixth track "ARIA" (the second double-A sided single which was used for the fourth chapter of "Kara no Kyoukai") utilizes the group's dreamy harmony but incorporating strings and a deep beat.

The seventh track "また風が強くなった" is much different than the previous tracks as it sports an upbeat rock n' roll track with thrashing guitars in the background.

And more tracks that feature the

harmonious vocals of the group and more beautiful and enchanting music.

I don't think I can find one bad song on the album. Every track is just magnificently done.

The DVD that comes with the CD+DVD version of "Seventh Heaven" features a total of seven videos.

I actually loved this DVD because it helps validate the vocals of the group because if you thought they sound good on their CD singles, you can watch them live and see that there is no studio manipulation, that these women can truly sing.

And along with the live performances of their hit "Kara no Kyoukai" songs are the music videos for "sprinter", "fairytale" and "seventh heaven" which people can see the group's unique presentation with the group's fashion.

Overall, "Seventh Heaven" is just a wonderful album showcasing beautiful, enchanting music and vocals with a wonderful presentation.

This album is highly recommended!

— DENNIS A. AMITH

J!-ENT

Covering Entertainment Worldwide
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Dennis A. Amith is the Editor-in-Chief and founder of entertainment and pop culture website J!-ENT. He is also the owner of the multi-disciplinary communications and design business, nt2099 media and entertainment. Graduating from California State University, Fresno with an educational background in mass communications and journalism, Dennis A. Amith has interviewed and featured many talents and

industry professionals in the United States, Europe and Asia and is recognized for promoting the entertainment and pop culture of different countries to an International audience. Currently residing in California.

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