

August 31, 1994 - Closing of Juliana's Tokyo, then December 1st - Opening of Velfarre

On August 31st, Juliana's Tokyo closed ^aamid everyone's regret after three and a quarter years' of glowing history. The record label "Avex DD", which grew greatly along with Juliana's Tokyo, will open the world's largest disco "Velfarre" on December 1st. delete

"Black Ships" or Major Typhoons of the Disco Industry

Juliana's Tokyo, planned by Whembly Japan (a joint-venture between the U.K.'s Whembly Group and the giant trading house Nissho-Iwai) and operated by Juliana's Japan, was the first truly European-style disco opening on May 15th, 1991 to the lead of traditional British bagpipes. At that time, the Japanese disco industry felt the direct shock of the collapse of the "bubble" economy (since huge discos were created by capital from the real estate industry and investors during the "bubble" period, and since many entrepreneurs fell into bankruptcy due to worsening business operations attributable to losses in stock investment and properties acquisition); a number of large discos were forced to close. At the point when companies operating the commercial buildings for discos, etc. had to rescale downwards due to declining numbers of customers, capital investment into a space with 2,000 person capacity and 1.5-billion yens' worth of interior and audio-lighting, etc. equipment became a major topic of discussion from the mass media down to the average person, needless to say persons in the industry. Persons in the industry took a cynical outlook, saying even if a large-scale structure was created with huge capital investment now, it would not last one year (not establish itself as a business). The mass media and average persons were extremely intrigued, in this time when large-scale discos were disappearing one-by-one, that one with maximum capacity and by tie-up between a British disco and the huge trading house Nissho-Iwai was going to be built in Japan.

Japanese people, and the younger age strata in particular, are extremely sensitive to fads, being "quick to heat-up, quick to cool-off" which makes them an extremely strict people as far as the development of commercial shops is concerned. People quickly abandon shops even though a number of the latest lighting equipment or special equipment are introduced. Also, Japanese are an extremely exclusivistic people, so most of the customers are lost (the expression "the customer base has gone to ruin" is used) due to the conflict between one-time customers visiting from the country-side and the long-time steady customers (when visitors from the country increase, the long-time customers claim that the atmosphere has been ruined). Naturally, Juliana's Tokyo has received this specifically Japanese strict baptism. However, past common-sense was overturned with the achievement of a habitually over-capacity number of customers due to the powerful weapons called "techno-house" and "otachidai" (elevated dance podiums).

Prior to the appearance of Juliana's Tokyo, mainstream techno-music was a type of black music from a portion of garage, house, etc. with the remainder being Eurobeat (HI, NRG, etc.). Eurobeat had been the mainstream from the early 80's until that time. The fast tempo was close to the tempo of Japanese festival music, and the melody line greatly utilized minor chords ~~muched~~ Japanese feeling. ~~was~~ With the appearance of Juliana's Tokyo, these were shifted into "techno-house" (an interesting phenomena is that after the abolition of "otachidai" at Juliana's Tokyo, Eurobeat is making a comeback).

"avex"

Honeymoon of AVEX and Juliana's Tokyo

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A great role in the meeting between Juliana's Tokyo and "techno-house" was fulfilled by the up-and-coming record label AVEX (now "AVEX DD" / record label is "Avex Trax"). (Details will be introduced in vol. 5, issue 3). This company, which was established in 1987, started as a wholesaler selling foreign 12-inch records and CDs to record rental shops. It soon imported CDs created for its independent disco music label in Italy; and later concluded direct contracts with many minor dance labels which had dissatisfaction with the large Japanese record makers. This led to the release of a series of numerous types of "super Eurobeat" releases which in turn achieved constant sales. Then, in the 90's while the Gulf War caused most record makers in Japan and the U.S.A. to cancel overseas business trips, AVEX participated in MIDEM and was able to conclude some exclusive contracts with techno-labels giving birth to the explosive craze in Japan.

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AVEX, which entered into an intimate relation with Juliana's Tokyo, consecutively released the "Juliana's Tokyo Vol. xx" series of "coronet compilation" CDs (they are not a simple assemblage of some techno-house music, but remixes like those actually played in discos + MC simulation remix versions created for the compilation). AVEX is continuing its rapid growth in 6 years from 70-million yen annual sales when it was established to 6-billion yen (statement of accounts for 1993). These compilation CDs reached not only those people who visited Juliana's Tokyo (a Juliana's Tokyo invitation ticket is attached as tie-up), but also the numerous young people in the outlying regions who could not easily go to Juliana's Tokyo (actual sales of the series is more than 2-million CDs which, along with rentals, achieved several times the latent demand) creating a bandwagon effect not only for Juliana's Tokyo, but also a great increase in customers for many discos.

"avex trax"

Success of AVEX TRAX and Opening of VELFARRE

Techno-house, like its predecessor Eurobeat, has a fast tempo and beautiful melody line which is easy to become familiar with. It has been accepted by many customers not only from Juliana's Tokyo, but has also explosively spread to and is widely played by many discos which had to operate under extremely severe conditions such as the collapse of the "bubble" economy at that time or the loss of customers due to their loss of interest. AVEX has reached the point where it spent 500-million yen to use the huge stadium called "Tokyo Dome", with a capacity of 50,000 persons, in order to present a huge live disco event in the summers of 1993 and 1994.

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There is no mistake that "techno-house" popularized by AVEX as well as Juliana's Tokyo brought life to the then dying Japanese disco industry. It is undeniable that "Techno-house", which began at Juliana's Tokyo, has spread to most of the discos throughout Japan capturing a new customer strata. The rapidly grown AVEX will soon possess its own disco which will be the world's largest. The unprecedented permanently-standing disco "VELFARRE" whose total expenditure is 4-billion yen (450-million yen for audio and lighting equipment), total floor space of 5,000 m² and capacity of over 15,000 persons will open on December 1st. (A review will be carried in vol. 5, issue 3).

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Another factor, in addition to Juliana's Tokyo and Avex Trax's success, which brought a glimmer of light to the dying Japanese disco industry was the "otachidai" (elevated dance podium).

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Appearance of the Famous Juliana's Tokyo "Otachidai"

The appearance of "otachidai" (dance podium), which became a famous attraction of Juliana's Tokyo, rewrote disco common-sense by being two 1.6-meter wide, 9-meter long podiums placed at a 1.2-meter height. They contained sub-low speakers, smoke machines, lighting equipment, and bodysonic transducers (along with those on the dance floor, the total number of transducers was 1,300). Although "otachidai" and stages for dancers existed since the first opening of discos in Japan in the 1960's, this was the first utilization of such a huge and complex podium. The structure was conceived by the Japanese staff based on extensive research on many discos, and its effects greatly exceeded all anticipations.

Many of the female customers visiting discos wear "bodikon" clothing (a new mode based on the theme "body conscious" announced at the 1986 Paris Collection) which shows the body lines at mini-skirt lengths. Discos, which are spaces where one can express oneself, allows female customers to get rid of timidity. These women dress in battle fatigues called "bodikon" and go into the battlefields called "otachidai". The height of the "otachidai" at Juliana's Tokyo is the same as the stage of a hall or theatre, and those who stand on top get special feelings of superiority and pleasure from showing themselves and being watched. There is an acceleration in the extremity of these women's stage clothing; those bored of "bodikon" change to swimwear; some go further and wear "T-back" underwear (so skanty that it is difficult to tell whether it is being worn or not) under their "bodikon"; or some do not put on any underwear (these fashions are not limited to discos, but can be commonly seen in the streets in Japan today). At discos in the outlying regions, which have been influenced by the Juliana's Tokyo boom, even the outlandishness is being surpassed with women going topless or some mistaken women going completely naked. Many television programs and weekly magazines engage in sensationalist reporting causing nationwide controversy.

The increasing lewdness of women's attire which started at the "otachidai" of Juliana's Tokyo has contributed greatly to attracting men from an extremely wide range of ages who come to see the lewdness. Consequently, it contributed not only to the great success of Juliana's Tokyo, which was linked to the great revitalization of discos throughout Japan, but it also became a social problem. In Japan, there is a law called "Law to Administrate the Operation of the Pleasure Industry" ("Fueiho") which also includes the disco business. This Law controls, at the judicial level, the opening and operation of types of industries which may become a social problem. Further details can be discussed at another time, but it suffices to say that there exist restrictions on age (only persons 18 years or older can enter the premises), business hours (discos can operate only until 12 midnight), and besides these there are only restrictions on noise; and there are, of course, no restrictions regarding attire. Further, under this Law, there is a minute categorization of sexual pleasure industries such as cabarets and strip lounges where there is a danger to "public order and good behavior", with precise restrictions for each category. This does not mean that one is free to do what is not specifically restricted, but each industry which is bound by this Law tends to have a "shady" existence in Japan so it would be unpardonable to create social problems. Still more, if people were to go completely naked at discos (which are categorized in the Law as "shops where dancing is done in accompaniment to record music"), it would be nothing other than a strip lounge and fall under the "Law for Crimes of Indecent Exposure".

It is not established that such "crimes" occurred at Juliana's Tokyo, but it is a fact that social controversy and problems were stirred and, although it ultimately became the scapegoat, the Public Safety Commission (which oversees the administration and

superintendance of the "Fuchiho") finally placed a claim against Juliana's Tokyo. Since the operation of Juliana's Tokyo was participated in by Nissho-Iwai (the huge trading house which wields great economic influence in Japan) and since Juliana's Tokyo became well-known to a wide section of the population throughout Japan (it was even listed as a "tourist spot" by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Minato Ward), its social responsibilities were especially heavy eventually leading to the demand for the removal of the "otachidai". Another problem which arose was the young people who did not go to Juliana's Tokyo from their homes "all dressed up" (one can say these were the "sane" ones) would repeatedly trespass into nearby condominiums and buildings to change clothes, causing the surrounding residents to complain to the police (further, illegal parking and cars filled with skirt-chasing youths cruising around Juliana's Tokyo obstructed the lives of nearby residents).

Removal of the "Otachidai" and Closure

Reasons were given that the "otachidai" had to be abolished due to the tremendous expenses which would be needed to renovate the superannuated "otachidai" and its interior equipment; that the injurious effects of age and class restrictions caused by the "otachidai; as well as instructions from the U.K. (concerning this reason, the actual truth is as stated above). These led to the abolition and remodelling of the "otachidai" over a two-week period starting from November 16th, 1993. The new Juliana's Tokyo reopened with a "Crystal Stage" (of similar scale to the "otachidai") whose usage was controlled under the guise of "auditions" (this was actually used in order to control attire). At that time, not only was it prohibited for female customers to climb onto the stage, but a section of the long-time customers who wore outlandish fashions were prohibited from entering the premises.

However, it became increasingly difficult for Juliana's Tokyo to attract people after losing many customers due to abolishment of the "otachidai" and clothing restrictions. Despite spending much money to call musicians and DJs from overseas, Juliana's Tokyo was only able to attract 1/2 to 1/5 of the 800 persons it has always drawn daily during its peak. Surprisingly, Juliana's Tokyo conducted various events at various places, such as events using huge spaces, an event using a pool (this was the first time a splash "bubble" machine was employed using many *ipisa?*) and even a trip to a Japanese-financed disco in Hawaii. But Juliana's Tokyo finally had to close on August 31st. Many people in the industry lauded the operators for making the brave decision to withdraw while there was still money remaining (that is, before continued operations broke even and began going deeply into the red). Entrance was free-of-charge during the last week prior to closure and although it was able to attract over 6,000 customers daily (there were over 13,000 people on the final day), there are no indications that Juliana's Tokyo will be able to reopen.

"Juliana's Tokyo", along with "techno-house" and "otachidai", was recognized by the people throughout Japan, causing a revitalization of the Japanese disco industry which until then had been facing its twilight. It also had a large economic impact totalling several tens of billions of yen in various industries. The gigantic "black ship" had a large and good influence upon Japan, then disappeared along with consequent social problems. The phenomena reaped unexpected fruit as well as unexpected problems.

Although the Juliana's Group is currently operating the "XY" disco in Osaka (formerly the disco "Genesis" remodelled) in conjunction with Vivre (a part of the gigantic distribution industrial group called Nichii), it is thought that a cooling-down period of several years is necessary before a new shop can be opened in the metropolitan area, including Tokyo. One reason is that it is impossible to actualize plans for large

commercial shops for discos, etc. since the Japanese economy is in the midst of a recession (it is currently impossible to obtain financing from financial institutions) and businesses are encountering difficulties. Another reason is that it became difficult to obtain business permits from the Public Safety Commission since social problems had arisen. The arrest of an executive (who had been posted to Japan from the U.K.) for the illegal possession of narcotics was treated scandalously by the newspapers, so even though there was no direct connection Whembly Japan will find it difficult to aggressively enter the disco market.

Juliana's Tokyo was widely accepted by the extremely unique Japanese national character and reaped great success by the various bandwagon effects produced. However, the reality is that those same national characteristics, which exceeded expectations, finally forced its closure. The main reason Juliana's Tokyo was able to attract such an unexpectedly large number of customers was due to the many female customers in sexy fashions and those men who were chasing after those women. The wide-scale attraction of customers was attributable to nothing other than the lecherous Japanese men who spent lots of money.

There are countries in which there are currently plans to open the first disco or some countries which have none at all. For the disco industry to become commonly established in those countries, it is necessary to understand the national characteristics of the people in that country. The success and final failure of Juliana's Tokyo was due to the unexpectedly close match with the Japanese national character. That an originally limited expectation led to such results exceeding all expectations can, in the final analysis, be due to insufficient research.

In the future, I would like to explain various phenomena and special characteristics of the Japanese disco industry in WDR.