

Co-write & Song Pitching in JAPAN

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Co-write & Song Pitching in JAPAN



Moderator

JT ⇒ Jonny Thompson (General Manager, Nichion International, Nichion Inc.)

Panelists

EL ⇒ Erik Lidbom (Songwriter)

h ⇒ her0ism (Songwriter)

JS ⇒ June Shinozaki

(Senior Vice President, International Repertoire,
Sony Music Publishing(Japan) Inc.)

KS ⇒ Kenichi Seki (A&R Producer, Nichion International, Nichion Inc.)

JT: I am trying to debate whether to stand or to sit down, but I guess I am going to stick with sitting down for now. I'm really uncomfortable sitting down. This is awkward for us. We were expecting something little more looser and little more kind of music oriented. In Japan, this is equivalent to a press conference where you have to apologize for your misdeeds. So that's what we were all talking about up here. We would all need to offer our apologies for doing something wrong or whatever and bowing our heads, but we won't do that. We'll try and make this as interesting and light as possible. What we're going to try and do is give you a little bit of insight into how the co-write and pitching process works in Japan, and that is a very important part of what the Japanese music business is at the moment. Not only our company, but several other companies started this many, many, many years ago and it's become a very successful part of what the music industry is in Japan now. Just to give you an example before we get into introductions here's a teaser just in the hopes that four other people will show up.

Two of the top 10 and four of the top 20 selling domestic singles in Japan in 2012 were co-writes by international songwriters, meaning co-writes between international songwriters and Japanese songwriters. Those singles sold in excess of 2 million physical copies in 2012, which gives you an indication that it's a very big physical market, which if you saw the

presentations you will already realize that, but also at the same time that there is room for international songwriters to have a presence in Japan. So, we have a panel of both songwriters and song pitchers here to talk a little bit about how the process works both from the creative standpoint and also from the pitching and also from administrative side as well.

To my left, I have Erik Lidbom. He is a very successful - probably Japan's most successful international songwriter at the moment. He has had multiple singles album cuts with several of Japan's most popular artists. I would like to give you the names, but I can and can't in some cases. But he has been very, very successful for the past 2 years actually in 2011, 2012.

EL: Yeah, I think that's probably the best years.

JT: Yeah. Then next to Erik, we have herOism who is a Japanese songwriter, also very successful. He has three, am I correct? I think three of the top 20 selling singles in Japan in 2012. HerOism actually has done many co-writes with not only Erik, but also other international songwriters as well. Next to herOism, we have Ken Seki who works at International A&R at Nichion, which is my company - not my company, I just work there. Ken has been doing international A&R song pitching for how many years now?

KS: Three.

JT: Three. And he is involved in the co-write process, traveling overseas to set up the co-writes and also he will talk a little bit about some interesting things that we do in Japan as well. Next to Ken is June Shinozaki. I just have - it's the first time I know what her official title is, Senior Vice President for Creative Department in International Repertoire at Sony Music Publishing. June also has for many, many, many years been involved in song pitching and the co-write process much earlier than many of us and she can talk a little bit about certainly what she does in terms of the leads and how she gets them into the co-write process as well. So, instead of me going on and on and on, we're going to have everybody talk a little bit. The question that we most often get is basically how do I get somebody to listen to my song in the Japanese market? I mean we know writing, we know demos, I've got music, and I get somebody to listen it, how do I get somebody to listen to it to get the process started? So, Erik, do you have any stories about that?

EL: I have my story.

JT: Erik will tell your story.

EL: Well, basically I was in the same position that any songwriter was. I was sending out my material to basically every music publisher in Sweden and Scandinavia. I got no from everyone. Everybody said my music didn't fit in Scandinavia. I was too musical, was too much. I need to go from more urban style or whatever and then I went to Japan for another reason except songwriting and I just was like I heard myself on the radio, was just that music that I was writing that was played on radio. I figured well, if my music can fit in here. I found



a little publisher in Sweden who helped me to get my music to Japanese acts. It got released, sold I think 50,000 copies like that and it was like a snowball, and I had basically been dedicated my songwriting, my life to the Japanese industry. I do that 100%, it's only Japanese music.

JT: How about for Japanese songwriter, getting your songs...

h: Getting sold - you mean domestic?



JT: Yeah, in Japan. Do you work with a music publisher or...?

h: Yeah. What do you mean, fit to Japanese market by myself?

JT: Yeah.

h: Yeah, I don't have such a long career, and I think I'm just a kind of newcomer now. So, I'm always trying to do something new stuff for Japanese market and also for some famous artists, and I am always trying to do something new. It's not just a J-Pop but it was more mixture stuff and fortunately I often go to LA and also Europe for songwriting and it's always that when I am back to Tokyo, I always notice there is many beautiful stuff that I often overlook. Yeah, I'm always trying to do something new.

JT: Okay. Erik, can you talk about how - what part an international writer brings to the song and maybe what part a Japanese writer brings to the song. I mean you guys have worked together on many songs before. So, maybe you can talk about one of your co-write experiences and how that came about and how you guys work together.

EL: Absolutely. I mean it's all very different. Sometimes we start from I would say maybe her0ism. He is a great track-maker and he is also great top-liner. He can bring a track and sometimes we just start with an angle.

JT: From scratch.

EL: Yeah and maybe you come with a verse or you can maybe ask me like, oh well can you fill in to the bridge and we go for chorus. It's basically just writing a song, but I mean you're the Japanese, you're more pressed into the Japanese music industry, so you probably can give me a little bit more angle.

KS: I think Erik knows well about Japanese market and not only for Japanese market, but he knows about Japan. I am really happy to work with him and it's easy to make something hit together.

EL: I think that if an international songwriter wants to do something in Japan, I think it's basically what you do in any other country, you're not trying to adapt your music to the specific country, but you're trying to find a spot for your own sound, for your own music in that territory or whatever. That's what I did. I mean her0ism, he has a very significant sound and he found like - you find a specific area where your sound is fitting and you can be very successful on that. Was that a good answer?

JT: That was a good answer. Neither one of you write lyrics, right? Do you write lyrics as well?

EL: Yes.

JT: You do. In most cases - for most of the songs that you do when you create songs for the Japanese market, do you create them using English lyrics and if so, do those lyrics turn into Japanese later or...?

KS: It depends. Maybe 50-50.

EL: 50-50.

KS: Yeah, 50-50. So, it depends on artists, which artists receive the pitch. But sometimes Japanese lyrics are only the way to express original Japanese melody. That exists only in Japan I think.

JT: Probably everybody here has heard the same thing all the time that for Asian music in Japan, in particular melody is very, very important. What part is different do

you think Erik from the melodies that are international music or Western music or for both of you.

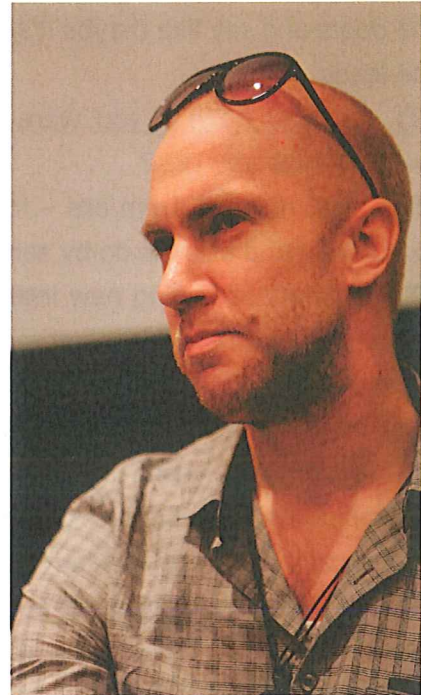
EL: Well, I think that in Japan you always start with a melody, lyrics are secondary. I mean if you have a good melody, it's really detail when it comes to like 8 notes, 16 notes. Something has to be twisted around differently to fit the Japanese lyrics, not the other way around which I think is probably the biggest difference compared to, I will say, American music. For instance, when you start with the lyrics and then the melody is following the lyrics somehow. Yeah, it would be the biggest for me.

JT: Okay. How about for track side as well, is there something different that international songwriter brings to the track that maybe a Japanese songwriter, different quality I think...?

KS: Yeah, it's my opinion, but it's always. Yeah, international writers track is really strong and I don't know why - but it's also my opinion. I always concentrate on making great melody when I write song with international writer, not only in Japan but also in Europe and US.

JT: Okay. June, can you tell me a little bit about how do you - if the songwriters are - you get leads obviously I guess from the record labels or producers so these guys can have something to write for. I don't think they're just sitting in the room somewhere dreaming up different songs you probably need, but can you talk a little bit about the lead process and how those come to you and how you get the songs that you need to get?

JS: Well, I think the basic ones are like we go to the A&R, we choose the artist there who is looking for songs, who wants to use international songs or who is more open-minded and then we talk with the A&R and we say we have songwriters and they give us a brief, which we send to our writers. They send us the songs and that's how the basic process is. If we don't get the leads what we do is depending on the artists, usually artists release their records, then do the promo, then do the tour, and then they have a holiday and then they go into recording. We try to focus on which timing the artist/A&R are looking the songs and we just kind of go and knock



the doors and say like maybe it's a time to say you're looking for songs and that's how we get the leads.

JT: Do you have – you were talking about your writers, do you have a writer signed exclusively to you or...?

JS: Well, most of them are – for Japanese writers you mean? Japanese writers - we sign exclusively and also we do by song by song basis.

JT: How about finding new international writers? I mean you have people that you go to regularly, but do you try sometimes a general pitch to try and find some new writers to pitch for Japan?

JS: Mainly, I talk with them because we have been pitching for many years. We have a tight relation with - original publishers who have got great creative persons, so I usually talk with a creative person or the writers actually - I ask who might be good ones, but we don't necessarily - I mean we have so many writers who's good enough and depending on that, but basically I only talk with the main creative person at the original publishers.

JT: Okay. So a music publisher, would you agree, Erik - agree is an important part of the process having somebody to help to get the song?

EL: Definitely.

JT: Okay.

EL: Most of them, especially in Japan I would say that's the gate and of course it might be tricky to find a key to that gate, but once we got it and you get one song in, it's easier to get another one in. It's a snowball effect. But definitely, yeah. I would say - I would also add that Japanese publishers to me are working in a little bit more flexible way than the rest of the world, especially the major ones, which is also an interesting aspect on it.

JT: Ken, can you talk a little bit about - there are some other parts that go to this as well, obviously the creative process and June gets the leads, sends out to the writers and Erik and her0ism start working on a track together and they probably already have a level of trust that the process is already organized and developed. But, how about for a new writer or somebody that's trying to pitch a song in, what do they need to be cautious about, what do they need to keep in mind when they are pitching?

KS: That's actually a very important part. I have a question to everybody. Who have ever pitched a song to Japan? Could you raise your hand? One, two, three and so I guess like around this section, you guys never had this opportunity before. Okay, as June mentioned - she mentioned about if the A&R is working at the record company has an open-mind or not to use international song, I think that's a very important part. The reason why we have to look for an A&R director to have an open mind is because it's really still rare for Japanese labels to use international songs and that is because international writers are signed to a publisher and usually in Japan all record labels have their own publishing company and 99% of the domestic



writers are not signed to a publisher. Therefore, the record company usually gets the entire publisher share, while pitching international song involves international publisher and that's when it gets a bit more complicated. So, that's why we have to look for open-minded directors to use international demo.

What's important for me is that when I ask for songs from various publishers or writers, I always ask for three things. One, I always ask them to give me full writer credit. Sometimes they only give one name - their name and they usually try to hide out the rest of the name and then when you open up the box, you find like about 10 different writers in one song. That is kind of confusing and so a lot of writers to talk to. It becomes really complicated.



Then, the second thing I would ask is I need publisher information for each writer and obviously if there are 10 writers with 10 different publishers, then we have to check with 10 writers and 10 publishers and 10 sub-publishers, so that really impedes our pitching speed. So, when we receive songs, we definitely need to have all information in advance so that we can somehow simulate in our mind as to if we pitched a song how it's going to turn out to be like, and obviously if there are too many writers, too many publishers, then it's going to be quite time-consuming to get all the understanding regarding the Japanese rules and other things, which June is going to be talking about later on. Usually, it's better. I mean it's not better, but it's crucial that we have all the information about the song.

The third thing that's most, most important is that the song must be an unreleased demo, and this is one of the unique characteristics about Japan that they do not take any released songs. So, they just don't. If the song is uploaded on YouTube, that would be considered as a release because people can have an access to listen to that. Facebook, obviously not. Sales of that - release doesn't really matter too. Some people tell me it's released in some random country, but only sold 50 units. So, it's not really a release or something. If it's released and if it's sold one unit or zero unit, it's still a release. You have to double check that's it's an unreleased demo and in Japan, even though the gate is open, if you make couple of mistakes, then your trust obviously goes down and once you lose your trust, it's really to get that trust back. Pitching in Japan does bring a lot of opportunity, but risk at the same time, so how do you manage risk by providing all the required information would be very important.

JT: June, are there any other elements that one needs to be concerned with- with domestic artists, it's a much different situation in Japan, obviously, television, promotion all of those areas are already built into the system. But, for an international writer it might be a little bit different. Are there some other areas that they need to be concerned about?

JS: I think main thing would be like because commercial is one of the medium to have the song played right now because there are not many music programs. Radio - people don't

listen to radio so much as in States. So, labels go to ad agency to get commercials and it's kind of taken for granted as a promotion. There won't be sync fee or we need to waive - they ask to waive the performance fee for that specific commercial just so that the song could be played on the air and client gets like a new song, it's considered as a win-win promotion, merits both.

The good thing is though that mechanicals can be collected. Performance, if the artist performs on TV would be collected. It's only for that commercial only. So, if we could get the prior waiver, it helps the A&R and the promo team of that label to go and promote freely that they can get the song on good promotion and marketing thing that in US or in other countries that might need a sync fee.

JT: Yeah. I think what you have to keep in mind in terms of what June is saying and what Ken is saying, those are basic pre conditions that you have to already have in mind when you're



pitching a song. There is no - there is not room for hey, it's my song and I want to negotiate this or I want to negotiate that. Those things that they've talked about whether it's getting correct information, whether it's getting the correct splits, getting the correct publisher's share, agreeing in advance to waivers for certain things, those are all things that are just part of the process of getting a cut in Japan. It's very difficult to understand in a market more and more in these days which is focused on branding and sync and you're going to use my songs, so I want to get a sync fee for that. It's entirely different in Japan. Japan is still very much based on generating mechanical income either via singles or via albums or via downloads or whatever it maybe. But, it's about selling the song in a way that's using television and other areas as a marketing and promotional tool and that's the kind of the give-and-take process. But, if you don't have those elements in place in the beginning or if you're going to want to start saying, hey, you know I think my song or this Japanese writer coming on there should get less because I am doing more, then most likely what's going to happen is one, people are not going to come back to you for songs anymore and two, you're going to have a very, very difficult time of getting anybody to listen to any of your music. Is it fair? Hard to say, but you are dealing with the number two music market in the world, it's also the number one physical market in the world and you have to adapt to the rules of that particular market if you want to be successful.

Getting back to the creative side a little bit, is there - maybe her0ism, you can talk a little bit about this. Is there some kind of basic song structure or song structure that you need to keep in mind or is it any kind of international song or work or is there some parts that have to be done in a certain way to get with the Japanese artists?

h I think we have more like a story in one song. Of course, the European song also has a story, but we have more story and we like to tell story indirectly I think and so we need to - how can I say - split the part and person before us and obviously it's a hook, so I think the most

important thing is the hook. We had a culture like Wabi Sabi, so song should be not flat, but we need dramatic part. Yeah, I'm always thinking.

JT: Would you agree Erik, is that...?

EL: Definitely. Most definitely - I think that's one of the things that I learned a lot when I started to write with Japanese writers like her0ism - was the song structure which is totally different to what is custom in the Western world. Yeah, definitely.

JT: Are there any parts that are difficult for you when you are writing for Japan?

EL: For me?

JT: Yeah.

EL: Now, I am starting to get so used with the Japanese structures and now when I hear Western song, it feels so weird to me. I mean it started to get more natural, but of course the structures are longer and they are more flowing, more dramatic as her0 just said and I think you summed it up pretty good.

JT: Many of the songs that you do together and that's the nature of the Japanese market are with what most of us would consider to be idol groups, boy bands, female artists, and things like that. Is that - in other words usually you would think that maybe the audience is a teenage audience. So, if it's a teenage audience, you want to write a song that's like a teenage song. Is that the case or do you write a song that's an adult song and because they're singing, it becomes more of a teenage song? I am just saying - how comfortable are you writing for idol groups and things like that? Is that something that bothers you or is it okay?

EL: Not at all. I mean it's - I am trying to see my songwriting as a profession more like craft. Of course, people would say that a songwriter is an artist. Maybe yes, but of course you have to - if you want to make a living out of it, you really got to kind of respect the leads and the requests from the act who wants the song. So, basically you really request or the lead the briefing and you say well, this are the keywords, major key up tempo blah, blah, blah and you try to write a song from that and - well, if it is a boy band of course you have to try to feel like you are 16 and look good and write a song and it's all about imagination I guess.

KS: Yeah, I agree you are 16 years old.

JT: Using a lot of imagination.

KS: You're a 16-year-old handsome boy...

EL: Exactly. The trick is it's easier to imagine that you are.

JT: We won't go into that. Maybe later. Do you get - for example, if there are writers in the room and they say, can I have your email address and they send you 50 songs. What happens then? Can you go through all 50 songs? Can you give everybody feedback? Is that a hard thing to do?

JS: Well, we are lucky that I have few people - like now we have, including myself, five people listening to the songs, international songs. We have domestic pitching team as well. I think we would be going through the songs. But, what we do is - it depends. I have five people gather around and we're going to play it, 50 songs, is just sitting like an hour, try not to take too much time - I don't leave it later, we just do it and then it's easy.

JT: So, there is room for somebody to send music. You're always listening.

JS: Definitely.

JT: You've got a team that's always looking for demos and things like that. Is this the same for you Ken as well?

KS: Absolutely yeah. We're always looking for new demos from newcomers. We always welcome that. They always bring in different sounds that give good inspiration for different artists in Japan, definitely.

JT: Yeah, Ken is Hawaii Time, so his responses will be a little slower than June's probably, but that's an internal discussion. [Laughing] I think what we're going to do is just talking about how it's done and what it is and everything else is very nice. But, we do fortunately have some music to listen to and actually June has been very generous. This is very difficult to do in Japan because of the fact that the management offices and production companies and getting everybody's okay on all of these, but she has actually been able to get a before and after where there is a demo that came through and later became a completed song. You might want to go ahead and talk about that.

JS: Yeah, just a quick background on this song. We did this writing camp and we wanted a song to be cut definitely. We focused on one of the artists and said, we'll knock on the door of the A&R talking that we're going to be doing a writing camp, what kind of songs would you be looking for and he gave us a lead, we chose three writers who would be fit for that. We had several others writers, but we choose three international writers, paired them up with our top Japanese writers and based on that brief, we had songs written and simultaneously we've arranged with A&R that she could come in to listen to the demo during the writing session so that it kind of motivates writers as well as we could get the feel of - sometimes the A&R has this vision, sometimes the artists have that vision. So that was arranged and the one that was chosen was Kool Kojak's songs. We sub-publishe Kobalt and he is Dr. Luke's team published by Kobalt and we had Kenichi Takemoto, our Japanese writer write and Kojak brought the beats, Kenichi put the chords and melody, and Kojak wrote the additional chords and melody and Kenichi sang on it putting Japanese lyrics on and once it was kind of ready, we had her come in. Well, first the A&R listened and he said okay, because A&R wanted like a melodious, like good melody, good hooks, dancy and pop. Then, She came in actually she was very reserved and she didn't really comment but it had a feel that she wanted the song to be like - I guess sounding not too melodic, not too pop. So, it was good that we could have the artists and A&R come in - the writers can hear from both angles because you have to have them both happy. Kojak and Kenichi worked on it and the demo that I would be playing was...

JT: Go ahead, you can...

JS: So the demo is - this is a version that she heard.

[Video]

JS: This is the male version and then I'm going to play the final one.

[Video]

JS: Unless you are Japanese, it's difficult to hear the difference. But, the big difference is that she wrote the Japanese lyrics. Even if the demo is written in Japanese, usually the vocalists want to sing their own lyrics. So, this is an example that sound-wise it's refined as well as she put in the Japanese lyrics that would fit in that melody. By the end of the day, you would be singing the song because I'm going to play the same song again and again. I want to show

you the music video just so that you can visualize what she looks like and this video is, it was... It's a very sexy video. So, the marketing was that it's not going to be on the air of all TV because it's going to be rated.

[Video]

JS: I know you want to see further. This was the video. So, how they marketed was now since it was good that people got the reaction from the website and internet that it's not going to be played on the TV. But, it's necessary to be on the TV. So, the label has booked this song on TV drama and this is how it was used. It was used as an ending theme and you will see the ending credits with the title and the artist name. That's how they do their promotion.

[Video]

JT: There is no sync for that if you wanted to know in case, there is no sync for that. Yeah, that's all considered promotion. There is going to be no money coming there. It's all promotion, sell the single and sell the album as well. So, there may have been a sync I hope, maybe I'm wrong.

JS: It wasn't a sync, but it was on a DVD.

JT: I was going to say, it's on the DVD. If the drama is used in Japan as it is here, basically the way television works in Japan is you can use music such as this in the program. If it does become a DVD, then there is a sync because it's obviously a different format. But there isn't anything there. Her0ism and Erik can you hear in there which part - it's really weird question, but which part is the international guy and which part is the Japanese.

EL: I structure-wise pretty can understand that riff is definitely the international.

JT: Okay, really?

EL: I would say the top line is pretty much Japanese, right.

h: Yeah, but I think it's kind of combination. Yeah, it's really hard to explain which part is Japanese and which part is - it's top line...

JT: Would you agree June, is that the case?

JS: Well, you're both right because it was like beat started from Kojak and then it was Kenichi writing the chords and melody on the beat and Kojak did write the chords and melody too. You're both right.

EL: Thank you very much.

JT: I have a question between the demo and between that finished version, how many changes were made with the song tweaking different parts of the song? All right, maybe I shouldn't have asked.

JS: Once we got an okay on the version that you've heard - after that they wanted to hear a faster version, then they wanted the key different version, which is quite a lot of work. There was a time when they asked for Kojak to put additional touch, so actually Kojak did add some structure, additional bridge on it, but we did not get approval. We've tried it, but it didn't work. I would say main changes would be three, but major changes.

JT: Yeah, the reason I asked is you both probably have it as well where you get a lot of requests for - even though you think it's done, just as I think June was saying change the key, change this, add that as writers everybody needs to be prepared for that, that you're going to

get lots of requests from the producer or the pitcher or the A&R people to make changes? herOism, what would you say?

h : We are not artists, but songwriters, so I would say I am always welcome to change.

JT: I will write that down actually.

h : Sometimes it's kind of obvious that the artist doesn't really know what they want. You deliver 15 versions, but you save the first one because you know they're going to go back for that later on.

JS: I agree, it's always the first one.

h : I mean basically that's what you hear after going back too and forth, let's listen to the demo again. So, you better save that in a computer.

JT: But patience and flexibility is necessary, do you agree?

h : Of course.

JT: You have to keep answering in others words.

EL: Yeah, I think you also need to really understand what they mean because sometimes it's a way to – kind of how do I say like - if they ask for a faster song, you might not really be the tempo that is the issue, it's more like the energy or something else, but of course you need to be flexible and just listen because you're not an artist, as herOism said, you're not the artist. You are the person who is going to deliver the right song for the artist.

JT: I am guessing the language part gets to be an issue too. As you said faster could mean energy, not necessarily tempo. Is that another learning process?

EL: Well, in my case I have a really good interpreter.

JT: Yeah, he is sitting at the end of the table over there.

EL: And he helps me a lot. But of course I can realize that it's even more difficult for the Japanese writers to understand what...

JT: Can you communicate that in the studio when you work together, when you say faster, up tempo, more speed, is it – how is it?

h : Usually, I mean it's easy for us. We know each other very well.

JT: Ken, you want to play some songs as well I guess. No reflection on you that all of your songs are male artists, but anyway...

KS: Yeah, let's listen to...

JT: You want to talk a little bit about the song first or you just play it?

KS: Yeah, I'm going to play a song from a boy band group. It's actually one of the songs that got into top 20 and this single sold 355,000 copies.

JT: Physical copies.

KS: Physical copies, yeah.

[Video]

JT: Busy. Ken, would you consider that kind of a basic structure for a group like this.

KS: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah it's very typical structure I think. What you guys think? Yeah, I guess.

JT: You want to play another song?

KS: Yeah. I play a girl song.

JT: Okay.

[Video]

JT: I think you can get a basic idea of kind of what the overall direction is. It's always based on multiple elements I think, different parts - maybe it might be electronica, maybe it might be disco, maybe it might be rap, maybe it might be something all in one song, not necessarily just that one particular style, but multiple styles in one song is a very common denominator for Japanese hit songs. Before I open up for questions, Ken just one quick thing. Where can people go to - what's a good source for people to hear some of this music or listen to some of this so they can get more acquainted with what works in Japan and maybe based on that kind of create a demo that they might want to pitch? Are there sources that people can go to that you know of?

KS: Well, first of all I think it will be good idea to access Japanese label companies' websites and take a look at what kind of artists they have and usually those websites have like sample audios that you can like listen to half of the song that could perhaps help you kind of get an image of what that artist sounds like and perhaps try to get an image of what's a J-Pop structure and all that.

JT: Should they copy what they hear? If they hear a Japanese song, if they hear these songs today, should they write exactly the same kind of thing?

KS: Absolutely not. I mean if they do one thing, they might have certain characteristics that they try to hold in common, but they will never do anything that they have done before already. That's something that...

JT: They're always looking for something new.

KS: Something new, absolutely.

JT: I'll open up for questions. Anybody have any questions that they want to ask? Somebody, we need a microphone wandering person which I guess I'll do - probably will help me. Thank you.

<< Q&A >>

Male1: Hi, I am Max Guerrero [ph], I'm coming from Italy. I just want to know what do you consider different in a structure and music peculiar for the Japanese market because it doesn't sound so different to me as you are talking about?

KS: You're asking me?

Male1: Yeah.

KS: In the structure?

Male1: Yeah.

KS: I would say the songs are little bit longer, which means that each part is probably a bit longer too. Doesn't really necessarily have to follow the most conventional verse, pre-chorus, chorus, it could be like a little bit of everything. But I think each part really needs to get a little bit longer than what Western music is used to.

Male1: But, I didn't find that in the song that you played. It sounds like a typical chorus and then the rest of the song.

EL: No, the chorus is upfront, but the A and the B are very important in Japan and the problem with most Western music is there is no A and B anymore. Matter of fact I can't even tell you if

there are any verses anymore. I think it's more pre-chorus and chorus now and that's the longer part. You need that A and that B part and this is a little shorter, but overall I think it tends to be a lot longer and you need multiple development in each of those areas and that's why from your ear it does sound not different, but from this side when you do send something usually a lot of what you get is it's too short. There is not enough development.

Male1: Very much like a dance developmental song. This is typical sort of music.

EL: Yeah, it's got to be a lot more and all of the elements have to be developed.

Male1: The song is made of different pitches and that comes...

EL: Story, just like you're saying each part has to be story, yeah.

Male1: Okay, thank you.

EL: Yeah, go ahead. You can pass it on.

Female1: I'm a singer, songwriter. You mentioned that the artist would go on tour and then record after that. For me as a singer, I want to record first, so I know exactly what I must sing in order to sound like in the recording. Do I understand you well?

JS: That was when I am pitching the song. Before that pitching, I need to get the lead. So, it's more of a A&R thing that the artist focus on your tour and recording, but when you're touring and write in the middle of your holiday, A&R gets to think about next album, next song. So, that's when I knock on the door. Am I answering your question or...?

JT: I think she was asking about when you're talking about Koda Kumi, when you're getting ready to get songs, I think she said that or you said that she - I can't remember which was the order, she toured first and then did the album later, which sounds kind of reverse from what the normal pattern would be, which would be do the album first and then tour.

JS: Maybe I said it but I wanted to say that originally there is a record and then promotion. Record, promotion, tour, and then the record where it's record release, promotion, tour to support that album, then holiday and then recording. That cycle.

Male2: Don't forget the holiday. Everything starts from...

JT: Exactly.

Female2: What we heard today is the kind of songs that would be pitched or is there any other genre in Japan that are searched for?

KS: There are a lot of different genres in Japan. A lot of the things that we play today are dance-oriented materials, but we do have a couple of things that are a bit more organic in sound that are a bit more ballad stuff and there are lots of different kinds of music played in Japan and basically it's a mixture of different types of music and as Jonny mentioned. So, we are open to different styles.

JT: One area that we didn't cover at all, which is the whole R&B side of things which also exists in Japan. It's a whole different - it requires a whole different panel. The pitchers are different - the pitchers are the same in lot of cases, but the people actually doing the music might be a little bit different and the way that process is what - but it is another - it's another area we just have the pop side kind of representative and maybe in future Midems, we might be get the other part as well. So, you would get that perspective also. But as Ken is saying, there are multiple genres and styles. I wouldn't encourage you to do a jazz demo. I don't think you're going to get - or a country demo that's not probably going to get anybody too excited. But

even the R&B side is very, very pop oriented, it's a very pop market is what it is. Yeah, anybody else. Yeah.

Male3: Ken, You were saying the track has to be unreleased. Is it unthinkable that a proven track in Finland or wherever can be recorded in Japanese?

KS: Well, if the artist wants to do the cover of that song, then the answer would be yes. But, in most cases they're looking for a new song that has never been established anywhere in the world so that it truly becomes an original song. I hope I answered your question.

JT: The Japanese attitude is now that - the song that they do because of the market presence of the country itself and because of how dominant domestic music is in Japan, that what they record should be the original version. That's not to say it doesn't happen, for example if the song was released and I'm not picking on a country in particular, just came into mind, but if a song was released in Serbia and it sold 300 copies and nobody really - it was done 10 years ago and nobody really remembers it, there is a possibility that somebody might still do that, but the important thing - the most important thing is to know that information upfront to tell the people that you're sending the song to that, hey you can look at it on YouTube or hey, it did come up before, and if they have that, they can go to people and say, do you still want to do it or how do you want to do it. Not entirely no, but very difficult - very, very difficult. Yeah, I think it was okay.

Male3: Thank you.

Male4: I have one question for Erik. Regardless of the music itself, about the music business - what do you think is the most important thing to enter the Japanese market like for example if you are from Scandinavian countries and you want to enter the Japanese market, what do you consider most out of music itself?

EL: Except the music?

Male4: Except the music like business part.

EL: From a business point of view. I think flexibility is the keyword. I think you need to be flexible in just trying to understand how the Japanese industry works because it's completely different compared to the - like I said before and really be prepared of what kind of weird requests you might think they are asking you. It really make sense, but in the very first beginning everything sounds a bit strange, but after a while you kind of understand what they are asking for and what the attitude is like. I think that would be - flexibility I would say, if you ask me for one word.

Male4: Thank you.

JT: I thought he was going to say find a good music publisher, but apparently not. We'll have to talk to him later. [Laughing]. We have got time for one or two more questions. Anybody else, please go ahead.

Male5: My name is Jørn Dalchow. I am from daWorks Music Publishing in Oslo, Norway. Can you give us a little insight on the splits for songwriters and publishers? That's always a question how this actually works in Japan?

JT: That in itself could be another little mini seminar. But, you want to do this, yeah you want to try - be careful who is sitting next to you. Maybe their splits might be different. [Laughing]

KS: If I am wrong, just slap me on my face and I will try to correct myself. It's going to be sung in Japanese, so obviously there is going to be a Japanese lyrics writer and that Japanese lyrics writer would be signing him or herself to a Japanese music publisher. In the end if you have your original splits, basically you need to consider adding in Japanese lyrics writer and publisher into the share and it's case by case, sometimes - we usually try to push equal writer split, but in certain cases it doesn't become like that. So, like Erik said, you need to be quite flexible enough to try to think about different scenarios that you possibly can.

JT: I think the biggest issue people have is - usually publishers have - the phrase that we always get is why do they have to take so much and that's usually what their mentality is, which is part of the reason why we have great difficulty in working with writers from particularly the US. Matter of the fact, most of the songs that you've heard today and most of the songs that are pitched and most of the songs that get cuts are by and large from European writers. That's not to say that US writers it's not possible, it's just that there are more layers involved, there are lawyers, there are other people and again it tends to be why do we have to give it away. But our perspective is you're gaining maybe half, maybe 25%, maybe a third, maybe whatever of the Japanese copyright that you wouldn't have before, and without those Japanese lyrics, you have no song and these are not adaptations, these are not covers, these are lyrics that are written specifically for the song as June said in some case by the artists themselves, in other cases by writers who are trying to convey a particular message and you can't convey the same message in English that you can in Japanese. That writer, that Japanese writer is an equal partner in the song even though they may be coming in after the fact to write the lyrics and if you can get your head around that I think - that idea then it becomes much easier. But if you look at it from a purely Western perspective of, well wait a minute, we had original English lyrics anyway, isn't that just be an adapter share for six and a quarter or 12 or whatever or we'll give them 8 and a third % or something. Then, it's going to be difficult and I think that's the flexibility that both Erik and Ken are talking about. We would like to go into more detail, but that's giving like trade secrets and there are rival publishers here. One more I think is there anybody else? Are we good?

Male5: How about if you have one writer from Warner and one from Sony - if your pitch is on.

JS: That's a difficult. You mean on one song to have Warner like different...?

Male5: Yeah, if you are like two or three writers with different publishers.

JS: As long as they are okay with the criteria it's okay, what Ken was saying and I was saying like that's unreleased and everything. As long as all the writers are okay with it and they say that it's unreleased, then it should be okay.

KS: Publishers should be aware too.

JS: Yeah, exactly.

KS: If one of the writers from Warner, then that writer is A&R and Warner should be aware about Japanese rules and vice versa, same for Sony as well.

Male5: Yeah, does it matter?

JT: But what does matter again is both Ken and June said earlier is you have to let everybody know if it's a Warner writer and a Universal writer and whatever writer, you have to let people

know in advance because that makes a big difference in terms of who we're going to be talking to and who we're going to be working with on the song and also you as a writer I think as Ken was saying also need to take certain responsibility for letting your publisher know that hey, I got a hold in Japan or I've got a cut in Japan and this is what they've told me is necessary and this is what I've agreed to and go with because if you say that, usually the original publisher is going to say okay as long as the writer is okay. The problem that we have in lot of cases is that we have to go through the original publisher and sometimes it depends what original publisher you're dealing with. People have different ways of thinking in terms of that split issue that we're talking about.

As long as we know upfront, usually most of that we can get cleared locally. I mean there is no blacklist of certain publishing companies that we don't want on a song. It has existed before and that's because what happens is the process become so complicated and the word gets around that - it gets - it's too complicated to work with that particular company and it could be a Japanese publisher as well. You want to try and avoid that as much as possible because the general feeling is that international songs are going to be difficult anyways. So, to make it easy and as straightforward as possible is the best and that builds trust which allows more songs to be used I think in the future.

So, we're done. Thank you very much. I'd like to thank Erik and her0ism and Ken and June. They maybe in and out and around in different places and I'll be at the booth sometime as well. So, if you have any specific questions you want to ask, feel free to do so. Following this and - it does lead into some of what we were talking about with TV dramas and things like that - there is a sync seminar talking about the sync market in Japan. It is very, very, very different. If you are interested and I would encourage you to stay because there are some things that will surprise you, that will make you fall out of your chair. You may want to throw something at the panel when they tell you some of the things that they're going to tell you. But, I would encourage you to stay for that if you can. It will be very interesting. Thank you very much.

(END)



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