

From the Editor's Laptop

Happy New Year! Happy New Name! But don't worry! PMM is staffed by the same creative group of people you've come to know and love from the past few issues. We still organize Pacific Media Expo and the newsletter name change is a manifestation of the many other aspects of Pacific Media Association, our parent group. Keep your eyes peeled in the next few months! You'll be in for a few pleasant surprises!

Festival (Hi)Lights



Japanese swordsmanship at the Weller Court Stage

Little Tokyo Celebrates 2006

LOS ANGELES -- Drizzle and a slight chill in the air did not dampen the festive spirit of attendees of the 2006 Oshogatsu (New Year festival) in the Los Angeles Little Tokyo's Weller Court and the New Otani Hotel on New Years Day.

More than a thousand people enjoyed the various demonstrations at Weller Court, from taiko drum demonstrations to a kimono fashion show, and even more attendees shopped at a small row of kiosks at the nearby pedestrian walk.

Inside the New Otani Hotel, there was an American and Japanese brunch; teachers taught Go, the traditional board game played with black and white stones; a mini-carnival; and origami lessons from past PMX panelist Michael Sanders.

The New Year celebration was free to the public and attracted attendees of all ages. There were plenty of activities for the children -- kite making, origami, and there was even an opportunity to pound sweet rice into the versatile confection known as *mochi*.

Asked about the abundance of plain white *mochi* in the festival, the helpful people behind the Fugetsu-Do booth explained that in Japan, it is traditional during New Year for people to buy white *mochi* to garnish in any

way they wanted. Most grill *mochi* slightly until it softens and browns on each side before they dip it into a soy sauce and sugar mixture. The Fugetsu-Do store has been a mainstay of the Little Tokyo neighborhood, having made *mochi* and other confections for over 100 years.

Despite the festive mood, the weekend's inclement weather did affect attendance. Carrie Ratajski and Ellysia Almaguer, who were drawn from Orange County for the taiko drum demonstration, noted that last year the row of kiosks extended across the street from Weller Court. "The weather was much better last year and there were more people," Ratajski said. However, both women still plan to attend again next year.

Oshogatsu festivities will continue through Jan. 8, 2006, throughout Little Tokyo. For more information, go to <http://www.jccsc.com>.

For more photos of this event, please visit <http://monthly.pacificmediaexpo.info/> and click on the link for "Event Photos".

PMM Reviews... Movies



Memoirs of a Geisha Where Culture Meets Hollywood

Due to the popularity of Arthur Golden's "Memoirs of Geisha," it wasn't long before his best-selling novel became a Hollywood feature film. Directed by Rob Marshall, director of Academy Award winning *Chicago* (2002), *Memoirs of a Geisha* stars Zhang Ziyi as Sayuri, a well-renowned geisha in Japan during the 1930s and '40s. Also starring Ken Watanabe and two of Hong Kong's most prized actresses, Gong Li and Michelle Yeoh, the story unfolds as a melodrama about rivalry, lost love, and the trials and tribulations of living the life of a geisha.

The film starts with a beautiful young girl

named Chiyo (Suzuka Ohgo), and it chronicles the hardships and struggles she had to face before she was allowed to become a geisha-in-training. After being sold by her father, she is forced to become a servant at a geisha house run by a strict Mother (Kaori Momoi) and kind Auntie (Tsai Chin). Even if Mother and Auntie ran the household, the whole house seemed to be under the control of Hatsumomo (Li), a beautiful geisha who's diva attitude had to be constantly tolerated because of the profits she brings into the house. Hatsumomo becomes consumed by her jealousy of Chiyo's natural beauty and unique blue eyes that she consistently tries to plot against Chiyo. And due to Hatsumomo's scheming, Chiyo becomes indebted to Mother.

But Chiyo is then leased to another famous geisha named Mameha (Yeoh), who takes on the responsibility of transforming Chiyo to become a geisha named Sayuri (Ziyi). And with the help of Mameha, she soon inherits the title as the most renowned geisha of all Kyoto. But despite the good fortune Sayuri experiences, the rivalry between Hatsumomo persists as she is even pitted against her friend Pumpkin (Youki Kudoh) in a battle to be the best. Sayuri will then realize that there is more to being a geisha than what she had expected.

Memoirs of a Geisha's innovative cinematography leaves audiences captivated in the film's stunning beauty. But in the midst of the film's beauty and grandeur, *Memoirs of a Geisha* is a product greatly influenced by Hollywood styles and standards. Instead of focusing on understanding the real-life experiences of geishas in Japan during that time, the film seems to center only on Sayuri's emotional struggles to be with the Chairman (Watanabe), who is the man that she loves. The film fails to note the true essence of geishas and Japanese culture and traditions since it focuses more on the emotions, feelings, and conflicts between all the characters involved.

Another popular topic of debate sparked by the film was the fact that it featured Chinese actresses playing the roles of Japanese geishas rather than casting Japanese actresses to play these roles. But, one must take into consideration the fact that Zhang Ziyi and many of the other cast members had to intensively learn and practice speaking English with a Japanese accent for two years. And even if they are not Japanese, their performances

spoke volumes about their capabilities to play the roles of Japanese geishas convincingly well.

Memoirs of a Geisha appears as a type of Cinderella story about a young geisha's attempts to denounce the idea that a she is not meant to fall in love. Aside from all the competition and even through all her suffering, Sayuri never gives up hope that she will one day find happiness with the Chairman who showed her great kindness and love when she was a little girl. But behind Sayuri's porcelain skin and colorful kimonos reveals a young woman who merely desires to discover what it means to love and be truly happy.

Memoirs of a Geisha is rated PG-13 and appears in theaters everywhere on Friday, December 23, 2005.

-- April Joy Limayo



Random Ninjas with Stephanie Yanez

Random Ninjas Invade JTAF3

SAN FRANCISCO -- On the weekend of Dec. 17, 2005, the third annual Japan town Anime Faire (JTAF) brought cosplayers, tourists, and locals alike to crowd the shops, restaurants, and malls of San Francisco's Japantown. Early in the morning of the first day, there was a light drizzle, and the large white pagoda in the Peace Plaza, the center of events for JTAF, was surrounded by concert equipment, cosplayers, and Random Ninjas. To everyone's dismay, the drizzle quickly turned into a rain storm. However, despite the rain and 3 hour delay, Random Ninjas still rocked out inside the mall in front of Sophie's Crepes complete with the entourage of martial artists that were first seen performing at PMX 2005.

Although there was no space for mosh pits or dancing in the mall walkways that were packed with fans and onlookers, each song, originals and covers alike, was met with applause and cries of approval from the audience. A few of the Ninjas also accompanied 2004 AX Idol Stephanie Yanez on one of her original songs, Tumbling Falling, as well as the Sailor Moon theme song. Word on the street is that the Random Ninjas performance in San Francisco has caught the eye of other Northern California anime events.

-- Tina Tsai



Home for the Holidays in Historic Filipinotown

HISTORIC FILIPINOTOWN (LOS ANGELES) - On December 16, 2005, Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA) held their annual holiday celebration – "Home for the Holidays in Historic Filipinotown." Star lanterns filled the sidewalks of Temple Street for the annual Parol Parade. The Eagle Rock High School Choir headed the singing of Christmas carols down the parade route. The featured activities took place at SIPA's Temple Gateway Youth & Community Center. The Eskwuela Kultura (EK) grade school participants performed the traditional Filipino folkdance, the Tinikling, while the EK high school participants performed their creative writing pieces. Some of the SIPA staff dressed as elves and distributed gifts to the family and children of the community. Santa and Mrs. Claus were available for photo taking. Winners from the Filipino American Icon contest during SIPA's Super Summer Celebration sang English and Tagalog Christmas songs. And at the end of the night, the winners were announced for the Parol and Holiday House Decorating contest. SIPA hopes to continue bringing the joy and spirit of the holidays as we head on to a new year.

-- Amirah May Limayo

What do you want to see in PMMonthly?

Let us know! Send email to: asianamerican@pacificmediaexpo.com.

PMMonthly Newsletter Staff:
Paula Angeles (Editor/Writer)
Garland Gee (Copy Editor)
Amirah May Limayo (Writer - L.A)

PMMonthly January Contributors:
April Joy Limayo
Tina Tsai

PMMonthly is free! Spread the word!
<http://monthly.pacificmediaexpo.info>

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PMX Veterans' and Other Upcoming Events in Los Angeles for January:

1-09-06:

Corrinne May @ The Hotel Cafe



We Want You to Write for PMMonthly

PMMonthly Call For International and Local Writers

Do you want to write articles for a monthly newsletter on Asian pop culture throughout the world? Topics can be about, but not limited to: Japanese/Korean animation/manga, Asian cinema, internet/console gaming, cosplay, music trends (Japanese/Korean/Chinese/Filipino musicians), fashion trends (Japanese/Korean/Chinese-inspired exported to another country), and Japanese animation events outside of the U.S. If you live in the following cities, we want to hear from you: San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Vancouver, Seoul, Beijing, Hong Kong, Manila, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, London, Berlin, Rome, Paris, and Sydney. All articles must be written in English and cut and pasted into email. Photo attachments are allowed. Please note that the readership age of this newsletter are people aged 14-35. Writers of accepted articles will receive a by-line (credit) in the newsletter. This opportunity is perfect for a journalism student or anyone who just wants to write! If you're interested, please send email with a very short writing sample or clip (link to previously published articles) to asianamerican@pacificmediaexpo.com.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Telecommunications Consumer Campaign is designed in particular for those with minimal English-speaking skills and the elderly. By going door-to-door and holding workshops, program-staff provide vital information to individuals about their rights regarding cell phone, internet and calling-card bills and regulations. For more information, contact SIPA at (213) 382-1819 or visit <http://www.esipa.org>.