

The 24th BATJ Conference: Invited Speech

Japan Says ‘Western Pop’?: No Thanks, Don’t Do It

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1. Introduction

From time to time, you come across articles and headlines in music magazines suggesting that a particular British/European/American (hereafter referred to as ‘Western’) act is ‘big in Japan’. Although, through my various trips to Japan, I have never really had the impression that (m)any Western acts were successful there, I also had no particular reason to question the popularity of Western acts in Japan. My assumption was that those acts that were successful in English speaking countries, in particular, would also have success in Japan. However, when I began to research the situation in 2020, I found that the reality was very different. The aim of this article is to understand a variety of aspects of Western pop music in Japan, using an example of a particular group in the 1980s.

During the COVID19 pandemic I started working on a book related to one Western act from the 1980s, Frankie Goes To Hollywood. Japan was one of the countries that the band, often referred to simply as Frankie or FGTH, toured to. There were also special issues of singles and albums in Japan in addition to the standard releases. Such factors suggested that Frankie had been relatively popular and successful in Japan. However, the reality was that Frankie had made little impression on the charts in Japan. While this was a somewhat surprising discovery, it transpired that it was reflective of a norm for most Western acts in Japan. This presented, therefore, a puzzle. If Western pop music is making such a small impression on the charts in Japan, why do Western acts tour Japan and not only release singles and albums there, but also have versions that are different to those in the rest of the world?

This article is significant as it adds to the very small body of literature on Western pop music in Japan. The article uses Frankie Goes To Hollywood as a case study by which to understand a variety of aspects related to pop music in Japan. In 1984, Frankie Goes To Hollywood, made up of five members (Peter Gill, Holly Johnson, Brian Nash, Mark O’Toole, and Paul Rutherford), burst onto the world stage. The first single, *Relax*, reached Number 1, spawning a plethora of 12-inch remixes, and also helped to launch the ubiquitous FRANKIE SAY T-shirts. *Relax*’s cover and content were nearly as outrageous as the group itself, including its two openly gay members (Johnson and Rutherford). The second single, *Two Tribes*, about the threat of nuclear war, shot straight to Number 1 in the UK, where it stayed for nine weeks. An extraordinary double-album, *Welcome To The Pleasuredome*, followed and the group got their third number one single, *The Power Of Love*, soon after. And it was still 1984. While Frankie would release four more singles, another album, *Liverpool*, and go on two tours, they could never match the heights of 1984 and the band split up in 1987.

As well as considering the popularity and overall commercial success of Western acts in Japan, or, rather, the lack thereof, the article provides insights into why there are special Japanese releases of albums, some linguist-related issues related to Western music, and how support for Western acts may manifest itself in light of the apparent lack of widespread popularity.

2. Lack of Chart Success

It would, of course, be an exaggeration to say that no Western acts have been genuinely ‘big in Japan’. Whether it be The Beatles in the 1960s, Madonna and Michael Jackson in the 1980s, or Taylor Swift and Lady Gaga more

recently, there are many examples of Western acts that have had huge commercial success in Japan. Indeed, it was not until 1967 that Japanese pop music overtook Western pop with 54% of the sales (De Launey 1995:206). On top of this, if we think about other genres, Western acts are central to the jazz and classical music scene in Japan. However, predominantly Western acts do not have much success in Japan. This is an issue that has seemingly been largely ignored by academia, with Guy De Launey's 1995 article 'Not-so-big in Japan: Western pop music in the Japanese market' being the only one that addressed the key issues.

If we look at 1984, a key year in relation to Frankie Goes To Hollywood, the case study for this article, only twelve songs by non-Japanese acts broke into the Oricon Top 20 in any week that year (Shūkan Oricon Chāto 2023). These singles were (with their highest position in 1984, the date achieved, and weeks in the top 20 in 1984 in brackets): *Marianne* by Jackie Chan (18, 9 January, 1), *I Don't Want This Night To End*¹ by John O'Banion (14, 23 January, 5), *Far From Over* by Frank Stallone (10, 6 February, 5), *Say Say Say* by Paul McCartney and Michael Jackson (16, 6 February, 3), *99 Luftballons* by Nena (16, 30 April, 2), *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun*² by Cyndi Lauper (17, 30 April, 1), *Miss Me Blind, It's A Miracle* (12 inch version) by Culture Club (17, 9 July, 1), *I Like Chopin* by Gazebo (9, 9 July, 5), *Tsugunai* by Teresa Ten (16, 13 August, 10 – recharted at 6 on 31 December, 1), *Overnight Success* by Teri DeSario (9, 17 December, 6), *Careless Whisper* by Wham! (12, 10 December, 5), *Last Christmas* by Wham! (15, 31 December, 1). Of these, 10 were by Western acts (with the other two being by a Taiwanese singer, Teresa Ten, whose song was in Japanese, and the actor, Jackie Chan, from Hong Kong), and, as can be seen, none really challenged the Top 10, let alone getting to the top of the charts. In most weeks there are no non-Japanese songs in the Top 20 at all. Looking at the all-time top selling singles in Japan, the highest is *Oyoge Taiyaki-kun* by Masato Shimon with 4.57 million copies sold (Oricon News 13 October 2021). Even the twentieth on the list, *True Love* by Fumiya Fujii, as of May 2023, had sales of 2.02 million (Nendai Ryūkō 2023a). The best-selling Western song in Japan, *Beautiful Sunday* by Daniel Boone, sold 2.05 million copies, but it is one of only three to sell over one million (Nendai Ryūkō 2023b). Western pop just does not appear to sell in Japan. But does this, or should this, really be any cause for surprise? Why should we have any expectation that Western songs should be popular in Japan?

Returning to the list of 1984 Western singles that made the Top 20 in Japan, there are a few other points that are worth noting. First, some of these – such as *Far From Over* by Frank Stallone and *Overnight Success* by Teri DeSario were not hits in the West (*I Like Chopin* by the Italian act Gazebo topped the charts in many non-English speaking countries, but it did not chart in the UK). Second, unlike in the UK where 7-inch and 12-inch sales in 1984 were combined, and helped to account for the success of Frankie Goes To Hollywood due to the multiple different 12-inch versions of their singles, in Japan the sales were separated, leading, in 1984, to Culture Club making the Top 20 with a 12-inch release. Third, there appears often to be a time-lag in when singles chart in Japan compared to when they chart in the West – although, there are noticeable exceptions such as *Last Christmas*. Fourth, *Careless Whisper* was branded, as in USA, as by Wham! rather than George Michael as it was in the UK, despite Andrew Ridgeley also appearing on the song's writing credits. Finally, while it was the English version that topped in the charts in the UK, for example, in Japan, the original German version of *99 Luftballons* made the top 20, showing that, although Western pop may not be that successful in Japan, there is less perhaps expectation or need for the song to be in English than may exist in English-speaking countries where non-English-language songs rarely perform well.

Looking beyond 1984, the pattern was very similar in 1985 with Madonna making a brief appearance in the lower end of the Top 20, but also seeing USA 4 Africa break into the Top 5 and having weeks when both the standard and 12-inch versions were in the Top 20 – the predominantly British act Band Aid, which was the first of these charity collaborations to try to raise money to help the aid efforts in famine-impacted areas in Ethiopia and other countries with the single *Do They Know It's Christmas?*, had made the Top 20 in January 1985 (Shūkan Oricon Chāto 2023).

In relation to the case study for this article, there was no sign of Frankie Goes To Hollywood in the Top 20 in either 1984 or in 1985, even when they were in Japan on tour.

All of the above fits with the findings of De Launey (1995), but the natural question is if Western acts are

not that successful in Japan, why do they even release anything? Part of the answer stems from the size of the market. The Japanese market around the time that this article is concerned with was the second largest in the world, accounting for about 13% of global music sales, well behind the USA (30%), but ahead of Germany (10%) and the UK (9%) (De Launey 1995:204). Even a small share of the Japanese market can represent a significant return. However, the figures do not tell us the full picture. Keith Cahoon (2021), former Managing Director of Tower Records in Japan, points out that ‘There is a grey area in the statistics... imports are often not part of statistics. And historically the Japanese music industry, especially Oricon (“Japan’s Billboard”) give inaccurate or distorted information.’

Another aspect of Western music, particularly albums, in Japan is that there will often be a special Japanese release, *Nihonban*. These releases would sometimes come out three to four months after the release in the USA or Europe due to the time taken to get parts and arrange the additional advertising strategy (Cahoon 2021). The *Nihonban* would also contain a lyric sheet with the Japanese translation of the lyrics and additional Japanese liner notes about the act and the album, all of which would also take time to prepare (Cahoon 2021; De Launey 1995:221). To compensate for the delay in release, and the fact that the price would often end up ¥200 to ¥500 than the international release (Cahoon 2021), which some people would buy through a shop such as Tower Records that would import these cheaper and more quickly available releases (Cahoon 2021), the *Nihonban* would often contain at least one bonus track not available on the international release (Cahoon 2021).

3. Frankie Goes To Japan

While chart success is almost non-existent, there was clearly reasons to release records in Japan and there could be rewards beyond what can be seen from looking at the charts alone. However, music acts do not solely get revenue from music sales. Another key aspect of the music industry is touring and Frankie Goes To Hollywood was no different in this respect. While Frankie, like most Western acts, were not ‘big in Japan’ when it came to chart success, there was still sufficient demand for them to make a ‘tour of Japan’. In reality, a ‘tour of Japan’ for most Western acts tends not to amount to much more than concerts in Tōkyō or one of the cities close to the capital, such as Yokohama or Saitama. Some acts may also do concerts in Nagoya, Ōsaka, or Fukuoka. It is less common for acts to venture to Sapporo and concerts in other cities around the archipelago would be exceptional. In the cast of Frankie, they did six concerts, across three cities in Japan in 1985.

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|---------|--------|------------------------------|
| 28 June | Tōkyō | Kōsei Nenkin Kaikan Dai Hall |
| 29 June | Tōkyō | Kōsei Nenkin Kaikan Dai Hall |
| 30 June | Tōkyō | Kōsei Nenkin Kaikan Dai Hall |
| 2 July | Ōsaka | Festival Hall |
| 3 July | Nagoya | Nagoya City Kōkaidō |
| 4 July | Tōkyō | Sun Plaza Hall |

Information from Frankie Goes To Hollywood Japan tour programme

When considering the capacity of these venues, there were, in turn, Kōsei Nenkin Kaikan Dai Hall – 2,062 capacity (Livefans 2023a), Ōsaka Festival Hall – 2,700 capacity (Festival Hall 2023), Nagoya City Kōkaidō – 1,994 capacity (Livefans 2023b), Tōkyō Sun Plaza Hall – 2,222 capacity (Sun Plaza 2023). These venues are smaller than many of the venues that top Japanese acts may perform at, but they were also comparable in size to some of the venues that Frankie played at during their 1985 tour of the UK, despite them being so much more popular there. For example, Frankie played at the Hammersmith Odeon which had a capacity of 3,487 (Eventim 2023) and the Birmingham Odeon, where I saw them perform, with its capacity of 2,439 (Cinema Treasures 2023). In 1987, Frankie would go on their final UK and European tour and play at larger stadia such as the Wembley Arena, with its 12,500 capacity (Visit London 2023) and the Birmingham NEC Arena, where I saw them for the second time, with its 15,685 capacity (NEC Group 2023).

Concerts are very important for Western acts in Japan, despite the fact that they may not make much impression on the official charts. Cahoon (2021) notes that it is 'quite lucrative to tour... And naturally, artists that visit Japan tend to sell more than artists that don't.' Touring is not merely about the selling of the tickets, there will often also be additional merchandise available at the concert such as a tour programme, T-shirts, badges, and such like. On top of this, the tour programme acts as a further way that the act can reach the fans and so may include information about records and merchandise that are already available, or which will be coming out soon. This can be seen in the case of Frankie's Japan tour programme which included details about an up-coming album, called *Bang!*, that features six tracks – all four of the singles and two other tracks. Interestingly, this Japan-only release has the same name as an album of the singles and other songs by Frankie that was released internationally in 1993.

Another aspect of touring in Japan is that the tours will often be sponsored. As would be seen in many countries around the world, there is a local promoter. In the case of Frankie Goes To Hollywood, as detailed in the tour programme, it was Udo Artists, headed by 'Mr Udo' as he is always referred to (see Nash 2012:203-8; Heath 2020:107-240), who 'was, and still is, the biggest promoter in Japan' (Nash 2012:203-4). However, the Frankie tour was also sponsored by Asahi Beer and further supported by Polystar, the record label under which the records were released in Japan (in the UK, the singles were released by ZTT). Johnson (1994:216) notes that he was told that without the sponsorship a Western act would not be able to afford touring in Japan. He goes on to say that 'Everything it seemed was a commercial exercise in Japan' (Johnson 1994:216). The tour programme included a two-page spread advert for Asahi Beer.

In relation to concerts in Japan, there is one pervasive image of Japanese fans; that they are polite and reserved, often sitting down rather than standing or dancing as is commonly seen in Western countries. As to why Japanese may be politer than fans in other countries, one Japanese person and music fan, Rika Hirose (2021), suggested that 'the main reason for the polite behaviour at Japanese concerts in those days [the 1980s] were due to an accident at a Rainbow concert in Sapporo in 1978, which resulted in the death of a 19-year-old girl, who suffocated under the audience smashing towards the stage. I remember they had a lots of security guards in the concert halls in the early 1980s and people were obediently staying in their seats.' This information fits with additional information that I found about this incident and how concerts changed afterwards (FakeTK 2008.) Hirose, however, went on to say that these days, at least, 'Japanese fans are not very different, and things have changed'. This view fits with my own experience from the only concert that I have been to in Japan, seeing U2 in Saitama in 2006 (see Hood 2020).

When it comes to Frankie's concerts in Japan, Johnson does not discuss the fans at the concerts in his autobiography, but Nash (2012:206-7) noted that 'We were told before our first show not to expect too much in terms of reaction... When a song ends, it is greeted with syncopated, polite applause. Even subtle changes in the lighting were greeted with smaller smatterings of applause'. These comments fit with what we would expect to read about the Japanese fans. Perhaps the fact that they were told before what to expect helped to lead to observing those types of behaviour and not remembering other things. However, I would also say that it does not fit with some of the evidence. There is a bootleg recording of Frankie's third concert and in that it is easy to hear the fans – seemingly predominantly female teenagers – screaming throughout the concert. This fits closely with an official live album of my favourite Japanese band of the 1980s, REBECCA, where again it is the female voices in the crowd that dominate. Furthermore, Nash notes that during one concert when four of the band decided to pull a prank on Johnson by sitting at the front of the audience during the start of the encore before joining him on stage, led some of the audience to thinking it was a stage invasion and about fifty of the audience joined in (Nash 2012:208). This is hardly the antics of a quiet, reserved audience.

If the Japanese fans were not as quiet as is suggested, why is there an image of Japanese fans being so polite? There may be two explanations. First, there are times when they are polite and we need to keep in mind that, depending on the lighting, that the bands themselves may not be able to see very far into the stadium, so if the front few rows are seated, then they may assume that this is what is repeated throughout the whole stadium. They may not even be able to hear all of the noise being made in the stadium. Second, relates to the way in

which popular stereotypes and clichés about Japanese people tend to be perpetuated. This is something which I have discussed in my books *Shinkansen: From Bullet Train to Symbol of Modern Japan* (Hood 2006) and *Japan: The Basics* (Hood 2015).

4. Magazines

De Launey (1995) points out how important TV and radio programmes have been in exposing Japanese people to music, including Western pop acts. But another media that has been very important has been pop magazines. De Launey (1995:214) notes that Cahoon says that these ‘magazines have the “biggest influence” over the Japanese market’. Although De Launey (1995:214) suggests that it may not be the specialist music magazines that had the greatest influence, but rather the general magazines that also contain articles about music, the music magazines and their coverage of Frankie Goes To Hollywood are worth considering in some detail. For the purpose of this study, I have considered four different titles – *Takarajima*, *Music Life*, *rockin'on*, and *FM Shukan*. In this section, I will first introduce each of these magazines, before then discussing their coverage of Frankie.

The first thing I noticed about *Takarajima* (which is also known as *Wonderland*), of which I have two issues, is how thick it is – both copies have 226 pages (predominantly paper) and cost ¥350 (£1.07 back in 1985). Compared to magazines that I was getting back in the 1980s like *Smash Hits* and *Number 1*, the difference is apparent. *Takarajima* is much like your standard Japanese monthly magazine – the pages are not that big, but there are a lot of them and there is a lot of text with feature articles and interviews. There are also a lot of photographs. But the magazine is not only about music – with articles on food and fashion, for example. There is even some manga in there.

Music Life – of which I also have two editions – is even bigger than *Takarajima*. Again, it is a monthly magazine, but the pages are bigger and there are over 300 of them (about half of which are glossy, the rest being standard paper) and cost ¥550 (£1.68). Unlike *Takarajima*, this magazine opens and works with the pages as a British magazine would rather than the more traditional version of *Takarajima*. *Music Life* is purely focussed on music – with a range of articles, photographs, interviews, and even a page of stickers. Also, the contents are almost exclusively about Western acts.

Compared to the previous two, the monthly magazine *rockin'on* has noticeably less pages. Although the page size is the same as *Music Life*, there are only about 120 of them – though at an original retail price of ¥280 (85p) is very good value. I only have one copy of *rockin'on*. It has a fairly even split between paper and glossy pages, with a range of articles, interviews, and pictures. There also seem to be a lot of adverts (which feature, of course, in the other magazines too, but seem disproportionately high in number in this magazine). The magazine predominantly works in the traditional right to left order, although two-page articles are sometimes left to right.

The final magazine is *FM Shūkan* (literally ‘*FM Weekly*’), a weekly magazine that retailed at ¥220 (67p) and is read from right to left. I have three editions of this magazine. Although the pages are the same height as *Music Life* and *rockin'on*, it is slightly wider. Despite being a weekly-magazine it runs to around 130 pages, although the last 30 pages of this primarily details TV and radio listings. *FM Shūkan* is only concerned with music and has a range of articles, interviews and photographs on a combination of paper and glossy pictures.

Overall, compared to the pop magazines that I bought in the 1980s (mostly *Smash Hits* and *Number 1*), the big differences are that lack of lyrics in the Japanese magazines – the reason for which has already been touched upon and will be discussed more below – but also the size of some of these magazines, which is just staggering. Let us now look at how these magazines covered Frankie, looking particularly at how the articles are presented and the fans’ views of Frankie contained in the articles.

Looking first at *Takarajima*, as noted above I have two issues which have Frankie-related content. The February one features a ‘Close Up’ article with Frankie (*Takarajima* 1985a:54-57), which is described as ‘The Century’s Incendiary Pop Group’ (*Seiki no sendō ongaku shūdan*), which is not a phrase I had come across before (in English or Japanese) to describe Frankie, but is hard to argue with. They are also described as the 80’s Sex Pistols – again, at least in early 1985, hard to argue with in some ways, although I would suggest that the

Sex Pistols did not do any as sophisticated as 'The Power of Love' or see a comparable level of chart success in the UK, at least. The article itself runs to four pages and most of it details aspects of the band, a few pictures (including from the TV advert of the *Welcome to the Pleasuredome* album) and an interview with Rutherford. The main quote from Rutherford is that 'Politics, sex, and dance are the things that we love' – the quote is followed by the character (笑) which is the forerunner of LOL or 😂.

The September 1985 edition of *Takarajima* contains an article (again four pages – but this time on the glossy paper at the start of the magazine and the pages are dominated by photographs) called 'Frankie Comes To Tokyo' (*Takarajima* 1985b:4-7). While three of the photos are taken at concerts, one is of Gill and Rutherford at the interview (at the Hilton Hotel), and one of the whole band on a very bare tiled floor upon which Johnson is lying down and Nash is looking very tired. There are also some photos of concerts. The article itself starts off with some quotes from teenage girls (further supporting the comments earlier about what can be heard on the bootleg recording) – 'It was a disco of the near future', 'I was so happy that I was crying', "'Born to Run" was the best', and 'they're so cheerful and cute.' However, that start is quickly followed by pointing out that there were people in their 20s and 30s there too, some of whom were a little more critical of the concert. The interview itself (just with Gill and Rutherford) discusses their time in Japan, appearing on TV, details about the concerts, and general questions about their success. Then, as a final question, whether they want to go to Hiroshima (which is written in the *katakana*, usually reserved for foreign words, and which in this context implies the city which was atomic bombed). Gill replied that he didn't want to go as he was 'scared', although he was aware that the city had recovered, he was afraid of meeting people who had been injured by the bomb.

Turning now to *Music Life*, the two issues I have are from June 1985 and August 1985. In the first of these, there are some photos taken (by three Japanese photographers) of a concert at the Hammersmith Odeon in London in early 1985 (*Music Life* 1985a:4-5). Other than a bit of text confirming that the concert was an hour and a half long and that it was a sell-out concert, there is no other information. In the August edition, there is a five-page article about Frankie in Japan (*Music Life* 1985b:116-120) and photographs of a concert (*Music Life* 1985b:4-5). The article features an interview with all the band members (which is described as being an exclusive) – there are also a few photos (all black and white), including one at the concert on 28 June, under which is the set list. As for the interview, there are general questions - Johnson complains about the humidity, the whole band says they prefer live music over studio recording (though it is noted that Nash and Gill do not seem very interested in the interview), about how popular Frankie is in Japan (Johnson says that he was surprised and very happy about it), about the number of cover songs on the *Welcome to the Pleasuredome* album, musical influences, details about the text on the album (which O'Toole says that they also do not understand and Nash says he had not read any of the books mentioned, while Johnson suggests reasons for their inclusion), and the process of writing songs. The interview finishes with the interviewer saying, 'Thank you for today' and the five members of the band saying, 'Frankie Say No More', a phrase that ends the album itself.

As noted above, I only have one issue of *rockin'on*, which is from June 1985. The article related to Frankie is the first article (in a feature called 'Front Page') in the magazine and is a translation of an article from the Daily Mirror syndication (*rockin'on* 1985:2-3). The article – which is about one and half pages long – was presumably chosen to be published in this edition to coincide with when Frankie would be in Japan. There is one picture (black and white) of Johnson and the article itself is largely focussing on the two women in the original video of 'Relax' and the popularity of the band with female fans.

The last of the magazines to look at is *FM Shūkan*, of which I have three editions. In the first of these, there is a short article with two colour photos (that take up about three-quarters of the page) of the concert at the Hammersmith Odeon in London on 6 April, and confirmation that they will be touring Japan. The dates of the concerts and a phone number to call are provided at the bottom of the page (*FM Shūkan* 1985a:12).

The second edition has Frankie on the front cover (most of the band look a bit jet-lagged or, at least, worn out) as well as an article including interviews and photos (*FM Shūkan* 1985a:63-5). The article is on the glossy pages towards the middle of the magazine, and although it is three pages long, the first page is mostly taken up by one large photo, two smaller photos, and the title of the article ('Frankie Goes to Japan'). The two pages of

the article is dominated by photographs – 15 (of varying sizes) of them (one of which is just of a meal and no sign of Frankie). One nice touch to the article is that the Frankie logo (in red on one page, and green on the other) is dropped in to help with the spacing. The main article is broken into three sections with the main heading of ‘three-sided mirror’. Each part then has a subtitle too – “‘Relax” stage”, “‘Relax” backstage”, and “‘Relax” free time” respectively. In terms of these three parts, the content is generally the standard discussion of the band and their time in Japan (including the playlist of one of the concerts). There are no quotes from band members, but rather the article runs like a diary describing what the journalists observed.

In terms of Frankie fans, the most interesting part is what is at the bottom of the page. The magazine had requested that readers (keeping in mind that ‘fans’ and ‘readers’ are not the same) to provide questions to be put to the band. A total of 1,548 entries were received. Here are the questions, the number of entries, and the answers.

1. What was your first impression of Japan? (81) They all commented on the heat and humidity. They hate that.
2. When is your age & birthday? (56) Johnson 25 (9 Feb 1960), Rutherford 25 (8 Dec 1959), O’Toole 21 (16 Jan 1964), Gill 21 (8 Jan 1964), and Nash 22 (20 May 1963).
3. What is your height? (43) – the interviewer(s) apologizes as they forgot to ask this question, but checked the details after: O’Toole 185cm, Rutherford 180cm, Johnson, Gill, and Nash all about 175cm.
3. Why did you become gay? (43) – use your imagination (silence).
4. What type of girl do you like? (40) – depends on the mood that day! (however, Nash is engaged so remained silent).
5. What is your impression of Japanese fans? (36) – surprised at how quiet the fans were at the first Tōkyō concert, but the fans in Ōsaka and Nagoya were much louder, so surprised.
6. Do you have a lover? (35) – yes (O’Toole noted that if he says ‘yes’ the number of fans drops, so he says ‘no comment’).
7. How do you spend your time off? (30) – shopping, both when in the UK and also during the time in Japan when they’ve bought many things.
8. Which artist do you respect? (27) – Johnson: David Bowie’s wife (likes her fashion), Rutherford: Brian Ferry, O’Toole: Pink Floyd, Gill: Led Zeppelin, Nash: Jimi Hendrix and Bon Dylan.
9. Tell us about the next LP (25) – Plan to go to the recording studio (in the Bahamas) in August, with the album coming out in early 1986. It won’t be a double album. Johnson noted that the plans were already well advanced, but a secret.

Looking again at the second joint-third placed question and fifth one, there is much irony that these two questions would be asked. The first one, of course, reflects a certain naivety about the issues – which, while they may still exist today, but were probably much more prevalent in the 1980s. It is also interesting that they note that the fans in Ōsaka and Nagoya were louder than those in Tōkyō, indicating that at the time, even if not at a later date, there was some awareness of the loudness of the audiences.

The final edition is from 1986 and the part on Frankie relates to the release of their second album, *Liverpool*, in a section called ‘Big Star’ (*FM Shūkan* 1986:7-9). The article is across three pages, but as with the previous one, the first page is dominated by a picture, as is most of the third page. As for the second page, there are three small pictures to accompany the text (all of this is on glossy pages and in colour). The two main picture pages show Frankie in concert with the chorus of *Rage Hard* included. Most of the article is discussing the new album and rumours about the band splitting up with quotes provided by Rutherford. Rutherford also discusses other

things (including getting rid of his moustache) and the plans for Japan to be included in the next world tour.

5. Localising Song Titles and Lyrics

Let us look at some linguistic (i.e., to do with language rather than linguistics *per se*) issues. First, as would be expected, the name of the group was usually written out in the *katakana* phonetic script that is mostly used for foreign words. But rather than being フランキー・ゴーズ・トゥ・ハリウッド as a British person may expect, it was actually フランキー・ゴーズ・トゥ・ハリウッド. There is just one character difference – making 'Hollywood' become 'hariuddo' rather than 'horiuddo'. The change reflects the usual way to write Hollywood in *katakana* and is based on a standard American pronunciation of the place, rather than going with the country that the band was from.

Looking at the albums, the English original titles of tracks are provided in capital letters. First is 'SIDE-1' (also known as side 'F'). This side is split in the Japanese version into four tracks – *WELL...*, *THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER*, *SNATCH OF FURY*, and *WELCOME TO THE PLEASUREDOME*. In terms of the Japanese titles, they are, in turn, ようこそフランキーの樂園へ, 世界を思いのままに, スナッチ・オヴ・フューリー, プレジャードーム. The first is completely different from the original and means 'Welcome to Frankie's paradise', a title which sets up the album for the adventure that follows. The translation for 'The world is my oyster' is a bit of a puzzle. Thanks to the general lack of usage of pronouns in Japanese, the translation is largely the same as the sentence used in the phrase 'The world is your oyster' that is in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. However, 'the world' in the Frankie version has switched to being the object of the sentence rather than the subject. The Japanese version has no mention of any oysters, and, despite the change of pronoun between Shakespeare's original and Frankie's version, is as it appears in the Japanese version of Shakespeare's play. A direct translation of the Japanese would be something like 'Make the world as you wish'. As for the title track of the album itself, the 'Welcome to the' part has been dropped in preference to keeping the title short and simple, and, perhaps, to not conflict with the welcome received with the name of the first track.

Looking at 'SIDE-2' (also known as side 'G'), we have the three tracks *RELAX*, *WAR*, and *TWO TRIBES*. At least it should be. 'TWO' has become 'TOW'. As for the translations, they are, in turn, リラックス, 黒い戦争, and トウ・トライブス〜フランキーの地球の最後の日. *Relax* has just been changed into the phonetic *katakana* script. *War*, on the other hand, has been given a Japanese title. If we translate this title back into English it literally means 'black war', which seems slightly troubling. I tried to find out more about this, and surprisingly there is not even a Japanese Wikipedia page for the song (originally by The Temptations), and, to date, I have not found a good explanation despite disappearing down many internet rabbit holes (including having suggestions for looking at 黒い雨 'black rain' – the rain that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki following the atomic bombings, and the 'Black War', which I had never heard of, in relation to Britain's invasion of Tasmania in the first half of the nineteenth century) and finding pages where others (Japanese) are also wanting to understand the choice of title. Turning to *Two Tribes*, this is the first of two cases on the album, where the title is extended. The first part is merely the phonetic *katakana* version of the name, but, to this is added text which literally means 'The last day of Frankie's world'. This title still keeps us linked to this fantasy Frankie world that we entered on 'SIDE-1'. However, this title (which is the version also used for the single) undermines the fact that the song was very much about the real, contemporary, world (as the video made very clear) rather than some fantasy world and was one of the key songs about the dangers of nuclear war and the Cold War released in the 1980s.

Next is 'SIDE-3' (also known as side 'T') and we only have four tracks with four times listed, although there are effectively five songs; *FURY*, *BORN TO RUN*, *SAN JOSE*, and *WISH THE LADS WERE HERE INC. BALLAD OF 32*. The Japanese titles, in turn, are フューリー, 明日なき暴走, サンホセへの道, and フランキーがここにいてほしい. The first is the phonetic *katakana* of *Fury*, so not much to comment on, other than to note that the song is a cover of 'Ferry' cross the Mersey' so 'Fury' was an odd title. The title of *Born to Run*, as with *War*, has been changed to a Japanese title and literally means 'Runaway with no tomorrow'. The noun

‘暴走’ is the same as in 暴走族, the biker gangs that can be found in Japan and that are sometimes seen as a stepping stone to becoming member of the Yakuza. Moving on to *San Jose*, the Japanese title has a mixture of the phonetic *katakana* for the name of the city and then additional Japanese, so that the title literally means ‘way to San Jose’. The final track has a completely different title to the original and literally means ‘Wish that Frankie was here’. Again, we have the theme and linkage of Frankie and being in that fantasy world, but perhaps by breaking the link to ‘the lads’ (as Gill, Nash, and O’Toole were collectively referred to) I feel that the title lets the track down. The track is one of only two on this side that is original, coming after three cover versions. The other original track, albeit it is combined with the previous one on the album listing, is *The Ballad of 32*. The Japanese version of the title drops ‘the’, which is quite common, in part due to the lack of definite and indefinite articles in the Japanese language.

Finally, ‘SIDE-4’ (also known as side ‘H’) and the five tracks of KRISCO KISSES, BLACK NIGHT WHITE LIGHT, THE ONLY STAR IN HEAVEN, THE POWER OF LOVE, and BANG... The Japanese versions, in turn for these are, クリスコ・キッス, ブラック・ナイト・ホワイト・ライト, オンリー・スター・イン・ヘヴン, パワー・オヴ・ラヴ (愛の救世主), and バーン.... Essentially each of these is the phonetic *katakana* version of the English titles. However, both *The Only Star in Heaven* and *The Power of Love* have had ‘The’ dropped from the Japanese version. *The Power of Love*, like *Two Tribes*, also has an extension to the title. This extended text literally means ‘Love Saviour’, though it can be used to refer to Jesus Christ so further making a link with the Nativity scene video of the single (although the song itself has no religious overtones the video has led it to be seen as a ‘Christmas song’ by some). This side is the only side which does not have a title referring to Frankie and I cannot help but feel that *Bang* would have been better served by calling it フランキー・セー・ノ・モアー – ‘Frankie Say No More’ in *katakana*, or, to use the version of the phrase in the lyric sheets ‘フランキー曰く「もうこれ以上」’, literally ‘According to Frankie “That is all”’.

For the second album, *Liverpool*, in Japanese it is called リヴァプール, the standard *katakana* for the city name. The tracks in order are ウェイストランド, レージ・ハード, キル・ザ・ペイン, マキシズム・ジョイ, ウォッチング・ザ・ワイルドライフ, ルーナー・ベイ, フォー・ヘブンズ・セイク, and 誰か外に? There is not anything noteworthy to say about the titles of the first seven tracks, which merely have the *katakana* versions of the English title. But *Is Anybody Out There?* has been translated into Japanese, and, in my view, is mistranslated. The current title, although not an incorrect translation technically, has more the nuance of what you would ask if someone had knocked on your door or you thought you heard a sound outside your house and called out to see if anyone was there. The actual song, however, has a much wider reach than this. Although the meaning of the song comes through the lyrics, given that the titles of the first seven tracks had been done in *katakana*, in my view, they would have been better being consistent and doing so for the final track.

Having considered the titles, let us now briefly consider the lyrics. As noted above, Japanese albums (for Japanese artists) will have lyric sheets and De Launey (1995:220) notes that there is a belief that ‘The Japanese would have you believe that people take their lyrics more seriously’. Albums in Japan for Western acts in will also contain lyric sheets, and producing these, as noted above, is one of the reasons why the release of the *Nihonban* may be later than the international release. However, it should be noted that the translations were not always done by professional translators (De Launey 2021). The translators also had the additional problem that they may not be provided with the original English and so they may have to work out those before even beginning to think about the Japanese equivalents, keeping in mind the limited possibilities to check nuances, double-meanings, puns, or other tricks in the language (De Launey 2021). When it comes to Frankie, one thing to note is that there was one track that was never provided with ‘official’ (i.e. on the single or album) translation, *Relax*. I imagine there would have been some interesting discussions about the content, how to translate it (keeping in mind how ‘come’ would have had to become ‘*iku*’, ‘go’), and whether it would be appropriate to include it. However, the first edition of *DARE*, the newsletter for Japanese fans had a translation of the lyrics for *Relax*. While there was a fan club based in the UK, in Japan, the Japanese record label, Polystar, which distributed Frankie records in Japan, set up a fan club – usually referred to as ‘FC’ in Japan. The fan club produced nine main newsletters. The main thing to be aware about these newsletters is that they are largely

handwritten and do not have the professional feel that one may expect from an official fan club, particularly when compared to what existed in the UK, for example, where official photos, stickers, badges, and even exclusive tickets were included as part of the membership packs and letters.

6. Conclusions

While there have been studies of Japanese music, both traditional and more contemporary, there have been almost no studies of Western pop in Japan. Yet, for several decades a number of acts have been hailed as being 'Big in Japan'. However, when looking at the charts, there is little evidence of success by Western acts in Japan. This article has considered some of the puzzles around this issue by taking one case study, Frankie Goes To Hollywood. This group dominated the charts in the UK in 1984, but did not make any impression on the charts in Japan. Yet, despite this, there were special releases of their albums, *Nihonban*, and the group also toured Japan in 1985. This article has highlighted that to understand the popularity of Western pop acts in Japan, we need to look beyond the charts and understand that Western acts can still be successful and be popular. Furthermore, the article has challenged the popular stereotype that Japanese audiences are reserved and quiet at pop concerts. Finally, the article has highlighted some of the issues that arise when the titles and lyrics of Western pop songs are translated into Japanese. From this study, it is clear that further investigation is warranted about the popularity of Western pop music in Japan.

Notes

¹ This song was known as 里見八犬伝 (*Satomi Hakkenden*) in Japanese.

² This song was known as ハイ・スクールはダンステリア (*Hai Skūru-wa Dansuteria*) in Japanese.

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