

NONNATIVE CREATIVE INTERVIEW**MIDORI AOYAMA****(video transcript)**

Midori: I like music, but you know, I like meeting people everywhere. I'm Midori Aoyama. Of course I'm doing DJ and also promoting parties, bringing international DJs to Japan. I'm running my radio show kinda stuff...Kind of, everything goes to like, one flow.

I'm born in Tokyo; based in Tokyo, Japan. I started to DJ since 2010, because I used to live in London. I went to uni, then I took my one year break. I was really shocked at the UK underground dance music culture, kind of thing. So then, I felt like yeah, I want to do something kind of similar in Japan.

There are lots of differences between Tokyo and London. Tokyo kind of never sleeps, so if you go out at midnight, we have like, lots of izakaya there. Lots of bars there, we have karaoke. Lots of activities at midnight. But in London we have only pub or kind of a few bars, and clubs. So basically, if people wanna go out, people just go to clubs and go dancing and drinking.

Basically, people from Japan don't know the real dance music culture and industry. For example, I mean, in Japan, jazz is really great now. We have a long, long history of jazz music. So then we have lots of great jazz musicians. And rock music as well. We have education. But I think the dance music industry has been maybe kind of 20 years now in Japan, maybe? But in the UK, US, and Europe, they have more. Maybe like 40 years or 50 years.

So now, the Internet is everywhere. People know how life is outside of Japan too. So we can check. And also lots of English—like American, I mean, European people are coming into Japan and having fun. So I mean, it's kind of getting more crossed over.

"So, now we're gonna have a guest mix show."

It's funny, like, the most important thing to work in this industry...We need English first. I mean, basically everybody speaks English. I mean, I've never seen a DJ who can't speak English. From any country. I've met lots of DJs from everywhere. But everybody speaks English first. Then, I mean, if we can speak English, we can share...you know, everything.

It's quite hard, I think, for Japanese people, still. But it's getting better now. Because people are now...the Internet makes everything free now, so people are more free to communicate with everybody. So that's cool.

How to put a brand outside of Japan. They don't know the culture difference.

Alisha: Is that something that you think about when you're planning EP releases, or planning parties?

Midori: Yeah, first EP we worked with a British guy called Crackazat. He now lives in Sweden. There's like no real connection with Japan, actually. Then, the second release we did actually with an American and a Dutch person. A collaborative track. So we're gonna have a third EP with a guy from France. So basically, the label was established from Japan, but artists who release EPs with us are not Japanese.

Alisha: How do you make these connections with people?

Midori: Well, basically, first, before I started the label, I was doing parties first. Making parties for like 4 or 5 years. Then after, I started bringing international DJs to Japan. Then, we talked. Because when they come to Japan, we discuss kind of my ideas, my music philosophy.

I'm doing a label coming from Japan. It means people see into what's going on in Japan. So basically some international DJs—If people want to promote themselves in Japan, it's nice to release on my label. Because basically I'm strong in Japan.

So after we did two releases, lots of producers sent demos to me. But basically, I'm not really into it, even if the music is quite nice. Because I can't see the person's background, basically.

Alisha: Part of that was bringing international DJs to Japan. Did that take a long time to learn how to do, or was it hard to do at first?

Midori: Yeah, actually, good question. I mean, I think it's not that difficult, but actually, it's not...The same thing, you know, it's not easy. Basically, because we need to consider about culture, different background.

Almost all the DJs I've booked I've actually never met before they come to Japan. So basically, we chat about everything online. But in Japan, everybody wants to have—let's meet face to face. So we don't really make any decisions before meeting, you know.

It's hard to communicate with people to make it happen. People think about like how to trust people. Because I'm from Japan. If I'm thinking about business...I don't know who you are. That kind of thing. Then we have to trust you, then get a ticket, come to Japan, play...That's quite a challenge. Kind of an adventure.

That's why basically I'm going to Europe every single year. To see what's kind of going on in the scene. The situation. Basically go to my friends, say hello. See my people, then try to share what I'm doing and what I'm thinking now. Then talk to people. Then, if I trust the artist, yeah, let's do it together. Yeah, it takes time, you know? It takes time, and it takes a lot of patience. So...A lot of people try to start doing kind of the same thing, but it takes a really long time. It's taken more than 5 or 6 years, now.

Alisha: When you play somewhere internationally, are you like really super conscious; Okay, I'm outside Japan, I should do something different.

Midori: No. No.

Alisha: No. It's always the same.

Midori: Same. Because that's a good thing. I mean, we're sharing kind of almost kind of the same music. I mean, outside of Japan too. Worldwide. That's really cool, you know. If some of my friends are releasing new tracks, people are playing their tracks everywhere.

Alisha: Have you ever met a person that has that very kind of...stereotypical image of Japan?

Midori: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah! I've met a lot. Sometimes people say, "are you like, living on a tatami floor?" kind of thing. I'm like, "yeah, sometimes. When I go to my parents' house, we have a tatami floor." "WOW!"

Alisha: So they have kind of this base knowledge about Japan, but maybe there's not like...a deep understanding, or they don't really know, maybe, where to start?

Midori: Mmhmm. But nowadays, you know, if I'm going to Europe or other places, the promoter is promoting me. People search on the Internet. So basically they have a kind of basic education. As like Internet culture. So people are checking my background, people are checking my interviews. Whatever. My music, my label. So people get knowledge before going to the club.

Alisha: So, what do you think is different between your parties and any of the other parties you could find in Tokyo? Is there something that you try to make different, or something that you feel is really unique about yourself?

Midori: Yeah, kind of. My party Eureka is doing house music, basically. But there is tons of house music there. But for us, we are doing more, I would say...we do more soulful. Soulful, jazzy, kind of lo-fi things. Those are the three key words for, I think, us now. And I try to bring new artists as much as I can.

Alisha: And then you have some other projects coming up, too. You're working on making a radio—essentially an Internet radio station.

Midori: Yeah. The radio platform called Tsubaki FM. It's an internet radio platform. Recording, we broadcast in Japan, but we try to shout out worldwide. So try to bring every single culture, underground culture in music through Japan to the world.

Alisha: Weekly, or every day, content?

Midori: I do every single Sunday, 6-9.

Alisha: Japan time?

Midori: Yeah, Japan time. Because I'm basically hosting the whole show. Then I book some guest DJs. Some people come from Tokyo. Some people come from Kyoto, Osaka, Fukuoka, whatever. Coming from Japan. And sometimes, if we have international guests who are related to me, we book them, play. Of course, I want to share philosophy and ideas, but basically music is first all the time. So we play music.

Alisha: I see. So it's gonna be in English? In Japanese?

Midori: English. Yeah. But maybe I'll speak a bit in Japanese, too.

I mean, radio is really really kind of a local thing. More kind of bottom education for people. But basically we're gonna do more...Thinking about more big things. Maybe kind of more festival things. Kind of huge label, huge community. Because I'm trying to make more...kind of bigger community.

Alisha: And so that's kind of maybe part of what you do here, then, also.

Midori: Yeah, yeah.

Alisha: Today we're at Otai Record School in Shibuya. So, you teach here once a week.

Midori: Yeah. Basically, we start with how to touch the gear. And how to use the mixer, how to switch knobs, those kinds of things. Then, I'm teaching how to mix A to B, B to A, mixing things. Then, if students grow up a bit, I'm teaching them how to pick music, how to make kind of a groove. How to make a kind of story. That kind of thing. Because we've had this school almost a year and a half. And a few people have already started DJing in clubs.

Alisha: Really?

Midori: Yeah.

Alisha: Have you gone to see them?

Midori: Yeah!

Alisha: Are they pretty good?

Midori: Yeah.

Alisha: Like, your students?

Midori: Yeah, yeah. It's quite nice. Like when I see the student in the club, people are like, "yeah, sensei!"

Alisha: Really?

Midori: I mean, you know...Actually, it feels like it never would have happened...that I would be a teacher. People are asking me things, like "teacher? master?" Wow. Trying to educate people directly. It's cool.

Alisha: Where is the best place to find out about you?

Midori: Well, check everything; I have a Facebook page called Midori Aoyama. And I have a SoundCloud, Instagram, whatever. I'm shouting about stuff every single day. So you can check or google it.

Alisha: Okay, cool. So, check out Midori Aoyama on his Facebook page, on Instagram, check out Tsubaki FM, and if you're in Tokyo, definitely stop by one of his shows. Thanks very much for watching this episode of Nonnative Creative.

We will see you again next time. Finished!

Midori: Different face, different skin, whatever, different languages, different religion, whatever. But we like the same music, you know. Then, it's sharing. It's really exciting.