VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

New York State of Mind

by Dan McDonald

Another summer in the books. Another season of trips to the beach, visiting family and traveling the country. In my experience, visiting



other parts of the country makes me reflect on what it means to be a New Yorker.

On the last official weekend of summer, I traveled out of state with a group of old friends to watch a college football game. Fans of the opposing team invited us to their tailgates in the vast parking lot, took pictures of our group decked out in our college colors and even directed us to the best places to sit in the cavernous, yet nearly empty, football stadium. Coming from New York, I was pleasantly surprised by the kindness, hospitality and openness of the opposing team's fans. Perhaps all these years in the Big Apple mean that my guard goes up whenever a stranger approaches me.

On the ride home, the noise of rowdy, cheering fans gently faded away. "So, what does it mean to be a New Yorker?" I thought. First, it certainly isn't defined by one's nationality, native language, ethnicity or religious views. I can't recall the last time I heard a New York accent on the streets of Astoria. Perhaps we do suspect the motives of strangers who strike up a conversation. We have the world at our fingertips, but frequently long to escape. We echo the sentiment of columnist Jimmy Breslin when he called New York "The city that I love and hate both equally." And don't forget, New Yorkers know you probably can't get a decent bagel anywhere outside of the five boroughs.

Another summer has come and gone, taking with it the stories of the 8.6 million people who call this city home.

(Dan McDonald is a newspaper columnist, editor and Japanese translator. Interested readers can contact him at dan9605@hotmail.com)

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Agata Morio sings as scenes from the movie "Looking for Sato Keiko" are projected behind him.

Red Colored Elegy

Sachiko's happiness found even in New York

Morio Agata Motion Picture Show Performance and Talk

Agata Morio, the accomplished singer-songwriter of the 1972 debut song "Red Colored Elegy", which sent shockwaves throughout Japan upon its release, gave two live performances with accompanying talks on September 29 at the Producers Club Grand Theater in Manhattan.

Two years ago, Agata created and screened parts of his documentary, "Looking for Sato Keiko" in an attempt to tell the story of his 45year long relationship with music.

In the documentary, Agata, driven by his natural curiosity, persistently pursues his first-grade homeroom teacher, whom he both envies and reveres. The teacher, in just two years' time, exposes the young boy to an astonishing new way to see the world, and plants a seed of desire for self expression in his heart.

Even now, inspiration from his teacher, Sato Keiko, flows throughout Agata's creative works.

The movie passionately portrays



Red Colored Elegy (1970-1971/GARO) by Seiichi Hayashi

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Agata as a man who is still searching for Sato Keiko, who was his former teacher in life, but is his eternal teacher in spirit.

The live show had the feel of a radio talk show, as if host Jun Suenaga had invited Agata Morio on as a guest. Agata played "The Teacher Sato Keiko is a Cruel Person" and seven other songs. For his encore, he played two songs, including "Red Colored Elegy."

"I had a vague way of thinking [of how the show would go], which led to a vague execution." said Agata. "In Japan, it would be easy to set up, but here, to be honest, I had some trouble. But the trou-



ble made for a wonderful realization: I thought that my beloved Bob Dylan and I were secretly the fathers of Inagaki Taruho. Inagaki Taruho has a nihilistic way of thinking, and although he looks happy on the outside, he's dead inside. I have a composure and a kind of idea of the power of love when looking at life now. This is something we have in common."

"Red Colored Elegy" was a manga created by Seichi Hayashi, in which the young Sachiko and Ichiro move to Tokyo and live together as they pursue their dream of becoming "painters" (what we now call "animators") for a company like Toei Animation.

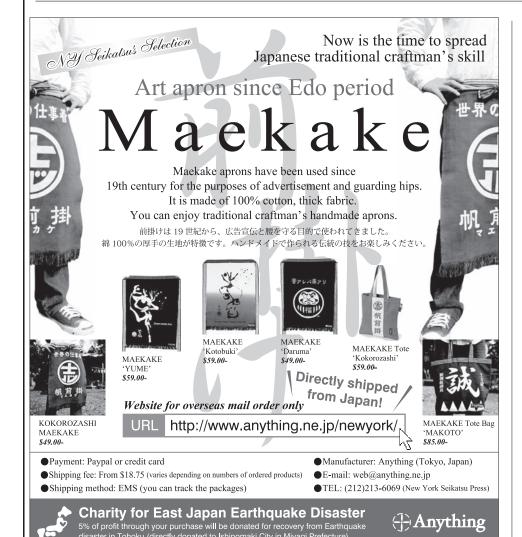
Agata was moved by the manga to create the song of the same name.

A journalist from Shukan NY Seikatsu asked Agata, "fifty years have passed since then and the times have changed. But there are still many Sachikos and Ichiros in New York today. Please say a few words to them, anything you would like to tell them."

"I felt so alive. I probably came here hoping to meet such people: a Sachiko and Ichiro living in New York, with no money or insurance for the future, but who were still trying hard. I want to tell them, 'Hey guys, it's difficult, but it's not too bad.' Even if things go well, all sorts of things will happen. You, who arereading this newspaper article right now, and I could meet somewhere someday. I came here today hoping to meet people, so I'm very happy." said Agata earnestly, a stream of tears running down his cheek.

(Article and Photograph by Ryoichi Miura / Translated by Marie Calloway)







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