Japan Music and Culture
Conducted in English
(No prior music experience or knowledge of Japanese or Japanese music is required)

Location: Tokyo, Japan
Dates: January 1 – 24
Host: The Academy at Magic Hour
Credits: 3

Description:

In this lecture series and seminar, you will explore the music world of Japan. Your course director, Mr. Yukio Kobayashi, has over forty years of experience in the Japanese music industry, working with both popular and independent Japanese bands and musicians. You will receive lectures from music professionals on Japanese music history, music production and event planning, how to write about Japanese music, and more. Featured guests may include prominent musicians, DJs, and music producers of Japanese independent and mainstream music, including anime. You will work in a recording studio, learning about studio production and creating music. You will visit a live house performance space and experience Japan's music scene firsthand. By the end of this course, you will have gained a sense of the professionalism, dedication, and character of the Japanese music industry.

Your course begins at a seaside retreat in Kyonan, Chiba, and includes survival Japanese, a visit to the largest sitting Buddha in Japan, mochi and fan-making for the New Year, zazen practice at a Zen Buddhist temple, and more. In Tokyo, you will visit the Studio Ghibli museum, wear kimonos while exploring Asakusa (Tokyo's "old" town) and Senso-ji Temple, and have a program dinner.

Requirements:

A) **Journal (size B5 to US Letter)**:

i. You will receive a playlist of songs by various Japanese musical artists before your departure. You will choose four artists and write about their sound, offering an overall critique and response. Guidelines will be provided. Due by your arrival in Japan. (10% of your total grade)

ii. You will maintain a handwritten log for note-taking during lectures with your questions, observations, and thoughts. Students will also write informal entries for seven additional songs from playlists offered by their guest lecturers in Tokyo, adding to the four songs you chose before your pre-departure, creating your own playlist for this course. In addition, you will offer entries for each cultural activity in the program, starting with your arrival and stay in Kyonan. Your journal/log also forms the basis for your term essay project. Take screenshots of your log entries, compile them as a single pdf, and submit them to: academy@magichour.co.jp.
(20% of your total grade)

**The journal/log is being evaluated for your content, curiosity, sense of exploration, and effort, not your perfect grammar and writing style.

B) **Active Participation**: Based on your attendance, punctuality, motivation, enthusiasm, exemplary behavior, and looking out for your peers for the duration of the course. (20% of your total grade)

C) **Presentation**: In a three or four-person group, you will present on an aspect of the Japanese music world covered in the course that you explore more in-depth. A group may also create their own song and music inspired by the course experience with a discussion and overview of their creation process. (25% of your total grade)

D) **Term Essay Project (No AI use permitted)**: Building from your journal/log entries, write an eight-to-ten page typed, double-spaced, reflection/meditation on your musical and cultural journey in Japan this January, integrating your playlist, lecture notes, observations, musings, and takeaways. You are also highly encouraged to include other media, such as photos, video footage, music samples, including your own music. You are being evaluated for your content, not perfect writing. Email as a pdf by January 24 to: academy@magichour.co.jp. (25% of your total grade)

Ultimately, the journal/log and term essay project are not only for your grade, but also serve as physical mementos of your immersion experience in Japan this January. Make it meaningful for you.

Required Materials:

Course handouts
Journal