

Kawabata Makoto





Kawabata Makoto

It's hard to imagine a harder working or more prolific musician than Kawabata Makoto. Kawabata was born in 1965 in Osaka but his family later moved to Nara, Japan. Since first traveling to the US in 1997, Kawabata has performed in Chicago alone at least fifteen times, playing in many different band configurations. In addition to his solo performances and collaborations with other bands, Kawabata has been or remains a member of groups that include: Mainliner, Musica Transonic, Zubi Zuva X, Akaten, Uchu, Tsurubami, Nishinohon, Zoffy, Toho Sara, Okami No Jikan and his mainstay: Acid Mothers Temple and the Melting Paraiso U.F.O.

Overwhelmed yet? Wrapping your head around all of these projects is no easy task, nor is keeping up with countless albums on almost as many labels along with numerous self-released titles. Acid Mothers Temple has also changed their name when they collaborate with members of other bands (see: Acid Mothers Gong, Acid Mothers Afrirampo and Acid Mothers Guru Guru) or when Kawabata receives "a transmission" from his own cosmos (Acid Mothers Temple and the Cosmic Inferno).

Kawabata Makoto first toured the US in 1997 as the guitarist of the bands Mainliner and Musica Transonic. Both of those groups were founded by bassist, vocalist and producer Nanjo Asahito. Nanjo, along with "Motor Cycle Guitarist" Munehiro Narita and a succession of drummers, led the trio High Rise from the early 1980s until the early 2000s. High Rise took the classic rock power trio formation of groups that began in the late 1960s like Cream, Blue Cheer, the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Guru Guru, tossed in bonus helpings of free jazz improvisation and threw it on the back of a tricked out punk rock motorcycle after drinking gallons of espresso. Their sound is characterized by extremely distorted and mixed 'in-the-red' production that gives the already fast and blisteringly loud rock music an even greater nervous energy.

For their first release, the Tokyo-based record label P.S.F. pressed just 300 copies of High Rise's debut LP in 1985. P.S.F. was founded by Hideo Ikeezumi, who also runs the record store Modern Music and publishes *G-Modern*, a quarterly magazine on underground music. The label quickly became home to Japanese musicians and groups like Keiji Haino, Fushit-susha, White Heaven, Ghost, Kousokuya, folk musician Kan Mikami and Japanese free jazz figures like Kaoru Abe and Masayoshi Urabe. In the November 1996 issue of the New Zealand-based magazine *Opprobrium*, Nanjo Asahito observes: "P.S.F. almost accidentally provided the links between jazz and rock or between folk and rock to develop. But as I see it, the links had already been developed in the live house scene, where all these people had been playing in the same places for years. Ikeezumi would go and see everything, so he introduced people from different genres that might otherwise not have met. Then he introduced the rock people to the jazz people. He became the direct link for these people..." Nanjo formed his own label La Musica to release countless cassettes, CDRs and more than a few bootlegs of ethically-questionable origin; seemingly every collaboration and permutation of every song was documented and available on one release or another.

Among some of the more active members of this loose scene, there has been a propensity for musicians who are already involved with bands to form additional new bands at a startling rate. When Alan Cummings asked Nanjo Asahito about this in the aforementioned issue of *Opprobrium*, he replied: "Because I'm not yet able to express everything I want to in the one band. If I could then one band would be enough. That's what I'm aiming for. There's also a political aspect. If I just had one band and I got a contract with a major record company, then I'd be tied down for three years or whatever. There'd be restrictions imposed upon me.

...Basically I don't want to be restricted by politics and society. So if something goes wrong with one of my bands, if it doesn't work out, or someone dies, whatever, then I've still got other things I can do." On the Acid Mothers Temple website, Kawabata simply states: "Groups exist because I feel a necessity for them. Once that necessity has gone they go on hold or I break them up." Not surprisingly, aesthetic similarities sometimes carry over from one unit to another. This can become particularly confusing to outside observers when these new bands share so many overlapping members.

The 1990s Japanese psychedelic rock scene surely had a larger audience abroad than in its home country but even so, Western interest and awareness has always been limited. When High Rise finally toured the U.S. for the first time in 1998, only about fifty people turned out for the show in Chicago. By the late 1990s, widespread internet availability and supportive online music distributors like Forced Exposure helped Westerners piece together the puzzle of modern Japanese psychedelic rock one import CD at a time. In addition to the writer, translator and historian Alan Cummings, musician Mason Jones - founder of the San Francisco-based label Charnel House - wrote about Japanese underground rock widely, released albums by some of the bands and published four thick issues of the magazine *Ongaku Otaku* devoted entirely to Japanese independent music.

In the mid-1990s, Nanjo Asahito formed the bands Mainliner and Musica Transonic featuring Kawabata Makoto on guitar. Nanjo's distinctive 'in-the-red' production style from High Rise was apparent on the new groups' recordings. Nanjo has described Mainliner as "[A] more condensed version of the High Rise aesthetic." The monolithic Mainliner album *Mellow Out* remains a high point of 1990s Japanese underground rock. Its title couldn't possibly convey a more erroneous description of the music.

Whereas Mainliner featured heavy driving guitar riffs that could repeat for many minutes before Kawabata broke into extended soloing, Musica Transonic's songs were usually shorter, more free jazz-sounding, and without vocals. The group described themselves as a "Contemporary Improvised Psychedelic Group." Forced Exposure's website provides a more helpful description of the band's sound: "Totally over the top, utterly stupid, hugely inventive, loud and obnoxious." Both Mainliner and Musica Transonic eventually disbanded.

Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso U.F.O. formed in 1995 and in 1997 P.S.F. released their first self-titled CD. The cover photo featured a large group of members - a hippie-looking collective holding all manner of instruments posed against a cosmic backdrop that looked like it was imported from an early 1970s Peter Max poster. The interior of the CD packaging included more photos of the band in rural settings, a picture of someone's cat and a shot of Kawabata Makoto throwing his arms up to the sky in front of Stonehenge. The liner notes promised: "WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO EXPERIENCE IS ASS KICKIN' BUD WHIPPIN' FOR OUT DROP DEAD COOL MUSIC FROM ANOTHER SOLAR SYSTEM WHEN THE ACIENT GODS STILL RULED THE EARTH." No false advertising there.

The group's expansive aesthetic arrived fully formed. The CD lists 13 songs but they are annoyingly mastered as a single, nearly 53 minute track that starts with a bit of chanting before busting into "Speed Guru" and finally ending with about a minute of a piercing test tone that will have the listener sprinting for the volume knob. A jackhammer beat kicks in near the start of the album and is quickly overlaid with synth squalls, wailing distorted female vocals, bells and Kawabata's fuzz guitar. The density of previous groups like Mainliner gets complicated by a cornucopia of new sounds and a vision that is at once more spiritual, transcendent, messy and absurd. The band leaves more room for humor and the influence of sounds from a wider variety of cultures including Kawabata's oft stated love of Occitanian folk music. Musicians and collective members are credited with providing: sitar, didgeridoo, violin, magic

cane, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, cosmic narration, freak power, cosmic ring modulator, soprano saxophone and cheese cake. On the double CD collection *Absolutely Freak Out Zap Your Mind* haunting sung melodies and breathtakingly beautiful guitar passages coexist with rock tracks that are interrupted by loud ring announcements for "Stone Cold" Steve Austin taken from American wrestling shows. The group's approach to creativity is guided by their slogan: "Do Whatever You Want, Don't Do Whatever You Don't Want!!!"

Over the years Acid Mothers Temple has shown itself to remain open to trying new things while also becoming a bit more consistent in its line up as a touring unit. Bassist, vocalist and musical comedian Tsuyama Atsushi and guitarist and synth player Higashi Hiroshi have accompanied Kawabata on most of Acid Mothers Temple's US tours. While not making an explicit political point about its organizational style, the group has remained easily accessible to their fans. Members avail themselves to the audience online and at shows, greeting concert attendees from behind tables of CDs packed with enough titles for a small store composed entirely of Acid Mothers Temple music. Staying on top of all of these releases became a lost cause years ago.

Kawabata Makoto - the one constant member of Acid Mothers Temple - has visited Chicago on other occasions over the past ten years - once to stop in for a set with the band Kin-ski, another time to perform with his group Tsurubami (also including Higashi Hiroshi from Acid Mothers Temple) and to appear with Tsuyama Atsushi and their frequent collaborator from the band Ruins, drummer Yoshida Tatsuya. The latter tour took the form of a "Japanese New Music Festival" - an evening that highlights the virtuosity, versatility and sense of humor of the three musicians as they present different collaborations and solo performances under seven different monikers, each with a distinct style and set of ideas.

Temporary Services has been fortunate enough to see Kawabata perform in many of these configurations over the years. We are big fans of not only his music but his playful and flexible approach to collaboration and group identity. Kawabata frequently talks about attempting to channel the sounds of the cosmos in his music but he was refreshingly down to earth and filled with good humor when he sat down to speak to us. This interview was conducted by Salem Collo-Julin and Marc Fischer of Temporary Services in the basement of the Chicago club the Empty Bottle. It took place a few hours before Acid Mothers Temple's show on May 5, 2007. All of the photos in this booklet were taken by Temporary Services at the same show. This booklet was published in March 2008. It is the first title in Temporary Services' *Temporary Conversations* interview booklet series.

Marc Fischer (MF): You often collaborate with other bands - younger musicians like Afrirampo and Steve Krakow from Plastic Crimewave Sound, but then also older musicians like Guru Guru and Daevid Allen from Gong. How does this usually come about? Do these people ask you to work with them or do you contact them?

Kawabata Makoto (KM): Case by case. Sometimes I ask. Sometimes they ask.

MF: How did it happen with Mani Neumeier from Guru Guru?

KM: Ahhhh. Mani was in Tokyo part of the year. His wife is a Japanese woman. So when we [points to Tsuyama Atsushi] played together as Zoffy - we have a side unit - we played a small venue in Tokyo and Mani came to the show. Then he had a concert the next day and he asked us to make a jam session. It was a fast moment. Also he had played with him [Atsushi] some times before. So they knew each other already.

MF: And now you'll do a small tour together?

KM: In September [2007]. Also we will release our first album.

MF: Are there other people that you would like to collaborate with that maybe you have asked and they weren't interested?

KM: Some people. Of course. Always I'm really interested in collaborating with any interested musician.

MF: Artistically, what do you look for in a collaboration?

KM: Usually nothing. [Laughter] I'm waiting for something to happen.

MF: Do you try to find time to practice with the person first?

KM: No. No. No. Never. I hate practicing. [Laughter]

MF: Does Acid Mothers Temple practice?

KM: No, never. Even, like sometimes we get new members for the tour. Sometimes we'll meet each other at the airport.

MF: So the first show is...

KM: ...the first session.

MF: Do you ever collaborate with someone and feel that it was a failure? Or not interesting to do again?

KM: Oh, of course. Sometimes nothing happens. Usually I chose the musicians. If I chose the musician I hope that we enjoy it. Always I enjoy it but I don't know if they enjoy it. [Laughter]

Salem Collo-Julien (SCJ): Have you collaborated with groups of people who do other things outside of music, like theater or visual arts, activism or dance?

KM: I have played with people who do modern dance, or Japanese Butoh a long time ago, but it's always not a good collaboration. Because especially some kind of dancers or Butoh performers, they have their own ideas already so they wanted to use just our music. So if I play something different – because I wanted to make them change something – always they are very conservative. Always they stay the same. So it means it's not a collaboration for me.

MF: They would maybe rather have your music playing on a CD or something?

KM: Like that. But if someone has same ideas [about collaboration] with me, I can collaborate with them, even theater, dance, or something...

SCJ: Did you have any successful collaborations with modern dancers who liked improvising?

KM: No. Also I collaborated with kind of like an art filmmaker. They set up a very big screen. Like a very big wall in the park. He played his films on the same wall – a kind of collage. Then I played music. But then... [Laughs] ...Not so interesting.

MF: Would you be interested in something like the kind of relationship that the German film director Werner Herzog and the band Popol Vuh had where they worked together on soundtracks for many of his films?

KM: I'm very interested to make the soundtrack to a film. It is much better. Much better situation for me. Because for example the thing I talked about with the filmmaker in the park, he controlled something [visually] by computer but not so much in collaboration with my music. He had ideas already.

MF: Was it kind of like live video mixing?

KM: Yes. Like that. Projection.

SCJ: So it sounds like the problem was that his ideas weren't necessarily coming from responding to you?

KM: Yes, because sometimes if I play very louder, or very smaller, his projections are always the same. So it means [he is] not collaborating.

MF: When you perform there is always a lot of humor, especially with Atsushi.

KM: Yeah. Yeah.

MF: It seems like in rock music or experimental music, some people don't like the idea of humor or they're very intolerant of when the artist changes the mood and wants to be funny.

KM: Yes. I think some people love humor or jokes but some people prefer a very serious [performance] – especially in the hardcore scene or experimental music. But anyway, Acid Mothers Temple play rock 'n roll. So we want to put a lot of humor or jokes. When I play experimental music or solo sort of stuff or something, I play very seriously. Not always, but case by case.

MF: Are there musicians you like for the humor in their music? For example Parliament and Funkadelic have a lot of humor in their music and their album covers. I know you like Captain Beefheart and Frank Zappa...

KM: Yeah. But I think album cover is not important for any of my philosophy. Sleeve is just not music. I can't change the idea of the music by any other people's opinions. Because the music is always mine, my idea, but the sleeve is not so important. The sleeve is just for selling the CD. Like a kind of promotion. So for example, a lot of post-rock bands make sleeve just like very boring photos, like just a view or a forest or like looks a little artistic. But it looks like nothing for me. So if I'm the audience, I don't want to touch or take [this kind of sleeve]. Packaging is very important to make people take it. So always I make a lot of parodies or some very stupid naked woman photo... so I don't care... any jacket, any sleeve, any art work.

MF: That doesn't interest you about music?

KM: Just for the sleeve I think artwork must make people interested.

MF: But do you think of it as an opportunity to express ideas or not so much?

KM: I don't have any ideas. [Laughter] It's always a problem, because after I finish mixing and everything and mastering, then I have to think about the package. Always I have no idea. Also song titles too. A song title is just a word. My music has no message to people. Music is just music so I think music doesn't need any words or messages. This is my opinion, always. But I have to put titles. So the title is the same idea as the package – just fake famous song titles or funny titles or kind of jokes.

MF: A lot of times on internet discussion boards people will say things like “I just saw Acid Mothers Temple and the show was so great. What album do you recommend? Where should I start?” And they're totally frustrated because there are about a hundred albums.

KM: [Laughs and agrees]

MF: Is one record ever more important than another? How do you view the idea of making an album?

KM: If we could get a contract with a very big label and they have a very big distribution in the world, we wouldn't need to release so much. Because when we started, we released the first three albums from the Japanese label P.S.F. They are a good label, but their distribution is not so good in the world. Also it's always imported. And an imported disc is always much more expensive than a domestic disc. So we wanted for people to get our CD much cheaper and find much easier. So we need to release at least one item in each country. So any people can get at least one disc very cheap and find it very easily. So I'm always thinking about fairness.

SCJ: Are there any albums in particular that you would push for being released somewhere else that haven't been released before over another one? And are there any albums from the past where you feel, “Oh no one needs to hear that anymore. But you should listen to this one...”

KM: [Laughs] Always I like to recommend the latest one! [Laughter] Because the latest is always the latest style. More fresh. Of course sometime when we release an album that's not so good and [we feel] sorry.

MF: When a label says they want to make a record with you, do they sometimes tell you what kind of record they would like to release?

KM: Always I ask. I ask the labels. Many labels offer that they want to do a release. So when I get an email, always I say yes. I never say no to any label. [Laughter] Because always I'm very grateful for any label that wants to release our stuff. So always I say yes, but I ask one question, “What kind of style do you want to release?” Because our music is not like one style. Sometimes it's like a very minimalistic drone. Sometimes it's very louder, very hard, sometimes more folky, sometimes more spacey. So always I'm grateful with any labels. So I want every label guy to be satisfied and release it.

SCJ: Do you think of yourself as the leader of the bands you play in? The person who makes all of the decisions? Or the spokesperson?

KM: I am the spokesman. But on the stage, Atsushi Tsuyama is the spokesman. Composing – usually we have three ways. One is just like a jam session in the studio improvising. After the jam session, I overdub a lot so we can finish and make the album. The other one, Atsushi composes some song. Just material. Not completely - just some chord or something. Then I and Atsushi – he composes some melody or chord and I arrange everything. The third one is that I compose everything.

MF: Do you still do things where you maybe mix recordings that were made somewhere else, by someone in another place and then you mix the tape in the studio?

KM: I prefer to work at my studio by myself. So always I mix and overdub everything at my flat. Because I don't like stupid engineers. [Laughter] Not everyone – I know some good engineers, but almost all engineers are so stupid. We fight a lot about just making one sound. I know how to make! I told them and they say, “It is taboo. It is impossible.” [Laughter] I say, “Why taboo? I pay you. You must make this!” Always fights. Much stressful.

MF: What about all of the bands you worked in with Nanjo Asahito, like Mainliner, Musica Transonic, Toho Sara – where he also produces the albums? Was that a source of conflict with his production style?

KM: He taught me a lot of things, like how to make sounds. Many things. Also, not just music but he gave me a lot of hints about business. So he was a very good teacher.

MF: Was the first time you came to the US when you were in Mainliner and Musica Transonic and you toured with Ruins?

KM: Yeah. When was it, 1998? Ten years ago? 1997.

MF: I still can't remember which band played which



Tsuyama Atsushi

night... Whether it was Mainliner the first night or Musica Transonic.

KM: Aaahhhhhh. Yeah. Yeah, because I learned from him this kind of thing too. Nanjo made a lot of mistakes too. He wanted to show people his multiple ideas, so Mainliner, Musica Transonic, Toho Sara, Okami No Jikan, we played as at least four units in the same night. But he couldn't introduce to people which band [was playing] so people were so confused.

MF: They still are.

KM: So I learned this kind of problem from him. [Laughing] So he's kind of a good teacher.

SCJ: That was one thing that worked really well the last time you toured the US with seven bands sharing the same three members.

KM: Aaahhh, yeah, "Japanese New Music Festival."

SCJ: A lot of us, before we came to see the show, were wondering, "How is this going to work? Are they going to just move to a different part of the stage and keep playing?" And I think everybody who I talked to felt there was a real separation between all of the acts. It was obvious when movement was happening but sometimes it didn't matter and that was good too.

KM: "Japanese New Music Festival" is one of the showcase tours. Of course, each band is independent, with its own CDs, its own discs. They are separate. But the "Japanese New Music Festival" is a showcase – more like a sampler tour. So also we are only three persons. Three persons play the same units. So each band plays very shorter – sometimes ten minutes, fifteen minutes, ten minutes, like that. It is a very economical idea. This idea was made by Yoshida from Ruins because he learned the same thing from Nanjo. Because he the drummer in Musica



Transonic and Mainliner at that moment. So he stole part of Nanjo's idea but Yoshida produced more like a kind of entertainment style. Also we always say [imitates a kind of announcer or ring-master voice] "Welcome to Japanese New Music Festival! First project is Zubi Zuva X." [Laughter] Like that always. Always we introduce. Also we change the sounds so much each project.

MF: Well, Nanjo seems to be more serious about having a mystique.

KM: Yeah. Yeah. More serious.

MF: I remember someone wanted to take his picture and he didn't have his sunglasses on so he ran away to go get his sunglasses and put them back on so they could take the photo. [Laughter]

KM: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Exactly.

MF: People like Nanjo or Keiji Haino have this kind of mystique and that's something that seems to be different with you or Acid Mothers Temple.

KM: Haino is more serious. Also more like... real. Even in his private life he never took off sunglasses. Even his cats maybe, she didn't see Haino's real eyes. [Laughter] But Nanjo, he wants to follow Haino, also Les Rallizes DeNudes. They are also a mystic... very mysterious band too. Nanjo really wanted to follow their ideas but it is so difficult to keep this kind of idea for a long time.

MF: It's very refreshing seeing on your website that you always answer people's questions. Is that important to you – to keep close contact with people that listen to your music?

KM: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Because our band grew up with internet. So we are kind of an internet generation band, I think. We set up our website kind of early in the internet generation. Also we live in Japan kind of very far east, so if people want to get any information, usually if there is no internet, it is too difficult to find any information. So internet is very important for us. Always we can give people a lot of information from us. So if there is a question, always I can answer. By internet it is very easy. Also contact is very easy and also very important for us.

MF: My association with that kind of attitude comes more from the hardcore punk scene where people release their own music and help distribute records by other people and book their own tours. Do you feel any association with that?

KM: Before we worked like that – always if we wanted to come to here we had to ask our friends. So that kind of very small organizing. Now we are working with Windish – a very good booking agency from Chicago. But still in Europe, I don't have any booking agency. So always I ask each local promoter, each of my friends in each city to book. It is normal. Also like last March, do you know the Swedish band Träd, Gräs och Stenar?

MF: Yes.

KM: I organized their Japan tour.

MF: So you also help other bands in that way?

KM: Yes. This kind of partnership is most important I think. Of course, if we can work with big booking agencies it is much better and easy but I don't want to forget this kind of thing.

MF: We are very similar with our art. Because we don't agree with the idea that artists need to have a commercial gallery that represents them and does all their communication for them. We like to do that. If a museum contacts us, it's fun for us to work with them directly.

SCJ: We give away most of the stuff that we publish and print. We make publications for every project that we do and we always try to kind of keep our connections from person to person rather than institution to institution. But I can understand when you have – especially these bigger groups of people – it's probably easier to have someone helping you to organize your travel.

KM: Also, I can't trust anyone usually. [Laughter] Usually for a tour, if we can release [something on a] big label we can work with a big agency. But if we get not so much audience like that, they will say, [imitating Donald Trump's voice] "You are fired." [Laughter] Also, if I know how to book a concert with my friend, or a local promoter, if we will be fired [by a larger agency], it's no problem. We can continue to make the tour.

MF: Something I found very funny when you played at the Hideout in 2001, Atsushi led this chant of, "We hate Tokyo! You hate New York!"

KM: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. [Laughs]

MF: And it's true. We do hate lots of things about New York. What was the reason for that? I think at one point you said you stopped playing in Tokyo.

KM: Just that we don't like Tokyo. Not hate, but we don't like Tokyo. Because it's too busy. Also, especially I and Atsushi are from Osaka – Western Japan. We have completely different cultures, kind of against Tokyo. Even like baseball. There are two oldest teams in Japanese profession league. One is from Tokyo and one is from Osaka. So we have very long tradition, a long history of always fighting. Also the Tokyo team is always very rich. Our team is very poor. Everything against. Even language too.

MF: That sounds very similar to Chicago versus New York.

SCJ: Also I wanted to briefly thank you because I don't know if you feel any connection to the baseball team, that is kind of like the Osaka team here, but the White Sox is like the team of the poor in Chicago. Because they're on the South Side - that's where I live. A year ago Acid Mothers Temple played the unofficial White Sox theme song at the end of your set: "Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye" by Steam.

KM: Oh, yes. Yes. [Laughs]

SCJ: So for many of us in the crowd, whether or not you cared, we thought, "Yes! He's one of us! Yes! They care!" [Laughter] Because the Cubs are like the rich people team.

Would you at this point have any suggestions for people who work collectively in groups? Things that you've learned from collaborating with others? Or things that you think people know when they go out on tour playing music with other people?

MF: Or things that keep the band happy working together? Are there things that people in Acid Mothers Temple fight about or are there sources of tension?

KM: Of course we learned a lot of things year by year. Before we had longer tours, like two months and a half or something. But always after one month, we started fighting. Sometimes very serious fighting. Also we felt so tired. So I decided the maximum [tour length] will be one month. It is good for keeping the band. Also we always were fighting with one member after a tour, so each time we change a member. Each time. Unfortunately this is a very good way to keep the band.

All: [Laughter]

KM: You know, this is a very political way. Even like America. You had the Cold War against the Soviet Union before. But now the Soviet Union fall down and changed to Russia. Russia is not so scary. So America tried to find a new... [Laughter] ...So finally you find Iraq or Afghanistan or something... [Laughter] So this is good for...

MF: To keep things interesting?

KM: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. [Laughter] Like that. Same.



Left to Right: Tsuyama Atsushi, Shimura Koji and Higashi Hiroshi

SCJ: They call it “term limits” in politics.

KM: So always I don’t want to fire any members. But of course there was a real reason about musical things – like not good playing, not good sense for the music. Maybe like our last drummer; he plays as Melt Banana’s drummer. I think his drumming is much more fitting for Melt Banana than Acid Mothers Temple. So I said to him, “Maybe you should play with Melt Banana. More like punk rock. Because your drumming is not good fit with us.” So we changed the drummer. We have some real reason, but on the tour always, if there is some problem about music, this makes, how do you say, “one guy against one guy?”

MF: A divide.

KM: But this kind of problem makes a stronger connection between the rest of the members.

MF: I think the strategy of going on tour with a new person... maybe when you tour with Mani from Guru Guru, it will also show you some new aspect of how Atsushi plays, or how Hiroshi plays because of having a different drummer? Do you think you learn something new about the band as a whole when you add or change members?

KM: I’m looking for almost a perfect member for Acid Mothers Temple, always. So I found Hiroshi Higashi, also Koji [Shimura] is almost perfect. So I think now it’s almost perfect.

MF: What is the status of some of the other bands you’ve been in? Does Nishinohon still exist?

KM: Nishinohon, now we are looking for a drummer. Because Ichiraku [Yoshimitsu] is so busy now. He plays as a solo performance. He plays just drums solo and the whole drum kit has triggers. So he can control video by drumming. He became so famous now so he plays a lot of very big art festivals. This year he plays the Venice Biennale. Kind of almost mainstream now. He is so busy so we are looking for a drummer.

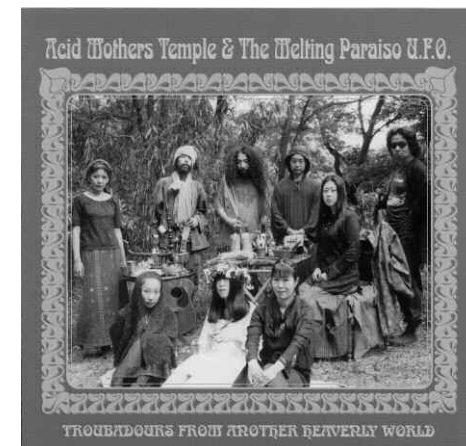
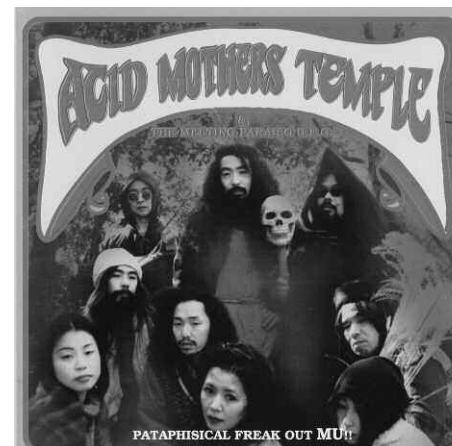
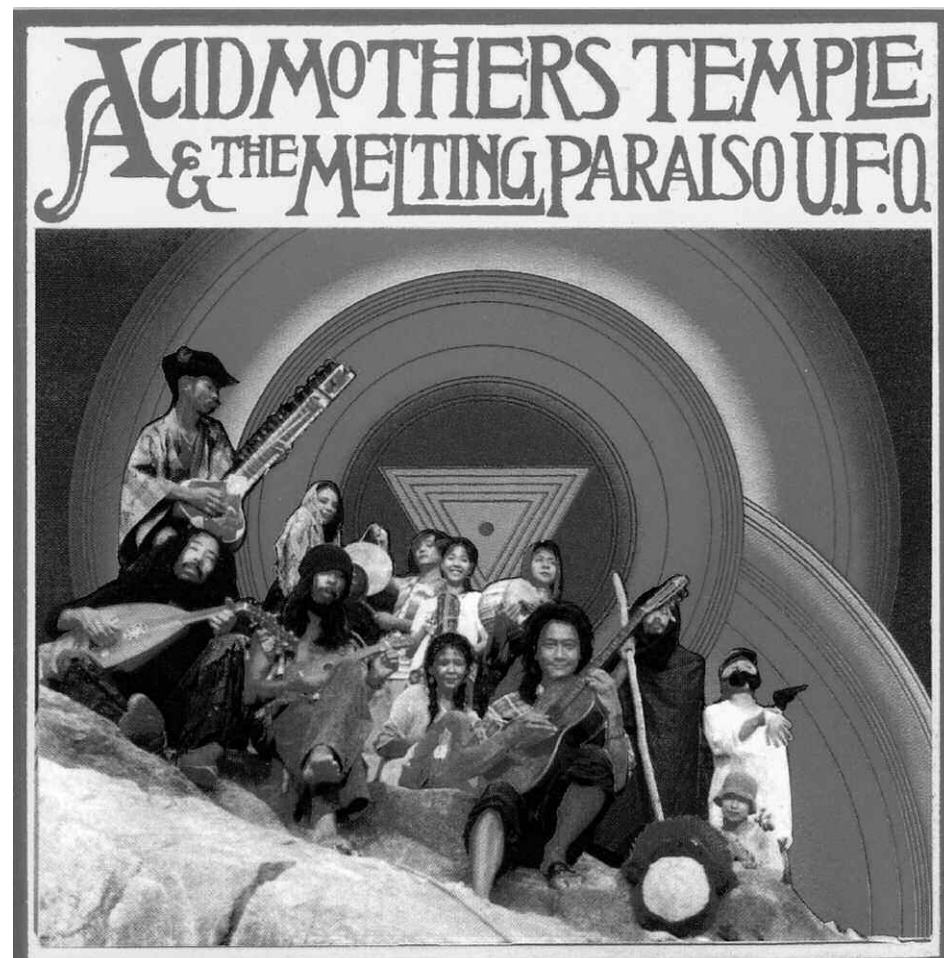
MF: And all the bands with Nanjo Asahito?

KM: I’ve never heard anything from him since 1997 or 98. Because I left from Mainliner and we completely finished. Also now he doesn’t play anything for a long time. Even in Japan. High Rise has almost stopped for a couple years.

MF: And with Up-Tight?

KM: Aaah, Up-Tight. They are kind of good friends. And so they wanted to come to America and they needed some kind of connection. I advised them that you must release at least one album from American label before the tour, so they invited us as producer and guest guitarist. So I introduced them to Steve Krakow.

MF: And he released the album and set up the show in Chicago.



The first three Acid Mothers Temple albums on P.S.F. Records.

Additional Resources

Extensive information about projects associated with Acid Mothers Temple and Kawabata Makoto can be found at www.acidmothers.com.

Aquarius Records in San Francisco distributes hundreds of Japanese psych, noise and ambient releases. Their excellent website offers sound clips for just about everything mentioned in this interview. At present they carry over fifty Acid Mothers Temple-related releases. www.aquariusrecords.org

Paul Collett's website www.noise.as features an excellent historical overview of Japanese psychedelic rock dating back to the 1960s with particular attention paid to the 1990s scene.

British journalist and musician Julian Cope has written widely about Japanese psychedelic rock of all periods. His website www.headheritage.co.uk has a wealth of articles and reviews. He recently released the book *JAPROCKSAMPLER: How The Post-War Japanese Blew Their Minds on Rock 'N' Roll*.

Alan Cummings commonly writes about Japanese independent music for the British magazine *The Wire*. Their website features extensive archives: www.thewire.co.uk

The webzine *Dusted* regularly features helpful critical reviews of Japanese underground bands by Mason Jones: www.dustedmagazine.com

The book *Japanese Independent Music* (published by Sonore, 2000) is the most complete single published source for information and discographies on the subject. Unfortunately the book appears to be out of print. www.sonore.com

Chicago-based musician and historian Steve Krakow has long been a proponent of the Japanese underground psych rock scene. His magazine *Galactic Zoo Dossier* has included features and Cds with unreleased tracks by artists covered in this text. www.dragcity.com/press/pgzd.html

The now defunct label Squealer Records has released music by Acid Mothers Temple and High Rise. Their website includes the two lengthy archived interviews with Nanjo Asahito and Munehiro Narita from High Rise that appeared in *Opprobrium* magazine: www.squealermusic.com/reviews/hrisereviews.html

WFMU in Jersey City, New Jersey regularly plays independent Japanese music and has often presented live recordings of these bands playing in their studio. You can listen online and look for archived live sets at www.wfm.org.

Record Labels and Distributors:

Eclipse Records: www.eclipse-records.com/catalog.html

Forced Exposure: www.forcedexposure.com

Fractal Records: www.fractal-records.com

P.S.F. Records: www.psfrecords.com