



An Interview with Selector Hemo; Bringing Soca and Carnival to Japan!

CARNIVALS, INTERVIEWS, WORLD WIDE AUGUST 22, 2017
AC CHRISTIE

Without Selector Hemo (born Tomoke Inoue), there would be no soca and Caribbean style carnival in Japan. That is the truth of things. Yes, there is a popular and stable dancehall culture but the initial and continued rise of Soca in Japan can primarily be attributed to Selector Hemo. There has been a Caribbean carnival style band in Japan for the past 10 years because of Selector Hemo. She introduced it to her hometown festival in Kochi. Machel Montano came to Japan for the first time this year because of Selector Hemo. And being part of her carnival band in Japan this year highlighted just what a force of nature this woman is.

Selector Hemo is a music and events producer as well as a DJ. She has created her own record Label, LIME Records. She regularly appears on popular radio stations. She DJs at Trinidad carnival regularly and has worked in Jamaica as a DJ. She has been to Ghana in Africa to find out more about the roots of our music. The list of her collaborations is exhaustive; Kevin Little, Rupee, KES THE BAND, Sean Paul, Wayne Wonder, Buju Banton, Tony Curtis, TOK, Wycriff, Machel Montano, Destra, Bunji Garlin, KMC, Mr. Slaughter and more. She has produced for Elephant man, Vybez Kartel, Wayne Wonder, Sizzla, Ninja Man, Ghost, Spragga Benz Mr Vegas, Capleton, Daville, Lukie D, LUST, Machel Montano, Bunji garlin, TOK, Lady saw, Tanya Stephens MR.LEXX, Fay an Lyons, Isasha, Benjai, Nicky B, RDX and more. As a rum connoisseur, she achieved Japanese Rum Association's Rum Concierge qualification in 2014 and is a regular guest DJ for "RUM CONNECTION", the biggest rum event in Asia. I had the honour of finding out more about this lady (despite the difficulties of a language

barrier) and finding out how soca found roots in the land of the rising sun.



When did you become a DJ? When I was 23-years-old.

How did you come to like Soca, carnival and Caribbean culture? I met Reggae music at the place I worked for when I became a high school student and started a part-time job. I started to study Reggae

music and became a Reggae selector. I happened to know soca at Labor Day in New York but didn't think it was a cool music at that time. Later, when I visited a carnival in Jamaica, I happened to listen to great soca music there so started to DJ Soca music in my performance as well in 1999.

Why did you start a carnival band in Japan? I visited Trinidad & Tobago for the first time in 2000, and found out that the carnival in T&T is very similar to the Yosakoi festival in Kochi where I was born and raised. And I got an idea to collaborate Trinbago carnival and Yosakoi festival.



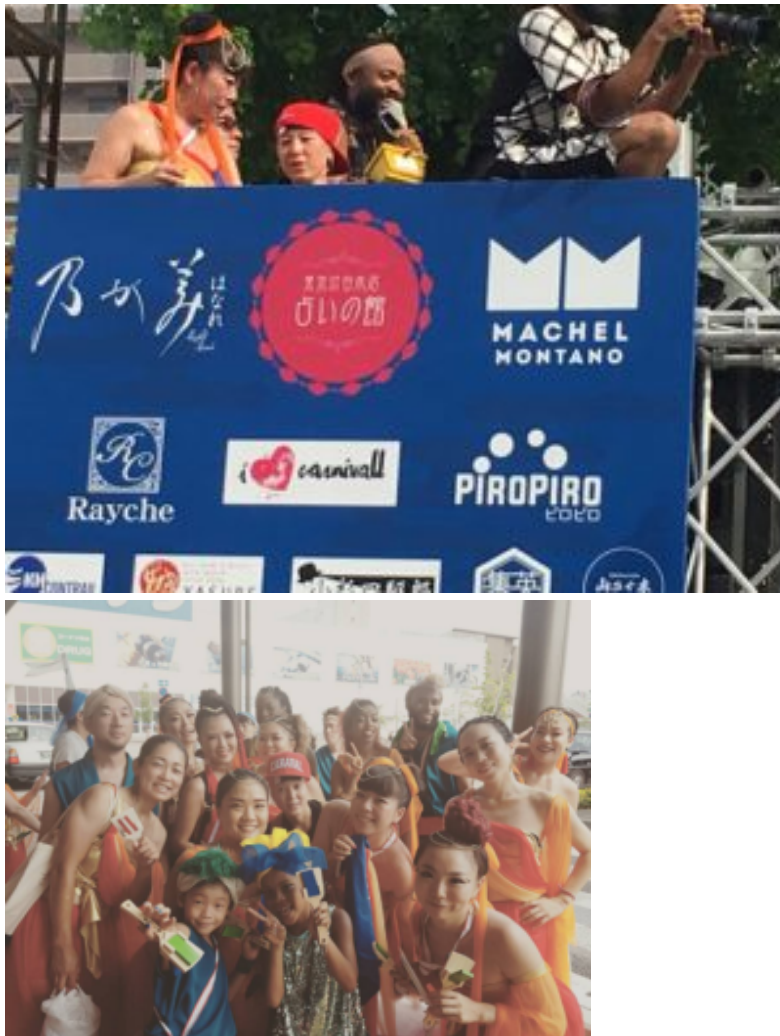
Why do you think Japanese people like Caribbean music and culture so much? The Caribbean culture and Japanese culture looks like opposite in a way but I think there is also a similarity.

How many people are involved in the band? As a regulation of Yosakoi festival, one team should be less than 150 ppl.

What were the hard parts of starting the carnival band in Japan? The Yosakoi festival became bigger but also many regulations were made. The most difficult thing is that to obey every regulation but try to merge and express a freedom of Caribbean culture into my Yosakoi band. I had to keep and respect the traditional style of Yosakoi

but also want to add spices of Caribbean culture.

Do you DJ with a band during Trinidad carnival? Yes, with so many bands.



Have you been to other carnivals other than Trinidad? Jamaica, Labor Day, Notting Hill Carnival, Dominican Republic.

What do you like about carnival and Soca music? Positive and Happy. And it gives people courage and strength.

Is it hard for foreigners to enjoy carnival in Japan? As you may have understand this time, Yosakoi is not a carnival exactly. It's a festival. In the festival, the tradition which doesn't really exist in the other carnival (Carnival these days is about parties) is kept. So It's difficult to get

foreigners to understand it but I want foreigners to enjoy it as well.

What do you want to do in the future? I want to convey Japanese culture to the world and convey Caribbean culture and music which I love to Japan. ONE LOVE!!!



It is not easy. Just starting and having a carnival band on any carnival route in any country is not easy at all. But attempting to amalgamate two seeming different cultures under one broad concept, that of carnival is a very difficult task and brings unique challenges. But this is a task Selector Hemo had set herself and continues to do without trying to lose the essence of either culture. And she did this amazingly well this year.

She ensured the tenth anniversary of the canaval band in Japan was made that extra special with the inclusion of none other than Machel Montano. And believed me he seemed thoroughly impressed with Japan and its response to soca and the Caribbean culture. A humble lady with an indomitable spirit and who knows what she wishes to do. And made the seemingly impossible an undeniable reality. Soca and carnival in Japan. A true honour Selector Hemo.

For more information on Selctor Hemo, please visit www.selectorhemo.com and selector hemo on facebook and instagram.