



JESSICA LINKER  
DIR 773 784 4335  
JESSICA@PITCHPERFECTPR.COM

4865 N WASHTEAW AVE #3  
CHICAGO, IL 60625-2824  
WWW.PITCHPERFECTPR.COM

## Nisennenmondai – *Destination Tokyo* Out 8/11/09 on Smalltown Supersound

Nisennenmondai are three women from Tokyo, Sayaka Himeno (drums), Yuri Zaikawa (bass) and Masako Takada (guitar), who have been playing instrumental music together since they met over ten years ago in college. Discovered after being lauded by members of groups including Battles and No Age, and most recently Gang Gang Dance, Prefuse 73, and Hella, Nisennenmondai were first officially introduced to an audience outside of Japan when Smalltown Supersound released their two EPs, "Neji" and "Tori" as one release last year. Their follow-up, *Destination Tokyo*, will be released worldwide on Smalltown Supersound this summer.

*Destination Tokyo*, Nisennenmondai's new album, was recorded in one take at Peace Music in Japan in the fall of 2007. Compared to "Neji/Tori", *Destination Tokyo* sounds more clean, and more minimal and repetitive than the EP collection, leading to a truly intense, brain-melting, hi-fi experience. The repetitive nature of the album also helps the band reach their goal with this record, which is to make people dance. *Destination Tokyo* could be described as a mix of the groovy krautrock of Neu! and New York 1980's no wave/disco created by bands such as Sonic Youth, DNA, and ESG, infused with elements of the instrumental Black Flag of *The Process Of Weeding Out* and the avant/post-punk of This Heat.

The album was released on Nisennenmondai's own label, Bijin, in Japan last year. The Smalltown Supersound world-wide release is complete with new Kim Hiorthoy designed artwork. The first 12" single from *Destination Tokyo* includes remix treatment from Norwegian disco master Prins Thomas, who became so enamored with the band after seeing them perform, that he reached out to the label about creating a remix. Prins Thomas' remix takes the band into an 11 minutes long hypnotic trip of kraut, psychedelia and folk.

"The best word to describe the female Nippon-noise trio, Nisennenmondai, and their debut US release, 'Neji/Tori,' might be a Japanese one: 'kimyou na utsukushii.' English doesn't have an equivalent, but it can be loosely translated as 'strange beauty' or 'queer loveliness.'" -- *URB*

"a maelstrom of furious drumming, completely blown/fuzzed-out bass, and screaming guitar that sucks your ears into a vortex of noise." -- *Alarm Magazine*

"Armed with screeching guitars, frantic drum solos, and enough feedback to blow a set of desktop speakers, Nisennenmondai - which happens to consist of three petite ladies - shows the rest of us how to properly manipulate a set of instruments" -- *XLR8R*

For more information contact Jessica Linker @ Pitch Perfect PR.  
[jessica@pitchperfectpr.com](mailto:jessica@pitchperfectpr.com), 773-784-4335, [www.pitchperfectpr.com](http://www.pitchperfectpr.com),  
[www.myspace.com/nisennenmondai](http://www.myspace.com/nisennenmondai), [www.nisennenmondai.com](http://www.nisennenmondai.com)

"ONLY INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC DESCRIBES OUR FEELINGS."

**GENF**

**DISCOVERY ZONE**

**THERE'S NO EXPLAINING NISENNENMONDAI**

**I**nterviewing *Nisennenmondai* is complicated. I don't speak Japanese, so my questions are emailed to their American manager in Tokyo, who then parlays them to drummer Sayaka Himeno at a friend's bar during the early evening in an exchange filled with casual translation and spurts of broken English. Then the conversation is sent back to me as an mp3. Amidst the commotion of businessmen grabbing after-work pints and The Cure's "Lovecats" playing on the bar's stereo, Himeno is shy and unassuming, answering questions with one word responses and letting her translator do most of the work. It's the flipside to her womanimal drumming style, where she transfuses *Nisennenmondai*'s convulsive attacks with subtle riffs and hidden melodies.

The trio of Himeno, guitarist Masako Takada and bassist Yuri Zaikawa, came together almost a decade ago on a university music club trip to Nagano. After years of twice-a-week rehearsals, *Nisennenmondai* came to specialize in suffocating rhythms and post-punk riffage. Though they initially set out to be a "pop band," *Nisennenmondai*'s no-wave-through-a-Cuisinart sound evolved out of necessity more than anything else. "We couldn't play very well, so we could only play one chord," Himeno says of the group's adoption of noise music. Now they make acid monster blues and give their songs titles like "This Heat" and "Sonic Youth." As to

why they remain an instrumental band, Himeno explains, "In the beginning, we tried to write a song with lyrics, but it was very difficult. Only instrumental music describes our feelings." What exactly those feelings are goes unexplained. Not that it matters, their endless free psych pummeling can induce spazmotics, ear damage, catatonic bliss, whatever.

After slots in Japan opening for No Age, Lightning Bolt and Battles turned those bands into fans, *Nisennenmondai* have begun to crawl out of the Tokyo underground and will release the two-EP reissue *Neji/Tori* stateside this fall through Norwegian disco weirdos Smalltown Supersound. They're not expecting much to come from it, and are content to exist in near-obscurity, as they have for the past nine years. They don't feel the need to explain themselves. And, really, why should they? Their songs don't even have lyrics. Figure it out.

SAM DUKE

[thefader.com/nisennenmondai](http://thefader.com/nisennenmondai)

*Nisennenmondai* backstage at Shibuya O-Nest in Tokyo, Japan.



PHOTOGRAPHY ATSUSHI SHIBUYA



## NISENNENMONDAI

### *Neji/Tori*

Nisennenmondai is the Japanese term for "Y2K bug," and, yes, the band does sound like the end of the world. Zaikawa Yuri (bass), Himeno Sayaka (drums), and Takada Masako (guitar) are the three women behind this Boredoms-meet-Neu! instrumental trio, and these two EPs are their first release outside of Japan. Originally self-released in 2004 and 2005 respectively, *Neji/Tori* are a maelstrom of furious drumming, completely blown/fuzzed-out bass, and screaming guitar that sucks your ears into a vortex of noise.

*Neji* is the noisier of the pair, living completely in the red as if recorded without a VU meter. Tracks such as "Pop Group," "This Heat," and "Sonic Youth," serve as something of a tribute to the bands by which **Nisennenmondai** has been influenced. Although "Pop Group" doesn't employ any dub elements like the late '70s post-punk band, it does take on a repetitive, trance-like state thanks to a relentless tribal beat. Again, "This Heat" doesn't use any of the tape looping that British experimenters This Heat were known for, but it manages to capture the creepy soundscape feeling from the *Health & Efficiency* EP through the use of tapped guitar and droning bass. Perhaps easier to emulate, "Sonic Youth" sounds just like its namesake. *Neji* also contains two non-band-named songs, which are equally noisy, filthy, and inspiring, the last being "Ikkyokume," which sees the band moving in a more progressive direction.

*Tori* is a slightly cleaner recording than *Neji* and shows the band following krautrock influences to terrific success. "Kyuukohan" opens with a simple hi-hat and bass drum pattern complemented by subdued strumming on bass and guitar. This is punctuated with guitar stabs and, eventually, snare cracks that lend an off-kilter, disorienting feeling to the song. Around the four-minute mark, the song explodes in a mess of guitar and a fury of drums; it's an amazing track. "Kyaaaaaaaa" is a two-and-a-half-minute rumbling noise piece, featuring short human shrieks. The second version of "Ikkyokume" is a refined version of the first and is a monumental take. Finally, "Iyashi" closes out the EP with a very Sonic Youth-sounding forty seconds before ten minutes of silence. After the silence, the song returns with something that could only be described as classic Japanese noise rock. Taking the baton from its predecessors, **Nisennenmondai** and its contemporaries are the future of the scene. [ND]

**Nisennenmondai:** [www.nisennenmondai.com](http://www.nisennenmondai.com)

**Small Town Supersound:** [www.smalltownsupersound.com](http://www.smalltownsupersound.com)

## SIGNAL TO NOISE #5 I

FALL, '08

### **Nisennenmondai** **Neji/Tori**

Smalltown Supersound STS 149 CD

This distaff, mostly instrumental trio from Tokyo took its name from the Japanese word for "Y2K bug," but their sense of history runs a little deeper than that. The English-language song titles on this CD, which combines two EPs previously released in Japan, tip their collective hat to an unassailable list of favorites—"Pop Group," "This Heat," and "Sonic Youth." While the imprints of these influences aren't hard to spot, even on the tracks that don't bear their names—the vocal yelp and howling guitar that kick off "Kyaaaaaaaa" sound très SY—this is no mere regurgitation of favorite sounds and ideas. What Nisennenmondai have in common with their heroes, as well as other bands as unlike as Television and Mission of Burma and Oneida, is an essential interpersonal chemistry that makes them exciting to hear regardless of the style in which they play. Bassist Zaikawa Yuri supplies the spine to each track, at once staunch in the face of Himeno Sayaka's aggressively challenging snare-beats and yet subtly responsive to them. Takada Masako may or may not have Keith Levine's chops, but she seems well aware of the lesson he taught in PIL—that one misshapen guitar chord is all it takes to make a tune striking enough that nothing else really matters.

However, these virtues aren't as evident on this CD as they could be; it's a swell document, but it's not a patch on being there. When I saw this band a few years back in Chicago, they pretty much stole the first Million Tongues Festival from a host of better-known and illustrious names. If you get a chance to see them, just go. **Bill Meyer**