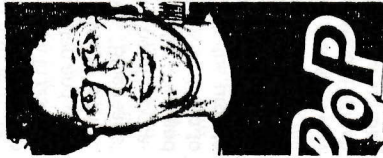


POP BIZ'S SADATO

Sadato's a hard working guy. Not only is he one of the more eccentric musicians on the Tokyo music scene, he's also the head honcho of POP BIZ, a record distributor. A label that has grown quite substantially in the 4 years of its existence. When I visited Sadato at his Ipiruiga office, he and his small staff were still hard at work even though it was close to 10 in the evening.



What sort of company is POP BIZ?

We are a CD import company with an office here in Tokyo and another in Hamburg. At the moment we import between 8,000 and 10,000 CDs a week and place them in major record stores around Japan such as Tower, Ciscos, etc. We take orders from our customers and import what they want. POP BIZ Europe is our buyer. They gather and package up information about new releases and send it to me by fax. I then take that information and fax it out to different shops based on what sort of music I know they are interested in. When they fax back an order, that's an agreement that they want so many of each CD at the price stated by the date requested. That order then gets faxed to Hamburg and the people there go to each label and put the order together and send it on to us. So we don't need to keep stock. The stock is with the label in Europe. Good business is based on flow. If you are in control of that and can foresee which things will be requested often then you can keep some backlog, which I do with things I know will continue to sell.

How did you learn the business?

Well my last job was working as the import manager for a company called Art Union. But what knowledge I have of distribution was learned through POP BIZ. Here I'm not just the managing director, I'm also the chief salesman, the chief buyer, the chief toilet cleaner... I do everything by myself. Because I have limits, I've recently hired some part-timers but hopefully by the end of next year I will have my own sales rep. I need at least one in Kansai and a salesman for Tokyo so that I don't have to do that and can be more of a managing director, able to travel more to Europe in order to start more deals with foreign companies. Talk more to the bosses than the chief buyers.



What do mean when you say philosophy?

Simply I mean the independent idea. The idea that an artist has, especially at the present time, the ability to put out his own work. If the artist has the money, it doesn't take much, the physical health and a little business talent and the eagerness to learn through the process of doing business then you have a chance to sell your shit. You don't have

to kiss the ass of major companies, I believe that POP BIZ is doing a better job than a major company selling my CDs as well as the other CDs we distribute. I hope that within three years POP BIZ will be so big that it will be seen as the Virgin or Rough Trade of Japan. That's my idea.



What direction do you see POP BIZ going in as a company?

My vision of POP BIZ is like the internet. I see POP BIZ creating a network with a lot of knots. POP BIZ Hamburg, POP BIZ New York, POP BIZ San Francisco, maybe London. That's my idea. I need to think big because that's the only way that I will push myself ahead. I'm talking about visions but within a very short time we will have our own home page on the internet so that will open things up a lot. I hope to have CDs, mine included on the internet so people can download them. I don't really know fully what's involved or what we can do but it's definitely the way forward. I'm collecting any bits of information I get and inputting it all into my head... slowly figuring out what's necessary. Whatever we do it will go through the internet.

Tell us a bit about how you ended up in Japan?

Well, my parents are from the north of Iran and I was born in Zurich, Switzerland. When I was one or so my parents moved to Hamburg. I finished high-school in Hamburg in 1973 and like anybody else wanted to continue studying but wasn't too sure what subject to pursue. So, since I was studying martial arts at that time, I just decided to go to Japan.

Were you doing any music at that time?

Sure, but privately at home. I played drums in some little amateur bands or at home with headphones listening to Cream, Doors, Hendrix, that sort of thing. Anyway, in January 1974 I got on a plane and came to Japan and I've been here 21 years. I spent the first years studying martial arts very hard and got my license in kendo. I had a very good teacher for a long time but eventually got tired of having a father, a super ego so to speak. We had a fight and I left him.

Is that when you started playing music again?

Well, eventually I got bored of martial arts, realizing that it wasn't really what I wanted to do. I then remembered that I had been a drummer for a little while. I met some people in Osaka who were into free jazz and so on and they let me sit in. Of course the drummer got very jealous but said ok play. Fortunately for him, unfortunately for me, I wasn't a very good drummer. He suggested that I do something else. I didn't know what I could do so he said

I should just yell. So I did, yelling and screaming for 2 weeks. They were very impressed but said they left pity for me as I wasn't playing an instrument. So they suggested that I try alto sax. I did pretty well on that so they made me their second horn player. But then three months later the band broke up and I had to make a choice. Play music or do Kendo. In the beginning it was martial arts, kendo and woman in that order. The music slowly developed and 6 months later I had my first official performance, a duo thing in Osaka. Things got stronger and I took the Sadato group to Europe 1 or 2 years later. It was at that point that my kendo teacher got jealous and said I had to decide which one I wanted to do. So I chose music because it's something I can take to Europe, Asia, Iran... anywhere. But if you decide to open a dojo in say, Teheran, it's super ridiculous.

When did you move from Osaka to Tokyo?

About that time. After I got to Tokyo, the revolution in Iran started. I couldn't go anywhere. I could go back to Iran but what for? My passport was almost invalidated. Just to go and stay for a week in Paris to see a friend took 3 months after applying. So I thought, well it looks like I have to stay in Japan for awhile. So I formed a few bands that came and went. Some where along the line I met Dennis Gunn (interviewed last issue-hb) and we formed a band called Alet. We recorded an album and then unfortunately Dennis left. Like anyone who leaves a band he didn't like the sound of the album, the way I pushed the band etc... I felt it was more important to stay friends so I said ok, leave. A year and a half later he was saying that the album was great! When I did Tenbatsu (divine punishment), my next CD, he said that they weren't comparable.

He liked the album that he was on better.

Of course. With Dennis I'm always wondering "What are you trying to tell me?" The whole band wanted to re-record that album... it wasn't perfect enough. But I was the one spending the money.

Tenbatsu was a CD.

Right. Everyone was against that. They didn't know why I wanted to make a CD. But I was convinced that it had more of a future than LPs. Everyone was

