

News from under the Southern Cross (Edition 42): Japanese decoration for Dame Olivia Newton-John DBE AC

3 November

Great news has arrived! A decoration has been bestowed by His Majesty the Emperor upon our Olivia. As I pondered these glad tidings, many of Olivia's hit songs, with her clear, bright, almost angelic voice came floating back to me.

1. Let Me Be There

It was 1974. When I had just started learning English at Toho Junior High School, the sound of a tune in a cheerful, country-music style entered my ears. Being sung to by Olivia in such easy-to-understand English, as “Let me be there in your morning, Let me be there in your night” with her sweet face, I inadvertently broke into a smile and hummed along “of course!”

I then resolved to fully commit myself to studying the English language!



CD cover of “Let Me Be There”

Provided by Olivia Newton-John Fan Club Japan

2. Have You Never Been Mellow

Junior and senior high school was a time when all of us are living with a sense of urgency with preparations for their exams and with club activities. A hit song that put me at ease during this impressionable period in my life was “Have You Never Been Mellow”. It seems like it was only yesterday that I pulled out my dictionary to discover the meaning of ‘mellow’. Having been used in TV commercials in Japan, everyone has heard the melody at least once.

CD cover of “Have You Never Been Mellow”
 Provided by Olivia Newton-John Fan Club Japan



The treasured hits that remain in my heart aren't limited to these ones alone. There was “Don't Stop Believing” which I listened to over and over again on days when nothing was going my way. There was “Take Me Home, Country Road”, which spent 15 weeks at No.1 on the Oricon Western Music chart (*note: Oricon Inc is a Japanese company offering music news services, including rankings*). Another was the song of innocent but painful and sincere confession “I Honestly Love You”. There was “Hopelessly Devoted to You”, the love song that made me so envy her on-screen boyfriend John Travolta. “Physical”, which was a complete change in tone, also brings out the nostalgia in me.



(From top) CD cover of “I Honestly Love You”,
 “Take Me Home, Country Road”, and “Physical”

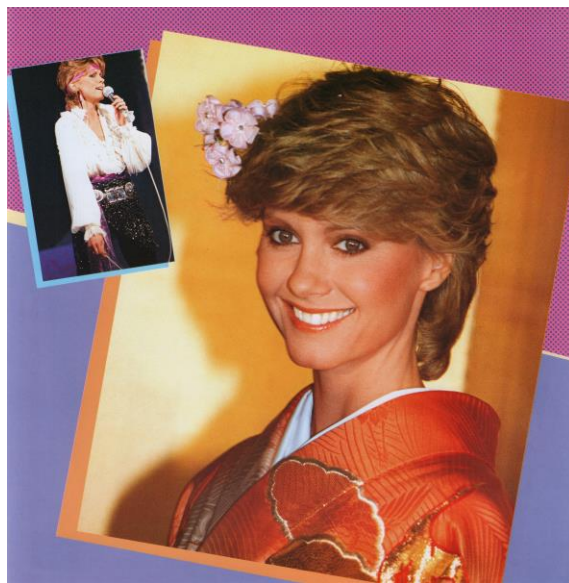
Provided by Olivia Newton-John Fan Club Japan

3. Worldwide superstar to represent Australia

Olivia was born in Cambridge in the United Kingdom in 1948, and moved with her family to Melbourne in Australia when she was 5 years old. She released a number of great songs throughout her heyday in the 1970s and 80s, and has also appeared in movies. Her total volume of sales in CDs and records exceeds 100 million, and she has won an astounding 3 Grammys. She also sang at the Opening Ceremony for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. She is truly one of the worldwide superstars to represent Australia.

4. Links to Japan

Amid all this, she actually has strong links to Japan as well. Not only have the famous tunes detailed above been major hits in Japan, but they have had a huge impact on Japan's pop music scene and its development, as confirmed by many Japanese music critics.



Olivia wearing a kimono in Japan, 1981

Provided by Olivia Newton-John Fan Club Japan

Following her first visit to Japan in 1972, she has been to Japan over 10 times, and has not only performed in Tokyo and Osaka but also in regional cities like Fukuoka and Kanazawa. When she came to Japan in 2015, she became the first foreign female singer to hold a disaster memorial concert in Fukushima City, titled "Pray for Fukushima", which contributed to the reconstruction from the disaster.

オリビア・ニュートン・ジョンさん 福島で公演

復興祈り 歌姫熱唱

世界の歌姫オリビア・ニュートン・ジョンさんのジャパンツアー福島公演は三日、福島市の県文化センターで催された。オリビアさんは東日本大震災と東京電力福島第一原発事故からの本県復興への祈りを込めて歌を披露し、詰め掛けた約千七百人のファンを魅了した。

コンサートはテレビユー福島を主催した。東北地方で福島の主催、県文化振興財団は本県のみでの公演となった。共催、福島民報社など。

オリビアさんは「そよ風」の誘惑、「サナドゥ」などとなる今年、五年ぶりの来日ツアーとして東京、大阪、名古屋の都市部での公演に加え、「Pray For Fukushima」と熱唱。観客は立ち上がってのタイトルを冠した福島公



美しい歌声で福島のファンを魅了したオリビアさん

「これからも応援」

らしたりして、オリビアさんと一緒に歌を楽しんでいました。素晴らしい日だった。これからも福島を応援する」と語った。

ふくしま子ども寄付金に50万円

福島公演を記念し、オリビアさん、ウドー音楽事務所、テレビユー福島の三者合同で、県の東日本大震災ふくしま子ども寄付金に五十万円を寄付した。

コンサート終了後、オリビアさんが内堀雅雄知事に目録を手渡し、握手を交わした。オリビアさんは「とても



内堀知事に目録を手渡し握手を交わすオリビアさん（左）

Newspaper article of "Pray for Fukushima", titled "Praying for Reconstruction – Diva Performs"
 Provided by Fukushima-Minpo Co., Ltd
 (Olivia met the Governor of Fukushima Pref. and donated to the Fukushima Children's Fund.)

5. Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Environment Programme

Olivia's contributions aren't confined to the entertainment world. She has been enthusiastically undertaking actions towards solving environmental problems since the birth of her daughter and in 1989 she was appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Environment Programme. Olivia worked on raising public awareness of environmental preservation activities, and her high profile helped her make a large contribution to that cause.

6. “While listening to Olivia”

Even after her retirement from the frontline of the entertainment world, many people of my generation still continue to feel the presence of Olivia nearby. One reason for this probably lies in the song “While Listening to Olivia”, sung by Japanese singers such as Ozaki Ami and Anri. While it might be “we have nothing to talk about”, many people have enjoyed “listening to Olivia while savoring Jasmine tea” (*translator’s note: These are lines from the song*).

If asked “who first comes to mind when you hear the word ‘Australia?’”, even now many Japanese would probably answer ‘Olivia’. What an amazing career she has had. She is a truly worthy recipient for the decoration, and I will celebrate from the bottom of my heart. Congratulations, Olivia!

7. I’m looking forward to meeting you in Australia!

Actually, I informed Olivia, who lives in the United States, unofficially of this award decision. Such things can’t be helped, it’s a perk of being an ambassador. The instant I heard her clear and down-to-earth voice, I felt 45 years younger. On top of that, to my great delight, she even sent me a video message for Japan. ([The video can be seen here.](#))

I am very much looking forward to holding the conferral ceremony of the decoration in Australia, which Olivia calls home, when travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are eased.



Olivia still fascinates us fans with her unchanging loveliness.