

# FACT

Hiro – Vocals • Tomohiro – Bass • Kazuki – Guitar • Takahiro – Guitar • Eiji – Drums

The island nation of Japan has a long history of both cultural isolationism and a fascination with American pop culture, a paradox that has long made the country a welcome touring haven for foreign rock bands, while its own homegrown artists work to balance both their own unique identity with the sounds of the West. Enter FACT.

Since forming 10 years ago over a mutual love for heavy music, the five-piece has been developing a unique, technically impressive sound that fuses myriad musical influences into something altogether new and indisputably their own.

“The band started out being a metallic hardcore band, but then started developing from there,” explains guitarist Kazuki. “We kept adding new sounds to it; bringing in elements of dance music, electronica, synths, and a lot of poppy, catchy tracks, and having all that come together. We’re trying to do something a little bit different than your typical band.”

What gives FACT such an impressive arsenal of sonic tools with which to create is the band’s obvious love of music with an edge, whether it be old-school thrash metal, contemporary punk, or hardcore, as well as their penchant for crafting powerful hooks that inject a crucial pop element into the mix. It is the union of the key elements of all these genres and more that make FACT’s music not only compelling, but surprisingly broad in its appeal.

“There are definitely elements of Slayer, Metallica, even Anthrax. A lot of the band members started out learning those songs,” says Kazuki. “Then, when the band got together, we collectively liked bands like Strung Out and some of the newer bands that don’t sound thrashy. We didn’t want to sound like any band that came from that melodic hardcore/punk sound; we wanted to do something different. It’s taking elements from all those different genres and combining them together.”

The band’s evolution has culminated in their first full-length release, a self-titled collection of 15 tracks recorded in May 2008, produced by Michael Elvis Baskette (Incubus, Story Of The Year, Chevelle) and mixed by Chris Lord-Alge (Green Day, My Chemical Romance). Their most professional recording to date, FACT is the tangible realization of the group’s ambitious vision.

“This was our first time using a producer, mixer, and big-time mastering engineer,” says Kazuki. “Sonically it was something we’d never had before, and it was the biggest asset to the entire recording process. The procedure—the way we recorded—was different than anything we’d ever done, and what came out of it is something we’re really proud of and excited about. We learned a lot.”

The proof is evident the minute one presses ‘play’: FACT gets right down to business straight from the gate, roaring forth with the stunning metal/electro-dance fusion of the aptly titled “Paradox,” into the soaring emo and crushing metal of “Los Angeles,” complete with fingertapped guitar lines. Tracks with a strong melodic bent, like “Stretch My Arms,” and “Lights Of Vein,” which at times recalls classic Blink-182, provide a refreshing complement to the more crushing moments.

And those moments are plentiful, too: FACT certainly bring the heaviness on the Sepultura-esque “Chain,” as well as on “Reborn” and “CO3,” and with good reason—the album’s aggressive riffs also reflect the themes within the lyrics, which are all written/sung in English.

“The concept of the album is fighting, or war—whether it’s your personal fight, or fighting for someone’s rights, or if there’s an even bigger fight. That’s the kind of theme we had through the entire album,” Kazuki says.

Another unique aspect of FACT is their visual presentation; the band wears traditional Japanese masks, not only hiding their personal identities, but hopefully, some of their external musical signifiers, as well. The idea is to keep you guessing, yet interested, at the same time.

“One aspect of the masks is to try to have people listen to the music rather than looking at us and seeing we’re just another Japanese band,” Kazuki explains. “Another aspect is it’s a traditional Japanese mask, so people will know we’re a Japanese band, but still won’t know what we’re all about, so they have to listen to the music to find out what it is. It’s a way to accept we’re Japanese, but also that we’re here for the music, not looks, or things like that.”

FACT was formed in 1999 when its members, who already knew one another from playing in various local outfits, convened to start anew. After going through the usual, painful process of selecting a band name, the group arrived at FACT, which has since become a telling link to the band’s identity.

“It kind of made sense that we’d picked Fact,” says Kazuki. “We liked that it’s kind of saying, ‘This is who we are; this is what we are,’ and there’s no other meaning to it—it’s what it is. That’s the kind of meaning we’ve been trying to portray.”

Since their inception, FACT has had to work tirelessly to advance their music and careers; Kazuki says at home, Japanese bands aren’t often met with the same enthusiasm as their Western counterparts, nor are they lent the same level of credibility. American bands sometimes attract attention just by virtue of being American, rousing interest from some who might not otherwise be interested.

Pair that with the fact that FACT operate in a loose “genre” of sorts that isn’t incredibly widespread outside of Japan’s big cities, as well as a dearth of venues to play aside from those in Tokyo, and you can start to see why FACT have evolved so radically. Contents under pressure often exude unpredictable, explosive results.

“Where we’re from, there’s no music like this; not many bands, even indie bands out there, do what we do,” Kazuki says. “As for our genre, playing live, it’s more accepting to play in America than Japan, just because we sing in English, and the genre isn’t widespread in Japan yet. There’s a certain core fan base, but it’s not as broad of a fan base as in the U.S.”

In the end, it’s been American bands, including some of those FACT has played with in Japan, who’ve been one of the greatest helps in spreading the band’s music outside their home. Stutterfly, who performed with FACT, passed along FACT’s sampler to other bands, including Rufio and the Used, and the bands have since proclaimed themselves as fans. The support of these and other artists, who’ve both inspired and challenged FACT since the band’s inception, has had an immeasurable impact on the group’s latest efforts. With a new album in hand and their first full U.S. tour planned for spring 2009, it seems FACT are about to make a mark of their own.

“It’s pretty big to get support from an American band. Getting that kind of positive feedback from them gave us inspiration and motivation to do more than the average Japanese band,” says Kazuki. “It gave us the confidence to say, ‘We can try this in America, and become a real band, that tours all over the world.’”

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