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Shonen Knife Reissue Albums in English, Play Pop Montreal

- Posted on Sep 30th 2010 11:30AM by [Steve McLean](#)
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Good Charamel Records

[Shonen Knife](#) has had their ups and downs in North America over their near 30-year career, but the Japanese all-female pop-punk band are now enjoying their highest profile since the early '90s when [Sonic Youth](#), [Redd Kross](#) and [Kurt Cobain](#) were singing their praise.

"When I finally got to see them live, I was transformed into a hysterical nine-year-old girl at a Beatles concert," the [Nirvana](#) frontman told 'Rolling Stone' magazine before inviting Shonen Knife to open on a 1991 UK tour.

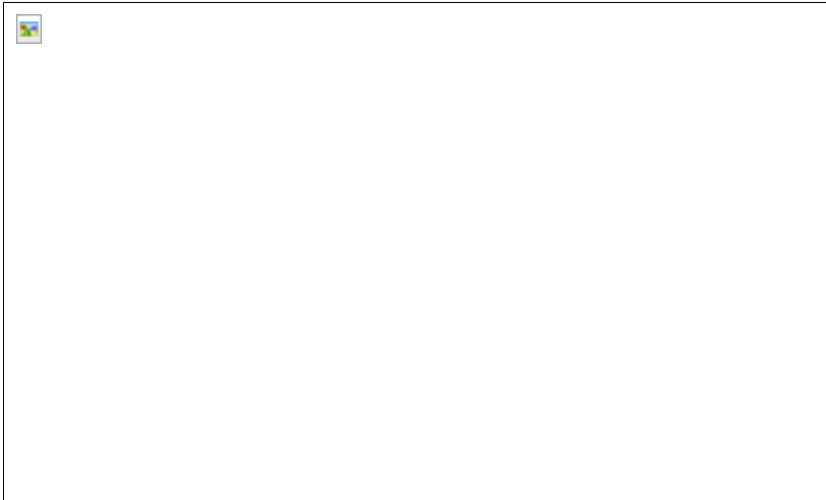
While lead singer-guitarist Naoko Yamano is the only original Shonen Knife member left, different lineups have continued to make records and tour over the ensuing years. The band played in Europe, the Philippines, China and Taiwan earlier this year. Yamano is accompanied on the current North American jaunt by bassist and backing vocalist Ritsuko Taneda and drummer Emi Morimoto.

Shonen Knife has a lot to promote and support while in North America. An English version of a 2007 Japanese disc called 'Fun! fun! fun!' was released on Aug. 31 along with an Anglo version of the more recent 'Free Time.' Both albums are on Buffalo, NY's Good Charamel Records, which was founded by [Goo Goo Dolls](#) member Robby Takac.

A little bit more of a metallic edge can occasionally be noticed on the two records, just part of the evolution of Shonen Knife's sound since 1982's 'Minna Tanoshiku' debut.

"I think my ability for playing guitar and writing songs are a little progressed. I have new members. My skill of studio work evolved," Yamano tells Spinner. "'Free Time' is more powerful and pop album, but my spirit for rock is always the same. I like to write songs about things that regular people don't write."

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Yamano's favourite song subjects still include animals, nature and food, as illustrated by 'Barnacle,' 'Popcorn' and 'I Wanna Eat Cookies' on 'Fun! fun! fun!' and 'Rock 'n' Roll Cake,' 'Capybara' and 'Monster Jellyfish' on 'Free Time.'

While Yamano writes lyrics in both English and Japanese, she prefers to do it in her non-native tongue.

"For me, English is a language of rock music," she says. "Singing in English is more natural for my melody line."

The lyrics don't change much in translation from one language to the other, and Yamano insists she doesn't get upset by accusations that she often writes nonsense.

"I don't mind. I just want to make people happy through our music. Having fun is the most important."

The [Ramones](#) were sometimes similarly criticized, and the New York City punk-pop pioneers have always been one of Yamano's favourite bands. Shonen Knife has performed as a tribute act called the Osaka Ramones, and there's even a song on 'Fun! fun! fun!' called 'Ramones Forever.'

Shonen Knife has contributed material to the Cartoon Network's 'The Powerpuff Girls' soundtracks and recently recorded a cover of 'Who Made Who' for a Japanese [AC/DC](#) tribute album.

"AC/DC often has sexy lyrics," Yamano says. "I didn't want to sing such lyrics, and 'Who Made Who' was safe."

Shonen Knife also contributed three songs to the 'I Love J-Rock' compilation of Japanese bands that also came out on Aug. 31 through Good Charamel. The label's last piece of Shonen Knife material is the 'Live at Mohawk Place' DVD that's available now in some independent music stores and will be sold online starting Oct. 19.

The 18-song live performance DVD was recorded at the tiny Buffalo club last fall as part of Shonen Knife's 'Super Group' tour. Mohawk Place will also be the final stop on Shonen Knife's current North American visit, the band plays there Oct. 2 after hitting Montreal's Cabaret du Mile End Sept. 30 as part of [Pop Montreal](#), and Toronto's Horseshoe Tavern Oct. 1.

More About Shonen Knife on AOL Music

- [Shonen Knife Biography](#)
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