

# EAST MEETS EAST

Asian culture prepares to take the capital by storm as we explore how it has influenced the UAE and grown in popularity in recent years

## ANIME AND THE EMIRATES

Japanese manga and Korean anime enjoy huge popularity here in the UAE, particularly among UAE nationals who have grown fond of the art form over the years.

The rise of Arabic cartoons like *Captain Majid* prove the genre's popularity, but as one UAE resident tells us, many children grew up unknowingly influenced by Japanese culture.

"Back then nobody here knew what anime was," Omar Ahmad Sharif, head of retailer Geeky Lizard, says about his experiences watching anime as a youngster.

"All we knew about cartoons was what we had on the TV and everything was dubbed in Arabic so you didn't question it.

"As we got older we discovered what anime was, and we realised almost every cartoon we saw on TV was actually made in Japan.

"The art from Japan was more

influential on us than Western art; I'm not sure why that was, maybe it's because Japan is geographically much closer as an Eastern country.

"Programmes like *Captain Majid*, *Grendizer* and *Mazinger Z* had a big impact on our youth through the 80s and 90s. And with the growth of the internet, more people could access it and it's continued to grow in popularity."

But it's not just art that has made an impression on the people of the UAE in recent decades.

"Japan has a culture that will always be loved by Emiratis," Omar adds. "Their culture embodies hard work, the importance of family, respectfulness and politeness. This is something that the Arabs and people in the GCC look up to and respect."

The population of the UAE is made up of expats from all corners of the world, each coming together and sharing a little bit of home with one another.

One region that's determined to share its unique offerings is the Far East with events from Japan and Korea lined up to showcase K-culture and all things otaku this month.

So if you're all about anime, consumed by cosplay, craving Korean cuisine or crazy for K-beauty, there are plenty of events to keep you entertained in the next few weeks.

But the influence of the Far East extends beyond the obvious and parallels can be drawn between the cultures here in the capital and overseas.

We explore how this relationship has developed and where the influences lie.

## GET ANIMATED

If you think that Japan's most popular exports are karaoke, origami, Sudoku and sushi then you're in for a shock.

Celebrating Japanese pop culture and bringing fans together, the ANI:ME exhibition is shining a spotlight on all things otaku - an obsessive interest in computer games, anime and other pop culture elements.

The exhibition will celebrate the best of Japanese anime, manga, cinema, music, games, fashion and food under one roof.

Special guests include comic book artists Jeffrey "Chamba" Cruz and Edwin Huang, international cosplayer Phil Mizuno, voice actor Todd Haberkorn and J-pop acts JAM Project, FLOW and Cuushe.

And of course, it wouldn't be an anime exhibition without a cosplay competition. The winner of the UAE national round will be given the opportunity to travel to Japan to represent the country in the finals of the World Cosplay Summit 2017.

Arafaat Ali Khan, co-organiser of ANI:ME: "This will be an amazing experience for friends, families, hardcore and casual anime fans.

"One of our main guests is Yoshitaka

Amano, the character designer for the Final Fantasy franchise. He's bringing one art piece that he did called The Panther, which is going to be sold for \$3.5 million (AED 12.9 million).

"We also have Tetsuro Shimaguchi who did the choreography for *Kill Bill 1* - he starred in the movie as well - who will be doing workshops and demos... We have movie screenings of classic and loved anime films from the Studio Ghibli library as well.

"It's the best way to experience authentic Japanese culture without having to go to Japan."

If you're interested in exploring the relationship between the UAE and Japan, a specially commissioned artwork will be on display by anime artist Long Vo who contributed work to the Street Fighter franchise.

The exhibited work features a selection of local anime characters alongside Arabian oryx, bringing the two different cultures together and exploring common themes.

ANI:ME takes place from 27th to 29th October at du Forum, Yas Island. From AED 95 for a one-day pass. For more information, visit: [animeabudhabi.com](http://animeabudhabi.com)

## SAY HALLYU

Returning to Abu Dhabi for the fourth time, the Korea Festival 2016 is bigger than ever this year marking the first city-wide cultural event since the opening of the Korean Cultural Center.

Hosted at three locations including the National Theatre, the Corniche and UAE University in Al Ain, the two-week event will celebrate everything from pop culture and entertainment to more traditional performances.

The event begins at the National Theatre on 27th October with a Korean theatre performance of the classic play *Hongdo* (left) before a Korean speech contest where Emiratis interested in the language will test their skills.

Over the next few days, makeup artist Calary Girl, who has over 700,000 subscribers on YouTube, will share the biggest trends

in Korea, and there will be a screening of the Korean film *Hanji* complemented by a meet-and-greet with one of the film's stars, Yeh Jiwon.

On 3rd and 4th November on the Corniche, visitors will get the chance to sample Korean cuisine, join a cooking class and immerse themselves in a range of K-content including animations, drama, virtual reality games, workshops and dance performances from Goblin Party and Lion Dance.

For the final edition on 6th November, fans in Al Ain will enjoy a condensed version of the festival with acts and workshops from previous locations.

Open to everyone, the diverse attractions are completely free of charge but operate on a first come first serve basis, so arrive early to avoid disappointment.

To find out more, visit: [uae.korean-culture.org](http://uae.korean-culture.org)

## BLURRING BOUNDARIES

Drawing parallels between two Eastern nations, a new art exhibition at NYUAD is putting the UAE and Japan in the frame together.

Exploring the relationship between the Emirates and the Land of the Rising Sun, *East-East: UAE Meets Japan* highlights areas of overlapping cultural practices, beliefs and heritage.

Sophie Mayuko Arni, curator of the exhibition, explains: "I wanted to see if there's a bridge between the UAE and Japan.

"The main thing that drew me to explore the relationship between these two countries is the balance between tradition and modernity and I thought it would be interesting to explore through art.

"Both countries have strong traditions, moral values and codes dating back hundreds of years but each are incredibly futuristic in terms of their architecture and technology. That was the conceptual thinking behind the exhibition."

The exhibition features the work of four Emirati artists: Ahmed al Anzi, Amna al Maamari, Khalid Mezaina and Al Anood Al Obaidly.

Interpreting the overall concept in different ways, the installations include a range of illustrations, sculptures and textile work that explores the similarities between the nations and their relationship with one another.

"I met with the artists and provided them with knowledge of Japanese art history that would fit their existing practice.

"Each of them had something amazing and unique to contribute and I'm so pleased with what we have ended up with after eight months working together.

"I would love to export this exhibition to Japan and maybe have Japanese artists do work about the UAE to have the full dialogue. That might be the next step in exploring the relationship."

*East-East: UAE Meets Japan* runs until 31st October at NYUAD Arts Centre, Saadiyat Island. Free. To find out more, visit: [nyuad.nyu.edu](http://nyuad.nyu.edu)

Khalid Mezaina, Maiden, 2016



Khalid Mezaina, Man, 2016





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**ASIAN  
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**CULTURES COMBINE AS THE  
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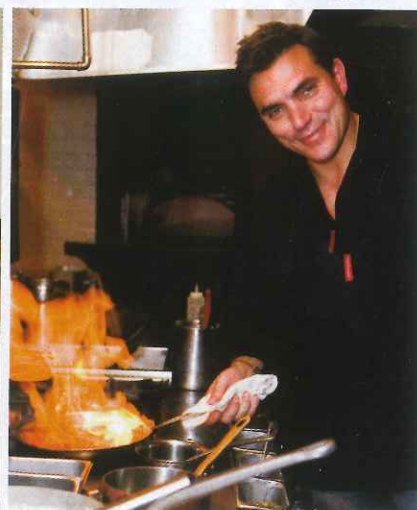
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