

Konnichi wa, Everyone!

Wow! What an amazing Saturday we had! The weather was perfect, the festival atmosphere was joyful, and the performances were top-notch! As the MC on the main stage, I only had one opportunity to walk the entire festival, and it was truly magical to see so many people enjoying the performances and the incredible food from all the fabulous vendors. I think we were pleasantly surprised how many locals came to the Strip to celebrate the **10th Annual Aki Matsuri, presented by MGM Resorts Japan.**

In case you missed the festival this year, there was an amazing Bridal Kimono Quick Change show by Jane Yamano and the Yamano Ryu Teachers from Japan, along with the numerous performances on the Pepsi Stage. There was also the Cosplay Event and Mochi pounding at the North Stage, and for the first time ever, we had a Taiko Showcase at the Bliss Stage which featured groups from Las Vegas, California, Hawaii and Japan. As if that wasn't enough, we had an Ikebana (Japanese flower arranging) demonstration, a haiku contest, and our popular Sake Pavilion inside New York, New York Hotel and Casino. And the evening concluded with the traditional Bon Odori (dance) around the Yagura overlooking Las Vegas Boulevard.

I would like to thank Jim Murren, Jiro Kawakami, and MGM Resorts Japan for their title sponsorship and for hosting our festival at The Park and New York New York Hotel and Casino. It was nice to see Japanese lanterns and flags swaying in the light breeze on the Brooklyn Bridge. Also, I must thank our other sponsors, the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, Asahi Japan's #1 Beer, H.I.S. Travel, Japan Airlines/American Airlines, and Nevada Kanko Service. Thank you to all of our extremely talented local performers and our guests from Japan, who all volunteer their time and travel expenses to perform at our annual event. Thanks to the entire Japanese Festival Association (JFAN) board members and consultants who did an amazing job behind the scenes, and for their hard work all year long! And of course, we couldn't do it without all of YOU attending this year cheering our performers, dining on the delicious food, buying unique souvenirs from our vendors, and dancing the night away.

On behalf of all of us on the JFAN board, **ARIGATOU GOZAIMASU (THANK YOU)!** We can't wait to see you again next year!

Gene Sugano
JFAN President