

Work in Japan has only begun

Band brings music, awareness of last year's earthquake to Ottawa

TONY LOFARO

Buildings are being reconstructed, roads repaired and cleanup continues in and around Sendai, Japan, but the coastal region is still a wasteland with thousands of homes destroyed, said an Ottawa musician who lives there.

It's almost a year since the Great East Japan Earthquake hit with a magnitude of 9.0 off the Pacific coast of Tohoku region and killed and injured tens of thousands of people. There were meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and the earthquake triggered powerful tsunami waves.

March 11 is the first anniversary of the earthquake. As a reminder of how much more needs to be done, the Embassy of Japan brought the band Monkey Majik — with two Canadian and two Japanese musicians — to perform concerts in Ottawa and Toronto.

"A lot of people are very positive about rebuilding and just trying to get their lives back to normal," said Maynard Plant, who along with his brother, Blaise, and friends Hideki Mori and Takuya Kikuchi formed the pop-rock band in 2000. (Blaise Plant spoke frequently to the *Citizen* in the days and months following the quake.)

The band performed a free concert Tuesday night at Zaphod Beeblebrox on York Street. They were here to connect with fans and share their experiences of the disaster.

"Of course we will always remember," said Maynard Plant in an interview prior to the show.

He said Japanese people are "very strong" and "courageous" and during relief efforts he saw their indomitable spirit more than once. He said he volunteered in the cleanup



JEAN LEVAC, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

The Embassy of Japan brought the band Monkey Majik to Canada to play in Ottawa and Toronto. Bottom, from left, Maynard Plant and Hideki Mori. Top, from left, Blaise Plant and Takuya Kikuchi.

in the Sendai region alongside other Japanese and in some cases he only learned afterwards that some volunteers lost family members.

"You work with a guy, shoveling and cleaning up homes and when you chit-chat with them you just think he's a regular Joe going through the same experiences as you are. But then he tells you how he lost his wife and daughter and how he had to let go of their hands because the force of the water was too strong," he said.

Maynard's bandmate Takuya Kikuchi said Japanese people are motivated to rebuild the towns and cities.

"There's a courageous sentiment among everyone to just keep moving forward for now because even though a year has gone by we are still at the beginning," he said, through a translator.

WATCH a video of the Plant brothers and their bandmates at

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"It's amazing how quickly the infrastructure has been put back into place in the areas that were hit by the earthquake."

Maynard said his bandmates are finding solace in music and last year established the Send Love project. They held an outdoor charity concert in Osaka in July that raised about \$200,000.

The band's latest single *Hero* is a campaign song for the Japanese Red Cross.

"Music takes my mind off everything when I am on stage. You got lost in it and the audience does too," said Maynard.