**DECONSTRUCTING YOSHI**

**How one Japanese man has made it his business to spread happiness**

By Omar Sommereyns

You can see it in his eyes. They dart about restlessly, as he moves across a lush property, honing in on details that may or may not be relevant or striking to the untrained viewer. It engulfs him, while he stands in a bustling commercial kitchen, carefully tasting gourmet edibles on the plate in front of him while an anxious chef looks on in anticipation; or as he pleasurably sniffs at flower petals, absorbing the aroma and observing their differing color combinations, his senses highly acute.

These are all elements that fuse and contribute to the passion of famed Japanese wedding/event producer, Yoshi Nojiri—the subject of a new documentary titled *The Ultimate Wedding Planner*, produced by Miami Beach-based Sea Star Films and directed by Celia Evans. It’s a story about someone achieving global success, but it’s also more than that. Nojiri’s ascent and multifaceted personality provide an insightful case study on what it means to be zealously immersed and engaged in what you do (whatever that may be), which can beget fulfillment, prosperity, and even happiness in the long-run.

“I expect people to be obsessed with their work,” Nojiri tells *Global Trend News*. “I don’t care for a ho-hum existence. You should quit if you don’t have passion. Go big or go home.”

Nojiri himself had to start from scratch, although it was chance that gave him the impetus to embark on his vocation. “When I was younger, I wanted to become like my father, who’s the president of a construction company,” he says. “But he told me my older brother would eventually take over. That's why I had to think of my own business for the future—find my own way.”

When he was 20, Nojiri attended a friend’s wedding party, which he found to be rather banal, even insipid. He did some research and realized that the Japanese wedding market was huge, yet the actual events at the time were boringly conventional and unfashionable, so he made it his mission to change that, to tap into people’s imaginations and create the most far-out and fanciful realms of wonderment in which to party and celebrate a union.

About 15 years ago, with $200,000 borrowed from his father and an office of only three people, he launched his company, now called One Heart Weddings. He has since built a wedding planning empire, often using unorthodox methods, like donning a Santa suit on Christmas Day as he gave a potential investor his proposal as a “present” since the latter would soon enough reap the benefits (and thereafter managed to get $5 million from him to build his dream wedding venue in Tokyo). Before he knew it, at only 28, he was able to take his company public—the youngest Japanese businessman to do in the country’s history. He now produces over 22,000 weddings a year, as well as sumptuous events for such luxury clients as Audi, Cartier, Dior, and Ferrari.

But back to Nojiri’s passion. You see it in his painstaking attention to detail: his weddings run the gamut from a Middle Eastern theme with authentic Moroccan rugs and waiters serving mint tea and finger foods in ethnic garments; to *Alice in Wonderland*-style fantasies with tables full of plump marshmallows, menus that look like antique fairy tale books, and a six-foot-tall cake topped with the couple’s initials encrusted with Swarovski crystals; to a showy, luxurious affair with fine cheeses, Champagne, and cigars for all guests, plus leather name cards doubling as take-home bag-tags.

He’s also gone global, having organized two major events in Hawaii, including a record release party for Carmen Electra (which was fittingly attended by director Adam Shankman of *The Wedding Planner*) and the vow renewal party for Kiss rocker Gene Simmons and wife Shannon Tweed, where he flew in crystal chandeliers from Las Vegas and decked them out with thousands of wild orchids.

Even if Nojiri is a perfectionist (and perhaps difficult with his staff) to the point of obsession, his modus operandi is contagious, transferring kinetically to his employees who progressively aspire to the same work ethic. They each go through intensive training for a six month period, where they focus on learning everything Nojiri cares about in creating his events, down to the littlest minutiae—from how to shoot vivid photos to selecting and designing themed paper items.

“My style is to challenge everything,” he says, pointing out he won’t be slowing down anytime soon. “And then the result—the most important attribute of this company is our spirit to make people happy and entertain them. Our whole staff truly enjoys making people happy.”