

Vision for Esports and Tokyo's Draw

For this Saudi prince, both Tokyo and esports are something special, providing excitement and inspiration.

His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan Al-Saud, chairman of the Saudi Esports Federation, explained his vision for esports, and the attraction of Tokyo, during an interview in his favorite destination.

—What is the purpose of your visit to Japan?

To meet with some of our partners. How can we work with our partners to start looking at (the Middle East) as an individual market? So many gaming companies look at us as EMEA—Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. We deserve our own regional hub, our own localization, a Middle East office—not just an EMEA office.

—What is your vision for the development of esports in Saudi?

We are always saying our ambition in Saudi is to become a global hub for gaming and esports. Right now, Tokyo is a global hub together with Seoul, Los Angeles, Montreal, etc.

—Tell us about the attractiveness of esports.

Gaming is a way to learn to communicate: to build a community. Electronic gaming is a new version of that. It is borderless.

—What is your vision for the future of esports?

The gaming and esports industry changes on a daily

basis, not weekly or monthly. A new game comes up and an old game goes away but there is one thing that does not change: that's the community. You should focus on people behind the gaming industry, people behind esports, people who are playing. The community is part of this. That's how you can stay ahead of the curve. That's how you can keep a finger on the pulse of what is happening. That's how you know you are at the forefront of the industry rather than being left behind. Community is the most important thing. I expect future generations to build on everything we have done.

—Do you want Japan to continue leading the esports industry?

Absolutely. From an esports angle and a gaming angle, you cannot talk about the history of games without talking about Japan. It is an integral part and really the founding father of the gaming industry. The world is a better place with Tokyo being part of this industry.

—Is there anything you want to do next in Japan?

I met Hideo Kojima* on my last visit. I'm a huge fan. I would love an opportunity to explore, not just with him but with other creators here, how we can collaborate to bring some of the Saudi stories to life through their creative minds. It has nothing to do with acquisition. This is pure collaboration. If this is possible, it would be amazing.

—Tell us about your impressions of Tokyo.

If I am being completely honest, Tokyo is one of my favorite places. I come back here as often as I can. There are few places where I feel more comfortable: it is just one of those places where I can relax and enjoy myself.

—What is your most favorite place in Tokyo?

My first home is Saudi Arabia. This is my second home. I enjoy being here more than traveling to most other places. I feel freer in Tokyo than I do in most



Prince Faisal during this interview

other places. I love walking around the gardens of the Imperial Palace especially when it starts to get dark. Obviously, as a gamer, Akihabara is a must-see. There is no better place in the world to just sit down and watch people than Shinjuku. Ginza for me is much more relaxing. I like to stay in this area because of the ready access to train stations and the ease of walking. I like to discover. So, I have not found my favorite place in Tokyo yet: I am going to keep looking. Visiting Tokyo once or twice a year is simply not often enough.

—What are Tokyo's strongest points?

For me, it is the history of its culture. There is something so unique about Tokyo and about the people here, the city and the culture, which you will not find anywhere else. In Ginza, for example, everything is organized and clean. It blows my mind. There are no cans on the street. You can't find things like that anywhere else. It is what draws people in and makes people want to come back. And people here are obviously welcoming, polite, and kind.



Photo: Yaroslav Astakhov – stock.adobe.com/jp



Prince Faisal at an esports event venue Photo: courtesy of the Saudi Esports Federation

*Hideo Kojima: Game creator, known for his blockbuster titles such as the Metal Gear series and Death Stranding. He set up Kojima Productions in 2015.