

LOAD



NIPPON PROJECT SPECIAL EDITION
SPECIAL FAN VERSION

Written by Christine S.
Photos Courtesy of Pony Canyon



Don't worry about the future of Japan's "boy bands", if you've been wondering just where Japan's boy/girl bands have been going, look no further. Hip hop dance units such as Lead have made their way into mainstream media seemingly paving a way for a new generation.

Looking at the vast majority of boy/girl bands in Japan appearing after 2000, taste in mainstream society has turned to cute boys and girls singing catchy karaoke-style tunes (more so than before) that sell and often make Oricon Chart rankings (equivalent to the Billboards). When you think of Japan's music industry and its ability to produce legions of pop groups, one may wonder just where the good ones have gone. Well like most, they're all underground, under-rated and/or under promoted. After all, Japan is known for its cute idols, cute groups and catchy tunes, but when it comes to hip hop (or "hip pop") and R&B, the only popular

names include ZEEBRA, KREVA, Crystal Kay, m-flo, AI and Amuro Namie who crossed over from "Pop Queen" to the "Queen of Hip-Pop".

Most dancers who grow up with the passion for dancing and possess the skill to do so, progress to become professional dancers for major artists. Hardly ever do you get a whole crew to become a "boy band", especially in Japan. However, some management companies in Japan have managed to take young aspiring artists, train them and then send them off to the appropriate labels resulting in groups like w-inds., FLAME and Lead (also referred to as wFL). No, Lead isn't your average boy band, they are a group of young guys who trained to become what they wanted to be without losing sight or falling into the trap of the typical boy band stereotype.

Kickin' it old school – is not something you hear everyday in the current Japanese music scene. Of course you will always have the J-"Pop" artists, but when it comes to hip hop dance units in Japan, Lead is "kickin' it old school" and bringing it back. They aren't your average dance crew; they sing, rap and are b-boys. The group is known for their hip-hop and break dancing moves making them one of the few "boy bands" in Japan's mainstream music scene that are truly hip-hop.

Every group has its roots, and while some would like to say that they aren't really a dance crew, their roots are hip hop and along the way pop played a role in melding them into their current form.

Starting off at the average age of 14, Hiroki Nakadoi, Shinya Taniuchi and Akira Kagimoto all shared the same passion when they met *Caless Vocal and Dance School* in Osaka,

while Keita Furuya was back home in Fukuoka doing his thing to get into the industry. Their inspirations for becoming what they are today stem from both Japanese and American artist alike. Japanese 90's artist, DA PUMP, has been an inspiration for the group since they formed (they are Lead's "senpai" (older brother); also Nujabes, a hip hop Japanese producer/DJ. Some American inspirations range from Shawn Desman to Ne-Yo to Justin Timberlake.

Some fans seem to think they are one of the more under rated groups in Japan. They're not a group formed by a company for mere show and looks. Lead is a talented group of guys who started out just like any dance crew. Dance training at a young age, forming their own crew and performing wherever they can. They were't put together randomly from different parts of the country. They were brought together through their love of dance and singing.

The original crew, *ryhmix* (later changed to "flow"), was founded in March 2002 by Hiroki, Shinya and Akira. They performed on the streets of Shiroten in Osaka. During that time Keita Furuya (from Fukuoka) auditioned and won the Kyushu Okinawa Starlight Audition held on April 13, 2002. Hearing of his win, flow tracked Keita down and he officially joined flow on May 22, 2002. After his joining they changed their name to Lead (aka the 4 MCs). The name change was made "in hopes to become a leading group of the age."

Their first live together as Lead, was held at Osaka Castle Park.

In front of 7,000 spectators and they presented the crowd with not only their dancing, but singing and rapping as well, making their first street live a great success. This paved an opportunity for the group, to become the opening act for already established group, w-inds., in their 2002 ~1st Message~ Tour in front of 120,000 people. This surprised the group tremendously as it was their first time in front of a huge audience.

After such a succesful tour, they released their debut single, "Manatsu no Magic" (Midsummer's Magic) and won the award for "Best newcomer" at the 44th Japan Record Awards in December of 2002. Their second single, "Show me the way" outsold their first single, selling 38,000 copies and charting in at #7 on Oricon Charts. From then on the group has released at a steady flow resulting in 12 more singles that charted in the top 20 on Oricon. Their singles have been used as theme songs for several shows including, Shounen Chample (a hip hop dance show), Mezashi TV, the movie "Deep Love ~Ayu's Story~" and many others. Their first album, "Life on da beat", was a mere introduction into what was to come.

A mixture of pop, hip hop, electronica, funk, mixed in with a bit of (American) '70's flavor and a tad bit of rock, this was a group well on their way to becoming the future of hip pop.

To date, the group has released 14 singles (2002-2008) and five albums (2003-2008) including a "Singles Collection" (09.14.2007) released only in Taiwan, reaching #1 on

Lead CD Single Release Event, "STAND UP!" Live





HIROKI NAKANO

1985.07.26, AB
Osaka, Japan



SHINYA TANIGUCHI

1987.09.23, A
Osaka, Japan



AKIRA KAGIMOTO

1988.08.20, O
Nara, Japan

KEITA FURUYA

1988.06.13, A
Fukuoka, Japan



on the country's charts. "Summer Madness" (2006) sent them south of Japan, to film the promotional video in Saipan.

The twelfth single, "Drive Alive" gained them massive attention from overseas fans (old and new alike), as the song was catchy and had an image of maturity mixed in. They appeared on Yahoo! Live Talk in a "Dream Collaboration" to promote this single with another group. Their thirteenth single, "Umi" (Ocean), has a Chinese (Beijing) version which they sang at their Taiwan live in October 2007. Lead marked their way into Taiwan charts in 2005 with their release of "Virgin Blue" (a remake of Japanese pop artist SALLY's 1985 song) in early 2006. This opened the way for an opportunity the group had been waiting a long time for: to perform overseas.

Following in the footsteps of most Japanese artists, they held their first overseas live in Taipei, Taiwan. On September 25, 2007, Lead was greeted by 1500 fans at their first one-man live held in Taipei's main hall. On September 23rd (prior to their arrival in Taipei), 500 fans waited for them at Taipei International Airport on and greeted Shinya with a "Happy Birthday". Turning 20, he stated, "It's different to celebrate your birthday overseas, but I'm really happy". On the day of the live, they presented Shinya with a cake, making it a birthday he wouldn't forget.

The group mentioned that they experienced something different from Japan. Leader of the group, Hiroki, stated that "the feeling here is different from Japan, it's more loud." For Akira, this would be his first time visiting his mother's native country, Akira hoped that the audience could feel the message of their songs. While for Keita, his was a different feeling, "It's not something every 19 year old can experience and for t

hat I'm grateful", he said. It was an exciting experience for all of them.

Since early on, their songs have had some English phrases (like all Japanese artists) and somewhat risqué lyrics for boys of such a young age. Songs such as "Night Deluxe" and "Extreme Girl" from their second album, "Brand New Era" (08.25.2004) raised eyebrows. The third album, "Lead! Heat! Beat!" (08.10.2005) was to be the beginning of their transition into their fourth album.

The fourth album, [4], was titled so because it was their fourth album, fourth year together and was dedicated to the fans, the concept being that if you rearranged the letters and you'd get, "For U". The group's music was gradually changing and maturing. Lyrics were getting more risqué, the beats were following that of a more western style, and dance moves were becoming more provocative. The group was now showing more sex appeal and appealing to a broader audience other than the teenage-girl. Not just young girls, but young boys look up to Lead when it comes to dancing. They are b-boys incorporating popping, and old school locking in their dance, rarely seen in Japan's boy band industry.

It's a new year for them and they have certainly stepped up to a style that might be nostalgic to music lovers of the nineties. This year proves to be the year where we can experience what Lead is really about.

Going back to their old school hip hop roots, their recent single, "STAND UP!" (02.05.2008) is written by the members themselves and seems to date back to American hip hop in the early nineties (this single is also the first tie-in they have with an anime, being the ending theme to *Katekyō Hitman REBORN!*). Having writ

Lead UPTURN 2007 ~B.W.R.~ Live Tour (Taipei, Taiwan)



*"It's different to celebrate your
birthday overseas, but I'm really happy"*



ten the lyrics and composing the melody proved to be a challenging task for them, but has been in the works for some time (since 2007). This single seemed to center on what they wanted to do most and something that represented them as *Lead*. Beats such as the one's used in the song are common among hip hop artists all over the world; but from a "boy band" in Japan? Hardly. Take your old school beats and mix it with some Japanese flavor because

the 4 MCs are bringing it old school. The bus doesn't stop there. Take a listen to their latest songs on their new album, "*Feel the Vibes*" (03.15.2008). It's been a year and seven months since the group released a full length album. The fifth album by the group is said to be their first "real" album. Some may ask "why?" when they have released previous albums, but this album seems a bit more personal. The members were involved

in the process of making this album. They thought of various ideas for the album, what they wanted, and the feelings they wanted to convey. Some of the toughest parts of creating the album revolved around how they could improve certain songs. Shinya seems to have had the most challenging task as he co-wrote a few songs (lyrically) on the album (along with Akira and DJ Taku). The album also has special guests from America, *The Substitute Teachers*, a hip hop group



Lead CD Album Release Event, 'Feel the Vibes'

hailing from California. The album itself shows a strong influence in R&B and hip hop. Adding some new texture to the group; they worked with LL Brothers for the first time. The change in style required a lot of study. Each member has their "own" song (more like dominant singer) and includes a mixture of R&B, hip hop, electronica and a tad bit of pop/rock. Look forward to upcoming releases as the guys plan on writing more of their own music.

To celebrate their newest single and album, the group held two release events. The first event "*STAND UP!*" was held in Kawasaki on February 8, 2008. Three-thousand fans waited for the group

as they performed their new single and some previous singles. They also held a hand-shake event, in which 3,500 lucky fans were able to meet and shake hands with the members (a special coupon was needed to attend the event, available only in the limited edition of the single). Needless to say they finished in three and half hours. Some fans even cried after shaking hands with the group.

The second release event was the "*Feel the Vibes*" event, which was held on March 15, 2008 at Yoyogi Park. The outside arena filled with three-thousand fans, who patiently awaited for the group as they performed songs including "*Drive Alive*", "*Umi*" and "*STAND UP!*" from

the new album and old singles such as "*Night Deluxe*". The event that day was cloudy but this didn't stop them. The group itself was determined to perform in any condition. Even Hiroki, who was getting over a cold was unfazed.

Not only are they accomplished artists, but they've appeared in several movies and dramas. The group itself starred in two movies, "*Baoutaoshi*" (2003) and "*Kamachi*" (2004). In 2004, Keita starred in the TV Drama and Movie, "*Deep Love ~Ayu no Monogatari~*" (Ayu's story) (2004). Their seventh single "*Tenohira wo taiyo ni*" (Palm to the sun) was a double A-side single, with "*Delight*" as the opening theme to

the drama. Akira starred in the movie, “*Tenshi ga kureta mono*” (A gift from an Angel) (2007).

Starting in 2007 they appeared in various drama’s on Vision Cast which is only viewable by cell phone in Japan. Hiroki, Shinya and Akira all starred in “*Natsu owaranai!!*” (It doesn’t end in Summer!), while Keita starred in “*Kanojo to boku to toshokan*” (“She, the library, and I”; which also starred Akira) and “*FLOWERS Jyunketsu no Yuri*” (FLOWERS- The Lily of

Purity) and Shinya in “*Toy Fireworks*”. Since starting their career, they appeared in various shows as guests as well as having their own shows. The first show they appeared on was an Osaka TV show, “*DOYAH*” (2003-2005) which features various celebrities as well as other artists. From 2003-2005 they’ve appeared in *PikaPuri*, *XEBEC Online* and *Factory Generation*; a show that featured Vision Factory artists. After three years, the group had their

very own show, *Lead Generation*, which only aired for one season. They are also frequent guests on the TV show *Make on the Holiday (M-ON)*, and was offered a mini corner on the show called “*Bura-lead*” in 2006.

This year proves to be a breaking point for them as they seem busier than ever. With the release of a single and an album in a month’s time; release events, their annual fan club event. Last year they did a collaboration concert with fellow manage



Lead CD Album Release Event, ‘Feel the Vibes’

ment artist, *FLAME* called “**BIGUP! LIVE**”. This year’s fanclub event included five shows in three days with *FLAME* at the end of April called “*FLAME & Lead Bigup Live*” during Golden week. They also participated in the “*One + Love World Down Syndrome Day*” event held on March 20, 2008 in Osaka; along with other musical guests and dance crews for a street live performance. Many organizations around the world participate in this event to raise public awareness of Down Syndrome. Right now, the group is preparing for their summer tour, “*Upturn 2008*”, which will start in early August and will show in five cities.

In October 2007, Lead started their own video blog. The blog shows snippets of the group’s daily activities to their fans. In some cases they show behind the scenes of their work and private lives. They even help the fans prepare for their lives by showing them how to do dance moves that the group asks the fans to participate in during the live itself. Fans can leave comments as well, showing that interaction with their fans is important to them.



As they start off their year with a bang, we were able to catch up with the guys for a one on one.

Please introduce yourselves.

We are Hiroki, Akira and Shinya from Osaka, and Keita is from Fukuoka. The average age is around 20.

When and how did you first become interested in music/dancing?

Keita: When I was in my 4th year in elementary school. Da Pump is one of my inspirations and that's when I started dancing.

Akira: I've always wanted to be in entertainment world, and so I started going to dance school and would commute back and forth when I was in elementary and junior high school.

Shinya: When I was in elementary school, my little sister was going to dance school and I used to go with her, and then I started to want to dance as well.

Hiroki: My mother was always interested in the entertainment world, and she left it to me, so needless to say that's when I started going to dance school.

What/who are your musical/dance influences? What is your favorite style of dance?

Keita: Da Pump. We started off hip hop, so its hip hop.

Your formation as a group is still a bit un-clear, can you explain how LEAD came to be?

Hiroki: Well Shinya, Akira and myself went to the same dance school, we even formed our own crew and did street performances. Keita had won an audition and was chosen



for our group, and that's how we were formed.

Who came up with the name LEAD? What does it mean?

Akira: Well at the time, the four of us were thinking of a name and we wanted to be a leading group of the age, and we thought that, *that* would be the perfect name, so we chose Lead.

You toured with w-inds. before LEAD's debut, what was that like?

Shinya: I was so surprised, because we were in front of 10,000's of people. At first I was so nervous that I couldn't even look forward.

When it was announced that you would debut how did you feel?

Hiroki: Well it was decided after only being together for a month, so it was like a dream.

What were your feelings after that first single/album release?

Hiroki: We all went out and bought the CD's.

You released a Taiwan Singles Collection, can you describe your feelings/thoughts when hearing that it made #1 on Taiwan charts?

Akira: I thought, "I love Taiwan!!"

You also sang in Mandarin, was it harder to convey the songs in a different language?



Keita: Well even though its not our native language, I thought that they can still understand our songs regardless.

Speaking of singles, your newest single, Stand Up, I see you guys wrote the lyrics for it. What were your thoughts on writing?

Shinya: They just kinda came out for during event and concert.

Were you the one's who approached this idea?

Akira: Yeah

What was the creative process behind this single? (design, concept, production)

Hiroki: To stand up on our feet, be independent and be poppy.

Did you have someone in mind to write the song?

Shinya & Akira: The members, fans and our friends.

Did you have a say in the composition of the song or did you write the lyrics first then music?

Keita: It was from the music first.

What was the hardest part in doing this single?

Keita: We made sure tha none of us overlapped each other.

Did you also choreograph the dance to this song as well?

Keita: Yeah, recently we've been doing it ourselves.



After getting a taste of being a part of a composing team, is this something you all plan on doing in the future? How about as solo artists?

Hiroki: We do plan on continuing writing and making our own songs. We've never even thought about doing solo work.

Can we expect any more future releases with LEAD as a composer as well as the lyricist?

Akira: We're gonna do our best!

<Taiwan Concert 2007/ Performing outside of Japan>

How do you prepare yourselves before each live during the tour?

Shinya: We usually think of a concept first.

Are there any easy or hard parts when on tour?

Hiroki: Watching our [physical] conditions.

What is the happiest memory you have being on tour?

Keita: When were in the middle of the doing the tour.

What was/is the most challenging thing you've had being on tour?

Akira: That the hard things are also the fun things.

When you were told about doing a live in Taiwan, how did you feel?

Hiroki: We finally made it! Taiwan here we come!!

Did you do anything different in terms of preparation for this live?

Akira: Singing in Mandarin.

How different is the atmosphere from Japan and Taiwan?

Shinya: Taiwan has such an exciting image.

Are the fans (the audience) different from your fans in Japan? If so, how are they different?

Keita: The Taiwan fans are more straight forward, they're so enthusiastic and thankful.

This question is for Shinya, were you surprised when fans greeted



you on your birthday?

Shinya: I was deeply moved by it.

Were you surprised that you have many fans in Taiwan?

Shinya: I was pretty amazed by it and I'm thankful for it.

Did you guys get to do any sightseeing in Taiwan? Visit any famous places? Eat authentic Taiwanese food?

Keita: We went out to the night markets. Had some "shouronpau" and went to a Ma po noodle shop.

Were you easily recognized?

Hiroki: Where ever we went we were surrounded by our loving fans.

Knowing that many artists have done overseas lives, do you feel your future will follow the same path?

Keita: If you call for us, we will be happy to go.

If not/so, can you please share your thoughts on this?

Akira: No matter the time or place I would love to go.

You have many fans outside of Asia, where would you like to go next?

Hiroki: We are all so inexperienced so we would like to go to many different places.

There are many Japanese artists that have come to America and Europe, would LEAD be interested in breaking outside of Asia and coming to America and Europe?

Shinya: Of course! We're going to do our best!

Please give a message to all your overseas fans.

Hiroki: There are so many challenges and various things we'd like to do. Please continue to support us! (continued on the next page)

*"I'm looking forward to the day that
I'll be able to meet you all."*



"We'll keep doing our best"



“STAND UP!” CD Release event
&
“Feel The Vibes” CD Release event
(February & March 2008)



AVAILABLE NOW!!

ANNA TSUCHIYA



SEDUCING THE WORLD,
ONE SONG AT A TIME

NIPPON PROJECT SPECIAL EDITION

INTERVIEW & ARTICLE BY: CHRISTINE SUNGA
EDITOR: RIN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AVEX ENTERTAINMENT, INC

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Drive Alive

The 12th installment from the group, this single is diverse in the musical sense. The song “Drive Alive” fuses electronic rock and pop beats that make this song great when heard live. The title might seem a bit off, but it’s a very “I won’t give up no matter what people tell” me song. It will get you going no matter what, and some people might think of a car commercial when they hear this song (not just cause of the title but it can resemble that feeling in the music itself). It uses a lot of electronic beats and synthesizers. “Get Dizzy” is your hip “poppy” song, it would not be a single by the group if they weren’t rapping and you didn’t hear the DJ scratches embedded in the song. It’s a catchy, happy and poppy tune that you’ll find yourself singing or whistling to it. The third track, “Love & Everything” is the slowest song of the single, it’s not a ballad but more of a track made for a concert. It’s very simple and easy going, lyrically and musically. Overall this single is a hip pop type single with electro thrown in. A bonus is the DVD, with the PV making and offshoot.

Regular Edition (CD)
PCCA-02430 1,260yen
release: 2007.03.14

M-1 Drive Alive
M-2 GET DIZZY
M-3 Love&Everything
M-4 Drive Alive (instru)



Limited Edition (CD+DVD)
PCCA-02429 1,575yen
release: 2007.03.14

M-1 Drive Alive
M-2 GET DIZZY
M-3 Love&Everything
M-4 Drive Alive (instru)

DVD: PV, Offshoot, Making

Umi

The second single that is made for the summer time love (Summer Madness was the first). This song should appease a majority of people who are open to all sorts of music. “Umi” (Sea) starts off with a little bit of that rock flavor because it fuses rock and rap then goes into a reggae tone with a bit of that jazz bass thrown in. It’s a fuse of different styles thrown into a blender. It’s a song that is great to listen to because its soothing (musically). “Sora no Kanata e” (Beyond the sky), you almost think its some mellow rock song then goes into a gospel type vocal via a cappella-ish in the beginning. The song is pretty mellow, its really made to be the ending song for a concert. The vocals on this track and “Umi” are very nice to listen to and very pleasing. “Kimi wa nani ka ga dekiru” (What can you do?), is your typical J-Pop song. If the J-Pop fans of boy bands heard this song, they probably would like it as it fits into the whole typical pop group category. The CD also comes with a bonus DVD that includes the PV, making and offshoot.

M-1 Umi
M-2 Sora no kanata e
M-3 Kimi wa nani
ga dekiru
M-4 Umi (instru)

DVD: PV, Offshoot



CD+DVD
PCCA-02531 1,575yen
release: 2007.07.18

Limited Edition
(CD+DVD)
PCCA-02609 1,575yen
release: 2008.02.06

Regular Edition (CD)
PCCA-02610 1,260yen
release: 2008.02.06
*1/5 photos incl.

M-1 STANDUP!
M-2 Load
M-3 Sleepin' Flower
M-4 STANDUP! (instru)

DVD: PV, Offshoot

STAND UP!

The latest single from Lead, is written by the guys themselves and has a very old school flavor to it. If you lived and liked the 1990’s then you’d appreciate this song as it is old school in every sense of the way. The PV for the song is very environmental conscious as well, as the theme revolved around corn (bio-fuel). The song is also is their first anime tie-in; it is the ending theme song to the anime, *Katekyō Hitman REBORN!* The second track, “Load” is a mellow rock track, there is rap so it does end up being a rock/hip hop-ish type song. The last song, “Sleepin’ Flower” is a the first of its kind for the group. It is a song only sung by Keita and is a slow pop song. Overall this single is very diverse and if you’re a lover of 90’s American music and Japanese pop music, one would definitely enjoy the single as it has a little bit of both.



Feel the Vibes

This album is tied for first place in terms of “Which one of the Lead albums is best?”. It really depends on taste. This album has all the elements of hip hop, R&B and pop. *The Substitute Teachers*, a hip hop group hailing from California are guests in this album and do the first and last tracks on the album. You can hear the strong influence of hip hop and R&B in tracks such as “*Baby what turns you on*”, “*Tani☆Rap*”, “*STAND UP!*”, “*Taisetsuna mono*” (My treasure), “*Fall in Love*” and “*Thanks for...*”. Each member has their “own” song on the album, Shinya’s “*Tani☆Rap*” (Taniuchi is his last name), Akira’s “*Wicked Wicked SUMMER PARTY*”, Hiroki’s “*Tasogare Gradation*” (Twilight Gradation), and Keita’s “*Sleepin’ Flower*”. Shinya’s song is pure old school hip hop, Akira has the acoustic pop rock sound (very summer style song), Hiroki’s gone technologic and Keita’s is your J-Pop ballad song. “*TOKIO NIGHT*” is a favorite among fans as the song very poppish. Recommended tracks: *Taisetsuna mono*, for the all the lovey dovey mushy people out there. *Baby what turns you on* and *Fall in Love*, for all the hip hop, R&B dancers who want to get down and everything else for everyone.



Limited Edition
PCCA-02623 3,300yen
release date: 2008.03.05

*bonus: 44 page photobook

Regular Edition
PCCA-02624 3,000yen
release date: 2008.03.05

*bonus: 1/5 original trading cards

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| M-1 THE VIBES | M-9 Sleepin' flower |
| M-2 Baby what turns you on | M-10 Taisetsuna Mono |
| M-3 TOKIO NIGHT | M-11 Fall in love |
| M-4 Umi | M-12 GET DIZZY |
| M-5 Tani☆RAP | M-13 Drive Alive |
| M-6 STAND UP! | M-14 Thanks for... |
| M-7 Wicked Wicked SUMMER PARTY | M-15 Sora no kanata e |
| M-8 Tasogare Gradation | M-16 feel |

Lead UPTURN 2007 ~B.W.R~

One of the most invigorating concerts of 2007. If there is any concert you should watch from 2007, this is the one. From beginning to end, it is non-stop movement, non-stop excitement and overall entertainment. If you enjoy dancing and great vocals you, you will not be disappointed. The filming also makes this DVD great. If you've watched dance movies, think of it just like that. You get the feeling that you are there at the concert watching it live. There are some artists who sound awesome live and some who sound great live. They are above and beyond. Not only do they sound great live, but many prefer to hear the live versions of this DVD above studio recordings. It's that good. Some people who watch this have been quite impressed by group, stating, “*I would watch them perform if they came here.*” and “*That's tight how they sing but they can really dance. You don't see that **** here in America, where its all of them and not just 1 or 2 main people sticking out. I'd watch them perform if they were here in America.*”^{*} For some it's not their taste, but if your into hip hop then this is a concert you will love for the mere fact there are two dance corners. One is a choreo corner and the other is a b-boy corner. You get a mixture of hip hop, rock, R&B, '70's music thrown in with some old school locking, hip hop choreo and b-boying and you have a formula for an awesome concert.

PCBP-51910 5,000yen
release date: 2007.12.12



- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| M-01. B.W.R | M-07. Deep in my heart | M-13. Dear | M-20. Funky Days! |
| M-02. What cha gonna? | M-08. Jewel of Queen | M-14. Red Eye Night | M-21. Summer Madness |
| M-03. LOVE RAIN | M-09. SWEETEST TABOO | M-15. Cosmic Drive | M-22. Baby' cuz U! |
| M-04. PRIVACY | M-10. No doubt | M-16. Drive Alive | M-23. Virgin Blue |
| M-05. Night Deluxe | M-11. Love&Everything | M-17. FEATURES | M-24. Sora no kanata e |
| M-06. Extreme girl | M-12. Boku ga inoru yoru | M-18. Umi | M-25. High Time |
| M-13. Dear | (my prayer to the moon) | M-19. ONE FOR DA SOUL | |

Artist Check-Up!

Guest artist, The Substitute Teachers, featured two tracks on Lead's new album, "Feel The Vibes". Hailing all the way from California, we caught up with the duo to find out what it was like to work on the album!

How were you approached to do this album? Like how did the management/company approach you about it? How did they hear about you guys?

Chris Gatsby (Chris Saiz): Basically what happened was that we were actually asked to do a song for Idoling!!! The track was used for the opening song of Idoling's debut album "Daiji Na Mono". Pony Canyon liked the song. Apparently they liked it so much that they allowed us to submit a track for Lead's new album "Feel the Vibes". The producer for the Idoling and Lead track is M.H (name withheld). M.H was our connection to Pony Canyon and he got our foot in the door. They most likely heard about us through M.H. Our network connection to M.H is a story in itself. M.H knew someone in LA who knew Iori. We were first approached by our connection in LA to do the Idoling track for M.H who would later submit the track to Pony Canyon Records. That is how the label heard us for the first time.

IO Hustle (Iori Omura): We we're approached by the producer who was contracted to do the introduction track for Lead. We had worked with him on a previous project and he told us that we should do the intro track for Lead. We came up with the raps, and he arranged them. I guess Pony Canyon liked it so they went with it. We have yet to officially hear from anyone at Pony Canyon though haha.

What made you decide to do the album?

Chris Gatsby: There were no complicated decisions really. Speaking for myself and I am sure Iori feels the same way, we decided to do it for fun. Hip-Hop music is one our passions and we'll make a track even if we are not approached by any labels or major artists. We are also willing to try new things and be creative. Hip-Hop is in need of originality, freshness and dope music. But looking at it from a business stand point, collaborating with Lead gave us the opportunity to spread our music and talents further across the globe. I think there is definitely a deeper appreciation for Hip-Hop music in other parts of the world and not just in the US. Hopefully, some Lead fans will like our material and become fans of our work as well.

IO Hustle: Personally, I liked the challenge of having to come up with a song that was outside of our normal comfort zone. We like to think that we are versatile artists and can pretty much collaborate with anyone. This project turned out to be pretty fun, and we would love to do more stuff like this in the future.

So this was something that was out of your comfort zone? How so?

IO Hustle: It just doesn't happen. I don't really know to what degree Lead's popularity and fan base is but from what I gather they have a pretty good following and also they are with a major label. We're just two dudes from California that some how got on the intro track. The producer that we worked with submitted the tracks to Pony Canyon, and from what I heard "loved it" so I think it's safe to say that we got on because they actually liked the song and felt that it should go on the album. But now that you mention it, maybe it does happen here too. Especially in rap where the rapper that makes it big will feature his friends on their records- never heard of them before and they're usually not that good. But for the most part, I don't see random collabs like this in the pop genre.

What did you think of Lead (assuming they gave you their early material??) Because you talk about them and their dancing etc, so I'm curious as to what your thoughts were when you guys were introduced to them.

Chris Gatsby: Actually, we kind of walked into this project blindly. M.H basically gave us a beat and said "Can you make a track to this in two days". He did not give us a theme or any



(cont.)

guidelines. He did not give us too much background or previous work. Which is fine: because it allowed our creativity to take its course. Anything we found was on the internet. The music that I did find and the videos that I did see were impressive. My first thoughts were, "Wow, look at how far the Hip-Hop culture has spread." Here are a group of Japanese dudes who can flow and dance. The amazing part is that they are half way across the globe from where Hip-Hop originated (New York). Their music was definitely a different type of Hip-Hop but in the end it's all expression and there is no right or wrong way to do Hip-Hop, you are Hip-Hop, it reflects who you are.

IO Hustle: I have actually never heard of Lead before this project so I didn't know what to expect. We only had what M.H told us and online research to go by. We found out that the first three members of Lead met each other at a dance school in Osaka and formed a dance crew, which I thought was cool. It's nice that hiphop has been infused and incorporated into many styles of music. I know that hiphop is pretty big in Japan, and I like the fact that if the end product sounds dope, artists are willing to collaborate. I don't think this kind of collaboration with us and Lead could have happened in America.

Would you guys be down to perform with them anytime in the future? Do more work with them or any other artists?

IO Hustle: Yes we would actually, we pitched the idea to the producer that we worked with if we could tour with them haha. I mean, we did the intro track so who better to open for them than us? We never really got any inquiries so maybe the idea didn't fly... we're still waiting for the call! But yeah, we would be down to collaborate with them or other artists; it was a fun project. Maybe this time we could actually do an actual collaboration where we would be on the same track, that would really be cool.

Has this project "opened your eyes" in terms of how music is in Japan?

IO Hustle: Well, it did get me to scan the Jpop section more at the record store. Sometimes I'll check out the top sellers list and then go back on line to check out some of their stuff. I'm sure there's alot more to it, I wish some one could kinda show me around.

Have you listened to the album? Your thoughts on it if you have.

Chris Gatsby: I thought the album was pretty entertaining. One reason is because I have never listened to J-Pop before. It was really different from what I expected. But being exposed to other types of music is really good. The music was pretty melodic and the way they harmonize and integrate each of their voices was pretty cool. I thought another interesting thing was that their single and video "Stand Up" was environmentally conscious. It shows that the same issues affect people around the world and we all communicate that through music.

To find more information visit:

<http://www.steachers.com>

<http://www.myspace.com/hiphopsubs>



Chris Gatsby and IO Hustle, *The Substitute Teachers*

It was great being able to contribute to the Lead album with the opening song. Lead has a smooth pop sound, making it for an enjoyable listen. The production has a nice range, fusing electronica, rock, and hip hop which complements the artists very nicely. While we never got to meet the group personally, they seem to be a talented collective, and being that this is their fifth release, they have obviously shown longevity in the music business. It is nice too see that collaborations between successful artists and relatively unknowns such as ourselves can occur in the Japanese music industry. We believe the end result turned out great!

This was our second time in the last two months working with a pop group from Japan. Growing up in America, where foreign music is not in the mainstream we were not too familiar with Japanese Pop music. We didn't really know what to expect but working with the likes of Idoling!!! and Lead really broadened our musical horizon, gaining an appreciation for the variety of music that is out there, in this particular case Japan. We hope to work with more artists out there in the future.

IO Hustle: I listened to the album; I thought it was pretty cool. I don't have their old stuff to compare it to but it's a fun listen in the car. I can't say that I listen to J-pop very much but I'm somewhat familiar with some of the big stars like BOA, Namie Amuro, SMAP, and etc, because my family watches Japanese TV, and sometimes I'd catch them on the music variety shows like Hey, Hey, Hey when it was still on. It has a very boy band feel to it, which kind of went out of style in the US, but hey, good sounding music is good sounding music. Lead has energy and a positive vibe in most of their songs, which I thought was cool.

Can you give a message to Lead?

Chris Gatsby: *Lead...keep holding it down in Japan, you guys are sick!*

IO Hustle: *Keep up the good work guys... tomorrowoshi rocks!*

AROUND THE WORLD

SOME PEOPLE MAY
WONDER JUST
WHERE ARE LEAD
FANS? WE WENT
AND FOUND SOME
REAL DEDICATED
FANS!

NOT JUST IN JAPAN!
FANS FROM SOUTH
AMERICA, AUSTRALIA,
CANADA, AMERICA,
ASIA... WHERE YOU GO
THERE ARE FANS IN
DIFFERENT PARTS OF
THE WORLD AND WE
WANT TO SHOW YOU
JUST HOW MUCH THEY
LOVE LEAD!!

I love you guys! You may not be aware, but Lead is definitely loved all over the world other than just Japan and Taiwan, and so you should keep continuing to produce wonderful music (as always), with us wonderful overseas fans in mind (haha). You guys have been through your ups and downs, but that's never stopped you from working hard, and I admire you for that. Thanks, Lead, for making these past 3.5 years of my life the best they've been.

-Jessica,
New Jersey, USA

I hope LEAD can exist forever, in the world and in my heart. Don't care about a little problem which can separate you. Always try to understand each other. Always do your best, be yourself, and SMILE!!!! I hope someday I can meet you.

-Pratiwi,
Indonesia





Yong Yee at "Wat Arun" River, Thailand



Emma Hennessy, Australia

Siyen, China
@ GuangZhou (the immortal Five Ram ancient legend as a good reputation flowing down for long ages, the Five Ram Sculpture be regard as Guang-Zhou's symbol)



LEAD だいすき!

FANS FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD
SHARE THEIR LOVE FOR LEAD



Khao, Thailand



Jessica S., New Jersey
USA. shows her collection
of merchandise and
hand made crafts.



Celine Zhou, Singapore



Dao, Thailand





Charmaine N., New Jersey, USA.
Collection with "Puppy Shinya".



"Puppy Shinya", named after Lead member, Shinya Taniuchi.



Siyan, China
Shows just how much she likes Lead. Rooms covered with their favorite artists is common among fans.





Fon, Thailand
Her collection and posters that are hung in her room.



“Lonely cookie”, Vietnam
CD, DVD, Photobooks & posters. It is extremely hard to get Lead items in her country but she continues to support.

“Kiroyoshi”, Canada
with collection and fan art.

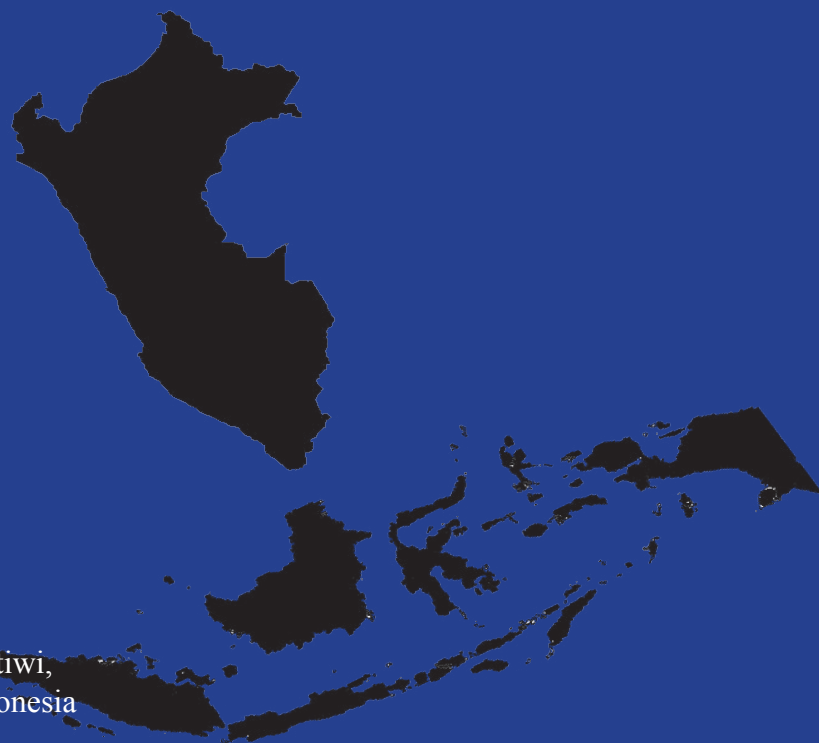




Juan Pablo Aponte & Patricia Jo show their appreciation for Lead all the way from Peru, South America.



Pratiwi, Indonesia





Kaew, Thailand has made everything from t-shirts, keychains, notebooks and clocks. She shows her love through her creative mind.



Mason Avery
Washington, U.S.A

Collecton of Fancub event goods,
CD/DVD's. Her 5 year old brother is a
big fan of Lead as well.





Puy
Samutprakarn, Thailand



Yong Yee, Thailand
CD, DVD, Magazine collections



☆ ROCK THE LM.C ☆

FEATURE ARTICLE



PONY CANYON

COMING SOON

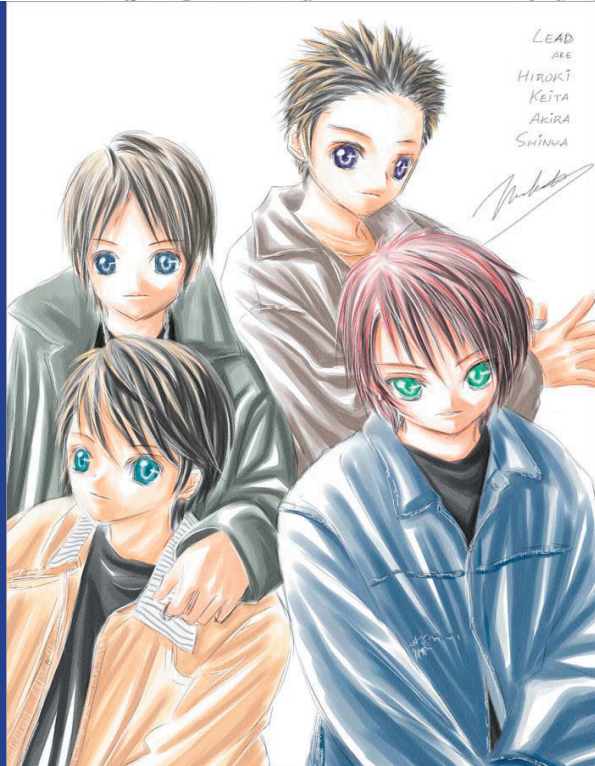
AVAILABLE MAY/JUNE 2008

MUCC D'espairs Ray the Underneath

Live Coverage from the East Coast, Interviews, Fan Event Coverage from the West Coast



FAN ART



by Makoto,
Canada



2003.09.23
birthday: taniuchi shinya

Iron Chef - Lead Generation
by "Jido"
<http://rubberyjido.deviantart.com>



Fan art is always a big thing with fans. Some are characterized in different themes, different styles of drawing and even real life art. Here are some drawn from fans.

“Kiroyoshi”, Canada



DJ TAKU & LEAD, “Feel The Vibes” version by Debbie (Singapore)



Hiroki Nakadoi by “Gukimon”



Art by: Gukimon.....XP

5 year old fan art by Mason, U.S.A



Shinya Taniuchi by Emma Hennessy (Australia)



LEADへ.....

私はLeadの皆さん大好き！！ Leadさんはたぶん知らないけど、たくさんファンいる(世界が)。

音楽続きくださいね！(と海外ファンに含む(笑)上がり下がりを通して、行ったことがあるのをからかうけれども、それは、熱心に働くことを一度も防いだことがなく、私はそのためあなたを賞賛します。 - Jessica S. (U.S.A)

私はリードファンに2004年から。リードさん大好き！！ 貴方達のダンスももっともっと大好きや！ Hirokiの本腰、Shinyaはカコイイ、Keitaは可愛いとAkiraのセクシーの声、全部はLeadですよ？ 皆さんがんばってね！ 歌のより多くを楽しみにしますか OK? :) ~Celine Zhou (Singapore)

本当にありがとうございます。
あなたの音楽を聞いています、
だから私は感します。

とくに、いつか私の世界は崩れ落ちた、
Leadのみなさんは私に勇気をくれました
ありがとう。

このままでがんばって、負けないでください。

私は永遠に応援します。

私のこころこめてThank you.

-Charmaine N. (U.S.A)

こんにちは！ 私はリード大好きそしてもっと知りたいな！ 応援します、ずっと！ ありがとうございます！ ~ Fon (Thailand)

Leadさん... がなばってね！
いつも応援します、永遠に。ラブ・ユー
-ケオ(タイランド)

がんばって！
~ミシャー (U.S.A)

私はリードさんは「ココイイ」と思うです。私はリードさすごいダンサーとシンガー、だから私はあなたは大好き。私のフェボロリートメンバーはShinyaさんです、Shinyaさんはクール帽子だから。私の好きな曲は「STAND UP!」、私はあのソングがダンスと一緒にだから。リードのメンバーさんはfunと良い性格見たい。

私の夢はLeadのライブ行きたい！！

ネバーギブアップ！ あなた達はたくさん世界ファンいるから、私達はずっとサポートだよ。

~メイソン アベリー (U.S.A)

Akira - お大事に！

Hiroki-最高のリーダー！

Leadを世話してください！

Keita - あなたのダンス大好き！

かわいいもん！

Shinya - カコイイと良いラパーですよ

こんにちは！ 僕の名前はJuan Pabloでペルーに住んでいる23歳です。僕がどうしてLeadのファンになったのか聞いてください。僕はペルーの日系の小学校／高校に行つて日本文化と強いつながりをもっています。。そして日系ペルー人の友達を多くもっています。子供の頃から日本の音楽を聞いていて年を重ねるに連れてヒップホップを聞くようになりました。ある日Youtubeで日本のヒップホップのビデオを探しているとGetWildLifeが出て来てLeadの音楽が好きになりました。Leadの情報をいろいろ探してみても海外のLeadのファンのためのフォーラム、Le-volutionに参加するようになりました。それ以来ずっとLeadの応援をしています。Leadはすごい才能をもっていますし、曲を楽しめてとてもプラス思考になれます。ライブでのパフォーマンスも素晴らしいです！ 歌とダンスともに最高です。

~ Juan Pablo (Peru)

~Beyond the Horizon~
 Fan site & Blog
<http://yunyiyi.blog3.petitmall.jp/>

Siyan helps fans in the English and Chinese speaking communities, by translating interviews, articles that feature LEAD.

Cosmic Drive (below), is one of the most visited LEAD fansites catered toward English speaking fans. You can find song translations and the owner runs the International Forum.

INTERNATIONAL FAN SITES

If you don't speak Japanese, that's OK!
 Here are some great sites to find out the latest information in either English or Chinese.

The sites are updated daily when news about Lead is officially released in Japan.



LEAD THE REVOLUTION
 Lead “Unofficial” International Fan Club.
 They thoroughly support their artist by advertising
**“RESPECT OUR MUSIC.
 Love Music? Save Music!
 STOP ILLEGAL COPYING”**

They also have contest within the community, such as banner contests that advertise the newest release.
<http://www.le-volution.com/forum/>



ON SALE NOW!



Available at CD Japan, Amazon Japan, HMV, Tower Records, YesAsia- Online
All shops ship internationally.

Something about....

There's just something about Lead that has attracted fans from different parts of the globe. For me, I was aware of Lead, but I never really ever looked into them. Their music was good enough for me. After hearing *Summer Madness*, I constantly found myself listening to it, and soon after their [4] album released, I enjoyed it very much. It is very easy listening. Then I watched their *Upturn 2007 ~B.W.R.~* live for the first time and I was amazed at the level of skill they displayed in singing, dancing and performance.

Something I found out, which surprised me to an extent, was that these fans are genuine, they're real. They're not your "typical" fans that fawn over the pretty Japanese guys, of course looks has always plays a role, but these fans have a deeper grasp and feeling toward this crew that I rarely see in J-Pop fans.

A majority of these fans took a liking to Lead through their music. It wasn't through magazine photos or just watching a fan-made video of Japanese boys, it was through listening and seeing them perform "live" (DVD concert clips).

They have an incredible flow of tones. Each of them have their own distinct voice, but when they are together, they harmonize. They've even been described as the "Boyz II Men" of Japan (by Carl who's never even heard of them till he heard "Fall in Love"). There are very, very few groups in Japan who can be described like that. Most groups, when formed blend, but they do not blend so well. Lead has a great range of singer/rappers in the group. Keita is the overall most balanced vocalist; Hiroki is the happy, boyish vocalist; Shinya is the natural rapper/flower with a sensual deep singing voice and Akira has the smooth, sexy and sensual voice. Akira and Shinya both have voices that are great for R&B music. They are all different, but once they sing together, they harmonize and blend well, they are one, and that's what makes them Lead.

These fans in essence, while not understanding Japanese very much, have understood what Lead has been trying to convey through their music: their feelings. As Akira once said, he hopes they can feel their words through their singing. It seems it is a goal accomplished.

We took some time and interviewed some of these Lead fans from around the world, see what they had to say; their words from their mouths.

Charmaine N, N.J. USA

Why do you like Lead?

The word "like" would be an understatement as I absolutely love Lead. Their music is enjoyable & refreshing to my ears. They are also a group that had (and still is) kept me moving during the peak of my depression several years ago. Although I'm not capable of understanding the language much, it was the way they sang their songs that truly inspired me. With every emotion they've exuded, I felt it in my heart. Lead are one of the few important people in my life and to which I consider them as a part of my family.

What made you (honestly) listen to them in the first place?

(Was it looks, did someone just say "here check this out?", what was the 1st thing that MADE You want to try them out)

I had come across a video of them learning the choreography for the song "*Delighted*" and thought they were adorable & funny. I then searched and watched several of their PVs. However, at that time though, I wasn't really into J-Pop and so the first few of their songs/PVs didn't appeal to me much. It wasn't till I had seen the PV for "*FLY AWAY*" did I start to become a fan of theirs.

So it was the song?

Yes, it was the song.

What was it about that song that caught your attention?

The beat of the song and the way they sang was what had caught my attention. It was a mesh of the late '80's & early '90's hip hop, r&b, and pop. The type of music that I had enjoyed listening to so much when I was younger.

Have you seen them before listening to them?

Prior to listening to them, I did come across a photo of them on some blog. I honestly thought they were adorable, but like I had stated before I wasn't into J-Pop at that time. Therefore, I didn't bother to do any research on them. This was two years before I had seen that "*Delighted*" dance practice video. So, technically, yes I did see them before actually getting into their music. However, even if I didn't know what their appearance was, their style of music would still pique my interest.

What is it about them you like so much?

(Singing, dancing, looks, etc... please name all the factors)

- + All four are exceptionally talented in their own way.
- + There is no one specific "lead" vocalist.
- + Four very distinct singers, but harmonize beautifully together. Amazing dancers.
- + All are capable of MCing/rapping.
- + They write & produce their own music, albeit it's more of an exclusive to their fan club events.
- + They are versatile as they experiment with different musical genres.
- + When they perform live, it's just as good as the studio version, or even better.

Can you explain the “All four are exceptionally talented in their own way.” Because there are also other groups out there (DBSK, w-inds. i.e.) so please explain.

Each one brings a little something different to the table.

Hiroki is capable of adjusting his vocal range to suit various musical genres. In R&B related songs, it's a little deeper & more sensual sounding. While for pop related songs, it's a notch higher but quite powerful. Shinya is a wonderful lyricists and the way he raps is very fluid & natural sounding. There are number of groups out there that when I've listened to whoever is rapping, it comes off very forced. The song “*STAND UP!*” is a good example of Shinya's natural flow. Keita is a fantastic dancer, he's very passionate about it and you can see it in the way he moves. He even at times helps with the choreography. He's also a lovely singer, hitting the high notes beautifully. Akira's melodic voice is very soothing to the ears. I don't think I've heard any other Japanese artist with such a voice.

Also, you said they sound better Live, do you think that is much better than being pro-tooled (in the studio)?

They've only had it in a few songs as background vocals, such as “*Twilight Gradation*” & have never depended on them for main vocals. What you hear when they sing live is the same as what you hear in their albums. Sometimes even better as you get to visually see their emotions & really hear the passion for their music in their vocals.

How would you describe them against the other “boy bands” in Japan? But what makes them stand out?

Is there a difference between the Lead and and other groups you've seen?

Lead are not some manufactured group formed by a company. They had started from the ground up as street performers before being signed. They're able to have a say in what they do when it comes to their music, dancing, & style.

Normally in groups they're only one or two main vocals, but when it comes to Lead each are given an equal amount. If not in one song, then they'll even it out in the next. Also, I love the fact that they each have very distinct vocals and can harmonize beautifully together. With most groups I've heard they sound the same vocal wise, but their harmonies are off and don't mesh with each other. Instead of sounding as one, it comes off as if there are more than, let's say, five members in a group. Whereas with Lead, I sometimes have difficulty differentiating their vocals because it blends so wonderfully. All around they are a multi-talented, unique, down-to-earth, & humble group with no strings attached. These are a few key elements as to what I feel makes them stand out above the rest.

Do you consider them a ‘boy band’ or as a dance group/crew? (There are some people who don't consider them boy band status that's why.)

No, I would never consider them as a ‘boy band’. I actually find that term quite offensive when referring to Lead. I prefer to call them a guy group or dance group/crew. ‘Boy bands’, to me, are a stereotypical group that is formed by some large company, where their artists are merely puppets on a string and their popularity is solely based on their so called, ‘sex appeal’. Massive amounts of hip gyrations, that makes some boy bands seem more like male strippers, certainly does not equal quality music.

Lead's main focus has always been about their singing & dancing. They don't need to exploit themselves to be popular. It's just a shame in today's music industry, most prefer to sell sex. A group such as Lead is a rare find and for me, no other group can ever compare.

What is it about them that stand out from the rest of the groups in Japan/Asia?

For me, personally, it was their history that stood out the most. They are not manufactured as they had formed the group themselves first and performed in the streets of Osaka before being signed. This also includes the number of reasons that I had listed, in regards to the previous question, which separates them apart from any other guy group out there. It's an extreme rarity to find groups such as Lead and I feel very fortunate to have come across them.

Do you think Americans would take a liking to them? In terms of dancing/singing?

I think they would do quite well in America as their music is enjoyable and their singing & dancing is fantastic. They have personalities that anyone can relate to and remain humble in the entertainment industry. However, it depends on the timing as American's haven't really fully embraced Asian artists out there and if they have it's more towards J-Rock. Plus, the number of guy groups out in the states has been depleted. If ever they do decide to branch out overseas, I hope it will be well received as they would bring something fresh to the American music industry and that's something that is much needed.

Vi, Sacramento, CA (U.S.A)

Why do you like Lead?

Lead is just a very inspiring group overall. They have amazing dancing, great choreography, catchy music, nice raps, and they even write some of it themselves! They can hold a tune like no one's business, and through it all they haven't lose themselves in the entertainment industry. They also have great personalities that make me happy.

What made you listen to them in the first place?

(Was it looks, did someone just say “here check this out”, what was the 1st thing that MADE You want to try them out?)

To be honest, I initially wanted to listen to Lead because one of my friends, Jessica, was a COMPLETE Lead fan and was always really hyper about them. So, one day she sent me one of her favorite songs (*Only You Can Hurt Me*) and I completely fell in love with it! And then I looked them up on YouTube and was amazed by their dancing and overall performance. That pretty much won me over.

So it was the song? What was it about that song that caught your attention? Have you seen them before listening to them?

Yeah, it was definitely the song that caught my attention. I think it was just the amount of feeling from the song, it just seemed like it had a lot of emotion and it really caught my feeling. Before listening to the song, I think I had seen a picture of them on my friend’s website layout, but I didn’t know it was him. When she sent me the song, I was like “huh? who’s Lead?” I didn’t know they were Lead so I was like oh they’re just some random guys. Then after I heard *Only You Can Hurt Me*, I looked ‘em up and then I was like “OHHH THAT’S LEAD!”.

But what makes them stand out? I mean your also a fan of other groups (w-inds.), right? Is there a difference between the Lead and w-inds. (and other groups you’ve seen)?

Yeah, I think Lead’s style is different from w-inds.. Like, it’s closer to other styles here in America. It’s also very up-beat at times and I really like it. Lately, w-inds. songs have been like, ballads and stuff, and that makes Lead stand out more. I guess I’m sort of disappointed with the fact that w-inds. have been changing so much and like, Keita has been getting more and more parts compared to Ryohei and Ryuichi. So for Lead, I really appreciate how they have still been sharing the songs and haven’t really ‘sold out’ to the media as much I guess? I also really like their voices because they’re very smooth and they don’t really strain to reach high notes like a lot of other artists I’ve heard. And their dancing is just more my style than w-inds. dancing is, like, I really like their break dancing and stuff. They’ve actually inspired me to work harder at my break dancing, oh and their voices blend really well together!!

So you think w-inds. has sold out to the media?

I guess ‘sold out’ is a stronger phrase than I meant for it to be. I mean, it’s probably just me missing how they used to be in the past because they have changed. Not only their music but their whole style with everything. I think they have been doing more fan service than they used to and it sorta seems like they’re doing a lot of things to try to get more fans again... and it’s sort of disappointing because I used to respect them a lot for that. For Lead, I don’t really see that in them. I know their style has sorta changed from before, but it is more of an evolution for their music that I liked rather than turning into a one-man show like how it did for w-inds. if that makes sense. Because for w-inds. it sort of seems like they’re playing more off of Keita’s popularity than their talents now, and Lead aren’t doing that.

So would you say they played a part in you taking up breaking or just more inspired?

I think I was always interested in breaking and just dancing in general, but they probably were part of what sort of gave me the “extra push” because whenever I would watch one of their performances and they’d start breaking it would just make me want to learn that much more and work that much harder.

How have they inspired you?

They inspire me to improve myself, and follow my dreams. I know that is very difficult to be recognized on japanese music industry, but they’re fighting to follow their dreams on that and they’re improving and growing so much as artists that they inspire me to fight in my life too. Their music always makes me happy and feel good.

Do you think Americans would take a liking to them? In terms of dancing and singing?

Yeah, I think that they would, since their style’s closer to what a lot of American’s have been listening to lately (at least from what I’ve heard from my friends). Also, my friends that I have shown Lead have taken a liking to them as well, and typically they don’t really like any of the Asian groups I show them, so that’s always a good sign, haha. Also, they’re dancing is impressive. Then again, at the same time in America there’s always people who criticize dance unless it’s EXACTLY the same. I’ve noticed that in Japan there’s less criticism for the precision for dancing than there is in America. At the same time, however, I still think Lead would fare quite well over here.

“Tio”, Peru

Why do you like Lead?

Obviously because I love Lead’s music, but first of all I think that I like them because I feel their friendship, I dunno, I feel that they’re like my friends or something, their charisma is unique.

What made you (honestly) listen to them in the first place?

I was looking for japanese hiphop videos on youtube, and I found Get Wild Life video, I like their fresh style of hip hop and music, and then I surf the net for more info about them, I enjoy all their stuff!

So do you consider them a boy band? Or a hip hop group/crew? Because I know some people see them as a boy band.

I consider them as a Vocal & Dance HipHop-HipPop-Reggae-Pop Unit. They're more than a simple "boy band".

What makes their music fresh to you? Are you a big hip hop fan?

I think that the happiness and rhythm that they put on their songs makes their music fresh. Yeah I'm big hip hop/hip pop/reggae fan, specially American, Japanese and Korean styles.

What is it about them you like so much? (Singing, dancing, looks, etc... please name all the factors)

Their fresh music!, is not like other azn groups that all songs sound the same, Lead is always surprising me, their singing is really cool and they are gorgeous dancers.

Can you go a little further? Like can you give examples as to what you mean in "not like other Asian groups that all songs sound the same, Lead is always surprising me, their singing is really cool and they are gorgeous dancers."

An example is that all JE's music (with a couple of exceptions) sounds the same for me (poppish but sometimes catchy songs with not so much care on the vocals = boring). Lead is always surprising me because they mix a lot of genres of music like hiphop/hippop/r&b/pop/reggae/ballade and makes each song very unique and different, and they care so much on their vocals and rhythm.

Siyon, China

Why do you like Lead?

Honestly there's no reason why I like them, everything they've done made me like them more and more and eventually I became a fan. I've already listened to their music earlier~ when my friend introduce there's a Japan unit called w-inds. to me then let me know VF, and later Lead debute..... soon there was a TV program promote VF NEW GENERATION GROUPS the groups: w-inds., FLAME and Lead. But to tell the truth, I didn't be a fan at that time~a few years past, I try them out accidentally by buy a DVD copy of Upturn Tour 2005. You must wonder what makes me to buy their DVD, I think is coincidence....but fate and coincidence just between a line, right? I walked through a street and passed a CD shop one day and I saw a DVD was placed in the shopping window. It reminded me of something and I started to consider why this unit, who also debuted years ago, was not as famous as w-inds.. So maybe you can say I try them out from curiosity.

What is it about them that stands out from the rest of the groups in Japan/Asia?

For me it's their family-like relationship, which makes me feel so ease to be their fan! I think that's also the reason why can go even further in life. I think a group that fights can't be a good unit. I've been a fan of Backstreet Boys for over ten years, that's the brother-like relationship that makes them came across the difficulty and stand until now. Good relationship can make fans closer together around the world. Lead are more than just friends, they're like a real happy and harmonic family!!!! By the way, their music production, that's very important to write and produce their own music, because it represents Lead's ability. I highly encourage them to write more, even if they are not used on CDs, for experience only is good. Practise makes perfect! I'm looking forward to the day that they can also direct their CD or PV!

Patty Jo, Peru

Why do you like Lead? What made you (honestly) listen to them in the first place?

I LOVE Lead because they're such great artists! I really like the catchy rythms of their songs, the way they dance, and their great live performances! I've never been to a live show because I've never been to Japan, but I've seen the videos of their concerts and WOW! They're just great! Not only because of the show the put out for the fans, but also because by watching them I can tell they really enjoy it and try to put the best of themselves in every single performance! My friend (Tio) was the one who made me listen to them. The first song that got stuck in my head was *Party Tune*. Then I started listening to all of the other songs and watched every video they made, their concerts and I totally got into them. Even though it was not so long ago, in this short period of time Lead has become one of my favorite J-pop bands!

What is it about them you like so much?

Well of course I have to start with the music! I think their singing is awesome and by listening to all of their records I can tell that they've been improving through out the years and I'm sure that they'll be so much better in the future! So I'm really hoping to see Lead in the music business for a long time. Plus, I like the fact that they don't do playback! I've seen other Jpop bands doing playback in their "live" shows and I'm really not into that. I'm also a big fan of their dancing! They're break dance performances are just AMAZING! Another thing I like the about them is their personality! They seem to be such humble and nice guys! They enjoy this business and have so much fun doing what they love. Plus, they're really funny and such cool guys.

Vickii Nguyen, U.S.A

Why do you like Lead?

I guess it's coz their lyrics/songs are very meaningful. I can relate to many of them, and alot of them cheer me up when I'm down or something. U.S. music isn't like theirs, it's full of inappropriate stuff and so it all sounds the same, also it's thanks to them that I've gotten so much closer to everyone in me life...so those are probably the main reasons, but other than that...the basics like their talents and things like that.

Other than the lyrics, it just seems like you just like them. Can you explain what you mean like "talents and things like that"?

I would have to say that they were the first group I saw that could do soo many things. For instance dance, sing, dj, and act, not only that but they continue to grow and improve by like doing things such as on that one show that they do every year with stunts and stuff, so yeah that's what I meant.

What made you (honestly) listen to them in the first place?

Actually my friend introduced me to them. I was moving away and I was really sad. She introduced Funky Days to me to make me happy, and I listened to that song for about 2 years and I began expanding on them haha.

What was it about Funky Days that got you? I mean you don't understand Japanese at the time correct? So how did you connect with it?

Haha I just basically went on to the internet and found the translated version of that song. But how I connect with it...at first when I just heard the song and didn't know what it meant, I just liked the melody and the tune of it. It sounded happy. But after that, I found the lyrics and I see why my friend told me to listen to it. In the song it says things like not giving up, moving on, and overcoming everything that comes my way. That I should be myself and be happy with life, and I think that after that I really did. I guess it's coz I truly loved that place I moved away from. I basically lived there my entire life, and moving was just a sad thing. So I think that I really needed that song in my life.

You don't understand Japanese, but their personalities is what you like? Can you explain? You said you "love their voices", well what about their voices?

OK about their personalities. It's like this...for instance, they always do random things: screaming, dancing, poking each other, and things like that. It's just cute to see how each member is and how they change over time lol and since the fansub teams often translate things that they say...I can understand some things...as for their voices...they're just different. Like Akira's is nice and soothing, Keita's is squeaky but like cute etc., Shinya's is like deep and very nice and Hiroki's is very...everything? kinda...(sorry can't describe super well) but anyways...I like them for that reason too. Even though their voices are all different, somehow they all blend and compliment each other, in the songs.

"Kiryoshi", Canada

Why do you like Lead?

I like Lead because they are a very determined group, to do the best in whatever they do. They are very inspirational.

What made you (honestly) listen to them in the first place?

I first started listening to Lead a few years ago when my friends introduced me to them. Honestly, at first I didn't like their appearance very much because I had not been exposed to this kind of music. However, when I watched their PV Night Deluxe, I fell in love with it, the awesome and catchy song and their cool dance moves.

What is it about them you like so much?

Lead has become my favourite group because they are very talented in many ways such as singing, dancing and rapping. They also fill in some of their own lyrics in their songs which makes them personal. Their sense of style in how they dress and how they present themselves also make them very appealing to me. I also like Lead because they have a great sense of humour and they really show their appreciation towards their fans. Whenever I watch clips or videos of them it always makes me smile.

What is it about them that stands out from the rest of the groups in Japan/Asia?

Lead stands out the most to me because they produce a variety of music with different feels from mellow to happy music. They are able to make their own decisions and as they have grown up these five so years their music and looks have matured. Lead constantly shows the effort to improve on anything they do and learn new things. Even though each member of the group has unique, they all seem to "click" very well. They are an awesome group to watch because there are always surprises.

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