

J!-ENT

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ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY



15 *Puffy AmiYumi* YEAR ANNIVERSARY

FEATURING INTERVIEWS FROM 2000-2010 BY DENNIS A. AMITH
2005 CONCERT REPORT BY GARLAND GEE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY NERGENE ARQUELADA (J!-ENT) AND MAYUMI NASHIDA



PUFFY AMM

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PHOTO BY NERGENE ARQUELADA/JI-ENT



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LONG LIVE PUFFY AMIYUMI

2011 marks the 15th Year Anniversary of PUFFY and their 10th Year Anniversary since their U.S. Debut and J!-ENT celebrates their 15 years of music.

By Dennis A. Amith

It's hard to believe that it has been 15 years since I first discovered PUFFY and their music.

I first discovered PUFFY when they appeared on a Japanese music shows titled "POP STOCK" back in May 7, 1996.

I am going to be truthful and tell you that my first impression of the group was of amusement, confusion and bewilderment.

Mainly because the duo came aboard when Namie Amuro, MAX and other female artists were promoting their style of dance music with choreography, female artists were either pop or rock-oriented but PUFFY, they were different.

These two would sing on stage with blue jeans, sneakers, t-shirts and their puffy hairdo and they would sing a song titled "Asia no Junshin", which literally made no sense and to make things even more interesting, the two could had the simplest choreography I have seen on stage.

But later that May of 1996, the group would appear on NHK's "POP JAM" back on May 25th, followed by a performance a few days later on HEY! HEY! HEY! MUSIC CHAMP on May 27 and by then, my impression of the group was...I love their music!

I started to realize quickly of how they stood out amongst the many Japanese female performers. How different they were in music, appearance and they had no look of the management tampering of their musical style and presentation. What you see on television, is what you got and that was very rare to see in Japan.

While many young women wanted to look like Namie Amuro and wear short skirts and big long boots, here was this female duo who was nothing like that.

And you could see the tide changing in Japan as other female listeners started to dig their music and their style. While male listeners found it impressive that they were linked to the famous Tamio Okuda and it helps that the two women had catchy music and most of all, that they are quite beautiful.

If anything, these girls were casual and nothing like what was in



PUFFY performing live. Image courtesy of Sony Music Japan.

Japan at the time in the music industry.

So, who is PUFFY?

PUFFY consists of Ami Onuki and Yumi Yoshimura.

Two music artists who had done well in Sony Music Japan auditions and were being set up for their own personal solo careers.

While Ami was part of the band Hanoi Sex and auditioned for Sony Music Japan and the band were signed by Sony Music Japan. Unfortunately, nothing came out of the deal and the band broke up. But Sony's intention was to make Ami a solo artist.

Meanwhile, Yumi was living in Osaka and moved to Tokyo where she auditioned for a Chokotto Sokomade talent search and eventually met Ami at Sony Music office.

By chance, these two women hit it off and became friends. The two talked about not having the confidence to become a solo act and thus requested for Sony to pair them up.

Thanks to music producer and music artist Andy Sturmer, he gave the duo the name PUFFY and from there on, the duo (who would be produced by Tamio Okuda) and would eventually become the latest music phenomenon in Japan.

The duo were absolutely everywhere on television. Turn on a music show, they were a guest. Watch a variety or news show in Japan, they were a guest. The two even took part in their own parody with popular Japanese group SMAP titled "SMUFFY" in which the guys imitated the duo's simplistic dance moves, clothing and hairstyle.

And what about those young ladies who wanted to dress and look like Namie Amuro, we started to see many adopting the PUFFY style of t-shirts, blue jeans, sneakers and puffy hair.

PUFFY was so popular that not only did they top the charts with singles, albums and videos, the duo would be given their first TV drama movie in 1997 titled "Puffy no Wide de Ikou: Born to be Wild" and that same year, would be given their own TV series in Japan titled "Pa Pa Pa Puffy".

But the biggest break that the group would have would be in 2000 when the duo would take part in "An Evening with Japan's All Stars" showcase for the 2000 South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival in Austin, Texas. Interesting enough, because Sean "Puffy" Combs was using the "Puffy" name at the time, they were forced to change their name in the U.S. to Puffy AmiYumi.

As the group began to focus on their U.S. activities and having released a few albums, the group would sing the theme songs for the Cartoon Network animated series "Teen Titans" and also "SD Gundam Force" which would earn them a strong U.S. fanbase.

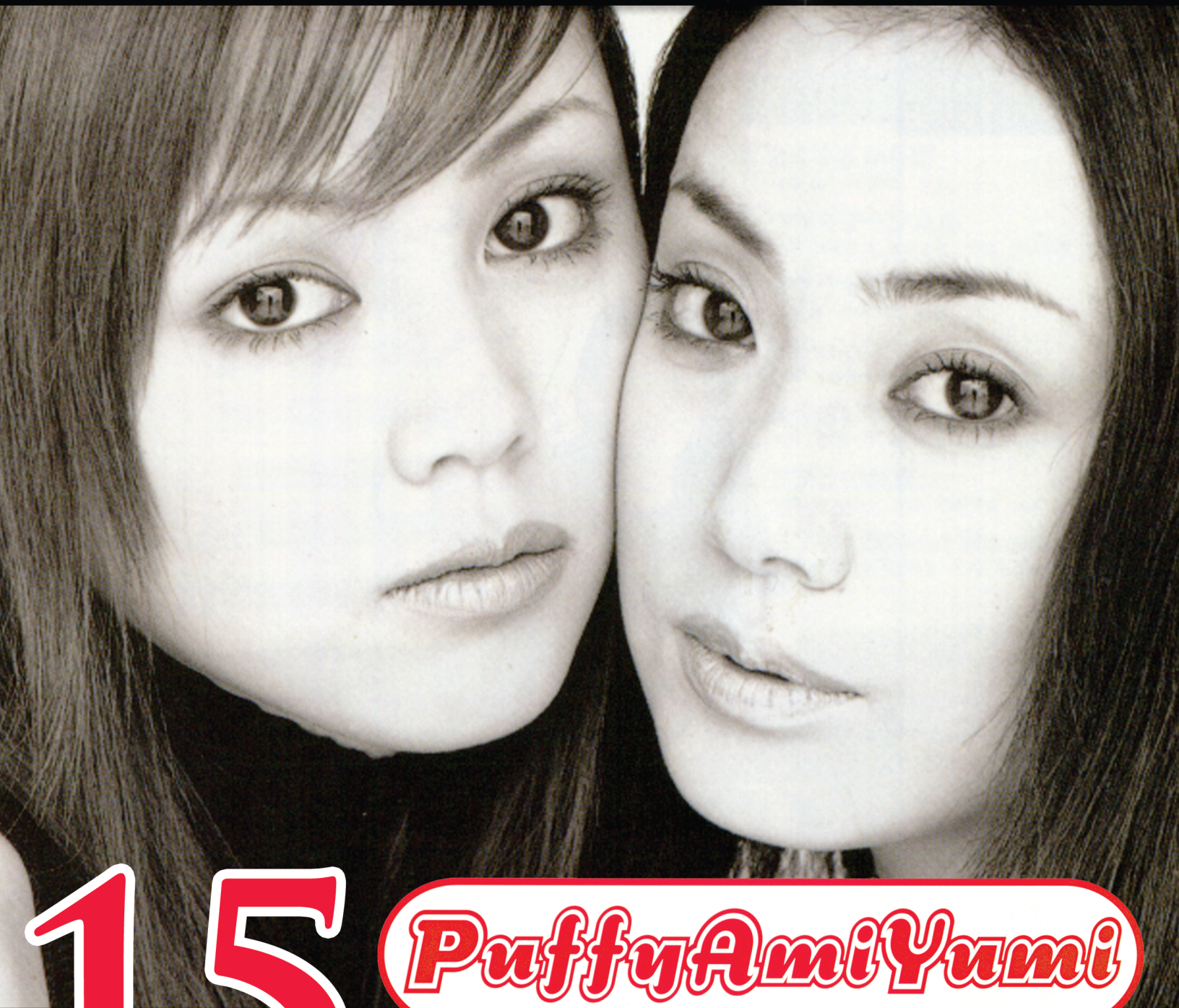
This would eventually lead to their biggest accomplishment in the U.S. with an animated TV series in 2004 titled "Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi", followed by a performance at the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade in 2005 and also becoming part of the celebrity GAP campaign in the U.S.

I have had a chance to interview PUFFY during their first U.S. appearance through 2006 and most recently with their New York performance in 2010.

As the group celebrates their 15th year anniversary in Japan and their 10 anniversary of debuting in the U.S., we celebrate Puffy AmiYumi with this special J!-ENT feature article, featuring all of the interviews we have done with Puffy AmiYumi and a new 2010 interview to celebrate 15 years of music. Long live Puffy AmiYumi. ■

J!-ENT

ENTERTAINMENT WORLDWIDE



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Puffy Ami Yumi

YEAR ANNIVERSARY

PUFFY AMIYUMI 2000 INTERVIEW BY DENNIS A. AMITH

For many years, fans in the US have wondered if PUFFY would follow other Japanese artists and perform in America.

Music Japan's "An Evening with JAPAN'S NOT FOR SALE All-stars" showcase was a huge success during the South by Southwest Music Conference in Austin, Texas, March 18.

The event featured Sony Japan's brightest music stars and up-and-coming artists. This included the only US appearance of the popular duo, PUFFY and performances from Tomovskyy, FEED, Polysics, and Love Love Straw.

Why all the noise? For several years, the popularity of Japanese pop culture has slowly permeated other countries.

In the United States, that popularity has been shared through Japanese animation, video games, fashion, movies and technology.

With the popularity of the Internet, people now have the opportunity to sample music from different cultures around the world and among the many cultures sampled, mainstream Japanese music (also known as J-POP) is at the top of the list.

In Japan, fashion accompanying the style of music is important. In Tokyo you can find many fans following the trends of their favorite music artist or music group. One such group popular for starting a fashion trend is the female duo known as PUFFY.

The duo consisting of Yumi Yoshimura and Ami Onuki, two women who are now in their mid-20's, came out of nowhere in May of 1996 with their debut single titled "Asia no Junshin" (True Asia) and they have dominated the charts ever since.

Of course, it helps when you have a veteran musician and composer such as Tamio Okuda (lead vocalist of the Japanese rock group, Unicorn) producing your album.

However, what made PUFFY so popular is their non-conforming style. In many songs you can hear a little of the Beatles, the Who, Velvet Crush, Stray Cats, Electric Light Orchestra, Unicorn and other groups in their music.

With each song you get something new, from "Circuit no Musume" (Race Circuit Girls) which sounds like a song from a racing video game, "Nagisa ni Matsuwaru Et Cetera" (About Nagisa, Etc.) which uses a disco theme and "PUFFY de Rumba" which uses a rumba



After the release of PUFFY's first album "AmiYumi", their second album "SoloSolo" (featuring the solo tracks that Ami recorded as a solo artist earlier and Yumi's solo tracks) were released. Ami's "Honey" and Yumi's "V.A.C.A.T.I.O.N." were big hits. The 1997 album debuted at #2 on the Oricon Charts.

theme.

As for the lyrics, the girls sing a lot about outdoor activities and love but their lyrics are not told in a story-type way. In fact, it's more about the random type of feelings and emotions that may go through a person's head and that's what PUFFY likes to sing about.

In the song "Honey" by Ami (from their SoloSolo album) she sings about going to a park and eating donuts and although she is full, she still is able to give a kiss to the person she loves.

In the song "V.A.C.A.T.I.O.N.", Yumi sings about going on a vacation but she also sings about her preparation for the vacation such as packing a swimsuit, a t-shirt and remembering to bring her passport and video camera.

These are examples of their lyrics and although it doesn't make sense most of the time, the lyrics are not written for a person to ponder on. The music of PUFFY is made for a person's enjoyment. The lyrics are so simple that anyone can sing along even if they may not understand the language.

It is one of the main reasons why PUFFY's music has attracted so many fans worldwide.

When PUFFY released "Asia no Junshin", the super-producer Tetsuya Komuro and his family of chart-topping artists such as Namie Amuro, Tomomi Kahala, globe and TRF were dominating the Japanese music scene.

These individuals whose music were more dance and techno-oriented brought on many copycat singers and groups and many listeners were complaining about how many of the songs sounded too similar.

At the same time, artists such as Namie Amuro were responsible for creating fashion trends among Japanese girls such as dyed-brown hair, mini skirts and knee-high boots. A trend which came to be known as the "Amura".

It appeared Japan was ready for a change and Sony and Okuda had a plan. That plan was to bring back folk pop music that was popular in Japan decades before and add a hip-twist of the 90s.

When "Asia no Junshin" was released, people were treated with a style of music

AMI: I can't begin to imagine what it's going to be like. I'm really looking forward to it.

J!-ENT: Is there a possibility you will perform in California and New York anytime soon?

YUMI: I'd like to play our music at more places if we could.

AMI: I would love to, but we don't have such plans for now.

J!-ENT: In the video, "RUN! PUFFY! RUN!" you traveled all around the United States. Did anything unusual happen during your filming for that video? Do you have any certain feelings after making that video?

AMI: It was real troublesome when the car broke down.

YUMI: America was really big, as huge as I had imagined.

J!-ENT: Ami, I was wondering if you studied English in the United States before because on your video "RUN! PUFFY! RUN!" your English is very good.

AMI: I went to a language school to learn English.

J!-ENT: What is the difference between PUFFY Japanese fans and PUFFY fans outside of Japan?

AMI: The languages are different. I guess our fans overseas appreciate our music in a pure way, beyond words.

J!-ENT: Did you both feel weird singing a Chinese version of "Kore ga watashi no ikiru michi"?

YUMI: It was pretty hard, more difficult than weird.

AMI: The recording was pretty tough because the pronunciation was so difficult.

J!-ENT: What is your favorite place to visit around the world?

YUMI: New York is my favorite place.

AMI: I want to decide after visiting more places in America.

J!-ENT: When girls started to copy your hairstyle and fashion, how did you feel?

YUMI: I'm glad if they think it's pretty.

AMI: I just kept wondering if they



PUFFY's fourth album "FEVER*FEVER" was released in 1999 and debut at #3 on the Oricon Charts.

were really copying us.

J!-ENT: Your dances are so cute and simplistic. Do you come up with them? Are the dances purposely simple to make the audience feel at ease and free to dance along?

YUMI: We have a dance instructor. But we couldn't quite do what she said and it had to be a little bit simplified for our levels, which is why it has turned out this way.

AMI: Our dance is choreographed by a dancer, not ourselves.

J!-ENT: Do you prefer to perform at a big stadium concert or at small public performances?

YUMI: I like both, though they are completely different.

AMI: Each has its own attraction.

J!-ENT: When you were growing up were you a big fan of Tamio Okuda's group, Unicorn?

YUMI: I've liked them since I was in a junior high.

AMI: Yes, I was.

J!-ENT: What is your most embarrassing moment?

YUMI: I was nervous and embarrassed when I got on stage for the first time.

AMI: When I found some lipstick on my teeth.

J!-ENT: I know that Rodney A. Greenblat (responsible for the character designs for the popular Sony Playstation game "Parappa the Rapper" and "Um Jammer Lammy") created the designs for the PUFFY CD singles. Is there any chance for PUFFY fans to see a PUFFY video game like "Parappa the Rapper?"

YUMI: I like that idea.

AMI: I wish there were.

J!-ENT: Where do you see yourselves five years from now?

YUMI: I'm not sure about the future. But I think I'll be enjoying myself.

AMI: What do I see...I don't know? I believe I'll be doing something fun. ■

JULENT



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Puffy AmiYumi

YEAR ANNIVERSARY

PUFFY AMIYUMI 2001 INTERVIEW BY DENNIS A. AMITH

The Past: The duo known as Puffy AmiYumi consisting of Yumi Yoshimura and Ami Onuki. Two women who came out of nowhere in May of 1996 with their debut single titled “Asia no Junshin” (True Asia) and continued to dominate the Japanese music charts in the mid to late 90’s with their unique style of music with songs such as “Kore ga Watashi no Ikiru Michi”, “Circuit no Musume”, “Nagisa ni Matsuwaru Et Cetera”, “Mother” and much more.

To add to their popularity was the duo’s unique fashion style which consisted of used T-shirts, blue jeans, sneakers and puffy hair.

This started a new fashion trend among young girls in Japan who weren’t comfortable with the other Japanese entertainment inspired fad called the “Amura” (inspired by singer Namie Amuro) which consisted of mini skirts, died golden-brown hair and knee high go go boots.

The Present: While many Japanese groups, especially female groups, aren’t featured in the limelight for a long period of time, Puffy AmiYumi has survived that challenge.

Five years after their first CD single release, the duo has released over seven albums, over a dozen CD singles, several videos and a Sony PlayStation videogame.

Although, they no longer sport the fashion style they inspired when they first debuted, the girls continue to remain stylish in their own way.

Their music style has gone through what would seem like an experimental stage with songs like “PUFFY de Rumba”, “Sumire” and “Boogie Woogie No. 5” and their various styles of music continue to draw new fans.

The duo’s variety show “Pa Pa Pa Puffy” can be seen on TV Asahi in Japan along with a variety of their commercials. They have now released their first US album titled “SPIKE” under the Sony Music Imports label.

There is no question that in the last decade Puffy AmiYumi has made an impact on the Japanese music industry.

Of course, it helps when you have a veteran musician and composer such



PUFFY’s fifth album “Spike” became the group’s first North American release back in Oct. 2000. The album would feature hit songs “Umi he to” and “Boogie Woogie No. 5”. This cover is for the North American release.

as Tamio Okuda (lead vocalist of the Japanese rock group, Unicorn) producing your album and a collaboration with many artists such as Pizzicato Five’s Yasuharu Konishi and Andy Sturmer (Jellyfish, Beatnik Beach).

However, what made Puffy AmiYumi so popular is their non-conforming style. In many songs you can hear a little of the Beatles, the Who, Velvet Crush, Stray Cats, Electric Light Orchestra, Unicorn and other groups.

With each song you get something new, from “Circuit no Musume” (Race Circuit Girls) which sounds like a song from a racing video game, “Nagisa ni Matsuwaru Et Cetera” (About Nagisa, Etc.) which uses a disco theme and “PUFFY de Rumba” which uses a rumba theme.

When I last interviewed Ami and Yumi in February 2000 the girls were preparing for their first performance in

the United States at the SXSW Music Festival in Texas for a special “Japan Not For Sale” performance featuring Sony Music Japan artists.

After their successful performance in Austin, the group had to change their name to “Puffy AmiYumi” in the US because of a cease and desist letter by Sean “Puffy” Combs lawyers for the use of the “Puffy” name.

Over the years, many fans have wondered if Puffy AmiYumi would release an album in the United States.

In May 2001, fans outside of Japan got their wish with the release of “SPIKE” which features thirteen Japanese. It also contains two bonus tracks, “Love So Pure” (an English version of the song “Sumire (Violet)”) and a remix of their popular Japanese song “Circuit no Musume” by Pizzicato Five’s Yasuharu Konishi.

As I prepared for the second inter-



view with Ami and Yumi, I wanted the interview to cover the Japanese entertainment side of Puffy AmiYumi with a non-Japanese perspective.

With the large Japanese entertainment fan base increasing throughout the world, it was important for me to show the duo that their popularity outside of Japan is not brand new but the fan support has existed since their debut in 1996.

J!-ENT: What was your reaction when you found out that you would be releasing an album in the United States?

Puffy AmiYumi: We are really grateful for this opportunity to be able to introduce our music and have people in the US listen to our music.

J!-ENT: I know Andy Sturmer (Jellyfish) has worked with your producer Tamio Okuda in the past. How did it feel to work with Andy Sturmer and to sing an English song like "Love So Pure"?

Puffy AmiYumi: We've worked with Andy several times and always enjoyed working with him. It was our first time to try an English song ("Love So Pure") with Andy.

J!-ENT: Was it difficult or was it easy for you to sing in English?

Puffy AmiYumi: It was really hard work, but we thought our efforts were rewarded when we listened to our finished outcome.

DENNIS: You worked with Yasuharu Konishi for your bonus track "Circuit no Musume/The Ready-made JBL Mix '99". What was it like working with him?

AMI: We didn't exactly work with him in a studio for this track because it is remix work, but Yumi has worked with him on her solo track "VACATION" a long time ago.

YUMI: He is a very intellectual person.

J!-ENT: Are both of you big fans of Pizzicato Five?

Puffy AmiYumi: We love their music because it's so cute and sweet.

J!-ENT: Sony Music Imports will be releasing albums for Puffy AmiYumi and L'Arc-en-Ciel in the US. L'Arc-en-Ciel released a greatest hits album and Puffy AmiYumi released "SPIKE". I really enjoyed your album "SPIKE" but I was wondering why "SPIKE" was chosen as the album to release in the USA and not your greatest hits album? The reason why I ask is because so many people love your older songs like "Asia no Junshin", "Kore ga watashi no ikiru michi", "Mother", etc.

Puffy AmiYumi: We wanted everyone to get known and listen to the most recent work that we have been doing.

J!-ENT: Since you work very closely with Okuda Tamio. What is the chance of Puffy AmiYumi doing their version of popular Unicorn songs in an upcoming album?

Puffy AmiYumi: There are no plan for now, but it might be possible.

J!-ENT: Are you shocked that many non-Japanese all over the world are listening to Japanese music? As well as knowing that a lot of your fans watch your variety show "Pa Pa Pa Puffy" thanks to Japanese video rental stores?

Puffy AmiYumi: We are really happy to know that, but well... it doesn't seem real for us yet.

J!-ENT: One of your fans wanted me to ask you if you will be performing at more events in the United States, Europe or anywhere outside of Japan in the near future?

Puffy AmiYumi: We have not planned exact events yet, but we'd love to perform more live events overseas.

J!-ENT: OK, I'm curious to what kind of music the both of you enjoy listening to? First, please tell me your favorite non-Japanese artists or music group.

YUMI: We are trying to listen to a

variety of music. My favorite artists are Nirvana, Eels, Hole and U2.

J!-ENT: What about your favorite Japanese artists or music group?

AMI: I like Blankey Jet City, Tamio Okuda and Blue Hearts.

YUMI: I like Boom Boom Satellites and Tamio Okuda

J!-ENT: I'm curious. Do both of you enjoy going on the Internet?

AMI: I only use Internet when I want to look up something. I also write a short message on my Website (AMI-GATOR) from time to time.

J!-ENT: What about you Ami?

AMI: I like the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Hole.

J!-ENT: I know you have a busy schedule with music and television but what do you like to do in your free time when you aren't working?

Puffy AmiYumi: We love going out by a car, shopping, chatting with our friends, and going to eat something good.

J!-ENT: Since you two are very popular, I'm guessing it must be hard when you go out to shop in Tokyo or eat in a restaurant. Do you have to wear sunglasses and a hat to disguise yourself?

Puffy AmiYumi: It would be a lie to say that there are no fans coming around us, but it's not as bad as before, I mean, when we actually debuted. So we do go outside. We often go to the shops that we see and check out in the magazines together.

J!-ENT: The next question is for Ami. On your show "Pa Pa Pa Puffy", I have seen you beat Amuro Namie, Sam, Morning Musume, Uehara Takako on "Dance Dance Revolution" and other video games. Are you really good at video games?

AMI: There are some games I'm good at but also there are some games I'm bad at... but basically I like video games.

J!-ENT: What makes you two



PUFFY's fifth album "Spike" became the group's first North American release back in Oct. 2000. The album would feature hit songs "Umi he to" and "Boogie Woogie No. 5". This cover is for the Japanese release.

happy?

YUMI: Friends. People around us.

J!-ENT: I always wondered if you felt strange or even a little upset when SMAP's Nakai Masahiro and Katori Shingo did a parody of your group called "SMUFFY" on "SMAP SMAP" (a segment mocking the groups fashion and dance style) a few years ago?

AMI: We were simply happy to watch them doing our impersonation.

J!-ENT: Before I ask the last question. Many of your dedicated fans outside of all around the world have followed your music since you released your first album, "AmiYumi". These fans have bought all your albums and videos. They have watched your TV show, and your appearance on music shows including your drama special that

you did a few years back. On behalf of the fans of Puffy Ami Yumi, I thank you for entertaining us for many years and we continue to wish you the best.

Puffy AmiYumi: THANK YOU!

J!-ENT: OK...final question. What final words would you like to say to all of your fans outside of Japan?

Puffy AmiYumi: It is very overwhelming to know that there are many people who are supporting us outside of our home country. It seems like surprise, but we are so happy that we've been getting their support from overseas! We are so pleased that people all over the world cheer us up and listen to our music. We believe this by itself is the proof of our efforts and work so far. And our music work is going on and on with people around us. We'd like to do our best and keep on delivering good music to everyone from now on, too. ■

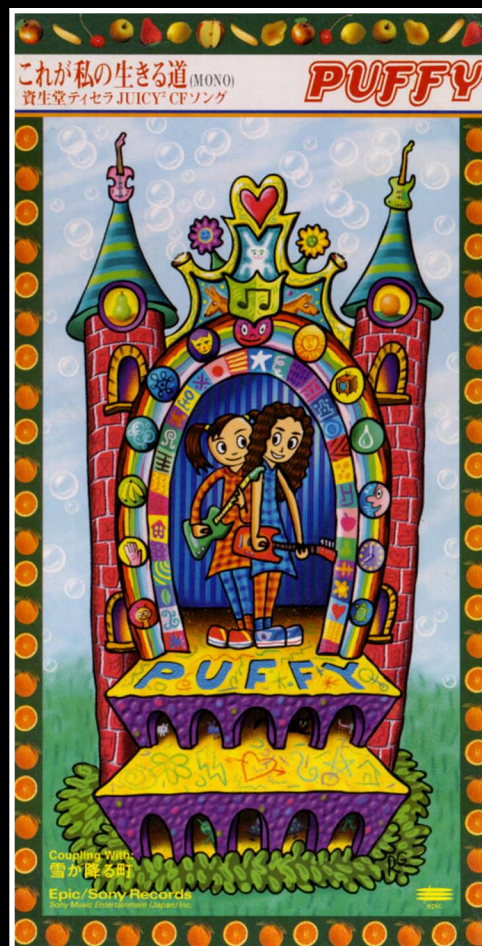
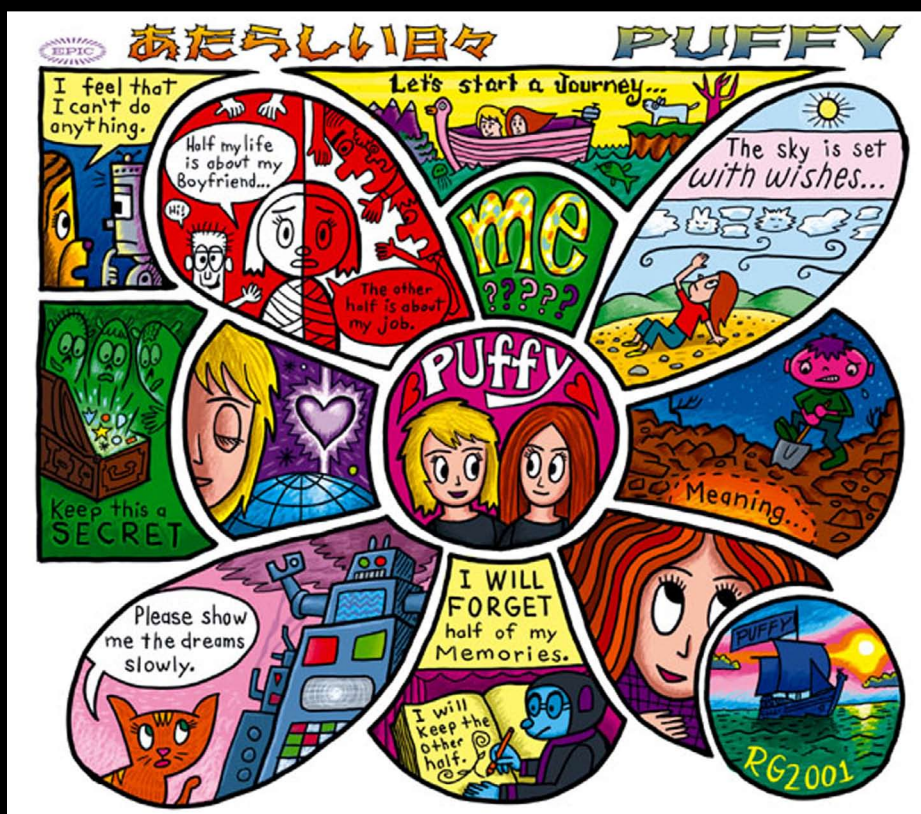
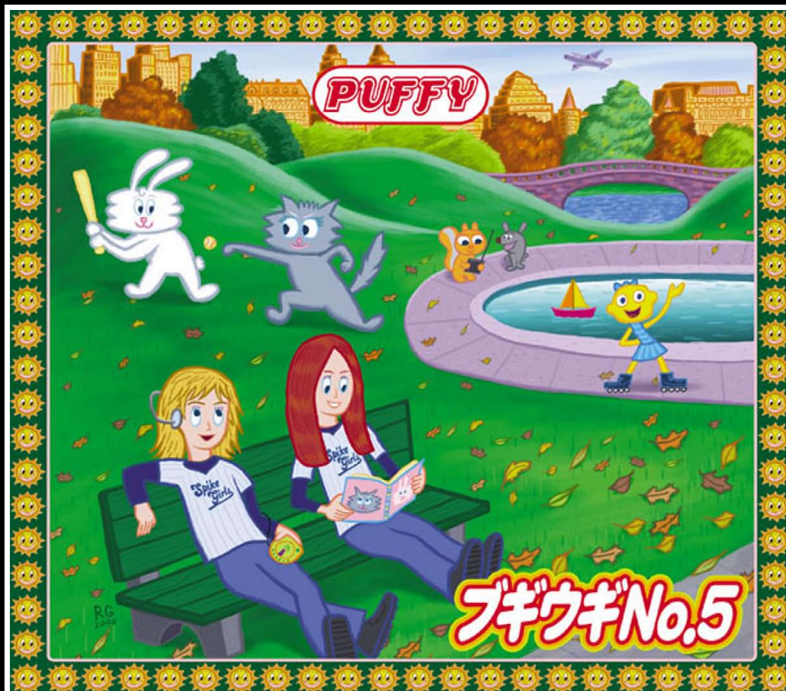


INTERESTING J!-ENT PUFFY AMIYUMI-RELATED FACTS

- Back in 1996, with the release of "Asia no Junshin", in America, finding Puffy AmiYumi's album was quite difficult to find in stores. Interesting enough, J!-ENT's Dennis A. Amith was given the album by a staff member of Shibuya Kei Japanese recording artist CORNELIUS during a concert in San Francisco.
- Back in 1997, J!-ENT held a PUFFY party in which fans of PUFFY came to watch the video "RUN! PUFFY! RUN!" and "TOUR! PUFFY! TOUR!" and also sing PUFFY karaoke songs.
- Back in 2000, when J!-ENT was hosted on an Asian American commercial entertainment portal, J!-ENT's first Puffy AmiYumi article was released at the same time that Jet Li's "Romeo Must Die" exclusive interview to promote the film. And on the first day, as reports came in to see how both were doing, surprisingly, the Puffy AmiYumi interview had more brought in more unique visitors worldwide.
- Back in 2001, PUFFY took part in J!-ENT's Celebrity "GOT RICE" challenge.

Rodney Greenblat's PUFFY artwork

Rodney Greenblat is a popular abstract painter from New York but for many people, his artwork on the PaRappa the Rapper and UmJammer Lammy videogames and the comic Thunder Bunny is well known. But also for his cover design work for PUFFY which began with the duo's second single "Kore ga Watashi no Ikiru Michi" (1996).



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ENTERTAINMENT WORLDWIDE



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Puffy AmiYumi

YEAR ANNIVERSARY

In 2000, they surprised many music fans at SXSW.

In 2001, they released their first US album "SPIKE" which was listed in the top 10 albums of 2001 in Billboard's Critic Choice and people in the U.S. were able to see them on MTV.

So, if 2001 was a good year for Puffy AmiYumi, 2002 looks even brighter!

Puffy AmiYumi is back and this year they will definitely take things up a notch by releasing their Japanese singles compilation "An Illustrated History" (which will be released by Bar None Records in May 2002). They will also tour the United States this summer which includes opening for the B-52's.

Their upcoming compilation will feature sixteen of their popular tracks including "Kore ga watashi no ikiru michi (That's the way it is)", "Mother", "Nagisa ni Matsuwaru Et Cetera (Electric Beach Fever)", "Puffy De Rumba" and many more. Also included is their English track "Love So Pure" and an English version of their first song "Asia no Junshin (True Asia)". Included in the CD is a music video for "Boogie Woogie No. 5".

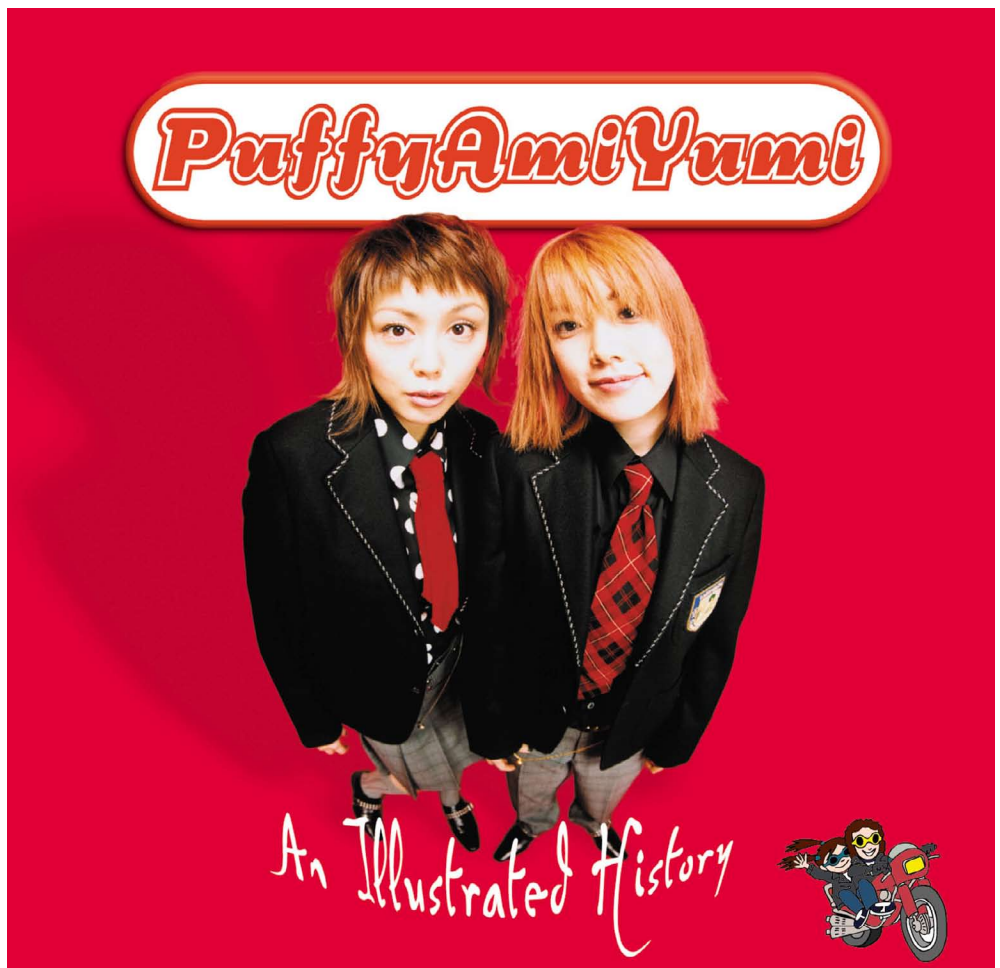
Their music will also be featured in the two upcoming Hollywood flicks. "Boogie Woogie No. 5" will be featured as the opening credit song for the movie "Sheer Bliss" and "Love So Pure" will be used during the closing credits for "I'm With Lucy".

As I prepared for this third interview with Ami and Yumi, I wanted to combine the styles of fan participation from the first interview and also cover the Japanese entertainment side from the second interview.

With Japanese music fandom growing at an increasing rate and with many publications focusing on the US perspective of Puffy AmiYumi, I felt it would be great to show another perspective that fans of the duo will not see in other publications. In addition I wanted to ask Ami and Yumi questions regarding music, life and even their personal interests.

I recently had the opportunity to interview the duo who were in the United States for a photo shoot for "An Illustrated History".

J!-ENT Last year, you released your first album "SPIKE" and there were many positive reviews. It was included in the list of top 10 albums of 2001 in Billboard's Critics



With the release of "Spike" in the U.S. back in 2000, their second album "An Illustrated History" is literally a compilation of all their popular Japanese hits since their Japan debut (not including the SoloSolo singles).

Choice. Americans had the opportunity to watch you on MTV. How was the experience of releasing an album in the US different compared to releasing an album in Japan?

YUMI: It's really great that our album has received good reviews. The majority of the songs we are singing are in Japanese and to be able to get good reviews based on the music is good. What we do in Japan and what we do over here is no different since there is no change in the style of the music. So, we are very happy to get the positive feedback.

J!-ENT: What was the biggest challenge for each of you since releasing your first album in the US?

AMI: The biggest challenge was to sing the song "Love so Pure" in English.

J!-ENT: You are releasing your second album in the US titled "An

Illustrated History of Puffy AmiYumi" which consists of many of your popular hits from Japan. I know many Puffy AmiYumi fans will be very happy to see this release. Was it your choice to release a greatest hits album in the US or Sony Music Japan?

YUMI: Since we put together the album for Japanese release anyway, just because we are releasing an album in the US, we didn't want to change the style of the direction of our music. So, it has been our choice to release the album the way it is.

J!-ENT How you feel about the many fans outside of Japan who have been supporting you since "Asia no Junshin"? Are you surprised by the support?

AMI: We really are happy that people outside of Japan have followed our music. We are very honored.



J!-ENT: Back in the 1960's, Sakamoto Kyu's "Ue o Muite Aruko" was the first Japanese song to stay #1 in the Billboard top 3. Now in 2002, thanks to the Internet, more and more people are becoming aware and are listening to Japanese music. Do you think it's possible for another Japanese song to make it #1 like Sakamoto Kyu's song did in the 60's?

YUMI: We won't necessarily say definitely "no" but to say that there will possibly be another chance like that...it's really hard to say.

J!-ENT: You're in the US working on promotions for "An Illustrated History of Puffy AmiYumi" but I know that you released a new album "THE HIT PARADE" in Japan. Is it hard to do two different album promotions at the same time?

AMI: Not really because it's songs that we sing and it's all about songs. So, we don't find it difficult to do two different album promotions in different territories for our songs.

J!-ENT: I know many fans outside of Japan have bought your new Japanese album. I would like to ask a question about it. How did

an album doing covers of WINK's "Ai ga Tomoranai", SPITZ's "Cherry" and other well known songs come about?

AMI: We were thinking of making a new album and what we would do for the new album. We wanted to work with Okuda Tamio again but he was really, really busy. So, we needed to come up with new ideas that we can work together on a different album without hassling Okuda Tamio so much. So, we felt we should do a cover version because songs already exist and we felt it would be a good idea. That's why we chose to do this album.

J!-ENT: We have seen other Japanese artists release albums in the US and recently Utada Hikaru has been signed with a major US label. How do you feel about other Japanese artists releasing music in the US?

AMI: It's good to know that other Japanese artists want to test out their opportunities in Japan but it's a positive thing that many Japanese artists are releasing their music in the US.

J!-ENT: The next questions are from fans who have followed Puffy

AmiYumi's music in Japan and the US. The questions were taken from fans from the J!-ENT Website.

FAN QUESTION: When Puffy AmiYumi goes on tour, will they be going alone, or with another Japanese band, or maybe opening up for an American band?

YUMI: Nothing is really confirmed right now but we are thinking of opening for an artists in the United States or at some places we will headline ourselves. But as long as we can have fun, we will keep on going and do our best. Whichever the situation maybe or whoever we are with in a live tour.

FAN QUESTION: Is there a band or a singer (dead or alive) that they would like to perform with? If so, who would that be?

AMI: There are so many artists that I like that it's too hard to pick.

FAN QUESTION: Describe your first experience performing live in the United States.

YUMI: We were very nervous to perform but it was the trigger for us to do things in the US and release these two albums. So, we are pretty

excited.

FAN QUESTION: What is your #1 favorite Japanese drama?

YUMI: We really don't watch dramas because we are so busy with work and that since dramas are every week and we can't follow the stories weekly, it gets pretty annoying if you miss an episode.

FAN QUESTION: What was it like to have your own drama special "Puffy no Wide de Ikou: Born to be Wild"?

AMI: It was a very good experience and we discovered and learned many things about appearing in a drama and it was a good experience.

J!-ENT: Would you like to do another drama again?

AMI: We would like to focus on our music right now but we aren't thinking of doing another drama right now.

FAN QUESTION: What is your favorite "Quest" spot for Pa Pa Pa Puffy? I really liked the Ghibli Museum Quest.

AMI: Probably the Ghibli Museum Quest because we could meet Hayao Miyazaki, who we really admire and so that was our favorite one.

FAN QUESTION: Have you thought of filming a "Quest" spot in the United States while you are in the US?

YUMI: It would really be hard because everything is so big in the United States.

FAN QUESTION: In "Pa Pa Pa Puffy", which episode do you enjoy the most? Any certain artists you like performing with?

YUMI: We met so many artists in Japan and overseas and we are happy to have the opportunity to meet and perform with so many different people.

FAN QUESTION: I noticed that in your music videos, you seem to like animals. In your video "RUN! PUFFY! RUN!". Is that your dog and in the music video "Circuit no



In 2002, PUFFY released their sixth album in Japan titled "THE HIT PARADE", a compilation albums which feature covers of popular '70s and '80s Japanese hits.

Musume"? Is that your rabbit?

AMI: They are not ours but we both have pet cats.

FAN QUESTION: In "RUN! PUFFY! RUN!" did your car really break down and you had to walk in the desert?

YUMI: Yes, that really happened. Our car broke down and we had to walk.

FAN QUESTION: When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grow up?

AMI: I wanted to be an air stewardess.

YUMI: I wanted to be an air stewardess as well because of a TV drama that I watched when I was growing up.

FAN QUESTION: You have several fan websites on the Internet all over the world. Do you ever visit

them?

YUMI: We visit and check our official sites but for unofficial fan sites, we don't, because we might get influenced if we see things that are not positive and that will make us feel depressed. So, we really don't visit them.

FAN QUESTION: A question for Ami. I know that you are big on video games. What games are you playing lately?

AMI: I have been playing "Dragon Quest" a lot. But now I have been playing the Nintendo GameCube.

FAN QUESTION: Ami, do you still play a lot of Dance Dance Revolution?

AMI: Yes, in the past. But not so much.

J!-ENT: Thank you to our readers who submitted their fan questions



In 2002, PUFFY released their 15th CD single in Japan titled "Hurricane".

for Ami and Yumi. Many people have watched Ami and Yumi on television via music shows or on their own television show. Is the Ami and Yumi on TV the same as Ami and Yumi that we see in real life.

AMI: We would like to say that we're exactly the same. Because when we are on TV, we are working but we are not that different from what we are from TV and off-camera.

J!-ENT: If there is one word to describe the group, what word would that be and why?

YUMI: In general, Puffy is regarded down to Earth like natural. So for the group, I would say "natural".

J!-ENT: If there is one word to describe each other, what word would that be and why?

YUMI: Ami...Ami is like a serious older sister. So, I would say "SERIOUS".

AMI: For Yumi, it would be "YOUNG". If Yumi was in a crowd with a lot of people and if there was a younger girl in the crowd, Yumi always tries to be the youngest out of all the people.

J!-ENT: I know you have visited New York a several times. Were you shocked to see the Twin Towers no longer there after 9/11?

AMI: It was such a shocking event. When we went back to New York, we could recall how things were visually. The September 11th tragedy was so shocking.

J!-ENT: You have visited New York and Los Angeles. Which do you

like better?

YUMI: I like both but if I lived in the US, I would want to live in Los Angeles because it's more relaxed and time goes a bit slower.

AMI: I like New York because of the great shopping!

J!-ENT: When you are in the US, do you like to eat American food or do you try to find a Japanese restaurant?

YUMI: We like to eat American food. In fact, this morning we ate at Taco Bell.

J!-ENT: Let's do a little word play. I'll ask you a few words and you each give me your definition of them:

Puffy Ami Yumi:

a) LOVE:

YUMI: It's not the most important thing to people.

AMI: Love means kindness.

b) SUCCESS

YUMI: Success is a combination of effort and faith.

AMI: Success is something that you shouldn't think of it as a goal.

c) MP3

YUMI: I haven't used it much but it's a pretty convenient tool.

AMI: MP3 is a media that will affect us and the sale of our CDs.

d) Brad Pitt

Puffy Ami Yumi: The commercial character for Edwin 503 Jeans.

e) SEX

AMI: Recently, there are people who are in between. Not female and male. It's an up in the air type of thing.

YUMI: Sex is not the only form of love.

J!-ENT: What final words do you have for your fans?

Puffy Ami Yumi: Our upcoming album "AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF PUFFY AMIYUMI" is a collection of our songs from the past, which represents the best of our songs, so we would like a lot of people to listen to it and enjoy it.





Follow the wacky adventures of Japan's rockin' duo Puffy AmiYumi in an upcoming animated series titled "Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi" debuting on November 19th on the Cartoon Network. *by Dennis A. Amith*

HI HI PUFFY AMI YUMI PHOTO COURTESY OF CARTOON NETWORK; PUFFY AMIYUMI PHOTO COURTESY OF SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN

PUFFY AMIYUMI ARE BACK! This time in an animated format for their upcoming show “Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi” which is set to debut on the Cartoon Network on November 19 (7:30 p.m., Friday).

Many Cartoon Network fans will know the duo from their theme to the popular animation “Teen Titans”.

For many of fans familiar with their music, they are known as the cute, humorous but hard rockin’ duo who had many #1 hits in Japan, sold millions of records, had their own television variety show, their own video game and also have rocked America with performances in New York, California and Texas.

With animation that is reminiscent to the popular “Power Puff Girls”, “Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi” is a very fun series which features Ami, the peppy, optimistic member and Yumi, the tough, hard rocking member along with their square manager, Kaz.

The animated series mixes live performances and short skit segments by Puffy AmiYumi. One example features Yumi explaining she’s from Osaka, Japan and Ami explaining she’s from Tokyo and the two get into a humorous argument of which city is better.

As for the spoken language of the animated series, the characters are dubbed by talented voice actors Janice Kawaye as Ami, Grey Delisle as Yumi and Keone Young as Kaz.

One of the cool aspects of this animated series which I enjoyed is the use of music by Puffy AmiYumi. So, although the series is all-English, the show does incorporate the popular music (Japanese and English) by the duo.

Andy Sturmer who has worked with the duo on their English tracks for their previous American albums is on-board with this animated series as the music director and consulting producer.

To accompany the debut of their show, Ami and Yumi have put together a soundtrack (available from Sony Epic on November 16) of some of their best

THE FIRST MUSIC DUO IN JAPAN TO BREAK OUT IN THE USA



Believe it or not but Puffy AmiYumi are the second female Japanese duo to have a major appearance on American television. The first was PINK LADY who debuted on the 1980 NBC variety show “PINK LADY & JEFF” (now available on DVD from RHINO). Despite their hotness, the women didn’t understand nor could they speak any English, participated in horrendous skits and had to sing (or lip-sync) covers of current popular songs at that time in English. Unfortunately, it is viewed as one of the top 10 terrible shows of all time. Fortunately, Puffy AmiYumi are not following the exact same route. (photo by Victor Records)

tracks spanning their 9 year career.

Songs included in this album feature the popular “Teen Titans Theme” as well as the “Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi” show theme. Also, “Friends Forever” (from “Scooby-Doo 2”) and popular Japanese hits such as “Kore ga watashi no Ikiru Michi”, “Vacation”, “Asia no Junshin”, “Boogie Woogie No. 5”, “Love So Pure” and many more.

From the J!-ENT point-of-view, I’m pretty stoked to see Puffy AmiYumi with an animated show in America.

Sam Register (Cartoon Network Vice President) and the Cartoon Network have been very hip to bridge the gap between American and Japanese culture with their programming. With the inclusion of Puffy AmiYumi singing the theme song for “Teen Titans” (both in Japanese and English) as well as giving them the opportunity to have their own

show, I really like the direction the network is going.

As for the animation of “Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi”, although the American character animation is different from the Rodney Greenblat style of artwork (used on the duo’s Japanese merchandise) that some of us are used to, I do feel that their intended targeted audience (ages 6-11) and fans will feel comfortable and enjoy it.

The voice acting is very well done and so far, from what I have seen, you can understand Ami and Yumi’s English during the live segments..

“Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi” is definitely quite unique.

Although “Hi Hi Puffy Ami Yumi” is not anime, it manages to carry both the Japanese elements of Puffy AmiYumi’s music and how they are in Japan and the American element through the animation.

All in all, it helps to have a balance of cool but simple animation and well-done voice acting which helps make this animation enjoyable. **B**



For more information on Puffy AmiYumi, please check out their official US Web site at: www.puffyamiyumi.com.

J! ENT

ENTERTAINMENT WORLDWIDE



15 Puffy AmiYumi YEAR ANNIVERSARY

PUFFY AMIYUMI 2005 CONCERT REPORT BY GARLAND GEE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAYUMI NASHIDA



PUFFY AMIYUMI rocking out in the Wiltern LG theater. Photo by Mayumi Nashida.

WHAT'S HOT IN MUSIC



PUFFY AMIYUMI rocking out in the Wiltern LG theater. Photo by Mayumi Nashida.

LOS ANGELES — Six-year-old Natalia Okamura waited in the line that formed in the sliver of a shadow on the north side of the Wiltern LG theater hours before performance time.

In the evening twilight, the red and green neon lights were barely coming on and had not yet cast a glow against the green exterior of the building.

Natalia's new T-shirt was too big for her and almost looked like a skirt on her small frame. The center of the black shirt revealed in white letters who she had come to see — Puffy AmiYumi.

Fronted by female singers Ami Onuki and Yumi Yoshimura, the Japanese rock band recently played a West Coast tour in the United States.

Natalia, along with her mother

Ligia, made the trek out from Torrance, Calif., to Los Angeles' Koreatown to catch Puffy AmiYumi in concert. Natalia's interest in Puffy AmiYumi stems from their animated show "Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi" on the Cartoon Network.

"She has to watch Puffy AmiYumi every day," says Ligia of her daughter's television viewing habits. "She wants to be like Yumi," Ligia says.

Jennifer Morgan is also a fan of the cartoon. "I love their story," says Jennifer Morgan, "two total strangers can come together and make kickass music."

The "Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi" show has a TV-Y rating which means it is designed to be appropriate for children of all ages.

"But it's not just for little girls,"

says Jennifer, a 21-year-old from Whittier, Calif.

Joe McGasko, a fan from New York, enjoys the cartoon but is more a fan of Puffy AmiYumi's music.

Joe, 35, has been a fan since hearing their song "Love So Pure" a few years ago and owns most of their albums.

He has previously seen Puffy AmiYumi in concert and had to see them again while he was visiting his sister in Southern California. "They're a really tight rock band," Joe says.

More than a thousand attendees packed into the Wiltern to hear this tight rock band play. The energy level was so high that the simple lowering of the Puffy AmiYumi banner elicited cheers from the crowd.



PUFFY AMIYUMI rocking out in the Wiltern LG theater. Photo by Mayumi Nashida.

The hundreds in the pit never stopped moving during the performance as they stood mere inches from the band.

Within the past few years, the popularity of Puffy AmiYumi in the United States has grown.

Their latest claims to fame on this side of the Pacific include the theme for the “Teen Titans” cartoon, the song “Friends Forever” for the “Scooby Doo 2” movie, and, most notably, the aforementioned “Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi” animated series on the Cartoon Network.

Because of this, much of the band’s recent exposure has been to young children.

Before the debut of “Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi” on Nov. 19, 2004, Puffy AmiYumi’s audience was

primarily college-aged adults, says Yaz Noya, of Antinos Management, the company handling Puffy AmiYumi’s appearances in the United States.

Yaz characterizes the current audience as a 50/50 mix of kids attending with their parents and the college crowd.

Though this combination may seem strange, “both enjoy themselves in their own way,” Yaz says.

But is targeting a younger audience starting a new trend for Puffy AmiYumi?

Yaz says it was just luck of timing that the “Teen Titans” and “Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi” projects coincided.

Puffy AmiYumi aren’t deliberately targeting younger audiences now and they won’t in the future, says Yaz. “They are rock band first and that will never change.” ■

PUFFY AMIYUMI “ROCK SHOW GOES WEST” SET LIST

1. UREI
2. Planet Tokyo
3. Tokyo Nights
4. LOVE SO PURE
5. That’s the Way It Is
(Kore ga watashi no ikiru-michi)
6. FRIENDS FOREVER
7. TALALAN
8. Jet Police (Jet Keisatsu)
9. Umi eto
10. TEEN TITANS
11. JOINING A FAN CLUB
12. Boogie Woogie No. 5
13. Puffy’s Rule
14. Hi Hi
(encore)
15. Basket Case
16. True Asia (Asia no Junshin)

...Splurge

J!-ENT HAS COVERED PUFFY AMIYUMI SINCE 1996 AND IN OUR LATEST INTERVIEW WITH PUFFYAMIYUMI, WE TALK ABOUT THEIR LATEST ALBUM "SPLURGE" AND CELEBRATING TEN YEARS WITH THE JAPANESE MUSIC DUO. BY DENNIS A. AMITH

PUFFY AMIYUMI. It's hard to believe that it has been ten years since the duo exploded onto the music scene.

I look at my old post that I made on the J!-ENT mailing list describing my first time of watching the duo on television:

[May 7, 1996]

I'm currently watching a Star Search-like show called "POP STOCK" which is filmed at the Nikko Hotel in Tokyo. Nagase Tomoya and Swing Out Sister are among the guests but there appears to be a new group featuring these two girls in jeans and t-shirts. Fun to watch and their song (Asia no Junshin) is definitely appealing. But I think they need a choreographer."

Several weeks later, the duo (known as PUFFY in Japan) were performing on various music and variety shows. Even being parodied on the popular show "SMAPxSMAP" as SMAP members Masahiro Nakai and Shingo Katori copying the duo's dancing style and fashion as SMUFFY.

It didn't take long for PUFFY which consists of Yumi Yoshimura and Ami Onuki to become a household name. With hit after hit, the women had a special chemistry and a sound that was unique.

Their first CD single "Asia no Junshin" sold over a million copies and their singles that followed their first continued the trend.

The duo were appearing on commercials, magazine ads and were working with popular artist Rodney Greenblat (known to many people in the US for his characters in the PlayStation video game "Parappa the Rappa") for the covers of their CD singles.

The duo had a chance to star in their own drama special titled "PUFFY no Wild de Ikou: Born to be Wild" and then landing their own TV series "PA. PA.PA. PUFFY" a year later.

The way I saw their popularity, I saw it at the time where electronic and R&B music were all that you heard from Japan, PUFFY was the alternative.

While many singers were aligned by a mega-producer, had the choreography and dancers, creat-

ing the latest fashion trend in mini skirts and large boots (a.k.a. the "Amuraa" trend inspired by Namie Amuro), PUFFY was the anti-thesis of what was the norm of Japanese music.

Here are two beautiful women and here they were sporting t-shirts, blue jeans and sneakers. Their hair was wavy and puffy and they definitely were not dancers. Their look and their sound were different.

Being different was a catalyst to their popularity in Japan and also worldwide.

The group was gaining popularity outside of Japan as evident with their Mandarin version of another million-plus selling CD single "Kore ga Watashi no Ikiru Michi" and also a solo album which the women had a chance to experiment with different music genres.

But with the many hit songs that continued with their second album "JET", during a trip from Tokyo in 1999, during my morning perusal of "Space Shower TV" and VIBE (now known as MTV Japan), I was surprised to see the duo experiment with different music with their song "Puffy de Rumba".

And for those who asked how is it that these two women have survived the Japanese music industry for ten years. Personally, I believe that the two women reinvent themselves. They collaborate with well known names from Unicorn's Tamio Okuda, Jellyfish's Andy Sturmer, Pizzicato Five's KONISHI, Malcolm McLaren, Fantastic Plastic Machine and many, many more thus producing a different sound.

Like Madonna who can take on different musical challenges, Puffy AmiYumi does just that.

Not many Japanese music stars venture outside of the music they are known for. Some who have, have risked the challenge and have suffered from it.

The music sound of PUFFY within the past five years has matured and experimentation of different musical genres have been the key of longevity for the duo.

Ten years later, they are known worldwide with accomplishments both in Japan and the U.S. not seen since Japanese artist Kyu Sakamoto's Japanese song "Ue o Muite Aruko" (I'll Walk with My Head Up) was #1 for several weeks on Cashbox Magazine

EVENT

ENTERTAINMENT WORLDWIDE



15

Puffy AmiYumi

YEAR ANNIVERSARY



and Billboard Magazine back in the 60's.

Ten years later, the duo has an animated show titled "Hi! Hi! Puffy AmiYumi" on the Cartoon Network, merchandise and even video games based on their likeness. The duo even performed at the 2005 Macy's Thanksgiving Parade.

Yes, ten years later and the duo are singing more songs in English, performing at more concerts around the U.S. and collaborating with more talented musicians and to make things even more sweeter for their ten year anniversary, the group has released a new album titled "SPLURGE" from Tofu Records.

In this latest album, Puffy AmiYumi got to work with indie icons such as Jon Spencer of Blues Explosion fame, Dexter Holland of the Offspring and Butch Walker, writer-producer of Avril Lavigne and Pink.

And Puffy AmiYumi wouldn't be the same without power-pop genius Andy Sturmer (formerly of Jellyfish) and Japanese rock star Tamio Okuda (formerly of Unicorn and also co-wrote many of the duo's early hits).

So, with all the collaborations on this album, expect a variety of different genres from rock and blues and many more. If you have been a fan of the

duo's experimentation of music, you are going to love "SPLURGE".

With a mix of English and Japanese tracks, you go from the classic PUFFY sound of "Call Me What You Like" (and critical fans of their English songs will find it comforting that their English is much better in this album) and "Nice Buddy" to Dexter Holland injecting bouncy rock/ska to the song "Tokyo, I'm on My Way" to the awesome Jon Spencer rockabilly guitar style of "Go Baby Power Now" and "Radio Tokyo" which Butch Walker gives the group a Mott the Hoople-style influenced song.

A very well done and with the various music styles represented, gives fans a new refreshing look at the duo and the future of their music.

Ten years later, another album featuring familiar and yet different type of music but yet Puffy AmiYumi is still going strong.

In the past decade, we have had the pleasure of covering Puffy AmiYumi and interviewing them at different stages of their career.

Recently, J!-ENT had the opportunity to interview Yumi and Ami during their U.S. tour in the East Coast regarding their new album "SPLURGE" and their tenth year anniversary.

“ We’ve been blessed with people that we’ve worked with. Musicians, staff members, fans and we wouldn’t have been here if it wasn’t for them.”



WHAT'S UP WITH MUSIC

j!-ent **Totally Hot** selection!

J!-ENT: With this year being the tenth year anniversary since the debut of PUFFY in Japan, how would you sum up these incredible ten years as a music duo?

YUMI: We've been blessed with people that we've worked with. Musicians, staff members, fans and we wouldn't have been here if it wasn't for them.

J!-ENT: Did you imagine 10 years ago that PUFFY AmiYumi would be like who you are today?

AMI: No, not at all.

J!-ENT: When the song "Puffy De Rumba" was released in 1998, it was clearly a start of a different musical take on PUFFY AMIYUMI's music. I believe this is where PUFFY began to attract more listeners (outside of Japan) who listen to Japanese music because of your willingness to try something different musically. Many Japanese artists usually do not try to change their style of music but for PUFFY AMIYUMI, you have experimented with different types of music as a duo. Do you both enjoy doing different types of music versus the musical style you did on your first two albums?

AMI: "Anything goes" is our style. It's free style. Tamio (Okuda) let us try various musical genres and "Puffy De Rumba" was created by a composer that Tamio trusts and we enjoyed making this single. We will keep exploring new style and I think that's Puffy AmiYumi is all about.

J!-ENT: Is it difficult for you to try different styles?

YUMI: We never considered it as a challenge. I think it's the same for everyone but you would get bored if you keep doing the same thing for 10 years. We try different styles simply because it's fun. It's nothing strategic.

J!-ENT: With the upcoming release of "SPLURGE" in the United States from Tofu Records, this album is highly

experimental in terms of PUFFY AMIYUMI utilizing different musical genres from rockabilly, classic, to rock and a little of the original PUFFY AMIYUMI style of music and more. How was the experience for you both in creating this album?

AMI: I feel very fortunate that our favorite artists have agreed to provide songs for this album. They're not just composers but artists who could sing themselves and have established their own style. As is the case with Tamio and Andy Sturmer, we were determined to make the songs that those artists create for us, sound as our own, and it was a challenge. But when we completed the album, we felt such great sense of accomplishment and that lead to confidence. I think we've made an album that's hard for us to live up to. (aughing)

J!-ENT: In "SPLURGE", you both are singing more English songs. Do you both feel comfortable now, singing in English?

YUMI: Obviously, it is harder than singing in Japanese. Paying close attention to the pronunciation is not an easy thing to do but when we listen to our finished songs, we felt that all our efforts were rewarded. We will keep singing English songs as long as we release music in America, so people can understand what we sing about. But if I answer this question simply, it's hard. (laugh)

J!-ENT: In "SPLURGE" you had the opportunity to work with Jon Spencer,

Butch Walker and Dexter Holland. How was that experience?

YUMI: I was really happy that those artists provided their music to us. I was also impressed how nice those people are. They're all really sweet and down-to-earth. I'm convinced that that is why they're loved by so many people. The music they gave us are great and that motivated us to make a good album. The song they made for us is so good that we felt a bit nervous about making sure that the finished songs are great. But everybody told us that the finished songs we great, so we felt relieved.

J!-ENT: I remember in one of your older concert videos "TOUR! PUFFY! TOUR!", I believe it was Ami who sung a little sample from the OFF-SPRING. Knowing that you are a fan of their music, it must have been a blast to work with him in "TOKYO, IM ON MY WAY". How was that experience?

AMI: They're my favorite band so of course, I was very happy.

J!-ENT: Now how was that experience of being the first Japanese music artists to perform on the "Macy's Parade" in New York on National TV?

AMI: I was surprised that there were so many people out there!

YUMI: Honestly, since there is no Japanese equivalent to Thanksgiving, it made me wonder.

AMI: Everybody in America watches the parade on TV, right? I think that parade gave us a great opportunity for us to introduce our music but I felt a bit embarrassed that so many people were watching us. (laughing)

J!-ENT: We have seen you perform a variety of times in the United States and it was very surreal to see young children at your concert last year. I always wondered how you felt about seeing a younger audience who enjoy your animated series "HI! HI! PUFFY AMIYUMI" at your concerts?

YUMI: I'm very happy about the fact



J!-ent **Totally Hot** selection!

that those children wanted to see the real us, not just animated us. What we hope for from the cartoon show is that it gives a chance to people to listen to our music and they like it. So in that sense, I feel very happy to see children at our show because of the cartoon. I did worry about the live sound being too loud for them, though.

J!-ENT: You've experimented with many musical genres but what other musical genres would you both like to experiment with in future albums? Possibly reggae, electronic, drum n bass, etc?

AMI: There is no particular genre that we have in mind right now. Since we're a duo, we will keep experimenting with sound that we both are

interested in. Whatever the genre of a songs is, it would be Puffy AmiYumi sound once our voices are on it.

J!-ENT: Before we go, I felt it was very cool that you worked with Okuda Tamio in "SPLURGE". He's been there for you in the beginning and he continues to work with you today. But one thing I have always wanted to ask you both, will we ever see a PUFFY AMI-YUMI rendition of Okuda's UNICORN Songs "Daimeiwaku", "Peke Peke" or "I'M A LOSER"?

YUMI: We've actually done it before. It's a song of UNICORN called "Yuki ga Furu Machi". We both respect Tamio so much and sing his song at concert sometime.

J!-ENT: Any last words for your fans?

AMI: I'm very happy with our new album and that it gets released in our 10th anniversary year. So I hope you will pick it up and listen to it. Also, if we come to perform near you, please come and post your comments on puffyamiyumi.com

YUMI: We're only playing 8 shows on this tour but we will come perform in different places as long as you support us. So until then, please listen to Splurge and wait for us to come! ■

For more information on Puffy AmiYumi, please visit their Website at www.puffyamiyumi.com and to get more information on their latest album "SPLURGE" from Tofu Records, please visit www.tofurecords.com.



Photography courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment (Japan)

J!-ENT

ENTERTAINMENT WORLDWIDE



PUFFY honeycreeper TOUR

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Puffy Ami Yumi

YEAR ANNIVERSARY

PUFFY AMIYUMI 2007 SPECIAL PICTORIAL BY NERGENE ARQUELADA
ARTICLE BY DENNIS A. AMITH

Puffy AmiYumi - honeysweeper tour



Fans gather outside the House of Blues in Anaheim, CA on November 18, 2007 - Photo by Nergene Arquelada

lit- **A** tle over a decade ago, a female duo known as PUFFY came on to the Japanese music scene and wowed audiences with their song “Asia no Junshin”.

Throughout the last six years, we have interviewed and featured an article on J!-ENT and in 2007, Puffy AmiYumi (the duo’s US monicker) returned to the United States for a five city North American Tour.

Not long ago, the two were modeling for a GAP campaign featuring Sarah Silverman, Forest Whitaker and Selma Blair.

And of course, the duo had a hit cartoon on the Cartoon Network with their series “Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi” which made the duo a fan favorite with the younger crowd.

With their latest album “honeysweeper” out in Japan, the duo carried out their “honeysweeper tour” by kicking it off at Richard’s in Vancouver, BC on November 11th.

Their tour then went on to Seattle at Moore Theatre, Slims in San Francisco, Key Club in West Hollywood and concluding on November 18th at the House of Blues in Anaheim, CA.

Since their animated series, we have seen a good percentage of children accompanying their parents or older siblings to a Puffy AmiYumi concert.

In 2006, for our interview with Puffy AmiYumi, we asked how they felt about seeing children at their concerts.

Yumi answered, “I’m very happy about the fact that those children wanted to see the real us, not just animated us.

What we hope for from the cartoon show is that it gives a chance to people to listen to our music and they like it. So in that sense, I feel very happy to see children at our show because of the cartoon. I did worry about the live sound being too loud for them, though.”

The turnout for the Anaheim concert was definitely well-attended and according to Sony Music Entertainment Japan, “honeysweeper” will have a US 2008 release.

J!-ENT photographer Nergene Arquelada attended the Puffy AmiYumi honeysweeper tour concert at the House of Blues and we would like to give you an insight of their Anaheim performance through his “Puffy AmiYumi honeysweeper Tour Pictorial”. ■

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PUFFY AmiYumi performing at the House of Blues in Anaheim, CA on November 18, 2007 - Photos by Nergene Arquelada

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Onuki Ami of Puffy AmiYumi performing at the House of Blues in Anaheim, CA on November 18, 2007 - Photo by Nergene Arquelada

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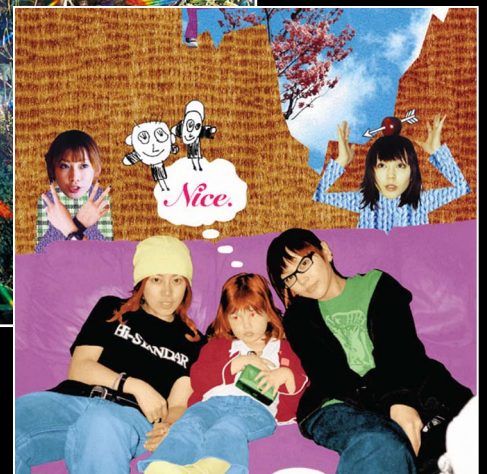
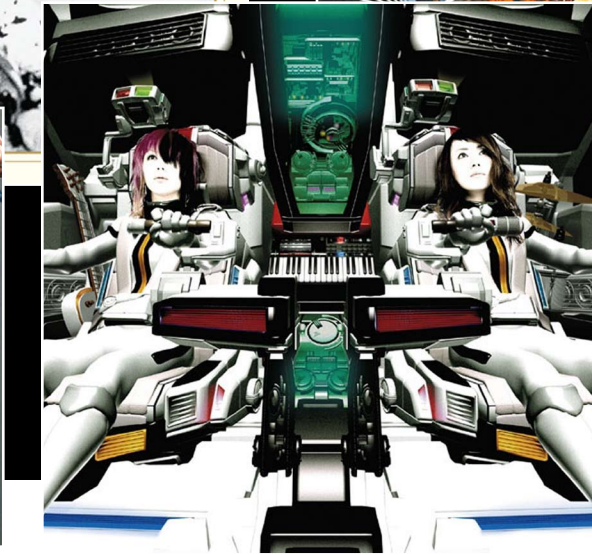
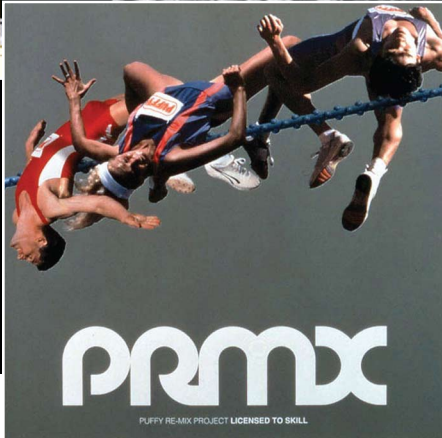


Yumi Yoshimura of PUFFY AmiYumi performing at the House of Blues in Anaheim, CA on November 18, 2007 - Photo by Nergene Arquelada



Puffy AmiYumi performing at the House of Blues in Anaheim, CA on November 18, 2007 - Photos by Nergene Arquelada

PUFFY cover artwork collage



J!-ENT

ENTERTAINMENT WORLDWIDE



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Puffy Ami Yumi

YEAR ANNIVERSARY

PUFFY AMIYUMI 2010 INTERVIEW BY DENNIS A. AMITH



Fifteen Years and Still Going Strong...

From their Japanese debut in 1996, to their American debut in 2000, Puffy AmiYumi continues to entertain their fans worldwide!

By Dennis A. Amith

Fifteen years later and Puffy AmiYumi continue to rock! 15 years later in the Japanese music industry and you're part of a rare group of music talent that have ever achieved such a major feat.

But Puffy AmiYumi is not your average group. Not only have the duo had achieved music success in Japan, 15 years ago, they have their own television show, their own drama specials, many special guest appearances, commercials and it continues to this

date as their latest commercial is to promote Disney's "Toy Story 3" Blu-ray and DVD release.

Fifteen years later and both Ami and Yumi still continue to be one of the most successful Japanese music duo's ever to crossover from Japan to the U.S.

Since their U.S. debut in 2000, the duo have performed throughout the United States and countries outside of Japan, they have had their own American animated show, they have had merchandise, video games and literally have a good American fanbase as well as a strong fanbase throughout the world and outside of Japan.

It really is an understatement of the accomplishments Puffy AmiYumi have made in the United States. But it hasn't always been that easy.

Puffy AmiYumi is a group that have literally have worked hard through various challenges to get themselves where they are today. Their success has even helped clear some barriers for other Japanese music artists to attempt success outside of Japan.

Of course, it helps when you receive the backing of your label, major American companies (such as the Cartoon Network and GAP) and most of all, the support from their fans all over the globe who have supported them for 15 years and for many years



In June 2009, PUFFY released their 11th album "Bring it!" in Japan.

to come.

For their 15th year anniversary, we looked forward to interview the duo once again.

In October 2010, Puffy AmiYumi performed live in concert in New York in conjunction with their appearance at New York Comic Con and the New York Anime Festival.

We recently had the opportunity to interview Puffy AmiYumi after their New York performance.

J!-ENT: It's great to interview you once again. I have to ask you, what is your secret of staying energetic and continuing to creating awesome music?

Puffy AmiYumi: There were some difficult moments over the past 15 years, but we always try to enjoy everything, so I guess that's the key to it.

J!-ENT: This year is your 15th Anniversary as a group. Looking back when you first made your appear-

ance in America and what you have accomplished in America so far, does it still amaze you?

Puffy AmiYumi: We just never thought that our music will be heard outside of Japan, so we're actually still surprised and we feel thankful.

J!-ENT: Back in 2000, when I asked you where you would see yourself five years from now? Both of your answers were "I'll be enjoying myself". Here we are in 2010, the both of you have accomplished so much in your music career, are you still having fun?

Puffy AmiYumi: "Having fun" is the keyword for Puffy AmiYumi, so we'll continue our music as long as we can enjoy.

J!-ENT: We have seen Tamio Okuda makes his return with UNICORN and I know that the both of you have had a good working relationship with Okuda-san. Since the be-

ginning of your careers, what has Okuda brought to the music of Puffy AmiYumi and what are you grateful to him for?

Puffy AmiYumi: Not only the music of Puffy AmiYumi, but we're influenced by him in so many ways.

J!-ENT: Along with Okuda-san, another person you have given great credit to your music is Andy Sturmer. In your opinion, what has Andy brought to the music of Puffy and what are you grateful to him for?

Puffy AmiYumi: Andy brought in the mature/feminine essence into Puffy AmiYumi.

J!-ENT: I'm curious, if I was too look into your MP3 player right now, what music, artist or band would I see you listening to?

AMI: I've been listening to many Japanese bands recently.

YUMI: I'm re-realizing the beauty of Japanese language, so I've been also listening to Japanese artists these days.

J!-ENT: You both had success that many Japanese artists and groups have hoped to achieve. How do you feel about that?

Puffy AmiYumi: It's hard to explain, but all of these were such an amazing experience!

J!-ENT: How do you feel about being a group that helped break down those walls for Japanese artists/music to become known to non-Japanese and what is your impression of how Japanese music has become accepted worldwide?

Puffy AmiYumi: We personally don't feel that we've opened the gate, but there are so much good music in Japan, so we really hope that their music will be heard to more people outside of Japan as well.

J!-ENT: Back then, the first year or so, you would always say that you were nervous to perform in front of an American audience. But having performed in front of American audiences and also audiences worldwide, do you still get nervous? And also, what differences have you seen between fans in Japan versus



PUFFY AmiYumi performing in New York. Photo by Mayumi Nashida.

fans in Asia, Europe and the United States in terms of how they appreciate your music?

Puffy AmiYumi: We're still always nervous, but that's also what makes it exciting. In terms of the audience, we don't think that there's much of a difference between different countries. We're just happy to see our fans enjoying with our music.

J!-ENT: Speaking of fans worldwide, you have become very popular with your fans in Mexico and Brazil. Many who are just discovering your music. How does it feel to find this new surging fandom in both countries lately?

Puffy AmiYumi: We are very much happy about it, and would love to go visit!

J!-ENT: Back in 2006, during our last interview, we talked about how your album "SPLURGE" was unique because you both sung in Japanese

and English and you both told me that it was difficult for both of you because of the pronunciation of the words. Are you both still confident about your English and singing in English or do you both still find it very difficult?

Puffy AmiYumi: Not too much towards singing in English, but everyday conversation is still difficult!

J!-ENT: Because your music has been featured in anime series, I need to ask this question for those new fans who are wondering, do you watch anime still?

Puffy AmiYumi: We both still watch anime, and we love manga. We grew up watching the anime series every Sundays. They were great!

J!-ENT: You've collaborated with Butch Walker and Avril Lavigne for tracks such as "I Don't Wanna" and "All Because of You". What was it like to work with Avril?

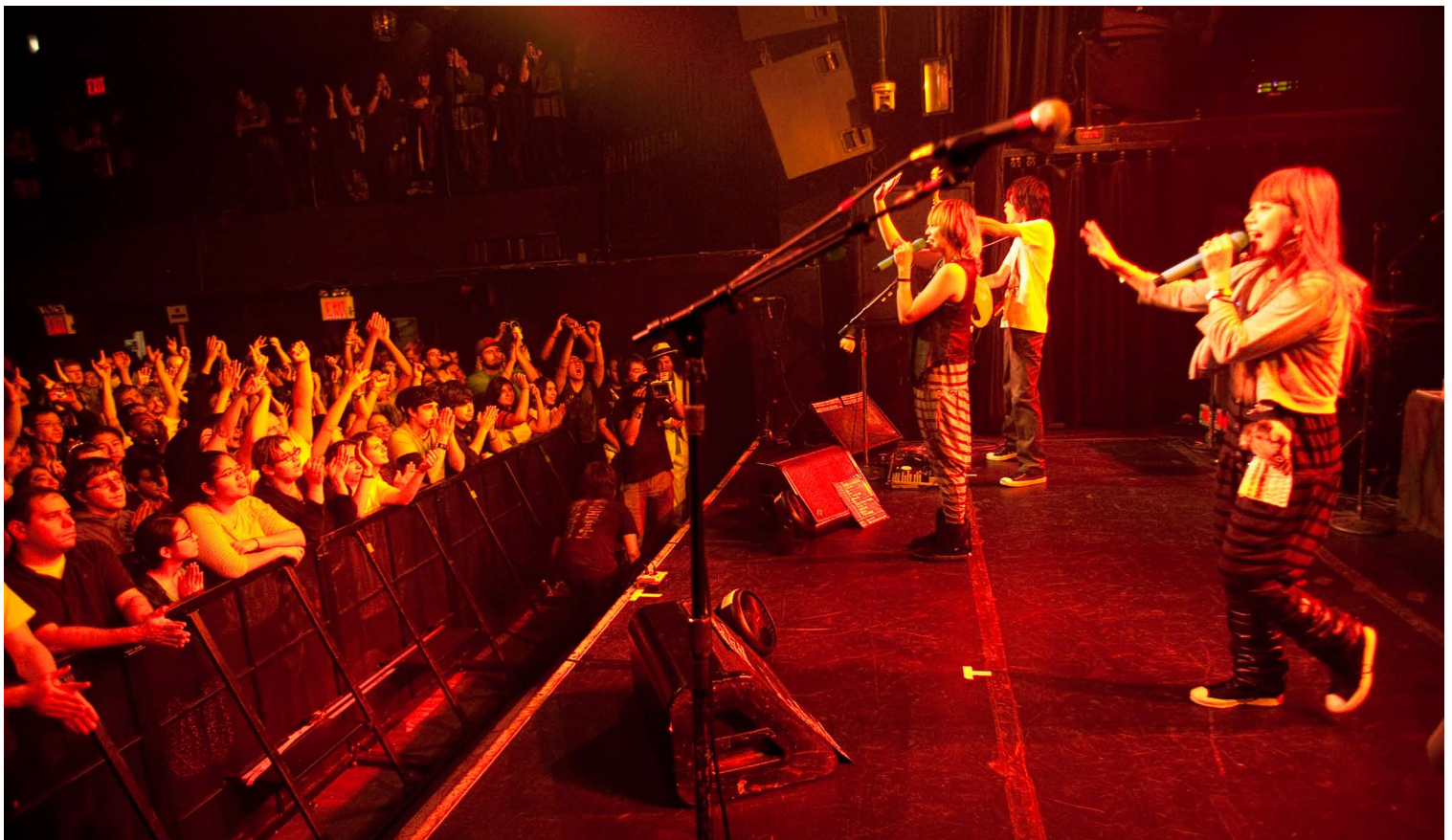
Puffy AmiYumi: Butch always finds the new Puffy AmiYumi in us, so it's really inspiring and fun. We have an impression of Avril as a powerful woman, even though she's slightly-built. We met her one time in Japan, and she was really lovely.

J!-ENT: Speaking of collaborations, on your last album "Bring It", there were quite a solid number of awesome collaborations. What was the experience like to record this album and work with these talented artists?

Puffy AmiYumi: They're also very talented singers themselves, so we learned a lot from this wonderful experience.

J!-ENT: Having performed in New York several times and visiting the city, what do you love about New York? A long time ago you told me Taco Bell (laughing).

Puffy AmiYumi: We really like the fact



PUFFY AmiYumi performing in New York. Photo by Mayumi Nashida.

that NYC is such a diverse city. From people, food, religion, to culture.

J!-ENT: There is one question that I have always wanted to know, have the both of you sung your own songs at karaoke and have you ever received a perfect score?

AMI: I scored only like 50 points when I sang "Asia no Junshin".

YUMI: I tried but the scores were low...

J!-ENT: In our interview many years ago, you both told me how you loved video games. AMI you were playing "Dragon Quest" a lot and Yumi, you used to play DDR a lot. This was back in 2002. I know both of you are busy but do you both still play video games and if so, what titles do you play?

AMI: Yes, we still play games. I've been playing Dragon Quest Monsters Joker II.

YUMI: I love games! I especially like the Dragon Quest series, and right now I'm playing "Ryu ga Gotoku" (Yakuza), this one is great!

J!-ENT: In our interviews, we did a section called wordplay where I gave you five words and you gave me your definition for those words. This time, we're going to try something different and I'm going to ask you five quick questions and you fill in the blank:

a) When I go out to sing karaoke with friends, a song I you would catch me singing is _____?

Puffy AmiYumi: Karaoke... we actually rarely go!

b) If there was one fast food restaurant in America that I wish they had in Japan, that restaurant would be _____?

Puffy AmiYumi: Definitely, Taco Bell!

c) The last film that I watched and thought it was so awesome was _____?

Puffy AmiYumi: Colorful

d) If there was an artist or band outside of Japan that I would love to collaborate with, it would be _____.

Puffy AmiYumi: There's too many!

e) When I go grocery shopping, a food or drink that I will always buy is _____.

Puffy AmiYumi: Tea!

J!-ENT: In an earlier interview, I asked you both if you had one word to describe each other, what word would that be. Back then, Ami said the word for Yumi was "young" and Yumi said Ami was "serious". So, I'll ask this same question ten years later. If you had one word to describe each other, what word would that be and why?

AMI: Relax

YUMI: Older sister

J!-ENT: What final words would you like to say to your fans worldwide?

Puffy AmiYumi: We'll continue to make fun music, thank you all for your support! ■

For more information on Puffy AmiYumi, please visit their website at:

<http://www.puffyamiyumi.com/>



Essential Puffy AmiYumi Classic Performances and Appearances

For hardcore Puffy AmiYumi fans, you may be trying to search for their earlier classic performances and guest appearances on Japan television. Of course, it was impossible for us to watch and keep in track of every performance and guest appearance but here are some of our recommendations of classic Puffy AmiYumi performances and appearances on Japanese television.

1996

May 7 - Pop Stock - Special guest appearance
May 25 - NHK Pop Jam - Special guest appearance
May 27 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ - Special Guest Appearance
June 14 - Music Station - Special guest appearance
July 6 - COUNTDOWN TV EPISODE #161: Special guest appearance with Tamio Okuda.
August 23 - Music Station - Special guest appearance
August 24 - Mega Hits Live - Special guest appearance
September 9 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ - Special guest appearance
September 17 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ Carnival Special - Special guest appearance
October 4 - Music Station Memories Special
October 14 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ - Special guest DJ's
October 16 - Sokuhou! Uta no Daijiten - Special guest appearance
October 18 - Music Station - Special guest appearance
October 26 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ - Special guest appearance
November 11 - SMAPxSMAP - SMUFFY parody
December 6 - Yuuzen Houshou Taishou - Special guest appearance
December 14 - Yuuzen Houshou Taishou Best Hits of 1996 Special - Special guest: AMI
December 24 - TOKUBAN SPECIAL - Special guest: AMI
December 31 - 38th Annual Nihon Record Taishou Awards - Special guest appearance

1997

January 2 - COUNTDOWN TV 1996 TOP 100 COUNTDOWN SPECIAL: Special guest appearance
March 14 - Music Station - Special guest appearance
March 17 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ - Special guest appearance.
March 28 - Music Station Memories Special
May 2 - Music Station - Special guest appearance
May 13 - UTABAN - Special guest appearance
April 1 - TOKUBAN Spring Special - Special guest appearance
April 7 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ Music Awards Special - Special guest appearance.
April 28 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ - Special guest announcers.
May 12 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ - Special guest appearance.
JUNE - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ - Special guest announcers.
DORAMA - September 30 - Puffy no Wide de Ikou: Born to be Wild
DORAMA: October - December 1997: Appearance on the Fuji TV drama "Eve ~Santa Claus Dreaming".
October 1 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring Tomoe Shinohara
October 8 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring Tomomi Kahala
October 22 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring Sarina Suzuki and Miho Kanno
November 5 - Pa Pa Pa - Starring ULFULS

1998

January 3 - COUNTDOWN TV 1997 TOP 100 COUNTDOWN SPECIAL - Special Guest Appearance
January 10 - COUNTDOWN TV EPISODE: Performance of "Mother"
January 30 - Music Station - Special guest appearance
March 25 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring Chisato Moritaka
March 31 - TOKUBAN Special - Special guest Appearance
April 1 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring globe
April 15 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring Judy and Mary's YUKI
June 10 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring Nanase Aikawa

1999

January 11 - Music Station - Special guest appearance
April 12 - SMAPxSMAP - Bistro SMAP special guest

2000

February 9 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring Nanase Aikawa
February 16 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - The 100 Best of Pa Pa Pa Puffy
February 23 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Starring Sarina Suzuki
March 31 - Music Station Special - Special guest appearance
April 3 - HEY! HEY! HEY! Music Champ Awards - Special guest appearance.
April 3 - SMAPxSMAP ZERO ZERO Grand Prix Haru Special - Special guest
April 14 - Music Station - Special guest appearance
September 30 - Pa Pa Pa Puffy - Girls Battle with Morning Musume, Silva, Takako Uehara and Eriko Imai



J!-ENT

J!-ENT is a website that has been cover entertainment worldwide since 1993. www.j-entonline.com



DENNIS A. AMITH is the Editor-in-Chief and founder of entertainment and pop culture website J!-ENT. He is also the owner of the multi-disciplinary communications and design business, nt2099 media and entertainment. Graduating from California State University, Fresno with an educational background in mass communications and

journalism, Dennis A. Amith has interviewed and featured many talents and industry professionals in the United States, Europe and Asia and is recognized for promoting the entertainment and pop culture of different countries to an International audience. Currently residing in California.



NERGENE ARQUELADA joined J!-ENT as a photographer in 2004. He is known to many as the anime convention and cosplay photographer "Super No. 1". Nergene has photographed bands, talents and industry professionals for J!-ENT. He is an avid fan of Japanese and Korean music and dramas. Nergene gradu-

ated from the University of Southern California with a degree in Aerospace Engineering. In his spare time, he enjoys exercising at the gym and attending local cultural festivals. He currently lives in the Los Angeles area.



GARLAND GEE has contributed to J!-ENT from 1999 to 2006. His work included words and pictures, covering the subjects of movies and music. Garland graduated from California State University of Fresno with a degree in Mass Communication and Journalism. He is formerly a copy-editor and page

designer for numerous Fresno Bee and Los Angeles Times publications. Garland has also coordinated the music events for Pacific Media Expo for the past 5 years. Garland is currently employed with Myspace and lives in the Los Angeles area.

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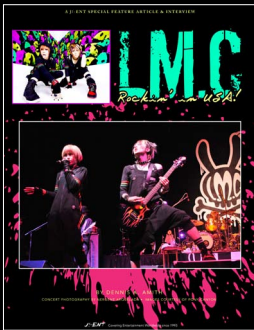


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BOOMBOOM SATELLITES

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW BY DENNIS A. AMITH
FEATURING THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF NERGENE ARQUELADA & MASANORI NARUSE

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