

K CRUSH

AMERICA

October 2015

ROOKIE GROUPS OF 2015

PLUS
INTERVIEW WITH
LUIS KIM

Top

50

K-POP SONG

Contents

- 04 Onward Korea
- 12 Rookie Group Debuts
- 21 Beauty trends that may surprise westerners
- 24 **10 under \$20**
- 28 Top 10 Artistic Films
- 48 K-Crush Interview with Luis Kim
- 51 Eating Right for your health in any country
- 53 **10 reasons to visit the Philippines**
- 59 Top 50 K-pop songs
- 65 **The K-Pop Essential Apps**



THE EDITOR'S DESK

Meet our Team!

Editorial Director

Denise Coley

Senior Contributing Editor

J. Chung

Senior Contributing Writer

Joelle Halon

Guest Writers:

Nikki Siclari

Douglas Siclari

Layout & Design Director

Douglas Siclari

Onward Korea! Getting to Know NYC-Based Group EXP

~Joelle Halon





In early 2015, the K-Pop world was turned upside down when news spread that a group of Americans would be working toward entering the Asian music scene with their own brand of music. Social media was flooded with confusion and anger due to the foreigners daring to penetrate the sacred circle of K-Pop, and this was later followed up by messages of hate toward the group. EXP is that group, and they began as a Columbia University thesis experiment by student Bora Kim.

Since the initial explosion of disdain ranging from K-Pop fans claiming that K-Pop would be forever be ruined to some EXO fans claiming EXP stole their name and concept (we kid you not!), Tarion, Frankie, Šime, Koki, David, and Hunter have survived and are about to release a new single. Kcrush America caught up with the sextet to see how their journey is progressing and to get their thoughts on online comments, their debut, future plans, as well as their thoughts on books, movies, and fan-fiction. If you haven't gotten to know EXP yet, now's your chance!

KC: You've been together for a while now, and telling by your interactions on EXP TV, you all get along great. Was it easy for everyone to get along at first, or were there any obstacles you had to overcome before you came together as a cohesive group?

Frankie: From the beginning we all clicked. Although we work hard we're always having fun and good laughs. Learning each other's strengths and weaknesses was more of an obstacle because we all have different backgrounds and understanding your team always takes time. We're a silly group and are still growing as one solid unit!

Šime: It was an adventure for all of us since day one. Although we were not really sure what we were getting ourselves into exactly, we were all ready to dive in head first. It really didn't take long for all of us to become close friends. We are all musicians and performers, living in NYC, sharing the same hopes and dreams. That was really corny... But it's true! And the fact that We were spending hours upon hours...upon hours rehearsing together helped too.

David: I had to learn to think of them less like business/co-workers and more as a bunch of friends. Once I did that, it made everything else flow easier between I and the rest of the group.

Hunter: I'd say we all came together pretty quickly. We spend a lot of time together, especially on shooting days, and we annoy each other a lot, which some people call "bonding." Generally, I eat everyone's food, Koki snapchats us making the ugliest faces we can, Šime tolerates me making fun of him, Tarion sings, Frankie mediates, and David naps. He can literally nap in places I've never thought were nap-able. That kid makes it happen.

Tarion: I can honestly say that from day one we have all meshed really well together. Of course, getting to know each other better and learning how each other works has taken some time, but we have always gotten along well. We may not agree on everything, but that's how family is.

Koki: I think it was easy for everyone to get along together, even in the beginning. We are all open-minded, especially when it came to discussing the group, so there was always a constructive conversation flowing. We all have our quirks, but it makes us a big, weird family.



EXP performed at the Jewish Museum earlier in 2015/ Cr. [exp_theband](#), Instagram

KC: You debuted earlier in 2015 with the song "LUV/WRONG." What was that experience like, what did you learn from your debut, and is there anything you would have done differently to enhance the experience?

Frankie: That day was a roller coaster! Last minute changes to our performance space and technical things can always make a performance stressful. We were finally being shown to an audience on stage and in a live setting. Since it was showcased at the Columbia MFA Thesis Show, our exhibit (in the gallery) was set up as our "backstage." Everyone who attended the show

witnessed our “getting ready” process with makeup, hair and wardrobe while footage of our documentary and trailer were playing on multiple screens around us. Being on that stage performing for the first time live with the guys was an amazing feeling! The audience was super excited and showed us a lot of love! I definitely would’ve changed the shaking stage, haha, but when last minute changes happen you just gotta roll with it and we definitely did that!

Šime: Releasing “Luv/Wrong” was such a fun experience. We didn’t really know what to expect and how the public would react to the single so it was pretty scary too. We definitely received a good amount of criticism, which was to be expected, but we also received a lot of encouragement and positivity from people. We have learned to strive for more and to keep improving ourselves and our performances.

Koki: It was both exhilarating and exhausting. It was the first time I had been in a group that released a “single” and we were met with a lot of press, which was exciting, but balancing the stress of everything at the time took its toll.

David: I would have definitely worked harder to promote the song and on getting more people to notice us in a positive light. If we could do it all over again, I would have liked “Luv/Wrong” to have had a lot more Korean within it.

Tarion: Releasing “Luv/Wrong” was an emotional roller coaster! (Oh, I just noticed Frankie said the exact same thing...Sometimes we are the SAME person.) We were dealing with so much as a team and still adjusting to this new attention that none of us expected to get (the social media explosion was a week before our debut). We found ourselves juggling 100 jobs between the nine of us, which made us all a little loopy and coffee crazy but also a lot closer. It was definitely an experience of mixed emotions and a huge learning curve for us all.

KC: A lot of people in the K-Pop community didn’t take kindly to the idea of a bunch of Americans working toward becoming K-Pop idols. Social media, especially, was filled with a lot of angst toward you. How did these comments make you feel, and did they encourage you to want to work harder?

Koki: Initially, it was slightly jarring; then I started laughing whenever I saw the comments. There were

some pretty good insults, haha. As a whole, I think it was frustrating to see how people making assumptions about the group and posting hateful comments without researching what we are truly attempting to accomplish. As time went on, it was interesting to see how people sort of switched sides and started to support us. They’d get into arguments with other people to defend us, and sometimes even convince the other person to give us a chance. It was pretty cool seeing that happen.

Frankie: When we started getting hate it literally all came within days in such an aggressive form so I became numb to it after a while. It was certainly shocking to read some of the comments, people were so angry and judging us based off of 12 posts on our Instagram page with no music released yet. It certainly was an eye opener and instantly made us want to step up our game. Šime: To be honest, I personally did not see it coming... at least not in such aggressive way. Of course, people will be mean. But in my head I was a part of something new and exciting and I was creating music for people to listen to and have fun to. The idea that people would hate us instantly just because of where we were from or because of our racial backgrounds never crossed my mind. But, you brush off the negativity and cherish the positivity. Did I just make that up?! That’s a good quote!

David: Everyone is going to have an opinion about something, so that really did not harm me much. Some of the comments were about things we couldn’t change (i.e. ethnic background), but aside from that the comments most definitely made each one of us want to push harder in perfecting our craft.

Hunter: Honestly, I don’t think we expected the comments and strong opinions to come as soon as they did. We only had 12 Instagram pictures posted, and no music out, and we were getting death threats and a lot of negative comments. We were also kind of surprised at how much attention we were getting with no real music out.

Tarion: I remember going to sleep one night and waking up and my life had completely exploded over social media and I didn’t know what to think or how to feel about it. I knew that I was shocked and surprised at the fact that people who knew very little about me and had never had a chance to meet me were telling me to “kill myself” and that I was “ugly” and “looked burned.” Then when I took the time to really process what was going on I wasn’t really upset for what was directed at us, I was more upset about the fact that there were people

dealing with this type of hate through social media every day and they aren't able to speak out about it or have the support of a strong team behind them, I think that realization hit all of us and encouraged us to get stronger as an EXP family, and stronger as artists and creators. We started to reach out to people, to spread as much love to our family, friends, supporters and even non-supporters as we could, which has made us better artists and actually turned a lot of the negativity around.

KC: Out of those comments, were there any that stood out as particularly encouraging or cruel that you remember? Why did these stand out, and how do they impact you as performers and creators?

Frankie: The death threat comments were pretty intense people saying if we go to Korea they would kill us. Most of the hate was coming from younger KPOP fans, mainly EXO fans. There were some comments at an early stage from one of our fans who started sticking up for us in the comment feed and just really trying to make people understand us. It was nice to start having people on our side and support this.

David: The comments that said "Keep Fighting" were the most encouraging to me. The simple fact that we have a fan base growing and through the clouds of negativity these small rays of sunshine keep pushing through makes me smile. We also get direct messages on Instagram from our "first" fans that remind us to keep going, that they were our first fans, they love us, and to ignore the hate. It is always nice to be reminded that people have your back.



EXP

NOLJA
LET'S
PARTY

Šime: Not even 2 weeks ago someone said I looked like a "38 yr old single dad". I'm cool with it. Ha!

KC: By now, many who've come across you know you formed because of a project. What was it like preparing the concept, auditioning, and ultimately being where you are right now with one single under your belts and another one that came out in August?

David: Preparing the concept was completely in the hands of Bora, Karin and Sam (the bosses), with some input from us. The auditioning process was by far my favorite, I remember the day I auditioned, the song I sang, what I wore, and how I rapped for them and completely forgot the words, and Karin swooped like a lyricist angel and helped me out. For me, everything else when we first began was a struggle. Yet, where we are right now is very exciting because we each (including "the bosses") have learned so much within this span of time that we are thinking of bigger ways to get more people to pay see the art we are creating.

Šime: Actually, I was just thinking about this the other day. The amount of work and things we have accomplished in such a short amount of time is something that pushes us every day. Learning about K-Pop and Korean culture have been so interesting and rewarding. Within the last four months the game has changed and now we're on a business platform. Now it's not just about the experiment and the project, we're a real group with goals and plans to make this succeed. So excited for you guys to hear the second single!

KC: Earlier this summer, you held a fundraiser to help you on your road to Korea. Why did you choose a fundraiser, and how did people respond?

David: We needed help. We do not have this huge corporation behind us: Just three very intelligent, passionate, and strong headed women with distinct resources.

KC: How did it feel to achieve your fundraising goal?

Šime: It felt so awesome! Just to know that we have people who believe in EXP and want to see it succeed meant so much to all of us! I will actually take this opportunity to thank them all for donating to our Kickstarter! You guys rock!

David: It was great!! It was like a weight had been lifted off us.

Tarion: Hahaha, so, we were working hard and stressing out and really pushing the Kickstarter campaign down until the very last second. When we reached the goal, I think I remember that Karin or Sam mentioned it in our text thread and we all acknowledged it for about two seconds and had to move on to the next thing on the list that needed to be accomplished that day. It wasn't until about three days later when we were all together that we realized that we didn't take the time to celebrate reaching our goal then we all quickly remembered that we still didn't have time.....we still haven't to this day!

KC: With the funds you raised, what are your plans?

David: Give the fans their EXP merch (fangoods!), produce our mini album, work on all of our music videos and a whole bunch of other things that will be focused entirely on making this "project" big.

KC: With the new single, I'm sure you're excited to get out there to perform. How were preparations for new song, and what can listeners expect?

Koki: It's a more upbeat, party, windows-down, sort of song.

David: I will simply say "More." Whatever they felt was missing in our first song has definitely been included in this second second single. I hope everyone is ready!

Tarion: We are extremely excited about our new single!!!! We worked really hard on everything from the concept to the writing to our Korean pronunciation. We've put a lot of hours into this song, and we want everyone to feel the passion and the energy we put into it when they listen to the song. It's a song that makes you want to get up and dance, so we definitely hope we make you want to move!

Frankie: The writing session and collaboration on this single was very productive. We decided early on that we wanted to create a song that would unite people and what better way to do that, than a party/dance song. In this single you'll hear each of the guys sing in Korean and possibly a rap (wink wink). With one month left of summer we wanted to go out with a bang, so a summer party song it was! #NoljaLetsParty!!!

KC: How are preparations for the album coming? Have you decided on songs, an image, and where you plan to debut it? What can we expect?

David: You have to watch and find out. BUT, you can expect amazing music, with amazing imagery, and just an overall higher quality than what is expected from an "American K-Pop Idol Group."

Frankie: Songs are what we've been working on the most, as well as, training our bodies. The mini album will have lots of fun content, new singles, music videos, remixes, and footage from the documentary. Image wise, I think people will be surprised! It's definitely exciting and distribution plans are still in the works.

KC: How far away are you from debuting in Korea? Furthermore, how have preparations gone as far as learning Korean and how to adapt to the Korean audience and market?

Koki: I cross my fingers to get there as soon as possible, but we all need to get better at our Korean speaking skills. We're all hard at work to learn the language, but have a ways to go. Bora, Karin, and Sam make us do "cuteness workshops" in order to help us understand how Korean idols act.

David: We are all studying the language. We have study books, we also have an amazing teacher named Bora Kim. We study up on some of the variety shows and try to get our "cuteness" down pat! #aegyo~!

KC: Besides Korea, do you plan on branching out to other markets, or does this rely on the success of your Korean debut?

Frankie: There are several conversations and opportunities that are being discussed among our team. With everything happening so fast the past couple of months who knows what the next six months will look like, I'm certainly excited for the ride!

Tarion: I think that our goal is to touch as many people around the world as we possibly can. We get messages and comments on our social media, from people from all over the world that tell us we inspire them to go for their dreams, and I think we could all agree that that's what really makes everything we do worth it. That humbles us and really makes us realize that if by doing what we love it makes people realize that they can do what they

love why not take it as far as we can go. We still have a lot of growing and learning to do, but we're up to the challenge.

KC: If you weren't members of EXP, what would you be doing?

Frankie: I would be acting more and still trying to make my Broadway debut a reality! I love the stage and live performance really fulfills my soul. The energy between the performers and an audience is a magical thing.

David: I would most likely be acting or singing somewhere in New York City or maybe I would be a burger boy at McDonalds (minimum wage is going up now...)

Hunter: I'm answering this for David. He'd be one of those fancy people that people pay to watch them sleep in a super luxurious museum. I'd watch.

KC: How would you describe your individual personalities?

Frankie: Hunter-He's so funny! Even in serious moments he finds a way to make it funny. Šime- the realist, when we get caught up in the future, Šime brings us back to reality. Tarion- they joke and say he's the diva of the group haha! He's the charmer. Koki- is the baby of the group, the quirky weird one but you can't help but to love him. David- the shy one, David loves a good nap. All together we are one silly crew of guys who are all very passionate about being in EXP and although we have fun, we work really hard!

David: I am quiet, in a group of six (plus three-IMMABB team) someone has to be quiet lol. Frankie holds it together, like a champ for us. Koki is the one with the guitar skills. He keeps us in the loop with ALL the new music. Hunter is the comedian. It doesn't matter what time of day; you can always count on Hunter for a joke. Šime is like the Dad/Big brother; he rallies us all together when we start dreaming a bit too far in the clouds...Tarion, is the one that dreams really, really far in the clouds.

Tarion: We really do function like a family, and much like a family, we all have different personalities that complement each other and also drive each other crazy. We all love to joke and play around, but we also know how to be serious and get to business when we need to.

Each of us are like six brothers and Bora, Karin, and Sam often have to play the older sister roles and keep us from going too overboard with our games and big personalities. (They just love it!) The guys tend to call me the "divo"/ male Beyoncé of the group.

KC: If you're successful, you know fans will want to stan different members. Looking at yourselves, what individual traits do you possess that will make fans look at you and think "THIS is the reason I stan this member!"?

Frankie: This is an interesting one. I'm a very positive person and am always trying to look at the good side. I've worked really hard since I was a child to make my dreams a reality. Hearing no in this business is second nature, I would definitely want to inspire fans to not give up on whatever it is they believe in and to follow their heart.

David: My eyebrows? Maybe? I haven't really thought that hard about it. Whatever reason they choose to "Stan" for me, will be a surprise.

Koki: I'm the Asian one.

KC: One thing the K-Pop fandom likes to do is write fan-fiction. Could you imagine yourselves as characters in a fan fiction? How would you hope fans would portray you, and what scenarios would you want to be in in a fan novel?

Šime: That would be so amazing! Hopefully they would NOT portray me as a 38 year old single dad. Well I always wanted to be Superman.... So maybe I could be some kind of a superhero? That would be sweet. Can someone get on that? ;)

David: I hope they treat me within their fiction as a cross between Harry Potter, Edward Cullen and Jacob Black from Twilight. That would be AWESOME!!!!!!

Tarion: I WOULD LOOOOOOOOOOOVE to be a character in a fan fiction! I haven't given much thought to this until now, but I guarantee you this is all I'll be thinking about for the next few days! By the way, I am completely open to suggestions.

Hunter: I'm excited for this... One thing I've seen with K-Pop fandoms is that they're extremely creative. I'd hope fans would portray me as a banger, crime-

stopping elf with dope hair that flies around on a dragon (named Bob). He's all magical and stuff during the day, rescuing people from dungeons and crooked wizards with mommy issues, and then he goes home to his pet squirrel(Elvis) and eats cheese and potato chips with him. Elvis always eats my cheese before I get home, which annoys me. Oh, Elvis... Then, one day Koki's dragon (Tesla) has the flu, and Tesla has to stay home, have tea, and watch Sesame Street to feel better. So Koki has to ride on my dragon (Bob) with me to fight crime that day. But instead of doing that, we give Bob the dragon a magic potion that makes him fly higher than he ever has before, and we spend the day flying to the moon and doing tricks and flips with good ol' Bob. Too much?

KC: Definitely not too much. Your wild imagination matches mine!

What are your favorite books, movies, or TV shows?

Frankie: I love Wolf of Wall Street, Slumdog Millionaire, The Notebook (haha!), TV shows: Empire, Orange is the New Black, Scandal and Amy Schumer.

Šime: I'm really into scary movies. Not so much into gore as into paranormal. Definitely a fan of American Horror Story.

KC: In your free time, what are some of your favorite activities?

Tarion: A: In my free time I love to FaceTime with my nephew (he is 1 year old now!), hang out with friends, take a walk through New York City and clear my mind and draw on new inspiration. I also really enjoy cooking for people and having friends over to my apartment to hang out and decompress from work for a while. (If you're ever in NYC let me know, I might cook for you.)

Koki: Reading, working on motorcycles, drinking milk tea, and guitar.

Šime: Netflix. Netflix, Netflix, Netflix.

Frankie: I love to spend quality time with close friends and family. I'm into extreme sports, and activities that are thrilling! Love to travel and go to the beach.

David: Free time.. Ha ha ha... There is no time for free time. We have to get to Korea.



KC: Finally, any final words for family, friends, or fans?

Tarion: THANK YOU! It would be impossible to express how deep our gratitude runs for your continued love and support. We are so humbled and thankful for everything. We love you and we feel so loved.

Frankie: I really want to thank everyone who has supported us since day one. When you see something getting a lot of hate it's easy to jump on the bandwagon, but to the people who have our backs and try to spread love, we see you and appreciate you and promise to make you proud!

David: Family and friends: I love you! VERY VERY VERY MUCH! Thanks for always believing in me! Fans: I wanna see your best party moves when this 2nd single drops! NOLJA LET'S PARTY!!!!!! I LOVE YOU! Koki: I love you all!

We thank EXP so much for their time to do this interview. We wish them the best of luck, and we hope you support them as much as we do.

Rookie Group Debuts That Caught Our Attention: January-June 2015

~By: Joelle Halon





As with any typical K-Pop year, there were plenty of debuts to keep fans busy in 2015. While January through June provided plenty of new groups, a few stood out based on singing abilities, performance, and charisma. Here are our choices for groups to watch in the coming months.

Playback | “Playback” | June | Clear Company

While Playback needs better music to stand out, the girls have impressive vocals and rap to help them be a group to look forward to in the coming months. They have cute, peppy dancing and cheerful personalities that match their image. If they can capitalize on this, they can survive the K-Pop debut rush.



Rebro | “Return” | June | Mirrorball Music

Signed under Mirrorball Music, Rebro debuted with “Return” in June. Rebro is refreshing because they have an oldies sound to them, great harmonies, and they just sing. It’s great to hear a group that stays away from the singer/rapper formula and just sticks with the basics. “Return” is beautiful and ear-catching as well, so here’s to hoping others discover them too!



CLC | “Pepe” | March | Cube Entertainment

CLC hardly feel like rookies due to their solid vocal abilities, sharp dancing, and through the way they carry themselves. They can pull off cute and dorky as well as mature and age-appropriate content. “Pepe,” as well as their second single “Like,” showed off their many facets and how much potential they have to be a standout. Their debut album also made a nice impression.



G-Friend | “Glass Bead” | January | Source Music Entertainment

So their debut song sounded a lot like SNSD’s “Into the New World” and APink’s “No No No,” but that shouldn’t really matter. Sadly, now they will forever be compared to both groups due to the similarities. G-Friend are cute and warm and feel like eternal springtime. Once they find their own unique flavor, they’ll be a charming addition to the K-Pop lineup.



Pretty Brown | “Break Up with Break Up” | March | Brand New Music

The duo Pretty Brown has a pretty smooth sound. Their music is pleasing to hear because of their nicely paired voices. Their debut song, “Break Up with Break Up” featured Kanto for the rap, but he fades into the background thanks to how lovely this pair sounds. K-Pop needs more strong male duos anyway, so they could be part of the charge to add more.



The Ark | “The Light” | April | Music K Entertainment

“The Light” is one of the most meaningful songs and MVs so far for 2015, making The Ark’s debut one of the strongest for the first half. All five members have charisma and personality, and they do not lack in stage presence. They are multi-faceted due to their strong dance, rap, and singing abilities. Some live stages need strengthened, but they’re right where they should be for rookies who burst onto the scene and made a great impression.

Oh My Girl | “Cupid” | April | WM Entertainment

“Cupid” has an After School “Bang” vibe with the heavy percussion, so the song isn’t wholly unique, but it is enough to get Oh My Girl noticed. A subsequent song that focuses more on their vocals and singing abilities will help them grow as a group and earn a fandom, but they’re doing A-OK so far. These cute, spunky ladies have a ton of potential.



Monsta X | “Trespass” | May | Starship Entertainment

Monsta X’s debut song and album were so strong, they hardly feel like rookies. For some, their debut is reminiscent of B.A.P with bombastic attitude and hard-edged sound. They brought their A-Game from the get-go, and if they maintain momentum, we will hear about them for several years.

A6P | “Face Off” | May | DS Entertainment

If SHINee, VIXX, BIGFLO, and Nu'est got together and somehow had a designer-baby lovechild, it would be A6P. “Face Off” focused on decent vocals and strong dancing with a great dubstep moment to make the song noticeable. They had a quiet, little-promoted debut, which is a shame because they’re pretty good. Plus, the mask concept made them interesting enough.



N.Flying | “Awesome” | May | FNC Entertainment

A lot of people waited years for their Korean debut, and it definitely wasn’t a disappointment! N.Flying’s brand of music helps them stand out since Rock groups are so few and far between in mainstream K-Pop. They have interesting vocals and instrumentals. Additionally, they come from the same company that blessed us with AOA, FTIsland, and CNBlue, so N.Flying is in good company. stages need strengthened, but they’re right where they should be for rookies who burst onto the scene and made a great impression.



JJY Band | “OMG” | May | CJ E&M Music

Another rocker on our list, JJY Band feels like they have potential for great things. Member Jung Joon Young, for whom the band is named, previously debuted as a soloist, but the band concept definitely suits his voice and vocal range. His voice has a retro Rock sound, so JJY Band should be commended for making what sounds old new again.



Awe5ome Baby | “Why Am I?” | June | TN Nation Entertainment

Awe5ome Baby brings an interesting fusion of R&B into the K-Pop scene. Given the visuals of the group, some fans compared them to f(x), and it's easy to see why. However, incorporating beatboxing into their debut track and bringing in their unique vocals provide some nostalgic 1990s' R&B sound.



Seventeen | “Adore U” | May | Pledis Entertainment

While the song is nothing too special, Seventeen did have a solid debut after years of “will they debut now or won’t they?” The song is pleasant to hear and the vocals are definitely there to provide them staying power. However, just like with G-Friend, they need to create an identity with their own unique sound to help them stand out.



Do you not see your band?

Where we have tried to showcase the best K-Pop bands, I am sure that we have probably overlooked some (we are human). If your K-Pop band was not mentioned or if you have an incredible band that you know is up and coming please let us know. Send us a message by Facebook or through the webpage.



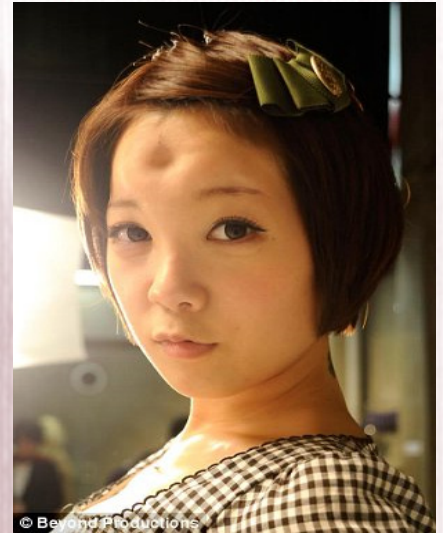
Beauty Trends That May ***SURPRISE*** Westerners

Joelle Halon

Beauty trends change yearly and range from the classy to the downright wacky. Asia always tends to be a fashion trend leader. Sometimes, though, some trends tend to be more questionable than “wow-factor” worthy. Here are some odd trends to come from Asia over the years that may make some foreigners question some things.

Bagel Face| Canada, Japan

While the “Bagel Face” trend started in Canada, some people involved in the Japanese underground fashion scene ran with it in 2012, leading worldwide media to mislabel the trend as something strictly Japanese. Bagel Face involves injecting saline into the forehead to create a bump; then a “hole” is poked in the center. The effect lasts 16-24 hours before the saline gets absorbed. With the trend came some safety concerns due to the possibility of unsterile saline being used. However, as quickly as the trend was reported internationally, it quickly petered out.



Featured on National Geographic's series Taboo, Marin shows off her “Bagel Head.” / Cr. Beyond Productions, UK Daily Mail

Fashion Braces | Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, China

Starting in 2013, “fashion braces” became a status symbol for Southeast Asian teens; but for some, the trend came with deadly consequences. Braces are an expensive commodity, so teens took to online marketplaces, street merchants, and the black market to purchase the fake braces for as little as \$50 USD. The braces can then be applied by beauty salons or affixed at home. The braces, however, are made from lead and pose multiple health risks such as thyroid and heart issues, and they are a choking hazard if installed incorrectly. In Thailand, the deaths of two teens have been blamed on the fake braces, causing the Thai government to pass restrictions regarding the sale of them. In 2015, the trend is still going strong and has spread to other questions.



Wearer showing off fashion braces / Cr. Fake Braces Murah, Facebook



Before and after images following a tsuke-yaeba procedure/ Cr. Japan Today

Yaeba | Japan

For some in Japan, it's trendy to have imperfect teeth. The fad known as yaeba or double tooth, involves having canine teeth that point outwards. The trend is credited to AKB48's Tomomi Itano who is known for her imperfect smile. To achieve the look, trend-followers either have permanent or temporary canine teeth affixed to their teeth (tsuke-yaeba). Tokyo's Ginza District is one place to get the procedure, and some dental offices have posted informative videos on YouTube to show how the procedure is done.

As soon as the trend took off, Japan even debuted “the first snaggle-toothed girl group” known as TYB48 (Rocket News, 2012). As the trend grew, dentists warned of some issues that may arise such as mouth ulcers and lip irritation due to the teeth sticking out.

Hangover Makeup | Japan, Korea

2015 gifted us with the “hangover makeup” trend. In Korea and Japan, girls have taken to Instagram and Twitter to show off their hungover looks. The trend is so popular in some circles, that people have posted tutorials on YouTube. Followers of the trend try to make their skin as pale as possible except for the bright red, feverish-looking blush directly under the eyes. The look is supposed to mimic the “just woke up” appearance also. To further play up the look, incorporate the wet hair trend like actress and model Kiko Mizuhara wears.



Wearer showing off fashion braces / Cr. Fake Braces Murah, Facebook

Face-kini | China

In Qingdao, China, the Face-kini trend started in 2012 and is meant to protect beachgoers from harsh UV rays and even jellyfish. The Face-kini looks similar to a Mexican Lucha Libre mask as it covers the entire face except for the eyes, mouth, and nostrils. While on the beach, it may look scary, but people from Qingdao say it helps wearers keep a light complexion. The masks are often worn in conjunction with full-body swimsuits. Of course, beauty is always in the eye of the beholder, and fashion trends always change. Would you try any of these fashion or beauty trends? What else could be on the horizon?



10 Under \$20

by:Joelle Halon

Celebrities and “regular people” across Japan, Korea, and China often turn heads because of their glamorous looks and great skin. You may feel it costs a lot of money to get such great skin, but this isn’t necessarily true. There are plenty of quality products available online. If you’re looking to add some Asian beauty products to your skincare routine, here are our 10 picks under \$20 to get you started!

Skincare

1.

Etude House Collagen Moistfull Sleep Pack | \$13 | Amazon

The Collagen Moistfull line was lauded in a 2014 Kcrush America issue. It’s no surprise this line remains a favorite. The Collagen Moistfull sleep pack is perfect for when you need an extra kick of moisture overnight. The thick cream feels nice when patted into the face and neck. In the morning, enjoy some soft, supple skin.



2.

Tatcha Original Aburatorigami Blotting Papers | \$12 | QVC

For oily skin or extra toasty summer days, the Tatcha blotting papers are a lifesaver! They absorb oil and sweat easily without disturbing makeup or leaving behind residue. You will be left with soft, dry skin that will feel refreshed regardless of skin type.



3.

The Face Shop Rice Water Bright Cleansing Light Oil \$13 | Amazon

The Rice Water Bright cleansing oil does an amazing job dissolving impurities and leaving skin soft and smooth. There is a light fragrance, and it feels a bit like baby oil when used, but it’s easy once you get the hang of it. Skin does appear brighter and refreshed after use, helping to solidify that it does its job well. This product is especially good when used as half of a double-washing routine.



4.

Bee & Flower Sandalwood Soap | \$12 | Amazon

While bar soaps aren't used as widely as they once were thanks to body wash, Bee & Flower brand should be an exception due to how long it lasts, its lasting scent, and creamy texture that doesn't leave residue on the skin. It smells divine, and you'll feel divine! The sandalwood is the most inviting, pleasant scent, while rose and bouquet may smell too strong for some people.



5.

TONYMOLY I'm Real Mask Sheets | \$4.41 | KpopTown

With so many types to choose from, the TONYMOLY I'm Real mask line has something for all skin types. If you need brightening, moisturizing, or blemish control, there is a mask to meet your needs. They stick to the face and get the job done easily and effectively. The masks each have light, clean scents that help make them more enjoyable.



6.

Skin Food Lemon Verbena Body Scrub | \$16.50 | KpopTown

Skin Food's body scrub does a great job removing dead skin to leave fresh, smooth skin behind. The product is gentle enough to use on your face, but strong enough to work on other parts of the body. The refreshing, energizing lemon verbena will make you feel awake and peppy while it brightens skin and leaves it looking much healthier.



7.

Holika Holika Jewel Light Eyeliner | \$8.99 | prettyandcute.com

Smooth lines, great color, and staying power: Holika Holika eyeliner is bound to become a favorite! The rich pigments help make your irises pop and brighten eye whites with ease, especially silver, gold, and pale pink shades. Purple, blue, charcoal, and teal eyeliners work wonderfully for evenings. The eyeliners are smudge-proof after a few seconds and can withstand sweat, crying, and rain.



8.

Nature Republic By Flower BB Cream | \$7 | KpopTown

This BB cream is a nice addition to any makeup bag. The formula is lightweight with good coverage, especially if you're looking to cover up red, splotchy skin. The cream doesn't make skin shiny and does not clog pores. Instead, you'll experience a natural, matte finish that lasts several hours. While it also has SPF protection, in over 80F temperatures, the product may wear off faster than normal. However, it does what its intended to do and it does it well!



9.

Kao Prettia Bubble Hair Color | \$10 | Amazon

Kao Prettia's bubble color line is gentle on hair and doesn't have as bad of a scent as other hair colors on the market. Plus, the color is believable and doesn't have the garish, flat "just colored" look. The product doesn't drastically lighten or darken hair, which is good for anyone looking for subtle shades. Additionally, it plays up highlights and lowlights with a hint of shimmer. Hair feels soft and undamaged after use making Kao Prettia a friendly product.



10.

Lioele Cutie Girl Etiquette Perfume Spray \$12.00 | prettyandcute.com

With scents that range from florally to fruity, Cutie Girl Etiquette perfume spray makes hair feel soft, silky, and leaves it smelling great. Be warned that a little goes a long way because spraying too much can leave hair crunchy in some places and greasy toward the scalp, so it does take a few tries to get it right. However, when done right, the scent lasts a long time and feels refreshing. The scents verge on too sweet depending on type, so it's not exactly the best in the summer when bees can be easily be attracted to your hair, but in any other season, it's just dandy!



Are there any beauty finds you want us to try for a review? Let us know on our Facebook page!



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Top Ten Artistic Films for the First Half of 2015

By Joelle Halon

In any given year, hundreds of music videos come out showing an artist's cuteness, sexiness, or dance abilities. The first half of 2015 didn't give us a shortage of MVs ranging from charming and cute to artsy and thought-provoking. With such a wide range, it's difficult to choose videos as the "best." However, we scoured through a ton of MVs to locate ones that could be classified as the best... or least the most interesting. Some are even hidden gems.

*Thoughts and ranking based on the author and not Kcrush Magazine as a whole.

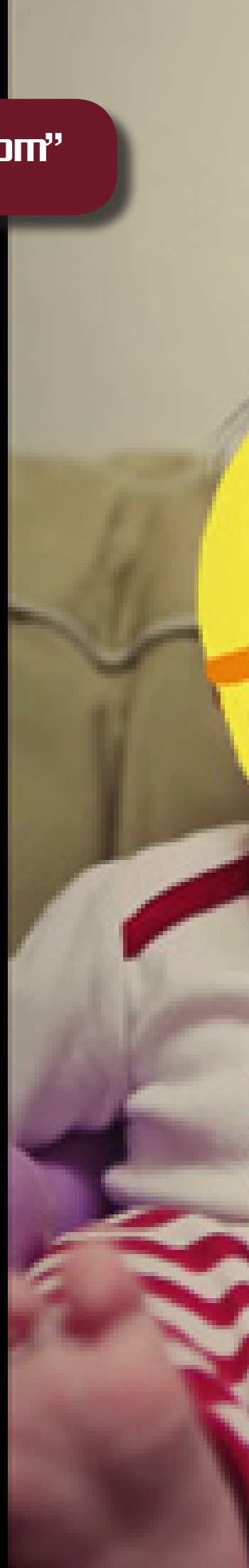


10. Azin “Delete”

If you're a fan of Sia, then “Delete” is a video for you. The MV has a semi-creepy feel to it with its slow movement and toned-down filters. Of course, staring into a TV has a Poltergeist feel, and then there's the ink-blot test-type shadow dancing. “Delete” is all at once simple and complex down to the smallest detail.

9. Kang Hyun Jung (Bubble Sisters) “I Love You Mom”

This is probably one of the cutest MVs to date. Why? Because the MV stars an adorable baby doing adorable baby things while drawings turn the little cutie into different characters. “I Love You Mom” proves that less is definitely more.









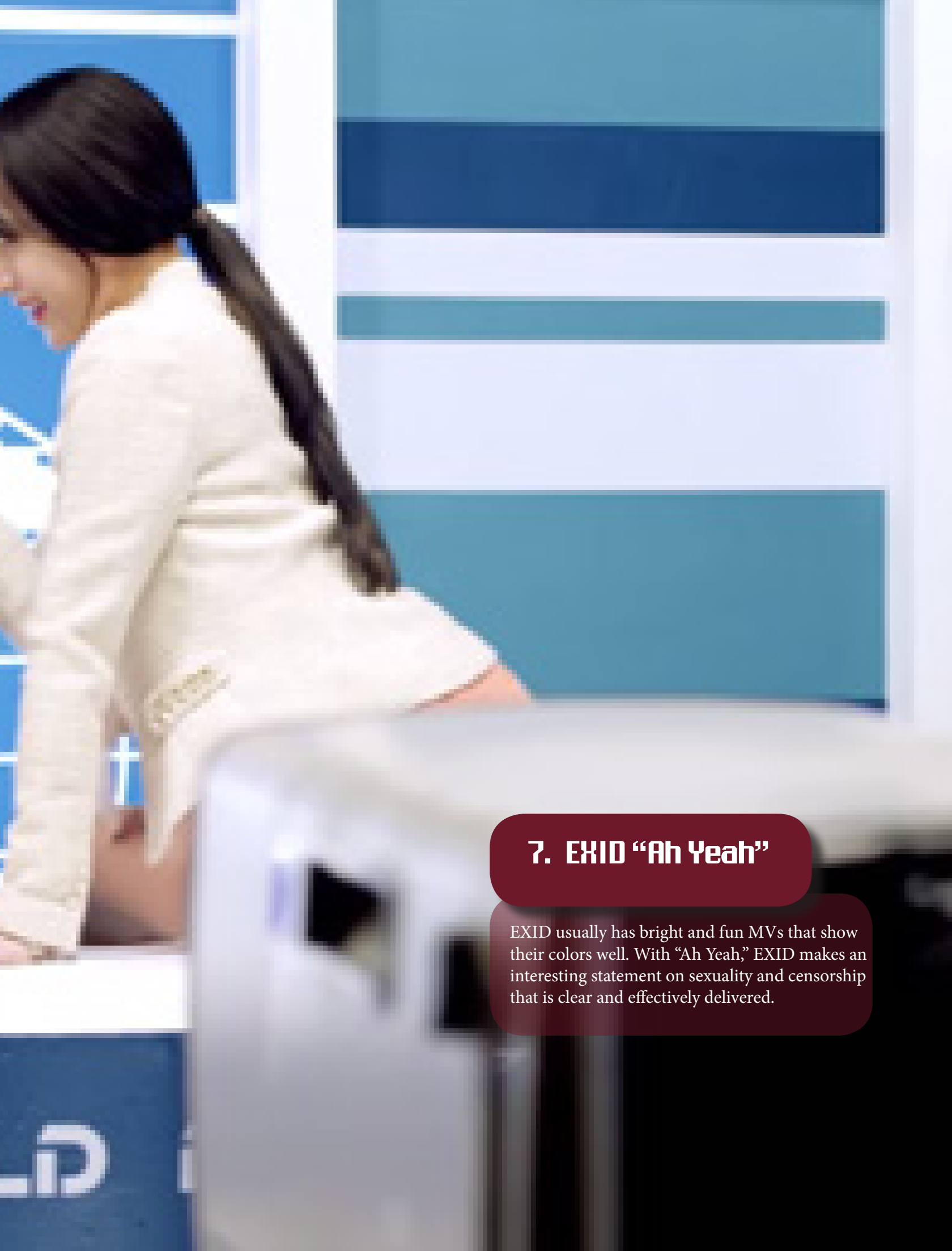
8. Rainbow “Black Swan”

Beautiful and elegant, “Black Swan’s” strength lies in how closely it follows the lyrics and the film Black Swan. The battle of light and dark creates an MV rich in lovely contrast. The Rainbow ladies also look great in their acting and individual scenes.

WORLD NEWS



WORLD NEWS WORLD



7. EXID “Ah Yeah”

EXID usually has bright and fun MVs that show their colors well. With “Ah Yeah,” EXID makes an interesting statement on sexuality and censorship that is clear and effectively delivered.



The background image is a blurred photograph of a library. In the foreground, a person with long dark hair is seen from behind, looking towards a bookshelf. In the lower left, another person is lying down, wearing a blue top. The bookshelves are filled with books of various colors, creating a warm, bokeh-like effect.

6. Anda “Touch”

“Touch” is bold and daring as it covers LGBTQ themes. We have Anda surrounded by and engaging in repetition as lesbian romance blooms around her. The MV may require a few views to catch everything going on, but it’s worth it since the MV is a slap in the face to censorship. We’re fond of how the director handled the MV and how the video thrives on subtlety.

5. Hong Dan-A “Tat Tat Tat” ft. Swings

Burning doll heads, creepy insects, small people, and other oddities dominate “Tat Tat Tat.” The MV looks like it was ripped from Tim Burton’s studios. The black and white filming with pops of color make it feel like an art house film that makes the MV fun to watch.







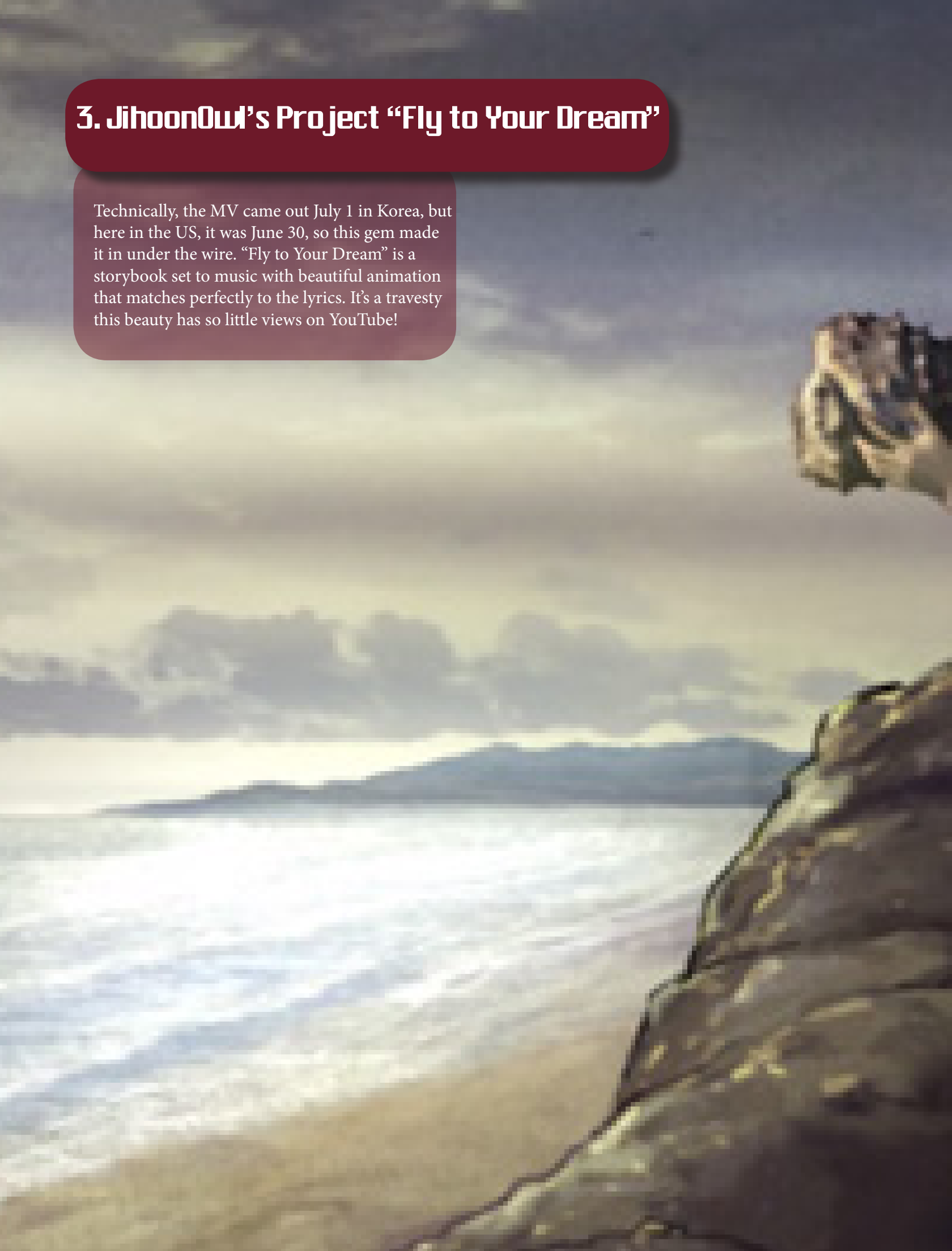
4. BIGBANG “Bae Bae”

Sex, cheekiness, and humor are parts of BIGBANG’s appeal. The MV has plenty to watch in terms of pointing out their feral maleness, and it is a different direction from past BIGBANG MVs. Plus, TOP is living pop art with his all-out strangeness, so he’s the best thing about “Bae Bae.”



3. JihoonOwl's Project "Fly to Your Dream"

Technically, the MV came out July 1 in Korea, but here in the US, it was June 30, so this gem made it in under the wire. "Fly to Your Dream" is a storybook set to music with beautiful animation that matches perfectly to the lyrics. It's a travesty this beauty has so little views on YouTube!









2. Gain “Paradise Lost”

“Paradise Lost” feeds on temptation, sin, and intense sexuality in a beautiful, interpretive-dance heavy MV. Gain channels Madonna to some degree. For once, she’s expressive in the MV, and everything works.





1. . Xia (Junsu) “Flower”

“Flower” is a special MV because of its heavy content, artsy filming, and immense storytelling and symbolism. Around the Web, theories involve the MV telling the story of Kronos to Junsu making a commentary about the industry. No matter what theory you believe, one thing for sure is the MV is epic, beautiful, and memorable.



K-CRUSH INTERVIEW WITH A FOXTROT AND LATIN MUSICIAN/SINGER, LUIS KIM

J. Chung.



Luis Kim is a Korean foxtrot and latin pop singer who released his debut album, 'Platonic Love' in 2007.

Other than being a singer and performer, for the past years Luis has been involved and responsible for various kinds of businesses including managing a club, planning and holding events, festivals and etc.

In 2008, he received an award from Korea Singers Association for his humanitarian work. Luis grew up in a very musical environment since he was very young, because his mother was a singer well-known in the 70's era.

I sat down with Luis for a short interview to ask him about his life and the work he's covered in the past. This will be an interesting read for many who are interested to read about the life of an independent singer or artist living in Korea, who is also active in the business world.

He advises that music should not be considered and regarded as a form of work or profession, but a way of life.

A special 'thank you' goes out to Luis Kim and we wish him all the best in all his endeavors.

Hello Luis, thank you for taking the time for a KCrush interview.

Pease let us know what made you decide to be a singer?

My mother used to be a foxtrot musician and singer who was quite well known back in the 70s and I grew up listening to her songs. I was able to get myself into music from an early age.

In 1998, I moved to Chile when I was in high school. I got together with my friends and got started singing and playing the bass guitar in a band. That's how I started doing Latin music.

It was not done professionally at the time, but I guess from then onwards, I started to get more into music.

How would you describe your music and could tell us more about your career as a singer?

I consider music is a way to express yourself and who you are, rather than classifying music and songs into categories or genres.

Musically, I am capable of covering Flamingo, Latin, R&B and Soul.

I had to go to the military right after I released my debut album a few years ago and was not able to do any promotion for it.

When I got discharged from the military, I got the chance to experience a lot of diverse work, businesses and promotion that included running a club.

Could you name any musical artists who influenced you musically?

I think I am most influenced by singers like Na Hoo-na(나훈아) and Namjin(남진) in Korea.

The legendary Japanese singer, Hibari Misora, who is known to be the queen of Enka (the name of the fox trot genre in Japan) until this day. Her father was Korean.

I think I am also very influenced by the singer, Luis Miguel in the Latin music world and last but definitely not least, Marvin Gaye.

What do you think is the most difficult and challenging for an independent singer in Korea?

I have been doing a lot of businesses in various areas for quite a long time, so I was fortunate to have not gone through the hardships as much as some of the other artists do.

If I was to say the most challenging thing for singers these days would be that the opportunities for talented amateur singers to showcase their potential and to launch a career are pretty scarce.

When a well-known celebrity releases a song, people will still pay attention even if the songs are not up to the standard or even considered good quality music.

There are so many audition programs existing these days than in the past, it is still extremely difficult for new amateur singers to launch their career in the music business.

Are there any interesting episodes you experienced you can share with us?

I have a song with the title, '너나 잘해' (which can be roughly interpreted into English as 'Mind your own business' or 'Just do what you have to do')

I was to visit a retirement home to sing as a volunteer work for a large group of elderly people and I had to perform that particular song to the audience. At the time, I didn't know whether I should sing it with the same title or change the title into more of a formal term, prior to the visit.

I was quite perplexed on how I should sing the song, but I ended up singing it as I would have anywhere else and to my relief the audience loved the performance.

As a singer, how do you look after your voice and health in general?

When it comes to food, I know that consuming broad bellflowers, fruits of schisandra are known to be good for the throat and the vocal cords.

I practice on my vocals and abdominal breathing which I find is a crucial process for singers. I also train myself to sing without damaging the vocal cords.



Can you recommend a song for our readers that you particularly like or sing often?

'My girl' by the Temptations.

**What does it take to be a great singer/entertainer?
Could you give any word of advice to the people who want to get into the music business?**

If you are going to become a singer or entertainer, I think it is important not to consider the art of singing or entertainment as a form of labor or profession.

Since music should be a way to live a life, not like a business and industry. Music and any form of art should never be a burden if you enjoy doing what you do. If you start regarding it as work or just a source to earn money, it would be very difficult not to fall into temptations like drug addiction and depressions and etc.

What is the best thing about doing music as a profession, in your opinion?

For the future, I am in plans to use my musical gift as a kind of therapy to help and heal other people. I believe that using my music and sharing it with others is what I am supposed to be doing. When you get to share your talent with others around you, it is the best feeling.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I don't usually have much free time because I am always out there giving other people a hand and I invest a lot of time doing all sorts of miscellaneous businesses and such.

I got to spend some free time for myself recently and I played online games for a short while. I also used to spend time in the gym to work out, but due to the hot weather recently I've quit going to the gym for the time being.

What is your favorite Korean cuisine that you would recommend to our readers?

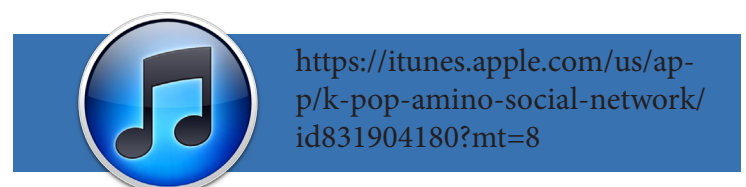
Well, I should state something that I want to eat right now. I would say, the black noodles (자장면) in Korean style. There are several places where they make great black noodles.

What are your goals for the future?

I have a few songs that I am working on right now for my album that is to be released around next year, so I intend to complete the work.

I am planning to write an autobiography of myself. I want to write a book so I can reflect on my life.

Find more K-Pop singers and music at:





Eating Right for Your Health in Any Country

Heatlhly eating for the vast majority of people is relatively easy. We live in approximately the same region and grow accustomed the healthy options available there, but for the avid traveler finding a healthy meal can be a bit of a challenge. Either they are always on the go while traveling and do not have the time to search out healthy meal options or they are so inundated with the local culture that eating healthy is the farthest thing from their minds. The fact remains however that we are only awarded one body in our lifetime and it is our duty no matter where our travels may take us to take care of it.

When traveling it may be tempting to arrange for the cheapest quarters in which to rest your weary head, however this tactic will leave you with a single bed and no way to cook for yourself. Every country may not have the option to have your own cooking area or even a shared cooking area, but do your research and find a way to have access to a kitchen during your stay. You will save a great deal of money by not eating out and you can control the ingredients as well as the cooking methods while preparing the food.

Where to Find Healthy Meal Options in Any City

It is not so much to want to eat healthy, but know where to obtain healthy meal options. Strolling aimlessly down a street following your nose can gain you some delectable culinary treats, but this sensory journey will often lead you strait down the path of destroying your diet. Many times your nose will lead you directly to a vendor selling fried foods. Street vendors are notorious for offering fried unhealthy food because the fat from frying and the fat used in the dishes are primarily used as a preservative and helps the food hold its flavor longer. Instead of following your too often deceptive nose take a stroll to these other options.

Farmer's Markets

Almost every country on the map has some form of farmer's markets. You will run into the same vendors selling many unhealthy options, but if you go past them and seek out the fresh vegetable stalls you will come upon some of the freshest produce available. The trick to getting the freshest and most flavorful fruits and vegetables is to get to the market early and look closely at all the offerings before settling on any one vendor. Many of the produce available will be the same standard fare at many of the stalls, so look for vibrant colors and firm fruits and vegetables. Although some of the produce will require cooking, many options can be eaten right from the stalls for the freshest of treats.

Fish Market

Like the Farmer's Market, the fish market should be an early morning excursion. If you are blessed enough to be visiting a coastal city they will likely have a fish market somewhere around. Early morning fishermen bring their catches in with the sunrise, so the early traveler will get the freshest fish. Should you be the type that likes to sleep in you may want to forego the trip to the fish market. Not all fish markets have the availability to properly manage the temperature of the fish and seafood can go bad very quickly when the temperature cannot be controlled.

Seafood is by far one of the healthiest options when it comes to eating. For the most part, heavily fished waterways are kept clean and pollutant free as this is the main source of income for many coastal residents. In addition to that fish, even if it has fat, is loaded with Omega 3s which are heart healthy and keep your blood pressure in check. Pared with a selection of healthy vegetables a little fish can go a long way in satisfying the hungry traveler.

If you Must Eat Out

While traveling, even if you plan on eating all of your meals in the place you are staying, the urge to sample the local fare will be too great. Go ahead and give to the temptation. It is perfectly fine to go out and have a meal among the local people. You will meet some fascinating individuals that will bring your trip to a whole new level.

The trick to eating out while still maintaining your healthy eating regimen is to know what you are ordering. A bit of research into popular local dishes will help you order more effectively. If your research fails you, which that is entirely possible, opt for vegetarian specialties. Vegetarian options are becoming more and more popular as many people are turning to vegetarianism as a means to control the fat content of their diet.

The main point is to not simply go by what your nose is telling you. There are so many wonderful options no matter where your travels take you. Sample the city, but do it in a way that will not lead you to be searching out bigger pants half way through your journey.

Happy Travels!

10 Reasons to Visit the Philippines

By: Joelle Halon

We at Kcrush love all things Asia. We love the people, the music, the trends, and we especially love the beauty, cultures, and different flavors that make Asian countries unique! Looking at the different countries, we feel people—especially globe-trotters—should experience them and what they have to offer. One country that should be on your list is the Philippines. With over 7,000 islands, the Philippines have something for everyone regardless of if they want to relax or have an adventure. Here are ten reasons why you should visit!

1.

The People

We always hear about how kind and hospitable the Filipino people are on many of the islands. This is true! The locals are always willing to chat and offer advice, and many also have potential to be great friends even outside your travels. Just from the people I've come across, there's always a story to be told and a smile to be had, making the trip worthwhile. Get to know the people; you won't be disappointed!



Cr. ed_davad (Pixabay)

2.

The Natural Beauty

The Philippines are appealing because of the natural, unspoiled beauty that can be found throughout the country. From lush forests to pristine waters, the country is a magical wonderland! Sagada, Mountain Province is one of the most beautiful places on any continent. From majestic waterfalls to fantastic mountains, you'll experience some breathtaking sights. We recommend visiting Kilepan Viewpoint and Bomod-ok Falls as places to experience.

Below:
 Bohol's Chocolate Hills
 Didier Baertschiger
 (Flickr Creative Commons)



3.

Palawan

One of our favorite places in the Philippines is Palawan. Palawan just screams heaven on Earth! It has one of the most gorgeous beaches that has views of tree-filled cliffs and endless blue sky. If you get tired of lounging on the beach, check out the lagoons or go diving for some adventure. UNESCO World Heritage sites Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park and Puerto Prinsesa Subterranean River are also located in Palawan. Take the time to explore Tabon Caves, chill at Sabang, or dive to see ship wrecks at Coron. Palawan is one of the places that can quench anyone's thirst for peace or adventure.



4.

Tagaytay

Located two hours South of Manila, Tagaytay is a popular place for tourist and locals alike. Enjoy Picnic Grove where you can sit, eat, and enjoy views of Taal Volcano. If you're feeling adventurous, enjoy some ziplining. Visitors can also take advantage of the Eco Trail or relax while taking a leisurely ride on horseback. Those visiting who want to take a faith-based journey can visit Tagaytay's many places of worship. For the kids, there's Sky Ranch Theme Park that has a Ferris wheel and carousel.

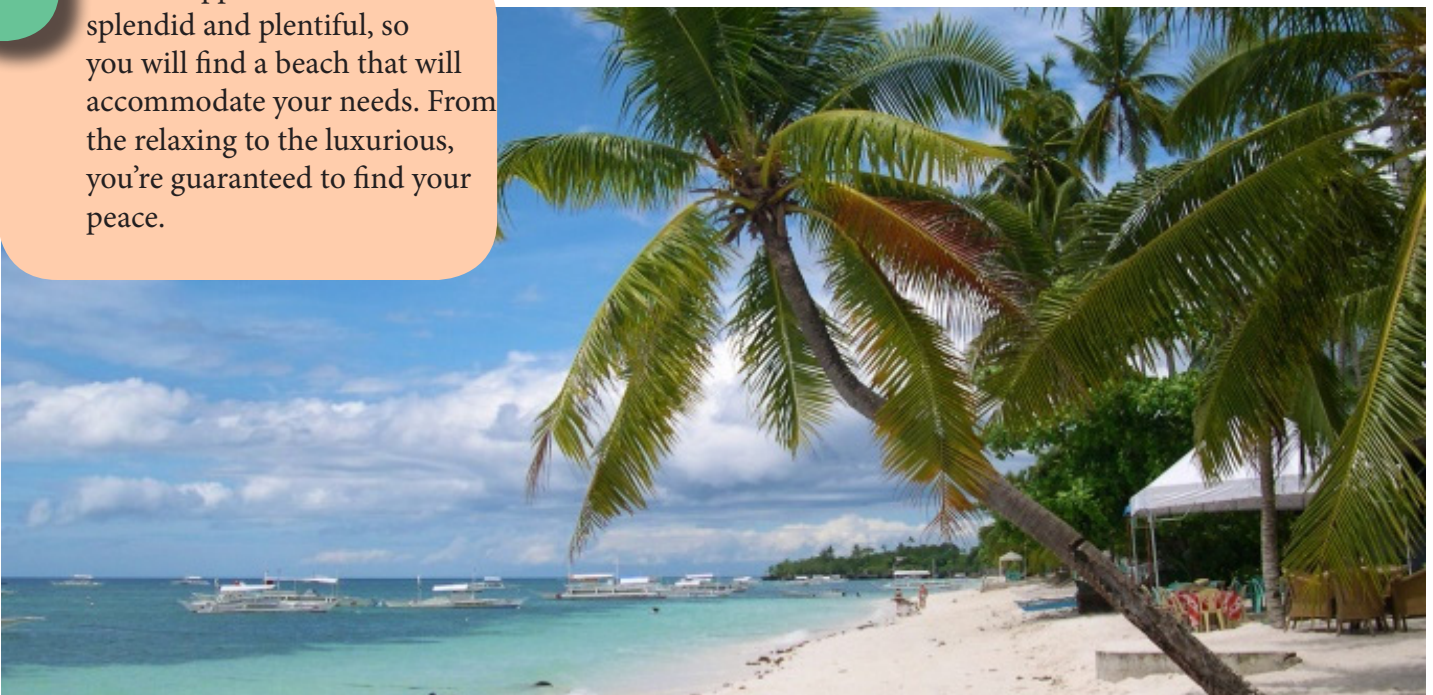


Tagaytay Highlands/ Cr. Wikipedia Creative Commons

5.

The Beaches

The Philippines' beaches are splendid and plentiful, so you will find a beach that will accommodate your needs. From the relaxing to the luxurious, you're guaranteed to find your peace.



Alona Beach in Panglao Island, Bohol/ Cr. Wikipedia Creative Commons

Filipino food is out of this world, and you will want to keep coming back for more. While traveling the islands, make sure to sample authentic tapa (dried marinated beef with fried eggs and garlic rice), camaro rebosado (egg and flour battered deep-fried shrimp), sinigang (fish, prawn, pork, or beef stew served in a sour fruit broth), sinugno (tilapia grilled then simmered with coconut milk and chilis), laing (taro leaves cooked in coconut milk), pinakbet (okra, eggplant, gourd, squash, tomatoes cooked in shrimp paste), and suman at manga (rice cake steamed in banana or coconut leaves and served with mango). For more adventurous foodies, dishes like kuhal sa gato (fresh snails cooked in coconut milk and vegetables), balut (boiled duck embryo), sisig (pork head, cheeks, and liver), kamaro (mole crickets boiled in vinegar and garlic), dinuguan at puto (pig innards cooked in pig blood), and betute (deep-fried frog stuffed with pork). The Philippines is definitely a culinary adventure!



7.

Shopping

The Philippine people love to shop, and that's evident in the large number of malls available on the islands. The Philippines are home to three of the world's top ten largest malls: SM Megamall in Mandaluyong, SM Mall of Asia in Pasay, and SM City North EDSA in Quezon City. In 2015, five more malls are expected to open: SM Seaside City Cebu, Robinsons Galleria Cebu, SM City Cabanatuan, KCC Mall de Zamboanga, and City Mall Tetuan. Not only are the malls for shopping; some government offices, playgrounds, and even planetariums operate inside them. Some locals say malls are prolific because they are air-conditioned and many people cannot afford A/C, while others suggest shopping provides fun for family and friends. No matter the reason, the country is a shopper's dream come true!

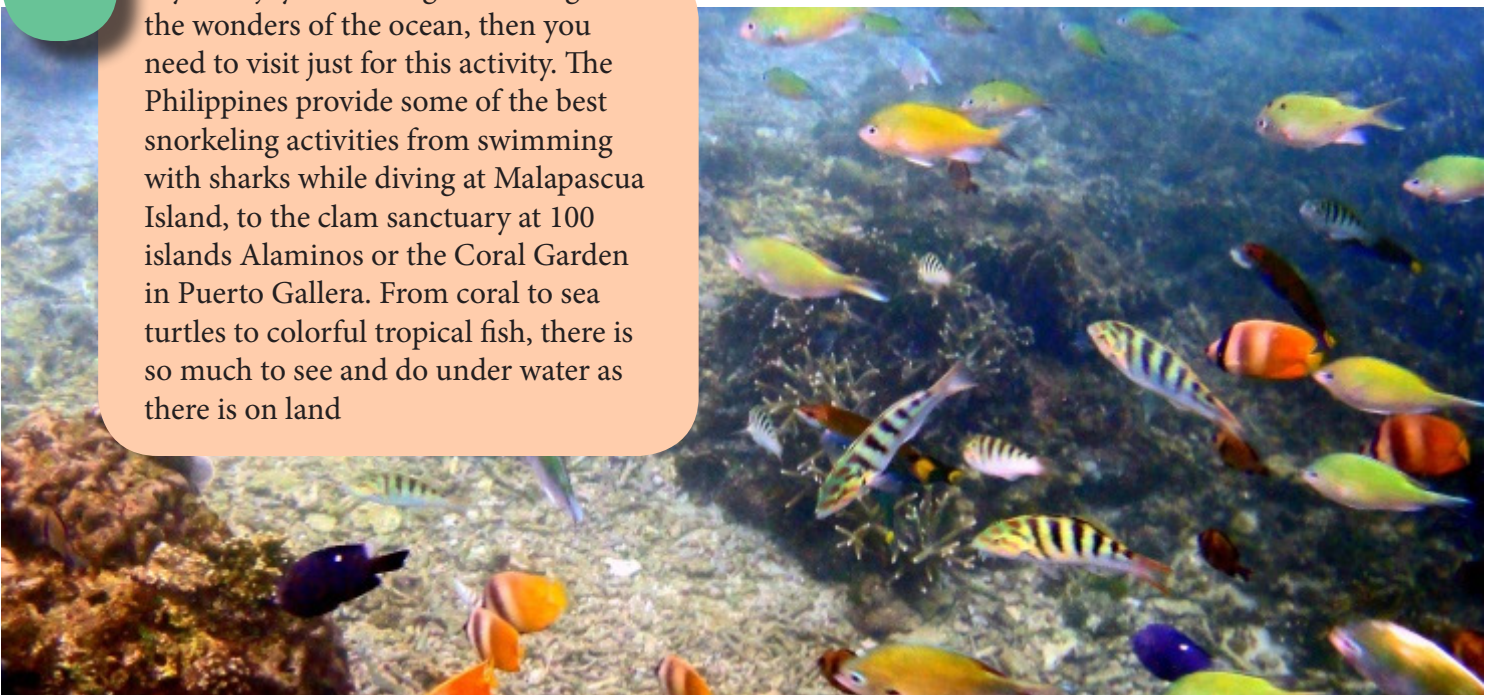


SM Megamall/ Cr. Wikipedia Creative Commons

8.

Snorkeling

If you enjoy snorkeling and seeing the wonders of the ocean, then you need to visit just for this activity. The Philippines provide some of the best snorkeling activities from swimming with sharks while diving at Malapascua Island, to the clam sanctuary at 100 islands Alaminos or the Coral Garden in Puerto Gallera. From coral to sea turtles to colorful tropical fish, there is so much to see and do under water as there is on land

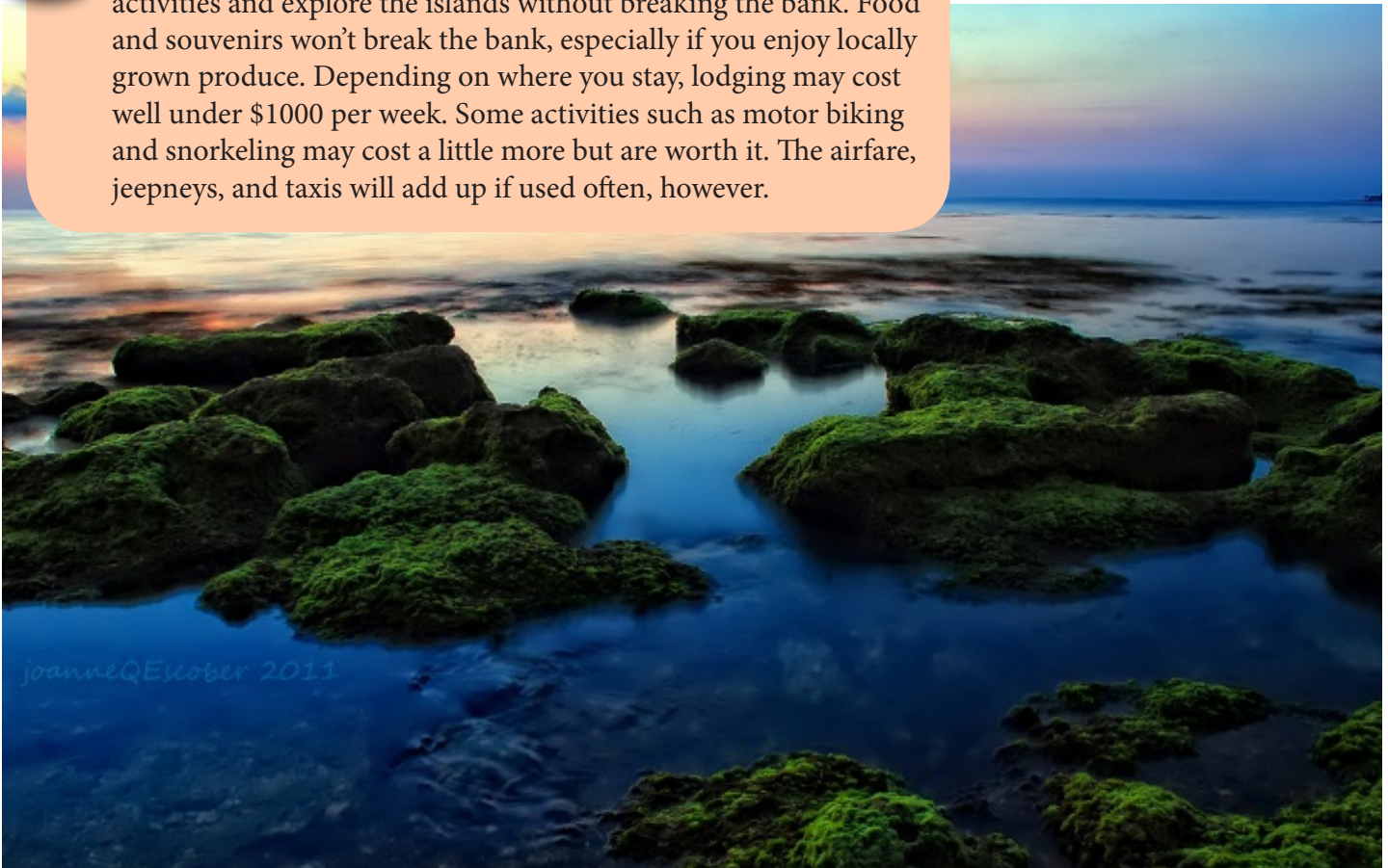


Boracay Island Reef/ Cr. Gareth Williams (Flickr Creative Commons)

9.

Fun on a Budget

Part of the Philippines' charm is how tourists can do many activities and explore the islands without breaking the bank. Food and souvenirs won't break the bank, especially if you enjoy locally grown produce. Depending on where you stay, lodging may cost well under \$1000 per week. Some activities such as motor biking and snorkeling may cost a little more but are worth it. The airfare, jeepneys, and taxis will add up if used often, however.



Pagudpod, Ilocos Norte, Philippines/ Cr. tacit requiem (joanneQEscobar) (Flickr Creative Commons)

10.

Relaxation

The Philippines feels like it's always at its own life pace, and that's what makes it amazing. You definitely won't be checking your watch to make sure you make your meetings or any of the life clutter you're used to in the "real world." It's always Island Time and a place to truly escape the Rat Race. No matter your form of relaxation—swimming, lounging on the beach, surfing, shopping, eating, or enjoying cheap liquor—the Philippines is for you! As Jimmy Buffet says, "it's five o'clock somewhere!"



Boracay Resort/ Cr. enmoredo (Pixabay)

Top 50

K-Pop Songs for the First Half of 2015

From January to June, 2015 has proved to be a super year with several comebacks from big groups, stellar debuts, and great songs from groups from smaller companies. With so many songs available, what songs caught our attention enough to be ranked in the top 50? Check out our list!

50) Standing Egg “Starry Night” | April 2

Standing Egg always know how to strike the heart. Singers who contribute have a nice way to add emotion and feeling to the lyrics. “Starry Night” is slow, but it’s so painfully beautiful.

49) Seo in Young “Lies” ft. Kanto | June 9

Seo in Young finally made a comeback with a song that’s jazzy and edgy. Unfortunately, she feels like more of an afterthought to Kanto’s sometimes overpowering rap.

48) Fresh Girls “Something to Say” | February 10

In 2014, they seemed destined to only sing about freshman. 2015 is their coming out with mature, beautiful songs that highlight their strengths. “Something to Say” is one of the many from them to check out this year.

47) Boyfriend “Bounce” | March 8

Boyfriend keeps evolving and finding songs that work better for their range and abilities. “Bounce” is fun and upbeat and one of the year’s underrated songs.

46) UKISS “Playground” | January 22

UKISS always had good vocals, but they never get attention. “Playground” highlights amazing harmonies and mature vocals.

45) Primary “U” ft. Kwon Jinah and Rap Monster | April 9

Kwon Jinah’s vocals are soothing, as is the music. Rap Monster’s rap is toned down and helps create a mellow vibe.

44) So Yumi “Shake Me Up” | April 20

It’s a shame Kiss&Cry ended, but it’s nice some of the former members have gone solo. So Yumi’s light trot song is fun, engaging, and youthful and a great song to help introduce foreigners to the genre.

43) NC.A “Cinderella Time” | March 25

NC.A is cute and expressive in “Cinderella Time,” a song that’s both youthful and mature. NC.A does well reaching out to both younger and older audiences with this song proving to be a chameleon in the industry.

42) San E “Me U” ft. Yerin (15&) | April 22

San E usually finds female singers that balance him out perfectly. This is the case with working with Yerin. The song is cute and charming and plays up to their strengths well.

41) K.Will “Growing” | March 24

K.Will’s sound is always distinct and haunting. “Growing” provides him an opportunity to flex his vocal muscles and give his fans some of his beautiful high and low notes.

40) 4Minute “Crazy” | February 8

4Minute went back to their roots a bit with “Crazy.” The song was praised a lot by international fans, even though it wasn’t that popular in Korea.

39) 9Muses “Drama” | January 22

2015 is one of 9Muses’ best years and should hopefully get them noticed. “Drama” focuses on 9Muses vocal range and abilities to carry a fun, flirty song.

38) Hello Venus “Wiggle Wiggle” | January 8

Hello Venus returned with a sexy concept and won despite the awful twerking that should have been left out of the MV. Vocals are still thin, but they can’t be faulted for trying, but “Wiggle Wiggle” may make some fans nostalgic for their cuteness.

37) Lim Kim “Love Game” | April 24

Lim Kim’s unique vocals provide a signature touch. “Love Game” plays to her strengths even though it’s not her strongest song. This song proves Lim Kim can spin a song to work to her advantage.

36) Melody Day “#LoveMe” | June 8

Melody Day returned with a song that’s different from their usual sound. While the song is a new take on Leki’s “Love Me Another Day,” the vocals are fresh and cute despite it being basically the same track.

35) Sistar “Shake It” | June 19

Sistar have really bright, cheerful personalities that radiate in their music. “Shake It” is a fun summer track, but unfortunately, most of their promoted tracks sound alike.

34) Shannon “Why Why” | March 4

Shannon is an adorable, strong vocalist with a quirky personality that shines in “Why Why.” The old-school sound paired with her cute vocals creates a memorable, timeless crush song.

33) Elsie “I’m Good” ft. K.Will | May 6

Elsie’s innocent vocals have a strong sense of pain. K.Will is surprisingly brighter in this song which creates an interesting dynamic when the two sing their respective parts.

32) EXO “Call Me Baby” | March 30

“Call Me Baby” shows EXO has improved vocally. The song has good rhythm and beats to make it catchy.

31) SPEED “What U” | June 1

SPEED are often underrated, and they’re going to be more so with Taewoon’s departure. “What U” shows the group has rhythm and nice vocals even though the leader left.

30) CLC “Pepe” | March 17

Right out of the gate, CLC greeted us with great performance abilities and mature vocals. Their ability to blend the lines of cute and mature helps them and assures their potential to be a longstanding group.

29) Jonghyun “Crazy (Guilty Pleasure)” | January 8

“Crazy” is Jonghyun’s solo debut and it’s an ear-catcher! Jonghyun has a nice amount of high notes and low notes to make the song work for his voice, even if some of the lyrics sound a little muddled.

28) Monsta X “Trespass” | May 13

“Trespass” is of the strongest debuts this year. Good rap, singing, and performance make Monsta X a well-rounded group that will experience a lot of success in the coming years.

27) SHINee “View” | June 5

Give it to SHINee to always release a song guaranteed to get stuck in a listener’s head. “View’s” addictive chorus alone is enough to propel it into a top spot.

26) AOA “Heart Attack” | June 21

“Heart Attack” is sloppy and all-over-the-place in terms of composition. However, AOA make the song work for them in order to show off their cute, girlish charms.

25) EXID “Ah Yeah” | April 12

EXID proved that they’re not a one-hit wonder, and it’s about time they got some attention. EXID is one of the hardest working underdogs in the industry, but still maintain their quirky awesomeness with their music.

24) Mamamoo “Um Oh Ah Yeh” | June 12

Mamamoo is special because all four ladies are vocalist queens. If vocals were more of a focus over popularity, these girls would win every time.

23) Zelo “No Title” | May 22

This is Zelo’s first true solo effort (“R(x) Play” was a collaboration). The song has passion as well as pain to make a song that’s well-rounded and raw.

22) Shin Zisu “Hey Jude” | April 12

“Hey Jude” is the definition of underrated. Great vocals, nice rapping, and a catchy upbeat tune: What’s not to like?

21) BIGBANG “Bae Bae” | April 30

“Bae Bae” is BIGBANG’s sexy concept. The song has humor and adult themes gloriously blended together to create this gem.

20) The Ark “The Light” | April 9

“The Light” is probably one of the most powerful debut songs in a long time. The story alone is enough to keep listeners engaged, but the singing and rap are superb as well.

19) Minah “I Am a Woman Too” | March 15

Minah doesn’t have the strongest vocals, but what she has she uses well. In “I Am a Woman Too,” Minah’s sweetness shines, as does her vulnerability.

18) Kris Leone “The End” | February 12

A solo female rock star is hard to come by, but Kris Leone has the talent and skill. Perhaps this comes from being a rocker’s daughter?

17) Baek A Yeon “Shouldn’t Have” | May 19

“Shouldn’t Have” is a tale of the little song that could. After a long period of time since its release, the song steadily climbed the charts, even earning nominations on some of the music shows in late June.

16) Yonghwa “One Fine Day” | January 19

Yonghwa stands out as a soloist away from CNBlue. He has a strong ability to convey emotion by putting a lot of heart into what he sings.

15) Sunggyu “The Answer” | May 10

Sunggyu has a unique but solid voice. “The Answer” gives us the best of him outside of Infinite.

14) Block B Bastarz “Zero for Conduct” | April 13

“Zero for Conduct” breathed some life is somewhat slow K-Pop season. It’s everything loveable about Block B, just with more P.O and more awesome.

13) Gain “Paradise Lost” | March 11

“Paradise Lost” is one of those songs that should put an artist on the map. Gain is sexy and controversial, making her Korea’s Madonna for this comeback.

12) Rap Monster “각성 (覺醒)” | March 12

Rap Monster is raw, passionate, vulnerable and on fire in this song. He packs a major punch in under three minutes, which is amazing. Plus, the piano at the end creates a haunting quality.

11) Azin “Delete” | February 9

Azin is so different and amazing, it’s still surprising how under-the-radar she is. Her voice layered over the retro sound is perfection. Her Developpe album is also interesting.

THE TOP

10

10) Rainbow “Black Swan” | February 22

“Black Swan” is, by far, one of Rainbow’s best, but it got so little love, it hurts. “Black Swan” is seriously one of those songs you didn’t know you needed until you actually listen to it.

9) BIGBANG “Loser” | April 30

BIGBANG does emotional and relatable well when they release these types of songs. “Loser” connects to fans because it describes feelings and experiences in a way that fans can see themselves in the song.

8) BTS “I Need U” | April 29

Since their debut, BTS has grown steadily in popularity. However, “I Need U” really helped propel them up the ranks to become a top group.

7) Xia “Flower” ft. Tablo | March 2

The lyrics are really simplistic, but that’s okay! The composition and Tablo’s rap are everything. This song is everything.

6) Yongguk “am 4:44” | April 3

Yongguk is a wordsmith and knows how to utilize language to share his tale. The beauty of the song is how a listener can get multiple meanings from it.

THE TOP

5

5) FTIsland “Pray” | March 20

Rock is not dead in the K-Pop world. FTIsland provides a song that’s powerful and more in-touch with their roots.

4) Shinhwa “Sniper” | February 25

Shinhwa is one of K-Pop’s most consistent groups in terms of releasing good music. Since the 1990s, they’ve been a group that has stood the test of time by being able to adapt to each decade.

3) BIGBANG “Bang Bang Bang” | June 1

“Fantastic Baby’s” little brother packs a punch. Each member shines and showcases their own style and flair well, making the song fresh and exciting.

2) Jinusean “Tell Me One More Time” | April 14

Jinusean still have it! With a combination of old-school sound and modern rap, the duo proved they’re still relevant and awesome. However, the song just makes a listener long for more.

1) Super Junior D&E “Growing Pains” | March 5

Donghae and Eunhyuk’s beautiful voices combine for a bittersweet tune. “Growing Pains” has a high replay and timeless qualities that make it special.



THE K-POP ESSENTIAL APPS: NAVER AND V-LIVE

~Douglas Siclari (CEO of Siclari Studios)

Most people understand that the world has gone to the smartphones and the mobile technology. It has been estimated that 1 out of every 5 people in the world have a smartphone and that the majority of the usage is for social media, YouTube, texting, and picture sharing. It is no wonder that apps are so popular. So what KPOP apps should you use? I have found the following 2 apps to be exceptional and easy to use. Best off they are both free.

There are four main parts to the app. They are

1. Follow Celebs
2. Upcoming
3. Popular
4. Chemi-beat

The V-Live app



The basics of the app

The V app is an android based application. This means that the application is universal and can be used on most mobile devices. All you need to do is go to the google plus store or such android app store to get it. Once you have successfully downloaded the app open it up and you will find that it is really easy to navigate and use.

How do these categories work?

The categories are pretty simple and easy to understand by most users. The follow celebs function allows you to pick your favorite celebrities and get updates as to what they are doing, their next live broadcast (which you can watch from the app), texts, etc. Upcoming allows you to schedule all your programing on V to highlight those celebrities which you follow. This will allow you not to miss a single episode of your favorite star. Of course, this option does cause a bit of drama if you have to worry about broadcasts which air at the same time. My advice, pick one celebrity to follow live on your V app and record the other show off of your tv and view it later. If you have having a bit of trouble with finding a video, don't worry the popular function of the app allows you to quickly find the most popular selections of videos based upon your celebrity preferences.

Understanding the Chemi-Beat

The fourth feature of the app is the Chemi-Beat. This is a lot like the status update, coins, and visiting perks that you will find in games and in other social apps. In truth, it is nothing really developed at this time. The programs have stated that “we plan to provide additional benefits based on Chemi-beat” in the future. At the present time, the only thing that the Chemi-Beat does is allow you to express with icons a very limited amount of feedback on a video or post of your favorite celebrities.



This is my pick of the litter. The Naver app is an extremely diverse app which allows the user to have an all-in-one type of experience without having to download a ton of applications to get the same features.

The basics of the app

The naver app allows you to access you to keep track of your news, media, and mail (among other features) fairly easily. The app is a multi-screen app meaning that you have to go from one page to another within the app. This may be a bit daunting for those who do not like to have experience with the more complex apps.

There are six main features of the app. They are:

1. The ability to customize your NAVER APP home screen – this is pretty common with such apps
2. Diverse feature access from one location
3. Bookmark integration
4. Smart Mobile-exclusive searches
5. Speak, play music and capture to search
6. Quick menu functionality

The diverse features allow you to move to Naver Pay, Mail, Bookmarks, and frequent services. The bookmarks are of course those pages which you find the most pleasing. The smart mobile searches allows the user to be recommended certain features and search inquires based upon history. The speak play and capture search allows you to quickly enjoy music based upon your preferences or upon a snippet of the song information.

Overall assessments of the apps

Both apps are offered for free which makes them ideal for those that refuse to pay for their apps. Personally, with all the free apps that are available I rarely will pay for an app unless it offers something that is completely new and in demand. That is a plus.

V-Live is a bit primitive for an app but does keep you informed with the vital information you need for keeping up with your KPOP celebrities. I do not believe that the app needs to be complex in order for it to be functional.

Naver may be a bit too complex for those which are new to using smartphone technology. The app states that it can be used by anyone 10 and up, but I would say that the technology is more oriented to the teen and adult then to younger audiences.

Both apps get my seal of approval as being functional, practical and meeting the demands of the current market. I give V-Live a 4 out of 5 rating and Naver a 3.5 rating out of 5.

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ISSN# 2372-574