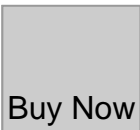




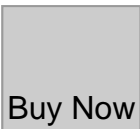
#Showbiz: AKB48's secret of staying relevant

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**#Showbiz: AKB48's secret of staying relevant**

### [Banzai Japan Music Video](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPEImgQJGBo>

BEFORE K-Pop groups took over the world, there was J-Pop.

Japanese pop groups like Arashi, Exile and Hey! Say! Jump have had a huge influence on teens over the years, thanks to the members' charming personalities and exciting music. But the most iconic of them all is girl group AKB48, one of Japan's biggest-selling musical acts with numerous chart-topping hits, commercial deals and world tours.

It owes its resounding success perhaps to its unique concept of "idols you can meet", where the members perform live on a rotational basis, simultaneously, at various events. Instead of appearing occasionally on TV and concerts, the music phenomenon also has its own performing theatre, thus making the band more accessible to fans.

The rotations are made possible with a large band member base. And no, AKB48 doesn't have just five or seven members, like most idol groups. As of December last year, the group boasts a whopping 134 members! You're probably wondering how they can all be on a stage together.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJsGZL-zb54>

This number actually includes AKB48's "sister groups"; additional teams of girls were formed in locations across Japan, as well as other major Asian cities. So in Japan, you have the main group AKB48, hailing from Akihabara. Then there are SKE48 (from Sakae), NMB48 (Namba), HKT48 (Hakata), NGT48 (Niigata) and STU48 (Setouchi region).

In 2011, AKB48 expanded its wings outside of Japan by forming JKT48, a group based in Jakarta and featuring Indonesian members. Following that were AKB48 Team SH (based in Shanghai, China); AKB48 Team TP (Taipei), BNK48 and CGM48 (Bangkok and Chiang Mai, Thailand, respectively); MNL48 (Manila, the Philippines); and SGO48 (Saigon, Vietnam).

Set to debut are MUB48 and DEL48, from Mumbai and Delhi, India. Basically, they are everywhere!

### MUSIC UNITES

Besides releasing their own singles, the sister groups also perform some of AKB48's singles as well as their local-language versions.

In an interview with the Malaysian press, AKB48 member Mion Mukaichi said it's an awesome feeling to know that they have teams all over the region.

"Earlier this year, we held a huge concert in Thailand where AKB48 and the entire sister groups performed together for the first time. We saw and felt the power of music, how it is able to unite people of diverse cultures," she says.

### [Banzai Japan Music Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3syHHGzkF_s)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3syHHGzkF\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3syHHGzkF_s)

Another member, Nana Okada, recalled her experience being part of an AKB48 concert in Jakarta featuring JKT48. “It was the first time AKB48 worked closely with its sister group, so it was extremely exciting. The local fans were beyond supportive, I’ll never forget that momentous event,” said Okada.

Added Mukaichi, “Even though we were from different parts of Asia, we were singing the same songs together.”

Unlike conventional groups that disband or have their members retire, AKB48 also employs a unique strategy that enables its power and influence to live on for years since inception in 2005.

Older members are allowed to “graduate” from the group and their spots will then be filled by existing trainees who are promoted. This way, the AKB48 family will continuously grow and run across several generations.

One of the younger members, Yui Oguri admitted to feeling the pressure of carrying the AKB48 name and preserving her seniors’ legacy. “At the same time, it’s exciting to come out with a fresh image that resonates with the current crowd.

“Whatever we do though, we will be sure to pass on our seniors’ teachings to our own juniors.”

Although the status between seniors and juniors is clear, the line blurs whenever the girls meet up. “We’re all really close and there are always new fun topics to discuss,” Oguri said.

“Even though we’re colleagues, our seniors are like our big sisters. We look up to them career-wise, and they’re always willing to help out if we need guidance in any way.”

### DIFFERENT FANS, DIFFERENT REACTIONS

Oguri, Okada, Mukaichi and three other AKB48 girls — Megu Taniguchi, Rin Okabe and Nagisa Sakaguchi — were in town last week for a performance. They were the headliners for Japan Expo Malaysia 2019 held at Pavilion KL.

Presented by G-Yu Creative Co Ltd and Siam Connection, it also featured performances by 19 acts, including Banzai Japan, DJ Hello Kitty, Sorgenti and Win = W1n.

Since this is the first time AKB48 has made it to Malaysian shores, local fans accordingly welcomed the six members with banners and loud cheers. “It was very heartwarming! The night view here is stunning, and the food is great. We’re very happy to be here,” Mukaichi exclaimed.

The girls were also thrilled and surprised (“Ehhh?! Sugoi [amazing]!”) to learn that Pavilion KL has a Tokyo Street. The section of the mall features shops selling Japanese-related products and services.

“Japanese people love every aspect of their culture,” says Mukaichi. “We love our country, so to know that other people also love it as much as we do, that’s an incredible feeling.”

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR8YYeb4PMk>

## Banzai Japan Social Media



### Fumi Fujisaki

Idol



### Riko Ueno

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# Rino Ibusuki

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# Yunagi Nino

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# Shiori Fujisaki

Idol



# Kana Ichinose

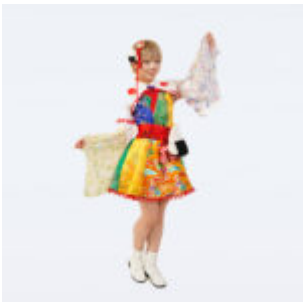
Idol

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## Hoshino Arice

Idol



## Sasa Sasagawa

Idol



## Kosaka Yuu

Idol

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Tsukumo Aira

Idol



Maika Ando

Idol



Yuuki Mochimaru

Idol

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