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Japanese Culture

All about Vocaloids

One interesting culture aspect I have learned about Japan is the fact of animated singers being really popular. This might sound bizarre if this is the first time hearing about it. Yes, Japan has done it again with their advances in technology and have found a way to create through computer software a singer.

First off, the whole program that starts this off is the definition of what I am talking about. A vocaloid is a singing song synthesizer. Speech synthesis is the artificial production of human speech. Stephen Hawking is the most famous person to use speech synthesis to communicate with others. The software vocaloid started its signal processing part being developed through a joint research project led by Kenmochi Hideki at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, Spain. It was introduced in the year 2000, and was not fully intended to be a commercialized product. Because it is, users are able to create songs right at home. To create a song, the user must input the melody and lyrics. A piano roll type interface is used to input the melody and the lyrics can be entered on each note. The software can change the stress of the pronunciations, add effects such as vibrato, or change the dynamics and tone of the voice.

This has become a hugely popular trend to discuss of pros and cons of this new advancing technology. In a way, many people discuss the aspect of this replacing actual singers who use their own voice to sing. However, using the vocaloid software, it requires a person to go in and records various syllables and noises that is available to use how the paying

customer wants. There are many pros and cons to this advancing technology. Pros of this include being able to spread out quickly in the media of this artist. Instead of worrying about a real person, the manager is the one who makes all the money and decides when this artist performs whenever they want. However, a con of this would be fans being unable to connect to a hologram singer. And if technology fails at one point then that would be the end of the vocaloid who is heavily reliant on technology. I would like to conclude this by saying one person is saying notes and sounds, and another creative person is just putting it together. There is a real artist in there, just not like we are used to.

This software is not only in Japanese. The first language it was released in English, then Japanese, then as later software versions were released, including Vocaloid 3, it included Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Catalan. Customers can buy a variety of vocaloid programs in English, Japanese, and Spanish, coming with a variety of vocal types. These include “young cool guy’s voice” to “childish voice with a slight nasal twang”. This has helped the push of vocaloid becoming famous globally.

The software is intended for both professional musicians as well as light computer music users and has so far sold on the idea that the only limits are the users' own skills. Japanese musical groups Live tune of Toy's Factory and Supercell of Sony Music Entertainment Japan have released their songs featuring Vocaloid as vocals. Japanese record label Exit Tunes of Quake Inc. also have released compilation albums featuring Vocaloids. Artists such as Mike Oldfield have also used Vocaloids within their work for backup singer vocals and sound samples.

This technology has led to these animated characters become hugely popular in Japan, and now in other countries. “Nico Nico Douga” is a Japanese video sharing site, played a big

role of increasing popularity of the software, releasing videos of songs using vocaloid technology. Supporters of the vocaloid program believe in great resource of musical creativity. The hope is that one day the use of the vocaloid program could someday be as normal as playing an instrument.