



IDOLS THROUGH THE AGES

WRITTEN & PRESENTED BY: JAEHAERYS48

ABOUT ME

- I generally go by “Jae,” short for my Twitter username @Jaehaerys48
- I’ve been a fan of anime, idols, and Japanese culture for about a decade now
- I’ve been interested in history for over a decade as well, and studied history on the undergrad level at university
- I’m a part of the panelist group Otaku Brain Trust
- Feel free to follow me on Twitter, though I mostly tweet about virtual youtubers these days
- This is my first time presenting this panel!

PURPOSE OF THE PANEL

- Cover the history of the Japanese idol scene of the 20th and 21st centuries
- Highlight several important individuals and groups of historical significance
- Talk about the general trends in idol music and the idol industry decade-by-decade

WHAT I WON'T BE COVERING

- Note: Idols will primarily be referred to by their stage names, not their birth names
- Most of the male idol scene, as I am not very familiar with it and did not have time to do sufficient research on it
- Non-singing related idols (ex: gravure idols)
- Behind-the-scenes of how the industry works
- Music theory
- Fan terminology (oshi, DD, etc)
- I won't cover every idol and idol group, even some famous ones, so don't be disappointed if your favourite is not mentioned

JAPANESE POPULAR MUSIC

Meiji era-1959



JAPANESE POPULAR MUSIC – ORIGINS

- Music, a universal experience shared by all human cultures, has existed in Japan as long as there have been people in Japan.
- Japan is home to several different forms of traditional music, each with their own unique sounds.
- The origins of contemporary Japanese popular music can be traced back to the Meiji period, during which landscape of Japanese music was altered permanently by two powerful and coinciding forces:
 - The newly open Japan was exposed to western music in a scale never seen before, as members of the new middle and upper classes flocked to various forms of Western culture.
 - The invention of the phonograph made recording and replaying music possible for the first time in history.

JAPANESE POPULAR MUSIC – ORIGINS

- The invention of the phonograph in 1877 revolutionized music globally by allowing for the establishment of the commercial music industry as we know it.
- Prior to the creation of phonograph records, music was a transitory thing - something that could only be enjoyed live.
 - Records allowed for music to be recorded, copied, and, of course, sold to consumers.
- Records also meant that consumers around the world could enjoy sounds that they previously may have never had access to.

JAPANESE POPULAR MUSIC – RYŪKŌKA

- As the phonograph was introduced to Japan alongside western music, it is of little surprise that earliest forms of pop music that arose to fill these records was highly influenced by western sounds.
- By the 1920s the genre of *ryūkōka*, literally “popular songs,” had taken form.
- Ryūkōka was inspired by genres such as classical, jazz, and blues, but it would be a mistake to view it as a copy of western music, as traditional Japanese scales, instruments, and techniques remained in use.
- Ryūkōka was a blend of east and west, and is difficult to summarize due to the great variety of music put in this category (basically, almost all popular pre-war music).



MATSUKO ASHITA

- ▶ Began her career in 1933 at the Moulin Rouge theatre in Shinjuku, while still 13 years old
- ▶ Quickly became the star of the theatre, attracting attention for her singing and acting abilities
- ▶ Became commercial face of the theatre and feature in print advertisements for various other brands
- ▶ Utilized for propaganda during the war, with performances put on to lift the morale of soldiers and civilians
- ▶ Retroactively viewed by some as Japan's "first idol"
- ▶ Retired after the war, passed away in 2019

JAPANESE POPULAR MUSIC – KAYŌKYOKU

- As music in Japan continued to evolve after WWII, a new genre known as *kayōkyoku* (“singing music”) began to emerge.
 - Note: the term was initially used interchangeably with *ryūkōka* in the 1930s, but later came to be applied to a refinement of that earlier form of pop music.
- While *ryūkōka* took from jazz and classical, *kayōkyoku* increasingly saw the influence of bebop and rockabilly, though again traditional Japanese instruments, scales, and singing techniques persisted alongside the western elements of the music.
- *Kayōkyoku* along with the related genre of *enka* dominated the popular music scene of the late Shōwa era. Shōwa “J-Pop”, to use an anachronistic term, was mostly *kayōkyoku*. This means that *kayōkyoku* encompasses the what is commonly seen as the beginning of the Japanese idol scene.



SANNIN MUSUME

Izumi Yukimura, Chiemi Eri, & Hibari Misora



HIBARI MISORA

- ▶ Began her career in 1949 at the age of 12, with her single “Kappa Boogie-Woogie” becoming a national hit
- ▶ Adept at singing a wide variety of genres, with a preference for ballads, jazz, and enka
- ▶ Active as a singer and a prolific actor, starring in up to a dozen films per year at the height of her career
- ▶ Her song “Kawa No Nagare No Yō Ni” was voted the top Japanese song of all time in an 1997 NHK poll



CHIEMI ERI

- Began her career in 1952, age 14, with a hit cover of the American song “Tennessee Waltz”
- Grew up exposed to American music as members of her family sung to GIs at nightclubs
- Frequently mixed America, Latin, and Japanese sounds together, often singing lyrics in English and Spanish
- Also was an actor, starring in numerous movies and stage plays



IZUMI YUKIMURA

- ▶ Debuted in 1953, age 16, with a hit cover of the song “Till I Waltz Again with You”
- ▶ Previously worked for free as a singer and worker at various dance halls as a child
- ▶ Frequently sung in English, despite not knowing the language
- ▶ Starred in several films, though fewer than Hibari and Chiemi
- ▶ Career lasted through the early 2000s, and she’s still alive today



SANNIN MUSUME - 3 DAUGHTERS

- Promotional grouping formed from Hibari, Chiemi, and Izumi, the three most popular young singer-actors of early 1950s Japan
- Not a “unit” in the more modern sense of the word, as the three did not debut together and were not managed as a single group
- Popularity lead to a series of films by Toho, beginning with the 1955 *Janken Musume*, portraying the 3 girls as lifelong friends going on various adventures
- Gave hope and a sense of escapism to a Japan still recovering from WWII

SUMMARY: MEIJI ERA-1959

- The near century between the Meiji Restoration and 1960 saw the birth of the modern Japanese music industry,
- Western styles of music were hugely influential, with Japanese covers of western songs frequently topping the charts, but Japanese elements remained.
- Young female singers & entertainers gained nationwide prominence, such as Matsuko Ashita, Hibari Misora, Chiemi Eri, and Izumi Yukimura.

SUMMARY: MEIJI ERA-1959

- Were they idols?
- The use of the term to describe Matsuko Ashita and the Sannin Musume is highly anachronistic, and a matter of some debate, as their careers and the style of their management was different to that of later idols.
- However, they did share several traits with later idols, and their success shows that many of the same appeals of the modern idol scene have been effective since before idols were a thing:
 - Young, charismatic women who were talented in a variety of fields - namely, singing, dancing, and acting - early form of mixed media
 - Used as the faces of commercial goods
 - Represented something greater than themselves — resiliency during and immediately following the war, and hope for a better future in the 1950s

THE BIRTH OF "IDOLS"

1960-1969



松下電器提供 TBSテレビ「太陽のあいつ」主題歌

太陽のあいつ

JOHNNYS

ジャニーズ

ステレオ

ロンサム
ガール

JOHNNY'S

- ▶ Boy group created in 1962 by the Japanese-American businessman Johnny Kitagawa
- ▶ 4 members: Hiromi Maie, Osami Iino, Ryo Nakatani, Teruhiko Aoi
- ▶ Established as multi-purpose entertainers - active for over a year before their first single - rather than just a boy band
- ▶ Set the basis for the foundation of Johnny & Associates, the dominant force in male idols
- ▶ Early example of an “idol group,” though the term was applied to them retroactively



CHERCHEZ L'IDOLE

Sylvie Vartan



SYLVIE VARTAN

- French-Bulgarian singer and actress, began her career in 1961
- Starred in the 1963 French-Italian movie *Cherchez l'idole*
 - Plot: protagonist steals a diamond and hides it in a guitar, but then loses possession of the guitar
- Massive success in Japan, with audiences enthralled by the young Sylvie Vartan's musical performance in the film
- Responsible for popularizing the term "idol" in the country

WHAT IS AN IDOL?

- The word “idol” has its origins in ancient Greek language, and has passed down through Latin and French to form a part of the English dictionary.
 - In its original meaning, an “idol” refers to an “image or representation of anything that is revered, or believed to convey spiritual power.” (Wiktionary)
- Perhaps due to its association with the idea of things and ideas that are revered, the term “idol” began to be applied to popular singers and actors in the West during the first the 20th century, hence its use in *Cherchez l'idole*.
 - These “idols” were popular entertainers who were indeed revered by their adoring fans, but there was little unified concept of what clearly defined them as an “idol” besides popularity.

Does this mean that Japanese idols are
just popular singers?

WHAT IS AN IDOL?

- While the term “idol” was taken from the West, it quickly took on a more specific meaning in Japan.
- Idols are not just musicians, but a group of entertainers who defined by a set of specific common characteristics. While an individual idol or group might not have all of these characteristics, they are likely to have most of them:
 - young, attractive
 - commercialized — corporate “products”
 - multimedia approach — singing, dancing, acting, etc
 - public images intentionally crafted to fit certain appeals and represent ideas or archetypes
 - restricted in behavior and ability to communicate directly with fans while also expected to be more “approachable” to fans than most celebrities, albeit in organized settings such as handshake events

“

Highly produced and promoted singers, models, and media personalities. Idols can be male or female, and tend to be young, or present themselves as such; they appeal to various demographics, and often broad cross sections of society. Idols perform across genres and interconnected media platforms at the same time. They are not expected to be greatly talented at any one thing, for example singing, dancing, or acting; they are interchangeable and disposable commodities that “affiliate with the signifying processes of Japanese consumer capitalism”. From popular music and photo albums to fashion and accessories, idols are produced and packaged to maximize consumption. At the same time, they are the currency of exchange in the promotion and advertising of all manner of other products and services.

- Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture

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For the fan-consumer, the idol as an object of desire is a fantasy or ideal construct, a “mirror” reflection, which resonates with deep affective or emotional meaning.

- Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture

FIRST IDOL ERA

1970-1979



FIRST IDOL ERA: 1970–1979

- The 1970s saw the creation of the modern idol industry in its recognizable form, with the term “idol” — アイドル (“*aidoru*”) — in use thanks to Sylvie Vartan.
- Mass media of all kinds flourished in 70s Japan, fueled by economic growth that allowed for greater amounts of disposable income that could be spent on things such as color televisions, albums, and merchandise.
- 70s idol scene was deeply connected with TV, with idols establishing their popularity through TV shows and in many cases even coming from them, with the TV show *Star Tanjo!* becoming an establishment in the industry. In turn they were used to promote the goods made possible by Japan’s economic growth to their fans.
- Many idols were scouted at a young age by smaller record labels, which were seeking ways to challenge the then-dominant Watanabe Productions (Nabe-pro).

FIRST IDOL ERA: 1970–1979

- Another term used to describe the idols of this decade — cuties — reflects their image and style. Idols largely went for the approachable “girl next door” archetype, distinct from untouchable, elite celebrities, with music that was light-hearted and optimistic. Duos and trios presented as friends were the norm.
 - Youth and purity was emphasized, and in spite of their approachable characters, idols were actually kept very separate from fans, often disappearing from the public scene almost entirely upon their retirement.
- This image the optimistic feelings of the era, as consumer culture supplanted the political radicalism of the 60s, and was well suited for advertising.
- The idols of this “first idol era” were a product of Japanese consumer capitalism, something that has never really changed since then.



SAORI MINAMI

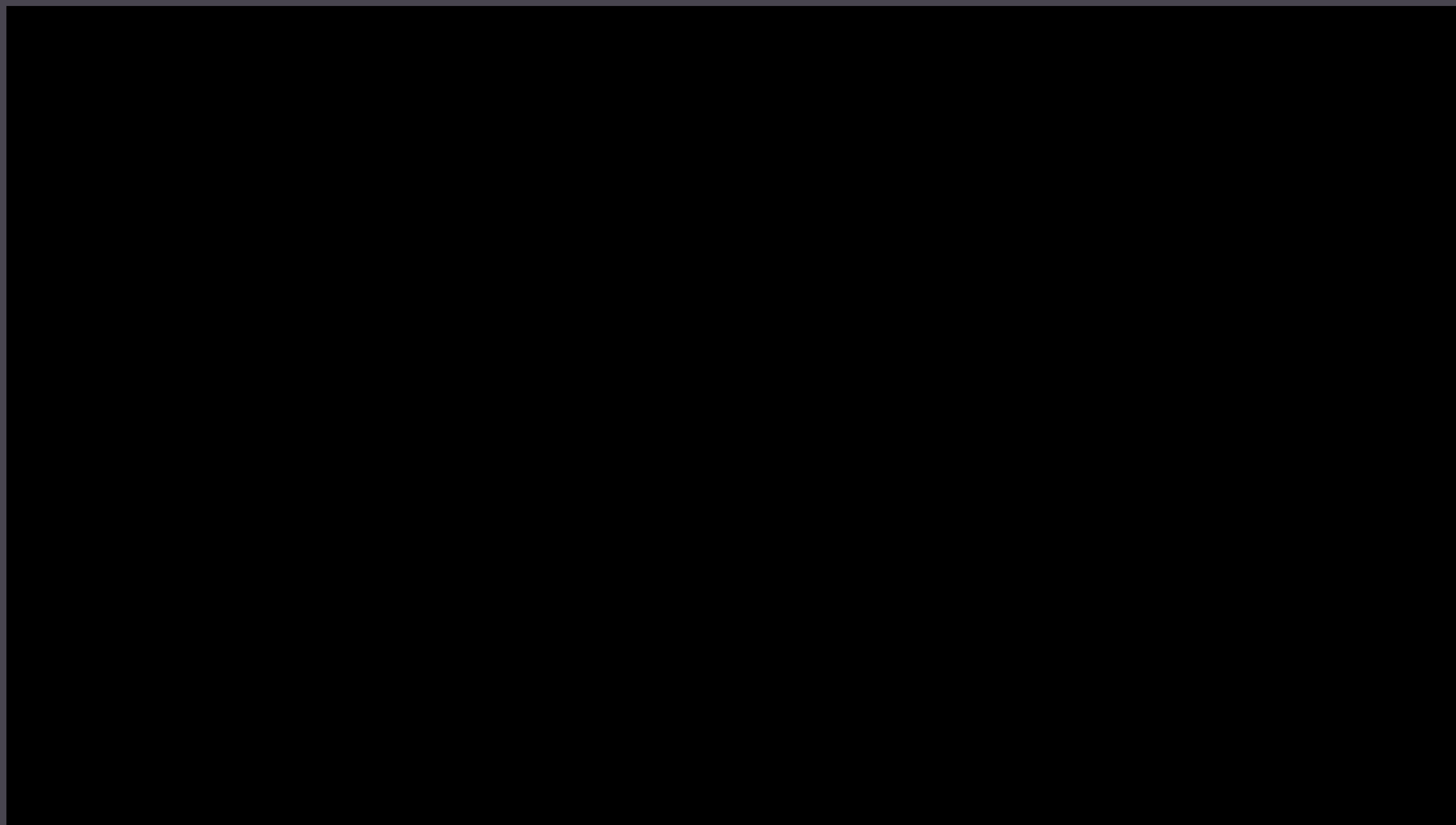
- ▶ Debuted in 1971 with the hit single “17-sai” (17 years old) when she was 17 years old
 - ▶ Based on “Rose Garden” by Lynn Anderson
- ▶ Okinawan, her debut as an idol closely coincided with Okinawa’s return to Japanese control
- ▶ Promoted as part of a new “Sannin Musume” alongside fellow idols Rimiko Koyanagi and Mari Amachi, who debuted around the same time as Saori
- ▶ Retired in 1978, though returned to singing in the 90s



CANDIES

- ▶ 3-person unit, debute in 1973
 - ▶ Ran (main singer), Sue, Miki
- ▶ One of the definitive idol groups of the decade, known for their singing talent and harmonies
- ▶ Famous for disbanding at the height of their popularity, announcing in 1977 that “We want to return to being ordinary girls”

CANDIES – “ANATA NI MUCHŪ” (CRAZY FOR YOU), 1973



06SH 15
CBS
SONY
45RPM STEREO



歌
山口百恵
YOKOSUKA STORY GAME IS OVER
MOMOE YAMAGUCHI

MOMOE YAMAGUCHI

- ▶ Debuted in 1972 on the TV show *Star Tanjō!* at the age of 13
- ▶ Instant hit on TV, promoted alongside fellow *Star Tanjō!* participants Junko Sakurada and Masako Mori as the *Hana no Chūsan Torio*, or trio of third-year middle school girls — reflecting their age — a promotional grouping inspired by Sannin Musume
- ▶ Went on to have a highly successful solo career throughout the 70s, and was known for preferring more assertive and adult lyrics as she got older



PINK LADY

- ▶ Debuted in 1976 as a duo on *Star Tanjo!*
 - ▶ 2 members — Mie and Kei — were genuine childhood friends
- ▶ Debuted in 1976 as a duo
- ▶ Known for their flashy, disco-inspired outfits and vibrant choreography, both of which would become a staple of the idol industry (albeit with less disco nowadays)
- ▶ Received a semi-animated biographical/slice-of-life TV series
- ▶ First Japanese artists to chart in the US, reaching 37th on the Billboard charts in 1979 with their song “Kiss in the Dark”
 - ▶ Led to a *very* strange and very short NBC variety TV show in America with comedian Jeff Altman

GOLDEN AGE

1980-1989



GOLDEN AGE: 1980–1989

- While the 1970s was the first decade of idols in Japan, the 1980s would come to be seen as the golden age of idols.
- Idol “production” rate reached a then all-time high in the 80s, with dozens of debuts per week at the height of the industry, but quantity is not all that the decade had to offer.
- Idol music in the 1980s reached new heights in terms of quality and respectability. The mostly forgettable “cuties” songs of the 70s were joined by ones with more bold and mature sounds and lyrics.
- The decade’s top idols reached a new level of respectability, frequently topping the charts and winning prestigious music awards.

GOLDEN AGE: 1980–1989

- Japanese pop music in the 80s in general reached a zenith, fueled by the height of Japan's bubble economy. Rock & roll and citypop flourished, which is reflected in many idol songs of the era.
- Idol music really became distinctive and memorable in this decade, and familiar aspects of idol fandom such as chanting during concerts became common.
- While the cute “girl next door” archetype remained popular, many female idols turned towards the more mature, independent *bishoujo* archetype, similar to that pioneered by Momoe Yamaguchi in the 70s.
- This decade would also see anime feature idols to a significant extent for the first time ever in shows such as *SDF Macross* and *Creamy Mami*.

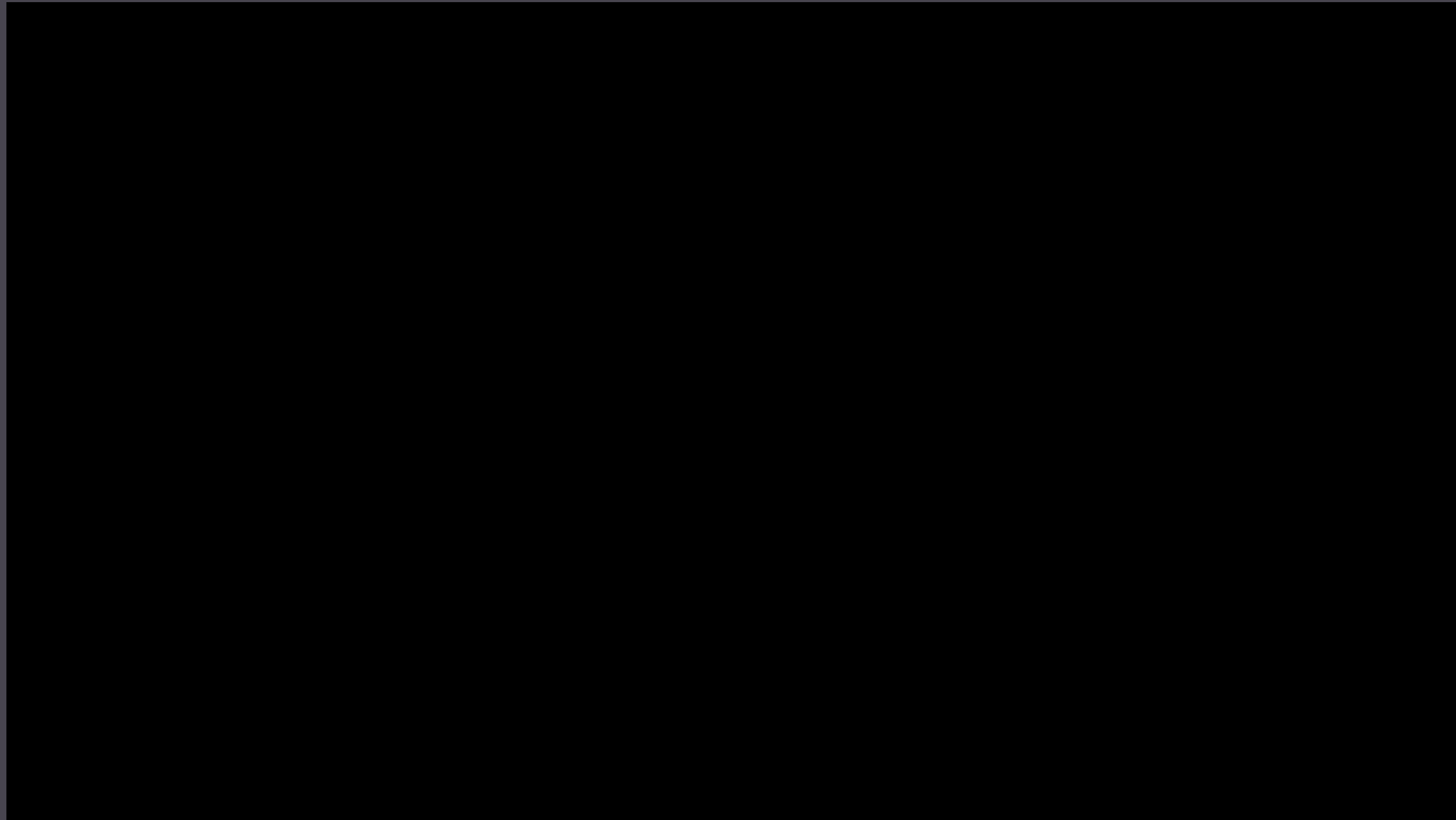


Seiko index

SEIKO MATSUDA

- Debuted in 1980 after winning a magazine contest
- 3rd single “Kaze wa Aki-iro” would become the first of 24 consecutive number 1 hits, setting a record that would last till the 2000s
- Started off with a more cute, innocent image, but continuously reinvented herself throughout her life — still active and popular today, earning her the title of the “Eternal Idol”
- Voted Japan’s top idol ever in an Oricon survey

SEIKO MATSUDA – “HADASHI NO KISETSU” (BAREFOOT SEASON), 1980

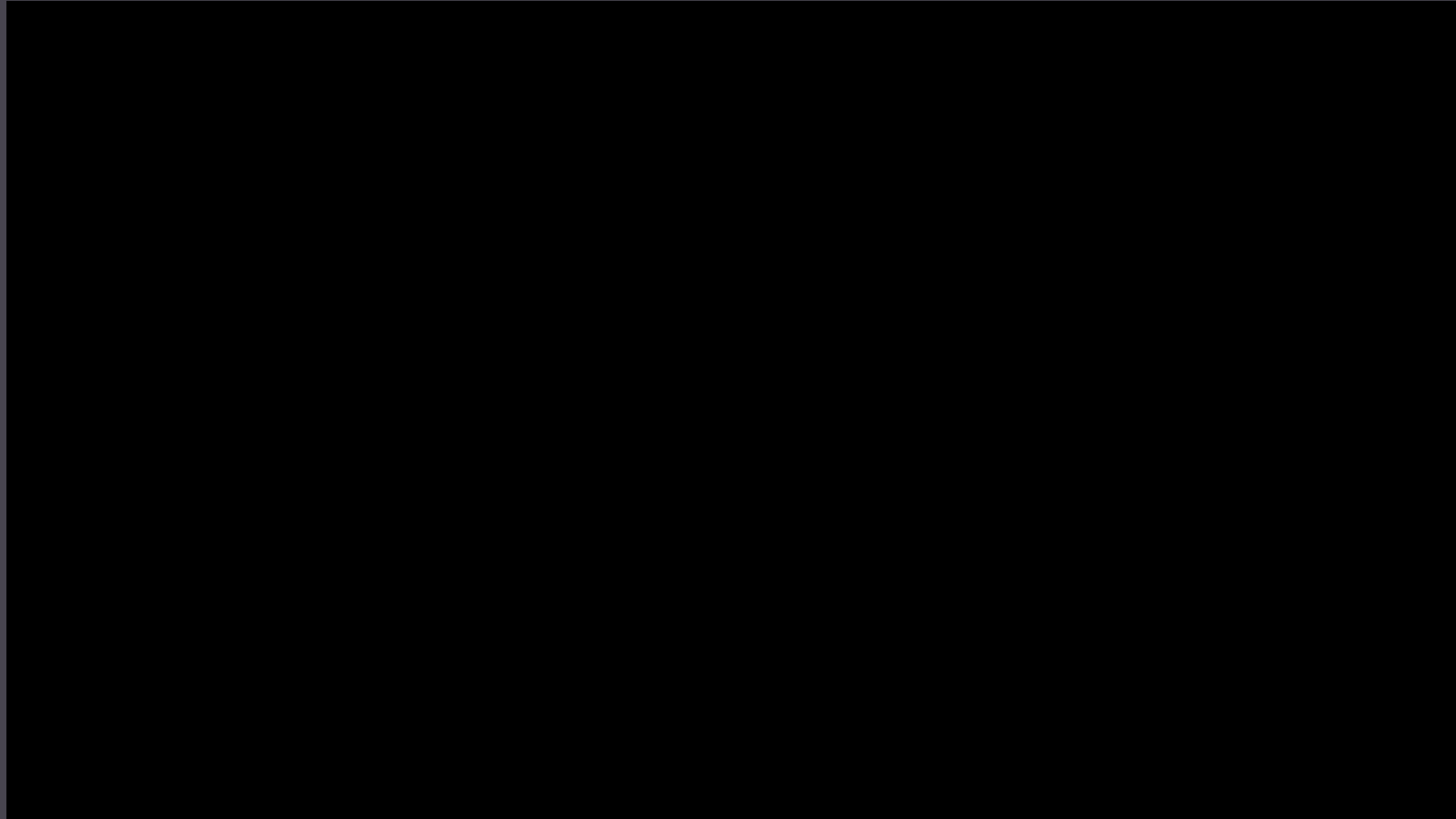




AKINA NAKAMORI

- ▶ Debuted in 1982 after starring in *Star Tanjo!*
- ▶ Depicted by the media at the time and since as Seiko's top rival, though the two got along well
- ▶ While Seiko was cute and approachable, Akina was rebellious, mysterious, and mature, favoring lower vocals and risque lyrics
- ▶ Became the youngest winner of the Japan Record Awards Grand Prix in 1985, won it again in 86

AKINA NAKAMORI – “DESIRE”, 1986





LYNN MINMAY – MARI IJIMA

- ▶ One of the two main heroines of the 1982 anime series *Super Dimension Fortress Macross*
- ▶ Voiced by Mari Iijima
- ▶ Minmay’s music, style, and portrayal reflects the real-world nature — and perceived nature — of idols in the early 1980s
- ▶ *Macross*’s cross-demographic success was credited to the inclusion of idols and romance, and launched Mari Iijima as the first “anime idol”



CREAMY MAMI – TAKAKO ŌTA

- Adult form of Yū Morisawa, the main character of the 1983 magical girl anime *Creamy Mami, the Magical Angel*
- Voiced by Takako Ōta
- “Media mix” strategy — the anime was used from the start to promote Takako as an idol herself
- The show depicts both the aspirational symbol that idols can be as well as the harsh and sometimes cutthroat nature of the idol industry (albeit usually for comedic effect)

♥ NO MORE 恋愛ごっこ ♥



ONYANKO CLUB
おニャン子クラブ

ONYANKO CLUB

- ▶ Launched in 1985 as a large female idol group, with their own variety TV series on Fuji TV called *Yūyake Nyan Nyan*
- ▶ Debuted with the surprisingly risqué single “Sailor Fuku o Nugasanai de” - “Don't Make Me Take Off My Sailor Uniform”
- ▶ Amateur, relatively imperfect singing turned into a charm point
- ▶ Only active for 3 years, but pioneered several innovations that would eventually become integral to the idol scene:
 - ▶ Large group with multiple sub-groups
 - ▶ System of rotation & graduations
 - ▶ “Love ban”
 - ▶ Intentional appeal to the male fanbase



CHISATO MORITAKA

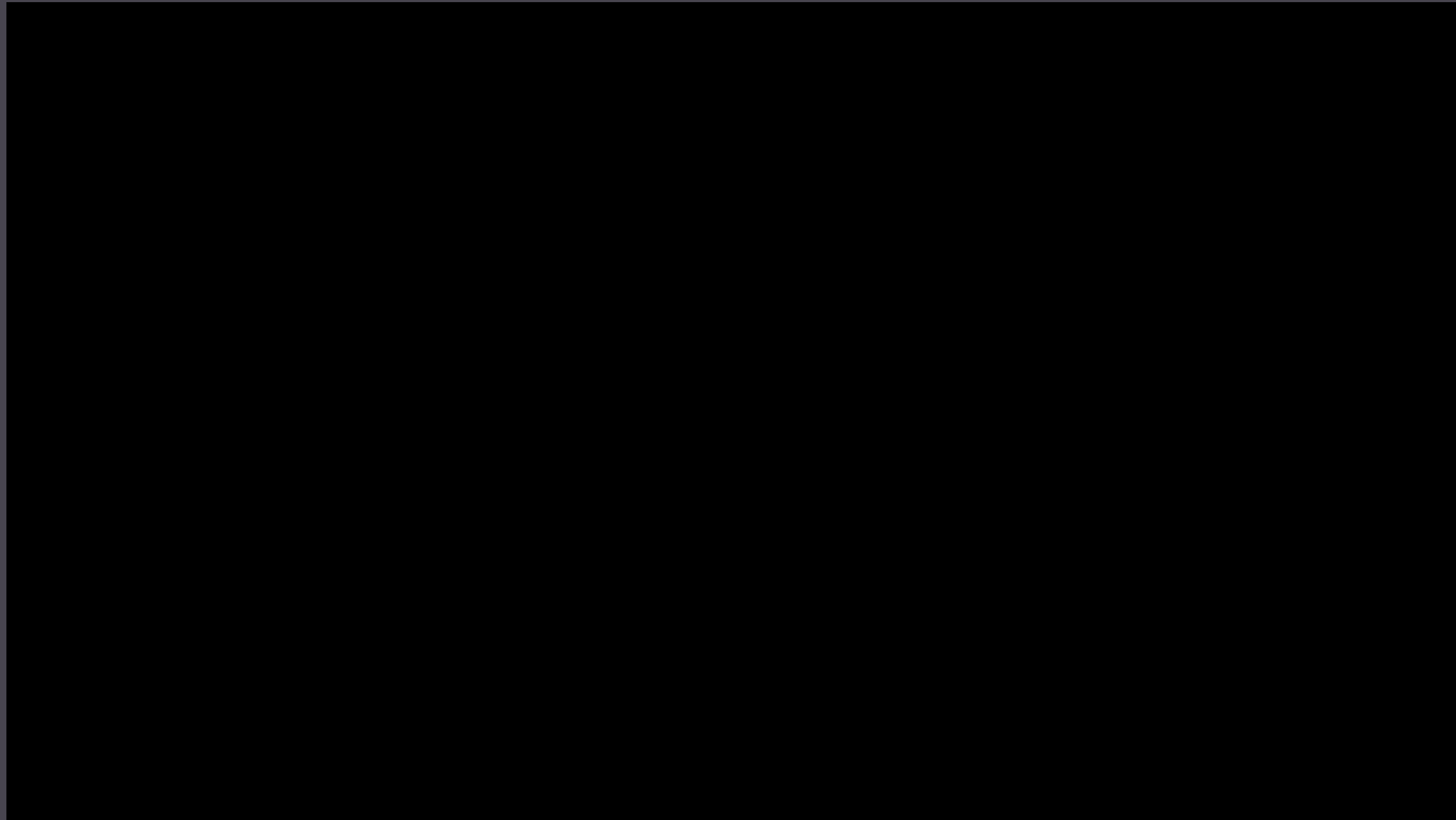
- ▶ Debuted in 1987 with the album *New Season*
- ▶ Known for her long black hair, flamboyant outfits, and dancing ability, which perfectly suited her songs that showed influence from disco, dance pop, and Eurobeat
- ▶ Frequently wrote her own lyrics and played instruments, something almost unheard of for idols at the time (and even today)
- ▶ Asserted a greater degree of independence and control over her own career than most idols, winning her a large female fanbase



WINK

- ▶ Duo launched in 1988 made up of two beauty contest contestants, Sachiko Suzuki and Shoko Aida
- ▶ Initially sung covers of western songs, before moving on to more original songs of their own
- ▶ Known for their extravagant outfits (an early example of lolita fashion), cool expressions, stoic performances, and European flare

WINK – “TSUIOKU NO HEROINE” (REMINISCENT HEROINE), 1991



hisper
KYOKO IV
KO KOIZUMI

Beginner Begins Beginning Love.
今日子...わさわさやきつたえたい。

ウエスパー
KYOKO IV
小泉今日子

Upper Class ■ Middle Class
のシンデレラ 1. 魔法騎士
ター 2. ラブ・ハイ・ジョーラー
イキョウ 3. 涙のセンターライン
たスローカー 4. 天降はあめだ
3. Flower

SO FRESH
Victor
ワー音楽産業株式会社



OTHER PROMINENT 80S IDOLS

- ▶ Other prominent idols:
 - ▶ Kyōko Koizumi (pictured)
 - ▶ Chemi Hori
 - ▶ Yu Hayami
 - ▶ Iyo Matsumoto
 - ▶ Yukiko Okada
 - ▶ Shizuka Kudo

IDOL WINTER

1990-1999

モーニングコーヒー モーニング娘。

C/W 愛の種



IDOL WINTER: 1990–1999

- The 80s were the Golden Age of idols, but that era was not to last long.
- Much like the general Japanese economy, which entered a prolonged period of stagnation beginning in 1991, the idol industry fell on hard times in the 1990s.
- While some 80s idols like Chisato Morinaka and Wink remained active, most retired or switched to non-idol solo music and acting careers.
 - The allure of idols took a hit as stars like Seiko and Akina left the idol phases of their careers behind.

IDOL WINTER: 1990–1999

- Popular young female singers and groups who had similarities with idols were not promoted as idols, such as Namie Amuro, Tomomi Kahara, Princess Princess, and the popular seiyuu Megumi Hayashibara.
- In general, the youth of the Lost Decade preferred singers who fashioned themselves after western pop, punk, Eurobeat, and trance over more traditional idols.
- “J-Pop” entered the popular lexicon, supplanting the older term kayōkyoku.
 - Music industry as a whole performed quite well, in spite of the stagnant economy.



MORNING MUSUME

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*Yuko Nakazawa, Aya Ishiguro, Kaori Iida, Natsumi Abe, Asuka Fukuda,
Kei Yasuda, Mari Yaguchi, Sayaka Ichii*



モーニング娘。ファーストタイム

MORNING MUSUME

- ▶ Group formed in 1997 by the producer Tsunku, composed of 5 singers who had participated in an audition for the band Sharam Q
- ▶ Tsunku offered to make them a permanent group if their demo single “Ai no Tane” could sell 50,000 copies in 5 days, which it did, leading to the creation of Morning Musume
- ▶ Expanded to 8 members in 1998
- ▶ Modeled after Onyanko Club from the 80s, with its large group format and formalized rotations and graduation

Memory 青春の光

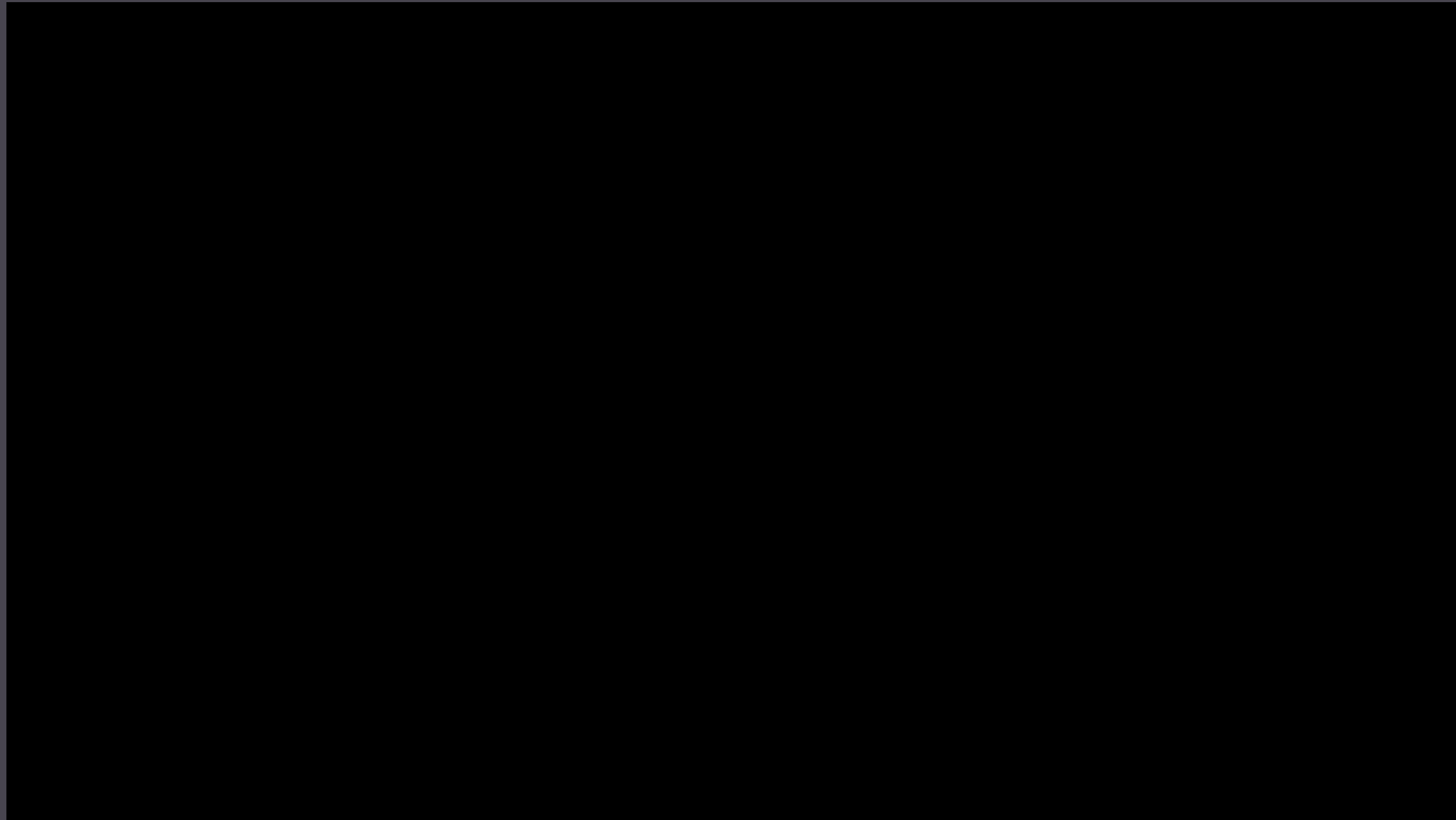
モーニング娘



MORNING MUSUME

- ▶ Became the lead part of Tsunku's wider Hello! Project
- ▶ Popularized concepts such as generations, training schools, and big group songs with each member singing a distinct part
- ▶ Fan groups defined modern idol fan culture with their wotagei, penlights, and mixes
- ▶ Almost single-handedly revived interest in idols and set the template for almost all idol groups that followed
- ▶ Several singles and albums charted highly in the late 90s

MORNING MUSUME – “MORNING COFFEE”, 1998

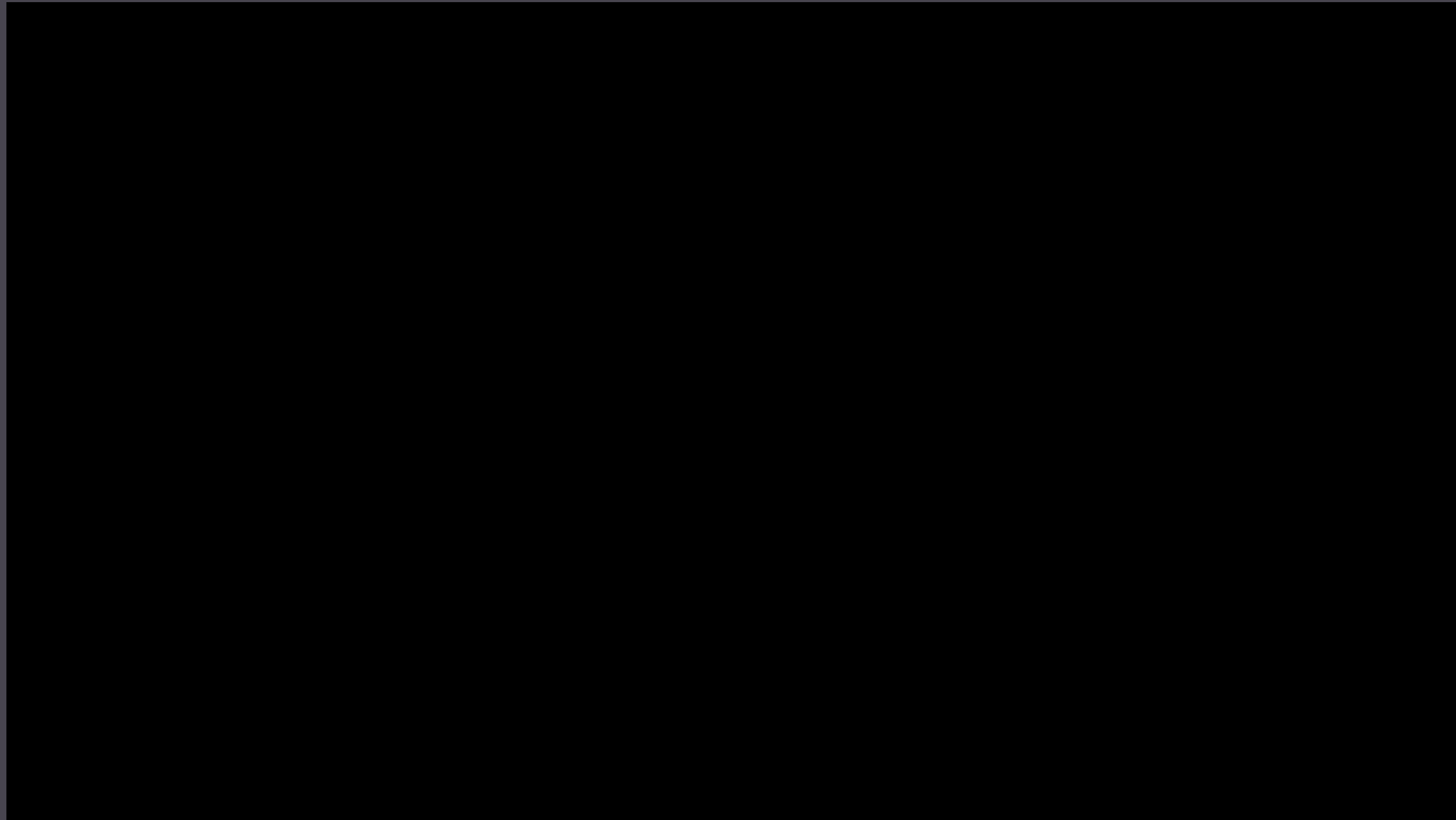




HARUKO MOMOI

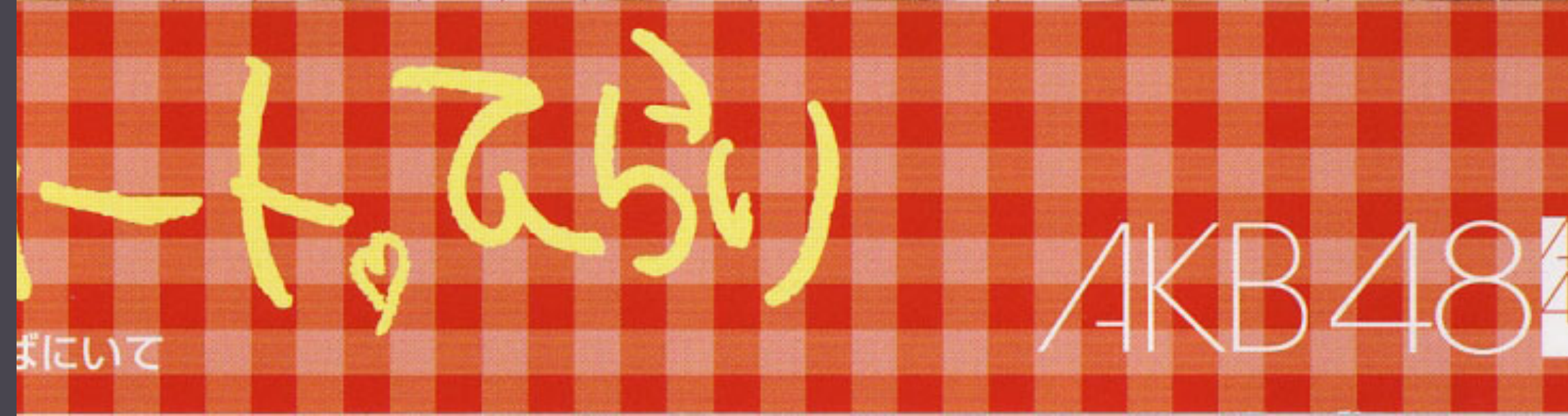
- ▶ Nicknamed “Halko,” Akihabara idol who began performing around 1997
- ▶ Known for her impromptu street performances, her cute voice, and her trademark power glove
- ▶ One of the first “Akiba idols” — the start of a culture of street idols that would flourish in the years to come in the Akihabara electronics district of Tokyo
- ▶ Debuted formally in 2000, would later go on to voice Komugi Nakahara in *The SoulTaker* and Nurse Witch Komugi, the latter of which satirizes the upstart idol scene around Akihabara

HARUKO MOMOI – “GURA GURA”, 1997



THE NEW MILLENNIUM

2000-2009



THE NEW MILLENNIUM: 2000–2009

- As the world entered the new millennium, the idol industry came along with it, recently reinvigorated thanks to the success of Morning Musume but still a shadow of its 80s self.
- As it turns out, the early 2000s would not be easy for idols in Japan. Morning Musume remained popular, but began to wane after the departure of some of its early members.
- The bands of the 90s also waned, with young, new J-Pop singer-songwriters became dominant, with Ayumi Hamasaki shattering records, including those set by Seiko Matsuda back in the 80s.
- Japanese music sales in general however entered a decline in the 2000s.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM: 2000–2009

- Nonetheless, the roots of a new resurgence of idols were present, both in the form of the model set by Morning Musume, which had proved to be very successful, and in the otaku-oriented Akiba and Harajuku idol scenes.
- The combination of those two ingredients would lead to a second explosion in idol popularity at the end of the 2000s, one which would lead the industry to heights not seen since the Golden Age of the 80s and arguably even surpass that glittering period.



NEGICCO

- ▶ Local idol group created in 2003 with the purpose of promoting Niigata prefecture onions
- ▶ Slowly gained a nation-wide following, becoming more popular in the 2010s
- ▶ Example of the appearance of local idols outside of Tokyo, a trend that would increase in the coming years



AKB48

Itano Tomomi, Oshima Mai, Kojima Haruna, Takahashi Minami, Narita Risa, Maeda Atsuko, Nakanishi Rina



AKB48

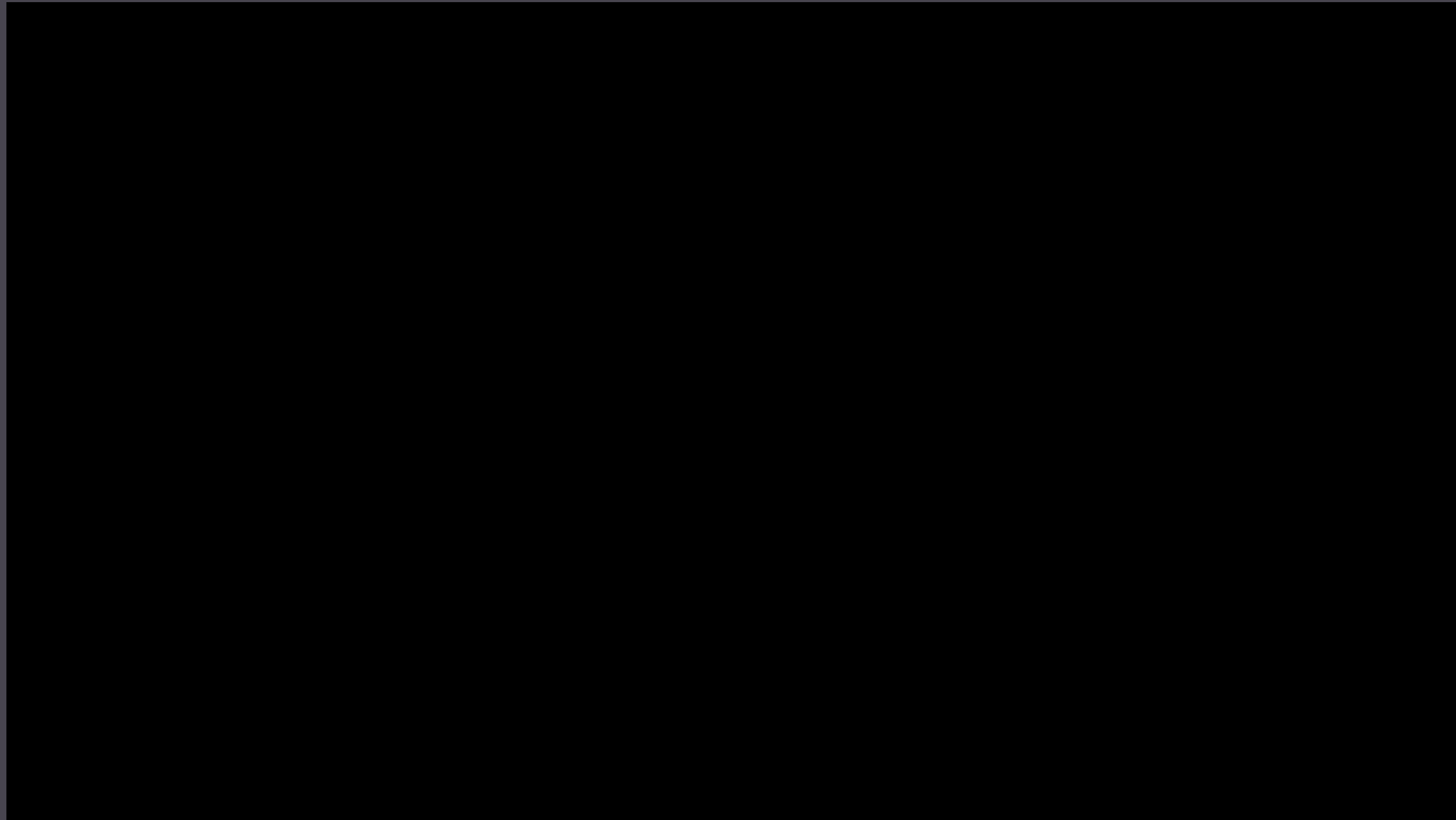
- ▶ Created in 2005 by producer Yasushi Akimoto, who has a career in the industry going back to his involvement in Onyanko Club and even Hibari Misora
- ▶ Initially composed of 24 members selected via an audition, later expanded
 - ▶ Teams A, K, and B
 - ▶ Highly structured, with institutional events like the Senbatsu Election
- ▶ Born from Akihabara idol scene, (hence “AKB”), based around the concept of “idols you can meet”
- ▶ Theatre-based group, similar to the Revues of old



AKB48

- ▶ Humble origins, but they quickly exploded in popularity, reaching the Oricon Top 10 by 2006
- ▶ AKB48 would soon become the dominant idol group in Japan, and the most successful ever
- ▶ Popularity built on a continued emphasis on fan interaction via the theatre and meet-and-greet events
 - ▶ More “otaku” appeal than Morning Musume
- ▶ AKB48 idols star in films and shows, and even had their own anime
- ▶ 48 Group would go on to launch several other units along the AKB format, with the first sister group — SKE48 — launching in 2008

AKB48 – “SKIRT, HIRARI”, 2006



週末ヒロイン Momoiro Clover

未来ハススメ!



MOMOIRO CLOVER Z

- ▶ Formed in 2005 as the 5-person unit Momoiro Clover, the “Z” — a reference to *Dragon Ball Z* — was added to their name in 2011
- ▶ Began as a street act in Harujuku performing on the weekends (as the members were still in school)
- ▶ Known for their highly energetic performances, fast lyrics, and collabs with western musicians
- ▶ Seen as a more anarchic, less formal alternative to the highly structured AKB48



DEMPAGUMI.INC

- ▶ Formed in 2008
- ▶ Name refers to “denpa music,” a genre of otaku music that relies on the use of punchy, often nonsensical lyrics to create catchy and almost hypnotic songs
- ▶ Strong connection with otaku culture
- ▶ Example of idol units branching out into more specialized genres and supgenres, a trend that would continue into the 2010s

IDOL WARRING STATES

2010-2019



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IDOL WARRING STATES: 2010–2019

- The 2010s are often referred to by idol fans as the “Idol Sengoku Jidai,” a reference to the Sengoku or warring states period of Japanese history, due to the unprecedented number of groups that cropped up during the decade.
- Morning Musume, AKB48, and Momoiro Clover Z continued to perform strongly into the 2010s, with the companies behind them launching various new groups:
 - Hello! Pro: Juice=Juice, Up Up Girls, Tsubaki Factory
 - AKB Group: NMB48, HKT48, NGT48, STU48, several foreign groups
 - Stardust Promotions: Ebichu (2009), Team Shachi
- While AKB48 had supplanted Morning Musume by the end of the 2000s, Momoiro Clover Z would go on to claim the title of the most popular female idol group for most of the 2010s.
- Sales of music, tickets, and merchandise grew massively.

IDOL WARRING STATES: 2010–2019

- Idol scene was not limited to these acts created by the big agencies, however. The independent underground idol scene continued to flourish, leading to several new units debuting.
- Many new units, indie and corporate, increasingly specialized in specific genres of music, straying away from the more general sounds of the big idol groups.
- Alternative idol and “Anti-idol” groups cropped up as a reaction to the popularity of idol culture, with members who cast themselves as opposing the “rules” of idols whilst also generally being idols themselves in terms of the promotion and managerial style.
- Seiyuu idol units based around anime and games such as The iDOL@MASTER and Love Live became incredibly popular, and increasingly similar to “traditional” idol groups.
- Industry would see increasing competition from outside of the idol world, particularly from Korea, with K-Pop gaining a large following in Japan.



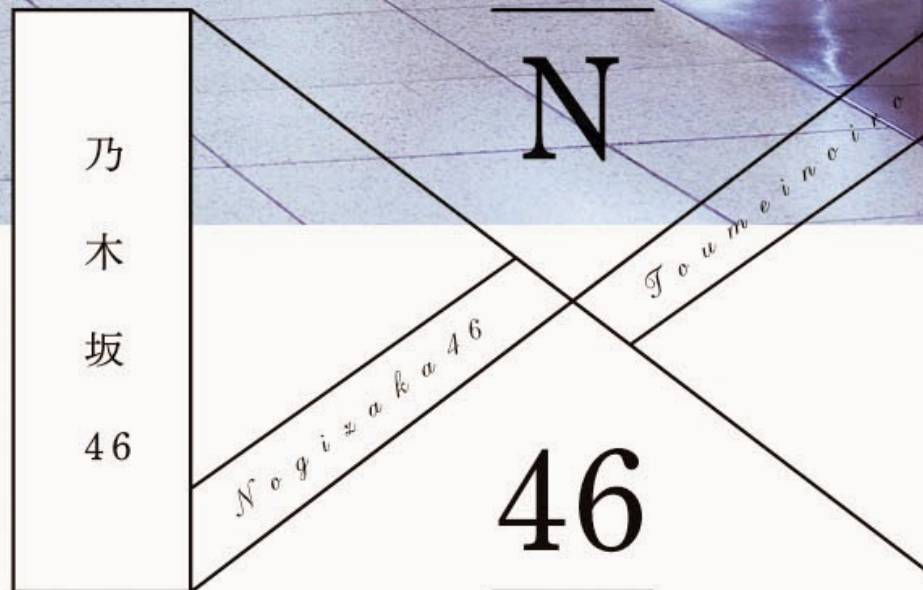
IDOL is DEAD

BiS

- ▶ Launched in 2010 by the singer Pour Lui
- ▶ “Brand-new idol Society,” music based in alternative punk and pop rock
- ▶ The success of BiS popularized alternative idols and led to producer Watanabe Junnosuke establishing his own production company, WACK, in 2014
- ▶ BiS disbanded in 2014 but has since reformed twice, with the third BiS remaining a part of WACK alongside groups such as BiSH, EMPIRE, GANG PARADE, and ASP



zaka46
meinairo



NOGIZAKA46

- ▶ Launched in 2011 by AKB48 producer Yasushi Akimoto as the official rival group of AKB48
- ▶ More refined, elegant style in contrast to the more kawaii look of AKB and their sister acts
- ▶ First part of the Sakamichi Series, which would go on to include Keyakizaka46, Yoshimotozaka46, and Hinatazaka46
- ▶ Nogizaka46 would achieve their function as “rivals” and overtake AKB48 in popularity by the end of the 2010s, though AKB has recently pulled ahead in 2021



THE iDOLM@STER 2

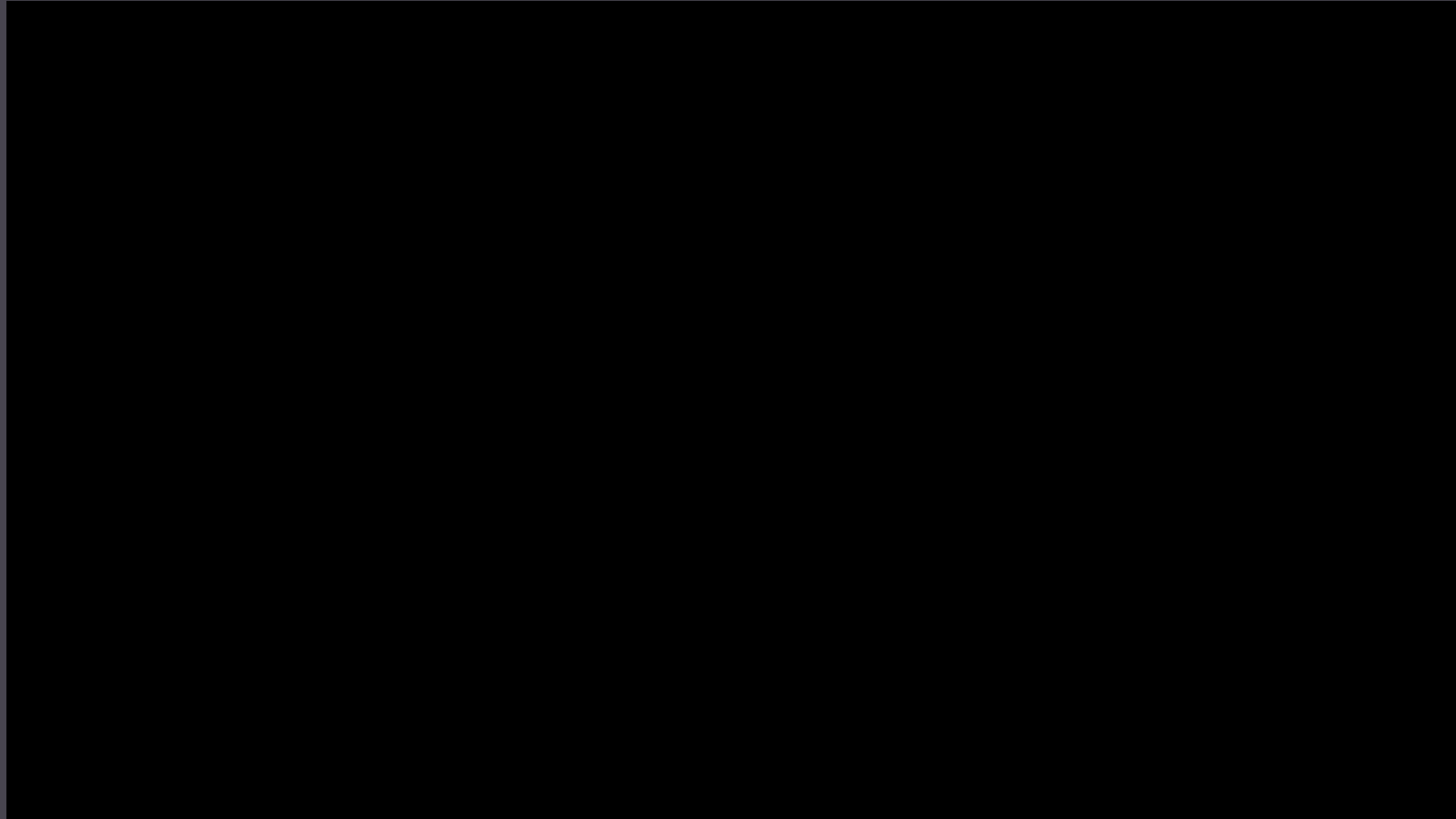
- ▶ Idol raising simulator, released in 2011 as the first part of the “2nd Vision” of the iM@S franchise that first launched in 2005 with the original arcade game
- ▶ Firmly established iDOLM@STER’s popularity and served as a launching point for future iM@S projects
- ▶ iM@S seiyuu would go on to release albums and be promoted akin to idols themselves, on a scale that had not been seen before
- ▶ Significant competitor for the same otaku audience that groups like AKB heavily target



BABYMETAL

- ▶ Began in 2010 as a sub-unit of the school-themed idol group Sakura Gakuin, became an independent act in 2013
- ▶ Specialize in heavy and “kawaii” metal
- ▶ International success, becoming arguably the most famous idol group of the 2010s outside of Japan
 - ▶ Frequently tour outside of Japan
- ▶ Another example of the rise of “alternative” idols

BABYMETAL – “DOKI DOKI MORNING”, 2012





LOVE LIVE! SCHOOL IDOL FESTIVAL

- ▶ Rythym game series released in 2013, followed by the anime “Love Live! School Idol Project” in 2014
- ▶ Intentionally created as a mixed media project from the beginning, with games, manga, anime, and live performances
- ▶ μ’s seiyuu concerts rival the most popular idol group concerts in terms of scale
- ▶ Spawned several spinoffs and successors

THE PRESENT ERA

2020-today



Artist	Score (Recognition X)
Perfume	52.6
Momoiro Clover Z	41.0
NiziU	33.8
AKB48	28.1
Nogizaka46	27.4
TWICE	26.0
Sakurazaka46	23.1
Hinatazaka46	22.2
BABYMETAL	19.5
BiSH	15.2
NMB48	15.1
SKE48	14.3
HKT48	13.0
Shiritsu Ebisu Chuugaku	11.6
IZ*ONE	11.4
NGT48	9.4
Denpagumi.inc	9.1

THE PRESENT ERA: 2020–TODAY

- The current era of idol history does not have a nickname, and one could say that we are still in the midst of the Idol Warring States period due to the fierce level of competition and proliferation of groups.
- Momoiro Clover Z ended 2021 as the most popular female idol group according to the Nikkei Entertainment Talent Power rankings, and the second most popular girl group in general after Perfume.
- AKB48 was fourth on the list, just ahead of Nogizaka46, though in general the Sakamichi 46 series groups are now more popular than their 48 counterparts.
- Babymetal and BiSH were 9 and 10.



NIZIU

.....
Mako, Maya, Mayuka, Riku, Rima, Ayaka, Miihi, Rio, Nina



VIRTUAL YOUTUBERS

Inui Toko, Hoshimachi Suisei

THE PRESENT ERA: 2020–TODAY

- The Japanese idol scene has undergone several periods of growth and change throughout its history, continuously reinventing itself to fit the times.
- Whatever form they take, idols are likely to be with us for years to come.

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