

My Favorite Asia-Related Digital Media

Japanese Anime and Korean Music

By Briana Jamerson

There are many aspects of Asian-related media that I have grown to love, but my top two favorites are Japanese anime and the South Korean record label SM Entertainment Company (SMENT). For the majority of my childhood, I knew nothing about Asian countries or their unique digital media. During my first year of high school, I learned more about these countries and began to explore their different cultures. My world geography teacher helped create my interest in East Asia. He required our class to be able to locate specific places on the map and to learn about the region and its diverse cultures. I began to learn as much as I could about these countries, and my interest in anime and SMENT flourished.



Girls Generation. Source: <http://tiny.cc/c4g1yw>.

Anime is a form of Japanese animation whose origins go back before the 1920s. Later, before and during World War II, many organizations for artists and cartoonists were established. The government used cartoonists that were neither banned from working nor serving in the military to manipulate the Japanese people through art. The cartoonists then proceeded to create comic strips and animation that were filled with misleading publicity to use against the nation's enemies.

Many people might ask what makes anime different from regular American cartoons. The answer to that question is that while a substantial amount of American cartoons are aimed at children, Japanese anime is for all ages. Another difference is that many of the anime characters that you can watch on television are also included in Japanese manga (comic books and strips).

Anime is one of the most incredible pieces of Japanese digital media because it is so well-designed. The storylines are well-developed, and the artistic talent that goes into making these masterpieces is simply astounding. Anime is like a painting brought to life by artists and voice actors. Characters are given certain qualities that cannot be found in most American cartoons. For example, female characters in anime are typically depicted as having stunning round eyes, hair that is exceedingly long, and striking figures and physiques. Male characters are shown as possessing enormous muscles and powerful bodies.

Anime is surprisingly relatable. In most instances, I can identify with anime characters. They might be going through the same things I am, or perhaps their personality is just similar to mine. Anime is enjoyable for all ages, and it can help one learn the Japanese language. For instance, as I watch programs, I pick up Japanese words without even realizing it. Anime also gives one an insight into Japanese culture.

Another form of Asian-related media is SM Entertainment Company, better known as SMENT. SMENT is a South Korean record label, talent organization, creator, and distributor of pop music, founded by Lee Soo-man in 1995. The current CEO is Kim Young-min. In 2009, the company earned the equivalent of more than US \$61 million and since then has more than doubled this amount. The label is one of the “big three” record companies in South Korea, along with YG Entertainment and JYP Entertainment. They are independent yet have a large market share and international sales.



Screen capture of EXO's “Wolf” at <http://tiny.cc/b40tyw>.

Some of their notable artists—and my favorites—include Girls Generation, F(x), SHINEE, and EXO. The company does excellent work in finding and developing musicians, and as demonstrated by their continued success, the company is doing something right. The company is admired for their ability to capture the audience's attention and professionally market their clients. SMENT finds groups from across the spectrum and helps each develop their unique sound. SMENT also does an excellent marketing job with their musical groups, which helps their musicians increase in popularity. SMENT appears to be an excellent company, and I predict the organization will enjoy continued growth and prosperity. ■

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