

Japanese Culture Now

浜崎あゆみ *Hamasaki Ayumi*—Source of strength for young people searching for a place of their own



Hamasaki Ayumi (23) sold more CDs than any other popular singer in the year 2001. Known as “ayu,” she is tremendously popular with young people. Until recently, her image was strongest as a fashion icon of teenage girls, but today her popularity is growing across a wider stratum—men and women in their twenties and thirties.

Hamasaki writes her own lyrics, lyrics that express an image of herself that is true to life. Her songs speak of heartache, loneliness and despair, the importance of accepting and believing in ourselves just as we are, seeing failure in love as energy to go forward, and offering the encouragement that “I (ayu) am right here with you.”

In an article in the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper on June 2, 2001, copywriter Maeda Tomomi noted, “Today’s younger generation suffers from a real thirst for words—they’re desperately seeking words with the power to rescue them. Many teenagers shed tears of relief when they hear songs like those of Hamasaki Ayumi—whose lyrics are embarrassingly straightforward for anyone of my age—grasping for the

strength and solace they offer. You can tell that the adults in their lives aren’t offering any support or advice—even moralistic—that really resonates in their hearts.” She continues to offer hope and companionship to those frustrated by what they feel is a world with no future, to those who cannot see where they belong.



Photo: Hongo Jin

Data ■ Ranking of Total CD Sales (singles + albums) by Artist

Oricon Survey 12/4/2000-11/26/2001

Rank	Artist	Total Sales (yen)
1	浜崎あゆみ [Hamasaki Ayumi]	24,370,000,000
2	宇多田ヒカル [Utada Hikaru]	15,830,000,000
3	GLAY	10,860,000,000
4	Mr. Children	10,810,000,000
5	サザンオールスターズ [Southern All-Stars]	10,320,000,000
6	モーニング娘。 [Morning Musume]	8,980,000,000
7	SMAP	8,330,000,000
8	CHEMISTRY	7,560,000,000
9	ゴスペラーズ [Gospellers]	7,060,000,000
10	MISIA	6,480,000,000

♪ A Song for XX

This song has special meaning for Hamasaki. She sings of a past self, at a point when she could not accept herself because of the complex situation surrounding her parents’ divorce. “ayu had cut herself off from everything, shut up behind walls in every direction,” she recalls in a magazine interview, “That I could write and sing such a song made it possible for me to move forward.”

居場所(いばしょ)がなかった 見(み)つからなかった
未来(みらい)には期待(きたい)出来(でき)るのか分(わ)からず

*There was no place for me. I couldn’t find it anywhere,
Unsure I could even count on the future.*

人(ひと)を信(しん)じる事(こと)って いつか裏切(うらぎ)られ
はねつけられることと 同(おな)じと思(おも)っていたよ

*Believing in someone only meant betrayal in the end;
only meant rejection someday.*

いつも強(つよ)い子(こ)だねって 言(い)われ続(つづ)けてた
泣(な)かないで偉(えら)いねって 褒(ほ)められたりしていたよ
そんな風(ふう)に周(まわり)りが言(い)えば言(い)う程(ほど)に
笑(わら)うことさえ苦痛(くつう)になってた

*They kept on saying, “What a brave kid you are!”
They kept praising: “How strong you are, not to cry!”
And the more they said these things,
The more even smiling was agony.*

一人(ひとり)きりで生(う)まれて 一人(ひとり)きりで生(い)きていく
きっとそんな毎日(まいにち)が 当(あた)り前(まえ)と思(おも)ってた

*I used to think I was born all alone and would go through life on my own
I thought every day would be that way.*

♪ To Be

“When I stopped to think about what hopes I really cherished, I realized I was holding out hope for people other than me, in other words for the existence of humanity itself. The “you” in this song refers to such people,” she explained in the interview.

誰(だれ)もが通(とお)り過(す)ぎてく
気(き)にも止(と)めない どうしようもない
そんなガラクタを 大切(たいせつ)そうに抱(かか)えていた
周(まわり)りは不思議(ふしぎ)なカオで 少(すこ)し離(はな)れた場所(ばしょ)から見(み)てた
それでも笑(わら)って言(い)ってくれた“宝物(たからもの)だ”と

*Everyone just passed by,
They didn’t even notice, this hopeless thing,
But you clutched me tightly to you.
People stared from a distance, looking puzzled.
But you’d laugh and exclaim, “My treasure!”*

ガラクタを守(まも)り続(つづ)ける腕(うで)は どんなに痛(いた)かったことだろう
何(なに)を犠(ぎ)牲(せい)にしてきたのだろう
決(けつ)してキレイな人間(マルノ)にんげん)にはなれないけどね
いびつに輝(かがや)くよ

*How painful it was to protect this,
What have you sacrificed for my sake?
I can’t become pure,
But I’ll shine in my own special way.*

君(きみ)がいたから どんな時(とき)も 笑(わら)ってたよ
君(きみ)がいたから どんな時(とき)も 笑(わら)ってたよ
泣(な)いていたよ 生(い)きていたよ
君(きみ)がいなきゃ何もなかった

*‘Cause you were there, I could laugh at anything.
‘Cause you were there, I could laugh at anything.
I could cry. I was really living.
Without you, there would have been nothing.*