



[WHAT'S HOT IN MUSIC]



NAMI TAMAKI

SHE'S 16 YEARS OLD. SHE'S TAKING JAPAN BY STORM WITH HIT SONGS SUCH AS "BELIEVE", "REALIZE", "PRAYER" and "SHINING STAR ~Wasurenai Kara~".

NT2099 INTERVIEWS NAMI TAMAKI ABOUT HER CAREER AND HER RECENT TOUR IN THE UNITED STATES. **BY DENNIS A. AMITH**

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Photography by **GARLAND GEE & EDWIN MACARAEG & SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN**

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AMERICA HAS ITS SHARE OF YOUNG TEEN ARTISTS, Avril Lavigne, Hillary Duff, JoJo, Aaron Carter to name a few. Japan has its fair share of young stars. From young idol singers pumped to the mainstream such as Hello! Project's Aya Matsuura and Maki Gotou to Avex's Korean pop star BoA and Pony Canon's boy band "w-inds".

But Nami Tamaki, one of Japan's youngest and fastest rising stars has been given a rare opportunity for a young Japanese performer and that was having her Japanese album "Greeting" distributed in the United States and Asia as well as the opportunity to showcase her talent at several venues in the United States.

In April 2003, the talented Nami Tamaki made her singing debut with the single "Believe" which quickly catapulted up to the top 5 of the Oricon Music Weekly Charts (Japan's version of Billboard music ratings). The single was also used as a theme song for the Japanese anime TV show, "Mobile Suit Gundam Seed".

Last March, Nami's popularity was proven by being selected as one of the "Best Artists of the Year" for the 18th Japan Golden Disk Awards.

In 2001-2002, Nami attracted the attention of the judges for a Sony Music audition with an awesome vocal and dance performance of the Destiny's Child song "Survivor". A performance which eventually led to her signing with Sony Music Japan.

The combination of her vocals along with her very energetic yet smooth dance moves is what separates Nami Tamaki from the many dozens of young female performers in Japan. Pure and simple, she can dance! Her on-stage performance

is reminiscent of the early days of Japanese pop star, Namie Amuro but with a fresh, exciting style of her own.

I recently had the opportunity to interview Nami during her stop in Anaheim, California before her performance at Pacific Media Expo.

DENNIS: Is this your first time coming to the United States?

NAMI: Yes.

DENNIS: Aside from your performances, what kind of things did you want to experience here in California?

NAMI: I wanted to see the fashion which I enjoy and do some shopping. Also, go to Disneyland.

DENNIS: You are the youngest Japanese artist to release an album in the US and also the youngest artist to perform in front of an American audience. How do you feel about that?

NAMI: I'm very happy but I'm going to use the fact that I am young and show the audience a fresh, exciting and happy performance.

DENNIS: Are you surprised that many Americans are fans of Japanese music?

NAMI: For Japanese people, it's normal for them to enjoy American music. And that's the norm. But it is very exciting to know that many Americans enjoy Japanese music too.

DENNIS: When you were a child, what did you want to grow up and be?

NAMI: I wanted to perform in a parade at Disneyland. Since I studied ballet, I also wanted to become a ballerina.

DENNIS: You wowed the crowd during your audition for Sony when you performed "Survivor" by Destiny's Child. Were you confident with that performance and did you have a feeling that performance would get you signed as an artist?

NAMI: My goal was to be different from everyone else. That is why I learned the English lyrics and the song because it was incredible. To sing the song, you have to be proud and so I put all my effort into it and I wasn't embarrassed at all and performed it.

*** NAMI TAMAKI PERFORMING LIVE at Pacific Media Expo in Anaheim, California for an audience of 3,500+ J-POP fans.**



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DENNIS: Who did you listen to a lot growing up?

NAMI: Janet Jackson and Green Day.

DENNIS: When your debut CD single "Believe" made it into the top 5 for the Oricon Weekly Charts, how did you celebrate?

NAMI: We rented a room and together with my management and the Sony staff, we had a party and celebrated.

DENNIS: How is your family reacting to your accomplishments?

NAMI: It's the same thing for me of how I feel. For my family, they don't realize it's real. It's very surreal for them. It's like a dream.

DENNIS: How was that first experience of performing in front of a live audience in Tokyo?

NAMI: People gathered just for me and I was impressed by that. People came to my concert and when I got on stage and saw people with the fluorescent light sticks, I was excited to see people participating during my performance, while I was singing.

DENNIS: Last December, you performed in front of all those rowdy, excited Gundam fans at the "Gundam Seed Festival". How was that experience?

NAMI: I hate to lose and always want to be on top and seeing the audience being very cheerful and powerful. So, I wanted to be more

cheerful and powerful for them. And with their energy, it gave me more power to sing for them.

DENNIS: 2004 has been an awesome year for you. Your CD singles and album have done well in the charts. You released your album in the United States and in Asia, you were selected as "New Artist of the Year" for the Japan Golden Disk Awards and you just finished an exciting concert in Tokyo and Osaka. Now, you are here in the United States to perform in different venues in California and also in Texas. How does that feel to accomplish this much success within the last year?

NAMI: I can't believe I am performing outside of Japan but it's very helpful for me to see that there are fans supporting me all over the world. But I don't want to stop there and thank and feel that I'm satisfied and that I've succeeded. I want to continue working harder, continue to working more because I haven't reached my goal yet. I want to continue working harder.

DENNIS: There have been several young talent in the past few years who have gained a lot of media attention when they were teenagers. Namie Amuro, Hikaru Utada and Morning Musume to name a few. How do you feel about being compared to these other talents?

NAMI: I am trying to perform differently as possible and present Nami Tamaki. Everything I have done, I don't want to follow what other artists do and try to create



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a different feel. I am confident of what I do and I am proud of how I present myself when I perform.

DENNIS: For many female music artists, they tend to get involved with film and TV dramas. Do you see yourself getting involved with acting?

NAMI: In the future I would like to do that but for now, I want to make a platform as a singer first and make my name there. Later on, I would like to do those things.

DENNIS: What we have next is our J!-ENT "FAN" questions. I will ask you three questions submitted to J!-ENT from your fans. Fan question No. 1:

Dear Nami, I am very happy that you are releasing an album in America and in Asia but will you ever perform in Europe?

NAMI: I love to perform and sing and would love more and more people to listen to my music no matter where they may live. Of course, my focus is to break out in Japan but I would love to perform in Europe.

Fan question No. 2: Dear Nami, what do you like to do for fun on your off-time when you are not busy with your career?

NAMI: Shopping and going out to karaoke with friends. Usually just hanging out with my friends.

Fan question No. 3: Dear Nami, do you receive a lot of strange fan e-mail from Gundam otaku?

NAMI: No! No! (laughing) There are usually mail supporting me and rooting for me.

DENNIS: What makes you happy?

NAMI: People who support me. The people around me. My family and the biggest thing is that although I am a singer, I can live my life as a normal high school girl.

DENNIS: What word or motto

describes your personality?

NAMI: Umm..."I don't like to lose". (laughing)

DENNIS: It's time for our J!-ENT "WORD PLAY" questions. I'll ask you a few words, you give me the Nami Tamaki definition for them. First word. Love.

NAMI: A thing very important that connects people together.

DENNIS: Summer.

NAMI: A period where I can go crazy!

DENNIS: Janet Jackson.

NAMI: (laughing) A person I respect and a person that I think about. That is why I became a singer.

DENNIS: On Monday, you celebrate your 16th birthday in the United States, how does that feel?

NAMI: Turning 16 is going to be a very special birthday. It's great to

spend it in a different country and it's rare experience for me. So, it will definitely be something that I will always remember.

DENNIS: So, Nami... Before we go. Who is cooler. Brad Pitt or Katori Shingo?

NAMI: Katori Shingo. (laughing)

DENNIS: What final comments would you like to leave with your fans.

NAMI: I'm going to work my hardest from now on, so please keep rooting for me and supporting me. ■

*Nami Tamaki - "Greeting" - Available now from Tofu Records.
www.tofurecords.com*

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