

BoA takes on America. By Michael Pascua



Asians are making a step backward with one of Asia's brightest pop sensations. After years of hard work Korean & Japanese Pop Star BoA also known as Kwon Boa is making steps to breaking into the US music industry. Her plan of attack? A song called "Eat You Up" which will be released as a digital track from iTunes on October 21, 2008. With a very catchy backbeat and chorus, what could go wrong?

It turns out that English may not be the strongest suit for the K-Pop megastar. Her pronunciation of several words including "night," "appetite," and just the term of "So yum yum" sounds questionable. The whole song is broken in a very syllabic fashion which harkens to actually speaking in a syllabic Japanese. After doing some research, her English versions of songs "Every Heart" and "Key of Heart" suffer from the same pronunciation problems.

As an Asian-American, I find the pronunciation to be a little offensive. It harkens back to the days of 60s James Bond where the Bond Girl is saying "Wercome to Japan Mr. Bond." I know of people who are taking English as a second language and their grasp is both knowledgeable and educated. By having BoA go around singing basically "engrish" to Americans can turn her into a one-note; some form of oriental candy. Am I being too critical? I doubt it. If I'm being critical, some non-Asian won't get it at all; hopefully it won't become a reinforced stereotype of Asians: The Underage Prostitute.

There have been several Asian artists who tried to break into the US's music industry. Since *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, Coco Lee has been trying to break into the US market to no success even with a large performance at the Oscars. Arguably, Hikaru Utada, another J-pop singer, has had the most success in trying to crossover. Although her album *Exodus* didn't sell well at all (The Album peaked at 160 on the Billboard Charts), it produced a Billboard number one club song with "Devil Inside" and a top 25 club song from "Exodus '04". She is also heard in the popular *Kingdom Hearts* series which has sold more than 12 million copies. Utada was born in New York City and has learned English at a young age. Her English songs in comparison to BoA sound comprehensible and her lyricism makes sense. Really, when was the last time you told someone, "I'll eat you up, so yum yum!"?

BoA needs more training in English before she can make it in the American industry. Am I being harshly critical for someone's accent? Sure, many Spanish artists have made a successful jump to the US market, but Latin music has carved a great niche in America. There isn't an "Asian" category at the moment. This leads to having to break right into the heart of American music, whether it is by Club, Dance, or Pop music.

Any artist jumping from Asia to America could succeed; it just needs to be good. I'm still waiting for Asian Pop stars to rise with the other stars of America. For now I'll listen to it secretly in my room.