



# YEAH TIGER USA!

An Exploration of Call and MIX  
culture, Wotagei, and Anikura

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## Introduction

Within the past year or so idol culture has exploded! Within my home region of the north east especially, idol culture has been growing and a lot of that can be attributed to the people interviewed within this spread: Ashes, Jun, Aniwaza, Aniparty, and YEAHLIGHTS.

Full disclosure: The people interviewed within this article are people I have worked with closely and some of whom are my personal friends. I've seen how hard they work and their passion for bringing idol culture to English-speaking audiences through the convention scene. I'm so deeply inspired by how hard they work and their complete embrace of the kaigai idol scene.



Why so many interviews in one massive chunk? First: Call and MIX, wotagei, and anikura are all related subcultures! Imagine them as a family. Second: Within the northeast's scene, the people involved with spreading these subcultures broadly overlap and all work with each other.

If you are already familiar with these subcultures, I hope you enjoy this spread! If you are completely new to these subcultures, I hope that this spread exposes you to a new passion and perspective on idol culture. (And if you're one of the people I interviewed for this spread reading this when this issue comes out, thank you for your time and dedication.)

If you're able to, please attend the people interviewed within this article's workshops, panels, and events and support the continued growth of their missions.

Please enjoy this passion project!

-Pan Ranger



# CALL? AND MIX?!

*Have you ever heard a really noisy pit of people at your local idol showcase? That's not noise, that's a shout from the soul!*

*Ashes is the runner of the panel series "Intro to Wota Culture: Call & MIX", which has been presented 14 times at conventions across the country since 2022, including friend of the International Idol Network NorthWest IdolFest, Anime Los Angeles, Anime Expo, and Anime NYC. In addition to her work spreading call and mix within the convention circuit, they're involved as the head of public relations for IdolFest foundation (NWIF, IdolParty in LA) and on the staff teams of various kaigai idols.*

*Jun is an idol otaku culture historian, uchishi (practicer of wotagei/cyalume dance), and the runner of the blog TaigaKaraFaiya, a blog dedicated to his love of idol fan culture that covers everything idol otaku related from history to tips for wotagei.*

*We talk with Ashes and Jun about their experiences educating about call and mix, the history of this culture, how it's evolved, and how kaigai idols can help encourage the spread of mix.*



*Let's start with a brief introduction! When did you start mixing? When did you start becoming passionate enough about mix to start educating?*

**Jun:** I started MIXing around 2019/2020 when a friend showed me some unofficial MIX guides for LoveLive songs. Later, the same friend introduced me to chika idols like Appare and Niji no Conquistador, and I got seriously into chika idol culture. One of those days, I saw a video of the idol group JEWEL KISS, produced by a guy named Encho who spread MIX in the early days. I thought, "Dang, those otaku are so cool," and wanted to be just like them...

From there, I learned every MIX I could and researched it. Eventually, I wanted to share what I learned because, in the West, there are many misconceptions about idol otaku culture history.

**Ashes:** I started MIXing in the late summer of 2019, when I went to a party with my friends and heard them MIX to "Psychic Fire" from Love Live!. When I first got into idols when I was younger, I always thought the fanchants were super interesting, but never knew anything beyond hais and fuwafuwa, so hearing that there was other stuff to do really opened my eyes and intrigued me. I picked up a lot from my so-called "MIX senpai," Midnight Aerie, and then learned more through wota from Thailand and Indonesia who have their own unique styles of MIX. I found it was a great way to make friends, so that's why I started running my panel in 2022 at Northwest IdolFest -- to spread the gospel to the west. I previously was too nervous to speak publicly, but discovered I would be okay doing such if it was a subject I was passionate about, so that's why I started running "Introduction to Wota Culture: Call and MIX" at every con with any ounce of idol culture. In 2024, I expanded it a little and also started running it with my friend Scrub, who was someone I met primarily thanks to chika idols and MIXing!

*A brief history of call and mix.*

**Jun:** Calls were around long before MIX. It is said that calls were started by groups of otaku who called themselves the Shin'eitai (elite guards). They formed clubs and cheered for their oshis in the 70s and 80s.

MIX, on the other hand, was born from five people who formed a dance team called EVEL. Two members, Kurofuku and Zenkyou, created MIX on December 28th, 1994, using words from their daily lives. Initially, MIX was used exclusively for heavy metal concerts until 1995. However, in 1995/1996, they started doing MIX at idol performances, including those by Mizuno Aoi and MELODY. As time went on, Kurofuku couldn't attend events anymore due to work. He entrusted Encho, one of his friends, to continue MIXing.

From there, MIX was passed down through him, and those who learned it were called MIXers. Among these MIXers was a guy named PIKA, the third MIXer. He spread MIX on his blog, even though he was told not to, causing it to spread even more from their local sites, specifically to places like AKB.

*How has it evolved to today?*

**Jun:** Today, MIX is very... mixed. Some people love it, while others hate it. However, we are experiencing a kind of MIXer's renaissance...

These days, MIXes are being created daily, with various themes and rhythms. There are probably hundreds, if not thousands, of MIXes, and that number continues to grow each year. Though one noticeable change from the past, according to the OG guys, is that more and more people are using guides for MIX placement instead of coming up with it themselves. This has led to a lot of fights around the world, in both Japan and elsewhere.

It might seem crazy at first glance, but I think it shows that MIX is becoming more popular... Without discussion and people caring about it, y'know, this culture would die out.

## How has it evolved today? (continued)

**Ashes:** There is no past tense here: MIX is constantly ever changing; a good example can be the transition from the use of "hai se no fuwa fuwa" to "aiyaiyai mou ikkai" to "aiyaiyai aishiteru" and "aiyaiyai aiyaiyai" in the chorus of a song just within the last couple of years. MIXes and calls can also be varied throughout region and location; for example in the Northeastern part of America, a lot of us do this thing I can only be dubbed as "increasing PPPH," where we increase the volume of each section of "oh" sound of the PPPH. In Thailand, they use Takamaru MIX rather commonly compared to other regions as well. And of course, the H2O chant that's been floating across the country can also be considered a MIX in it's own way.

## What are some common misconceptions people have about MIX?

**Jun:** Many people mistakenly think MIX is the same as wotagei, but this is not true. Wotagei has its own history and culture... While they may intertwine, wotagei is completely separate from MIX. Another thing people mix up is the idea that MIX is the same as calls. They are not.

The main difference is calls are usually for that song only, while MIXes are usually made to be universal. Finally, MIX is not meant to be a nuisance or disrespectful. It is supposed to be a vocalization of your excitement. It's a lie that spread in many circles that MIX's purpose is to ruin the performers' set or annoy the audience. It's like graffiti—it's vandalism on the song, but it's there because we all want to show and convey our enthusiasm, of our unique culture of OTAKU, to the performers and the world.

**Ashes:** People think MIX is disrespectful when it's the complete opposite. If a performance has me excited, I'm more likely to MIX! A lot of idols have also informed me it's a huge honor to have people MIX at their lives, because it shows them they're doing something right. A lot of people also are worried to mess up, when in actuality they shouldn't. We're all here to help each other, so if you need help, just ask!

## How can kaigai idols learn more about this aspect of wota culture?

**Jun:** I'd suggest either going to Japan to experience the scene first hand if you have the time and money, or watch a lot of videos of chika idols. Pay attention not only to the idols' performances but also to the crowd's energy and how they enjoy not only the performance but also the atmosphere that's created through MIX.

**Ashes:** Definitely by watching or listening to 3D/chika idols. Since MIX is generally frowned upon in 2D idol circles, you'll not really learn anything from those songs unless you are watching anikura videos. There's a beautiful world of 3D idols to check out!

## How can you start learning how to MIX?

**Jun:** In the past, finding information required relying on your ear or searching in Japanese... Nowadays, however, there are plenty of resources available online provided by overseas otaku on YouTube and Twitter. Additionally, Ashes hosts a call and MIX panel at conventions, which serves as an excellent introduction. And also, on my blog, Taigakarafaiya, I am currently working on a top MIXes guide, so be sure to keep an eye out for that as well.

**Ashes:** I definitely recommend finding videos online of your favorite songs and learning the patterns of the songs and what goes where. Not all placements are concrete, but you'll learn a general pattern that tells you, "oh, standard MIX goes here, this is kahan sanren, et cetera".

## Favorite MIX?

**Jun:** My favorite MIX has to be Kurofuku's "KUROFUKU ORIGINAL PERFECT MIX." This legendary MIX was created by the first MIXer and holds a special place in the community. If you have the time, check out JEWEL KISS's "Night Crow" to see him perform it!

**Ashes:** Now that I finally stopped messing up Takamaru MIX, I'm pretty fond of it lately! I'm also a fan of the Nursery Rhyme MIX.

## Final thoughts?

**Jun:** IMIXing isn't about being perfect; it's about having fun and expressing yourself. Don't worry if you make a mistake or stumble over the words—no one will get upset. The most important thing is to enjoy yourself.


If MIXing isn't your thing, that's perfectly fine too. There are many different types of otaku, each playing different roles. Some may focus on wotagei without doing MIX, while others might just stand and cheer or do masai jumps. These activities are not measures of how good a fan you are; they are all about having fun and enjoying the experience. You're just as much a fan as anyone else, no matter how you choose to participate. However, don't trouble people who do want to MIX. If it's allowed, let them enjoy their time at the venue as much as you are. Their way of enjoying it may be different, but their passion is the same.

And finally, "IETTAIGA."

**Ashes Social Media**

  geneigalactica

**Jun's Social Media**

 taigakarafaiya.wordpress.com

  junfujioka\_chou

# KAGAYAKI CYALUME

*Aniwaza is a wotagei team based in the DMV area and the only wotagei team in the US. They have been dedicated to making wotagei accessible to learn for an English-speaking audience through their workshops.*

*We talk with Aniwaza about the history of cyalume dance, wotagei, and chikagei, the formation of their team, the wotagei scene in North America, and their work in breaking down the language barrier.*



**Please introduce yourselves! How and when did you start getting into wotagei/cyalume dance?**

**Gin:** I am the cofounder of AniWaza. In early 2017, I started getting into wotagei through videos I saw online. There were not many resources at that time. At AnimeExpo 2017, I saw wotagei in person for the first time. The people there taught me the basics and gave me resources to learn. After that, I really started learning. In 2018, when Aniparty started it became a gathering place for people on the east coast. That's where I met Aerie and Pwn and we started doing wotagei together.

**Aerie:** I am the other cofounder of AniWaza. I was invited by Pwn to AniParty Vol. 1 in 2018 and that's where I witnessed people doing wotagei for the first time. Pwn had already been practicing wotagei for a while and started teaching me after that AniParty. I became friends with Gin during the summer of 2018 and we started doing wotagei together since.

**Pwn:** I got into wotagei in late 2016-2017 by going to Love Live delayed viewings. At AnimeExpo around that time, I saw one person start thundersnaking and it sparked my interest. After going to AniParty Vol. 1 with Aerie, I started teaching him and things have never been the same since (laughs)

**Mikio:** My introduction to wotagei was way before I started to practice. I would watch wotagei videos done to RADWIMPS songs. I have a dance and musical theater background, I played violin, and loved anime my whole life. The idea of music, dance, and anime mixed together the way they are in wotagei piqued my interest. In 2020, I met Aerie and Pwn and I asked if we could meet up sometime so they could teach me. That summer we started practicing in Aerie's home gym.

**Third:** My story is interesting. I had the same experience as Mikio where wotagei was on my radar but it was a while before I started practicing. At Anime NYC 2019, I passed by the Lumica booth and saw Aerie doing thundersnake. I started to learn by myself around that time. Interesting coincidence: we only reconnected a year or two ago when we saw each other again at a Nijigasaki delayed viewing event and started talking. At that point, I'd been practicing wotagei for 4 years. The stars just aligned.

**Tofu:** I am Aniwaza's "official bench player" as our 6th member (laughs). I am the newest member and was recruited in June of 2024. I found wotagei in 2016 at the peak popularity of Love Live and specifically μ's and became interested. I learned gradually over time and picked up basic moves by watching videos on YouTube as a hobby. I've frequented AniParty's events since 2019 and learned about Aniwaza there. I had always seen them at different events but remained a spectator until recently. I was recruited onto the team by Aerie.

*The team reminisces about how Aniparty and specifically AniParty Vol. 1 and Vol.2 were the catalysts for them getting together and more interested in wotagei. They also think it's a funny coincidence that most of them had been practicing by 2018, when AniParty Vol. 1 took place.*



Aniwaza at Anime Expo 2023

## What is wotagei and cyalume dance?

**Gin:** Wotagei (ヲタ芸) is derived from a combination of wota (ヲタ), which refers to an idol otaku, and gei (芸), which refers to an art or practice. Thus, wotagei is an idol otaku art form consisting of dancing actions performed at idol, J-Pop, and anime song concerts. Cyalume dance is another way to refer to wotagei.

Wotagei and Cyalume dance is a form of dance utilizing chemical light sticks known as cyalumes which are similar to conventional glow sticks found at raves or music festivals. Cyalume dance is characterized by coordinated choreography that involves spins and slashes with cyalumes, ultimately creating a wondrous, synchronized light show to the beat of J-idol or J-Pop music.

## What is wotagei and cyalume dance?

**Aerie:** In the beginning, people created cheers and cheering motions for idol culture. This used to be called Otagei (オタ芸). At some point, a practitioner by the name of Bakkuhon decided to try doing Otagei using cheerlights, a type of penlight from the early 2010s. This new style gained traction and many people began doing “Otagei” with lights. Bakkuhon went on to create a team called Ginyu Tokusentai, which we know in modern day as GinyuforcE. They spread the popularity of this new dance movement and it eventually came to be called “Wotagei (ヲタ芸)” to distinguish itself from “Otagei”. Over time, GinyuforcE established guidelines for this movement as well as new techniques or “wazas” to really flesh out Wotagei as a dance form.

On the other hand, “Otagei” evolved into Chikagei (地下芸). This naming change was due to everlasting confusion between Wotagei and Otagei. Chikagei, which roughly translates to “underground art/practice” based on made up dancing moves by fans at idol concerts such as Morning Musume and AKB as far back as the early 2000s. Chikagei looks very similar to wotagei except the movements are more sloppy and free form and is done free handed without using any lights such as cyalumes or penlights.



**You're the only wotagei team in North America. How did you all become a team?**

**Gin:** Originally, there was a practitioner named Sas who mentored Pwn. Pwn then went on to teach Aerie and the both of them continued to practice under Sas's mentorship. Sas and Pwn went on to form a collective called “West World Wotagei” to organize uchishis in the western hemisphere. During AnimeExpo 2019, the head of AniParty, who oversaw the Lumica stage at the time, wanted to give uchishis within that collective a space to perform to an audience but only on condition that they enter with a formal team name.

Aerie and I entered together and jokingly came up with “Aniwaza”. The “Ani” is taken from “AniParty” and “Waza” is the Japanese word for “technique”, which is what they call the moves in wotagei. Aniwaza went from being a temporary “joke” unit to being a more legitimized group when an Anime Los Angeles rep offered to fly our team out to ALA that year. The name stuck and we pre-debuted on the Lumica stage with a few guerilla performances. We debuted for real at AnimeNYC 2019 at the Lumica stage there. That finally cemented Aniwaza officially as a wotagei team.

We were not the first: After Aniwaza, Haru Wotagei debuted in Canada. Then COVID-19 hit and messed up everything. A good chunk of people quit the scene, including Sas, and West World Wotagei dissolved as a result. Both Aniwaza and Haru Wotagei suffered from bouts of inactivity over the pandemic.

Aniwaza ended up surviving and managed to bounce back. We've gone on to resume promoting Wotagei across conventions with AniParty. Since 2022, we've gained more members to become a full five member team.

**The whole team says “It's the New Genesis!!” and note that Aniwaza does both Wotagei AND chikagei, with their name having a new second meaning as a play on word for “ANY WAZA”.**



Aniwaza at Otakon 2024

**You all bring up how the pandemic was a catalyst for both a “death” and the current “boom” in different circles. How has the reopening of spaces after the pandemic changed the community?**

**Aerie:** There is a phenomenon that occurred in the Wota community that’s akin to a generational shift when COVID happened. From 2017 and onwards when Wota culture picked up in America, everyone was learning it at the same time and at equal pace. However, when COVID happened, that knowledge train halted. Many people moved on with their lives or found other hobbies while those that remained did not continue at the same gusto. When the pandemic started lifting, we saw a new “generation” of people interested in wota culture flood in due to the advent of VTubers and the resumption of kaigai Idol activity. Many people who were in highschool during 2019 are now in college and have the means to travel out to events now as well. However, this new generation of people were not privy to all the existing knowledge that we knew. They had no idea where to start with learning because of the barrier to entry we mentioned before. Most importantly, this new generation of wota are not used to the idea that doing cheers and being a participatory audience is the norm.

There’s a problem of people sitting down during concerts or being too scared to get up and do what Wotas normally do because they’re just not used to it. Wota culture has regressed and it’s our mission to reassure people that yes! You should cheer and do wotagei to your heart’s content during shows!

**What are some common misconceptions people have about wotagei and cyalume dance?**

All members of Aniwaza mention that the anime “Oshi no Ko” did irreparable harm to the perception of wotagei in the English-speaking side of anime fan culture. Many newcomers believe wotagei originated from “Oshi no Ko” when the culture has already been around for many years. The wotagei team GinyuforceE, established in 2009, has pioneered the look of current day wotagei.

**Gin:** We’re not bothered by this being people’s entry point.

**Tofu:** Those actually interested will stay and learn real wotagei.

**Mikio:** As long as people are being brought in, it’s a good thing. This anime has played a big role in exposing a whole new audience to wotagei for the first time, which is essential to keep this community going.

**Aerie:** Another misconception is that for many years, “Wotagei” was used by the west as a blanket term for everything idol related which is wrong. Call and MIX is a separate culture from wotagei. The name for general idol support culture is OTAgei. The phrase WOTAGEI is exclusively for the dance with cyalumes. The phrase cyalume dance is context dependent. This differentiation exists in Japan and in Japanese-speaking circles, but not in English. Aniwaza is trying to differentiate these terms for the layman.

**Mikio:** I want people to understand wotagei as a genre of dance and that it’s not owned by one specific subculture or can only be done to one genre of music! It will always be in the sphere of anisong and idol music but can be done to anything! Please go out and try it!

**How can people start getting involved and learning waza?**

**Gin:** YouTube is the best way to learn wotagei. You can also learn at our workshops. No matter how you do it, go out and just start learning.

**Mikio:** Get to know people who do wotagei! The community aspect is so important. This community is niche and welcoming. We want to see this flourish so please find us and learn.

**Aerie:** The traditional way of getting into wotagei previously was to find videos of the wazas and learn it like how you would learn any other dance move: mimicking it and getting it down to muscle memory. The big issue is that most of these resources are in Japanese and require you to know what the name of the waza is in Japanese in the first place.

The videos also don’t really teach you the nuances of how to have proper form. Wotagei is different from other dance styles because it is shape-based and plays off tricks of the light. It also requires endurance, precision, and awareness that you can only build through learning with others. This creates a large barrier to entry. Aniwaza’s job is to break this barrier to entry by creating English based resources for learning wotagei.

**Third:** I agree with everything everyone else has mentioned. You can practice in a mirror to check your form once you understand the basics. There is a skill ceiling without feedback but once you have the basics down, the physical barrier to entry is low for new practitioners.

**Tofu:** Anyone can start getting the basics by watching videos for these moves: OAD, Rosario (ロサリオ), Thundersnake (サンダースネイク), and Romance (ロマンス). There are lots of resources on youtube and the hardest obstacle to overcome learning is yourself. All of us learned by reproducing movements in slow motion repetitively until it became natural. Language is a barrier but dance is not.

**Favorite waza?**

**Gin:** Nano Blade, RUUNA Romance

**Third:** RUUNA, STREAM BURST

**Aerie:** Fuuga

**Tofu:** Mrs. Narcissa

**Mikio:** The fundamental wazas like OAD, Rosario, Los Angeles, and Romeo

**Pwn:** Shiranui



## GLOSSARY OF WOTAGEI TERMS

### *Wotagei* (ヲタ芸)

Derived from a combination of wota (ヲタ), which refers to an idol otaku, and gei (芸), which refers to an art or practice; an idol otaku art form consisting of dancing actions performed at idol, J-Pop, and anime song concerts.

### *Uchishi*

Practicers of Wotagei

### *Cyalume dance*

Another way to refer to wotagei.

### *Otagei*

General idol support culture encompassing the ways fans use their voices and bodies to show their support, apart from wotagei.

### *Chikagei*

A looser, free-form style similar to wotagei done without lightsticks.

### *Cyalume*

Chemical glow sticks, a brand name within the U.S.

### *UO*

“Ultra Orange”, a variety of ultra-bright glow sticks.

### *Waza*

Skill, technique.



Aniwaza at AnimeNYC 2024



## Aniwaza's Social Media



Website

[aniwaza.wordpress.com](http://aniwaza.wordpress.com)



X/Twitter

[@aniwazaofficial](https://twitter.com/aniwazaofficial)



Instagram

[@aniwaza](https://www.instagram.com/aniwaza)

All photos used from  
[aniwaza.wordpress.com](http://aniwaza.wordpress.com)

# WELCOME TO THE ANIME CLUB

Aniparty is a northeast-based DJ collective that specializes in anikura events. A large part of the spread of call and mix culture and wotagei in the northeastern US has been through AniParty's events.

We talk with AniParty about anikura culture, DJing, and their years-long history of running events.



*Let's start with a brief introduction of yourselves. How did you learn about anikura? When/how did you start DJing?*

**DJ APPARE:** Hello I'm Alvin, Owner of Henshin Sounds LLC. and DJ APPARE. I'm a big fan of tokusatsu, anime, and J-pop. I started DJing at a panel for Danzoo Dash back at Anime USA 2017. Unsatisfied with Anime Conventions and anime events not spinning Anisong I took it upon myself to spin what I like. The thought of spinning didn't cross my mind till the introduction of Anikura from friends (Raymond, Victor, Sean, and Ren) coming back from Japan about their encounters. Together with Me, Victor, and Sean, we put together our first show at The Crown, Baltimore MD.

**DJ Pleasant:** My name is Victor aka DJ Pleasant, I like J-jpop idols, anime with cute girls, and cosplay photography. You may also see me cosplay once in a while. One of my first exposures to Anikura was my friend Raymond visiting Japan and telling me to check out Mogra's twitch stream for an event called Xi-lium that happened every month. This led to him experimenting with DJing on his own. Eventually during my own trip to Japan in 2018 I went to many different anikura events to pull inspiration for AniParty's inaugural event later that spring, AniParty Vol.1 where Appare DJed and I VJed for 4 hours. I eventually studied up on DJing and spun at Vol.2 later that summer.



**DJ Moero:** Hey, I'm DJ Moero. I learned about anikura from live streams from Akihabara club Mogra, in maybe 2011 or so? Back then they were on a service called Ustream. I started DJing shortly after the first AniParty in 2017, debuting at our second show. It was clear AniParty was something special, so when DJ Appare asked me if I was interested in DJing, I decided to challenge myself to do something outside of my comfort zone.

**DJ Wazahai:** I started DJing in general in 2018, after being invited by the AniParty team after their first event. I first found out about DJing anime songs from being a subscriber to the MOGRA Twitch channel, as the Akiba club had events dedicated to original anisongs and remixes of anisongs as well. Seeing that made me interested in learning how to DJ anime songs in general, but it wasn't until the request from AniParty that I finally got the push to start and keep going.

**DJ Dekimasen:** DJできません・・・できない?いやいや、「できません」です! よろしくお願ひします。(DJ Dekimasen... Dekinai? Nah, nah... Dekimasen! Nice to meet you!) I've been a DJ for most longer, but I've been with AniParty since 2018 spinning high-energy Anikura and Akiba-Pop hits!

## Introductions continued

**DJ SignalΔ:** I'm SignalΔ, some of you may know me as Gin from Aniwaza. When I'm not swinging glow sticks around aggressively, I DJ under this alias. I first learned about anikura in 2018 through AniParty. Prior to AniParty vol. 1 I had zero knowledge on anikura.

I first started DJing in 2020 during the pandemic lockdown. Being at all the previous in-person AniParty events sparked an interest in me to become a DJ but I never made the jump until 2020 during an online event called "Anikura Unison". It's during this event where I witnessed a dj set performed by "Vanille Altzy" that blew me away. After witnessing that greatness I was inspired to make the jump and bought my equipment thus starting my journey as a DJ.

**DJ Th3rdEye:** I'm Th3rdEye, the newest addition to AniParty. I learned about anikura through AniParty actually, back at ANYC 2018 at the Lumica booth when I happened to walk by and hear the music. I only started DJing in 2021, since my college roommate that year was an EDM DJ, and that reminded me of AniParty in 2018. I borrowed his controller when he wasn't using it and started practicing from there.



**What is anikura? Could you give us a brief history of anikura and tell us a little about the anikura scene in the US.**

**DJ Pleasant:** Anikura is simply a portmanteau of Anime and Club. The culture around anikura is less simple. You can have events that play remixed anisong to events that play music unaltered. Some events will lean into the EDM club crowd while others focus on the Wotagei aspect of the sub-culture.

Anikura in the US is relatively new, there have been events before AniParty that played anisong but we were the first to adopt the "TV sized", Wotagei focused format. The scene really grew during the pandemic as many DJs started streaming sets on twitch allowing others to discover other like-minded groups. Many of us networked and collaborated during that summer to raise over \$7000 for Doctors without borders with the Anikura Unison Fundraiser marathon stream.

**DJ Wazahai:** To me, anikura is just a club (kurabu) that focuses on anime music, which keeps things simple. Keeping it simple helps people find different ways to do the same thing, and it's been interesting seeing the growth in other groups in North America devoted to that, like AniCLover in California, Anison Hijack in the New York area and Animaple in Toronto. Each group brings something different to the table in terms of anikura, and each focuses on different styles. I'm proud that we at AniParty largely stick with the original versions of songs, because that's what we know and love. Because DJing can also be done online, it expands the breadth of accessibility for anikura.



**DJ Th3rdEye:** Anikura is a shortened form for anime club, and is an event where DJs play otaku music such as music from anime (anisong), gacha game tracks, idol songs, Vocaloid, etc. These songs can be remixed or original as well, and each anikura DJ has their own preference on how many originals vs. remixes they spin.

**DJ SignalΔ:** Anikura, in my definition, is a DJ music event where the main genre of songs being played are adjacent to J-pop, Anime, Idol, Video games and everything in between Japanese pop culture.

Anikura can be divided into 2 different types. The first type of anikura is a more "chill and vibe" kind of anikura, where the main draw of the event is to give everyone a space to relax and vibe to the music with maybe a drink in their hand. These types of anikura are typically held at a bar or venue that serves alcohol. The songs being played for this type of anikura ranges from originals to remixes that are more "edm-ish".

The second type of anikura is more catered to the wota(idol fans) crowds, where the main draw is to give everyone a space to do calls, wotagei, chikagei, etc. to their heart's content. These types of anikura are mostly held at venues where space is a priority, and bars or alcohol isn't. The songs being played for this type of anikura are mostly played as they are, no remixes.

**How can people start getting involved in the anikura scene?**

**DJ Pleasant:** For the A-pop side of things, the best way to get involved with the scene is to learn wotagei. Thundersnake goes a long way and is foundational. From there you can feel the structure of many songs and can apply what you know to other dances. There's a wide variety of dances that don't involve glow sticks too, our sister group Aniwaza is constructing a database.

**DJ Moero:** The anikura scene is still growing, but it's slowly becoming more normal to see club and convention events dedicated to anisong. Sometimes if there are no events in your area, the best thing is to get together with some friends and create the space yourself - even just holding a party with a Spotify playlist of anime music or a karaoke night is a start.

**DJ Wazahai:** If someone is interested, I would definitely recommend first checking out anikura in some way, like physical events or online streams. And to not focus on just one stream, but different ones if they can. Seeing how different groups do anikura events will help people decide if the vibe is right for them or not as an audience goer and will help decide if they would want to help run events themselves as a performer, organizer or other role.



**DJ SignalΔ:** The best way to get involved in the anikura scene is to go to an anikura event. In the US, anikura events are mainly held by AniParty and AnisonHijack in the east coast, and AniClover in the west coast. An alternative to in-person anikura are online streams on Twitch mainly done by Mogra; which can give you a taste of what anikura is from the comfort of your own home.

**DJ Th3rdEye:** Try to find an anikura DJ group in your area! For the East Coast area, there's us at AniParty. For NorCal, there's AniClover. Unfortunately, if you're not in a big city, there might not be any anikura events since the subculture is niche though.

**DJ APPARE:** There's multiple ways to get involved in the anikura scene whether it's attending them, watching streams or learning dances and wotagei. As for getting involved with the Anikura scene in the US, I would definitely recommend attending them when you can and requesting for Anikura or AniParty at conventions or events.

### **How can you start learning how to DJ? What goes into becoming a skilled anikura DJ?**

**DJ Pleasant:** Best way to start is to start collecting music that you want to spin. There are a variety of tutorials on youtube on how to transition. Each style of music has transitions that work best. ☒The #1 skill for being a DJ is reading the crowd. You can go into a set with a predetermined list of songs, and transitions and if you notice the crowd isn't vibing with the songs you're playing you have to be able to pivot. It's ok to have a few songs where the crowd isn't as hype as others as long as someone in the crowd is enjoying the music but too many in a row and you'll kill the floor.

**DJ Dekimassen:** Learn about a DJ deck and how to play with it, play with your music, build a set and have a time with it! Although everyone's pace will be different, one thing's universal: pressing that play button! You'll feel like a skilled Anikura DJ when the audience gets hype and reacts to your set, no matter what the reaction is in the form of – a mix, a chant, a cheer!

**DJ APPARE:** The first thing is getting the equipment. Get a DJ controller and learn the basics. I first started DJing off an Ipad and went from there. As for becoming a skilled Anikura DJ? Well, do you like Anime? Do you like Idol music? Play what you like and follow that Groove. Want to get more technical, then there's always DJ tutorials on Youtube. Whether it's wonderful song selection or crowd reading through cosplay you must not forget to have fun with it~ You're not a jukebox. You're performing and weaving together your favorite tracks on that stage!

**DJ Wazahai:** As long as you have music and a means to play it with, you can start DJing from there, as someone can DJ from their laptop or smartphone alone with the right software. There are tutorials online and in person on aspects such as knowing one's way around DJ equipment/software, and DJ strategies such as DJing different styles of music, beatmatching, transition techniques between songs, and so on. I started off with googling "How to learn how to DJ" and branched off into what interested from there at my own pace.

I don't think I'm a skilled anikura DJ myself, but I do think imagination is the key to being a good DJ in general. You can have a large or small music library, and various levels of technical knowledge on how to DJ, but imagination helps give you the willingness to experiment with what you have to see what works, the resolve to be okay with making mistakes as you go, and the desire to try new things. You as a DJ have your own unique perspective on what brings stuff together, and that individuality is a strength when you can get that vision out into the world.

**DJ Moero:** It really is just grabbing a controller, a laptop, and some songs! I admittedly lack the technical skill for wild transitions, so for me DJing is all about song selection. I've learned at the end of the day an awkward transition between genre, BPM, etc. doesn't matter much if everyone loves your song! The nice thing about anikura is that you play most songs at TV size (through the first chorus) - so go ahead and play a deep cut for yourself once in a while and see how the crowd reacts. If a song doesn't quite land, you're only a minute and half away from playing another song. The rapid pace keeps anikura sets exciting!!

**DJ SignalΔ:** My biggest advice for learning how to DJ is to just start doing it. Get a dj controller (you don't need an expensive one), grab some songs, and just start playing around with it. There are tons and tons of tutorials on Youtube that can help you get familiarized with what the buttons and knobs on your controller do. You don't need music theory, you don't need to know how to count beats, just hit the play button.

Being a "skilled" anikura DJ, in my opinion, is subjective. There are various factors that determine a DJ's skill. Transitions, song selection, crowd interaction, scratching, making your own music, yada yada yada... You can have the best song transitions anyone has ever heard but if the crowd isn't vibing with your song selection, are you still a "skilled" dj? You can have the sickest scratching skills but what if the crowd just wants to hear the song uninterrupted? Are you still a "skilled" dj then? To those that care about your transitions or scratching skills you may be considered skilled or maybe even a god behind the deck. But to those that don't; they might just think you suck. Skill is subjective and it is all determined by the eyes of the beholder.

**DJ Th3rdEye:** First, pick your music. Figure out what you like to listen to and would want to play for others and get the files. Get a basic controller like a FLX4, download the DJ software for that controller, import your music in, and start learning about the basics like song structure, BPM, keys, how to mix in and out of songs, etc. For anikura specifically, song selection and timing are key - you want to be able to read your audience and know what songs land well and control the energy of the floor, so people don't get too bored or too tired. You also want to know how long to play a song for - most of the time you'll be mixing out after the first chorus (what we call TV size length), but sometimes people want the full song to be played because of things like MIX.

### **Favorite event you've done?**

**DJ APPARE:** There's honestly too many to choose from. AniParty Vol.1 and Vol.2 The work we put into those two events became the basis of what AniParty is today. It's also a tie with KUSALAND which was an event put together in our biggest space. Not only did we have a live band Eternal Hoshi but a vtuber(Mint Fantome) performed alongside our DJ Team.

**DJ Pleasant:** Anime NYC 2019 we were contracted out by Lumica USA to DJ their booth. It was a magical time, walking in, they had set up a massive projector for us to use. We had the blessing from the con to go as hard as we wanted, loads of space. Even Morning Musume showed up while walking the halls.

**DJ Moero:** AniParty Vol 7 at the Deep End in NYC, Dec 2019. We brought DJ Hitomi from Japan, and everyone brought their A-game to create a very memorable event only a few months before the pandemic. I'll never forget the smiles on everyone's face when we made the whole venue glow orange from glow sticks broken during the last song played by DJ Appare, "Snow Halation" covered by JAM Project.



**DJ Dekimasen:** Lumica Booth at Anime NYC 2019 – Nothing compares to bringing the largest by-far traditional Anikura experience to my home city anime convention backed by my ultimate favorite manufacturer of Anikura-ready products!

**DJ Wazahai:** I love performing in the standalone AniParty events, as the crowd we've curated over time gives off energy that allows us to try silly stuff for fun. But I like showing off what AniParty has to others in providing original songs, so I try do guest slots, when possible, for other groups.

**DJ SignalΔ:** My favorite event that I've done so far is Universal Denonbu Project Vol.3 back in April, 2023. This was an online event with a Denonbu theme, which is a music franchise I really love. So I got to spin a set full of Denonbu songs.

**DJ Th3rdEye:** I DJ'd for AniParty's Otakon afterparties this year, which is probably my favorite event I've done. We had a venue big enough for everyone and got around 80 people each night. Since it was a con weekend, we also had a fair chunk of random people drop by who started following AniParty as well.



 [anisong.party](https://anisong.party)

 [@anisongparty4020](https://www.youtube.com/@anisongparty4020)

 [@anisongparty](https://twitter.com/anisongparty)

 [ANISONGPARTY](https://www.facebook.com/ANISONGPARTY)

 [@anisongparty](https://www.instagram.com/@anisongparty)

 [AnisongParty](https://discord.com/invite/AnisongParty)

# A LIGHT CONVERSATION WITH YEAHLIGHTS!

YEAHLiGHTS is a business based in the northeast that sells penlights, glowsticks, and more. They are partnered with Lumica as a US-based distributor for their products. From the humble beginnings of selling at local events to becoming a national purveyor of quality light products with a fanatic team, they want every event to SHiNE its brightest!

We talk a bit with the owners of YEAHLiGHTS, Alvin, Tsui, and Harmony about YEAHLiGHTS as a business and their experiences with Call and MIX culture, wotagei, and the anikura scene.



**Please introduce yourselves! What is your role at YeahLights, and what made you want to join Yeah Lights?**

**Alvin:** Hello I'm Alvin, the Chief Executive Officer. I handle a lot of the Front End business for Yeahlights and you'll see me at most of the event circuits we vend at. The thought came to both me and Tsui while chilling at his house during the lock-downs back in 2021. We love the Lumica products and we were already connected with them through AniParty. There was a Renaissance for events and concerts coming back on the horizon and Vtubers were on the rise so we decided to start this company together in order to share the products we love.

**Tsui:** I'm Tsui, the Chief Operations Officer, and I handle a lot of the day-to-day operations that keeps YEAH LiGHTS lit! Alvin partnered with me to form a company where our passion is to light up events everywhere with products we truly love and wish to share - I have not regretted it ever since!

**Harmony:** I'm Harmony, I was originally a contractor, got leveled up to an administrative assistant and then more recently began tackling projects as the business development lead. My roles currently are just helping out these two and also work on bulk custom business projects. Truthfully, I joined the company because two people I am close to in my circle were running it and I already loved idol and penlight culture so it just made sense.

**What is YeahLights? How long has YeahLights been around? How did you get started?**

**Tsui:** YEAH LiGHTS brings the LiGHTS to all the exciting events in life - from concerts to parties and just about anything that can use some shine! We were established in early 2022 when two AniParty DJ's, wanted to make brightening the world more available to anyone!

**Talk a little bit about your experiences within the rest of the subcultures within this spread (Call/MIX, wotagei, anikura).**

**Alvin:** From the beginning, I started learning about Mixing/Calls/Penlights from two places one being from AKB48 and the other was on a variety show where Shoko-tan explained Wota and Wotaku Culture. It was back in the days of Yossha Ikuzou! to start the mix and PPPH. Ever since Idol Anime, Anisong Concerts, and Vtuber the whole culture has been evolving. I'm glad we can be a part of that through our company with Yeah Lights. It's just crazy to see Penlights being more of the norm through anime, J-pop and K-Pop.

**Tsui:** Our company is... quite literally... the embodiment of it all. That's practically what we're doing in our free time. Fun fact: The name of our company is a portmanteau of the "YEAH TIGER" chant! On the flip side, I am also an Akiba-Pop DJ who enjoys mixing the best of Anime, Idol and J-POP music for everyone to vibe out to and DJ'ing with North America's real anikura that brings upon the authentically wild and eccentric experience to everyone. I like to say we work together, hand-in-hand, to bring the best of the sphere that is the subcultures in which we take to heart!



**Harmony:** I used to be an Odottemita and very, very part time do cosplay idol stuff to this day and it's very different from when I started back in 2016. Call and Mix and wotagei are much more prevalent now. I think only my friend group (two of which are my bosses here at Yeah Lights) were like the only people mixing and while it's still mostly us, there's a lot more people joining with lots of online virtual influences like Pomu Rainpuff, Mint Fantome, and Peoni Astera really leading the way on spreading the culture. It makes me super excited because the culture is just very fun and yeah it sounds goofy but from being on stage, I really love it, seeing the lights and hearing the calls and that's a big reason why I enjoy what I do.

### **Any big goals for YeahLights?**

**Alvin:** I'm interested in bringing more interesting Light-Up products overseas and introducing Idol and Penlight culture to more people. The more accessible the better!

**Tsui:** Underserved markets, like in Europe - I want them to have Lumica products. They're calling and I want YEAH LIGHTS to answer.

**Harmony:** I have a couple of goals, I want to make products and wota culture more available to kaigai idols and vtubers! But also I think I want to throw a big music festival on the east coast one day!



### **Favorite product you sell?**

**Alvin:** My favorite has to be the Lumica Lumiac 2 Omegas (I love the color preview, the handle and brightness of the penlight), Compacts (The Penlights fold in and are great for portability), and the UO's (Ultra Orange Glow Sticks). Pack it all into the Lumica Official Pouch and you can't go wrong with that loadout!

**Tsui:** I'll never stop promoting UO's (Ultra Orange Glowsticks) - The rush of excitement that can't be explained in words can always be expressed in the crack of our brightest glowstick!

**Harmony:** Truthfully, I think I'm stuck between both the Daisenko Blade 300 and the Lumiheart! The 300 is the latest model and has a lot of really cool features like the programmable back button and additional colors to program but the Lumiheart is not only cute but can be customized physically. I love both of them so much my personal penlight is a frankenstein version of those! I use the 300 bottom/light with handle and buttons with the Lumiheart cuteness! Both Functional and also very girlie, I highly recommend doing the same to other people.

### **YEAHLIGHTS Social Media**



**Website**  
yeahlights.com



**X/Twitter**  
@YEAHLIGHTS



THANK YOU  
FOR READING!

Article by  
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