

Ezi Ononuju

Dr. Gingrich

AP Lang

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Jubyphonic Vocaloid English Cover Review

Culture Shock

Have you ever, even just out of boredom, listened to a cover of a song you like in a different language? The obvious difference is in the language itself, sure, but when you really get into the subtle nuances of the music, you'll often find that something about the tone can entirely change, just based on the energy of the person singing it.

A new voice singing a song you love can absolutely breathe new life into it and, in Japan, lovers of a certain genre of music are having new life be brought to the songs they adore through covers made by fans in the west. This certain genre is called Vocaloid, and it's popularization has been headed by the robotic diva, Hatsune Miku.

“Who's Miku?”

Vocaloid, since the cult-hit Hatsune Miku made her electrified debut in August 2007, has been moving fast and forward with eyes locked on the mainstream. Vocaloid software, in simple terms, makes it possible to recreate the entire vocal part of a song by inputting a melody and lyrics using just a computer. Vocaloid has carved it's into the music scene over the past 11 years, populating their own genre.

Vocaloid comes in the form of various products provided by Crypton Future Media INC, and has been popularized by Piapro's characterizations of each of their robotic singers. Their names are Hatsune Miku, Kagamine Rin and Len, Megurine Luka, MEIKO, and KAITO.

Miku, the most popular of the Piapro Vocaloid characters, has her own annual convention in Japan, known as Magical Mirai, that's as filled as a hard-drive with excited fans, merchant stands who sell all kinds of *kawaii* vocaloid paraphernalia, as well concert hall venues in which she has live concerts in shimmering holographic form. She's even appeared on US national talk shows, such as the Late Show with David Letterman, where she takes her talents international.

It's no myth that Vocaloid has made its mark as a cult music genre all over the worldwide web (emphasis on worldwide), with many fans being not only from Japan, but the west too. Whether these fans can understand Japanese or not, more westerners than you could fit in a floppy disk have become simply enchanted by these digital pop stars.

Many particularly skilled fans even go as far as translating Vocaloid songs from Japanese to English, and performing those songs themselves through the video-hosting site Youtube. The biggest of these cover artists include the users known as Splendiferachie, Lizz Robinett, and Jubyphonic who's the subject of this review.

Jubyphonic's Credentials

Jubyphonic, or Juliet Simmons, is a professional voice actress who works for Sentai Filmworks. Along with her day job, she has made something of a side act as a

youtube cover artist. She's become one of the most popular Vocaloid cover artists on Youtube, with over 742,219 subscribers, and it's no surprise, as she often does her own translyrics, and has an amazing unique voice.

While it's clear that she's a vocal powerhouse compared to many other soprano youtube singers, in this review, I want to explore whether or not her english covers hold a candle to the original songs. To solve this mystery, I've picked out 4 vocaloid songs out of her top 35 most popular covers to judge.

What am I scoring on?

The main factors that I will be judging based upon are the Emotion and Character that are added to the song and Lyrical Quality of the translation.

Vocaloid songs, since they're effectively sung by robots, understandably don't have much in terms of an emotional range. While Miku's voice can have its own unique charm to it when you get familiar with it, the almost deadpan sound works better for some songs than others, as with the other vocaloids. For the same reason, a lot of Vocaloid songs lack personality, so I want to observe how well Jubyphonic breathes life into these songs through the character and charm she adds.

With regards to Lyrical Quality, translating anything from Japanese to English is a very interesting yet difficult task, as the two languages have a totally different sentence structure, phonetic alphabet, and have different colloquialisms unique to each one's respective culture. On top of this, since she's translating a song, she has the added work of needing to reword things to sound smooth in english, adapting a rhyme scheme,

and in general making sure it has a higher quality standard than a broken-english Google Translate query.

More broadly the question I want to answer is what exactly do Simmon's English Vocaloid covers specifically add to these songs, besides a translation, that the originals didn't have? What warrants people listening to these over the originals if given the choice?

Song #1 - Happy Halloween

[Happy Halloween](#) starts off strong, with a funky halloween song that gives the Monster Mash a run for its money. [The original version](#), written by Junky, is sung by Kagamine Rin. The song itself is light hearted and fun, but dispenses some simply sinister sections throughout this all out party of the walking dead. The flat voice that Rin has in the song really makes your blood go cold at some points, as when the party slows down, you only hear her inhuman voice fall fast and far down the uncanny valley. The original song brings to mind famous (if not cliché) ghost girl characters (such as The Twins from *The Shining* film) playing with their victim as if Halloween is a game of cat and mouse for them.

Juliet's english cover changes the energy right from the get go. In both versions, at the very beginning of the song, a rapping on a door is heard, but whereas in the original version only silence accompanied each "1-2-3" knock, in the Jubyphonic cover, a childish voice interjects from the darkness, shouting immaturely to whoever's on the other side, "Hello? Anybody home? I'd like some candy please! Well, if you won't open

up then... Trick or Treat!" As the whirring sound of a chainsaw can be heard in the background.

This English cover uses many charming adlibs to amazing effect during sections that were originally quiet, or had served as a musical interlude. Juliet portrays the main character of the song up as a childish trickster ghost on hunt for only the best treats with excited phrases like "Gimme chocolate!" and annoyed whinings such as "These are raisins...". These phrases bring me back to when I was a little kid walking down the block after dark all those October 31st's ago in search for enough sweets to make my dentist bank.

The tone of the actual singing is, of course, different as well, with Juliet changing the vibe of the genuinely creepy quiet parts of the original to be give off more of a "campfire story" type of spook than the "come play with us" variety.

Juxtaposed with the more campy parts of course, are the all out party sections when the beat drops. These parts show a more laid back in-control variety of the character of this funky little ghost girl. These rocking party sections have the best lyrical sections of the song, with fun to sing along with bouncy lines like "See, because it's Happy Halloween, rock around the clock with tick and tock" and "Here maybe there, and a trick or treat. See pumpkin pie in my dreams!" I especially like these sections because they portray the other side of Halloween that the rest of the song doesn't: The parties! While it keeps on the lighter-hearted G-rated side of Halloween parties, I love how both the "kiddy" side of Halloween and the more "grown up" side of it are both represented.

Juliet's cover is an incredibly spooky example of what a grade-A English cover of a Vocaloid song can be like. It adds so much that the original song never could've hoped to replicate, such as parts that are adlib-ed, a personable character to guide us through the world of Undead Halloween Parties, and of course, some good old Halloween camp.

Song #2 - A Realistic Logical Ideologist

[A Realistic Logical Ideologist](#) places us in a world of highly structured guitar, jarring chiptunes, and crescendoing radio noise, as a consistent drum serves as a backdrop to keep order. All of these factors create a song that invokes puts the image of a well oiled machine running a depressingly real world. [The original song](#), written by Goboumen, is sung by Megurine Luka. The song portrays a girl who feels like an outcast in the real world because she's treated like an idiot by everyone around her, so she uses her phone to escape from the real world and live as the heroine who's the one person that the entire world is counting on. The song switches back and forth through calmer if not more monotonous sections that represent the pessimistic, totally logical real world in all its dullness, and intense parts that embody the dramatism of the girl's glorious electronic avatar. The monotone voice of the Vocaloid fits the sections of the song which represent real life really well, but it just doesn't reach the same level of excitement as the background music for the sections representing her heroine avatar.

The Jubbyphonic version has a deeply distant subdued cynical tone, just as the original had, but this time around, Juliet shifts between that and this epic

protagonist-worthy energy. Her version really does the representations of these two opposing worlds, justice.

The lyrics themselves are really cool as well, such as when the girl is reflecting on her life experience in the real world, and she states, "Life, like a ghost, is thin as air. It doesn't matter if you're gone. You're here nor there." It's a really cleverly written and honestly poetic lyric.

However, the true highlights of this song are located in the last section of the song, as this part portrays the contrast between the real world she wishes to escape and the dream world in the best way that it's done in the entire song. We're shown the character at a very the low point in their life, and you can hear Juliet convey this girl's horribly broken and outcasted feeling as she admits, "Shaking me down, my lonely logic finds... Another thorn of this envy in my side, called heartbreak." After this moment of vulnerability however, the character rises up from their low point, referencing how the protagonist of a does in a film's 3rd act.

She emphatically belts with all her might, "I'm the one thing that's saving what's beating in everyone--", when suddenly, she stops herself and interjects "Well, that's not reality". Another thing that usually happens in a film's 3rd act is a twist that plays with the audience's expectations (It's called the "Twist in the Third Act" for a reason, I suppose), but while it appears for just a moment that she's given up on her dream, she ends the song with a powerful newfound outlook that balances realism with genuine optimism: "But, it's alright. I can at least try in my dreams." Instead of giving up on her dream completely, she manages to uses logic, what has throughout the song been

painted as an enemy, to argue why she's allowed to keep dreaming. She realizes that no matter who she is in real life, she can be whoever she wants in her dreams.

While the beginning and middle of this cover aren't anything to write home about, by the end of the song, Juliet turns this average electronic song into an a marvelous techno rock ballad about two warring sides within a teenage girl's mind attempting to reach a personal consensus.

Song #3 - A Female Ninja, But I Want to Love

Our second song, [A Female Ninja, But I Want to Love](#), is a great follow-up to our last rocking jam. [The original song](#), written by the MikitoP, is performed as a Duet by Kagamine Rin and Hatsune Miku, representing the two sides of the girl's mind.

The song portrays a 15 year old ninja girl who's forbidden to date any boys by her Mom, a horrifying situation for many teenagers; Both trained assassin variety and not, alike.

The music itself embodies the swift action-packed life of ninjas living (and loving) in the shadows, quite nicely, however the way I find that the original song falters is that the bland voice of each of the Vocaloids' voices really takes away from the melodramatic teenage-love drama that we watch unfold before our eyes in the music video.

Juliet's version is a duet between her and the aforementioned Splendiferachie, and it remedies my biggest gripes with the original. To describe the cover in a headline: "Exciting Ninja Adventure Meets Teenage Love Drama".

The singer's voices themselves just so animated, as in they're so expressive that I can vividly picture all the teen drama between this ninja girl, her rival, and the boy she has a gigantic crush on.

When she first sees her crush, she breaks out into a total frenzy where you can really hear the urgency and rebelliousness in her voice alongside lyrics like "I love and wanna love, but no it's not allowed," from one side of her mind, as well as, "it's not fair! I don't care! Just let me do what I want!" From the other. Juliet especially did a good job in adapting the lyrics in a way that has a fitting lexicon for a young teenager, such as "stop this, and quit that; You're making me freak out!" As well, When she's on the job and tries to flirt with a teenage guard to break into a place saying "Gatekeeper have you been working out? Maybe open up this door now, for little old me," and it inevitably backfires, she gives the most defeated sigh that makes you both laugh out loud and honestly feel for her.

Finally, at the end of the song when she receives a secret letter telling her she has to assassinate her crush, you can hear legitimate panic from both of the voices in her head. In the same regard, you can hear her complete unanimity and certainty of the two halves of her mind when she makes a decision on how to deal with this predicament.

One final touch I appreciated was in one of the final lines in the song, "O happy daggers I have hidden, set me free". That line is a clever reference to Romeo and Juliet, and is the line right before Juliet offs herself to be with Romeo in the afterlife. I read this

as representing our favorite ninja girl basically committing career suicide and losing her parents' favor just to date the boy she's crushing on hard.

Once again, this song is an exemplary work for what Vocaloid english covers should be like. She mixes two unexpected vibes, teen drama, and swift ninja clan missions, and gets an amazing song out of it, with fun lyrics, and limitless charm.

Song #4 - Sand Planet

[Sand Planet](#) is an indie rock jam that gives off what can only be described as a seriously cool energy. [The original song](#), by Haichi (Kenshi Yonezu), a famous Japanese composer and songwriter, and is sung by Hatsune Miku. This song was written for the 10 year anniversary of Hatsune Miku's original release (Miku's 10th birthday if you will), and was made the theme song of Miku's Magical Mirai convention in 2017.

The instrumentation of this song is absolutely exceptional, but the multiple robotic Miku voices that make up the low, middle, and high vocal sections clash with each other in a really jarring way, which makes for an odd effect that really takes me out of the sick guitar playing and tight piano melody.

In the english cover, Juliet has a very controlled voice. Miku in this song is characterized as experienced, but world weary and pessimistic, as she wanders with her squad through the desolate post-apocalyptic desert. Lines such as "In the end, our fate is fading. Are we all dead?" portray the hopelessness she feels for this dusty world, possibly representing Vocaloid culture beginning to fade from cult status to obscurity as the years pass by. Meanwhile, even when something even remotely exciting happens,

such as a lightning strike, Juliet writes lyrics such as “Yeah, cool. Another lightning strike. On and on through the dawn echoing. Bye, bye, bye.” She writes these lyrics to portray Miku as someone who’s seen it all a million times, and there’s some truth to that characterization, as 11 years in, Miku has been in thousands of Music videos, from the heart-wrenchingly depressing, to the cheeriest most waltzy tunes.

At the midpoint of the song, Juliet has a part where Miku finally remembers it’s her birthday: “Right, I know, we should be singing Happy Birthday. We’ll dress to show that we can party, blowing away a cake to cut made of the past we’ve piled up. We sing the songs they made.” This part of the song really shows just how deep the lyrics can get in this song. The apocalyptic landscape that is now Miku’s world is so taxing that she manages to forget it’s even her own birthday. Even when she realizes that fact, she manages to take a somber meaning from it. She describes her birthdays as just the past that they’ve piled up. Worst of all, she doesn’t even get to sing happy birthday with her group. They “simply sing the song they’ve made”. They is implied to be Vocaloid creators, which means that Miku chooses to sing the songs other people have made her sing, instead of an innocent song to celebrate herself for one day. Miku’s character in this song may not even really know how Happy Birthday song goes, considering she sings multiple songs and not even one song is the obligatory ‘Happy Birthday’.

Sadly, something has to give, and the way in which this song loses a lot of points from me is in the charm aspect. Juliet throughout the entire song portrays Miku with this too-cool attitude, and while I adore this out of the ordinary characterization for Miku on paper, in practice she sticks with it the entire time and that previously mentioned

“seriously cool energy” muddies the energy of the song. This makes for a song that is so immensely lyrically depthful, but emotionally shallow, up until the final line, “Even now, keep facing the wind as we walk into the sandy planet sky,” which is an interesting exception. It’s the only part where Juliet shows some semblance of actual emotional change, and an optimistic change at that. Miku is calling out to her friends and followers, and telling them to never give up, even in the face of a seemingly impossible to live with scenario, which fits her world weary characterization well because it paints her as having experience with this type of pain and uncertainty.

Overall, this cover is my least favorite of the bunch. The cover is still very high quality don’t get me wrong, but in keeping the same tone for the entire song, no matter how cool it is, I feel like it hinders it as a whole. The instrumental part is amazing, but you could get that in the original song too.

The other songs have set the bar for what constitutes an extremely high quality english cover of Vocaloid songs, and this song compared to the others is just devoid of charm. It’s simply a personality desert.

Conclusion

Through reviewing these 4 songs, I can comfortably say that Jubiphonic is not only a masterful vocalist, but an incredible lyricist even when translating from another language. Her time as a voice acting talent absolutely shows through the character and charm exhibited through most of her Vocaloid covers, which really create an almost entirely new experience from listening to her english covers compared the original songs in Japanese with a robotic tenor.

Jubyphonic, as well as other cover artists through their amazing music have done an incredible job of turning Vocaloid, this niche digital genre from Japan, into a genre more easily accessible to all kinds of people in the west, those who love music for the lyrics, and those who love music for feelings it allows them to embody.

My introduction to Vocaloid music was actually from these english covers, and I love them now just as much as I did back when I first discovered them. The life that these artists breathe into these song is an absolutely something special.

I would absolutely recommend listening to songs from Jubyphonic, as well as other professional Vocaloid english cover artists to any person who enjoyed listening to the original versions of the songs, as well as to honestly any person with ears that hear. If I alone could give them all a million likes on Youtube, I certainly would.

Reference Article Rule Analysis

Rule #1 - Use very vivid descriptions using words that make the artist/music seem larger than life.

[The review of Mitski's 'Be the Cowboy' album](#), in the section all about the song “Your Best American Girl”, the author describes it in vivid detail with sentences such as “chipper Beatle-esque melody punctuated by slightly catatonic piano chords and a circus-organ flourish”. Another part that’s described in a similar way is right at the beginning of the article, when the author describes Mitski as having the signature talent of “making complex feelings of powerlessness loom as large as movie *kaijus*”.

Rule #2 - The first few paragraphs give some kind of background about the singer and their music.

The review of Mitski's 'Be the Cowboy' album, it immediately starts with this detailed paragraph giving background info on Mitski:

When Lorde took Mitski Miyawaki out on her Melodrama tour this year as an opening act, it was a perfect match: Two smart, intense women addressing heartache, class issues, and other emotional shitstorms in miniaturist detail and at maximalist scale, albeit with different tools. Some fans may’ve been surprised at how easily Mitski’s music translated to huge arena stages. But as her third LP proves, making complex feelings of powerlessness loom as large as movie *kaijus* isn’t just a signature talent — it can seem like the main point and power of what Miyawaki does.

This is done so that the author can engage the audience by explaining what Mitski has been up to in the year before that album came out, and why they should care about Mitski, such as her appearing next to another very popular artist, Lorde.

Rule #3 - Throughout the review, there's fun wordplay and rhetorical devices used to engage the reader and make it more enjoyable to read and keep the reader engaged.

In [the review of Ariana Grande's 'Thank U Next' Album](#), in the section where the author reviews Ariana's song "Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored", they use parallel structure in the sentence describing her attitude at the end of the song: "After crying her tears and screaming her screams and feeling her feels, Ari flirts with the bartender on her way out, ready for more punishment."

They also use allusion to compare it to other popular past songs when they first introduce the song with "'Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored' is a perfect song title in the tradition of Britney's 'Get Naked (I Got a Plan),' with Max Martin and a clever interpolation of the 'NSync deep cut 'It Makes Me Ill.'"

Rule #4 - Quotes from the lyrics are used, with their significance elaborated on before or after their use.

The author for the 'Be the Cowboy' Album review goes into great detail on the significance of the section on the song "Pink in the Night":

Miyawaki's voice unfurling in a slow goth processional, with a cathedral organ tone out of some fantasy wedding sequence building over a relentless kickdrum, cresting into a reverie of staring at a beloved's back while hungering for another chance: "I know I've

kissed you before, but I didn't do it right/Can I try again try again try again...and again and again and again," she begs...

Quotes are often used to allow a reader to use the logical side of their brain to analyze the song for its symbolic merit along with describing the emotion of the singer.

Rule #5 - The tone usually stays light, fun, and clever, but can get rather somber or analytical depending on the specific subject that's being reviewed.

The review of Ariana Grande's 'Thank U Next' keeps a light tone for the entirety of the review, with lines such as "It's strange to go back and listen to "Dangerous Woman" from just three years ago, back when Ariana sang about needing a dude to make her feel dangerous. Picture that. Well, those days are gone—this Ariana needs danger lessons like she needs an extra ponytail," while the 'Be the Cowboy' Review stays positive but does get more somber and down to earth at the very end, when they begin elaborating on the symbolic merit of this album today:

There may be nothing explicitly political in the songs on Be the Cowboy. But there's plenty implicit, from the DIY American mythology of the title, to the way the songs validate voices that are shaky, hurting, irrational, and damaged, while also being smart, wry, powerful, and deserving of love. There are no cowboys riding in to save the day anytime soon anywhere, it seems. But Mitski will remind you that saving yourself is usually a good first priority.