KAY: Hello and welcome to Happy Synthesizers, a podcast about singing robots. I'm your host, Kay, and today I'll be talking with Hen, also known as AphelionIC. They are visual artists who primarily specializes in illustration and simple 2D animation, and they've also dabbled in making UTAU content.

How's it going, Hen? Have I missed anything?

HEN: Honestly, not really. My day job has been taking up all of my time, and I've barely been able to draw anything. Maybe soon, I'd really like to get back into making making art as a hobby, not just for work, because I do do art for my work. Thank you for having me, Kay, I'm really glad to be here.

KAY: Yeah, of course. Well, simplest question first. How did you get into vocalsynth?

HEN: Well, as with many other people in my age, I got on the internet when I was relatively young. So I found it as many do, which is just on YouTube while browsing the videos. I don't exactly remember when I first got into it, but I did also play a bit of like *Project Diva 2nd* on the PSP. So, a lot of my early favourites were "Melt" by Ryo,[1] "Yellow" by kz of Livetune,[2] "Romeo and Cinderella,"[3] that kind of like era of vocalsynth where it's mostly the songs with Hatsune Miku and the other Cryptonloids getting popular.

"Look Here, Baby"[4] is one of those songs that is like super burned into my brain because I kept hearing it in the opening of the game. It's really good. I know Ryo has mostly stopped making Vocaloid songs now, but if he makes a comeback, I think it would be really cool because he's been so iconic in the community.

KAY: Nice, yeah. So, your hobby artwork is only sometimes related to vocalsynth, so I wanted to approach this a bit more as a sort of a fandom-centric discussion than some of my other interviews, but we'll get to the stuff that you've created as we go. So, with that in mind, besides Ryo, who you've already mentioned, who are some of your favourite vocalsynth artists, and what are some of the things about their music that make them your favourites?

HEN: In terms of music, one of my recent favourites is Sasuke Haraguchi, because of "Hito Mania"[5] and "Medicine"[6] because they're just such weird songs. I think we need more weird songs with a thousand random sound effects.

And another one that I really like for a long time is PinocchioP because of how he makes use of his voice like, as the backing vocal with Miku's, it makes for a very nice listening experience because of the different sonic textures and I like that he's always trying something a little bit

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[1] https://youtu.be/5rFBkHb8CL8 (unofficial reprint of a fan-made PV)
[2] https://youtu.be/saN1ySqCO5g (unofficial reprint from Project Diva)
[3] https://youtu.be/swqbfMh467A (unofficial reprint from Project Diva)
[4] AKA "Kocchi Muite Baby" - https://youtu.be/zQ7wxg3CW-E (unofficial reprint of the Project Diva opening)
[5] https://youtu.be/HTxwOxFt5d4
[6] https://youtu.be/dDlljvDSLSg (mild flash warning)

different with all of his songs but they are all still like distinctly his and he's also one of the vocals and producers who I know that does his own artworks and designs for his MVs.

So I think that makes him even cooler because of like the expanded skill set.

And as of late I've been trying to listen to more English vocalsynth so that I can have that experience of listening and understanding the lyrics rather than reading the translation. So a name that might be familiar to those in the fandom is Flavor Foley. I've been super hooked on "Water the Roses"[7] because it's just so damn catchy. And the way that the MV is edited with the paper texture and the little bird magnets is so beautiful.

KAY: You're the second of my interview subjects to bring up that song specifically. Clearly, they've made quite an impact. I think—I think my favourite from them is still maybe "Butcher Vanity,"[8] but it's pretty hard to pick a favourite out of them. Like every single one so far has hit.

HEN: Yeah, I think Butcher Vanity is their most popular song that isn't on their channel, which is really funny because it's—I think it's on Vane Lily's channel.

KAY: Yeah, I just don't. I think they didn't expect it to be quite that big of a hit, especially because Yi Xi wasn't even available for sale on the main Dreamtonics website yet. You had to go through like the Chinese taobao thing. So it really did come out of nowhere.

HEN: Really?

KAY: Yeah, like they came out with Butcher Vanity, I think barely three weeks after Yi Xi came out for the taobao, which was, like I said, before the main release.[9] So I remember when it came out, I was just like, "did they hire a person? Is this a singer?" Like, I didn't know that this was a new synth.

HEN: Yeah, she sounds really good in that song. I think that also contributes to why it became so popular.

KAY: That and just like—

HEN: Even among the demographic outside of the Vocaloid and vsynth community.

KAY: For sure. It's definitely gone viral beyond it, but I also, the part of that, I think, is also kind of just the shock value of the subject matter. [laughs]

HEN: I mean, I mean people love a bit of they love a bit of shocking subject matter, let's be real.

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[7] https://youtu.be/NA3MJmcyPpE

[8] https://youtu.be/vjBFftpQxxM (warning for violent content)

[9] Yi Xi actually *still* isn't on the English Dreamtonics site, but you can find her on the AHS store (same place you'd get Teto SynthV or Frimomen or what have you)

Kay: Yeah. Speaking of Yi Xi, similar question to before it's who are some of your favourite voice banks? And I'm asking about both the ones that you like to work with because you do UTAU covers, and also some of your favourite voice banks on any engine just to listen to.

HEN: Well, obviously, Hatsune Miku is one of my favourites, because, you know, she is the face of vocalsynth, and she has been for so many years. It's such a basic pick, but I just really like her. I think she's great.

Other than her, of course… for UTAU, I really like Kye,[10] mainly from listening to the covers by a popular I think, UTAU user in the community, which is revolocities[11] because they make a lot of covers using him and I just tend to prefer his strong rock style vocal. They also have an U of their own, which is a Yuutsukoe Karasu,[12] which they use a lot in their covers and I think recently they released a Diffsinger of him, which I don't—I haven't gotten the Diffsinger yet, but if I do, I think I'll try him out.

KAY: Yeah, I know exactly which artist you're talking about, and I love both of those voicebanks. For any listeners who don't know this person, I'll link in the show notes, but yeah, two A-plus choices right there.

HEN: He probably also helps that he's just a really popular voicebank  to use anyway, so a lot of people know him. For sure. Yeah.

I also like Haruka Nana[13] and Anna Nyui[14] because they have such like a bright vocal tone.

KAY: Sorry, what was that second one? Haruka Nana and…?

HEN: Anna Nyui. I think—

KAY: Oh, Anna Nyui!

HEN:  Yeah, she's the one with like the rabbit ears.

KAY: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

HEN: Yeah, I in general, I just think that most popular UTAUloids,, especially like the I think the the Vipperloids, are they called? Those those guys like—like, Yokune Ruko, Namine Ritsu, because, you know, because they're so old and people have already known them for so long, they're just iconic. And their voicebanks are like fairly good quality, even for the time that they were produced in. But even like the newer voicebanks, like made by the modern UTAU

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[10] https://winterdrive.wixsite.com/utau/kye
[11] they mostly just go by rev these days, I think - https://www.youtube.com/@rev_bmp
[12] https://www.karasu.utau.us/ (in Japanese)
[13] Haruka Nana official site (in Japanese) https://nanahira.jp/haruka_nana/
[14] Anna Nyui official site (mainly in Japanese, English tab under construction): https://aoka45.wixsite.com/annanyui?lang=en

community, are also pretty good because, you know, they come up with like a billion kinds of reclists and just ways to record and format your UTAU Banks.

So—another user, Ozumi Wizard,[15] has a lot of amazing voice banks that they've made with just their own voice. Like they're the only person who voices all of their voice banks, I think. I don't think they've had another voice provider, which is really amazing. I really like their deep and mature one, which is named Ivory. I think at some point I might want to try using it.

KAY: Sorry, who is? Who is this creator?

HEN: Oh, Ozumi Wizard.

KAY: Ozumi Wizard.

HEN: I'll provide you the link if you want.

KAY: Absolutely. Good to have for the show notes.

HEN: Great, great. And then besides UTAU—I feel like I've been going on for quite a bit, but Chis-A is one of my favourites, because she has like like a nice boyish or androgynous quality to her voice and that I think is very appealing, kind of like a V Flower.

KAY: Yeah, there's I haven't bought Voisona or CeVIO yet. It's one of the engines that I haven't really touched so far, but like, it's on my sort of distant to-do list that when I do Chis-A or—I was, I've never known for sure whether it's Chis-AY or Chis-UH, but I think Chis-AY probably makes a bit more sense. Anyway, she's top of the list.

HEN: Yeah, she's, I think it's called Chis-A because of the way that you pronounce her Japanese name.

KAY: For sure. Yeah. Moving on a bit from the vocal elements to the visuals as an artist, are there any vocalsynth characters whose designs really stand out to you as sort of the favourites?

HEN: In terms of character design, it's very hard to pick and say, like, who is definitely my favourite. Like, I have a few that I like, but favourite is a bit of like a hard title to give, in my opinion.

KAY: Well, then in that case, no need to use the word favourite. Just what are some of the ones you like?

HEN: Sure, sure, sure, of course. When it comes down to character design, in my opinion, it comes down to like less is more. Because character designs that have like a very obvious and recognizable feature, like Miku's blue twin tails, and Kaito's scarf. I think those are the most memorable because of like one feature that is the most recognizable. For like anime style characters like a lot of Vocaloid mascots, it usually comes down to hairstyles because you can

[15] https://ozumiiutaus.carrd.co/

see that there's a lot of brightly coloured hair, but just anything that is easy to recognize is the most important.

So I think like, Gumi Gakupo, Chis-A, again, Matsudappoiyo, I think those are like some of the quite iconic designs, but there are a lot. I think in general, Vocaloid and vocalsynth in general has like quite a good selection of character designs.

KAY: Yeah, there's very, very few out there that I would say are like not good.

HEN: That's why I think it's like to pick a favourite.

KAY: Yeah. The only thing I can think of and like, I'm sure that the voicebank itself is going to be lovely. I know that there's one upcoming for Synthesizer V called Halo,[16] I think And just the longer I looked at that design, the more things I noticed, I was like, "there is a lot going on here. Oh, boy." Kind of the opposite of your less is more.

HEN: Yeah. Yeah, now that I'm looking at it, I can see what you mean.

KAY: [laughs]

HEN: [trying to sound nice] I mean, well…

KAY: [laughs harder]

HEN: She is based on that *Bang Dream* series. She's coming out with another one—alongside another one.[17] So I kind of understand because like I've played those games, so I can see like all the visual references, but it's definitely like a maximalist design.

KAY: Yeah. But circling back, your point about, you know, less is more and having sort of one really particular immediately recognizable thing leads pretty perfectly into my next question. Hypothetically, if you were creating a character for a voicebank and let's say that this is going to be an official design and not just say, like, one of the fan designs that people do for a Dreamtonics voice or whatever, are there any particular elements of character design that you really like that like, appeal to your tastes and that you would want to try and include regardless of what the voice like—voice is like, or would you prefer to approach a project like this kind of just totally blank slate, do something with no preconceptions?

HEN: In terms of design elements, I always draw eyelashes on all of my characters, but outside of that, I would prefer to start with a blank slate and I just outline one of two things, which is either the theme of the design or the character's personality, since a lot of voicebanks have kind of like mini profiles that say it's like, oh, their likes, dislikes, a little bit of backstory, maybe.

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[16] https://synthv.fandom.com/wiki/HALO

[17] Pastel, who I'd forgotten about/repressed the memory of because her design is even more egregiously busy: https://synthv.fandom.com/wiki/PASTEL

Kind of like a VTuber in a way. But of course, having both is the best so that way the character design can communicate both, but it helps to just have a starting point so you can start with like a mood board to get a vibe and then you split off into the specifics like fashion, the body, that kind of thing. Because most of the character designs for vocal sense are based on the quality of the voice itself. I think having a design that complements the voice and gives off the right vibe is the most important. [laughs]

KAY: Yeah, that makes sense. I think I probably should have been a little clearer in my question. I was thinking of pretty small things like how all of the Cryptonloids have painted nails, even the guys, just sort of like little things like that. But even then, you know, if you're not designing a whole suite of characters and you're just doing one, then it makes sense that you wouldn't necessarily want to have anything going in. But like, then you mentioned the eyelashes. That's perfect.That's exactly what I meant. Just wondering about neat things, details that you like to include.

HEN: I think it can be indicative of like the artist style as well, maybe like this as like a subtle watermark.

KAY: Yeah, a signature thing. Speaking of creating your own characters, have you ever thought about making your own UTAU?

HEN: I have actually been working on and off on my own voicebank. It's kind of a basic one. There's not much like, in the way of multi-expression, like some other people's voicebanks or like appends, that kind of thing, but it's my first one, so I'm not that worried about it and it's not ready for release yet because I still have to finish drawing the character art and I'm thinking of re-recording some samples, but it's on the back burner. So it's just my regular voice. It just sounds like me.

And I'll definitely post about it once I finish. It was a really interesting experience recording for it, though, because I don't have a microphone, so I just use my phone for everything But in the future, if I make more voicebanks. I definitely want to improve on this one or make new ones.

KAY: If you get some fancier ones in the future, you can call this first bank, you know, Aphelion Lo-fi or whatever you want the character be named.

HEN: Yeah. I think that's kind of a good idea. I might keep that. Credit you for it

KAY: So when you're making your covers with existing UTAU banks, you generally create some new art for them instead of like using the original PV for it. What is your general illustration process likes? Like what art programs do you use, and how long do the illustrations for your videos tend to take?

HEN: Okay, so for all of my artworks, I used to use Procreate in… in like a few years ago because because I was working mostly out of my iPad, but now I've since moved completely over the desktop, so I use Clip Studio Paint. Generally, the illustrations don't take me that long. I'd say maybe at least two hours, but they don't go, like, they don't take me like an entire day to

do, because I do want to just, like, make something that's quick but also looks nice. And the process itself is not that complicated. I just take a still or something that I like from the MV or sometimes the album art, if the song like, doesn't have an MV and just make an artwork inspired by it that also features the voicebanks.

Not using the original PV is just like a personal preference. I hope I don't come off as like pretentious when I say this, it's just like… as an artist, I feel like I should put in some effort into the visual aspect because the cover is already derivative. So I just want some part of it to be original, you know?

KAY: I don't think that sounds pretentious at all. I mean, like, being an artist is your main thing. Like, I totally get why you would want to have something of that nature to showcase.

HEN: Yeah.

KAY: And on that note, I wanted to get your perspective on sort of how a song's artwork and video affects its popularity. So, bit of preamble. The two most viewed songs on YouTube as of recording are "Young Girl A" by Siinamota[18] and "Goodbye Declaration" by Chinozo,[19] which both have pretty simple if somewhat eye-catching art.

And then on the other hand, a lot of the vocalsynth songs that have found popularity really fast have been ones with pretty elaborate and attention-grabbing animated videos, things like "Sand Planet"[20] by Hachi, which I think was the—I think is still the fastest to ever crack a million views on Nicovideo, or the number three most popular—most viewed song on YouTube is "Mesmerizer" by 32ki.[21] And like keeping in mind that they're all pretty great songs in their own right, what role do you think that the visuals play in the success of a vocalsynth song?

HEN: I think in terms of the artwork, it doesn't matter whether the music video is animated or not, just whether the image is eye catching, like you mentioned, because, like, for example, "Young Girl A" is—the art that they use. It's so simple that the bright background just draws your attention and the simple art style conveys like a ch a children's drawing vibe, which is kind of like what the lyrics is and the title is meant to convey anyways.

And for like "Mesmerizer," it's like, you know, bright colours that also draws people's attention as well as like the twist at the ending of the MV. And it also probably helps if it gives the vocalsynths that they used a memorable original design or an outfit because it makes it feel like the modules in the Project Diva Games and it also kind of tends to learn itself well to fan out, which will boost the popularity of the song even more.

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[18] https://youtu.be/AqI97zHMoQw
[19] https://youtu.be/dHXC_ahjtEE
[20] https://youtu.be/AS4q9yaWJkI (the official English title used in this upload is, of course, "Dune" but I still prefer "Sand Planet" or "Suna no Wakusei" and I *think* most of the fandom agrees with me on this)
[21] https://youtu.be/19y8YTbvri8 MAJOR flash warning

KAY: For sure. That reminds me, circling back to Pinocchio P, who often has such unique Hatsune Miku designs for his videos.

HEN: Yeah, I would really like to see, like, maybe if *Project Diva* plans to ever adapt any of those designs designs into modules, that would be great.

KAY: Yeah, I'm not entirely sure how much *Project Diva* is still active, given that it's largely been superseded by Project Sekai but… Oh, gosh, what's it? "Nobody Makes Sense."[22] That's my favourite of Pinocchio P's designs, if not necessarily my favourite song from him.

HEN: I think my favourite would have to be "Common World Domination"[23] just because it looks …it's [a] very iconic look. So I think it lends itself well to like an updated kind of design for a Project Diva game or something like that.

KAY: Well, I know that I know that "Common World Domination" is featured in concerts, and when Miku performs that song,[24] she's in a [sputters, then enunciates] custom costume.

HEN: I've never been to the concerts, so I've never seen like Miku's costumes for it, but let me see.

KAY: Yeah, I…

HEN: Doing a lot of Googling.

KAY: Nah, fair enough. I mean, this is a podcast about discovering new vocalsynth things The only thing I will say about that, I actually have been lucky enough to go to a Miku concert once in 2019, which was fantastic. "Common World Domination" was not in that set list. I had only just seen a clip from one of the concerts where it was. And most of—the concert that I saw, it was Magical Mirai Tokyo in 2019. For the most part, she was just in her standard outfit and would change costumes, you know, for the concert theme,[25] which at that time was "Bless Your Breath" by KurageP or Wada Takeaki.[26]

And then a few others. I believe "Romeo and Cinderella"[27] got a costume change, which is pretty classic. Len and Rin performing "Bring It On"[28] had the alternate outfits, that sort of thing.

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[22] https://youtu.be/LtSNzPyo0lA - minor flash warning
[23] https://youtu.be/8Z3TbMBfDM0 - flash warning
[24] https://youtu.be/RtoSlSPyPIk - Magical Mirai Osaka 2014, minor flash warning
[25] https://youtu.be/7EEUU-ylN5c - Bless Your Breath performance (official footage)
[26] https://youtu.be/a-Nf3QUFkOU MV for Bless Your Breath, minor flash warning
[27] https://youtu.be/-oppluhYP9U from the 2019 Osaka concert, while I saw the Tokyo one, but same choreo/costume. Minor flash warning. Also, this isn't really relevant to my point about the costumes, but GOD I love the Romeo and Cinderella choreography.
[28] https://youtu.be/T7-AXotDMDE - this is footage from 2018, not the 2019 show I saw, but again, same choreo/costume. Flash warning.

HEN: I've seen those because of the clips that people posted. Turns out that actually "Common Domination" does have a *Project Diva* module,[29] which is great.

KAY: Sick.

HEN: Yay!

KAY: Yay! "Common World Domination" aside, any all-time favourite videos, like setting aside how much you like the song? Any videos that stick out in your mind is like, "whoa, that one was really good?"

HEN: Recently, I really liked the PV for "Hana ni Kaze" or "Wind Over the Flower" by Balloon,[30] which was animated by Avocado6. I think people know them mostly online for like their illustrations, but they can also do a lot of like different things. They're really good at animation, which is—they've animated for quite a few Vocaloid music videos, I think.

KAY: I was about to say, I recognize that name. I just can't think of another song that they've done off the top of my head.

HEN: I think they've done some songs by Lanndo[31] and others, I think "Charles,"[32] also by Balloon, right? Was also animated by them.

KAY: Yes, that's what I was thinking.

HEN: Yes. I think the… like the typography that was used in the video is really cool. And the animated sign language also stands out a lot to me because you don't really see that since hands are hard to draw.

KAY: Yes, they are. Oh, boy.

HEN: Yeah. So another one is this is not vocalsynth, but it was made by a creator that also does does vocalsynth. The PV for "Bakushou" by Syudou,[33] similar reason. The video only features one illustration with a few variations for like the facial expressions and the but the lyrics have like a kinetic text feeling. I think if videos with like animated or kinetic text are more interesting because even the PVs with still images as the background can be really enhanced with just a little bit of like animated text and some strategic cuts. Makes it feel a lot more dynamic.

KAY: : Yeah, it lends some more energy to it. And I know exactly what you're talking about with Syudou. Like his music videos are consistently very striking. They're very simple, but they they do what they need to do. And they're very eye catching. I've been using this word a lot.

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[29] https://youtu.be/dQImqvsjNIo - flash warning
[30] https://youtu.be/ixLrlhthgHs
[31] For example, "It's Just Life" - https://youtu.be/YDnZFwlZa1g
[32] https://youtu.be/TA5OFS_xX0c?list=PL4DbP64zznTVCuHzrmyK9Y9PrDrdXehFx
[33] https://youtu.be/KQPpw3dzEks - mild flash warning + warning for illustrated depictions of injury and body contortion

KAY: I mean, it—we live in an attention economy.

HEN: True, so true. You know, like back to *Project Diva* again, you know those animated videos that they have like in the background, which is sometimes like the the Vocaloid in question like dancing, or maybe they are having like, like a short animation in the background. I don't know what they're called, but… because there's nothing super special about those videos besides like the dance or like sometimes they have a sort of like a skit or a storyline. But Yellow's, like "Yellow" by KZ, the one for that song is just one of my favourites, purely because of nostalgia, because I used to play that song a lot on *Project Diva.*

KAY: Nice. Have you ever seen "Yellow" by Yoh Kamiyama, who did a decent amount of…

HEN: I have.

KAY: Yeah, that's that's where my brain jumps first when I hear "Yellow", and then I remember, "oh, right, but kz also did it, nice." [laughs]

HEN: Yeah. The kz one is older, but.. "Yellow" by Yoh Kamiyama is also pretty good.

KAY: Yeah, well, and talk about a unique music video.

HEN: Mm-hmm.

KAY: Wrapping up a little bit, just do you have any big projects that you're working on besides your UTAU voicebank? It'll likely be a little while[34] between recording this episode and it going live. So I guess anything to look forward to in the summer?
HEN: Okay, so… I'm currently working as an illustrator for this magical girl visual novel called *This Magical Girl Is a Bitch.*[35] Because currently, Act 1 and 2 are available to play. It's free and we we're currently working on Act 3 with an estimated release in October, which is not summer, but it is Halloween themed, so, you know, we have to land the release so that the hype is built appropriately. It's a story about a magical girl who is not the nicest and how she uses her powers to blast away all the enemies in her way.

And also, you know, the aforementioned with UTAU voicebank, but I'm not really worried about that right now and I'll just release it when I release it.

KAY: Fair enough. I do love me a good subversive sort of magical girl story. That sounds like a lot of fun, actually.

HEN: It is a lot of fun and I'm not saying this just because I worked on it.

KAY: Even if you were, fair enough. Get that self promo.

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[34] More like a long while, but never mind that, we all get busy.
[35] https://belleinpastel.itch.io/this-magical-girl-is-a-btch

HEN: I got a shill, man. So good.

KAY: Okay, actual last question. If you could get any singer in the world to record a voicebank for the engine of your choice, whose voice would you want to sample

HEN: Okay, so me personally, I am a big Bring Me the Horizon[36] fan, so I'd love an Ollie Sykes voice bank. He's the vocalist of Bring me the Horizon for anyone who's not initiated. But I don't think there are any current commercial voice banks that can do screaming, not via like editing in a DAW, like with voice drive or other kinds of distortion plugins, but having screaming in the samples because the only vocalsynth that I can think of that does this is the UTAU Hakaine Maiko,[37] I think that's how you say her name who was voiced by a professional screamo singer.

So I think there are other UTAU banks that can do something similar because they were also made with scream samples. But if there are commercial voicebanks that can do this, then I want to be put on that because I want to check it out.

KAY: Yeah, I think by the time this episode comes out, HXVOC by Eclipsed Sounds for Synthesizer V 2 will have already come out[38] but as of recording, he's not out yet.

HEN: I saw his design on Twitter, actually, because I follow Ricedeity because they were posting about it.

KAY: Yeah, he's—HXVOC is a proper screaming-capable voicebank. But like I said, he's still upcoming as of recording, so I can't speak as to how easy it is to work with him. But I own the existing Eclipsed Sounds voice Bank so far, and I've always sound them very easy to use. So you know, speaking of shilling,

HEN: Well, does he have a demo? I'd like to listen to it later.

KAY: I will link in the description[39] and also send it to you privately.

HEN: Excellent. Okay, so besides him, I think if you know the singer Aurora,[40] I think she'd also be a really great voice provider because of her very ethereal voice and also because she is… I'm pretty sure she's from, I don't know, I forgot which country, but she's from like Scandinavia so she has an accent that's very strong when she speaks English. and I think that having a differently accented English voice would be quite interesting.

KAY: For sure.

HEN: [unintelligible]

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[36] https://www.bmthofficial.com/
[37] https://utau.fandom.com/wiki/Maiko_Hakaine
[38] He actually came out like, a week after recording.
[39] https://youtu.be/pZ3T50pHBS8 (mild flash warning)
[40] https://www.aurora-music.com/

KAY: Sorry, sorry.I was pretty much just agreeing with you and thinking, “yes, we do need more variety in accents of English voice banks. That would be interesting.”

HEN: Because if you think about it, like most of the English voice banks that we have are kind of like Japanese or American accented. We don't even have something that is like British accented.

KAY: Yeah, I mean…

HEN: I saw somebody make one, like an UTAU that was British accent. I was like, “wow, I've never heard one with a British accent, now that I think about it.”

KAY: Yeah, I mean, like, there are—some of the older ones have much more noticeable accents. Oliver for Vocaloid, of course, comes to mind. And the original two, like first ever Vocaloids, Leon and Lola were both British Caribbean, so quite a unique voice—accent. But I think part of the thing is that in recent years with the rise of deep learning AI kind of stuff, I think it does tend to smooth accents out a little bit and generally sound sort of a bit more American.

And that is something that happens to a degree with real people singing. I mean, like there are bands out there where you can hear the singer's accent quite distinctly, but, you know, I—it took me a very long time when One Direction was getting started to find out that they were a British band because their style of singing didn't sound particularly strongly accented.

HEN: Yeah, I think people just mostly default to that quote unquote, “neutral” English accent, which is just like an—a very general American English accent.

And one last thing. It's not very specific, but I’d love to see some more Korean voicebanks because the only ones that we have from Vocaloid anyways, I don't know if other programs have voicebanks that are also in Korean, but the only ones that we have from Vocaloid are SeeU and UNI, I think, which are both female vocals, and there's nothing wrong with that, but I used to be super big into K-pop, so I think more Korean support from modern commercial voicebanks would be the vocalsynths, sorry, like SynthV, would be great.

KAY: Yeah, well, Uni is getting a Synthesizer V upgrade. She is going to be released for Synthesizer V 2.

HEN: I think I saw that.

KAY: Yeah, but besides that, that still leaves us without any masculine native Korean voicebanks. So, you know, let's get to it. Bring it on.

HEN: Yes, absolutely. And, well, if anything, if UNI is coming to Synth V, that might mean that they're adding Korean to like the cross synth language thing, I don't know what it's called.

KAY: They are. Yeah, confirmed.

HEN: Oh, really? That's great. Well, you know, no native Korean male voicebanks yet, but we can just use that.

KAY: We have to live in hope.

HEN: It's true, that's true. There are like, UTAUs that can do Korean, of course, but that's because it's like user generated. So yeah, like I said, commercial support for Korean and other languages, I can't leave other people in the dirt as well.

KAY: Yes, I'm quite looking forward to Maghni AI, whenever that eventually does come out because they are apparently hoping to get quite a few languages in there. So, you know, [knocks on table] knock wood.

HEN: That's great.

KAY: Well, on that positive note of looking towards the future, I think we'll wrap this up, but it's been great to have you. Fun chat.

HEN: Thank you again. Thank you so much for having me. I think this is the first time in the world that I've like really yapped about Vocaloid, vocalsynths, that kind of stuff. [laughs]

KAY: This is the vocalsynth yapping podcast. You are in good company.

HEN: That's true.

KAY: [laughs]

HEN: My people.

KAY: Alright. Well, on that happy note, thank you. See ya.

HEN: Thank you again. Bye-bye.

(outro music)

Special thanks to Hen for joining me this episode. This is the last of a series of interviews that I pre-recorded during the springtime, but I love doing these, so I'm always looking for more folks to talk to. If you're active in the vocalsynth space and you'd like to appear, send me an email over at happysynthesizerspod@gmail.com. You can also reach me on tumblr or bluesky, linked in the transcript document for this episode, but I admittedly don't check those as often.

Happy Synthesizers is written and produced by Kay Judson. The theme music is Ievan Polkka, arranged with inspiration from Loituma and Otomania.

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