Outselling the Beatles: Assessing the Influence and Legacy of the Ventures on Japanese Musicians and Popular Music in the 1960s.

売り上げでビートルズを凌駕した インストゥルメンタル．バンド

—1960年代日本野「ベンチャーズが及ぼした影響とその遺産を位置づける」

Michael FURMANOVSKY

Abstract

The Beatles have a unique status in Japanese popular culture and their music and image can be found in almost every area of commercial life and entertainment. Perhaps for this reason, popular music commentators and historians assume that the group played a major role in changing the popular music culture of Japan in the mid-and late-1960s. A superficial look at the so-called "Group Sounds" bands of the era seems to confirm this assumption. However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the Ventures, an electric guitar-based instrumental American group who still tour Japan, were in fact more influential than the Beatles in shaping the initial direction of Japanese pop and rock music. This article, the first in English to utilize a full range of Japanese sources, looks at the impact of the Ventures. It argues that by triggering off the electric guitar boom of 1965-67 and directly shaping the music styles and tastes of the leading Japanese pop musicians of the 1960s, the group deserve a place alongside the Beatles in Japanese popular music history and were in fact the underlying musical influence on which Group Sounds was built.

Keywords: popular music, eleki bumu, Group Sounds, The Ventures, The Beatles, Terauchi Takeshi, Kayama Yuzo, Wakadaisho, the first "cool" Japan, Mosrite Guitar

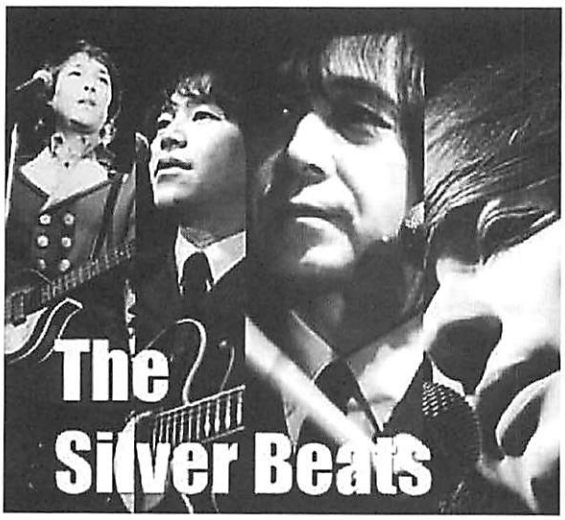
概　要

ビートルズは日本の大衆文化において、唯一無二の地位を確立している。彼らの音楽や映像は、今もなおほぼ全ての商業界、娯楽産業界で見聞きすることができる。この現状からポピュラー音楽評論家や歴史研究者たちは、ビートルズは1960年台中期から後期において日本のポピュラー音楽文化の変革において、重責を担ったと認識している。1960年代後期の日本でグループサウンズ（GS）と呼ばれたバンドの外見上の服装やイメージなどは、この認識と合致するものである。しかし、実際は今もなお日本ツアーを行うアメリカのエレキギターを中心としたインストゥルメンタルグループ、ザ・ベンチャーズがビートルズよりも日本のポップス、ロック音楽の方向性を形成する上で多大な影響を及ぼしたと考察できるかなりの証拠が存在する。本稿では、1965年～67年に興ったエレキブームの引き金となり1960年代、日本を代

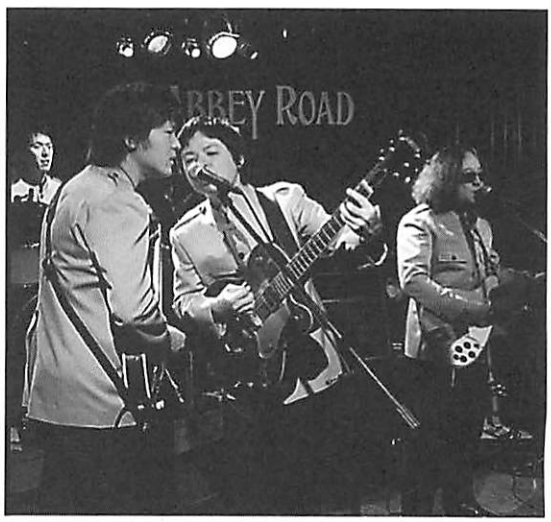
表するポップスミュージシャンたちの音楽スタイルや嗜好の形成に直接的につながったザ・ベンチャーズの影響力について取り上げる。ザ・ベンチャーズは、日本のポピュラー音楽史においてビートルズと同等の重要な存在であり、グループサウンズの形成において基礎的な音楽的影響を与えたのは実はこのベンチャーズなのである。

キーワード：ポピュラー音楽、エレキブーム、グループサウンズ、ザ・ベンチャーズ、
ザ・ビートルズ、寺内タケシ、加山雄三、若大将、日本最初のクールガイ、
モズライトギター

Many journalists and commentators have written about the special place reserved for the Beatles in Japanese popular culture. It is not uncommon for Beatles songs to be played nonstop in shopping centers or in a variety of TV show settings, while the range of Beatles CDs and souvenirs available online or in music-related retail outlets is as wide and diverse as that in any country. Junior High School English textbooks often feature Beatles songs that are used for listening and pronunciation practice and information about the Beatles, especially John Lennon's antiwar activities can be found in JHS and HS Social Studies textbooks[1]. On a more tangible basis, both the Kanto and Kansai areas have several highly proficient cover bands that play regularly in cafes and live houses. Some of these are modeled on the Beatles' Cavern Club in Liverpool and, as many commentators have noted, the cover bands go to great lengths not only to look like the four members of the band, but to make use of exactly the same instruments and equipment that the Beatles used when they performed in the mid 1960s[2]. The popularity and longevity of the Beatles in Japan has of course benefited from the Japanese nationality of Yoko Ono, the late John Lennon's wife, and is in line with the group's iconic status throughout the developed world. Yet despite their unparalled standing in popular music history, sales of the Beatles' albums in Japan during the mid 1960s were in fact below that of the Ventures, an American instrumental group with a far less illustrious reputation in popular music history.[3] Sales alone, of course, do not necessarily equate with long-term influence. Nevertheless, the role and contribution of the Ventures in the shaping of Japanese popular culture, especially through



Tribute Band "The Silver Beatles"



Tribute Band "The Parrots"

their popularization of the electric guitar—an instrument that can be seen slung over the shoulder of many young Japanese student on any given train ride in urban areas—is worthy of closer examination, especially in light of the special role that the instrument has had, and continues to have, in the lives of so many young Japanese. As will also be suggested below, the instrumental sound of the Ventures would provide the template for what would evolve into the so-called "Group Sounds" of the late 1960s, a musical movement that is generally thought to be a Japanese response to, or version of, the Beatles-led pop and rock music revolution emanating from Liverpool and other parts of the UK in the years 1964-67.

1.1: Takeshi Terauchi and the Popularization of the Ventures Sound, 1961-65

The story behind the distinctive status of The Ventures in Japan and their influence on young Japanese musicians, most notably Terauchi "Terry" Takeshi and Kayama Yuzo has received some attention from non-Japanese electric guitar enthusiasts and musicians. These include Julian Cope's seminal *Japanrocksampler* and the work of Ventures chronicler Dan Halterman and Japan-based journalist Mark Schilling. These accounts have attempted to explain the reason for the success of the Ventures in general and more specifically the instrumental group's impact on the popularization of the electric guitar in Japan. What is missing from their analysis, however, perhaps because they do not make use Japanese language materials, is the context and personal background of these two Japanese pioneers. As the two men most responsible for popularizing the Ventures sound in Japan, their personal motivations, ambitions and musical tastes as well as their pioneering status within the Japanese popular music industry, would have a profound effect not only on the manner in which the *eleki bumu* (electric guitar craze) boom would develop, but on the subsequent "Groups Sounds" movement of 1966-69, arguably the single most important era in Japan's popular music history [4].

Formed in Tacoma, Washington in 1958, the Ventures came to national attention in the U.S in late 1960 with their hit single "Walk Don't Run," a speeded up and simplified version of a jazz number originally heard by the group on a Chet Atkins LP. In the next two years, the group would become closely associated with the hip surfing teenage subculture in Southern California and a major influence on the Beach Boys. Indeed at time when American pop music was dominated by male idol singers from the East Coast, the group can reasonably be regarded as America's first pop or rock music band. While future singles would be less successful, the groups' LPs, featuring electric guitar-based cover versions of songs from a wide range of musical genres, were a major influence on aspiring guitarists in the U.S. The group were perhaps even more influential in the U.K, where the Ventures-like combo, the Shadows, emerged as the country's first electric guitar-based band prior to the Beatles' emergence in 1963. The Ventures sound also later spread across Europe, spawning several imitators and attracting the attention in Japan, of guitar prodigy Terauchi Takeshi. It would be Terauchi who would provide much of the musical and commercial basis for a major pop music revolution in Japan in the mid-1960s.[5]

Born in 1939, Terauchi Takeshi grew up in an affluent family in Ibaraki prefecture near Tokyo and from as young as nine, had become interested in sound technology, connecting coils from an old telephone to his brother's acoustic guitar to built a rudimentary electric instrument that he hoped would be louder than his mother's shamisen. Uninterested in school work, he often listened to big band records and musical soundtracks and became a fan of the Cuban mambo artist Perez Prado whose "Mambo 5" was a world wide hit in 1950. As a teenager, he formed his own jazz band and continued to experiment with a number of guitar-like string instruments that he fashioned from materials around his house. Terauchi exhibited an

obsession with sound and experimentation that resembled that of American solid-body electric guitar pioneer Les Paul to whom he can, in many respects, be compared. Using an old violin manual, he soon taught himself musical notation and developed considerable dexterity with his left hand. Terauchi supplemented his guitar skills through a short but important period of study in the electrical engineering department of Kantou Gakuin, one that would later provide him with the background for a range of innovations in sound technology.

With country music and an early incarnation of rockabilly sweeping the Kantou area, the 19 year-old's excellent guitar technique, attracted attention from other musicians. This in turn led to an invitation to join the Honshu Cowboys, one of just a handful of professional country groups that earned a good living playing at American bases and dance halls. It was at one of these concerts in 1961 that Terauchi, who had been using a relatively basic Japanese-made electric guitar, was offered a Fender Telecaster—perhaps the only one in Japan at the time—for $100. Increasingly conscious of the musical limitations of country music, the guitarist had already become exposed to the new electric guitar sound of the Ventures, Shadows and other groups. He now resolved to bring this new guitar sound to a wider audience and in 1962 signed with Watanabe Pro, the leading music production company in Japan founded by husband and wife impresarios Shin and Misa Watanabe. The decision to join Watanabe Pro, with its hierarchical structure, nationwide reach and laser-like emphasis on finding and producing commercial product, would, like his earlier decision to purchase a Telecaster guitar and introduce the sound of the Ventures, have significant consequences, not only for his own career but for the development of the *eleki bumu* two years later.

1.2 The Ventures in Japan: Origins of the first Eleki Boom,1962-65

In late 1961, just months before forming his own group and the first Japan tour of The Ventures, Terauchi had heard Swedish guitarist Jorgen Ingmann's version of "Apache" a major instrumental hit for the Shadows in the U.K. Impressed at Terauchi's ability to arrange the song after hearing it just once on armed forces radio station FEN (Far East Network), the guitarists' then mentor, country singer Jimmy Tokita, offered him a chance to record the song on King Records. While the recording was somewhat rudimentary and did not reach a mass audience, it brought Terauchi's superb guitar skills and the Ventures-Shadows sound to the notice of other musicians, some of whom it seems likely, attended concerts in Tokyo by idol pop singer Bobby Vee and rockabilly singer Jo Ann Campbell who had recently appeared in the popular movie *Hey Lets Twist* with Joey Dee and the Starlighters. Opening for Campbell were Don Wilson and Bob Bogle, two members of The Ventures. Although they had already enjoyed two major U.S hits, their three LP recordings had not yet become available in Japan and the Japanese promoters had found funding for only two of the group to tour. Despite having to appear without a bassist or drummer, however, their technical ability on the latest Stratocaster guitars and their imposing appearance in sharkskin suits apparently mesmerized the audience and soon led to the release of their earlier LPs. Within a few months of this visit, Japanese guitar enthusiasts had dubbed the new sound (built around Don Wilson's percussive rhythm guitar sound), "deke-deke-deke" and Terauchi, who had also discovered the recordings of American country guitarist Chet Atkins, was on his way to redefining the image and sound of his newly formed instrumental band, the Blue Jeans, the first of the so-called *eleki* bands in Japan. Ever attuned to musical innovation, the 24-year old guitarist not only practiced to improve his already impressive technique, but also began working towards the development of a more sophisticated sound and stage image—one that could match that of his American mentors. In 1963 he recruited a talented former rockabilly band member,

Kase Kunihiko, who had already begun to take an interest in the burgeoning British music scene. Kase had been a member of an electric combo called the Spiders, but had lost interest in the group's jazz orientation and saw Terauchi's Blue Jeans as the closest thing to a "rock" band at a time when both the U.S and Japanese music scene were dominated by solo artists, many of whom were female idol singers. The group continued to hone its skills, performing at the so-called Western Carnival concert series in Tokyo on a regular basis and also guesting on Watanabe Pro's weekly TV show "The Hit Parade." They also began developing an on-stage choreography, inspired, according to Terauchi, by the movie of *West Side Story*.[6]

In June 1964 Terauchi's group had a double breakthrough, headlining a concert in which the opening act was the Animals (the first of the new British rock bands to visit Japan), and releasing of what was arguably the first rock music LP in Japan, *Korezo Surfing*. The instrumental album, not only showcased Terauchi's frenzied picking style and creative use of the whammy bar, but was also a technological breakthrough, featuring individual microphones for the drums and an early version of an electric piano based on Terauchi's own design (and custom-made by Yamaha). These innovations were a clear hint that Japan's own electric guitar pioneer, would be more than just an imitator. Given the release of *Korezo Surfing*, it was natural for the band to be chosen as the opening act for the Ventures on their second tour in January 1965. A few months prior to the visit, however, the group met and performed with The Liverpool Five, a virtually unknown Merseybeat group who by chance, had been asked to represent Britain at the Tokyo Olympics. The British combo, who performed at a so-called "World Surfing Festival" organized by Terauchi, were surprised that none of the Japanese bands included a vocalist. Playing to sell-out crowds of over 8,000 at the Kourakuen Ice Palace and other venues, the lead singers' vocals caused a stir among musicians in the audience and was almost certainly responsible for the decision of several of the new *eleki* bands that sprung up in the next few months to begin recruiting vocalists and move towards a sound and approach that would increasingly diverge from that of the Ventures. Among those aware of the potential of the new trend was Terauchi himself, who some time in 1964, recruited 25-year old Kobe-born vocalist Yuya Uchida into the Blue Jeans. While not the focus of the band, Uchida who had played a minor role in the rockabilly movement of the late 1950s and insisted on singing in English, would later feature on a few Rolling Stones and Beatles cover songs. Despite the presence of Uchida, however, the band remained primarily instrumental and were the obvious act to open for the Ventures' second tour of Japan in early January 1965.

Organized by Tatsu Nagashima, who would later bring The Beatles to Japan, the Ventures played a series of sold-out concerts in Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka and Sapporo. To their great surprise, the group were treated as superstars and chased by adoring female fans. The concerts also attracted a high percentage of male fans eager to study the groups' guitar techniques and get a closer look at the bands' custom-made white Mosrite guitars that were not yet available in Japan. Among their discoveries was that the Mosrite guitars had narrower necks than any Japanese guitars and were strung with lighter guage strings. It was this they now realized, that in combination to their guitar-playing idols' longer fingers, made it possible to achieve many of the effects that had so amazed them. Traveling from city to city by train, the group was surprised when Terauchi Takeshi appeared in their carriage with his guitar to ask lead guitarist Nokie Edwards some questions about his technique. Also surprising was an offer from three fans to buys the groups' guitars at the end of their tour, an offer that was accepted by the band. All three fans would go on to form their own bands and help trigger what would become a major Japanese infatuation with Mosrite guitars in particular and high-end guitar equipment in general. Stunned by their popularity in Japan at a time when the Beatles and British groups were dominating the pop charts in the U.S, the Ventures re-

turned to Japan in July to find that their "Live in Japan" LP, released by Toshiba, had made them sufficiently big stars to warrant the making a movie of their visit. With Fuji Television having just inaugurated a "battle of the bands"-style electric guitar competition called "Kachinuki Ereki Gassen," it was perhaps not surprising that audiences were now double in size. Playing over 50 concerts, the tour would reach a total attendance of 170,000 and helped send their catchy single, "Diamond Head," to the top of the pop music charts. By the end of the year, five of the groups' LPs would be in the top 10 chart for non-Japanese music [7].

1.3 The first "Cool Japan": Kayama Yuzo, "Ereki no Wakadaisho" and the spread of electric guitar culture, 1965-66

Among the reasons for the appeal of the Ventures was their stage presence. Just as the pristine cowboy outfits and performance skills of American country and western bands had attracted Japanese fans in the mid 1950s, now the sharp suits, high-tech guitars and carefully choreographed steps of the Ventures gripped the more affluent baby boom generation, many of them college students or graduates who had grown up on American movies and baseball. Symbolizing the potentially exciting and well-heeled lifestyles that this newly educated generation could aspire to, was Kayama Yuzo, the star of Toho's *Wakadaisho* movie series featuring the exciting adventures of a wholesome, but impossibly affluent college student. Kayama—whose father was a well-known actor— grew up in a classical musical-loving home but was exposed to country music-style guitar while a student at Keio high school. In 1956, he first heard Elvis Presley on FEN radio and formed his own country band that played at private dance parties and army bases. Although his acting career, initially limited his musical activities, Kayama, who by 1961 was on the Watanabe Productions roster, used his free time between movies to make recordings of his songs on a Webcor "wired" recorder. Some time in early 1963, he heard about the Ventures and together with some cousins and former Keio friends, formed a group (the Launchers) whom he invited to join him as a backing band in his next movie.

A "beach and girls" movie clearly modeled on Elvis' "Blue Hawaii," *Hawaii no Wakadaisho* would provide a breakthrough for the actor. In his earlier movies, Kayama had performed only kayokyoku ballads written by Toho Corporation songwriters. During rehearsals for "Hawaii no Wakadaisho," however, he had written some songs in English. Three of these would be chosen for use in the movie, a decision by the innovative but business-oriented Watanabe Misa, that in retrospect can be seen as a milestone in Japanese popular music history. Wearing a white suit, strumming an acoustic guitar and backed by the Launchers, Kayama, was at his Elvis-inspired best on his two mid-tempo songs, "Honky-Tonk Party" and "Sweetest of All," both sung outdoors in front of an lei-wearing audience. While no one commented on it at the time, these two songs, as well as the ballad "Dedicated" were, in fact, the first original English pop songs written by a Japanese songwriter to receive a mass audience. With his contract demanding one *Wakadaisho* movie a year, the film idol, increasingly conscious of the excitement generated by the visit of the Ventures and the growing interest in the electric guitar, persuaded his management to make the next movie in the series one that would be based around the *ereki bumu*, and which would feature not only his band but other music artists.

Released in December 1965, *Ereki no Wakadaisho*, would become perhaps the single most influential Japanese popular-culture movie of the 1960s. Featuring an amusing plot that included a battle of the bands competition; several displays of expensive guitars aimed at young male guitar enthusiasts; perfor-

mances by Terauchi and Kayama in a variety of surprising locales and numerous attractive girls, the movie is an almost perfectly formed slice of pop culture comparable in creative and musical terms with contemporary pop-music movies from the U.K and U.S. With several songs co-written by Kayama that would go on to become pop standards, the movie showed a deft and hip sense of humor that captured the optimism felt by young Japanese in the year after the Olympic Games. While one of these, "Black Sand Beach," sounds much like the Ventures, Kayama also wrote a lyric for the uptempo "Yozora no Hoshi," and the melody for romantic *kayokyoku* ballad "Kimi to Itsumademo." The success of the movie was boosted by Kayama's impressive new LP, "Exciting Sounds of Yuzo Kayama and the Launchers" and in combination with concurrent tours by the Ventures, the movie and LP triggered a massive rush by mostly male teenagers and college students to buy guitars from the leading musical instrument makers, Guya and Victor. Sales for the year ultimately reached an estimated 760,000, a figure that clearly suggests that the *eleki bumu* had spread well beyond the major urban centers. With thousands of bands being formed throughout the country, an opportunity for Japanese baby boomers to develop an original and dynamic popular music culture clearly existed [8].

1.4: Assessing the Impact of the Ventures' Pre-Beatles Tours

The Ventures return to Japan in July saw even larger crowds and this lengthy 40-date tour not only boosted album sales but sparked great interest in the groups' guitar manual "Play Guitar with the Ventures." Perhaps the key to cementing the group's soaring popularity, however, was a joint appearance with Kayama Yuzo, the *Wakadaisho* movie star singer and guitarist on Fuji Television's "The Hit Parade." In this now legendary performance, the hugely popular Ventures fan took over lead guitar, much to the delight of his many fans. During the Hokkaido leg of their tour, the group was invited to make a film record about their Japan experience. Entitled "Beloved Invaders" the humorous documentary, while not widely shown in the theaters clearly demonstrates the groups' superstar status in Japan at a time when the Beat-



1. The Ventures in Japan 1966 2. Nagisa Yuko and the Ventures, 1970



1. Kayama Yuzo with the Ventures, 1965 2. "Ereki No Wakadaisho" 1965



Nagisa Yuko with the Ventures on their 50th annivesary tour 2009



3. Nokie Edwards & Kayama 1993 4. The Ventures Play Kayama 2009

les' own comical drama *Help* was taking British pop to new levels of popularity in the U.K and U.S. Subsequent live tours, including one in March 1966 in which the group played matching red Mosrites, would also be recorded and released as either LPs or EPs. Pressed on high quality red vinyl and featuring attractive picture sleeves, these releases were highly prized and appealed to the collector instincts of many young Japanese men. Equally important in solidifying the groups' special status in Japan was their decision to incorporate Kayama's "Kimi to Itsudemo" and "Yozora No Hoshi" in their live set, as well as composing several melodies with Japanese names or themes. In 1966, the groups' "Ginza Lights" would be given Japanese lyrics and released as "Futari no Ginza" by Ken Yamauchi and Masako Izumi. This pattern of Ventures instrumentals being given Japanese lyrics would continue throughout the decade, during which the group continued to outsell the Beatles, an achievement that the members attribute to the accessibility of their sound as well as their regular tours into regional areas of Japan. In addition, the group made a conscious effort to compose minor key melodies with a *kayokyoku* feel, later writing and performing hits for *kayokyoku* singers Chiyo Okamura in 1967 and Yuko Nagisa in 1970. While the groups' impact would decline in the late 1960s, their basic sound and image, had by the time of the Beatles 1966 tour, already set the stage for male rock-band, rhythm-guitar driven sounds. Indeed the Ventures template and precise clean-cut image would remain intact even after the Beatles and other vocal groups solidified their domination of much of Anglo-European popular music world in the late 1960s.[9]

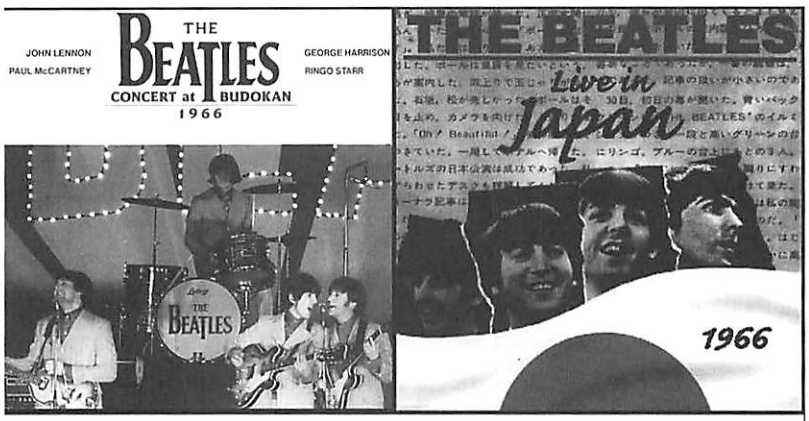
2.1 The Beatles Visit in Japan: Inspiration for Japanese Youth or Musical Gods Just Passing Through?

Given the legendary status of the Beatles in Japan today, it is natural to assume that the popularity and impact of the group followed the same trajectory as it did in other developed countries. In almost all of the English-speaking world, the bands' following and influence on youth culture and music grew rapidly from the early to mid-sixties, peaking in the late 1960s and reaching a plateau in later decades as subsequent generations discovered and effectively canonized their body of work. As will be suggested, below, however, this was not necessarily the case in Japan, despite the huge excitement generated by the Beatles triumphant concerts at the Tokyo Budokan in July 1966. The nature of the Beatles short-term impact and influence on Japanese popular music, can perhaps best be understood by an appreciation of the manner in which the Ventures' music and tours had already shaped the musical development of the Japanese groups that had formed in response to the latter's tours and LP releases. Indeed, to all intents and purposes, the basic musical and visual template of what would later be dubbed "Group Sounds,"—a genre built around four or five young male musicians and featuring electric guitars, bass and drums—predated the July 1966 visit and subsequent musical explosion triggered by the Beatles emergence in 1964.

In the year preceding the Beatles' visit, the leading Japanese pop musicians who had formed instrumental bands based around the Ventures' simple approach, confronted the impact of the so-called Liverpool (or British Invasion) sound emanating from the largely working-class cities of the U.K. The more serious of these performers and artists, such as *eleki bumu* veterans Terauchi Takeshi and Kayama Yuzo; Kase Kunihiko of the newly formed Wild Ones; Yoshikawa Jacky and Inoue Tadao of the Blue Comets and Kamayatsu Hiroshi and Inoue Takayuki of the Spiders, would have to face a number of contradictions and dilemmas in their efforts to develop, project and market their sound and image in the context of the new music from the U.S. and U.K. While far from obvious at the time however, it is in retrospect quite clear that none of these artists possessed a deep understanding or appreciation of the those American musical

genres and artists that had inspired and shaped the Beatles' sound and songwriting. Indeed with only a limited exposure to musicians and songwriters such as Chuck Berry, the Everly Brothers, Carl Perkins, Buck Owens, Leiber and Stoller and Carole King, and no real sense of the influence on the Beatles' sound made by African-American musical traditions, the aforementioned Japanese pop pioneers were in no position to fashion a sound that could parallel or draw on the Beatles pioneering musical output.[10]

In addition to their unfamiliarity with some of the key American musical cultures and styles of the early 1960s, Japanese pop musicians faced an additional issue. By the 1960s, American popular culture had already benefited from a half-century of professional commercial songwriting experience, mostly within the Broadway theater-based musical tradition of New York's Tin Pan Alley. By contrast, outside of traditional forms such as *enka* or *kayokyoku*, Japanese songwriting was restricted to a handful of men in their 40s and 50s such as Hattori Ryuichi, Koga Masao and Yoshida Tadashi. These men had made their name writing in a classical or orchestral-based jazz format and had influenced younger composers such as Miyagawa Hiroshi, Hachidai Nakamura and Sugiyama Koichi, who would go on to specialize in choral-style jazz ballads and European-influenced semi-classical styles in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While it is also true that some of the early British and American pop hits were written by older professional songwriters most of the major rock bands had, by 1966, already begun to write a majority of their songs, and take at least partial control of their own image. While older record company executives still looked to professional songwriters for hits, even these tended to be songwriters in their twenties or early thirties and following the huge worldwide commercial and artistic success of Lennon and McCartney (Beatles) Jagger and Rich-



1. Two album covers of the Beatles "Live in Japan," tour in 1966



2. Japanese Group Sounds artists, the Blue Jeans (1966) and Spiders (1967)

ards (Rolling Stones) and Brian Wilson (Beach Boys), few doubted that young British or American artists were capable of mastering the art of matching melody with words. Such was clearly not the case with Japan. [11]

On June 29, 1966, the all-conquering Beatles arrived in Tokyo, just days after a major hurricane. The groups' plane was met by a massive military protection force dubbed "Operation Beatles" that at one point numbered as many as 35,000 men in military or police uniform. This force was designed to protect the band not only from excited fans, but also from the threat of rightwing groups who opposed use of the Budokan (normally a martial arts venue and regarded by some as a shrine to the war dead) as a venue for a pop concert. Indeed the controversy over the venue had even involved the British ambassador and various Japanese government officials. Although the group wore JAL-brand Japanese Hapi jackets on their arrival and presented a friendly image at their only interview, they were in effect locked away from their fans in the heavily protected Tokyo Hotel where they occupied an entire floor. In addition, unlike the Ventures with their lengthy and leisurely tours to as many as twenty medium size towns, the Beatles performed only five sold-out concerts, appearing on stage for just thirty minutes, after opening acts from a Terauchi-less Blue Jeans, (the guitarist having recently left his own group) and distinctly underwhelming performances by Yoshikawa Jacky and the Blue Comets and novelty group the Drifters, both of whom seemed to be in awe of the event. Concert footage shows the Beatles to be confident but far from their best. The relatively reserved behavior of the Japanese fans—perhaps as much the result of the heavy police presence than any "cultural" factors— meant that the group could at least hear themselves play. This was something of a novelty since in most of Europe the screams of female fans usually overwhelmed the underpowered sound systems. Ironically, it was this very ability to hear their often out of tune and sloppy performances, that would contribute to the band's decision to give up live performances after the Philippines and Australian legs of their Asian tour. [12]

2.2: Assessing the Impact of the Beatles on Early Japanese Rock Music, 1966-70

The Beatles visit to Japan has, in recent years, taken on a legendary status with the groups' own official site claiming that "the concerts inspired many Japanese youths to pick up a guitar, giving rise to a flourishing band scene the likes of which the country had never seen before." This view is echoed by Nippop (the leading website for Japanese popular music history) which argues that "the Fab Four's stand at Budokan was in retrospect a turning point of sorts...spewing out a whole generation of kids rushing to form beat bands of their own." Rock artist and Japanese music archivist Julian Cope goes beyond this view to suggest that "waving goodbye to the Beatles at Haneda Airport, on 3rd July 1966, was—to the newly Westernised and still-insular Japanese—somewhat akin to watching four divinities departing Earth; so much so that damn near everyone in Japanese popular culture was, for the next half decade at least, consumed with following 'The Way of the Beatles'." While the enormous media interest in the so-called "Beatles Hurricane," as the 5-day event was dubbed by the press, clearly had a significant impact on Japanese youth, there is in fact little concrete evidence to support these views. Indeed the electric guitar craze had already peaked several months prior to the groups' visit. It is thus reasonably clear that it was the Ventures' tours and the release of *Eleki no Wakadaisho* a year earlier that had set the stage for the Group Sounds era that succeeded it. In retrospect, the Beatles' tour can be seen as almost the exact antithesis of those undertaken by the Ventures at around the same time. Where the latter performed throughout regional Japan; enjoyed numerous interactions with local people; covered the occasional Japanese song and

provided a meticulous sound and stage image that many young Japanese could realistically hope to imitate, the Beatles seemed, to paraphrase Cope, like a quartet of untouchable musical gods writing and playing songs with a melodic structure and musical palette that no Japanese group—and especially no instrumental one—could aspire to creatively emulate.[13]

While the sheer "otherness" and power of the Beatles' songs, sound and image may have been too intimidating to have any immediate impact on most Japanese musicians, it could not help but accelerate certain trends that were already underway in the Japanese popular music scene. These included not only the use of lead and harmony vocals, but also a more sophisticated sonic palette that would include electronic keyboards, piano and even strings. This was matched in the case of some of the newer Group Sounds outfits, with a somewhat edgier image and presentation on stage that could appeal to the growing numbers of male university students in Japan. A close look at the groups who would embody this evolution into what would be labeled "Group Sounds," however, suggests that rather than imitate or attempt to emulate the ever-evolving and complex Beatles, groups such as the Spiders, Wild Ones, Blue Comets and later Tigers, Golden Cups and Carnabeats, drew on the much simpler Ventures template supplemented by an electric organ sound drawn from the British blues-oriented Animals and vocal styles that echoed the folk-rock of the UK's Kinks and the softer and harmony-laden pop of the Beach Boys and Lovin' Spoonful. While on-stage styles, did at times echo the "dandy" 18th century and Edwardian styles used by the Beatles in the late 1960s, they were equally influenced by American idol group the Monkees, a manufactured Beatles knock off whose music and image, was like the Japanese Group Sounds bands, almost totally controlled by music industry professionals. Indeed almost all of leading the Japanese groups mentioned earlier, while given some freedom on their LPs, followed production record company guidelines on all major single releases, most of which were written by much older professional songwriters in a quasi-kayokyoku style. This can be seen by looking at the four top-selling GS songs released in the year following the Beatles' visit—"Yuhi ga Naiteiru" by the Spiders, "Omoide no Nagisa" by the Wild Ones, "Aoi Hitomi" by the Blue Comets and "Mona Liza's Smile" by the Tigers.[14]

Taken together, the four songs above, all of which were accepted by the highly conservative music establishment of the era, represented Japanese pop music's most serious response to the extraordinary flowering of popular music creativity epitomized by the Beatles and a handful of other British And American pop groups during 1966-67. Yet unlike the timeless classics produced by groups such as the Beach Boys, Rolling Stones, Kinks and of course the Beatles during the this same period, all but one of these songs was at least co-written by a middle-aged music industry professional and given orchestral-type arrangements that rendered them safe enough to gain cross generation appeal. Thus while the four groups at various times borrowed Beatlesque stage costumes and styles, their musical style does not in any significant way seem inspired by the British group. While it is also true that the styles of the late 1960s GS bands were quite far removed from that of the still regularly touring Ventures, the latter retained their "archetypal rock band" status throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, by which time the GS boom had been supplanted with a combination of alternative rock and folk-rock which drew some inspiration from the American hippy movement but borrowed little from any specific western musical group.

It is hardly surprising, given the ubiquity of their music and image in so many areas of Japanese popular and commercial culture, that the Beatles should be seen as not only the definitive pop-rock band, but also the single biggest influence on the development of Japanese pop in the 1960s. For the casual observer, this view might, if anything, be reinforced by a cursory look at the album sleeves of the major Group Sounds who emerged in the years 1966-69. These show myriad echoes, and in some cases direct imita-

tions, of the Beatles fashion and image. Yet as has been suggested above, the actual musical impact of the Beatles was necessarily highly limited due to a range of historical and socio-cultural factors. The most important of these were the early adoption of an all-male instrumental band template as a counter to the female-oriented idol pop of the early 1960s; the Japanese affinity for neatly presented, consistent and highly skilled performers who showed a real respect for Japanese sensibilities and perhaps above all, the realistic possibility of imitation of the sounds they heard, by Japanese youth, especially males. All of these, it is clear, favored the ascendency and influence of the Ventures for the bulk of the culturally all-important mid-1960s. While the Beatles' sheer musical genius and power certainly had a dramatic impact on Japanese youth, the latter, mostly teenage college students, could hardly be expected to challenge the basic structure of the music industry with its all-powerful production companies epitomized by Watanabe Pro. These companies, with their established professional songwriters and producers, did not hesitate to use their power to control, emasculate and straitjacket the output of the talented musicians who emerged out of the *eleki bumu*, while also making sure that they were employed on highly inequitable and exploitative contracts that provided a salary only and no royalties. The latter meanwhile, lacking the deep exposure to American musical traditions that their British counterparts possessed simply did not possess the kind musical understanding required to create Japanese songs that embodied the originality and depth of the best of those that reached them from Japan and the U.S. The result of this inability to effect a real musical revolution, it may be argued, was to set the Japanese music industry on a path that would by the mid 1970s, have diverged greatly from the western one and, with its reliance on short-term commercial product designed or customized solely for Japanese consumption, greatly reduce its chances of becoming a significant player in the popular music culture of the developed world.

Timeline of Events In western-genre Japanese Popular Music History, 1960-70

1960: The Ventures' "Walk Don't Run" becomes international hit
1961: Terauchi Takeshi records "Apache," on Telecaster guitar with Jimmy Tokita's band
1962: First appearances by members of the Ventures in Japan. Cover band The Spiders formed
1962-63: Terauchi Takeshi forms Blue Jeans and recruits guitarist Kase Kazuhiko
1963-64: The Blue Jeans and the Blue Comets perform on Japanese TV music shows
1964: The Blue Jeans release "Korezo Surfing" and make use of electric keyboards
1964: "The Animals" and "Liverpool Five" play in Japan
1965: Ventures tour Japan in January and June. *Ereki no Wakadaisho* triggers guitar boom
1966: The Beatles play in Japan. Group Sounds (GS) bands add vocalists to lineup and score hit singles with kayokyoku style songs written by established songwriters
1967-68: Heyday of Groups Sounds led by the Spiders and Tigers. Ventures outsell Beatles
1969-70: Western rock-influenced GS bands such as Carnabeats and Tempters challenge earlier pop-oriented GS but with little commercial success. Folk music boom begins

Notes

1 Social studies teacher Hideki Osaka examined the high school texts produced by eight major Japanese publishers and found numerous references to the Beatles impact. See "The Beatles in Japanese Education" at http://ns.tamano.or.jp/usr/osaka/pages/b-data/e-theme1.htm. The groups' status in Japan is discussed by W. David Marx, "Beatlemania in Japan: Beatles cover bands but no 'Rock Band'" at http://www.cnngo.com/tokyo/play/beatles-mania-japan-cover-bands-no-rock-band-968101.

2 Journalist Alfie Goodrich writes about Beatles cover bands in Tokyo in "Yoko Ono in Tokyo, John Lennon Museum

& Beatles Tribute band." See http://imaginepeace.com/news/archives/4438. The Osaka scene is described by Darron Davies in "Beatles Remain Popular in Japan." See http://www.japantoday.com/category/entertainment-arts/view/beatles-remain-popular-in-japan.

3 See Malcolm Davis, "Japan's Super Group-the Ventures." *Billboard*, September 19, 1970 for statistics about the Ventures' LP, EP and singles sales in Japan in the 1960s.

4 Julian Cope's *JapRocksampler: How the Post-War Japanese Blew Their Minds on Rock 'N' Roll* (London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007) is the only book in English with a full chapter focusing on Japanese pop in the 1960s while Dan Halterman, *Walk-Don't Run: The Story of the Ventures* (Lulu.Com, 2009) is the definitive study of the Ventures and includes several pages dealing with the group's relationship with Japan. Mark Schilling, *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture* (Weatherhill Books,1997) includes lengthy entries on Kayama Yuzo and Group Sounds.

5 Basic information on the career of Ventures is taken from Dan Halterman, *Walk-Don't Run: The Story of the Ventures*; the groups' official homepage, http://www.theventures.com and the fan site Sandcastle VI, http://www.sandcastlevi.com/ventures/f_ventures.html.

6 Author's interview with Ishida Shintaro and Terauchi Takeshi, August 23, 2009 and with Kase Kazuhiko August 6, 2009. Terauchi Takeshi, *Teketeke Den* (Tokyo, Kodansha 2004), pp. 33-36 Details of the first two Ventures tours to Japan are described by Halterman, *Walk Don't Run*, pp.117-18. Author's interview with Don Wilson, January 10, 2010.

7 Terauchi Takeshi, *Teketeke Den, pp.* 36-41. The most detailed biography of Terauchi is at the Wonderful Musicians Website, "Electric Guitar God Terauchi Vol 1", http://plaza.rakuten.co.jp/tmatsumoto/2034. The relationship between the Ventures and the Japanese *eleki bumu* musicians is described by Halterman, *Walk Don't Run*, pp.119-120, 126-29. For information on the Liverpool Five's tour of Japan in 1964, see "The Liverpool Five" at the Transworld 60s Punk Website, http://60spunk.m78.com/liverpool5.htm. For the success of the Ventures' LPs in the wake of their 1965 tour, see J. Fukunishi, "Japan 65: Electric Guitars Twang, the Ventures Clang," *Billboard*, January 15, 1966

8 Biograhical information on Kayama Yuzo is taken from his autiobiography, *I am Music: Ongakuteki Jinseiron*, (Tokyo Koudansha, 2005), pp.27-54, 89, 139; Wonderful Musicians, "Kayama Yuzo's 45th Anniversary"; Mark Schilling, *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture* (Weatherhill Books,1997) p. 202 and Julian Cope. *JapRocksampler: How the Post-War Japanese Blew Their Minds on Rock 'N' Roll* (London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), pp. 81-83. For Kayama's discography, see the tribute website Muyonosuke Dan no Ongaku Kobo at http://www5a.biglobe.ne.jp/~dansound/kayamayuuzoukona-1.htm.

9 Halterman, *Walk Don't Run* pp.127-29; Ventures guitarist Don Wilson discusses the groups relationship with the Japanese music industry in general in Philip Brasor, "The Ventures: Still Rocking after 50 Years," *The Japan Times*, Aug 7, 2008. For video footage of the groups' "Beloved Invaders" documentary, see youtube.

10 See Michael Furmanovsky, *The American and British Origins of Japan's "Eleki Bumu" and "Group Sounds" and the Marginalization of Japanese Popular Music, 1961-66* (forthcoming, Minerva Press) for an analysis of the origins of Group Sounds.

11 For background on the songwriting tradition in Japan see the author's "Watanabe Productions and *The Hit Parade*: A Comparative Study of Early Pop Music TV music Shows and Artists in Japan and the UK in the Years Before The Beatles" *in Geijitsu no Media Cultural Studies (Minerva Press, 2009). pp 124-2.* This is also discussed by Spiders member Inoue Tadayuki in the NHK Documentary, "The Tigers & '60s GS boom," broadcast on NHK on January 6, 2008 and viewable at youtube; See also Kayama, *I am Music*: 139-49 and Kase Kunihiko, *Beatles no Okagedesu: The Wild Ones Fuunroku* (Tokyo, Ei Shuppansha 2001)

12 Although the Daiwa Foundation held an exhibition on the 40th anniversary of the Japan leg of the Asian tour featuring journalist Bob Whitaker's book *The Beatles in Japan*, (Ascom Press, 2006), surprisingly little has been written in either Japanese or English about the Beatles visit to Japan. The most detailed accounts are by Cope, *Japanrock-Sampler*, pp. 87-89 and "Budo-can't: Rockin In Japan?" written by the author of the Beatles fansite "Old Rope." See http://oldrope.wordpress.com. Michael Stewart, the British ambassador in Tokyo at the time wrote a seven-page letter about the positive public relations aspect of the visit. The letter, originally in the FBI file of John Lennon is reprinted at http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/beatles1.html.

13 Cope's quotation is from *JapanrockSampler*, p.89. The figure of 760,000 sales is also cited by Cope, and repeated

by several websites, among them the Radiodiffusion Internasionaal site at http://www.radiodiffusion.net. None of the sources give any evidence for this now mythical statistic.

14 Information on the early Group Sounds recordings comes from five Japanese fan sites: Popular Song Box; Transworld 60s Punk, Rahyale Maniac Popular Song Blog; Nippop.com and Radiodiffusion Internasionaal Annexe. Additional details are from Kurosawa Susumsu, *Nippon Rock-ki GS hen Complete* (Tokyo, Shinko Music, 2007). Cope discusses the problematic relationship of the Group Sounds bands with their record companies in *JapanrockSampler*, pp. 90-94

Japanese Books and Articles

Terauchi Takeshi, 2004. Teketeke den, Tokyo, Koudansha

Kase Kunihiko, 2001. Beatles no Okagedesu: The Wild Ones Fuunroku , Tokyo, Ei Shuppansha

Kayama Yuzo, 2005. I am Music: Ongakuteki jinseiron, Tokyo, Koudansha

Kurosawa Susumsu, 2007. Nippon Rock-ki GS hen Complete: Psychedelia in Japan 1966-1969, Tokyo, Shinko Music

Websites

Another Group Sounds. Website devoted to Japanese Group Sounds. http://60spunk.m78.com/gsbands.htm. Accessed September 16, 2009

The Beatles Official EMI Site <http://www.emimusic.jp/beatles> Accessed December 6, 2009

Dansound. Fansite devoted to the music and acting career of Kamaya Yuzo. http://www5a.biglobe.ne.jp/~dansound/hawainowakadaisyo.htm. Accessed September 23, 2009

Kayama Yuzo's Official Website. <http://www.kayamayuzo.com/history/#history3> Accessed September 30, 2009

Muyonosuke Dan no Ongaku Kobo. Website devoted to the music and life of Kayama Yuzo. http://www5a.biglobe.ne.jp/~dansound. Accessed August 23, 2009

Nippop. Biographies of Japanese pop artists. <http://nippop.com>Accessed September 23, 2009

Popular Song Box. Fan website devoted to 1960s Japanese pop music. <http://dribox.g-serve.net/kayopop/GS/gs.htm> Accessed October 4, 2009

Radiodiffusion Internasionaal. Website devoted to the evolution of popular music from Africa, the Middle East, India and Asia. <http://www.radiodiffusion.net> Accessed July 23, 2009

Rahyale. Personal Blog of "Rahyale" focusing on the LPs of Group Sounds Artists <http://blogs.yahoo.co.jp/rahyale/folder/894275.html> Accessed October 15, 2009

The Smoking Gun. Website containing "secret" documents released under the U.S Freedom of Information Act including a report by the British ambassador to Japan about the Beatles tour. Documents reprinted from John Lennon's FBI file and released by Professor Jon Wiener. <http://www.thebeatles.com/#/article/The_Beatles_concerts_in_Japan> Accessed December 3, 2009

Transworld 60s Punk. Website "Dedicated to 60s Garage Punk." <http://60spunk.m78.com> Accessed September 18, 2009

The Ventures Official Homepage. <http://www.theventures.com> Accessed November 20, 2009

Wonderful Musicians. Website devoted to Groups Sounds and Japanese pop music of the 1960s <http://plaza.rakuten.co.jp/tmatsumoto/2034> Accessed September 19, 2009

Video Sources

NHK Documentary. 2008. "The Tigers & '60s GS boom." NHK January 6

Interviews by the Author

Author's Interview with Kase, Kunihiko, August 6, 2009

Author's Interview with Ishida, Shintaro, August 23, 2009

Author's Interview with Terauchi, Takeshi, August 23, 2009

Author's Interview with Don Wilson, January 10, 2010