

The Asian Reporter

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Shirt-photo tradition at APEC summit

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Marcos jewelry appraised again

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Sia video features child karate master with Olympic dreams



KARATE KID. Nine-year-old Mahiro Takano, three-time Japan karate champion in her age group, practices in Nagaoka, Niigata prefecture, north of Tokyo. Mahiro stars in singer Sia's latest music video "Alive" — the just-released single from the singer's upcoming album. Her kicks, turns, and punches in the air are part of kata forms that are like choreography in the Japanese defensive martial art of karate. Kata competition is separate from combat matches, which are also part of the sport. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

By Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

NAGAOKA, Japan — She has a soft spot for Duffy the Disney Bear and her favorite food is chocolate. She does her homework before dinner but really loves skateboarding, playing video games, and bouncing on her trampoline.

If Mahiro Takano sounds like any nine-year-old, think again: The third-grader from Niigata prefecture, a rice-growing region in Japan, stars in Sia's latest music video "Alive" — the just-released single from the singer's upcoming album.

In a backdrop of stark gray, the girl, wearing a white and black wig evocative of Sia's hairstyle, performs a dazzling routine with quick fists and kicks, and an adorably determined concentration of energy.

Mahiro, a three-time Japan karate champion in her age group, found making a music video was quite fun, and agreed she would do it again, especially if Justin Bieber or Taylor Swift offers.

The video shoot with Sia in a Tokyo suburb took about a week. She made a point to move to match the music, and "look cool," Mahiro said in an interview at her home, where she was gulping down her

dinner of curry and boiled eggs before rushing to karate practice.

"She was nice," she said calmly of Sia. "She kept saying I was fantastic."

"Amazing" was the way her thoroughly impressed mother, Masayo Takano, remembers Sia repeatedly praising her daughter.

"I was so excited," her mother said, letting out a squeal not quite as fierce as the long throaty screams her daughter makes during her karate routines.

Mahiro — whose name means "ten thousand kindness, as well as ten thousand

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