

# Who Are the Korean Cheerleaders Flooding TikTok?

Videos of baseball cheerleaders performing an ultra-chill dance routine have taken over social media algorithms, intriguing millions of viewers.

 Listen to this article · 4:58 min [Learn more](#)



By **Rachel Sherman**

Published Aug. 27, 2024 Updated Aug. 31, 2024

It starts with bouncy drum beats, quickly interrupted by the sounds of sneakers squeaking on a gym floor. Then a thumbs up comes into frame, swiveling up and down like a hammer.

The strangely entralling routine, often referred to as the “Pikki Pikki” dance, is performed by cheerleaders for the Kia Tigers, a Korean baseball team, and it has become a sensation on TikTok, racking up millions of views across numerous accounts. The moves are simple, repetitive and unassuming; the song, addictively catchy (beware). It’s become a perfect recipe for flooding the algorithms.

While the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders have turned “Thunderstruck,” a maximalist routine, into a symbol of football and cheerleading in the United States, the Tigers’ cheerleaders are more subdued, gently throwing their elbows and mostly dancing in place. They even look a little ... bored?

The lax approach is intentional, according to Lee Si-Young, founder and president of Apex Communications, which represents the cheer squad. The dance is performed whenever a Tigers pitcher strikes out an opposing batter as a cheeky way for the cheerleaders to applaud their team while gently poking fun at the other guys.

**always\_kia\_tigers**

pink\_hannaaa · 기아 빠끼빠끼

[View profile](#)[View more on Instagram](#)

58,521 likes

**always\_kia\_tigers**

오늘 같이 추실 분? 🎶跳舞

#빠끼빠끼챌린지 #기아타이거즈삼진송

[View all 253 comments](#)Add a comment...

"We emphasize setting moves and outward expressions to match the tone and mood of the music while making it easy for the fans to follow," Mr. Lee said in an email through a translator. "We felt that it would fit more to have a more casual feel rather than something energetic or powerful."

The moves — dancing with two thumbs up — are decidedly uncomplicated. But performed deadpan by cheerleaders, in front of 16,000 fans, 10 to 15 times per game, the dance has an unexpected charm.

It's that low-key spirit that has attracted fans around the world and spurred confusion online. The dance has been performed since 2022 — so why the sudden influx? The surge of interest has come as the Korea Baseball Organization has seen record-breaking crowds, credited in part to a spike in ticket sales to young female fans. The rapid growth and changing demographics have meant more eyes are on the cheerleaders (and, of course, on the players, too).

"K.B.O. is more recognized outside of Korea than it's ever been," said Dan Kurtz, who runs MyKBO, a fan site dedicated to covering Korean baseball in English. "The Kia Tigers are like the New York Yankees of the K.B.O."



K.B.O. games are known for their high energy, and the cheerleaders play a large role in that. The strikeout dance has a subdued nature because it is performed when the Tigers are on the field, not at bat. Kia Tigers

Tickets cost the equivalent of \$5 to \$10 during the regular season, Mr. Kurtz said, and fans can bring in their own food and drinks, making a baseball game an affordable outing for younger spectators. It's also common, he said, for the cheerleaders to have specific songs and dances for individual players and to lead the crowd through the motions.

"It's like a rock concert compared to Major League Baseball games," he said. "At a Korean baseball game, it doesn't matter the score, the fans are up singing, cheering."

The catchy tune in the routine — "Lecon Studios" by Olive Beat, sampled from "My Lecon" by the Korean boy band JTL — is called the "strikeout song" by the cheering staff, Mr. Lee said. But because of the squeaky sound effects, fans began calling it the "Pikki Pikki," an onomatopoeia for the sound of something creaking.

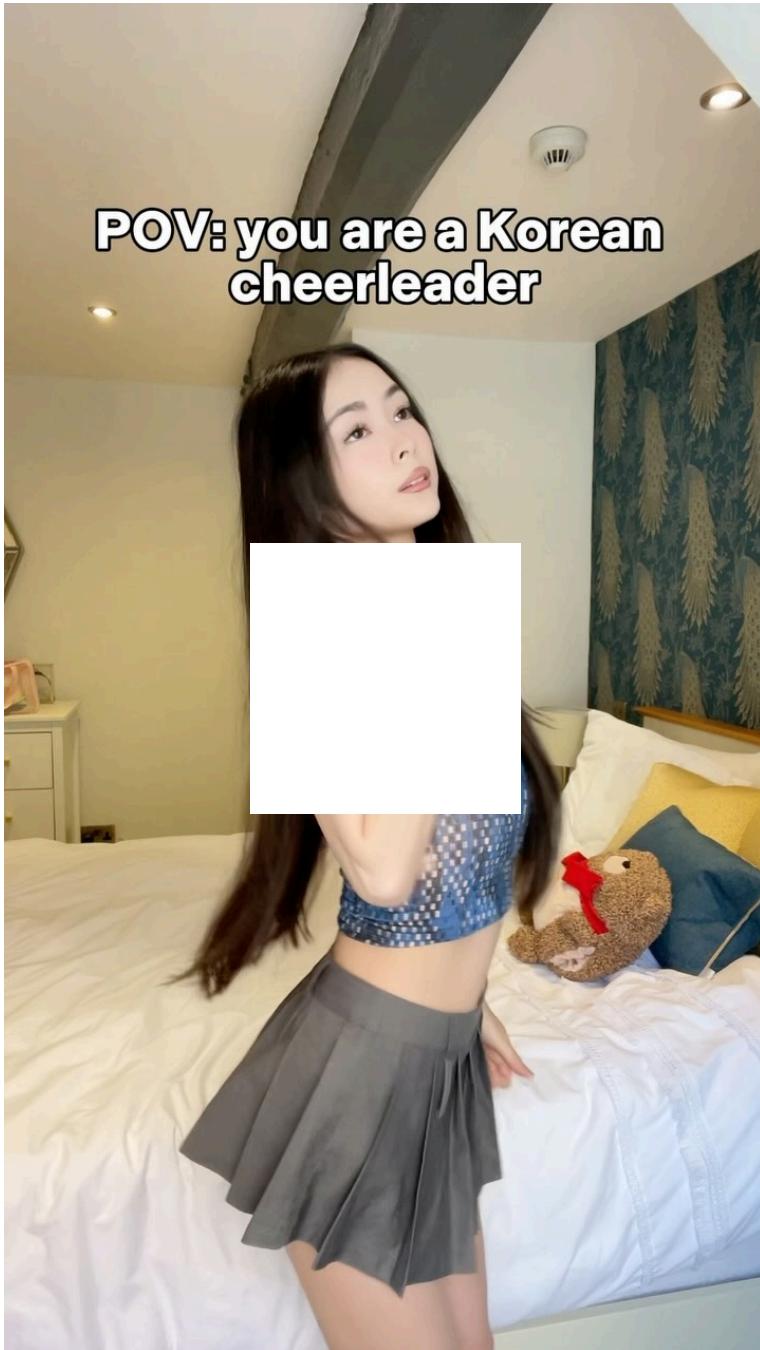
The dance has spawned numerous imitators, who, smitten by the cutesy number and its accompanying ear worm, mimic the cheerleaders' blank stares and hip swivels.

Among the imitators is Melissa Minh, a model and influencer in Britain, who poked fun at the lack of enthusiasm, but captioned the post "They are so pretty though."



**melissaminh\_**  
plastic\_\_\_man · 빠니까송

[View profile](#)



[View more on Instagram](#)

**melissaminh\_**

They are so pretty though ❤️

♡ folgt mir auf TikTok - melissaminh  
♡ Music TikTok - melissaminh.music  
♡ YouTube - Melissa Minh

#korean #koreancheerleader #cheerleader #korea #dance #melissaminh

[View all 64 comments](#)

Add a comment...

“The trend is a bit hard to explain in terms of why it’s trending,” said Deborah Park, 32, a content creator from Oklahoma City who has also made videos of the dance. She said her friends were slow to understand the appeal. “But once it clicks, they find it intriguing as well.”

“This is basically the first time that a K.B.O. cheerleading routine has reached worldwide viral/TikTok challenge status,” Mr. Lee said. “So the squad is feeling a lot of pride”

If there’s one breakout star, it’s Lee Ju-Eun, who shares the same name as a K-pop star, causing a few mix-ups in TikTok tags, and whose bouncy hair and barrettes are featured in several of the most-viewed videos.

“She is somewhat dazed by all this happening,” Mr. Lee said of the cheerleader’s sudden fame. “But at the same time, she is taking it as a fun, unique and positive experience overall.”

In several videos, Ms. Lee refreshes her makeup or puts down an electric fan before getting up to dance, prompting curious viewers online to wonder if the distracted look is intentional.

In actuality, the “Pikki Pikki” dance happens only when the Tigers are on the field, and the cheerleaders are resting between strikeouts.

Before the song begins, the cheerleaders powder their faces and cool themselves in front of fans. They’re preoccupied, they couldn’t be bothered — until the squeaks start up and it’s time to dance. Then they stand with a nonchalance that brushes aside any great sense of urgency. Finally, they start to smirk.

**Rachel Sherman** reports on culture and the arts. More about Rachel Sherman

---

A version of this article appears in print on , Section ST, Page 4 of the New York edition with the headline: For TikTok’s Korean Cheerleaders, It’s Blasé for the Win