

Blind box boom

From the joy of collecting to the excitement of unboxing, blind boxes are more than toys

| MAYA GODINA

Hidden in plain sight, they are everywhere: concealed behind a plant, watching atop a phone, even in armies perched on shelves. These creatures take many forms, some dressed in unusual hats while others glow green when darkness falls.

Many know them as Sonny Angels and Smiskis, but they are a ripple effect of a much bigger trend: blind boxes. Some may believe they are just toys, but these tiny plastic creatures mean much more.

Blind boxes can be traced back to the 1980s in Japan. According to the China-Britain Business Council, lucky bags called fukubukuro, mystery bags containing surprise items, and capsule toys sold from coin-operated vending machines, called gashapon, first became popular around this time.

In March 2004, Toru Soeya, a Japanese toy manufacturer and the CEO of Dreams Inc., launched Sonny Angel. After the success of the mini figures across Japan, Dreams Inc. released Smiski in 2009.



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Because of social media platforms like TikTok, blind boxes have taken the internet by storm. On TikTok, “#blindboxes” has accumulated 693,000 posts as of January 2025.

Like many others, Canadian content creator Xiao Bae discovered Sonny’s Angels after constantly seeing them on TikTok. Since buying her first Sonny Angel in January 2024, her collection has grown to more than 300 mini figures.

“At first, I just wanted to get one, but there are so many different designs and you find yourself always looking for more,” said Xiao Bae.

Her collection almost feels like an art piece as it includes designs from the past 20 years.

“Their appeal to me is that they look extremely cute, especially when displayed together,” Xiao Bae said. “They make me feel happy when I look at them.

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On the other hand, many enjoy Smiskis and Sonny Angels because of the anticipation of opening them.

“When I opened my first Smiski blind box I was really excited, but a little nervous because I was scared I wasn’t gonna get the one I wanted,” said Miyu Ikeda, a freshman at the University of Southern California.

In total, Ikeda bought 12 boxes, believing the more she got, the more likely she was to get her desired Smiski. However, due to the randomness of each box, her chances were the same each time. Ikeda’s thought process is better known as the gambler’s fallacy.

“Opening them is kind of like gambling to me,” said Carlmont sophomore Justin Ji. “That’s not the best way to describe it, but I like the surprise and anticipation.”

A guide to blind boxes' success

BUY THEM ALL!

70%

of people would purchase a blind box three or more times for the design they want

The industry is estimated to have doubled in value over the past four years



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Art by Skylin Lui