Welcome to Anime

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What is Anime?

We have all heard about anime. The word itself is used in Japan, where it was first coined, to refer to all animated content but around the world, it is used to refer to animated content created in Japan. For the sake of this article, we will be using the word anime how the rest of the world uses it.  The first anime was published back in 1917, just over a century ago, and since then anime has come a long way. Although originally made just for the Japanese audience, anime started to gain popularity in the 1960s with the premiere of the anime ‘Astro Boy’, which was broadcasted to American televisions. It was an instant hit and a monumental moment in the history of anime. As time passed, more and more countries such as Spain and France started to broadcast anime and within the past 40 years, anime has become a global phenomenon. Now, to clear up a major misconception. Many people consider anime to be a ‘genre’. In reality, anime is much broader than that. Anime is a massive industry that contains various shows and movies based on numerous genres such as comedy, adventure, romance, sci-fi, action, tragedy, fiction and so many more. It is not just one genre but a mix of every genre imaginable.

Why is anime special?

The easiest answer to that question for any anime fan is:” It’s different.” Anime is not the same as the animated shows and movies created elsewhere in the world. There are many differences such as the art style, the storytelling, the cultural nuances of the characters, and certain themes depicted in anime that are not present in any other animated content. The art style of each anime has something special about it. They can range from vibrant and outlandish anime such as ‘FLCL’ and ‘No Game No Life’ to simple and direct in anime such as ‘Azumanga Daioh!’ Every art style has something special about it and strikes the audience’s eyes in a matter of seconds.  In terms of storylines, there are no shortages of those in anime. An anime can be 13 episodes long or even stretch up to more than 950 episodes (yes, there are anime which go on for that long), yet they both can create characters and stories into which a viewer is emotionally invested for the entire time. These storylines can be comedic such as that in ‘One Punch Man’ or tear-jerking, heart-wrenching, and beautiful such as that in ‘Your Lie in April’.  Coming to character nuances, as anime is made in Japan, it is made primarily for Japanese audiences. Due to this, certain common character traits throughout all anime are difficult to get used to for non-Japanese viewers, which unfortunately makes some people completely avoid anime. However, we get used to these nuances and also start to understand Japanese culture and the language more. Anime is not only a direct source of entertainment but it also indirectly helps us understand how things vary in Japan compared to the rest of the world.  As mentioned above, Japanese culture is different from that in the rest of the world. There is a common belief that ‘anime is weird’ because it has weird jokes or nudity. Yes, that may be true from our perspective but those things are common in Japanese content. Anime fans understand and start to accept these small details and can enjoy these moments in the way the creators wanted them to be enjoyed. Most anime have such ‘weird’ moments but beyond them is a well written-plot with relatable characters and a mesmerising art style and it is an injustice to call such anime ‘weird’.

I feel the greatest quality that anime has is that there is always something for everyone, at every age, and for every kind of desire. There are anime such as ‘Pokémon’ which is aimed mainly at kids but even older generations of people who have been watching it since its release in 1997 are fully invested in even after 2 decades. There are anime films such as ‘Spirited Away’ or ‘My Neighbour Totoro’, both produced by the world-famous Studio Ghibli which is enjoyed by people of all ages. Then there are shows aimed at younger teens such as ‘Dragon Ball’ and ‘Naruto’, which was the first anime many fans of the industry ever watched when they were just seven or eight years old and millions of people watch these shows even as adults. Shows such as ‘Tokyo Ghoul’ and ‘Attack on Titan’ are aimed at older teenagers, while shows like ‘Berserk’ and ‘Monster’ are meant for mature audiences. Yet, all anime can be enjoyed by every single person, as each person relates to a character or story in their personal way, making it special for them.  This also clears up the common misconception that anime is meant just for children. People believe that anime are just cartoons, aimed only for children but that is not the case. Certain anime need a level of maturity to be truly appreciated and enjoyed, which many young children cannot do and so saying that anime is just meant for kids is completely illogical. Anime is also available through various languages. You can watch it in Japanese and understand what the characters are saying with the help of subtitles, and if that is not comfortable for you, you can always find an English dubbed version of the anime.

Where to start and where to watch anime?

If you are new to anime and are confused about what anime to begin with, you can start with any of the shows mentioned above. I would also recommend shows such as ‘Death Note’ if you are into mysteries and drama, or ‘Cowboy Bebop’ if you enjoy sci-fi. These are a couple of my favourite anime and I always recommend them when someone asks me what they should start with. Both are short anime but leave a major impact on you. However, you may not like these genres and that is fine. Anime is diverse and you can always find something specifically for you. You could ask one of your friends who watches anime to suggest something that would suit your tastes or you could always search for some anime yourself. My suggestion would be that to enjoy anime you need to be able to experiment and try out different anime to find out what suits you best. Regarding where to watch it, Netflix has a wide choice of anime which are all worth watching and there are also sites such as 4anime.to or gogoanime.io, where you can watch anime for free and safely. I hope I have been able to clear up some misconceptions about this incredible industry and got some of you to join our amazing anime community.