



# KONSHUU

vol. 54 #7

音楽 (Music)

Fling Posse  
*Hypnosis Mic*  
Art By Kate Bushmareva

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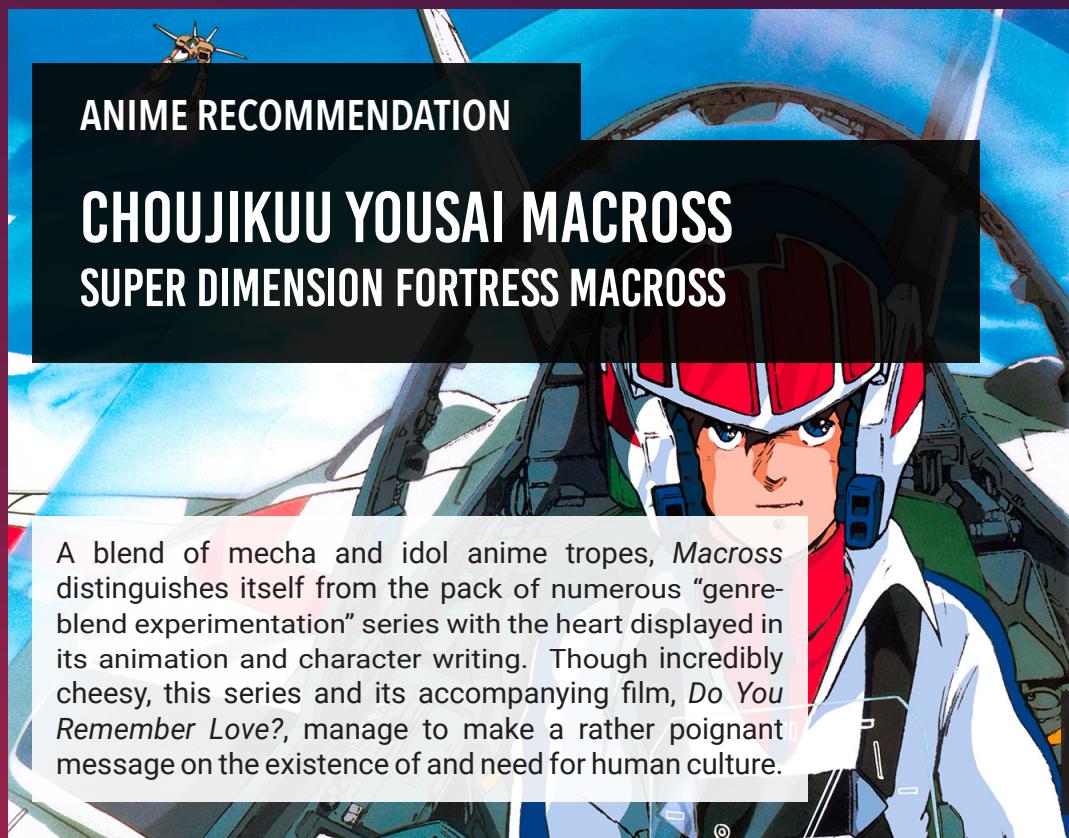
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# THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED SERIES!

**ANIME RECOMMENDATION**

## CHOUJIKUU YOUSAI MACROSS SUPER DIMENSION FORTRESS MACROSS



A blend of mecha and idol anime tropes, *Macross* distinguishes itself from the pack of numerous “genre-blend experimentation” series with the heart displayed in its animation and character writing. Though incredibly cheesy, this series and its accompanying film, *Do You Remember Love?*, manage to make a rather poignant message on the existence of and need for human culture.



1982-83, Tatsunoko Production  
Directed by Noboru Ishiguro  
36 episodes



April 20, 2006,  
Brownie Brown, HAL Laboratory  
Directed by Nobuyuki Inoue  
Published by Nintendo

**GAME RECOMMENDATION**

## MOTHER 3



Although it's not explicitly a rhythm game, *Mother 3* incorporates a new mechanic where by pressing a button to the beat of the music, you can land extra hits on the enemy. However, without an official physical copy outside Japan, you'll have to use an emulator which messes up the timing of the combos. Regardless, *Mother 3* is a delightful finale to the *Mother* trilogy with a tragic story, simply addictive gameplay, and of course, a stellar soundtrack to play along with.

# FULL MOON WO SAGASHITE EMPTYING HOURGLASS



MAX R.

3rd Year, Japanese

Hopefully this isn't too morbid for Konshuu.

Writer

## SPOILERS FOR FULL MOON WO SAGASHITE

Death will come to everyone indiscriminately. Friends and family, aspirations and achievements, all that one has ever known, worked for, and has been taught to treat with some level of importance will eventually come to naught, ultimately lacking inherent meaning in any universal sense, instead functioning as distractions in dissuading mentalities of constant concernment with impending doom from engulfing the individual. Once crushing ordeals are rendered trivial upon glimpsing the bigger picture of life at large; it is extremely easy to get swept up in daily endeavors and encounters to where one misses opportunities for existential musings, simply floating on by through the years without ruminating until old age knocks on the door and questions in this vein pertaining to the value one's life holds suddenly grow relevant and no longer feel so distant.

Albeit aesthetically appearing cute and seemingly lighthearted, *Full Moon wo Sagashite*, speaking to the anime adaptation as the manga supposedly differs in content, is capable of addressing this heavy subject matter, hitting me significantly harder than I would've expected. Immediately established is 12-year old, Kouyama Mitsuki, who dreams of becoming a singer, yet afflicted by throat cancer, she is unable to pursue these aspirations; even worse, Shinigami duo, Takuto and Meroko, arrive to inform her of the single year she has left to live. Rather than discouraged however, with assistance from the Shinigami who take pity on her, Mitsuki rushes to grasp hold of her dreams with the time remaining. Healthy viewers who aren't on the verge of death may dissociate themselves from this premise, but perhaps part of why Mitsuki's dilemma is simultaneously so affecting and inspiring is precisely because, to some extent, it is actually shared by every living person in existence.

The series encapsulates the cherishing of life, self-fulfillment and existentialism, drawing attention to the fact that everybody has an hourglass that will inevitably run out, life essentially consisting of bidding time in myriad ways until death comes around. The notable difference lies with Mitsuki's hourglass being made apparent, the acknowledgement of limited time causing it to feel all the more precious and spurring her to take action. In some ways, not entirely dissimilar to *Technolyze*'s absurdism brought about by Yoshii and Ichise, there lies distinct beauty in watching people brave universal meaninglessness to seek out their own fulfillment, which Mitsuki effectively does through her music. While the first half of the series is lighter, adopting an aston-

ishingly cheerful tone in spite of the established predicaments, the latter half grows serious and dire, exploring the implications and complications of a recognizably limited lifespan. A certain self-awareness in relation to mortality is present, Mitsuki readily comprehending that even the Shinigami supporting her will one day end up taking her life, as she sees happen to others in her situation.

As much as she attempts to remain headstrong, many obstacles still lie in wake; with the search for her lost love, Eichi, as an ulterior motive for her singing, Mitsuki is utterly devastated at the realization that he has been long dead. With no light at the end of the tunnel, she abandons all hope, having lost her supposed "meaning of life," her ambitions crumble and health deteriorates rapidly. In stark contrast to her prior mental fortitude in earnestly enduring anything thrown at her, days turn into a literal battle of life and death in efforts to retain the will to live. Would it have been better off not undertaking this entire journey if only disappointment lies at the end? Thoughts of this nature clutter her mind; no longer does she sing, feeling no reason to, and at her lowest point, suicide seems like a tempting escape. I feel that accentuating this juxtaposition is integral, highlighting a trap that more unstable individuals could potentially fall into. It is the process of widening one's perspective to seek out a more nuanced answer regarding existential dread that serves as a gateway to coherent understanding. The series goes about challenging meaninglessness, as Mitsuki, with the help of many who care for her, comes to a realization that her singing doesn't necessarily require specific reason, to where even in a world without Eichi, she finds new satisfaction in singing simply because she likes to.

This dynamic between action and meaning parallels the common notion of life requiring some sort of grand overarching purpose, or that such a thing even exists to begin with, continually perpetuated ad nauseum by human tendencies to chase after that of this nature. The entire quest for meaning in itself is perhaps meaningless, as is the meaning found in something being meaningful or meaningless at all. Even holding recognition of the fact of imminent death and looming futility surrounding everyday life, this isn't to say that one should anxiously hole up to await their day of passing, as a reason for living isn't necessary, and one can live simply because one is capable of doing so. Personal satisfaction, wholly distinct from inherent meaning, is truly what matters at the end of the day, there lying innumerable paths one can take which extend towards reaching said satisfaction, the stretch of time in between birth and death employed to traverse those paths, and the capacity to feel satisfied with one's life being something to strive for. With this in mind, *Full Moon wo Sagashite* serves to emphasize the beauty in life's ephemerality through an incredibly emotionally resonant journey.

# SPEEDRUNNING MUSIC-INDUCED HIGHS VIA ANIME OPENINGS



**BLAKE MORRISON**

2nd Year, Intended English and Japanese

90 second anime openings have ruined my music attention span

**Writer**

How do I enjoy music? Here's how: I find a song I like and listen to it on repeat until I don't like it anymore. Okay, "don't like" might be too harsh of a way to put it. It's more accurate to say that I'll keep listening to a song until it stops doing anything for me, stops giving me goosebumps, stops raising my heart rate, stops making me feel. This makes me sound like a drug addict, but honestly, out of all the media we consume day to day, music is the most like a drug in my mind. And if your average American pop song is a weak strain of marijuana, a catchy anime opening is pure crack cocaine. How do they do it? I don't know, but I can tell you which songs do it for me, or rather used to do it for me because I've listened to them so much that their initial effect has dulled and become a fond and faint memory, forcing me to chase my music highs elsewhere.



*Me when an anime op stops giving me a high*

99.9% of modern anime openings are about 90 seconds long. Of course, even with songs that are commissioned specifically for the anime they appear in, the 90 second version is not the full version but rather the tv size. That said, you can tell that these songs are produced for a 90 second duration in mind. A lot of the full versions of anime openings are best described as the 90 second version times two or maybe three in length with perhaps a key change or two thrown in there with different instruments accompanying the chorus the second time around. I'm not a music critic, but even I can tell how lazy this is. There are some anime openings whose tv size versions I love, like the second opening for *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam*, but the full version is just the tv size times two in length with a fade out for the

ending. No melodic conclusion, no nothing. It's nothing but a fade out. That's how you know they weren't trying.

But enough negativity. What anime openings give have once upon a time given me a high? Although I can't stand the anime it's from, *My Dearest* by Supercell kept me coming back longer than most. The full version doesn't just follow the 90x2 formula either, it's a 5 minute 39 second pop anthem. Sure, the basic structure is the tv size times three, which is to say the chorus repeats thrice, but the execution is so much more than that. The buildup to the first chorus is extended from the tv size version, for instance, and there's a completely new guitar section that starts at the 3:50 mark before we go back to the chorus one more time with more intensity than ever before. There's also this beauty to the vocals of Koeda (aka Aikono Kikakina), who was only 15 years old at the time of the original recording and yet was able to lend a deep richness to the vocals that most singers at the height of their careers can't match. The buildup to the chorus starting at 1:20 also still gets me to this day. It's the violins swelling delicately and sonorously paired with the drums that have hitherto been in the background kicking into high gear with Koeda's voice going resolutely forth among all of it (遠く遠くどこまでも遠く君と二人～). Well, I guess this song still gives me a high now that I think about it.

That's the thing with me. I'll listen to an anime opening I like an absurd amount of times, and even if it's something I love dearly like *A Cruel Angel's Thesis* or *Staple Staple* or *My Dearest*, it'll get stale eventually. But if I let the song sit for a bit, let my tolerance to its charms drop day by day as I refrain from listening to it, eventually I get to the point where I can recapture some of the magic of my first listen. And then I'll listen to it repeatedly until the thrill ends once again. I never learn.



*Please, someone tell me to stop*

**EWIK NELSON**

4th Year, Music

Mafumafu had soft McCoy djent in Kamisama no Idenshi, now that's what I call weeb jazz LOL.

**Writer**

# THE PROBLEM WI

I could be considered a jazz musician. I've helped teach jazz to middle and high school students in Japan, helped judge a jazz festival there, and got to meet people and play in the Tokyo jazz scene. So I'm familiar with jazz in Japan. Needless to say, I'm familiar with it in the US too and have unfortunately had to deal with "normies" who know nothing about the genre but have wrong conceptions about it. Especially within anime, there's a lot of "anime jazz" which a lot of weebz are super into and I'm not. I've basically never enjoyed any of it, in fact it's annoying to me. Before I can explain why, I'll have to give a quick rundown on what jazz actually is.

First of all, I will keep using the word "jazz" because most people will know what I'm talking about, even though there's a debate in the jazz community over whether or not to even use the term. Some have proposed the term "Black American Music" which is accurate, but too broad in my opinion because lots of stuff which is BAM is not jazz, but jazz is a subset of BAM. In any case, jazz is a form of Black American Music which grew out of music like Blues and Ragtime, retaining elements from earlier spirituals and work songs. Jazz originated in the early 20th century in New Orleans, later spreading into places like New York and Kansas City. The 20's were known as the Jazz Age because big band swing was very popular at the time. The influence of American culture on the world meant it was exported to other countries, including Japan. In World War 2, a new genre of jazz developed: bebop, which set itself against swing in the sense that bebop insisted that it was art music, whereas swing was dance/popular music. That's really the origin of jazz as I know it. The cutting edge of jazz became more intellectual and less popular, though people still liked big band stuff like Frank Sinatra, but he's like the Attack on Titan of jazz. Jazz after bebop, while rooted in the tradition of Black American culture, took on a modernist influenced ideology of innovation and progressivism (artistically and arguably politically, but that's another article). Jazz, especially post bebop, was defined by constantly pushing musical and artistic boundaries, while being rooted in its cultural tradition. This isn't an essay on the history of jazz but it should be known that after the 50s and early 60s, which most people think of when they think of jazz, came massive develop-

ments in the genre which eventually lead to what it is today. So briefly, jazz in the 60's, with civil rights and freedom in the air, became freer on average, leading to the free jazz movement. This became very hard to listen to for most people, myself included and it eventually evolved into basically its own genre. In the early 70s jazz was actually in a bad place, with the more mainstream figures like John Coltrane going more free and inaccessible to normal listeners. However, jazz fusion changed everything and brought jazz back into the mainstream, at least as close as jazz ever is. Miles Davis returned with jazz (rock) fusion, a completely new sound. Stuff like Weather Report, the Brecker Brothers, etc. also pushed jazz in new directions. Eventually this evolved into the abomination that is smooth jazz, but that's like the Sword Art Online of jazz. In the late 80's and early 90's there was a sort of return to the post bop that was prominent in the late 50s and early 60s, but it was pushed far beyond that into new territories by new fusion influenced players like Kenny Garrett, Michael Brecker, and Herbie Hancock (who spent the whole 70s and 80s doing funk). The 90s saw the rise of people like Mark Turner who really changed the sound of jazz in the 90s into the 2010s, and now we have people like James Francies and Immanuel Wilkins who are doing cool new stuff. Jazz is even returning to the mainstream with people like Robert Glasper, Kamasi Washington, Snarky Puppy, and Louis Cole (though I'm not really a fan of that stuff myself). Of course I skimmed over tons of stuff, and I'm biased towards saxophone players, being one myself.

So, back to Japan. After WW2 (and before, but not during because it was seen as enemy music), Jazz became quite popular. Many musicians have commented that jazz is more popular in Japan and Europe than its home country. I've experienced this too. In Japan a lot of people actually like it and know way more about it than the average American. Jazz became so popular that it influenced Japanese pop music. So all that stuff from the 80's and all that city pop, that's all super jazz influenced. It was the case in the US too, but something different happened in Japan such that that jazz influence remains to this day. Most of the OG Japanese video game music composers were also influenced by jazz. However, it seems to me that once jazz became less popular in the US, influence from the US stopped permeating Japanese music nearly as much. As a result there was a large amount of Jazz influenced Japanese music but it stopped evolving with American jazz, meaning the evolutionary populations speciated, so to speak, and Japanese jazz-pop missed a lot of the developments which happened in the last 40 years,



# WITH JAZZ IN ANIME

which are some of my favorite parts of jazz. This left the most popular jazz stuff in Japan stuck in the 60's, and it didn't evolve much. The reason for this is cultural. In Japanese schools, they teach Jazz like it's classical music, and the one thing classical music doesn't do is evolve. The actual core of good jazz musicians in the Japanese scene are keeping up with the global jazz scene and doing cool stuff, but they're not that popular and have no institutional power so they can't really change anything. So even now, Jazz in the popular Japanese conception is basically like classical music, where stuff from America in the 60s or before is sacred and can't be changed and also extremely popular. That's my pet theory, but I think it's true.

This brings us to the problem with Japanese jazz. Because popular jazz in Japan is stuck in the 50's-60's, most of it is super normie big band stuff or classic bebop. Why does this bother me? Because Jazz isn't classical music and it's not the 60's anymore. We've come a long way and so has jazz. The tradition has always been about innovation and pushing boundaries within the context of current culture and history. In Japan, the majority of people aren't even aware of the cultural tradition of jazz as Black American Music. It's just an American cultural export, which in my opinion takes away a lot of the authenticity of the very serious struggle that went into the making of jazz. There's more to this music than just swang-a-lang and fast bebop lines. There's history. Take A Love Supreme, John Coltrane's magnum opus. Not only is it an ode to God but also embodies the Black experience in America. Seeing some of the ignorance Japanese culture has to this part of jazz makes me think they can't really understand what jazz is. It's disrespectful to the tradition, to treat it so lightly (though mainstream American culture does that too, so it might be an export from America). Most of the contemporary jazz musicians I've met in Japan get it. They understand the music they're playing, but the normies not so much. And this is really the point of my argument. Japanese culture by and large doesn't understand what jazz is on a fundamental level and I can tell by listening to it.

Finally, this brings us to anime. Anime jazz is a subset of normie Japanese jazz. The same problems that plague the normie Japanese understanding of jazz plague anime jazz. It just isn't jazz to me, it's a hollow shell uprooted from its cultural and intellectual tradition, just normie American pop jazz exports from the 50's which have almost nothing to do with jazz as I know it.

On the bright side, jazz as I know it actually thrives in Japan.

It just isn't known as jazz, because people think jazz has to be some big band or bebop stuff, they can't even tell that contemporary jazz is real jazz because it's so different. There's a ton of cool weeb jazz fusion happening in Japan. It's not "jazz jazz" because it's not Black American music but it's certainly jazz influenced and doing new stuff, without disrespecting the jazz tradition, which is what (good) fusion has always been. Hyperpop, artcore, Japanese rhythm game music, Japanese video game music, weeb DTM, math Touhou, weeb math rock/djent, etc. frequently dip their toes into weeb jazz fusion too. In fact, as I already said, tons of weeb stuff is jazz influenced. Just listen to weeb music and VGM and you'll hear it (or see [this video](#)), but it's usually boomer jazz when it's overt, not contemporary jazz, which is usually more subtle. When the influence is subtle, it usually turns out great to me. That's most J-Pop and weeb stuff. But the stuff that sets out to be "jazz" like Tank ends up being cringe to me.

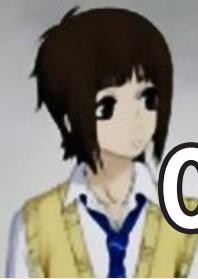
I consider people like [Hakushi Hasegawa](#), [Iyowa](#), [sasakure.UK](#), [Lasah](#), [Treow/ELECTROCUTICA](#), [Wato](#), [Chintara](#), and [Hiromi Uehara](#) to be quintessential weeb jazz. Hiromi isn't even weeb music related but she has a lot of Japaneseisms in her music which makes it sound weeb to me. Her fusion stuff is great, her straight ahead jazz is less good in my opinion. Hakushi Hasegawa and Iyowa are like the avant garde of weeb music, they're brilliant. [Cosmo@busouP](#), [Millstones](#), [Osterreich](#), [Ichika Nito](#), [Xi](#), [Sakuzyo](#), [Hagane](#), [whitefists](#), [Oster Project](#), [Idono Kawazu](#), [PSYQUI](#), [Yu-dachi](#), [Neko Hacker](#), [Camellia](#), etc.(and even [Mafumafu](#) recently) also dip their toes into it. Though where math weeb ends and weeb jazz begins is not clear. When I first heard artcore I was like "wait this is just weeb jazz," and I had pretty much the same reaction with weeb math rock/djent. Western weeb artists like [Patrick Bartley/J Music Ensemble](#) and [Moe Shop](#) are also doing good work. Please listen to them to raise awareness of contemporary weeb jazz in Japan.



# Kagamine Len & Rin

Vocaloid

Art By Jen Zhao



# OPS ARE OP



**KEV WANG**

2nd Year, EECS

"Without music, life would be a mistake" -  
Friedrich Nietzsche

**Writer**

When I hear the word "art", my first thought would be a painting, a piece of music, written prose. Anime, on the other hand, or at least most anime, I would consider entertainment more than I would consider art: mass-produced to maximize the profits of the studios, largely devoid of creative spirit or artistic merit.

Which is an incredible shame, because anime is one of the few mediums that combines auditory, visual, as well as storytelling artistry. Unrestricted by reality as live-action works are, anime, as an art form, has arguably unbounded potential. Yet, that potential is only realized by very few works of the genre.

Out of those three aspects of art, I think the most overlooked in anime is the first: the stimulation of auditory senses. In this article I want to highlight the brief moments of brilliance, glimpses of incredible artistic value, contained in some of the OPs of anime.

As one of the first things viewers see each episode, the OP, or opening song, of an anime sets the tone of the entire anime. Great OPs help you take off the mental baggage of the real world, dust you off, and put you in a new suit, dressed to fit the occasion, ready to enter into the imaginary world in the anime.

No OP does this better than *Toradora*'s OP 1, "Pure Pare-do", a song that could not have more perfectly captured not only the mood of the show, but also the personality of the main character Taiga. Its sassy, electronic beats solidify your impression of Taiga as a foundational member of the "tsundere" character trope, while its catchy, upbeat tempo and colorful visuals tell you not to take the show too seriously. Meanwhile, the animations give glimpses of what's to come, introducing the characters and hinting at the main romantic plot of the story. You know exactly what you're getting into when you watch this OP, and you know that it's going to hit hard.

*Hyouka*'s OP 1, "Yasashisano Riyuu", is a beautiful, melodic song, and it's paired with equally beautiful and melodic imagery: raindrops on a monochrome scene reveal the colorful world and characters that brighten up Oreki's initially dull and passionless life. It's emotional, yes, but on initial glance the emotions it evokes seem out of place. For a lighthearted slice of life story set around a cast of schoolchildren solving small, barely consequential mysteries, such a graceful song seems too... heavy? But it's that contrast that

really sets *Hyouka* apart. As typical of KyoAni works, *Hyouka* has a very simple premise that can easily be passed off as a shallow, uninteresting piece of escapism. However, when the OP plays, you know that this show is different. If slice of life anime were types of cakes, this one would be a cheesecake: rich, yet delicate flavors, with a smooth texture. It's very much a cake, but it's distinctly intricate. The OP conveys that difference with a captivating aroma.



"Friendship", the OP of *Sukkite li nayo*, unfortunately does not share the same synergy with its corresponding anime. It's one of the softest, sapiest OPs ever, which might give the impression that it would fit a romance anime, but it sticks out like a sore thumb. The song is successful at giving the impression of ultimate innocence, of purity, whereas the story, about a popular boy at school who takes advantage of a shy girl, is far from it. Perhaps Mei, the main character, is deluded by Yamato to feel the emotions that the song heavenly captures, but as the viewer, I could not help but feel disgusted by this story, a feeling not even the best efforts of the OP could dissolve. Really, this song feels like it exists in an entirely different universe, and just so happened to be played prior to my viewing of each episode. The animations of the OP, consisting entirely of white outlines of snowflakes, paper planes, and falling leaves on a black background, are also completely detached from the anime itself, making no reference to the show whatsoever. What's really perplexing, though, is that the artist, Okazaki Ritsuko, passed away 8 years before the release of the anime, and 4 years before the release of even the original manga. It's as if this entire OP was made in advance, ready to be tacked onto any relevant romance anime. Unfortunately, if that was the case, it was chosen to be in one that was truly not deserving of its beauty.

On the other end (literally) are EDs. The scope of this article is not large enough to cover them, but just as a brief description: along with all of the OPs mentioned here, I have included a few in the playlist which I have found notably poignant, both in how good the music is as well as in how they were able to affect my impression of their anime. Please enjoy.



**Flower**

*Vocaloid*

Art By Kai Wu

# TANK! IS CRINGE.



**EWIK NELSON**

4th Year, Music

The saxophone solo does not spark joy.

**Writer**

In *The Problem With Weeb Jazz* I explained the history of jazz in Japan and why anime jazz is so cringe. The most well known example of jazz in anime is undoubtedly Tank! from *Cowboy Bebop* (it even has “Bebop” in the name), and to me this is frustrating because it epitomizes everything wrong with jazz in anime and the average weeb’s understanding of jazz. As I said in the other article, jazz in anime is mostly boomer jazz, which is fine. If you like boomer jazz that’s ok, I do. But I also know that people like Charlie Parker and John Coltrane who were pioneers of boomer jazz, if they were alive today, wouldn’t be still making boomer jazz. John Coltrane changed jazz more in 10 years than the popular conception of jazz in Japan has changed since his death in 1967. If Trane and Bird were alive today, and happened to be weebs, they wouldn’t be playing anything close to Tank! What Tank is, is just treating jazz like some nostalgia pill. Just pop on some jazz and it makes stuff cool and old fashioned instantly. I see this a lot in the west too. People who don’t know the first thing about the genre putting it on to make a restaurant classy, or to make something have James Bond vibes or some nonsense. There’s nothing wrong with that necessarily if you don’t care about music, but to me it’s kind of insulting to the tradition.



Dante Corrado 11 months ago

One simply does not skip the *Cowboy Bebop* opening

6.3K REPLY

Yes, I am a *Tank* shipper.

Now onto the actual song. As a standalone piece of music it’s ok. It’s just some post bop era big band stuff. 5/10. The most famous parts of the song are probably the intro vocal line “3, 2, 1, let’s jam,” and the sax solo. The spoken vocal part is kinda corny, but it’s not offensive. What I mostly dislike is the sax solo. First of all, Masato Honda’s tone is very smooth jazzy, like a slightly more subdued David Sanborn or Eric Marienthal. To me that’s instantly cringe because I don’t like smooth jazz. Two of my favorite saxophonists ever, Michael Brecker and Kenny Garrett, have a smooth tone because they came up in the 80s

and everyone had a smooth tone then, but they were super innovative. Masato Honda is just playing bebop licks with a smooth tone and some blues licks thrown in. Maybe he could get away with that if they were really impressive bebop licks, but they’re just kind of mid (for reasons too technical to get into here). The result is just a cringe 4/10 solo. I wouldn’t be interested if I heard that at a jam session. The saxophone break at the end is more cringe smooth jazz stuff. The rest of the song is fine, it’s competent big band playing, there’s nothing to pick on except aesthetics.



Maybe I'd listen to *Tank* if Kenny Garret was the soloist.

If you like *Tank*, that’s ok with me. It’s “jazz.” Just not how I think of it. But please just look into the jazz tradition a bit and treat it with some more respect. Anyway, I don’t want to ruin people’s fun. But I probably did. If your fun was ruined, hopefully you’re inspired to look into jazz a bit more, both its history and contemporary weeb jazz.



SHIT

**TONY T.**

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

Watch *Nodame Cantabile* and *Kids on the Slope* instead.**Writer**

When it comes to live action entertainment, most viewers tend to look down on melodrama. Culturally, exaggerated and sensationalized dramatic pieces generally elicit lukewarm responses, with said pieces often being satirized as cheap or desperate ploys on the behalf of screenwriters to elicit some emotional response from rather forgettable media. In no place is this more evident than with the concept of soap operas - pieces of television with often domestic settings to relate to a hypothetical average viewer, which erupt into melodramatic arcs. One could interpret this standard idea of a soap opera to be a way of attracting viewers by convincing them that their generic lives are somehow likely to be a part of some grand narrative. Most people, including I, simply think of these works as being silly. As such, the cultural notion of melodramas and soap operas as a whole has, at least in my empirical experiences, solidified as being popcorn entertainment that most understand as not deserving of intense cinematic analyses, unlike more "arthouse" works.

As a massive fan of *Dragon Ball*, *HeartCatch PreCure*, *K-On!* and a whole slew of entertainment that most write off as uncomplicated, "dumb" media, I might stray a bit in terms of what I consider complex media worthy of analysis. Having written (kind of) analytical writing on those first two, I can understand the notion that I may be acting on the aforementioned folly of deeply considering media that do not deserve much thought. Having outlined why I believe *Dragon Ball* and *HeartCatch PreCure* are so compelling in previous writing, I'd have to say I disagree with that notion, though. Still, even I acknowledge that there exists certain pieces of media that are so lazily constructed that they completely do not merit any sort of critical analysis.

That brings me to *Your Lie in April*, an animated series considered amongst fans of Japanese animation to be a complete and utter masterpiece of storytelling, character writing, and presentation. On the subject of presentation, I view that inherently more subjective than any other aspect of art, and therefore cannot confidently say that I dislike it. However, *Your Lie in April's* critical acclaim in terms of storytelling and character writing confuses me. Personally, it serves as ample evidence that, somehow, the switch from real actors to drawn caricatures of human beings serves as an abstraction barrier which allows

viewers to disassociate from the understanding that the melodrama in the show's narrative is inherently exaggerated and sensationalized by nature.



*Your Lie in April* is many things, but subtle isn't one of them. Every beat in storytelling feels forcefully crammed down the viewer's head to where it is almost comical how little the showrunners think of the audience's intelligence. For instance, the core dramatic plot points such as the protagonist's troubled and toxic relationship with music, itself being an extension of his overbearing parent, are always accompanied with monologues ruminating on the fact. There is no room for the audience to think for themselves, on how characters react to and interpret certain situations. Everything is obviously signalled by internal character monologue in a manner which, for me, removes anything I could feel about the dramatic elements of the series. The overreliance on these types of devices, as well as the common jarring shifts to comedic bits spread throughout the series, are akin to the cheap ploys which soap opera melodramas use to evoke audience emotional response.

These types of devices are not inherently those of cheap soap operas, though. Series like *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* or the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*, while rather soapy, employ similar elements to great critical success. The difference is, those series are fantastical in nature and deal with concepts far beyond the scope of a typical individual's domestic life. *Your Lie in April*, in contrast, is a purely grounded story which attempts to be realistic due to its setting. Under that perspective, then, it absolutely fails at being engaging due to its realistic setting being undermined by elements that clearly indicate (what should be) the invisible hand of the writer. It falls in line with the failures of most soap operas.

Another perspective I've heard people take on *Your Lie in April* is that it is meaningful due to tackling realistic phenomena. While I've outlined why I believe the series fails at realism in the previous paragraphs, I believe this claim deserves some scrutiny. Media concerning itself with real issues can often allow audi-



# GATSU

ences to cope with their own issues. There's nothing inherently wrong with that, so long as the media in question still retains narrative intrigue and depth. The problem with *Your Lie in April* is not that it isn't realistic to real life problems. Featured in the series are many common problems, such as parental abuse via lofty expectations, the crushing disappointment of failing large scale goals, or the death of a loved one. These ideas are universal, and media should touch on them. The manner with which these concepts are approached is worthy of questioning, though. Much can be said about those concepts. Off the top of my head, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *ef: A Tale of Melodies*, and yes, *Dragon Ball*, all handle at least one of the above mentioned issues. They do so with some sort of deeper message, though. *Your Lie in April* simply has nothing to say on those concerns, narratively brushing them aside with the characters crying or reacting emotionally. That can be cathartic, but it conveys very little other than, "this situation is very sad". Having played multiple instruments personally, I can attest that practicing for years, only to come up short, can be incredibly emotional. The show does very little with that concept beyond what I've just said, though. Other than a binary good/bad assertion, there really isn't much that the series does with its concepts.



I should clarify that I do not find *Your Lie in April* lackluster due to any one particular element. I've mentioned series that tackle the exact same issues as *Your Lie in April*, but more uniquely. *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*, a series I hold in high regard, has many soapish elements that I've complained about regarding *Your Lie in April*. It gets away with this because, whilst *Your Lie in April* attempts to make more mundane types of concerns into grand dramatic spectacles, the scale of *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*, that of the governance of all living human beings, is legitimately a setting which is deserving of more dramatization.

Yet, I'm not even complaining about the mundane scale of *Your Lie in April*.

*Lie in April*. After all, I am a big fan of *K-On!* and *Lucky Star* shows which are commonly disparaged due to a perceived lack of value as a result of their low key settings; I find them meaningful because they still have some semblance of dramatic satisfaction in spite of their scales, without overuse of melodrama. My dislike of *Your Lie in April* comes from the overuse of soap opera elements in ignorance of when and how those elements are appropriate. A part of this is also likely derived from the sheer ignorance I perceive many anime fans have with issues they commonly deride live action media for, yet turn a blind eye towards when the third dimension is removed. As someone that considers both live action and animated media to have value in ways distinct from each other, I find that this part of the discourse is inherently hypocritical and deserves further consideration.



Me when watching this show

But beyond my personal opinions, the sheer fact that *Your Lie in April* is to be some sort of incontestable masterpiece disturbs me. Sitting on MyAnimeList at an average score of 8.68, it has more critical praise than almost anything else I've mentioned in this article, with the sole exception of *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*, itself a series that I believe warrants more criticism in spite of its status as one of my personal favorites. As a popular "first anime", the aforementioned sort of cognitive dissonance that I perceive anime viewers have is extremely potent in *Your Lie in April*, with the majority of viewers distracted from the fact that it is quite literally a soap opera. With the soaring popularity of other similarly melodramatic emotional series like *AnoHana*, *Clannad*, and *The Pet Girl of Sakurasou*, all of which I personally view with similar levels of disdain I have towards *Your Lie in April*, I can't exactly say that anime is in a worse place. Anime has always been rather generic and ephemeral even before the rise of seasonal anime viewing culture. In acknowledgement of the irony that anime are literally cartoons, most anime have always been cartoonish, as in, unrealistic and sensational. It's just that the majority of anime generally aren't widely lauded as masterpieces. In spite of its critical acclaim, I believe that *Your Lie in April* is a literal soap opera which even fails at eliciting the corny emotions most soap operas succeed at.

# SUITE PRECURE IS A 7/10.



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

Still need to write about *Futari wa Max Heart*, *Splash Star*, *Fresh*, *Smile*, *HappinessCharge*, *Go Princess*, *Mahou Tsukai*, *KiraKira*, *Hugtto*, *Star Twinkle*, *Healin Good*, *Tropical Rouge*, and *Delicious Party*.

Writer

As a *Pretty Cure* series (which I have written no shortage of articles covering), there are certain expectations going into *Suite PreCure*. Given the series almost always (sans *KiraKira*) featuring magical girls engaged in monster of the week physical combat, one would generally expect decent animation. This is further emphasized by the reputation of the *PreCure* franchise itself as having wonderful animation. Beyond this, *Pretty Cure* series generally have a common structure, with a team of fighters developing over a 50 episode runtime, with new protagonists generally joining around the end of a cour. My opinions of the franchise vary wildly, from my love of *HeartCatch* to my heavy dislike of *Smile*. In spite of generally enjoying *Suite*, its identity is perplexing, both in terms of being a *PreCure* series, and as a piece of media in general.

The most eye-catching and notable aspect to *Suite* is probably the character designs. As even the concepts of art and animation often get confused, I should elaborate. Whilst art refers to still images, and animation refers to the illusion of movement created by a sequence of said images, character designs are generally how the characters should look. An official character design will generally be rendered in the form of art, but these designs mostly serve as a blueprint for basic aesthetic considerations, like clothing, which other artists can portray in their respective unique art styles. When I mention the fact that *Suite*'s designs are complex and interesting, I more so am referring to official character art, as well as transformation sequences. One look at said designs and it's obvious why. Compared to the majority of other series in the franchise, the characters in *Suite* wear incredibly frilly, embellished clothing, with each design containing at least one reference to the series' musical motif (in turn, my excuse for including this article in the おんがく issue).

While that sounds incredibly praiseworthy, it results in the series' animation and art being incredibly sloppy. Complex designs work in non animated mediums, such as manga, due to the fact that there are only so many times an artist in those mediums will have to draw the characters. In motion, *Suite PreCure* is rather sloppy, with the series' signature of great animation relatively absent. Beyond this, in parts of *Suite* without motion, such as panning shots, the characters almost always look off. I would probably attribute this not only to the incredibly complex

designs, but also to the series' fetish for utilizing a ridiculous amount of lines in its art. The overabundance of lines is what makes the character designs pop out so much, yet also results in it animating poorly.

However, while I do enjoy a fair few anime (*Aria*, *HeartCatch PreCure*, *Lupin III: The Woman Called Mine Fujiko*) primarily due to their aesthetic considerations, I mostly consider narrative and/or writing to be paramount in anime. This aspect of my personal standards and expectations is what ameliorates my judgement of *Suite*. For a series aimed at children, the character writing is surprisingly competent. This isn't to say that *Suite*'s plot is *Citizen Kane*—it follows the relatively tried and true *PreCure* plot structure, with deviations only present in relative minutiae. Rather, the series' character writing manages to be evocative on a somewhat regular basis, in the manner with which it intends to be. Generally, the series' lighthearted tone serves it well, as nothing is overly serious and the comedy, while showing the age demographic, is unexpectedly humorous.

Returning to the topic of aesthetics, while I've mentioned my dislike of the series' complex designs, the transformation sequences are perhaps the best I've ever seen in the genre, likely the result of having more care put into a part of the show which recurs relatively often. In addition, *Suite PreCure*'s background art depicting its main setting, the music themed Kanon Town, is incredibly inspired. Having not watched the series in a while, I can still recall locales such as the giant working piano adorning the floor of the Shopping District or the clock tower which at one point transformed into a monster of the week villain. Certain elements of *Suite* are what I'd deem cheesy, but in a tongue-in-cheek fashion where it's clear that was the intention.

*Suite PreCure*'s animation and art suffer due to incredibly complex designs that cannot be properly animated in a weekly schedule stretching four cours. Despite this fact, along with the series' relatively stock storyline for a *Pretty Cure* series, its actual execution is perplexingly adept. *Suite*'s dialogue writing is worlds beyond what I might find from a "more serious" drama, such as *Your Lie in April*, which I've spent 2 pages bashing earlier in this おんがく issue. This is primarily because *Suite*'s writing doesn't put on airs about being anything uniquely complex. In addition, the series' world is nothing terribly imaginative, but it has enough unique landmarks and interesting elements to where that isn't horribly detractive. *Suite* is a giant mess which I cannot easily recommend to most people, especially those who have never seen a *PreCure* anime, yet there's a particular charm to the series, even in its more clumsy aspects, which makes it rather endearing.

# STAFF PLAYLIST

(CLICK ON ANY FOR YOUTUBE LINK)



MITCHELL MADAYAG

Remember Summer Days - 杏里



SOPHIA XUE

Psyche's Butterfly - Eden



EWIK NELSON

Lysis - Ichika Nito



ANGEL MENDEZ

Dramaturgy - Eve



TONY T.

くじびきアンバランス - UNDER17



JASON GONG

カワキヲアメク - Minami



JOSÉ CUEVAS

カゲロウ - YeaL



NICK WONOSAPUTRA

大河よ共に泣いてくれ - Franchouchou



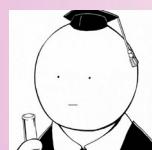
BLAKE MORRISON

TIGAR (ALL PHASE MIX) - 浅野隼人



FELIX LEVY

Emotional Skyscraper ~ Cosmic Mind - ZUN



今週先生

魚類による考古学 - シャノン



CHRIS LIU

巡恋歌 - 長渕剛



JEN ZHAO

ライアーダンス feat. 初音ミク - DECO\*27



KAI WU

It's Raining After All - TUYU



KATE BUSHMAREVA

どろん - King Gnu



KEV WANG

Nanairo Symphony - COALAMODE

Check out the  
full YouTube  
playlist here:



List version:



# VOLUME 54, ISSUE 7

DECEMBER 9, 2021

アヤノの幸福理論  
Ayano's Theory of Happiness

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### Weekly Socials:

Thursdays 8-10pm      Social Sciences Building 170

### Weekly Virtual Showings:

Fridays 8-9pm      CAA Discord - [cal.moe/discord](https://cal.moe/discord)

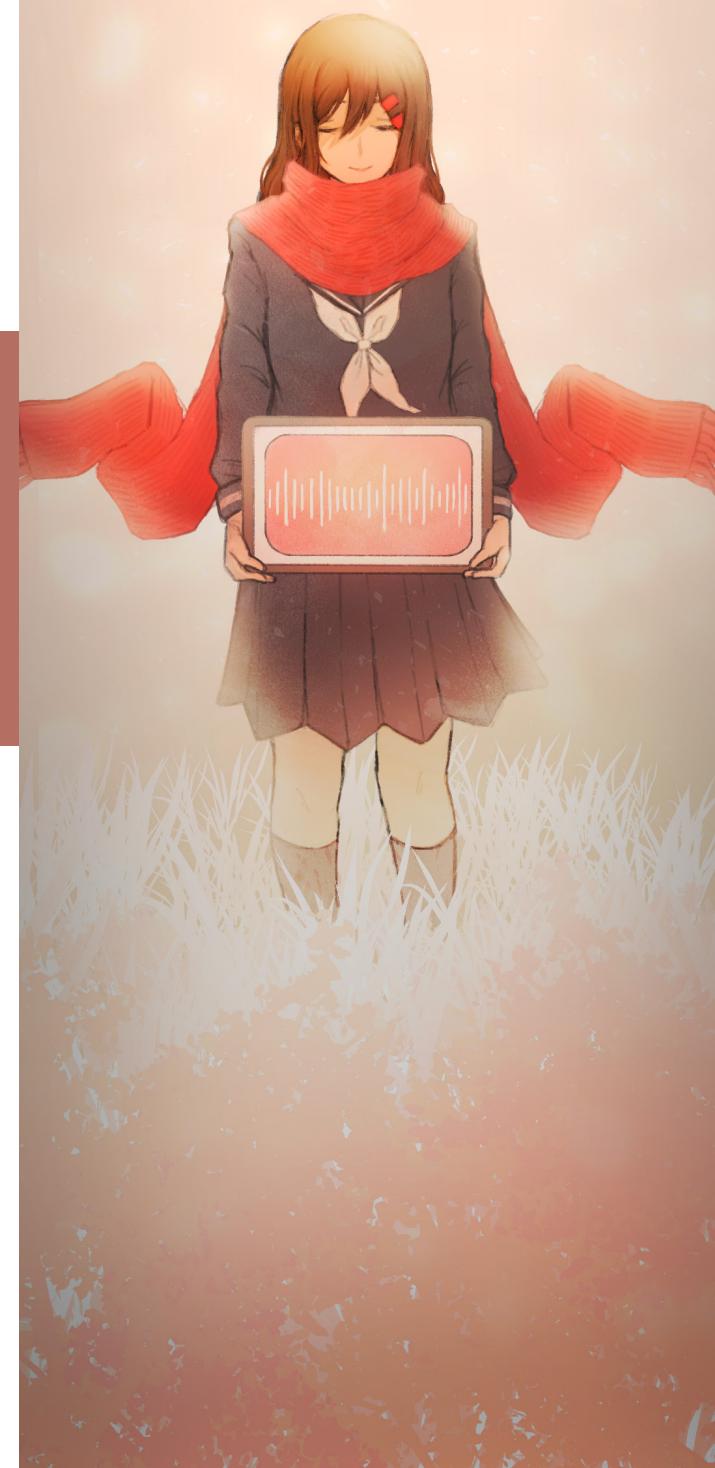
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**Ayano Tateyama**

Kagerou Project

Art By Miranda Zhang