

KONSHUU

vol. 54 #2
Guilty Pleasures



Zhongli, Venti, and Raiden Shogun

Genshin Impact

Art By Sharrel Narsico



Anime Destiny 2021!

Games, Cosplay Events, Panels, Performances, Giveaways, and More!

Sunday, November 7
on Discord, YouTube, and Twitch

Find us on:

calanimedestiny.com ★
calanimedestiny.com/discord ★
cal.moe/youtube ★

PAST ANIME DESTINIES



Anime Destiny 2016



Cosplay Gathering 2019



Artist Alley 2019



Anime Destiny 2019



Zero
Drakengard 3
Art By Tammy

A TALE OF ASPIRATIONS



FELIX L.

2nd Year, Environmental Engineering
Gaming

Writer

SAO, and its first season especially, is one of the most popular but also hated shows out there. It birthed an entire fad in anime of videogame isekai that, despite already being a thing before SAO, really took off after this show aired, and it has now become the go-to anime that people express their dislike for.

This is not too surprising. Its premise of an immense videogame world with stakes as high as in real life is very appealing to a lot of people, but its execution in the first arcs of SAO can be described as clumsy, with time skips all over the place and a lot of aspects and characters that can hardly be seen as anything other than generic.

But despite all that, I love SAO, and I love its (quite numerous) flaws because, to me, they have led to one of the most entertaining and satisfying examples of Power Fantasy that I have encountered. This has been executed better in other shows or works, but SAO has always struck me as an extremely enjoyable experience in that regard.

After all, sometimes, a trainwreck of pure power fantasy can look cool, and we can only watch as it happens in front of us.



The first episodes are, in terms of writing, the strongest part of the show as they explain how the world functions, set up the tension quite effectively, and introduce the mortal premise that the players in Aincrad will have to face. It creates a feeling of dread in the minds of the players, and we get to see a great combination of the wonders brought by this virtual world and the fear that it induces in everyone because of its stakes and dangers.

SAO continues upon this premise to a slight extent, using it as the initial vector for its story and motivation to advance in Aincrad or to create smaller subplots. Notably, the arc during which Kirito and Asuna investigate a strange case of deaths in safe zones linked to conspiracies inside of a guild.

But in general, it strays away from this atmosphere that it initially creates or from video-game political plots like what we could see in other shows like *Log Horizon* to focus on our main protagonist, Kirito. This can be considered the anime's greatest fault. It throws away what might make the relationship between the players and this virtual world interesting and complex, instead exclusively focusing on the highlights of its protagonist's adventure, with a comically large number of time skips to only showcase Kirito's most significant moments in Aincrad.

This, of course, messes up the pacing of the show and takes away a sense of progression, development, and growth throughout the series. Individual subplots, such as the Black Cats guild arc, that seemingly should impact Kirito, do not seem to affect his character at any other instance in the show, in part because of these time skips. I would say these are valid points about the show, but SAO, in its way, finds a way to make the viewer engaged and find the story fun. That is because SAO showcases the ultimate power fantasy, the dream of every teenager, in an environment with high stakes but filled with wonders, and with pure typical hero energy that embodies the imagination of the audience. SAO gives form to what viewers who have grown up with videogames and other similar forms of media fantasize about.

In that regard, Aincrad itself functions perfectly as a videogame world, giving us an immense sense of scale, and would make anyone want to immerse themselves in a game like this. It holds different kinds of environments, dungeons, creatures, and a lot

AND POWER FANTASY

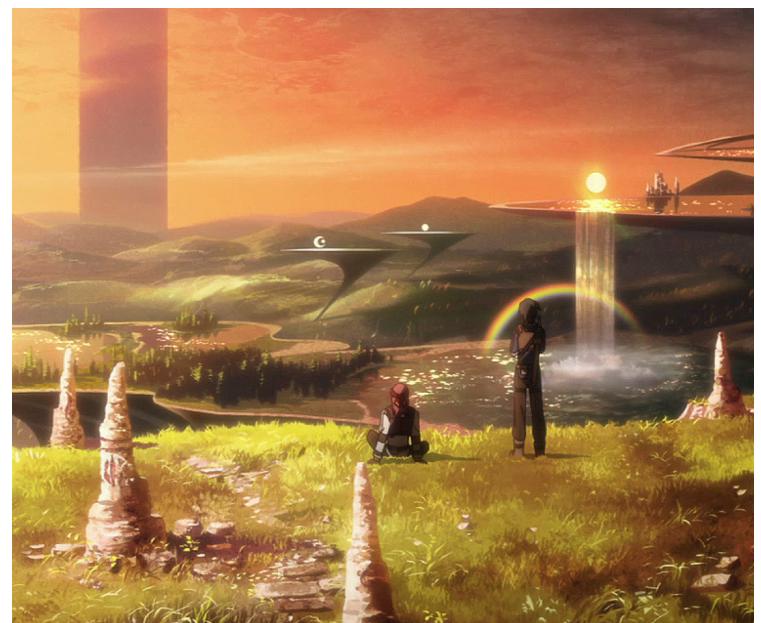
of it in the show's short runtime is left to the viewer's imagination.

But Kirito is arguably the biggest part of this power fantasy. The entire world of SAO and everything that happens in it seems to revolve around him. The game grants him a unique dual-sword wielding ability, his influence is equal if not superior to that of the strongest guilds, and he is both an outcast because of his status as a "beater" and recognized as an extremely powerful warrior. This individuality, coupled with his strength, leads him to carry the entire game by himself, even defeating the minotaur of the 74th floor alone, and the final boss in a 1v1 battle. He is not just another player in this game, doing his part and then leaving: this game was created for him and no one else, and everything else in this anime is merely a bystander to his feats of strength and skill. We see him back into the game's code and use the power of a game master to transform Yui into an item. This game is but a tool, a testament to Kirito's existence as the hero in this story. He does suffer hardships. His entire guild died, he almost got killed by Kuradeel, and he got defeated by Heathcliff once, but all of these events do not whatsoever taint his status as a hero. Instead, they contribute to it: they forge his mentality and relationships with others, but only serve to portray him as a loner who still cares about others, an image that undoubtedly reinforces his portrayal as a champion of teenage fantasy.

Alfheim Online, while going in a different direction in terms of the stakes of its world and plot, continues on this same path. Kirito loses his status as the "beater" but ends up bringing about the end of the final quest of the game (reaching the top of the tree) while barging into the game's internal politics and defeating its most powerful warriors. He, who started as a random stranger in Alfheim, influenced the entirety of the events in this game and once again became the center of it. He transcends these virtual worlds, as in this show, they are purely made to suit his adventures and allow him to shine through individuality. As I said, this is a flawed way of building an intriguing and complex world or a compelling plot, but it makes for the ultimate power fantasy, one that all interested in SAO's premise have dreamed of and imagined.

The show's sequels take drastic turns. GGO essentially follows the same path, but the next arcs and *Alicization* completely

change the direction that SAO as a story takes. And then there is SAO Progressive, even though it tells the same story as SAO, takes the time to explain the development of the characters and the world that surrounds them, filling the absurdly long time skips in a way that makes it more interesting and compelling when it comes to storytelling. This takes away from the appeal of the original SAO which can essentially be described as a Kirito highlight reel, but once again, this simply means that their appeals lie in different places.



SAO is undoubtedly a flawed show, but I believe this is what makes it fun, and why it is still relevant and around today. Its premise and what it has to offer have an extremely wide appeal because it gives life to the fantasies of many, and lets the tale of the black swordsman stimulate their imagination.

THE HEARTCATCH LINEAGE



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science Minor

I don't feel guilty over liking this show, I just feel guilty that I haven't written about it sooner.

Writer

A first glance at *HeartCatch PreCure*, the seventh entry in Toei Animation's *Pretty Cure* money-making machine magical girl anime series, gives off the impression that the series is for children. That's not wrong, but that misses the point. A full watch-through of the series shows an extremely animated children's action series with a lot of heart. That's a closer approximation of what the series is, but that isn't what makes it stand out either. Much has been said online on the depth of *HeartCatch PreCure*'s ideas and how it maturely tackles ideas that children's anime generally shies away from, but I don't want to write about that, either. All of these interpretations of the series are perfectly valid, but have been drilled into the ground so hard that *HeartCatch PreCure* essays as a collective should just be renamed *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann*. They're all accurate ideas, but they don't explain why anyone aside from the incredibly limited demographic of toddlers should watch the series. Yeah, tackling complex issues are great, but when so many anime exist to do that, why bother?

Well first, *HeartCatch PreCure* has really, really, cool action scenes. Holy fuck, the action scenes are so cool.

But beyond that, the one thing that I haven't heard mentioned at all within *HeartCatch PreCure* is how it sets up an incredibly interesting world with a strong focus on lineage, an idea that should seemingly be crucial to the magical girl genre. My main issue with the genre, for the longest time, is in the name itself: magical girl. Why get so invested in events that likely only make up a small part of the characters' total lives? Other shows like *Madoka Magica* or *Nanoha* circumvent this with dark twists, but *HeartCatch PreCure* makes its events matter by having each of its main cast have to deal with familial responsibilities.

The most obvious example is in the main protagonist Cure Blossom herself. Unlike every other *PreCure* main protagonist to date, Hanasaki Tsubomi is not especially outgoing or energetic, instead being an introvert trying to break out of her shell. Perhaps as a result (in a metatextual, literary sense) she is aided by her elderly grandmother, a former Pretty Cure, another aspect unique to *HeartCatch*. As the mentor character, one of the most

interesting things Hanasaki Kaoruko does is take the main cast to train at a mysterious temple with statues of all previous *Pretty Cure*, including herself. The act of being a magical girl feels powerful because it has a mysticism and lineage to it.

Moreover, just as the main cast all have fairy companions who help them transform, Hanasaki Kaoruko still retains her partner, who transforms to look like Tsubomi's deceased grandfather to occasionally save the main cast. It's humorous that he is constantly called by the main cast as "that mysterious hot guy" for well over half of the show. Yet beyond that, this serves as a sign that the adventures in Kaoruko's youth still influence her, even after not transforming for decades. Thematically, this does a lot in making the narrative of *HeartCatch PreCure* feel relevant even before world-ending stakes are introduced. Along these lines, then, it is equally poignant that the very last image in the show is of a young girl, likely Tsubomi's newborn younger sister presumably a few years after the series' conclusion, holding a transformation device.

The events in the *HeartCatch PreCure* matter because being a magical girl is something that is relevant for the characters' entire lives even past their fighting days, both in terms of keeping a connection to the fairies, but also in terms of passing information onto the next generation. For that matter, the inclusion of the oldest ever *Pretty Cure*, Cure Moonlight, as a sort of in-between generation mentor to the main cast also demonstrates the idea that what happens within the show is relevant not just for the characters' youth, but in every stage of their lives.



FOOD WARS ISN'T (JUST) PORN, GUYS.



JOSÉ CUEVAS

5th Year, Intended EECS and Theatre

MUDAMUDAMUDAMUDAMUDA

Guest

If there is one anime I enjoy very much but adamantly refuse to admit to any of my friends, I think it's probably *Shokugeki no Soma*, more commonly known as *Food Wars*. What many people consider a perverted mess of fanservice, I think of as one of the better shounen manga coming out of Weekly Shounen Jump in the last decade. Yet, by incorporating ecchi elements into the series' DNA, series creators Yuto Tsukuda and Shun Saeki allow for a great deal of misinterpretation for what is on the surface, a classic shounen story utilizing a time-tested but excellent formula.

Telling the story of Soma Yukihira, the son of a low-key restaurant owner, *Shokugeki no Soma* resembles other shounen manga like *Naruto* or *One Piece* in that it features a character who is an overdog, but is viewed as an underdog by often inaccurate societal standards. Just as *Naruto* was secretly strong by way of possessing the Nine-Tails, yet overlooked by his village for a plethora of reasons, Soma Yukihira is fascinating in that he possesses absolutely stunning cooking abilities and a secretly impressive lineage, but many in the elite culinary school he attends doubt his abilities as a result of his seemingly humble origins.

Furthermore, the main conflict of *Food Wars* plays with the traditional understanding of battle shounen. Instead of physical combat competitions as famously shown in series like *My Hero Academia* or *Hunter x Hunter* (2011), *Shokugeki no Soma* opts to demonstrate conflict via judged cooking competitions, the titular *Shokugeki*. As such, the typical dynamics of shounen conflict are, in fact, made more interesting. In most physical competitions shown in other shounen series, the only thing that matters is who wins in an incredibly basic and primal manner. Arguably, that simplicity is why battle shounen continue to be published even to this day, with series like *Black Clover*. In contrast, *Food Wars* has tension built up in rather particular spots instead of spread throughout a fight. When Izuku Midoriya fights Katsuki Bakugo in *My Hero Academia*, there's tension throughout, but the readers are given space to get acclimated to that feeling. In *Shokugeki no Soma*, the particular points of real uncertainty come mostly when the actual preparations are explained and

when the judges reveal their verdicts. I would liken *Food Wars* to, instead of spreading a proverbial stick of butter of tension evenly through all of its 'combat' scenes like other shounen, opting to throw said stick of butter onto the bread at very specific points and calling it a day. What I mean with this metaphor is that, while there isn't as much tension overall in *Shokugeki no Soma*, the fact that it waxes and wanes makes its conflicts more meaningful and intense.



Of course, this overlooks a huge part of *Food Wars*, being the last chunk of the manga, which most would consider horrible. When the manga was released, in fact, I constantly saw r/manga threads on its downfall not just narratively but also economically - sales of the manga were dropping at a dramatically fast rate. I won't do any defending of that last section, as I don't believe it deserves much. The character writing, plot pacing, and overall tone of that last section veers so far down the deep end that I cannot possibly mount a decent argument as to why it isn't that bad. However, I do think that, in spite of all its faults, the majority of *Shokugeki no Soma* is worth reading even though most will simply write it off as a run of the mill ecchi like *To-Love-Ru* or *Yuuna and the Haunted Hot Springs* from the same magazine. *Food Wars* is more than that, with interesting development and a sense of intensity matching even the most legendary battle shounen titles.

BEAUTIFUL DREAMER:



TONY T.

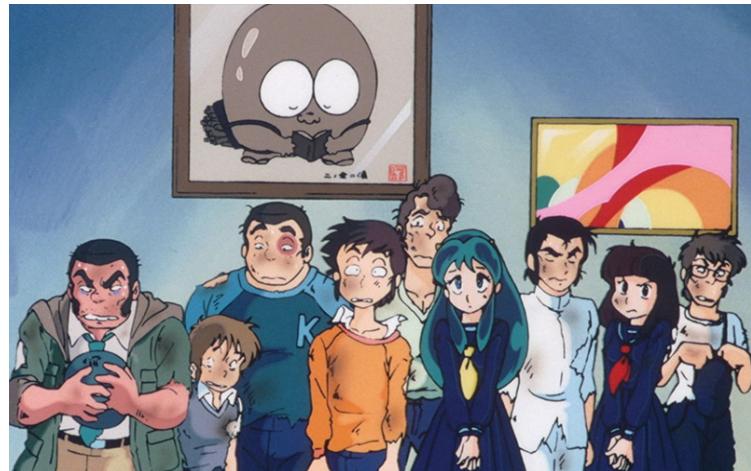
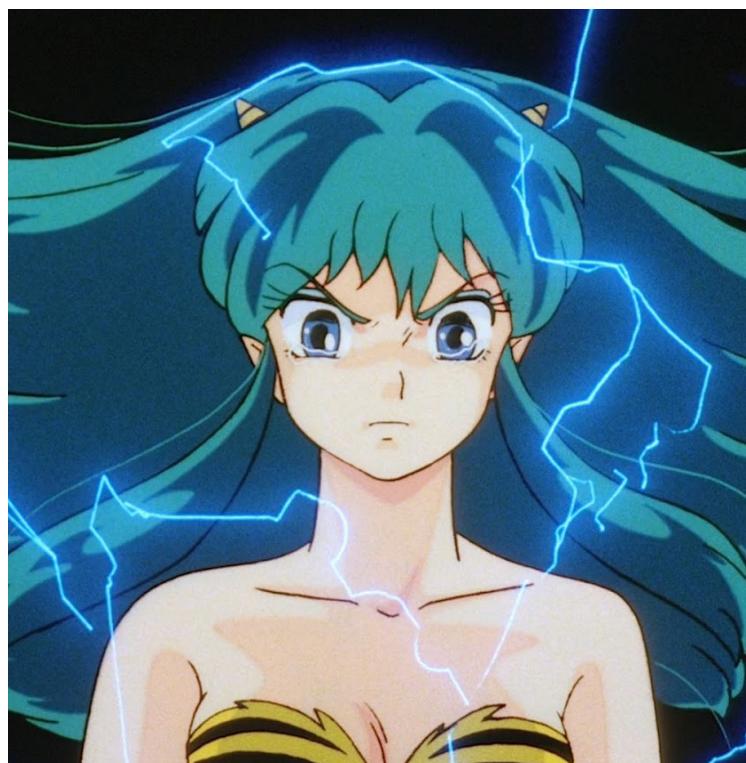
2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science Minor

I don't believe in guilty pleasures, but this seems adjacent enough.

Writer

To people who don't know me very well, I may come across like a "le wrong generation" person. I complain and complain about new anime, but seemingly, I espouse much less hatred towards older anime. Though I could see that viewpoint, I, being myself, disagree. There is no shortage of anime from the cel-shaded era that I could nitpick and find issues with. Frankly, the reason why I don't mention them more often simply comes down to no one mentioning older shows in casual conversation more often.

Most relevant to this article, however, is *Urusei Yatsura*, a series that I have very mixed feelings towards. It's not so much that I think *Urusei Yatsura* is terrible, but that statement in of itself would not be false. Rather, I recognize that *Urusei Yatsura* is, at times, a fun romantic comedy with goofy characters, which inarguably shaped tropes and the overall anime landscape that we have experienced in the 40 years since it started airing. If



a bit stale, the characters are only such because of the series' influence, and are still very fun. The series can get wacky with science fiction concepts but can also have interesting elements ripped from Japanese folklore, resulting in a plethora of interesting story concepts, some of which really work. Yet, the series varies too much on an episode-by-episode basis without changing enough of the dynamic to remain truly interesting for long. The status quo almost always reverts to an original point towards the end of the episode, and if it isn't, following episodes ignore developments that happened in earlier ones. The only changes that actually amount to much are the addition of new characters, which makes the cast feel incredibly bloated at times. Thus, I would be lying if I said I enjoyed all of *Urusei Yatsura*. A solid 5/10 for me, the television series of *Urusei Yatsura* is, among other anime, one of the ones that I point to when someone accuses me of being overly partial to the cel animation era of Japanese animation.

This sentiment roughly extends to the series' films itself. I find all but two to be rather boring extensions of what could have been episodic plots in and of itself. The sixth film is particularly awful, however, as it seemingly did nothing and overwrote the brilliant and emotionally poignant ending presented within the fifth film, one of the two that I found actually enjoyable. Yet, the fifth film, in being a satisfying ending to *Urusei Yatsura*, is more enjoyable because it feels fulfilling, and requires a large amount of the series' context to fully appreciate. The fifth film is an 8/10, and the abhorrent sixth film a 2/10. The one small piece of the *Urusei Yatsura* franchise that I unabashedly adore and consider a masterpiece even beyond the typical confines of "it's good for what it is" - a label I could even begrudgingly apply

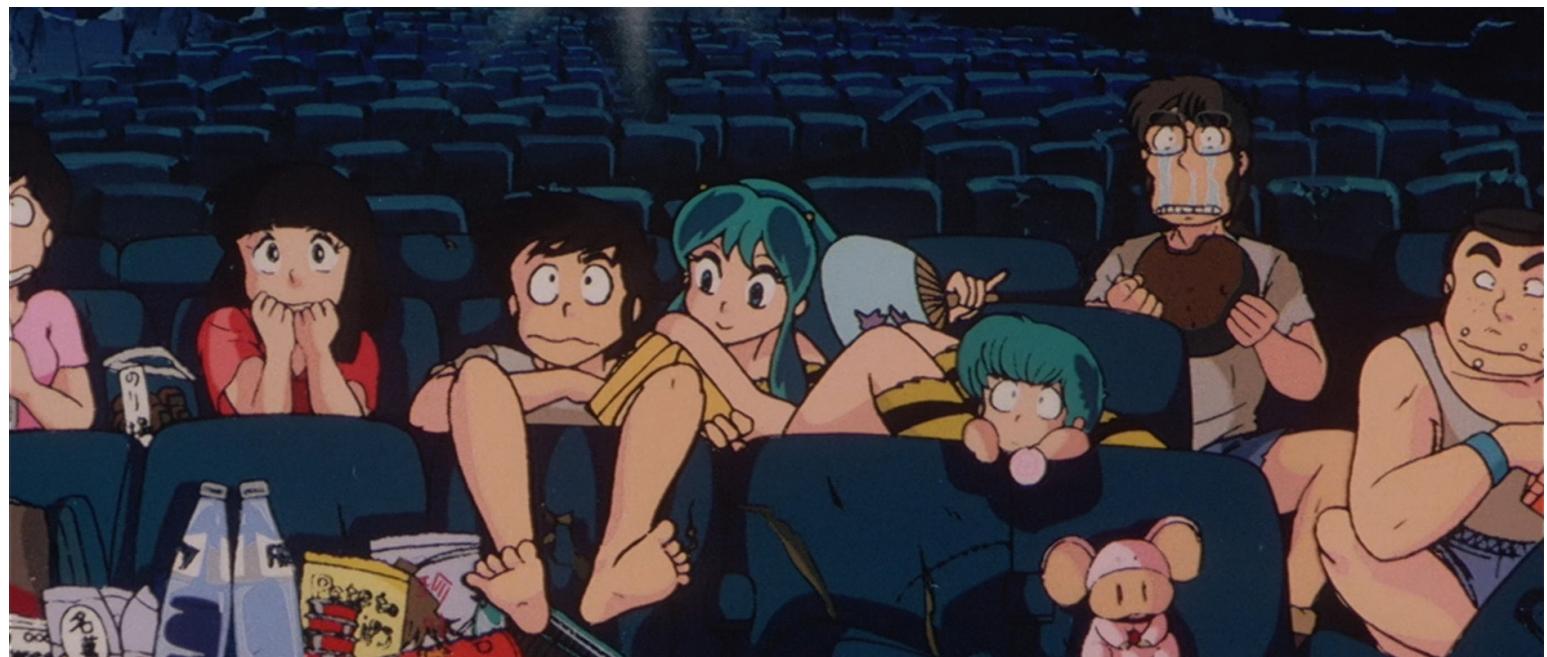
IS IT GOOD OR IS IT BAD?

to the fifth film - would be the second one. In so many ways, *Beautiful Dreamer* is an absolutely fantastic piece of media that I do not think the *Urusei Yatsura* franchise deserves, but is all the more stronger for having.

From the mind of Oshii Mamoru, who would later go on to direct works like *Ghost in the Shell*, *Patlabor*, and *Angel's Egg*, *Urusei Yatsura 2: Beautiful Dreamer* is a phenomenal film that recognizes the repetitive nature of the series it is tied to. Its imagery fits the wacky aesthetic of the franchise writ large with goofy aspects blending in culturally understood imagery from folklore and science fiction, yet includes large amounts of surrealism that Oshii would later exemplify in his more landmark works. The thematic and aesthetic focus on delusions and dreams, in particular, evokes an existentialist atmosphere. The spatial design of the film's setting, along with how the characters move through it, give off this particularly peaceful yet anxious tone as well. *Beautiful Dreamer* is not just nominally tied to the series it stems from, however. Though its plot could perhaps have been an episodic plot of the series itself, its cinematic length and production values allow the filmmakers to explore the nature of *Urusei Yatsura* itself. In particular, the film's final scene connotes an understanding that, just as *Beautiful Dreamer* is a loop, the television series can only subsist by looping itself over and over again - ending the loop would conclude the series.

I've attached so much pretentious-sounding praise to *Beautiful Dreamer* in part because I recognize it as a fantastic film that makes use of its production circumstances and medium, but moreover because it shows me that even media created for the most non-artistic, corporate reasons, can be absolute cinematic marvels. *Beautiful Dreamer* had every reason to be mediocre, as a spinoff to a property that I don't exactly lather with praise. Instead, it was an absolutely phenomenal film that I've rewatched multiple times now. In fact, though Oshii's other directorial projects, particularly *Ghost in the Shell*, *Angel's Egg*, and perhaps *Gosenzo-sama Banbanzai!*, are far more accepted as works of art, I consider *Beautiful Dreamer* my favorite of his works if only because it works so well within its own context. In closing, *Beautiful Dreamer* is a film that has no right to be so great, yet it is one of my favorite films of all time. Just as I will often refer to *Urusei Yatsura* as an older anime that I find middling, *Beautiful Dreamer* shows me that any piece of media, despite how terrible it may seem, can be made interesting. It is why I dislike simply labeling a piece of media "good" or "bad", or ending a conversation off by spouting out some numbered rating. I should always have something more to discuss, even for something that I don't really enjoy, like the *Urusei Yatsura* series as a whole.

But anyway, *Beautiful Dreamer* was, like, really good. 9/10.



STUPID HUMANS FIGHTING ALIENS IS AWESOME



MITCHELL MADAYAG

2nd Year, Undeclared

0 pts, g0 r34d G4nTz Br0

Writer

Over the summer, I recently stumbled upon a manga series that unexpectedly jumped into my top ten list: *Gantz*. Contrary to the theme of this issue, I can't say I am inherently guilty of liking *Gantz*, rather that I find it difficult to casually recommend it to anyone. Most chapters of *Gantz* feature a cover image that doubles as a lewd pin-up poster, making it difficult to read in public without getting a few odd stares. As for the actual plot, *Gantz* is terribly inconsistent in what it is trying to be, but it is awesome. To keep it brief, a chosen few who die in Tokyo are given a second chance at life via an ominous black sphere named *Gantz*. They are tasked with the objective to slaughter a race of aliens disguised among Earth's attractions within a short time limit. Complete the objective and survive, they must repeat this process continuously until granted enough points to buy their freedom. I would never consider *Gantz* to be a good gateway series into the sci-fi thriller manga rabbit hole, but instead one that will keep you down there for a long time (via Z-Gun).



Along with this nonsensical but fun premise, the various often unnamed side characters are what really hooked me into *Gantz*. With each wave of aliens comes a new wave of revived idiots who often refuse to listen to the instructions of *Gantz* and the surviving veterans from the previous games. For instance, one of the players brought into *Gantz* was a Buddhist priest who claimed that this was all a trial for determining the fate of their souls after death. His outstanding faith in religion was what eventually led to his demise, ironically by an alien taking the form of a great Buddha statue. Mangaka Hiroya Oku loves

using these moments for depicting humans as cynical selfish creatures, a trope later seen in his work *Inuyashiki*. Like with the priest, a good portion of the human deaths are mostly attributed to their own ignorance rather than the terrifying power of the aliens. In a provocative sort of way, I looked forward to getting to each round of *Gantz* to see what embarrassingly dumb things the adults would do or say to get them killed. Although these side characters may seem useless in contributing to the war of the worlds, I find them brilliant as tools for demonstrating a nihilistic but all too realistic portrayal of the human condition.

However, what made me appreciate these lesser people even more was when they finally sucked in their pride and banded together against the aliens for once, creating an epic sequence of desperate humans fighting extraterrestrials. Even American tourists who were unfairly dragged into the hellhole of *Gantz* can at least tell that it's a do or die situation, creating a humorously dark example of the language barrier. This is the true beauty of *Gantz*: sometimes even the most selfish of people can put aside their own morals and work together to achieve something great. But this is *Gantz* we're talking about here. The satisfaction of witnessing the growth of detestable humans doesn't last very long, as the aliens are unreasonably powercreep with each mission. I hate to draw pointless comparisons, but I felt that the looming feeling of death over every character was more prevalent and consistent in *Gantz* than it was artificially in the later parts of *Attack on Titan* ([see my article from last volume](#)). Each main and side character was equally likely to die, raising the stakes of every exciting battle between two races that made me unsure of who to truly root for.



DEAR KONSHUU-SENSEI...

最近、「ありふれた」の抱き枕を買いましたが、友達は俺がとても気持ち悪いだと思っています。どうすればいいですか。教えてください、今週先生！

それは困りますね、○○○○・○○○○○○さん。私は「ありふれた」をまだ見たことがありませんが、それについて少し悪いことを知っています。ですが、○○○○○○さんの興味を尊敬して、全然馬鹿にしません。

どうして○○○○○○さんの友達はいじめましたか。○○○○○○さんは抱き枕に変なことをして、友達を不快にしましたか。それとも、○○○○○○さんはもっと優しくてケアしてくれる友人が要りますか。どちらにしても、自分と自分の友達の関係を強く考えてください、○○○○○○さん。

みなさん、お互いの興味と趣味を尊敬しなくてはいけませんね。でも、誰かの興味は体に悪いか違法だったり、その人に話して、具合をチェックするはずだと思います。もちろん、状況によって、気をつけてください。他の質問があったら、私に聞いてね。

P.S.

○○○○○○さんは本当に「ありふれた」が好きですか。

Ask a question at tinyurl.com/konshuuSensei and it might be answered by Konshuu-sensei in the next issue! (English questions are okay, too!)

VOLUME 54, ISSUE 2

SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

 facebook.com/calanimagealpha

 instagram.com/calanimagealpha

 cal.moe/discord

 cal.moe/youtube

CLUB EVENTS

Follow us on social media or visit cal.moe for updates!

Weekly Socials:

Thursdays 8-10pm Social Sciences Building 170

Weekly Virtual Showings:

Fridays 8-9pm CAA Discord - cal.moe/discord

STAFF

 **Mitchell Madayag**
Editor-in-Chief

 **Tiffany Tran**
Graphic Designer

 **Sophia Xue**
Artist/Graphic Designer

 **Miranda Zhang**
Artist/Graphic Designer

 **Sharrel Narsico**
Artist

 **Tammy Lee**
Artist

 **Kate Bushmareva**
Artist

 **Grace Li**
Artist

 **Crystal Li**
Artist

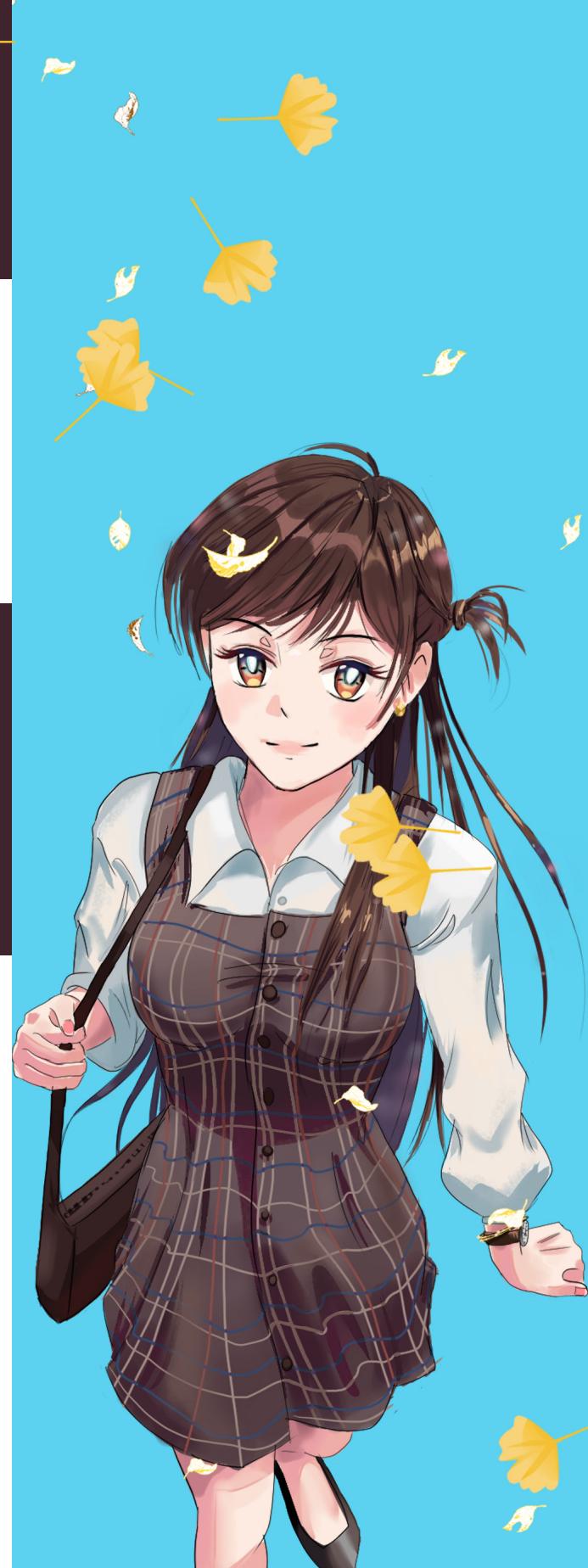
 **Cosette Moskowitz**
Artist

 **Heaven Jones**
Artist

 **Erik Nelson**
Writer

 **Tony T.**
Writer

 **Felix Levy**
Writer



Konshuu accepts guest submissions from club members! If you'd like to have content featured, please visit:

j.mp/konsub

Mizuhara
Rent A Girlfriend
Art By **Heaven Jones**