

THE HALLOWEEN ISSUE

konshuu

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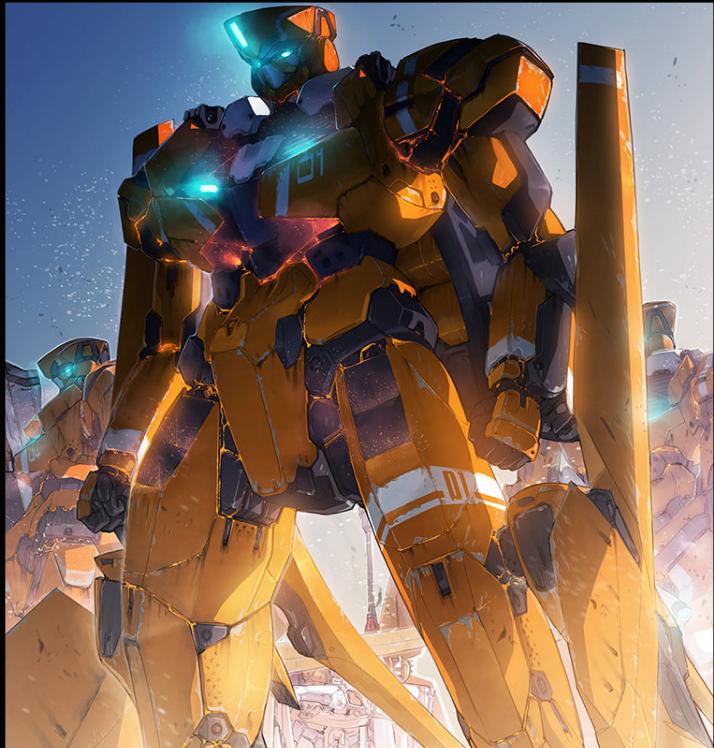
Volume XLIV, Issue VII
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THIS WEEK'S SERIES

► ANIME RECOMMENDATION

ALDNOAH.ZERO

In the 20th century, a gate to the planet of Mars was discovered. Eventually, the Vers Empire was founded on Mars, and it unsuccessfully attacked Earth with its advanced technology. But war has begun once again in the year of 2014, when the assassination of Vers Empire's princess, Asseylum Vers Allusia, acts as a catalyst for the Martians to conquer the Earthlings. The story follows Inaho Kaizuka, a genius high school student who becomes a mech pilot and fights for the United Earth Forces, as well as Slaine Troyard, an Earth-born human subservient to one of the royal counts of the Vers Empire. Although they come from the same planet, Slaine Troyard and Inaho Kaizuka will fight with their lives on the line as they lead the United Earth Forces and the Vers Empire respectively. With enthralling mech designs and a beautiful score made by Hiroyuki Sawano, Aldnoah.Zero's action scenes are both aesthetically pleasing and hard to forget.



Studio: A-1 Pictures

Written by: Katsuhiko Takayama



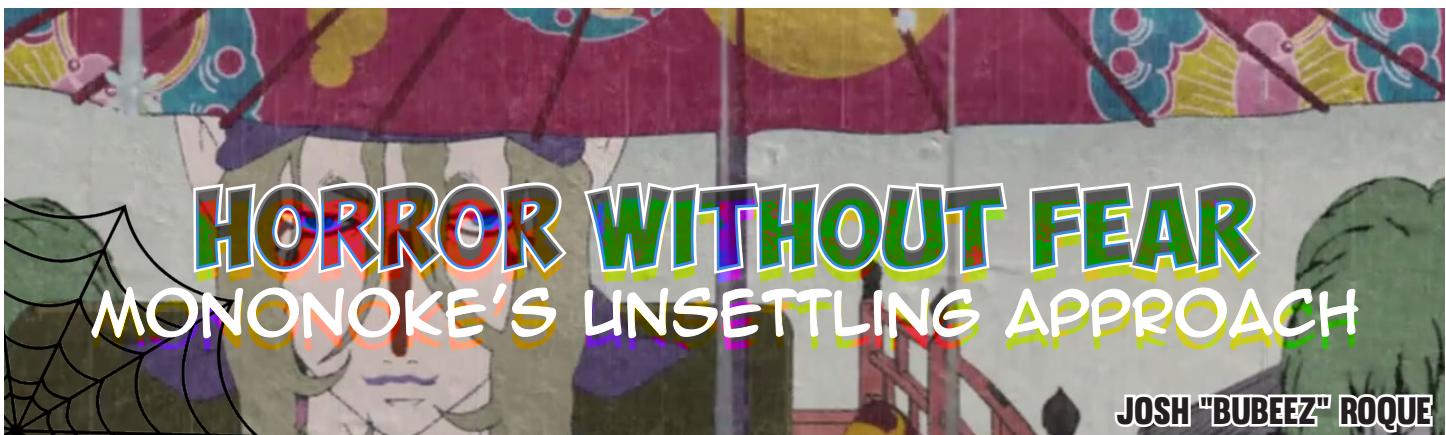
Artist: Daromeon

Written by: Sandrovich Yabako

MANGA SOCIAL

KENGUA ASHUA

Kengan Ashua takes place in the ring, where there's only two types of people: winners and losers. Merchants and businessmen partake in gambling matches, pitting two unarmed fighters against each other, where the winner takes all. These unarmed fighters use solely hand-to-hand combat when fighting against each other, and merchants typically utilize this to solve contentious disputes and debates. Everything changes when Ouma Tokita enters the fray, nicknamed by some as the "Ashura." Ouma Tokita effortlessly crushes his opposing competition without batting an eye, capturing the interest of several influential businessmen. Among them is Hideki Nogi, esteemed leader of the Nogi Group. Clearly inspired by the classic Grappler Baki, Kengan Ashura manages to skillfully balance light-hearted comedy and insane combat.



JOSH "BUBEEZ" ROQUE

Mononoke is what you would call an “artsy-fartsy” kind of anime. When there is a clear and conventional route to telling a story, *Mononoke* would rather not take it. Regardless of what you think of the show, it certainly has no fear in taking an experimental approach, even in its approach to creating fear. This will be an intense look at the first two episodes of *Mononoke*, focusing on the odd and charming ways that it sends shivers down your spine, makes you turn the lights on, makes that other “presence” in the room feel just a bit closer...

Here's a quick refresher on the plot, shortened to please the palate: in the Edo Period in Japan, a mysterious medicine seller travels to different places, encountering the supernatural along the way; these are caused by spirits known as *mononoke*, spirits that still wander the Earth for purposes unknown. The medicine seller must investigate why each *mononoke* has not moved on to the afterlife, in order to either help them move on, or defeat them.

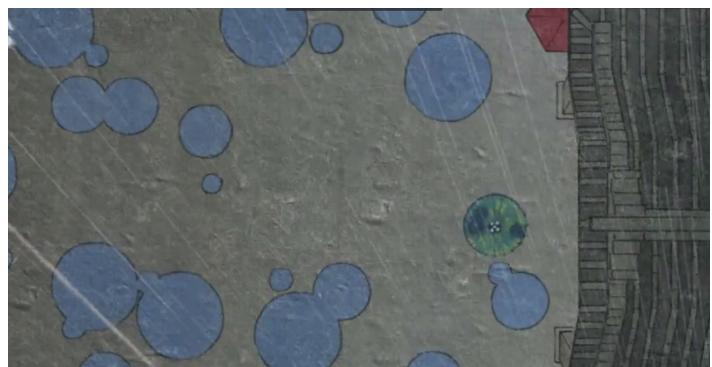
This article regards the first story, making up the first two episodes. The medicine seller spends the night at an inn, where he meets another guest named Shino. She is pregnant with the illegitimate child of a noble and is running away from assassins sent to kill both her and her child. The innkeeper, with every other room occupied for the night, has no choice but to open a “special” room that has not been used in years, for reasons that seem to frighten the employees.

So, how does *Mononoke* make you begin to feel nervous about that room? Geometry!

I tend to believe that shapes are not inherently frightening. A square or a circle does not make anyone go, “ahh!” At least not justifiably. *Mononoke*, however, gets creative in making the viewer look at a circle on

the screen, think about what the circle might mean or not, and produce enough anxiety to make the viewer eventually go, “ahh!” That was just a fun way of saying that *Mononoke* tells part of its story through the shapes that it makes you look at, remember, and focus on. Let's take a closer look at the circle, obviously the most horrifying geometric shape since the rhombus.

The first thing that *Mononoke* teaches the viewer about circles is that they are associated with the presence of people. How does it do this? Within the first minute of the anime, we see that it is raining on the medicine seller and he has an umbrella along with everyone in the background. He is interested in the inn directly in front of him. Then we get a shot that overlooks the road and the inn from above; there are no visible “people” around, just circles that are moving around outside of the building on the road, except for one that stays still in front of the inn. What does an umbrella look like from this angle? A perfect circle! This may be the first instance, but it is far from the last; this is a repeated image throughout the first two episodes; when someone comes to the inn, it is signified by the circular umbrella stopping in front of the building. For instance, a few minutes later:



You might not be convinced yet. There are also circles of rain on the ground, so how does this mean the

circle becomes a symbol of “people?” Well, the anime compels us to make that connection with other physical cues: the umbrellas are highly ornamental, they catch the eye with their design; they are always the same size, covering the same area below them. Not only that, the umbrellas move A LOT. They zig and zag on the road, the medicine seller’s umbrella is spinning in place despite just standing there. The motions of these circles indicate liveliness, or life. The umbrella must be held by a person, and in this scene, their visual covering of the people below them in terms of area becomes the visual cue for these ornamental circles to be seen as something more than just a circle.

Even the absence of a circle creates an implication for the story, creating anxiety: after it is understood that Shino is being followed and is seeking shelter in the inn from would-be assassins, the single umbrella that was in the shot earlier has disappeared; and we understand that the assassin has already entered the building. There are no rooms left to rent out in the inn, so this circle becomes an oddity; when he sees a charm that Shino had dropped earlier, only for his umbrella’s circle to disappear later, we understand that the assassin is coming. The viewer holds the tension, the knowledge about what is to come, and we become anxious for the moment of realization. And in the next scene, we get the horrified revelation:



How does Mononoke use this geometry to make us feel nervous about the room, before we ever actually learn about it?

Shino begins to suspect something strange when she hears the sound of children on her way to her “special” room; the innkeeper comments, though, that no children are currently staying in the inn. When Shino is being shown this “mysterious” room, the innkeeper lights a fire, the screen pans on the ceiling (remember: movement!)

and we are presented with this: An ornamental circle, watching over the room like a looming eye that has been awakened by the fire that the innkeeper has relit.



How about the repeated images of the stairs that lead up to the room? The stairs are repeatedly set as the only way to get to this “special” room; and what happens when we are flashed this image as soon as we understand that something supernatural is coming?

Spinning, ornamental circles, covering only parts of these figure’s faces; only to be understood as something “almost human,” making their way towards that room... Something not particularly human is coming for Shino.



This is hard to visualize how it produces anxiety without the ambiance that the music and sound effects give to it, such as the sharp sound of wooden blocks clanging together, as if snapping the viewer to attention in moments that had been previously foreshadowed.

Geometry is just a single aspect of Mononoke, a single chain of details that support the narrative. I adamantly refuse to spoil the whole story in this article. Instead, I invite you to watch the episodes. There is much more to Mononoke than what has been revealed, the show of horror without fear. While not the typical Halloween treat, the recent Berkeley rain is the perfect mood for a supernatural adventure.



THE HORROR OF LIVING AT SCHOOL

ANDRES GONZALEZ

Gakkou Gurashi (School Live) is a slice of life anime that stars Yuki Takeya and her friends in the School Living Club as they make memories having completely normal club activities. At least, that's what the show wants you to believe. When the show aired in the Summer Season of 2015 it caught many viewers off guard with its episode 1 twist; this supposed moe show is actually a horror show. With this change of perspective, everything that was shown in the episode holds a brand new meaning, and what results is a slice-of-life/horror hybrid show. What I'd like to look at is the moment the show turns from moe to horror, as well as look at how the show successfully manages to blend the two genres together in a meaningful way.

Let's start by looking at the first episode itself. The episode starts off in a clichéd manner typical to the slice of life genre, with the protagonist running late to school. As she arrives at her club we are introduced to the rest of the cast of characters who fit into defining tropes. There's the strong-willed and zealous Kurumi, the calm and collected Miki, the big sister character Yuuri, the quiet and underwhelming teacher Megumi, and their cute dog Taroumaru. From there we follow Yuki as she has a normal day at school and nothing of particular interest happens until the group reconvenes in the clubroom for a second time. Yuki asks to step out for a second on her own and when she does it's clear that it makes Miki uncomfortable. She offers to go check on Yuki, and as she's doing so we cut back to Yuki in the classroom as she chatters with her classmates. It is here right as Miki appears in the doorframe that the mood of the show shifts.

The idle chatter that was used for background noise begins to fade, the lengthening shadows of the setting

sun darken the atmosphere, and the positioning of the camera keeps both the characters' faces out of view. An eerie, overbearing sound effect weighs down the situation further as Miki reluctantly attempts to work up the courage to call out to Yuki. As soon as she does, the reality of the world in which the show resides is revealed. The warm lighting from the sunset emphasizes the shattered windows and the overall redness that composes the shot. The classroom once filled with laughing children is now filled with worn out desks in complete disarray, blood is splattered across the walls and floor, but most disturbingly of all Yuki continues to talk to her nonexistent friend. All the while, a gentle melody plays in the background. I would like to point out that this same melody is used throughout the show to great effect. Despite its calmness, it is used at very meaningful times, usually when something bad happens to the protagonists, and so it becomes associated with such in our minds. It both soothes the soul and terrifies it simultaneously.



Overall this scene is executed very well as the show spends the entirety of its first episode to try to create

an expectation in your mind only so that they could immediately shatter it with their reality. Not only has that, but the reveal itself serves purpose as character development for our protagonist. It is meant to show the harsh contrast between the world Yuki sees and the reality that she lives in. From here on out the show becomes a hybrid between the daily life that Yuki tries to live and the horror of the zombie apocalypse that she and her club members are trying to survive.

An element of particular notice to me was the opening theme for the show. Despite the major switch in the genre it remains the same, a typical happy-go-lucky slice-of-life opening. However, as the show progresses the visuals of the opening change to match the plot and become more in line with reality than Yuki's delusions. Several changes occur at specific episodes, but for the sake of spoilers I will only discuss the changes between the first and second openings. The first of the three changes is the once unblemished school in the panning shot of the school now has its true, shattered windows and boarded up doorways with a horde of zombies inching toward its entrance. The second change is in a short montage of shots where her once-living friends are replaced with the shambling zombies they have become. The third change is to a tracking shot of Yuki's silhouette as she runs happily through different sections of the school. In the first iteration everything seems perfectly normal, but in the second we see the school for what it truly is. Notice here though that in this second iteration, the school still seems perfectly normal in the parts of the shot that overlay Yuki's silhouette. From the beginning the opening was meant for the audience to view the world from Yuki's point of view, but this second iteration slightly tears away at some of it in place for reality. The majority of the meaning that opening holds relies upon the mental psyche of Yuki and how it changes over the course of the show.

Yuki is the character that really holds everything together in the show. Not only the bond between the girls, but the horror aspect, and slice of life aspect alike. Her most defining characteristic is her inability to handle difficult situations which is the cause of her delusions. When the zombie apocalypse starts she was unable to find a reasonable coping mechanism and instead turns to believing that nothing had changed

at all. Normally this kind of behavior is incredibly detrimental, but it becomes one of her greatest strengths as a member of her group. Her upbeat attitude and spirit are uplifting for her as well as the other members of the group. Yuki often suggests they have club activities, and it's these activities that give their lives meaning again. This also contributes to the show's slice of life aspect as several episodes focus on these activities and have a light air to them. On the contrast, there are times when her delusions are shattered by the intenseness of the situation. These are times when the show is able to focus on its horror aspect.



A notable aspect of the show is the way in which the zombies are used to create trauma. While the zombies are the immediate threat that endanger their lives, the show doesn't use the fact simply that they are zombies as part of their horror. Rather than just use them as something scary, the show focuses more on how the zombies impact the lives of the girls. Some of the episodes feature flashbacks to before the outbreak and show the how the infection personally affected each of the girls. They each have their own stories to tell and they each probably have their own opinion on them. The show questions whether or not these walking corpses are still considered people.

Gakkou Gurashi is not the most unique or innovative show, but it brings something different and unexpected to the table. It manages to take two seemingly polar opposite genres and make them work with one another to emphasize their differences for dramatic effect. Should you decide to watch it, keep an eye out for the changes in the opening as they come.

THIS WEEK'S ACTIVITY

STAFF HALLOWEEN PLAYLIST

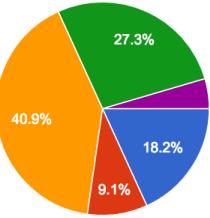
A spooky staff playlist! In the spirit of Halloween, here are our top choices for horror-inducing music!

	Title	Composer	Series	Staff Member
	Adore	Kou Otani	Haibane Renmei Omake	Austin "cozziekuns" Tai
	Ononoki	Yasuharu Takahashi	Mononoke	Josh "bubeez" Roque
	Barok van Zieks	Yasumasa Kitagawa	Dai Gyakuten Saiban	Edward "Edo" Hong
	Rainy Forest Highway	Kikiyama	Yume Nikki	Jamie You
	We'll Be Waiting For The Night	Kuniaki Hishima	Monster	Nimsi Garcia
	In the Garden of Sinners	Yuki Kajiura	Kara no Kyoukai	Cassandra Sonne
	Snowy	Toby Fox	Undertale	Andrew "arched" Oeung
	Song of Saya I	ZIZZ Studio	Saya no Uta	Andy Chen
	Nightmare Contagion	ALI PROJECT	Another	Takayuki Yokota
	Kioku no Naka no Machigatta Keshiki	Mosaic.wav	Gakkou Gurashi	Andres Gonzalez
	Spider Dance	Toby Fox	Undertale	Rika "satoimo" Sato

LAST WEEK'S POLL

You're transported into the past, to the prehistoric era of cavemen. What item from Japanese culture do you take with you?

RESULTS



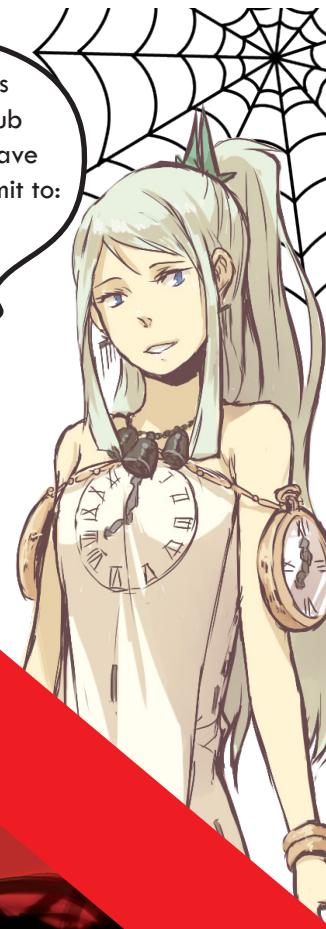
- My waifu figurine. Can't live without her. (18.2%)
- Godzilla. He belongs in this era, right? (9.1%)
- A giant robot mecha. I'll show those cavemen plebeians who's boss. (40.9%)
- A pen and paper to teach these cavemen how to draw manga all over again. (27.3%)
- Yu-Gi-Oh! It's the only way I'll survive this shadow realm. (4.5%)

THIS WEEK'S POLL

What was your favorite horror/thriller anime in the past year?



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Konshuu proudly accepts guest submissions from club members! If you'd like to have content featured, please submit to:
J.MP/KONSUB

calanimagealpha.com | facebook.com/groups/calanimagealpha
twitter.com/calanimagealpha | calanimagealpha.tumblr.com

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REGULAR WEEKLY EVENTS

Manga Socials

GBC Patio

Thursdays, 5:30 - 6:30pm

Game Nights

234 Dwinelle

Thursdays, 8:00 - 10:00pm

SCAN THIS CODE TO GO
TO OUR STAFF PLAYLIST!



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Artwork by: Jamie You
Alucard - Hellsing

JOY
2016