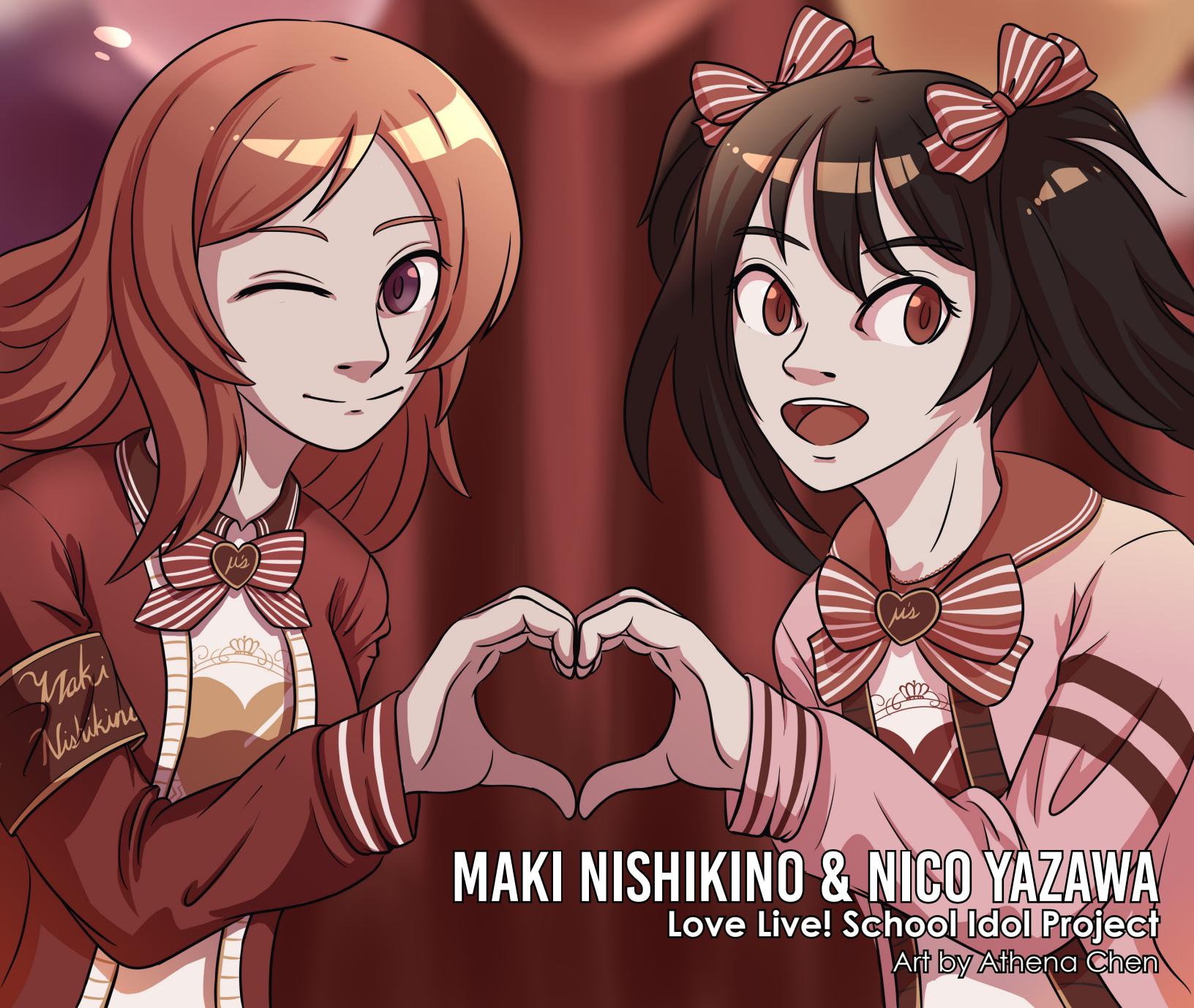


THE VALENTINE'S ISSUE

konshuu

Volume XLIX, Issue II



MAKI NISHIKINO & NICO YAZAWA
Love Live! School Idol Project

Art by Athena Chen

THIS WEEK'S FEATURED SERIES

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

KUZU NO HONKAI



Hanabi Yasuraoka and Mugi Awaya are the perfect couple, but they share a secret: they're in love with other people they can't be with. To deal with this, they use each other as substitutes. One day, they finally decide to act on their feelings, beginning the unraveling of a complicated web of unrequited love and feelings. A beautifully-crafted story about the complicated relationships of horrible people offering a different twist on the standard anime romance.

クズの本懐
SCUM'S WISH



Winter 2017, Lerche
Directed by Masaomi Andou



Winter 2018, Wit Studio
Directed by Ayumu Watanabe

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

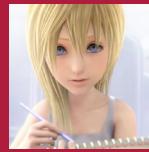
KOI WA AMEAGARI NO YOU NI



Akira Tachibana is a former track star who works at a family restaurant. She is in love with her manager, which would be fine if she wasn't a high school student and he wasn't a middle-aged man. Wait, don't leave yet... there is little romance in this one. Instead, this is a story of people overcoming their difficult situations. With breathtaking cinematography and art direction, it's a must-watch for slice-of-life fans and those who want something different.



LOVE AND OTHER MISNOMERS



ZIANA DEEN
3RD YEAR, ARCHITECTURE

STAFF WRITER

I'm taking Psychology of Love and Close Relationship class, and it only serves to make me more cynical about love.

Due to recent events, I have become a cynic when it comes to love. When I see affectionate couples on the bus, I make faces at them behind their backs. My friends' romances, once keeping me on the edge of my seat, now bore me, and I have to feign interest in their mundane stories. I can't even read shoujo manga anymore, because the false idealization of love makes me gag.

Humans love the idea of love. We love shipping characters, making romance where there is none. We like to knock our socks off with the idea that love is a wholesome, invigorating concept that keeps the world rotating. We all want someone, and most of us manga-reading, anime-watching people are miserable single people who feel the pressure to be in love and find someone because that's all we ever see in manga and anime.

In previous articles, I've mentioned how manga causes unrealistic expectations of love. There's constant misunderstanding, a whole lot of sexist gender norms, and the idea that everything will work out with optimism and hope. Then there's the whole set of clichés that are as familiar and recycled as subject matters in love songs. Frankly, it's boring and overdone.

"But Ziana", you, a level-headed reader, might say, "it's Valentine's Day! You just sound like a bitter single person in the holiday of love. Shouldn't you be talking about the beautiful wonders in love? Shouldn't you hold on to hope that things will get better?"

To that, I say, no. Screw that. Damn straight I'm reclaiming singlehood. There's not enough shoujo manga that celebrates being single, and certainly not enough shoujo manga that celebrates other types of love. We're so desperate for love: we'd accept love we don't deserve. So that's what this article will be about: the not-so-typical love, and the normalcy in being single.

Barakamon and *Yotsuba&* are the first of these manga. They're both wholesome manga about an older male taking care of a young child. In *Barakamon*, Handa, a twenty-something former professional calligrapher, becomes the unwitting, unofficial caretaker of reckless seven-year old Naru. Their shenanigans are made more wholesome by the cast of equally reckless characters. The two mutually grow, as Handa becomes both responsible and relaxed in Naru's youthful company. In *Yotsuba&*, Yousuke is a thirty-something writer who has adopted the titular character, Yotsuba. Yotsuba, at five years old, is plenty odd, but she's genuine,

and that's why her interactions with the various aged characters in the manga fill your heart. The love she has for her father is unmatched, and it makes you wish you had a positive father figure like that in your life. In both these manga, the guys are single af, and for that, I am grateful.



Fullmetal Alchemist has a couple obvious romances, but what the story really cherishes, more than the subtle romance between Ed and Winry, is the brotherly relationship between the Elric brothers and the formidable loyalty between Roy and Hawkeye. Besides the fact that Ed and Al have endured hell to get their mother back, Ed literally gave up an arm for Al's soul. On the other hand (pun, freaking, intended), the boss-subordinate dynamic between Roy and Hawkeye is to die for. After a personal tragedy, Hawkeye has nothing to live for and no one to rely on. So Roy takes her on as his second, his right hand man, and tells her to trust him through thick and thin. Because as long as she has his back, he'll have hers. They're so close, they've invented secret codes between themselves in the form of small talk. In the aftermath of the series, a single photograph shows they're still kicking it, together. Lots of people like to think they're a thing. I take comfort that they're not.

There's this idea that love will complete us, that there's somebody out there that will accept our mess and make us better. Maybe one day I'll believe in that. In the meantime, I'll hold onto the fact that being single is okay, and that you don't need romantic love to feel loved.



WHAT IS LOVE? BABY DON'T HURT ME ~ NO MORE



BENSON PENG

2ND YEAR, ENGINEERING AND PHYSICS

STAFF WRITER

Another of my favorite romcom - *Ano Natsu de Matteru*

SPOILER WARNING:

Redline (minor), *Toradora*, *Nagi no Asukara*

February 1st, 2019 – It was a dark and stormy night, and I was running late for my weekly Konshuu meeting. When I arrived at the meeting room, sweating and panting because I ran across the campus in the rain (*Insert Bunny Girl OP*), the director looked at me, and with an authoritative tone, said, “Omae wa mou~ no we need you to write for the Valentine’s Issue”. I, of course, responded, “Nani!?” This is it: this is how I met your mother.

Alright, so let's talk about romance anime. To me, romance anime is kind of like Kinder Surprise™ chocolate eggs that kids love so much – sometimes you get gems that really sets anime apart from other mediums, and sometimes you get *Kuzu no Honkai*. Yes, every time I watch that show there is this boiling urge for me to ask the characters, “What are you doing here? Do you guys not have a life to live besides being edgy? Like there are more than 40 active conflicts in this world at the moment and you are here doing this. WHY?”



10/10 IGN - A must watch if you enjoyed White Album 2

The reason I just presented this rant is because I want to illustrate an important point about producing an anime in the romance genre: there is a fine balance bridging the reality and idealization of the subject of love. If you tip too far into either, the balance collapses and you have successfully lost your audience.

For example, if a romance anime becomes too ideal so that it devolves into the “once upon a time there is a prince and a princess” trope, it becomes somewhat hackneyed. Of course, some good works deliberately but moderately use this technique as a comedic relief. In the end of the movie *Redline*, at the end of an intergalactic racing death match with a DANDY hero and a COOL heroine, the entire screen blurs into a big neon sign of “LOVE”, giving me a chuckle and reminding me to enjoy the ride and not take it too seriously.



What more is there to love than a full throttle intergalactic death match?

In another case, the anime tries too hard to pursue the form of realism, incorporating elements from real life such as cheating, commitment issues, and grossly and inappropriately dramatized struggles of sexual identity without discretion or subtlety, and ironically becomes less realistic because now it is just a dumpster fire where the producers/authors indiscriminately pour in the worst they can imagine for shock value. Such is the case for *Kuzu no Honkai*, and to an extent *Citrus*. Again, like the former case where there is an inclination towards idealization, there are exceptions where a moderated inclination towards realism is achieved successfully. For example, in the series *Oregairu*, the protagonist Hachiman breaks away from the norm for protagonists of rom-coms of its time, harboring a pessimistic outlook towards romance and youth due to his own social isolation and failed attempts at confession. Seeing how such a realistically flawed character navigate through his youthful challenge is at once refreshing and relatable for many viewers, making the series a successful rom-com.

Finally, when the two inclinations are balanced, then some of my favorite works in anime history are born. For readers that have



Battle of Jutland – Colorized – Oregairu

read up until this point of the article, this might come as a surprise: romance is actually my favorite genres of anime. To me, a good balanced anime is one of the best mediums for romance, as its abstraction of reality gives it the perfect tool to convey complex emotions and ideas that are based on reality but are more than that. Compared to live-action shows where regardless of how earnestly the actors try to convey emotions, they are nevertheless acting, anime characters are created entities that exist in the medium itself. In the world of anime, the characters are just as alive in the frame they're in as we are in the real world because they are created along with the world they're in through the hard work of the illustrators and production committee. As a result, the abstract nature of romantic anime allow us to not just imagine what romance is now, but what romance can be in a different context.

This may sound very abstract, but can be easily illustrated with a few examples. A good example is *Toradora!*. During Christmas last year, I rewatched *Toradora!* to keep my holiday spirit alive, and I discovered something that I couldn't see when I was younger than the characters: their animation tells a lot more about the story than the actual dialogue.

[Heavy Spoiler Warning from this point]

In episode 24 (the second to last episode), Ryuji and Taiga, the show's hero and heroine, decide to elope to Ryuji's grandparents' home. Through a turn of events, they manage to reunite the grandparents with Ryuji's mother, who was estranged from the grandparents ever since she gave birth to Ryuji outside marriage. Ryuji is glad that his mother and grandparents have remarkably repaired a relationship that has been broken for more than ten years (perhaps in an unrealistically rapid progress). But for Taiga, while she is equally happy to see the parental relationships fixed, she is also torn between her love for Ryuji and her longing for her own mother, whom she has abandoned to 'elope'. There is no dialogue that explicitly states her inner conflict, but the expressions she makes while seeing Ryuji's mother and hearing the phrase of "parents" showed her conflict clearer than ever.

Another interesting scene in the anime happened earlier in the same episode while Taiga and Ryuji's friends are helping them elope. One of their friends, Ami, used to get into confrontations with Taiga because she dislikes Taiga's brash nature, but has since grown to cherish her because she sees through and empathizes with Taiga's struggles. However, she also develops feelings for Ryuji for understanding her "childishness" while everyone else sees her as a mature and successful actress. To conclude her

feelings for Ryuji, Ami asks Ryuji whether he loves Taiga while helping them elope. To Ryuji, it seems like another one of Ami's pranks, but for Ami, it is one of the most emotional moments of her storyline. In my opinion, this scene is brilliant in condensing emotions in a few frames, and I think the industry agrees with me too. In the anime *Nagi no Asukara* that came out a few years later, one of the main characters, Miuna Shiodome, experienced a very similar turn of events and had a remarkably similar scene.



A sad Taiga breaks my heart

In my opinion, *Toradora!*, as an exceptional example of a good balanced romance anime, achieves a few extraordinary feats. It is an anime with conflicts arising from nearly every character trying to find ways to love each other as friends, family, and lovers without resorting to cheap plot devices such as a malicious Mr. Steal-Your-Girl. While the anime is unrealistic in a way that such malicious players exist in real life, it discards such characters in order to focus on its attempt to define what constitutes as love and a happy relationship in an otherwise realistic perspective. It also limits the amount of information the viewers get directly, letting the viewers ponder and discover the subtleties in the plot just like a real person without God's perspective would. Finally, it portrays emotion in condensed format that is otherwise difficult to act out in real life. Therefore, if you want to share a great Valentine's Day with your loved one (who hopefully also watches anime), what better way is there than to watch a good romance anime together?

Left: Ami – *Toradora!* Right: Miuna – *Nagi no Asukara* Caption: The Pleading Your Crush to Reject You Face

WE ARE ALL MIYAKO

SHAMIN CHOWDHURY
3RD YEAR, PHYSICS AND MATH

STAFF WRITER

Bogeun, I wrote this article fast, but sorry for turning it in late

Love stories. Person meets person, they fall in love, maybe they become a couple, maybe they get married, maybe they have children, etc.. Maybe we picture ourselves accomplishing something along those lines. But really, we're all just Miyako until we've done that. Actually, maybe we're still Miyako even after that. Anyway, for those of you who don't know, this Winter 2019 anime season has brought us a show called *Wataten* which involves a college student named Miyako who is probably crushing on one of her little sister's friends named Hana. By the way, Hana is in fifth grade. Now, the show itself is mostly just Miyako dressing up her little sister, Hana, and her other friends in cute, cosplay style clothing to then take pictures of them, and in exchange, she feeds them desserts. It's mostly just a cute girls doing cute things kind of show. Miyako ends up being creepy towards Hana at least once per episode, going so far as to stalk Hana and her friends and take pictures of Hana without her consent one time, and Hana gets disgusted at Miyako every time. At this point, you might be wondering "We Are All Miyako"? Are you trying to say that we're all lolicons or something?" Well, no, but Miyako's potentially lolicon feelings aside, we do all share something with Miyako, and it's that we all struggle to come to terms with these sorts of feelings at first.



Miyako and that creepy look

In one episode, Miyako thinks to herself "that squirmy feeling hit out of the blue!" when Hana sleeps over the night and the two of them are sleeping next to each other. She describes this feeling of hers as a "squirmy feeling." Now, if Miyako was determined about her feelings, I don't think she'd be so uncertain about them so as to describe them in such a way. You see, when Hana first came over, Miyako thought to herself that an angel came into her home (hence the name of the show¹), and she goes on to act creepy towards her like I described earlier. But she never outright thinks to herself "Hana daisuki!" or anything like that. She only ever blushes, breathes heavily, and makes groping motions, for example, when she wants to dress up Hana in cute clothing and take pictures of her. Think back to your first crush. Did you immediately think to yourself "I like ___!" or "I want to ask ___ out!" or anything like that? I certainly didn't, and I would think many of you didn't either.

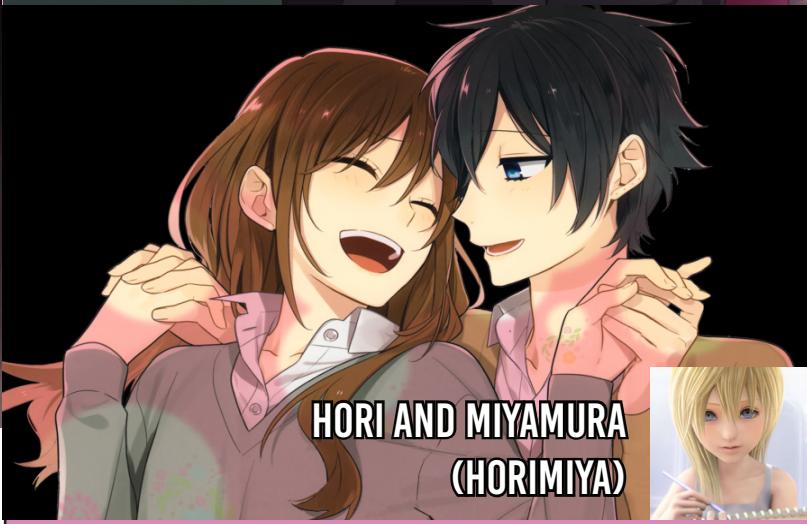


Miyako and that squirmy feeling

When we first have feelings like these, they're new to us, and we might be uncomfortable with them even. It takes time for us to make sense of them. We might even be in denial of them at first. But while we're making sense of these feelings, we act a lot like Miyako. We see the person we like, we blush, we act stupid, and oftentimes, we get rejected. But once we're sure about how we feel, we might think to ourselves "I like/love ___," and "I'm going to ___," whether that's choosing to pursue them or not, and once we've hit that point, then we can stop being Miyako...or you might still be stupid like me.

¹ The full name is *Watashi ni Tenshi ga Maiorita!*, which roughly means An Angel Flew Down to Me.

STAFF PICKS: BEST COUPLES



HORI AND MIYAMURA
(HORIMIYA)



KAZEHAYA AND SAWAKO
(KIMI NI TODOKE)



ASH X EIJI
(BANANA FISH)



NAMASTE X ELIZABETH
(BANANYA)



ALLEN X TYKI
(D.GRAY-MAN)



SHINJI X KAORU
(EVANGELION)

VOLUME XLIX, ISSUE 2 — FEBUARY 14, 2019

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