

konshuu

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favorite of 2019

Sarazanmai
art by Elliot Lu





Mob Psycho 100

ACTION AND EMOTION

ABEER HOSSAIN

3RD YEAR, MECHANICAL ENGINEERING AND ASTROPHYSICS

Welcome to the 51st Volume of Konshuu!

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



2019 was an amazing year for anime . We started the year with *Kaguya-sama*, *Promised Neverland*, *Dororo*, and *Mob Psycho 100 II* in the winter season (sorry *Shield Hero* is not a good anime). Following that we were blessed with the best season of *Attack on Titan*, *Demon Slayer*, the undoubted popularity champ of the past year, along with *Kono Oto Tomare!* and the long anticipated remake of *Fruits Basket*. The summer season continued to give us bangers with more anime of the year candidates in *Vinland Saga* and *Dr. Stone*, with *Dumbbell Nan Kilo Moteru?*, *Fire Force*, *Kanata no Astra*, and a second season of *Danmachi*. Fall of course had *BNHA*, *Beastars*, the slideshow bonanza that is *Shokugeki*, and surprise quality anime in *Cautious Hero* and *Hoshiai no Sora*. There are so many more I want to mention but you can just look up a list anywhere online. After a long internal debate, my favorite anime of 2019 was *Mob Psycho 100 II*.

My answer may change on any given day honestly, but I'd like to go into just what made the second season of this anime just so amazing. One of the lesser talked about aspect of the show is its music. For most of its runtime, the show is a reflection of Mob's mind and the music perfectly sets up every scene. Whether it's Mob discovering something haunting, going all

in on an enemy, or comforting his best friend and mentor, the show's OST makes sure to set the mood just right. Seeing as how his powers are very connected to his emotions, a weak OST would be far more noticeable than a good one but in this case we have one that elevates the show to greatness.

When one thinks of *Mob Psycho*, they can't help but think of its animation. *Mob Psycho* looks great at every moment, not just during its fight scenes. Casual and emotional scenes are given great care with attention paid to the facial and body animation to make us really feel what the characters feel. This is best seen at the end of Reigen's arc with the incredibly heartwarming scene between him and Mob. This animation turns it to 100 (heh) during the fight scenes. Episode 5 could just be an animation showcase on its own, and I wouldn't mind watching it a dozen times. There are instances when stretching proportions and adding scrambled and erratic line work just falls flat, failing to achieve the fast pace and smooth effects it aims to create, but that's not the case in *Mob Psycho 100 II*. The show manages to create clear, fluid animation with great sense of scale and speed without sacrificing quality. These are the moments shonen fans live for, and Studio Bones did not disappoint.

However, no music or animation is going to carry a bunch of trash writing and unlikeable characters and thank goodness *Mob Psycho 100 II* has some of the most interesting and human characters of the year. Reigen gets his chance to shine during this season, dealing with some of his inner and outer demons, whether he initially wanted to or not. Dimple continues to be a steadily hilarious character and a great support next to Mob. The other school students and power users all have diverse and likable personalities and never once do I go "ugh we're seeing them again" when we divert away from the main characters. The new enemies we are introduced to all have something to add to the cast and don't seem like copy and paste characters that we've seen before. They have their own aspirations, fears, and morals. Mob himself grows tremendously throughout the show and his growth is what really elevates this show to the next level. I can't recommend this show enough and if you haven't watched it yet, I really suggest you give it a chance.



ダンベル 何キロ持てる?

How Heavy Are the Dumbbells You Lift?

TIME TO GET MACHO!

 NICHOLAS WONOSAPUTRA
1ST YEAR, INTENDED NEUROBIOLOGY

STAFF WRITER

A missed opportunity to call an anime: "Do you even lift bro?"

2019 was an interesting year for anime, and there's a lot of surprisingly memorable things to talk about, from the ghost-pepper-spicy *Domestic Girlfriend*, to the hilariously dramatic antics of *Kaguya-sama: Love is War*, to the enigmatically fascinating *Beastars*. 2019 also saw the release of two of my most highly anticipated anime movies of all time: *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Resurrection*, and *Konosuba: Crimson Legend*. There're too many things I could choose as a favorite for that year, and scrolling through my MAL page, it's impossible to just choose one!

...At least, that's what I would say.... if *Dumbbell Nan Kilo Moteru?* didn't exist.

This absurdly bombastic edutainment show about a group of young people learning to work out and get into shape in a safe and healthy manner is, hands down, the greatest thing to come out of 2019.

...Now, obviously, I'm hyperbolizing, and I certainly wouldn't say this show is for everyone, but, for a multitude of reasons, it has found its way into my heart.

Among these reasons is how the show realistically and relatably explores the theme of change and self-improvement by placing heavier emphasis on doing things at one's own pace, as opposed to driving the narrative through drama and rivalry. That's not to say there isn't any drama present in the show; afterall, many of the characters—Akemi, Gina, and even Machio—can be considered

Hibiki's fitness rivals, but these rivalries are never born from negative emotions, but healthy, positive ones. The only reason why these characters ever challenge one another to a context of strength or endurance is expressly because they genuinely care for one another and want to see their friends reach and push past their fitness goals. However, they also don't want to see their friends hurt themselves by doing exercises incorrectly and will go into great depth on how to do the given exercise safely and in a way that will maximize one's gains. Through its characters and its philosophy of healthy, safe exercise, *Dumbbell* is able to pull its viewers into this group of enthusiastically supportive individuals and lets them be a part of the group's collective fitness journey while still recognizing the importance of going at one's own pace and not feeling ashamed for trying to improve oneself.

That said, *Dumbbell* is an absurdist comedy, and a good one at that. Its setting is much like our world, with one major exception: the Silverman gym. This gym is where all the insanity happens (at least, until the idol group arc) and is home to a population of macho men who revere the macho god, who may or may not be channelling an immense amount of macho energy into everyone's favorite, totally average-looking fitness trainer, Machio. This initial premise helps establish *Dumbbell*'s tone as a series that mainly wants to entertain and educate, and it is not afraid of trying new and extremely memorable ways to introduce exercises.



At the end of the day, *Dumbbell* is like that one endearingly supportive friend of yours that happens to be really into fitness, but understands that you have a lot on your plate and won't judge you for slacking off on going to the gym, which makes you want to work out even more. I hope you reach your fitness goals and get macho!





IT'S STILL TOO SOON FOR THE END ROLL!

JET SITU

1ST YEAR, ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING/COMPUTER SCIENCE

STAFF WRITER



Contains mild spoilers for *Endro~!*

It's the final boss battle of a JRPG, and the Hero Party stands at the foot of the Demon Lord's throne. Facing the final boss, the Demon Lord herself, is Yulia "Yusha" Chardiet and her three companions: Seira, a Sage; Mei, a Mage; and Fai, a Fighter. The Demon Lord towers over the small party, an arsenal of spells aching to be unleashed. A fierce battle ensues – Mei's lightning ricocheting across the room, Seira casting buffing circles, Fai jumping and jabbing at the Demon Lord, Yusha slashing and dodging the Demon Lord's strikes. But at the end, the Demon Lord is unfazed. Seeing no other way to victory, Yusha calls upon her party to cast a forbidden spell, a spell that would break the fabric of the universe. As their combined magical shield barely holds off the Demon Lord's strikes, Yusha completes the incantation, and in a flash of light, the Demon Lord is no more. The game ends, and the credits roll as the Hero Party returns victorious.



But he didn't need to go out of his way to use such complicated words.

When the evil god uses too many big words in his evil speech.

I'm just kidding.

Actually, the Hero Party barges into the throne room. Mei and Fai run loose and get to looting immediately, Seira yells at Yusha for speedrunning everything, and the Demon Lord has to yell at the group of dorks to stop screwing around. When the battle starts,

Yusha immediately defaults to the forbidden magic.

And Yusha, lovable airheaded dork, fucks up the incantation. As a result, the spell similarly fucks up, sending them all back in time, right to the very beginning. Thus begins *Endro~!*

Endro~! is my personal AOTY, premiering in January. One of the biggest reasons why I would say it's a dark horse and isn't as popular is because *Endro*, made by Studio Gokumi, is an original, meaning no manga/LN fanbase to carry over. In fact, the only reason why I watched it was because the VA for Kaoruko Moeta (from *Comic Girls*), stars as Yusha here. Honestly, going into *Endro~!*, I thought I would get a fairly cute show that's wholesome and fits somewhere in the timeline of the many SoLs. Instead, I found a comedy sugarmine.

Endro~! is the product of taking a squad of lovable adorable dorks, tossing them into an RPG, and letting chaos ensue. The easiest way to describe it is that it's the moe version of *Konosuba*. I'm fairly biased here, but I think the comedy is the same level, making fun of plenty of JRPG stereotypes, storylines, and SoL tropes.

What makes *Endro~!* particularly fun is its absurd cast of characters and NPCs. We got airhead pure sugary pink-haired Hero, a princess with a Hero fetish, an elf with a chest complex, a fighter who's making that complex worse, an otaku collect-them-all mage, a loli Demon Lord sensei, a lolicon bikini-armored sensei, a bunch of NPCs whose job is to just stand in a single spot, a ton of random cats, seashell narwhals, sentient watermelons, a ton of evil gods, and Chibi-chan the worldeater.

If you've ever touched a JRPG or are into fantasy, I would highly recommend *Endro~!*. It's a hilarious parody of the classic fantasy world, packed with an extra dose of wholesomeness and sweetness.



Why do I get the feeling I would've been safer if you had left me alone?

MY ONE-CHARACTER DRIVEN TASTE

SHAMIN CHOWDHURY
4TH YEAR, PHYSICS AND MATH

STAFF WRITER

Soy milk doesn't seem to remedy spice as well as plain milk, or maybe my sauce was that spicy

2018 reminded me of a lot. The animes from that year reminded me of tough times I was going through, and I remembered two shows, not from 2018, that I finally sat down with that year: *Haikyuu* and *Boku no Hero Academia*. Neither of these shows are especially sophisticated and their appeal is easy to understand. The reason I bring them up is that they're the first shows I can think of that match the taste I have right now. You see, when I saw episode 1 of *Boku no Hero Academia* back in high school, I wasn't interested in it. It just seemed like it would be another popular shonen, and yeah, that is what it turned out to be. When I saw episode 2 in college, however, something clicked with me. Maybe it was the part when All Might told Deku he should give up trying to be a hero, and then after Deku did what he could, All Might took back what he said and Deku cathartically cried his heart out. I think it reminded me of my personal struggles at the time and gave me some hope to keep going even if times were rough. *Haikyuu* also did something similar, especially that montage in episode 1 of Hinata practicing volleyball regardless of what he had to overcome to do so.

In both of those shows, there was one character that I connected with, and that was the source of my enjoyment of those shows. When I looked back at shows from 2018, I realized how much I liked or disliked many of the shows from then depended on how much I liked or disliked one character, often the main one. I didn't like *Darling in the FranXX* because Zero Two's attachment

to Hiro felt too convenient, but I liked *Steins;Gate 0* because Okabe's about-face in personality reminded me of my own. I didn't like *Bunny Girl Senpai* because I've seen better versions of Sakurajima Mai, but I liked *TenSura* because the main character was funny and built up the world around him more or less from scratch, which felt cool to me. In fact, this is the kind of thinking that led me to find *Goblin Slayer* as my favorite anime of 2018.

This brings me to my favorite anime of 2019: *Dororo*. This show was not the most popular. It doesn't fit the isekai trend of these past few years, and in fact, its monster-of-the-week format is rather out-dated, really. However, I appreciate the presentation of Hyakkimaru. We learn from his backstory how his father sacrificed his body to demons before abandoning him and how he grew up with a body of prosthetics thanks to Jukai. He then set out to kill demons in order to get his body parts back. None of this is motivated by wanting to protect others or saving the world or anything. He lost his body, and he wants to get it back. He's a difficult character to connect to since he doesn't really have dialogue (since he had to go find his vocal chords), but he



was particularly interesting to me. His emotions as expressed by his actions are more raw, so when he does express them, they can reach us on a more fundamental level (kind of like a baby who doesn't know how to talk). This among other factors helped me determine *Dororo* to be my favorite anime of 2019. While one's view of a single character shouldn't necessarily be the only thing to consider about a show, this seems to be the main idea governing my taste at the moment.



ISEKAI IN HINDSIGHT

RACHEL MIN

1ST YEAR, INTENDED COMPUTER SCIENCE

TECHNOLOGY

Isekai me out of this hell

By now we've all noticed it—the one overused trope that has the entire anime industry by the throat. You've guessed it, it's the isekai anime. Isekai has been around for a while with *Re:Zero* and *Saga of Tanya the Evil* in 2016/2017 or even *Inuyasha* in all the way back 1996. However, no other year has exemplified the plight of the isekai like 2019.

There wasn't a season in 2019 that didn't have four or five isekai series. Look no further than *Isekai Quartet*, a mini crossover anime between *Overlord*, *Re:Zero*, *Saga of Tanya the Evil*, and *Konosuba*. The series featured in the show are good when compared to the cookie-cutter isekai, but the fact that a studio came together screams 'Isekai is overused and makes a lot of money.'

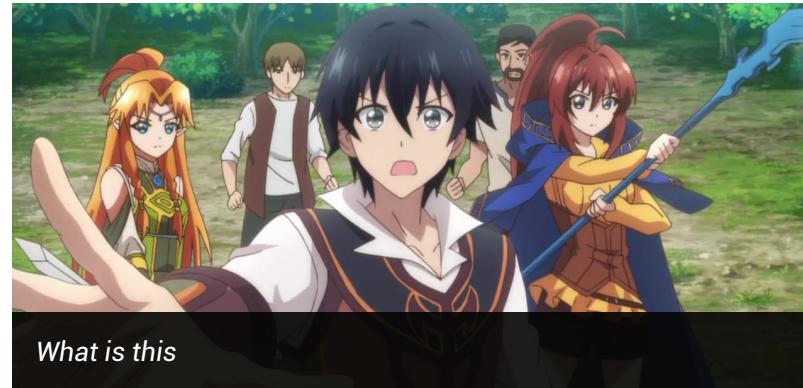
To be honest, I understand the appeal of isekai; it provides a convenient way to world-build and develop characters. At its core, isekai is really a subversion of the "new guy in town" or "transfer student" trope. But there's a point in time where the authors looking for a cash grab come out, who ignore world-building and character development, and we step back thinking, 'Wow, I almost want to watch *Sword Art Online* instead.'



Myne's reaction to bad isekai

For example, look at the Summer 2019 anime *Isekai Cheat Magician*. Do you remember it? Neither do I. With that title, it could be any isekai really, and I can guess that it's about an

OP MC that brute forces their way through the story with their impenetrable plot armor and godly magic powers. (A quick Google search says it's about two OP MCs going to a magic high school but semantics).



What is this

But for all of the disappointing isekai anime that came out in 2019, there were a few that were good. The aforementioned *Isekai Quartet* was an anime I never knew I wanted. It seemed like a fast cash grab (which it was) since it smashed the big, popular titles together, but it was a fairly nice, short anime. For people who enjoyed the anime featured in the show, *Isekai Quartet* was an amusing show that put familiar characters out of their element. Even the haters have to admit that with *Isekai Quartet*'s weird chibi animation, they at least didn't waste a lot of animators.

Another isekai that stood out in 2019 was *Ascendance of a Bookworm*, which wormed its way into the isekai list at the end of the year. In contrast to a lot of isekai, it's a nonaction, lowkey anime. The protagonist is a young girl who wants to make books and utilizes knowledge of her previous world to develop and sell products. It's not a revolutionary anime, but it is a pretty refreshing twist on the action isekai flooding the market.

2020 will no doubt have more isekai. Looking ahead, there seems to be more isekai like *Ascendance of the Bookworm*, which deviates from the action genre, as well as the more conventional isekai. Maybe this is the year where anime studios come together and say "we should have some standards for our isekai light novel/manga adaptions," contributing masterpieces that save isekai's bad rep.

Just kidding, get ready for *Isekai Cheat Magician* v30.

STAFF PICKS: BEST OF 2019



GIVEN

Shao-Lon Ye



This was like the only BL anime released in 2019, and it's great because the characters are super cute but also sad bois.



AI: THE SOMNIUM FILES

Athena Chen



This murder mystery adventure game is directed by the same person as acclaimed VN series *Zero Escape*, so you know it's gonna be good. *AI* features a gripping story, trippy visuals, humorous dialogue, and unusual puzzles in the Somnium (dream) sequences. Also, Aiba is best girl.



MAZEOKU MAGHICKADO

Jet Situ



Shamiko is the cutest. Shamiko is the cutest.

MY HERO ACADEMIA:
VIGILANTES

Neil Frydendal



If you watch or read *MHA* and haven't read *Vigilantes* yet, then you're seriously missing out! It adds so much depth to the lore of the *MHA*-verse, and 2019 was its biggest year yet, giving us some amazing fights and an entire Aizawa flashback arc! If you like *MHA* at all, then definitely check out this brilliant prequel spinoff series!

VINLAND SAGA

Abeer Hossain



Vinland Saga is a wild ride from start to finish. With amazing animation, voice acting, and expertly crafted characters, the show unwraps an exhilarating story in a world very loosely based in Nordic history.

FIRE EMBLEM:
THREE HOUSES

Marc Castillo



I played this for the husbandos, and I have no regrets. Probably Sylvain and Dimitri are my best bois of 2019 therefore this game deserves a spot in my top anime media this past year.

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THE PROMISED NEVERLAND
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