

KONSHUU

Summer Festival

vol. 55 #8



Anya, Loid & Yor Forger

Spy x Family

Art By Willow Otaka

THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED SERIES!

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

SHINRYAKU! IKA MUSUME

Commonly known as *Squid Girl* in the west, this lighthearted comedy starts with a young squid human hybrid learning the ins and outs of human civilization after a failed attempt at world domination. *Shinryaku! Ika Musume* could make a good anime for younger audiences (minus the obsessive creep Sanae) though it captures the peaceful summer vibes for anyone to relax to. There's even a cute summer festival episode to close off the second season.



Fall 2010, diomedéa
Directed by Tsutomu Mizushima
12 episodes



Spring 2015, Kyoto Animation
Directed by Tatsuya Ishihara
13 episodes

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

HIBIKE! EUPHONIUM

Though not explicitly a summer show to match the sweltering season, *Hibike! Euphonium* is a must watch for those who experienced high school band shenanigans and hardships. Main character Kumiko Oumae is nowhere close to being one-dimensional and goes from being a simple bystander to the drama happening around her to someone who finds the motivation to aspire to be a better euphonium player and a better person.

POKÉMON SUN & MOON - NEWFOUNDED VITALITY



MAX R.

3rd Year, Japanese

Pokémon in full form.

Writer



Needless to say, *Pokémon* is the media franchise that I, among many others, have sunk the most time into. Over the years I would partake in nearly everything even remotely related, spanning various mediums from games and trading cards to anime and manga. While I adore some of said games, particularly *Black & White* and their sequels, the anime has always held a special place in my heart, having grown up watching and following it on a regular basis. These days, I recognize the bulk of earlier seasons to be borderline unwatchable, at one point leading me to falsely conclude that my fondness for the franchise had dissipated, but fast forward to my completion of *Sun & Moon* and I realize that this deduction couldn't have been more incorrect.

Sun & Moon marks my return to the series, truly setting a high bar for the *Pokémon* anime, with only *XY*, which executes itself far better than any season prior, and the currently airing *Journeys*, which demonstrates potential despite ultimately being inconsistent, even holding a candle to it, imbuing new life into a worn formula utilized for over a decade and taking profound artistic liberties, not only structurally with the erasure of gyms, but aesthetically as well, being unquestionably the most expressive and some of the most experimental the mainline *Pokémon* anime has ever been, with simplified, stylized character designs easily enabling fluid motion and exaggerated facial expressions; on that note, the series doesn't pull any punches regarding facial expressions and comedy (Lana trying to fish up a Kyogre was a running gag until it actually happened), bodies constantly contorting to provide preposterous reactions that one wouldn't expect characters to be capable of (the baseball episode has still left its impression on me). Implementation of facial expressions in this fashion complements the permeating seemingly oxymoronic chaotically mellow tone, akin to a summer vacation at a tropical oasis with children flailing about and screaming; it's precisely this dominantly upbeat, chaotic albeit placid aura that carves out a distinct identity for the season within the saga.



The installment is a grand departure from the aforementioned standard *Pokémon* formula, incorporating school as a home base and adopting more slice of life-esque antics. Abolishing the gym structure, one may assume a lack of adventure and decline in terrain diversity, but the opposite holds true as the cast traverses vast, sprawling environments and dimensional rifts just as they would with other seasons. The return to school serves as an unwinding process back to equilibrium after a day's escapades, reminiscent of *Hidam-*

ari Sketch's bath scenes or *Mystery Dungeon Explorers of Sky's* guild dinner sequences. A centralized base allows for familiarity in regards to location as characters continually visit, enhancing the homey, hospitable atmosphere while simultaneously fleshing out the region. *Pokémons'* roles culturally and environmentally as well as their relationships with humanity are emphasized, the creatures regularly showcased partaking in mundane endeavors, their versatility far transcending sole combat functionality, aspects prevalent in previous seasons, but not nearly to the same extent as *Sun & Moon*. *Pokémon* are harmoniously integrated into nature to where they legitimately feel to be a believable facet of the universe. Episodes may almost entirely lack human dialogue in favor of *Pokémon* communicating amongst themselves through expressions and mannerisms alone, which the franchise has gotten progressively more successful at through experimentation.

The characters and their interactions are what largely carry the season, providing an all-around ever-fun experience which rarely stagnates. Alola's cast is downright incredible to say the least, everyone lovable and displaying complementary chemistry. Ash's traveling companions are numerous, but each receives multiple dedicated focus episodes, some genuinely heartrending, and manages to be well-developed, Lillie especially, who acts as a centerpiece of a major arc. Kukui, in contrast to previous professors, is more directly involved in ensuing shenanigans, serving varied roles as a mentor/father-figure to Ash and formidable adversary as eventual champion, even providing assistance in battle on occasion; he remains a relevant force throughout the series, having plenty of his own moments to shine, including his marriage. Interestingly, the games' primary plot threads swiftly conclude around episode 50, designating nearly a hundred remaining episodes to post-game hijinks including Ultra Beasts and Necrozma; Lusamine is a redeemed antagonist, eventually functioning as a favorable ally and providing interesting dynamics as Lillie's mother. Team Rocket is also dealt a fantastic hand regarding their *Pokémon*, particularly in Bewear's absurdities and Mimikyu with its fierce rivalry with Pikachu, and are also given some of their most impactful episodes, including a pleasant sendoff in the final episode that demonstrates a level of compassion. With this, the cast is among the best of any season.

As a cherry on top, the league is constructed from the ground up, proving to be the longest ever and if anything feels celebratory given how it's derived from Kukui's ambitions; animation dips in few episodes and not every battle is a full 6-on-6, but it's an incredible arc nonetheless where all loose threads tie together. Ash finally winning a league brings the adventure full-circle, a culmination of efforts after over a thousand episode journey, causing the season to feel like a complete package in comparison to any other installment. Even after the brilliant revival of the anime with Kalos, *Sun & Moon* pushes even further to deliver on essentially every front imaginable to bestow new life upon the franchise.



Mizuki Akiyama & Ena Shinonome

*Project Sekai
Art By Kai Wu*

ENDLESS EIGHT: LOW BUDGET AND LAZY



JOSÉ CUEVAS

5th Year, Intended EECS and Theater

I really really really would like to see a season three tho!

Writer

The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya is a series that has a strong legacy. Even though the original anime series is almost old enough to vote, *Haruhi's* influence on anime and light novels is indisputable. For instance, the character of Kyon is particularly fascinating with his snark and understanding of his intellectual superiority. The manner in which he comments on the wacky world surrounding *Haruhi Suzumiya*, by occasionally mentioning why none of it is realistic and how everything his companions in the SOS Brigade are idiotic, was obviously extremely unprecedented in the medium of light novels. One could look at equally seminal and amazing works of fiction like *Rascal Does Not Dream of Bunny Girl Senpai* or *My Teen Romantic Comedy SNAFU* to see how Sakuta Azusagawa and Hachiman Hikigaya are, respectively, clearly inspired by the irreverent attitude of Kyon. Without *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*, neither of those characters would exist in the same capacity that they do now: expressing beyond-their-years wisdom to unsympathetic peers, illuminating truths on societal issues using high school as a microcosm. Thus, I cannot express how much I respect *Haruhi* for first introducing the archetype of the intelligent yet snarky audience-surrogate narrator character. By extension, one could say that *Haruhi* increased the intelligence of light novels as a whole, bringing the format to heights it otherwise wouldn't have seen.

Furthermore, *Haruhi Suzumiya*'s titular character set the mold for unique characterizations of female leads in light novels as well. One could say that *Haruhi Suzumiya* is a typical tsundere/princess character harkening back to (in my opinion, flawed) classics like *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Yet, the particularities of the series' protagonist being a literal unknowing deity brings up interesting philosophical questions regarding the existence of free will, or perhaps the lack thereof, for human beings. In a metatextual sense, the character introduced the refreshing trend of having novels centered around the psychology of a female character who fits an existing character archetype with one or two unique quirks. While I'd say something like *Bakemonogatari* is a bit pretentious with its directing and incomprehensible dialogue, the massive success of said book owes greatly to *Haruhi*. Essentially, *Haruhi Suzumiya* is definitely to be celebrated for its psychological focus, intelligent and witty insights, and influence



on character writing in the anime industry. The animation is beautiful, with the designs of Kyon and *Haruhi* particularly fun. I highly recommend anyone watch it, particularly in the chronological order, because the original release order highkey makes no sense. Most of all, the film tie-in *The Disappearance of Haruhi Suzumiya* is a highlight, featuring an interesting plot and a good deal of introspection from Kyon via monologues on his personal preferences.

With that said, however, the second season is egregiously flawed in one particular way (outside of the ordering... I have no idea why Kyoto Animation decided to do such a thing). Though I've heard sparse criticism of the "Endless Eight" section of the second anime series, I've never seen these eight episodes denounced for the complete waste of time that they truly are. Repeating the same exact lines and scenes throughout eight different episodes, this portion alone would constitute likely the worst anime I've ever seen given how lazy Kyoto Animation was by just repeating the same thing again. Obviously, the point was to make the audience feel the same tedium that Kyon feels in a repeated loop by giving the viewers a similar experience. However, this is in of itself boring, thus invalidating the very purpose of media. I hate to rag on Kyoto Animation, as they're likely GOAT candidates when we're discussing Japanese anime, but you have to wonder why they thought they could get away with just repeating the same thing over and over again. Absolutely no effort went into this, either, as the script is basically the exact same thing each loop. The summer festival that appears in the Endless Eight would itself be fun if it appeared in one episode, but the sheer repetition of these episodes proves that too much of anything is a bad thing. My enjoyment of Japanese festivals in of themselves as a concept was lowkey ruined by association to this stretch of terrible episodes in an otherwise unforgettable, amazing anime. Watch *Haruhi* (again, chronologically!) but skip the Endless Eight completely. It's not worth it.

"AESTHETIC"



TONY T.

2nd Year, Economics and Data Science

Managing Editor

While I don't exactly remember, I'd wager that the first anime I ever saw was probably *Castle in the Sky*. Ghibli works in general are somewhat difficult for me to discuss, partially due how the animation studio seems to receive zealous praise almost ubiquitously. Much of the admiration for Studio Ghibli, at least in the west, typically comes from established media sources that have extremely rigid understandings of cinema, resulting in praise that is as repetitive as it is abundant. My fear of being associated with the trend of generic pleasantries has thus made me apprehensive about discussing Ghibli prior to this article. Beyond that, the conflation of "Studio Ghibli" with the name "Miyazaki Hayao" is also rather irksome. As a whole, traditional Hollywood praise of Ghibli works generally spout vague positive qualities of these films as somehow surpassing limitations of their medium without much understanding as to why Japanese animation is so captivating. One has to wonder how many, if any, other anime films western critics have seen before giving their thoughts on Ghibli films.



However, I can't exactly refute the critical acclaim. *Castle in the Sky*, in particular, is a film which I have revisited on numerous occasions and still find to be one of my favorites in its simplistic charm and somewhat innocent optimism. There aren't many pieces of *Castle in the Sky* that I find groundbreaking, but its whole is far greater than the sum of its parts. Certain sequences in the film are simply

so ingrained in my understanding of animation (and frankly, narrative media) that fully dissecting my outlook would be akin to performing a complete psychological evaluation of myself.

Unfortunately, I neither have a background in psychology, nor have an ego so inflated that I would think that completely examining my personality is that entertaining. One portion that particularly stands out in a way I can verbalize, though, is the scene upon reaching the titular *Castle in the Sky*. Following a sequence of dizzying confusion for the audience and characters alike, the simple panning shots of a clearly high-tech fortress covered by nature evokes simultaneous feelings of joy and melancholy. The liminality of the space, a place once likely sprawling with individuals and technology, yet now featuring only nature and a singular remaining robotic guardian, creates an almost intoxicating atmosphere. The protagonists' actions mirror this emotional duality. They first break out in laughter while running around, joyfully celebrating their success in finding Laputa, yet this is slowly supplanted by more thoughtful contemplation of why such a futuristic civilization fell into ruin to begin with. *Castle in the Sky* is a film that I enjoy for numerous reasons, but I think the film's aesthetic components – its art, animation, and music (particularly the music) – are the primary key to its lasting presence in my subconscious. The film's mise en scène in its depiction of Laputa perfectly concludes its characters' quest to find it. Their journey is made all the more meaningful because Laputa is so vibrantly luscious with nature yet desolate with mere remnants of human influence. If one considers certain stories to be the 'core embodiment' of a concept, such as the Biblical clash of David and Goliath forever typifying underdogs, then *Castle in the Sky* encapsulates adventure for me.



Yet, perhaps even more aesthetically intriguing (yet somehow even more mainstream) than *Castle in the Sky* is *Spirited Away*. Rather than beautiful, universally poignant shots of nature overcoming human abuse, *Spirited Away* utilizes notably eastern visual motifs. Much of the film's visual beauty is due to its setting, a traditional bath house surrounded by a perpetual festival atmosphere. There's a surreal quality to the primary locales of *Spirited Away*. In a sense, it captures an eerie ambience akin to Oshii Mamoru's *Urusei Yatsura 2: Beautiful Dreamer* or the first third of Otomo Katsuhiro's *Memories* anthology. Like *Castle in the Sky*, *Spirited Away*'s setting thrives due to its quality as a liminal space, though it has a different approach, first showing a location in a state of abandonment, followed by sequences portraying it as lively and filled with peculiar creatures.

The world's sense of scale helps as well. *Spirited Away* remains particularly memorable for me due to the large assortment of interesting interconnected parts. From the path to the boiler room to the memorable train ride to Zeniba's home, there's a sense that what protagonist Sen explores is but part of a rich and complex world. As opposed to *Castle in the Sky*'s setting tying in with its overall narrative of adventure, *Spirited Away* evokes a sense of youthful wonder. The particular use of traditional Japanese architecture and design in the setting, combined with the connection to nature established with the entrance being tucked away behind trees sets a mood that is wholly unique to the film, difficult to accomplish outside of Japanese animation.



My fascination with *Spirited Away*, like many, then, comes with these small details. I personally cannot separate any viewing of *Spirited Away* from childhood experiences exploring rural mountainous areas of Asia, where forests filled with nature are interrupted only by stairs leading to Buddhist temples. In that regard, reminiscent of my inability to express my thoughts on *Castle in the Sky* due to its visuals eliciting nonverbal emotions, there's an artistic quality to *Spirited Away* that is hard to verbalize. It likely has a strong grip on my very preferences in media. As my first viewing was an early formative memory, I cannot say my particular fixation on settings densely packed with distinct and interesting locales isn't rooted in *Spirited Away*. Works which utilize similarly complex settings, including the aforementioned film *Beautiful Dreamer*, games like

Super Mario 64, or television animation like *Aria*, may not have had a lasting impact on me had I not seen *Spirited Away* first. And yet, the interesting and unique story present in *Spirited Away* likely swayed my preferences in aesthetics as an afterthought to a strong narrative. I may enjoy *Castle in the Sky* more purely due to its particularly loose story and overall feeling of innocent adventure, but *Spirited Away* has by far the more influence on me as a person, and arguably is one of the fundamental works that remain paramount to my personal tastes.



It's difficult for me to accurately describe the impact of Studio Ghibli's works on myself because thinking about the studio generally leaves me with mixed emotions. Just as I absolutely adore the previously mentioned *Castle in the Sky* and *Spirited Away*, I have similar thoughts towards other Miyazaki Hayao films like *The Wind Rises*, his son Miyazaki Goro's *From Up On Poppy Hill* (yes, I do actually enjoy a Goro film), Kondo Yoshifumi's *Whisper of the Heart*, or Mochizuki Tomomi's *Ocean Waves*. What more, with the possible exception of *Poppy Hill*, my rationale for appreciating these films all vary drastically. From the unique nihilistic contemplation of artist and creation offered by *The Wind Rises*, to the suburban coming of age narrative of *Whisper of the Heart*, to the somewhat strange romance present in *Ocean Waves*, a plethora of Studio Ghibli's works are outstanding in their own particular ways. However, while the studio has produced many films I'd consider excellent, I find myself extremely negative towards works like *Princess Mononoke* or *Howl's Moving Castle*. On that note, the less said about Miyazaki Goro's other films, *Tales from Earthsea* and *Earwig and the Witch*, the better. Paralleling my thoughts on Ghibli films is the reception they receive. I generally agree with the exaltation of several of these films as defining pieces of media, if this article wasn't proof enough. Yet, I find an equal amount of reason in dismissing a great deal of the praise as uninformed fluff pieces from a fairly ignorant and tunneled western perspective. Nevertheless, I unambiguously believe that by far the strongest aspect of these films are their sense of aesthetic and how they uniquely use art, animation, and music to evoke emotion. It is the reason why I have revisited these films and will likely continue to do so in the future, and why I still consider the name of Studio Ghibli on a movie poster as an indication of, if nothing else, something probably interesting.



Forger Family
Spy x Family
Art By Heaven Jones

THE 2 CENT CORNER

How has your break been so far? Any plans for the rest of summer?



Willow Otaka
Artist

"My break has been pretty great so far! Aside from gaining the time to pick up seasonal anime, finally having the time to work on passion projects is really exciting! Recently, I've been really into learning Live2D rigging and special effects. It's nice being able to pursue the things I have a passion for outside of academics! (... cough cough and I think the summer break is giving me a little too much time to grind osu!... <_< but we don't need to talk about that.)"



Irene Kao
Graphic Designer

"Summer's been great! I finally found the time to binge some anime at the expense of my sleep schedule, but it was worth it. Unfortunately the hell that is summer classes begins in two weeks, so rip my summer plans."



Kai Wu
Artist

"I've been going to the library and gym to cope with DDR withdrawal (:pensive:) I actually kind of miss Berkeley... I'm going to see the Dreamcatcher concert later this summer though!"



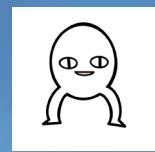
Jenna Patton
Graphic Designer

"My break has been good so far, I have just been relaxing and enjoying the free time I have before going back to school. I'm planning on going on a road trip to LA sometime in July."



Nicholas Wonosaputra
Writer

"So far, my break's just been grinding every Xenoblade game in preparation for 3, but I'm hoping to spend way more time streaming for the rest of summer."



Crystal Li
Artist

"My summer break's been fun! I'll be spending most of my summer doing my internship, but I hope to be able to do some art as well :D "

What is your favorite Konshuu issue from this semester so far and why?

"My favorite Konshuu issue so far definitely is the Summer Festival Issue (spoiler alert: the one you're reading right now!) I had a ton of fun working on the Spy x Family cover! Also, I find it cool that the writers and artists get to be creative and make content about whatever their heart desires, as long as they can connect it to summer. I suppose it goes to show that despite the gaps between universes and genres, any character can come together and enjoy a good summer festival arc :D "

"My favorite issue was probably the Mahou Shoujo one. I was practically raised on this genre, so I had so much nostalgia reading it. I'm also addicted to pastel colors, so this issue was top tier eye candy for me."

"April Fool's. Is there even any competition?"

"My favorite Konshuu issue from Volume 55 was actually the last one to be released, which was Issue 7 Mahou Shoujo. It was my favorite Konshuu Issue because of the artwork that was included in it. The creative drawings were very my style and so it caught my eye the most."

"My favorite Konshuu issue this semester is probably JRPGs, Blake's Trails article is impressive."

"I'd say that Vol. 55 #6 is my favorite because the issue is really aesthetically pleasing and the articles are a lot of fun! The cover art is fantastic and I especially enjoyed the 2 Cent Corner."

SUMMER IS FOR DOING NOTHING



KEV WANG

2nd Year, EECS

"Labour' by its very nature is unfree, unhuman, unsocial activity, determined by private property and creating private property."
- Karl Marx

Writer

I really don't get what people like about summer. It's hot, it's boring, and without the constant schedule provided by my education, what do I even do with my life? Well, the doing nothing part is actually pretty appealing, I mean lethargy is in fact one of my greatest talents. So I guess while the rest of you have your "fun", tiring yourselves out at your summer festivals, running around in the heat like ants, I'll just stay in my bed. Alone. Where I belong.

I'm the Hachimans from *Oregairu*, the Orekis from *Hyouka*, the Tanaka-kuns from *Tanaka-kun is Always Listless*, the Satous from *Welcome to the NHK*, and not only do I not want to do anything this summer, but I am proud of it. These four shows differ in quality and aesthetic quite a lot, some of which I have written about in the past, but fundamentally they are practically the same. Oreki may be good at solving mysteries, Hachiman may be spiteful, Satou may be a creep, and Tanaka may be extra lazy, but they're all male students who just want to be left alone to do their own nothing. And then, of course, they get reluctantly pulled out of their shell by some cute girl, and made, despite their own efforts, to see the positivity and excitement the world has to offer them.



Blah blah blah. The difference between real life and fiction is that things like this do not happen in real life. Nobody's going to take interest in a lazy cynic and put the effort into making them happy. The most they'll do is take pity on you. Really, the only party who benefits from telling these fantasies are those in the Japanese government, who are dealing with an increasing amount of hikikomoris combined with a decreasing birth rate. Perhaps they're the ones pushing for these types of anime, a targeted effort to get people back to working and raising families.

I honestly cannot find a reason to care. Human productivity has long since passed the point where every able-bodied person needed to work in order to sustain humanity. That means a significant amount, if not majority, of the human population is working on things that are superfluous, maybe even useless. These people are straining their brains and bodies to do what? Increase the country's GDP by a few percentage points? Allow their bosses to buy another Ferrari? No thanks. Heaven knows why there are still people in the world who go hungry (well, I suppose the wealthy know too).



And as for falling in love and raising children, well if love is so great, why do 50% of all marriages lead to divorce? That's like if every married couple flips a coin and all the ones with tails end up with a failed marriage. Why would I want to take those odds, and moreover, why would I want to do so while bringing more humans into this wretched world? Not only will they suffer, but they will in turn cause undue suffering on the world. Humans are by far the worst thing that's happened to the global environment, I can't imagine why we'd want more of us.

So, despite initial appearances with a seemingly inert main character that us pessimists thought we could relate to, these shows present a rosy and frankly ridiculous view of reality where everything turns out great in the end. Don't fall for it. Don't feel like you need to be active and social to have a good life. Don't envy the Instagram stories of exotic places, the LinkedIn posts of prestigious, high-paying jobs, the Facebook feed filled with baby pictures. These people are chasing a facade of a dream prescribed to them by society. This summer, I'm going to defiantly do what I want to do, even if that means doing nothing at all.





Annie May and Cal

Cal Animation Alpha

Art By Tammy Lee

YOTSUBA TO! - MAKING IT



BLAKE MORRISON

2nd Year, English and Japanese

There's a summer festival in chapter 21 of *Yotuba to!*. Yes, that's my thinly veiled excuse to write about this manga for the Summer Festival Issue.

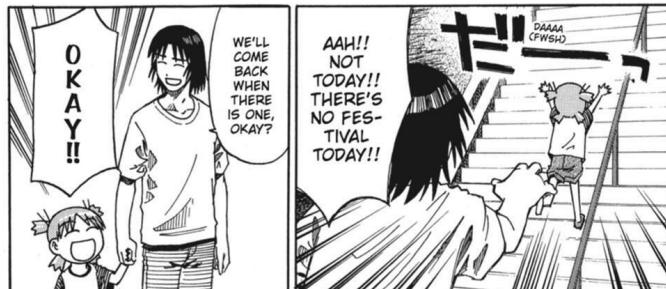
Writer

Yotuba to! is a slice of life comedy manga about the day to day happenings and goings ons of the eccentric and endearing five-year old Yotuba Koiwai, her adoptive father, and their neighbors and friends. And it's a modern classic. *Yotuba to!* has been running since 2003 and was originally published monthly, although new chapters have been coming out on an irregular schedule for years now. Set publishing schedule or not, though, *Yotuba to!* is one of the most consistently enjoyable long-running manga I've read. It also enjoys an enduring popularity commensurate with its quality. Chances are those who haven't read the manga, or those who don't even read manga but regularly spend time on internet forums, have seen the titular Yotuba's character design, instantly recognizable by her four leaf clover-esc green hair (*Yotuba*'s name literally translates to "four-leaved"). Of course, *Yotuba*'s conquest of the internet is largely due to the wonderful expressiveness of mangaka Azuma Kiyohiko's designs. Instead of defaulting to the same "moe" template faces for happy, sad, angry, or whatnot as you might expect, *Yotuba* seems to make new expressions every chapter.



To those who only know about *Yotuba* from her design and the occasional meme, I'd like to say that yes, *Yotuba* is cute, and yes, the panel of her pointing the water gun saying "save your excuses for hell" is funny out of context (and even more so in context), but *Yotuba to!* isn't one of the best manga out there simply because of a cute character and some memeable panels. 109 chapters of *Yotuba to!* have been published over its almost 20 year run, but only half a year has passed in the manga. When I described *Yotuba to!* as "day to day," I meant it. It's a slice of life manga in the purest sense. Every chapter is either a self-contained story or set-up for the occasional two-parter, all centering on the wonder of everyday life seen from the perspective of a little girl. In one chapter, *Yotuba* and her father go to the zoo. In another, they look for acorns. In yet another, they go to a summer festival to see fireworks with some friends. If these topics sound mundane to you, it's because they are, but to *Yotuba* they are anything but. It's surprisingly easy for me to read any chapter of *Yotuba to!* and be able to invest in, and somewhat regain, the unabashed curiosity and excitement of children that *Yotuba* embodies. *Yotuba to!* reminds us that every mundanity we have come to take for granted can be made to seem magical again, and it does this with humor and heart every chapter. Yes, even in the acorn one.

Yotuba to! also has a special place in my heart as the first manga I read entirely in Japanese. I'm sure that the joy of being able to finally (mostly) read a manga in Japanese after studying for months certainly played a part in this, but I don't think I've ever smiled or laughed more reading a manga than I did my first time



THE MUNDANE MAGICAL

reading *Yotuba to!*. However, when I read some of the English translation, even though I still enjoyed myself, I didn't respond as openly to it as I did to the Japanese version. Naturally, the knowledge that the dialogue and wordplay almost always works best in Japanese acts as one barrier to enjoyment. For example, Yotuba's dialogue has the special feature of being written in hiragana and katakana without any kanji (Chinese characters), which instantly reflects her childishness in a way no other language exactly can.



But I also believe this preference of mine stems from the fact that, through learning Japanese as a second language these past couple of years, I've been able to somewhat return to an unironic, sincere connection to concepts referred to by Japanese signifiers (that's pretentious speak for "words") whose

English equivalents I've come to emotionally distance myself from as cliches due to overexposure. That is, a Japanese poem translated into English can make me cringe in embarrassment, while the original text, even if identical in meaning, can strike me as beautiful. I'm well aware that the opposite would be the case if Japanese was my native language, but regardless, rediscovering basic human concepts without the baggage that one's native language brings to them simply has a rejuvenating effect, a return to the mindset of a child absorbing knowledge if not the limited understanding of one. Of course, this isn't to knock *Yotuba to!*'s English translation(s). Like in most manga, the art carries the lion's share of the appeal, so even the clunkiest fan translation would fail to ruin the humor and fun rooted in *Yotuba to!*'s foundations.



No matter how many more manga and novels I read, in English or Japanese or any other language, I think I'll keep coming back to *Yotuba to!* every now and then. My first read of it was already a kind of homecoming, after all. Thanks to it, I learned to laugh again.



Translator's note: Hanabi, the Japanese word for fireworks, literally means "flower fire."

UCHOUTEN KAZOKU A TAPESTRY OF COLOR



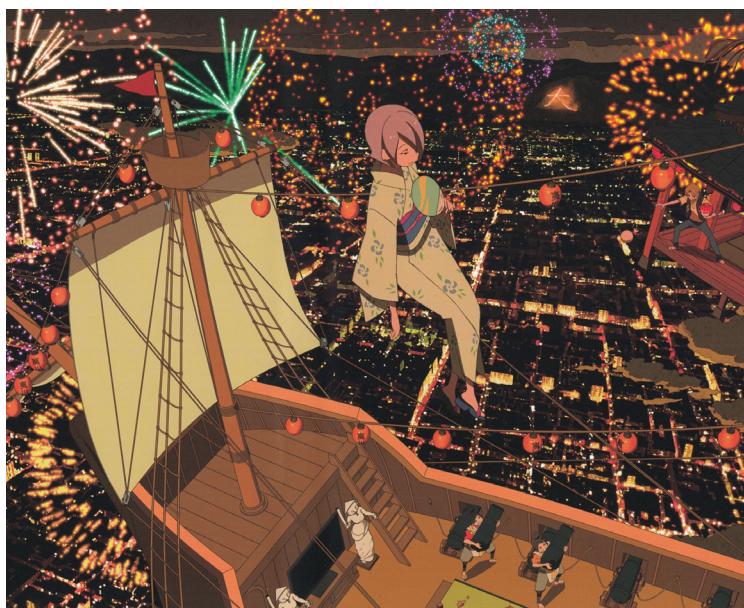
FELIX LEVY

2nd Year, Environmental Engineering

Writer

Uchouten Kazoku is an anime series that started airing in 2013 and got two seasons. It was originally created by Tomihiko Morimi, notorious for his creative works and stories such as *Tatami Galaxy* or *Penguindrum*, notable for their ability to showcase mundane aspects of life with a vibrant palette, both aesthetically and thematically, in refreshing and interesting ways.

These key points of his writings are quite evident in *Uchouten Kazoku*. It is a show that does not contain a summer festival in its story, but most certainly displays many aspects tied to that concept, and emphasizes them to create a beautiful product. It possesses the colorful and gorgeously chaotic nature of bustling life, roots in Japanese folklore for its setting, as well as an emphasis on the idea of fun, both as a theme of its narrative and an inevitable effect on its audience.



This show tells the story of Yasaburo and his family, the Shimogamo clan, an important clan in this anime's setting, composed of tanuki, raccoon-like creatures capable of metamorphosis. *Uchouten Kazoku*'s world is based on a triad of species that coexist in the city of Kyoto: humans,

the previously mentioned tanuki, and the prideful Tengu, crow-like flying youkai who stand at the top of the hierarchy of the mythical creatures of Kyoto. The Shimogamo clan is seen as weak by all others, after loss of Yasaburo's father, the clan's charismatic leader, and their fall from grace as well as the turmoil surrounding it lies at the center of the narrative. That is especially true considering the fact that the father's death and the mystery surrounding it, are one of the main elements of the story's progression.

But in general, *Uchouten Kazoku* shines in its world dynamics that can be described as an entire political system in the way it functions. The manners in which different creatures interact with each other based on their background and nature, or how one manages to go beyond their preconceived role in this state of harmony are recurrent dimensions that this anime explores. The protagonist behaves in certain ways with his tengu master that interestingly display the chasm existing between the two, and their human companion, a strange woman called Benben capable of flight as she was taught magic by that same tengu, is used in this story to show bits of flexibility and complexity in a system otherwise deeply rooted in its rigidity. These dimensions are explored thoroughly throughout the entire story and are apparent in subtle elements of dialogue, as well as entire characters and their motivations.

Kyoto becomes a large and vibrant tapestry in *Uchouten Kazoku*. Through the lens of our protagonist, who lives by the motto "fun things are good", we get to experience the many dimensions that the city has to offer, on every level of the social sphere, from the backstreets of human society to the backrooms of Tengu palaces. The countless societal layers and the web of connections of every element of the story is dissected by the protagonist as he searches for answers regarding his clan's situation. All of this, from the folklore to the ever-present hierarchical diction in the language, might make this show difficult to apprehend outside of a purely Japanese perspective, but the extra implication required from the audience ends up making the experience worthwhile and memorable, especially paired with the outstanding storyboarding and art direction that almost give off a grand and festive tone to the entire show. It is a beautiful journey through the many facets of an intriguing world.

THE NOT SO DISASTROUS LIVE ACTION ADAPTATION OF SAIKI K



MITCHELL MADAYAG

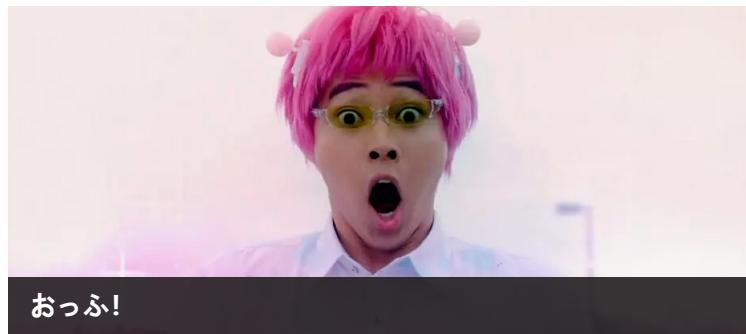
2nd Year, Japanese and Economics

Sorry Saiki, but coffee jelly actually tastes pretty gross.

Editor-In-Chief

The original *The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.* used to be one of the first anime I watched and was an instant favorite of mine back when I was in junior high school. Yet, I never bothered to finish the rest of the series since I was too attached to the dub version. I can't remember why I was so adamant in watching the second season in sub when I was younger, but perhaps being able to experience media in my own native language makes it easier for me to connect to and appreciate (possibly why I really love *Dragon Ball*, *Kill la Kill*, and *Yuu Yuu Hakusho*). It wasn't until recently that I decided to pick up the show again after many long years and found that the sub was just as entertaining if not more, making me want to kick myself for how long I've put off watching it. Once I was done with the anime, I yearned for more antics with the sweet tooth psychic and company, which led me to discover the cursed live action adaptation from 2017. It mainly focuses on the events in short episodes 71-74, so I may be cheating a bit with the theme, but I think that school festivals are similar enough to capture that summery feel.

I'm not sure why there needed to be a live action *Saiki K* movie to begin with, but I surprisingly found enjoyment with its casting and the purposefully cheesy special effects. The low quality animation could be a small nod towards the anime's simple art style and lack of fluid motion as the series shines more from its quick and quirky dialogue than any sort of action sequence. The imperfections of the adaptation felt deliberate such that it reminded me of the cringy video projects that you see in high school but can't help yourself from laughing at due to the absurd ingenuity of your classmates. This isn't to say that the film was "so bad that it was good" as it truly encapsulated the comedic tones the *Saiki K* franchise is known for, even if the adaptation did reuse a lot of jokes from the source material.



It was quite uncanny at first, seeing what Saiki and his friends would look like in real life as they almost felt like they could fit right in with modern society. Yet the thing that left me the most impressed was how the actors really embraced the exaggerated personalities of their respective characters. I liked how Kento Yamazaki was able to pull off Saiki's deadpan look and speech even if he had to speak vocally instead of telepathically like in the anime and manga. Ryo Yoshizawa who constantly did random hand motions to sell the Kaido's chuunibyou and Kento Kaku who replicated Aren's enraged expressions may have played smaller roles in the film but also did a really good job capturing the stupidity of the tropes they were portraying. Yet the film has Kanna Hashimoto take her role as Teruhashi a bit too far as she constantly replicates the standard surprised anime face. It's funny the first few times as anime reactions can look pretty ridiculous in real life, but after seeing it for the tenth time or so, it got really tiring and made me feel pretty uncomfortable.



Conversely, Nendo, who was played by Hirofumi Arai, was practically low energy and not as loud as I would have expected, which made him seem more like a creepy stalker than a naive idiot. Arai, bearing Nendo's iconic buttchin, was also shorter than Yamazaki (Saiki), which made for quite a sight. My last gripe was that it was a bit disappointing to see that Chiyo Yumehara was absent entirely from the film, not even as a background character, but it's understandable since having two girls crush over Saiki would be redundant. Though I'd like to also think of it as a small meta jab towards Chiyo's character as she seems to be the one who bears the worst luck out of anyone in Saiki's friend group. Regardless, even with some of the film's faults with the dialogue and acting, the mini plot with Saiki going out of his way to save the school festival kept me engaged. Overall, I still found the live action adaptation of *The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.* to be an absolutely fun watch that has a unique take on the series.

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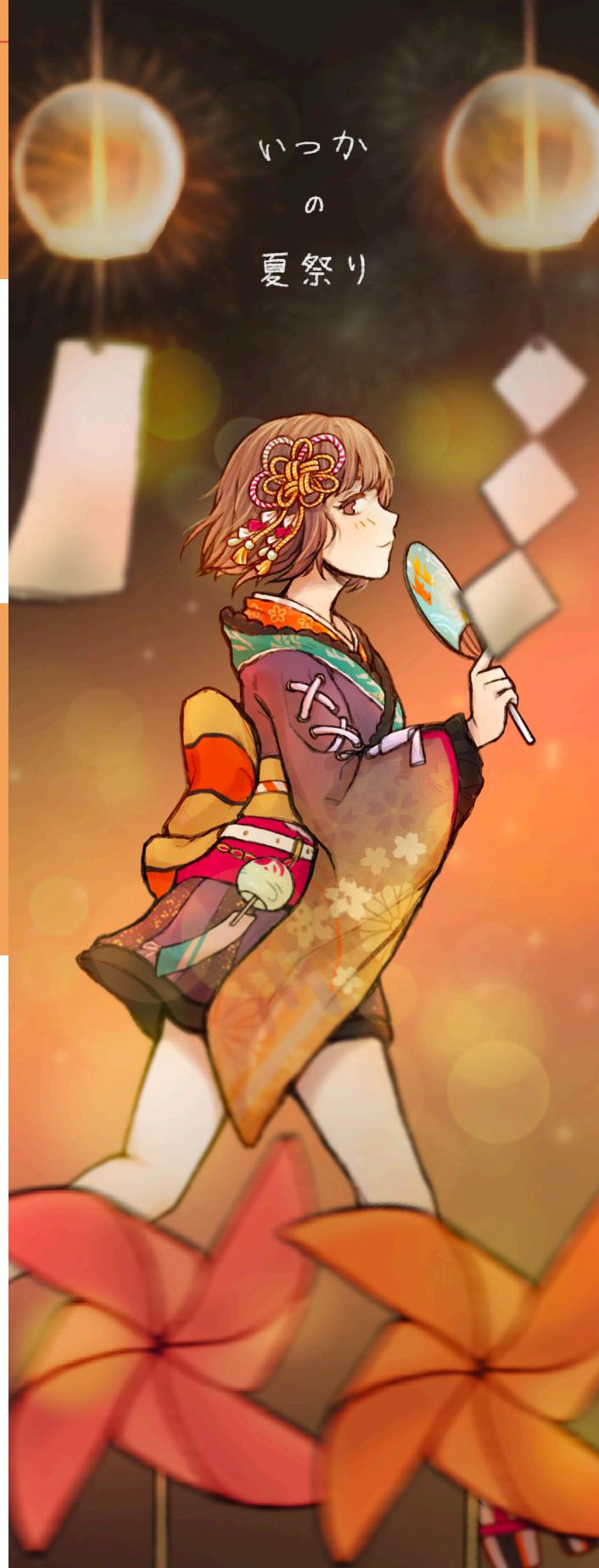
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