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2D idols

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BANG DREAM: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF A RISING FRANCHISE

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4TH YEAR. APPLIED MATH AND DATA SCIENCE

The longest article in the history of Konshuu,
and it's about idols. Nice.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Idol Trash: two words that together create a title of possibly negative connotation. Separately, though, the words have totally different tones. On the one hand, you have “trash”, which comes with a generally negative meaning. On the other hand, you have “idol”. What do you think of when you hear the word “idol”? *American Idol?* That one *BTS* song? In layman’s terms, an idol is “an image or representation of a god used as an object of worship”. While that’s a valid definition, it’s useless for us because when I say idol, I mean the Japanese idol: a young celebrity who is “manufactured and marketed for image, attractiveness, and personality” (according to Wikipedia). Granted, the idea does borrow concepts from the original definition of idol -- fans follow (AKA worship) these young’uns as they grow into stardom and fame.

Herein lies the origins of the phrase “idol trash”. I’ve talked before about how I got into the *Love Live* franchise and idols in general, entering what is known as idol hell. The months after that were spent lurking the *Love Live* subreddit, playing the mobile game, and considering how much it would cost to go to a live in Japan. That, my friend, is characteristic of idol trash: an individual who has an unhealthy obsession with idols. I’m happy to say that I’ve calmed down from this high, and I now consume idol in a reasonable rate... if we don’t count a certain franchise (hint: it’s in the title).



Example #1 of Idol Trash

Now this isn’t the first time *BanG Dream* was mentioned in Konshuu. I’ve talked about how its mobile game is in the category of “Gacha Idol Rhythm Mobile Games” (GIRMG), which is both pretty self-explanatory and a term I made up on the spot. Now, though, it’s time to really get into the meat and bones of *BanG Dream*: its past, present, and possible future. Sit back, ladies and gentleman – I have three pages to fill with *BanG Dream* knowledge. (Side note: this is what happens when none of the Konshuu writers have experience with idol anime). Let’s get into it, starting with how it all began.

BanG Dream started off pretty recently during the beginning of 2015. If you’re wondering what it actually is, think *Love Live* with *K-On* aspects added on. It’s a multimedia franchise similar to *Love Live*: that means it has anime, manga, music, live performances, and the works. The *K-On* aspects come in through the type of music itself: *BanG Dream* features rock bands instead the standard song-and-dance routine. Per the *K-On* band template, there’s a vocalist (possibly playing an instrument), guitarist, bassist, drummer, and keyboardist.



An inspiration for a generation

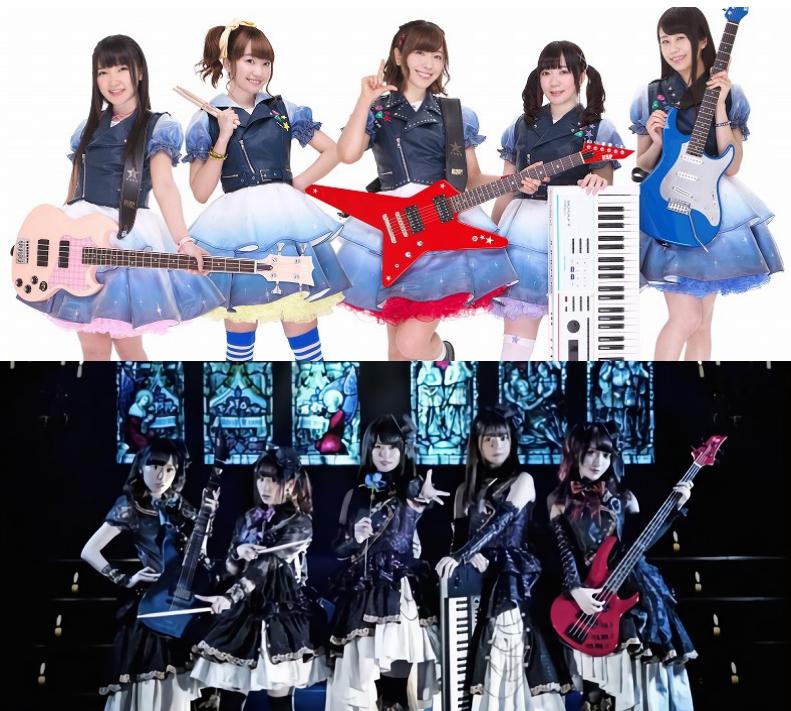
If you’re wondering why it’s called *BanG Dream*, you’re not alone. The name is actually a stylized version of Girls Band Dream, which is why the G in “Bang” is capitalized. Yeah, it’s an interesting choice. But remember Japan loves using

English without understanding it because it looks cool. Now if you're hesitant on being a Bang Dreamer (yes that's the official name for the fanbase), note that the Japanese pronunciation is *Bandori*, which is what most people refer to it as (as I will now).

The franchise technically started with a manga called *BanG Dream!: Star Beat*, though the characters in it had completely different personalities from their current versions. For example, protagonist and main *Bandori* girl Kasumi Toyama is the overly positive and energetic girl who wants to have a sparkling, heart-pounding experience (no not in that way). In the manga, though, she's a shy girl who has trouble expressing herself ever since she was made fun of for singing her favorite song. Complete polar opposites.

A month after the manga came out, a new band was formed called Poppin' Party, your standard girls' rock band. This is where the live performance part comes into play, and it's one of the more impressive parts of the franchise. The real life voice actors actually play their instruments during the live performances, known as lives. In fact, the whole reason why the franchise exists is because an executive of the company that created *Bandori*, Bushiroad, saw an *iDOLM@STER* seiyuu play her instrument while performing and thought, "hey this could work as a multimedia franchise" (fun fact: that seiyuu is the voice of Kasumi, the vocalist/guitarist for Poppin' Party).

It took some time for Poppin' Party to get its current cast, around a year or so. It took some more time for Roselia, the second *Bandori* band, to form. Like Poppin' Party, Roselia's members play their instruments during lives. Unlike Poppin' Party, Roselia is a more edgier rock band taking gothic influences into their costumes and music.



Poppin' Party (top) and Roselia (bottom)

Ok, so we have two bands with different styles who perform live, we have multiple manga and a light novel, and we have singles being released of the bands' songs. That wasn't enough unfortunately: *Bandori* was not very popular among the general idol trashdom. So what better thing to do than make an anime! The *Bandori* anime, aptly named *BanG Dream!*, released during the Winter 2017 season. I was actually watching seasonal anime at the time, and I remember nothing about it. I wouldn't be surprised if you didn't know it either with anime such as *Kobayashi-san Chi no Maid Dragon*, *KonoSuba 2*, *Youjo Senki*, and so on airing at the same time. It didn't help that it started airing 3 weeks into the season and delayed episodes twice, but it also didn't help that it was not a good anime in general. With a story too cheesy for even Wisconsin, inconsistent character models, and heavy CG reliance, it's an anime that even I have not and will not watch.

So you can imagine the anime didn't help matters much. Luckily, the people over at *Bandori* HQ had a backup plan. What's the next step in idol advertising when you've exhausted pretty much every medium out there? Make a game! Specifically, a mobile game. This is where *BanG Dream: Girls Band Party* comes in. As mentioned before, I've written about the game in a past article. What I didn't mention, though, is how it was the gateway drug to the *Bandori* franchise for me.

Going into the game, my exposure to these GIRMGs was limited to *Love Live: School Idol Festival*. While it was a good starting point and a perfectly adequate game, *Bandori* eclipses it in almost all aspects. The UI is much better, the gameplay is intuitive, the card art is beautiful, and best of all there are cover songs! Also, events (a week-long period where players play to obtain event points, collect event-only cards, and rank among other players) are fun stories that serve as good character development. Best of all, compared to *Love Live*, obtaining an event-only card is not a grind-fest because it's dependent on the number of event points you get rather than your place among other players. I've skipped days playing during events and was still able to get both exclusive cards. Not being forced to play everyday is great because it prevents burnout, which happened a lot while I was playing *Love Live*.



Quality gameplay

Now all that may have been one big tangent, but it proves a point: the mobile game is great, and it helped introduce me to the franchise as a whole. I started off only playing the cover songs because pshh, who wants to listen to these original songs? Eventually, I caved in and started playing some of the original songs to discover that hey, they're actually pretty good. That's when they got me – eventually I looked into characters to find best girl, and then into the other media the franchise had such as the manga and light novel. *Bandori* songs infiltrated my playlists to the point where they were the only songs I would listen to some days. It became a big part of my life, for better or for worse.

Though this is my story, I wouldn't be surprised if other people shared the same sentiments. The mobile game was what really sparked the popularity rise of *Bandori*, and without it the franchise would be most likely be non-existent.

So where are we now? We currently stand at 6 bands, 3 of which were introduced in the mobile game. There's Afterglow (childhood friends who play more punk-rock style), Pastel*Palettes (idol rock band), and Hello, Happy World! (band of chaos whose goal is to make everybody smile I guess). Recently, a sixth band has been integrated into the franchise, Raise A Suilen (RAS). Their story is interesting: because the above three bands are mostly made up of some pretty famous seiyuu, they can't actually play their instruments. So a song by any of those three bands is actually played by the members of RAS. In that sense, they were a backup band for *Bandori*. It wasn't until last month that they started getting a more prominent role – they got a manga about them, and they appear in significant roles in the new season of the anime airing currently.

Yes, the generally criticized anime got a second season! It actually also got a third one at the same time, planned to air in October during the Fall 2019 season. And yes, I'm watching it. Though it is entirely in CG, it's been really fun so far. In this case, the CG performances are fine because the entire thing is in CG, so there's no weird model shifts. Plus let's be honest, it's awesome to see the characters moving in animation even with the Live2D models the game uses.

The franchise also received a few short anime, both with chibi versions of characters. First was Pastel Life, a 6-episode short anime about the life of Pastel*Palettes. A few months later came *BanG Dream! Garupa Pico*, a short which I can only describe with two episodes: episode 10 where two characters talk about life, and episode 14 where Hello, Happy World "dies" while hiking on a mountaintop in a snowstorm. Surprisingly, though, it was really good and actually my favorite anime from its season.

Speaking of really good stuff, the mobile game now has four different versions: a Japanese version, a Taiwanese version, a Korean version, and a worldwide English version. The franchise itself has also done collaborations with multiple franchises and companies, with some notable names



Left: Me / Right: My responsibilities

including *Persona* and *Hatsune Miku*. In fact, the *Persona* collaboration event for the mobile game recently happened for the English version. No, I'm not salty that I didn't get any cards from the gacha. Rate up is a lie.

In short, the *Bandori* franchise is booming, and the future has never looked better. Where will it go from here? Well, as mentioned before, the third season of the anime is coming in a few months. Of course, there will be more songs. There will be more live shows. The mobile game will continue to churn out new events and new cover songs. As to what else will happen – I don't know. I'm not the best at predictions – just look at how I thought the Packers would win the Super Bowl. Hahaha sports. But whatever is in store, I'm ready and excited. Because I am a Bang Dreamer.

Ran best girl btw.



Yes



TRIGGER UNIT
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STAFF PICKS

FAVORITE IDOLS



Ran Mitake
BanG Dream



Umi Sonoda
Love Live! School Idol Project



Mikumo Guynemer
Macross Delta



Izumi Iori
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St. Giorgio
Sekkou Boys

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