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Tony Issue



Tony's Profile Picture (who is it?)

*Serial Experiments Lain (no seriously, who the f*ck is it?)*

Art By Mitchell Madayag

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ARIA THE NATURAL: THE CUTEST GIRL IS THE ARCHITECTURE (REDUX)



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

Aria was so nice, I had to write about it twice.

Writer

In my [original Aria article](#), I believe I meandered too much regarding why I enjoy *The Natural* (second season) far more than the introductory *The Animation* (first season), or the almost unanimously regarded “best season”, *The Origination* (third and final season). Since writing said article, its existence and failure to communicate my thoughts has continued to nag at me. My opinions on the series have not changed, but the way in which I prefer to express my ideas has shifted. Spending too much time on summary and context, my original article didn’t explain my opinions as well as I would have liked. As such, I wish to remedy that here.



To me, the appeal of *Aria* was never in the character writing. Most media, in my view, require some semblance of characters and narrative arcs. Via this outlook, I would view *Aria* as a sufficient piece of media, but short of the extraordinary praise it rightfully deserves. The standout storyline for me was likely Aika’s arc, which has her realize that her aspirations to reach the level of Alicia, her idol, are unnecessary. Aika’s resolution to be the best version of herself and not some version of another person was wonderful. Still, compared to other CGDCT (Cute Girls Doing Cute Things) series like *K-On!* or *Hidamari Sketch*, this really isn’t remarkable or even original. *Aria* has decent characters, but I don’t think its acclaim stems from its character arcs. As such, though most prefer the character driven *The Animation*, or *The Origination*, which gives a fulfilling conclusion to most of the dramatic narratives, I believe that those seasons don’t exemplify what makes *Aria* so special.

The beauty of *Aria* for me has always been its world. While Neo-Venezia (and the wider Aqua) is inherently something of a science fiction world, given that it is a product of terraforming, the way *Aria* builds and explores its setting is distinctly fantastical. These sequences, spread throughout *Aria*’s entire run, truly give an impression that the world of Neo-Venezia is endless, that within every strange corridor lies something interesting. In short, Aqua feels like a lived-in place. The way *Aria* frames its world is distinctly childlike and wondrous, with characters occasionally running into random alleyways that lead to bizarre locations full of supernatural phenomena. Something else worth mentioning is the variety of locations featured in the series. Having lived in both an urban city and a rural town in two very different countries, at different points in my life, I appreciated how *Aria* explores both types of settings in great detail, admiring beauty in man-made structures as well as nature. In this sense, *Aria* is the perfect “iyashikei” (healing) anime in that it calmly and soothingly shows its storied world as it is, with minimal human presence. The comfort of *Aria* for me, then, is the same as the concept of liminal spaces. The clear wear and tear brought upon by time that *Aria*’s Aqua displays strikes me as oddly nostalgic, like a place I can imagine myself having been to before. This is further made potent with the series’ score, which is never aggressive and always maintains the same tone of calmness. Much of the series oozes with this laid back, quaint tone that is unmatched in other media. The iyashikei-ness of many anime generally come from cute anime girls doing... anything. Neo-Venezia best girl.



THE MAGICIAN DOESN'T COME BACK



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

LotGH is grossly pedestalized. (I still like it though)

Writer

death of Yang is a great concept, but one that inherently relies on the audience feeling disappointed.



SPOILERS FOR LEGEND OF THE GALACTIC HEROES

Legend of the Galactic Heroes is an anime series beloved by almost all who watch it, but one particular issue always irked me: the Free Planets Alliance. More specifically, the quality of character writing on the FPA. Compared to the richly developed and varied cast of the Galactic Empire side, the Alliance simply has very few relevant characters aside from Yang Wenli. This is compounded by the existing (but, frankly, unsolvable) issue that the Alliance is perhaps inherently less interesting, it being a democracy akin to what the majority of the viewership of the anime likely live under. As a result, while the Alliance is hardly dull (really, not much in *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* could be called that), it often feels less interesting in comparison to the rich dynamics of the Galactic Empire. Even Wenli, as unique of an ideologue figure that he is, can occasionally feel stale as he states platitudes that likely seem obvious to most of the series' audience. Although most enjoy Yang Wenli and the FPA's escapades, I grew weary of it and view it as an issue in a supposed "perfect" piece of media.

This issue is perhaps why the fourth and final batch of episodes in the original 110 OVA run of the *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* series is often criticized. It is incredibly hard to top the intrigue of the genius level strategic battles between Reinhard and Yang, after Yang's death. This is, itself, a fairly relevant and interesting plot point brought up by Yang's successor Julian, but it doesn't cover the fact that many find a good portion of what is considered "the greatest anime of all time" dull. The lampshading doesn't provide ample justification for me to fully be entertained by what is clearly a less interesting dynamic. The FPA is, in terms of worldbuilding, overly Yang focused and ideologically not particularly intellectually challenging. The FPA side characters are never flat, as *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* does not often have flat characters. Dusty Attenborough, Walter von Schenkopp, and others are still fairly fleshed out characters compared to almost any other anime. Yet, one would likely be hard pressed to find the FPA characters as possessing more dimensions than their Empire counterparts on average. Julian's thematic relevance tying to the audience's void following the

As such, I find it perfectly reasonable as to why many have issues with the fourth season. However, perhaps due to my aforementioned lesser interest in the Alliance, that portion of the story was actually thoroughly engaging with greater focus on the internal affairs of the Empire. Beyond that, seeing as the FPA storylines focus on Yang greatly, it should also be said that I was never as big a fan of him as much as others online. To momentarily ignore the myriad of interesting traits that Yang possesses, his concepts and ideas never challenged me as someone predisposed to appreciate democracy, given I am from a country that is, in its inherent construction, an attempt at democracy. Yang's luck on the battlefield is somewhat well integrated into the narrative, but it strikes me as just a bit too perfect to be narratively interesting. Reinhard von Lohengramm, on the other hand, is far more developed in his backstory, has extremely damning flaws in spite of his genius and cunning, and has an ideology focused around just authoritarianism, something conceptually challenging to me as someone not inclined to appreciate lowered freedom. Therefore, while Yang Wenli is a wonderfully written character, just as most of the *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* cast, his death did not mark the death of the show for me, only a shift in focus.



CHAR FANSERVICE: WHY THE ORIGIN ISN'T PERFECT



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

7/10

Writer

Aside from more perverse connotations, when one thinks of “fanservice”, it’s almost always a negative, used to describe content that only iterates on an already established concept rather than presenting new ideas. Essentially, fanservice is, as the name implies, content that placates fan desire for more of something. However, this doesn’t always have to be a negative. After all, aren’t the conclusions of fulfilling character arcs flattering desire to see the ending of a thrilling story? If I were to stretch this concept far, I could possibly end up with the conclusion that cathartic, engaging finales like those to *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* could perhaps be considered fanservice.

Gundam has an interesting history of fanservice. With a meta universe as vast as *Gundam*, it should not be surprising that the series has had both good and bad instances of that concept. The most notable example is perhaps with the character of Char Aznable, who fascinatingly goes through a complex character arc, swinging between factions and allegiances throughout the original Universal Century timeline. The fanservice for Char has worked in two different ways. The most notable form of fanservice with the character comes in the form of what has been dubbed “Char Clones”. Whilst not (well... not always) literal, almost every form of *Gundam* media contains a character that mimics the original red Mobile Suit pilot in some fashion, whether it be aspects of his personality, his quirks, or perhaps their mask designs. With a character with so many arcs and personas - Casval Rem Deikun, Édouard Mass, Char Aznable, The Red Comet, and Quattro Bajeena - it is understandable that the franchise would eventually repeat similar characteristics to the original Char. However, the reason I generally use “Char Clone” as a pejorative when discussing the *Gundam* series is due to how none of these characters truly differentiate themselves past their characteristics similar to Char. Thus, whilst the characters are not Char, the franchise’s metaphorical masturbation over his characteristics seem like they exist purely for the fan desire for Char-like qualities.

The other, and by far the more interesting, way *Gundam* has iterated upon Char has been with the inclusion of extra material that flesh out the character. This is not always productive.

Char’s Deleted Affair, for instance, is a manga that purely exists to inflate the audience’s understanding of Char Aznable to near-mythic proportions. *Mobile Suit Gundam: The Origin*, on the other hand, seems to be more on the right track. Whilst still glamorizing the character, *The Origin* is a fascinating take on what events could have led to the character that audiences see in *Gundam*, *Zeta Gundam*, and *Char’s Counterattack*. Though the writing for Char’s arc is brilliant and poetically gives character trait hints to later events in his life, *The Origin* also functions as a narrative in of itself. *The Origin* provides Char backstory, but it also presents backstory for the Universal Century itself, and as such, ascends to what I deem “good” fanservice - placating audience desire for more of a specific element, yet existing on its own merit. *The Origin* is both a slightly indulgent fantasy on a young Char Aznable, yet also a gripping and powerful political war drama akin to *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*.



I don’t necessarily share the astoundingly high opinions of *The Origin* that its critical acclaim may imply. It has several shortcomings, such as its continuity being inconsistent with the other series, thus making its callbacks to the series feel hollow. Furthermore, it still engages a tad bit too much with spectacle and flash in place of character writing and narrative pacing for my liking. There’s also a bit too much focus on what makes Char Aznable the Char in the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*, and not enough focus on the characteristics that we learn of him his anti-hero portrayal in *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam*, and the outright cackling villain we see in *Char’s Counterattack*. Still, for what *The Origin* is, I find it fascinating. As *Char’s Deleted Affair*, along with practically every iteration of a “Char Clone”, proves, pandering to Char Aznable fans often comes with mixed results. Yet, *The Origin* manages to exist in a space where it is catering to fans, but can exist on its own merit.

GT IS MORE DRAGON BALL THAN SUPER



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

I hate separating Dragon Ball into the original and Z because that distinction doesn't exist in the manga, but it just makes sense here for convenience's sake.

Writer

The core appeal of something as ubiquitously popular as the *Dragon Ball* franchise is rather tough to pin down. However, as someone who's seen literally thousands of anime, what makes likely the most popular anime in existence my personal favorite comes down to its adherence to one continuity. From the first episode of *Dragon Ball* all the way to the finale of *Dragon Ball GT*, the series is one continuous saga chronicling the life and adventures of its protagonist. Readers of the manga literally follow Son Goku from his youth all the way to him being a grandfather. In this way, *Dragon Ball* accomplishes something I only rarely see within fictional narratives: palpably develop characters as they age and grow up. Nestled within a narrative inherently about self-growth, this element makes the series extremely compelling to me. There are, of course, a myriad of valid criticisms of *Dragon Ball*. This article would be around 23 pages if I were to go in depth. In spite of that, the series remains entertaining for me from beginning to end due to the meticulous depth and scope of its coming of age, going far past the usual shift from youth to adulthood.

Because of this, I've never quite had the hatred of *Dragon Ball GT* like the majority of western *Dragon Ball* fans do. Obviously, series creator Toriyama Akira has stated that *GT* is not canon, but so is the term "*Dragon Ball Z*". *GT* has a substantial amount of problems, but the entire series can validly be critiqued in the same ways that *GT* has been dissected. At its core, I view *GT* on par with *Dragon Ball* and *Z* for continuing the narrative in a somewhat meaningful way. Instead of concluding with showing another generation of the Son family, *GT* logically takes the franchise the furthest it can go, with its final episode showing a far flung future where Son Goku is truly accepted by the people of Earth as a legendary figure. Broadly, *Dragon Ball* and *Z* show an extended coming of age story. Along those lines, *GT* progresses Son Goku's narrative to the final status that any individual can hope to achieve: that of a culturally immortal figure. As such, I view *GT* as a worthy followup as it continues and concludes the serialized narrative of *Dragon Ball* in a substantive manner. When I say that my favorite anime is *Dragon Ball*, I mean that my favorite anime is the extended saga presented through *Dragon Ball*, *Dragon Ball Z*, and *Dragon Ball GT*.

For the exact same reasons, then, not only can I not include *Dragon Ball Super*, but I disagree with its very existence. As a follow-up to *Dragon Ball Z*, it is inherently uninteresting to me, taking place in the 10 year timeskip after the defeat of Majin Buu. Seeing as the last few episodes of *Dragon Ball Z* give a glimpse into the series' world past that period of time, *Super* exists in an awkward place where it cannot actively progress the characters past a certain state. Any changes that do happen flies in the face of existent continuity given how viewers already know the state of the cast in a future setting. Ignoring the (supposedly) non-canonical *GT* for a moment, *Super* inherently cannot move the saga forward and thus completely misses the very reason why I enjoy the franchise. Beyond this, the narrative of *Super* is subpar even by the standards of *Dragon Ball*, with very little narrative buildup or stakes to any conflicts present. The original series spent utterly long amounts of time foreshadowing events such as the Super Saiyan transformation or Son Gohan's inherent large reserves of power. *Super*'s greatest accomplishment on par with that comes with Ultra Instinct, a powerup that is mentioned once before being used a hundred episodes later. Additionally, none of the physical gains the characters make have any bearing on their writing. One of the most important themes in the early chapters of *Dragon Ball* is that, generally, when the characters get stronger or receive a powerup, it mirrors some character growth they go through. Such is the case with the aforementioned first Super Saiyan and Super Saiyan 2 transformations. For these and so many more reasons (which themselves could also constitute 23 pages), *Super* completely misses the mark.

Dragon Ball's defined canon excludes *Dragon Ball GT* and includes *Super*, but from a pure narrative perspective, *GT* is far more in line with the original series than *Super* ever could be. *GT* not only continues the timeline and story in a relevant, coherent manner, but it gives a definitive capstone to the themes of *Dragon Ball*. It encapsulates what I like about the series. Due to the nature of its existence in a previous time period, *Super* accomplishes none of these things, with its narrative also unsatisfying from a standalone perspective. What *Dragon Ball Super* is, is nostalgia bait, profiting off of recognizable imagery to the cohort of grown up "90's kids", many of whom likely only look for something visually reminiscent of *Dragon Ball*. There is no critical consideration regarding whether the sequel/reboot's quality, or even if it makes sense. The most charitable description I can give *Super* is that of a somewhat dazzling, but ephemeral light show which ultimately lacks the soul of *Dragon Ball*. Despite being the non-canonical red-headed (perhaps literally, looking at Super Saiyan 4 Gogeta) stepchild of the franchise, *GT* is more *Dragon Ball* than *Super*.

LUPIN III: STAND ALONE COMPLEX



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

Part 6 is, so far, so much better than SAC_2045 that even comparing is offensive to the former.

Writer

Episodic television shows have come to be reviled in the modern age of binging, with the advent and proliferation of streaming services. In spite of many popular anime series still being released weekly on television channels, most tend to find episodically structured anime to be a foreign anachronistic reminder of the past. The reasoning for this is obvious, given how many of the most praised pieces of media tend to be long, epic sagas, which are inherently less likely to appear in episodic series. For me, though, episodic story structures tend to be the most effective if a common theme pervades the entire series, evident in anime like *The Tatami Galaxy*, *Serial Experiments Lain*, *Gintama*, and much, much more. Those series use the fact that they feature seemingly unconnected episodes in order to further their thematic exploration. Beyond those examples, though, I believe that *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* makes the most use of its structure, and downright would not at all work if it solely featured a consistent linear narrative present in every episode. In a sense, I believe its particular employment of structure is a logical followup to classic episodic structures that I wish to highlight and hope to see more of.

The titular Stand Alone Complex refers to the first season of *GitS: SAC*'s use of both "Stand Alone" episodes which generally are episodic and seldom feature much narrative progress, and "Complex" episodes, which contribute to the series' overall plot. The second season furthers this by instead featuring two concurrent plots in the midst of individual episodes. Given the series' focus on police work in a far flung future, this puts the viewer in the same place as the characters. There's an almost chaotic result to this, as if to emphasize the nature of police work having certain cases that may not contribute any leads to larger, more involved ones. This could also tie into the series' futuristic setting, being set in a cyberpunk future wherein the concept of identity is up for question. Either way, in effect, this broadens the series' tonal range. Though *Ghost in the Shell* is often seen as a somewhat dark and nihilistic future, a notion supported by the original film, *Stand Alone Complex* has many moments of levity and as such provokes thoughtfulness in aspects beyond simple concepts of "man is doomed". The structure allows *Stand Alone Complex* to stand apart from other series of its ilk, and is a fundamental part of why the series works so well.

Another series I believe uses the same Stand Alone Complex structure employed by the aforementioned *GitS: SAC* are modern *Lupin III* series, specifically *Mine Fujiko to Iu Onna, Part IV*, *Part V*, and *Part VI*, currently airing as of this article's release. Of these, the most interesting to discuss for me is *Part V*, which makes use of the structure as a meta commentary on the inherent nature of the franchise itself. As a series from the 1970s and 80s, *Lupin III*'s contemporaries feature the likes of *Ashita no Joe*, the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*, and *The Rose of Versailles*, yet it has continued airing new entries into the 2020s with few signs of stopping. This is likely due to the series' core cast of clashing personalities, allowing various showrunners and directors to throw the characters into many settings without issue. By fundamentally keeping the characters the same, with an exception in *Mine Fujiko to Iu Onna*, *Lupin III* has thus remained a time capsule of a bygone era of animation. Given the franchise being episodic from its initial episode, *Part V* uses the Stand Alone Complex structure to both pay homage to its predecessors but also lampshade the tired nature of episodic stories with unchanging characters. It does not feature direct subversion of the franchise's elements, but is rather playful in illustrating how the characters could be seen as outdated. The heist film formula that *Lupin III* as a whole has used since the 70s is present, virtually unaltered, yet the central villains of the overall "Complex" narrative use modern technological improvements to illustrate how the series' tropes are incredibly old-fashioned. The structure of the series highlights the contrast between the franchise's seemingly outdated elements and modern concepts. Just like *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, *Lupin III: Part V* utilizes its construction as an episodic series effectively.

Though these two series are incredibly disparate in most aspects (*GitS* as an anime hadn't even tried episodic structures before *SAC*), their shared structure is something unique that few anime employ to an effective extent. Though I personally have few qualms with truly episodic narratives, as I can find them to be interesting showcases of individual directorial talent, I understand the disdain many people hold. Stand Alone Complexes both uphold a series' ability to be varied, a feature of episodic media, yet also allows for rewarding storytelling which most find to be far more abundant in linear narratives. As such, I hope to see more anime properly utilize this structure. Just as *Lupin III: Part V* and *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* revitalized older franchises in the 21st century, I believe this structure can rejuvenate the somewhat lost art of episodic television.



DOKIDOKI PRECURE IS PRETTY GOOD.



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

Giant Lance is peak PreCure.

Writer

Pretty Cure is a franchise wherein its individual entries are almost narratively indistinguishable from each other. Of course, certain series have their own unique themes which visually and thematically differentiate them from each other. Still, this largely results in entries only notable as “the __ PreCure”, such as *Healin’ Good PreCure* being “the medicine PreCure”, or *Kirakira Precure A La Mode* being “the cooking PreCure”. In effect, while many Pretty Cure series have their own identities, they largely boil down to visual differences and superficial themes, taking the form of some setting detail, a villainous catchphrase, or a protagonist’s motivation. As someone who’s seen every entry, I can only truly say I enjoyed around a third: *HeartCatch*, *Fresh*, *Yes! 5*, *Futari wa, Hugtto!*, *Suite*, and *Splash Star*. Most of those series are structured identical to each other. The “PreCure formula” consists of ~50 episode monster-of-the-week cartoons wherein the characters have to transform into magical girls in order to physically batter opponents. Generally, characters are introduced around the end of a cour, with the narrative climaxes starting around the start of the fourth cour. This makes discourse incredibly unproductive, given how many PreCure fans use comparative evaluation between entries of PreCure, rather than looking at individual entries’ places in the general picture of action shows, to form opinions. Given that, I should mention that my earlier list omits a series that I believe was a meaningful departure from the rest of the series: *DokiDoki! PreCure*.



DokiDoki! PreCure is likely the most controversial entry in the entire series. The main reason for this boils down to the series clearly hinting towards a redemption arc for the character Regina, to fulfill a series trope of a villain switching sides and

becoming a Pretty Cure. *DokiDoki!* then shifts to Regina becoming further consumed by evil forces, with an entirely different character, Cure Ace, joining the main protagonists. Though plot twists for the sake of themselves is something I largely look down upon, as they generally rely on shock and not effective writing, the twist of Regina not being Cure Ace avoids that by being the basis for further conflict and revelations down the road. Regina and Cure Ace’s dynamic becomes a thoroughly interesting part of *DokiDoki! PreCure*’s main narrative and therefore stays relevant in a way shock twists generally do not. As such, the negative reaction to this twist feels less like a genuine problem and more a case of Pretty Cure fans being used to a formula and having it shift on them.

The central aspect of *DokiDoki! PreCure* which makes it compelling, however, is surely the presence of true narrative momentum. While still featuring the vestiges of the monster-of-the-week format the franchise is known for, *DokiDoki!* is not episodic. Each and every episode contributes in some way to the main narrative, resulting in the series feeling refreshing amongst PreCure entries. Compounding on the unique aspects of *DokiDoki!* is the strong focus on a central main character. Pretty Cure as a whole places a focus on a group cast more than individual characters. At minimum, a series will still have two protagonists, as is the case with *Futari wa* and *Splash Star*. Though it has a main cast of five Pretty Cure, *DokiDoki! PreCure* puts a special amount of attention to its primary main character, Aida Mana, or Cure Heart. The other Cures, as a result, have far less importance than Cure Heart. Humorously, this is even shown in the final attack, wherein, in lieu of traditional PreCure team-up final attacks, the *DokiDoki!* characters simply lend their power to Cure Heart. In spite of her being deemed as a “Mary Sue”, I believe Mana is a far more realized character due to the higher level of attention she receives. Her character strengths and flaws are more abundantly recognizable with her being a fairly complex character with realistic life goals.

Overall, the sentiments I express towards the character of Cure Heart is applicable to the entirety of *DokiDoki! PreCure*. While not being traditional PreCure, it takes interesting liberties which ultimately pay off and results in it being the most unique entry from a narrative perspective. As easily the most disliked entry of Pretty Cure, this opinion runs contrary to what has made the franchise as a whole popular in certain circles, but perhaps this is fitting given I don’t enjoy the Pretty Cure series as a whole. *DokiDoki! PreCure* is an interesting experiment with what had worked prior, and I believe it should be recognized as such, instead of being “the bad PreCure”

THE KAGUYA-SAMA ANIME IS



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

Can't wait to see audience reaction to the Kaguya (Ice) arc.

Writer

On a technical level, the anime adaptation of *Kaguya-sama wa Kokurasetai: Tensai-tachi no Renai Zunousen* is an almost one to one direct adaptation of the manga source material. Though it occasionally skips a few chapters and plays with the sequence, each segment of the adaptation is an almost verbatim reading of the original text. Despite this, as someone who has been following the manga and its author, Akasaka Aka, since before *Kaguya*'s inception, the anime completely misses the whole point of the manga. Dareisay, the manga's core appeal, at least for me, is completely gone in its adaptation.

This becomes abundantly clear even without watching the anime. The opening for the first season, "Love Dramatic", is a fairly competent song in the sense that it was pleasant for me to hear divorced from the show's context. However, Love Dramatic absolutely does not fit the tone of the series. The repetition of the line "Love is War" may seem fitting to Western audiences, as the Western title of the series is *Kaguya-sama: Love is War*, but it holds little value in the series' original context other than highlighting an increasingly irrelevant gimmick to the story. The romance "wars" are what generally popularized the anime, giving it an easy one-sentence tag for people to explain to others. However, the series consistently calls to the absurdity of these interactions, and downright omits them later on. As of the final draft of this article, the series has reached chapter 242, and this aspect has not had a meaningful presence for almost 100 chapters.

Beyond that issue, there is the obvious fact that Love Dramatic singer Suzuki Masayuki has a voice indicative of the general expectation of jazz. The song is definitely better off, but there's a certain lack of awareness given the entire series focuses on the misadventurous love lives of teenagers. This could be part of the overall memetic tone and audience that the anime adaptation has attracted; under that interpretation, then, this anime misses the genuinity of *Kaguya-sama*'s overall messages. Perhaps this could be fitting for the stretch of 45 chapters that the first season adapts, but in a sense, this gives the complete wrong tone for the franchise as a whole, something that I believe the showrunners of the first season should have been aware of. One could say that an opening does not need to represent the tone of an anime, yet this one actively supports an interpreta-

tion of the series which I deem inaccurate.

On a similar note, while I have very few positive or negative things to say about *Kaguya*'s first ending, "Sentimental Crisis", I cannot say the same for the famous (infamous?) "Chikatto Chika Chika", which plays at the end of the third episode of the first season. Immediately becoming a hit Internet meme as soon as it aired, my issues with this ending are somewhat similar to the aforementioned problems I levied towards Love Dramatic. Embellishing something of a post-ironic tone and following, the "Chika Dance", as it is famously known, once again runs contrary to the series' inherently sincere feel, in spite of being a comedy. Given how that contradictory feel is what I love from *Kaguya* and Akasaka's other work, *ib: Instant Bullet*, it should be no wonder as to why I don't particularly care much for what is likely the most famous part of the *Kaguya* anime, as well as the aspect which increased its popularity in Western anime circles after the first two episodes were mostly only seen by existing manga fans in said circles. On a similar note, Chikatto Chika Chika pushed the character of Fujiwara Chika as the most prominent character of the series, in spite of her having the least importance out of the main cast. As a whole, though this is probably the most important part of why *Kaguya* as a series has an audience to begin with, this special ending embodies much of what makes the adaptation unpalatable as someone who gave the manga a 10/10 against an average manga score of 5.02.



In terms of the *Kaguya* anime itself, the most immediate difference between the manga and anime is the presence of an omnipresent narrator. Just like Chikatto Chika Chika, this disembodied voice is likely one of the most popular things that propelled the anime adaptation to its current level of popularity. At face value, it is a direct adaptation of the numerous square bubbles of narration present in the original. As someone who enjoys the manga's narration, the anime's narration is a clear example

THOROUGHLY DISAPPOINTING

of why certain details in one medium cannot be directly translated to another. By giving the narration boxes a voice, the anime adaptation gave them a character. "He" is now established as being a man, sporting a deep voice, and a somewhat ironic disposition. As a large presence in much of *Kaguya*, it creates something of a disconnect between the audience and the show, akin to watching a commentary track instead of watching a film by itself. Once again, this also furthers the memetic appeal of the series, something that ostensibly would fit with the author and series' sense of humor, but absolutely does not work in the anime, due to the writing being inherently absurd yet concealing a layer of hidden sincerity. All of this could be said of the manga as well, given it features the exact same text which the narrator reads. The difference is, the manga's narration has no character. It is a part of the world of *Kaguya*, and therefore there is no tone or sentiment conveyed by the textual narration aside from what the readers interpret. If the narration had to be given a character, it'd be the author, or the characters' inner egos.

My last complaint regarding the *Kaguya* anime's narration, that it takes up too much time, ties into an overall complaint about the differences between anime and manga as mediums. Simply put, manga are paced by the reading speeds, different for each individual, whereas anime has a set length. Any given episode of the anime typically lasts 24 episodes, covering 3 chapters, leaving 8 minutes per chapter. The content within *Kaguya*'s manga is fairly humorous, but it does not warrant the amount of time that an episode of the anime takes. *Kaguya* is a series that feels more meaningful not with each individual chapter, but in its 10-15 chapter arcs. Chapters of the manga likely take little more than 1 minute for most people to read, yet are given almost 8 times the length because it would make little logical sense in the television medium for the characters, including the "narrator", to talk so fast. By directly adapting *Kaguya* verbatim from manga to anime, A-1 Pictures drew out existing peripheral elements and put a great deal of focus on irrelevant new details.

Translating such a text-heavy work to anime is difficult, but not impossible. Studio Shaft, for instance, have created a reputation off of their anime adaptations of *Monogatari* and *Sayonara Zetsubou Sensei*. If said studio had adapted *Kaguya*, the narrator would be bouts of flashing text and some sort of visual direction would have been put into making conversation scenes, something that characterizes *Kaguya*, more aesthetically compelling. To give credit to A-1 Pictures, a studio whose lack of positive reputation is itself a dead joke, there was definite effort placed in making the series' dialogue scenes interesting with the inclusion of an abundance of visual gags. However, as can be expected at this point, I don't believe it contributes in any meaningful way. The point of *Kaguya*, in my view, is always rooted in a mix of sharp wit and genuine emotion. The cutaways and other visual metaphors present in the adaptations, then, have the effect of trying to abundantly explain a joke. This ruins the balance of comedy and sincerity in the series, just as other aforementioned adaptational shifts have. More simple to see, though, is that explaining the joke makes the comedy in the series, which is already somewhat lukewarm, all the more groan-inducing.

Obviously, much of what I've criticized has made *Kaguya-sama* a hit, but this article isn't to evaluate popularity. To be fair, this isn't to serve as (some false notion of) objective critique either. Rather, all the above is an explanation as to why I, as a fan of Akasaka Aka before the inception of *Kaguya*, thoroughly find the adaptation to be lacking. At 1594 words, this is a somewhat protracted article, and certainly one of my longer ones. Yet, I could easily go on for double the length in picking apart every small aspect of the manga that cannot work on television without changes. In spite of being technically identical, the differences in anime and manga are vast. It's why fans of many textual works will constantly campaign against film adaptations. There are different considerations required, and the anime staff failed to analyze how to make certain things work, opting to directly adapt the manga. What changes the staff did make were either pointless, or actively disruptive of the series' messages. I cannot overstate how happy I am that the anime was popular, because it ensured the manga's existence and secured Akasaka Aka platforms to write whatever crazy batshit comes to his mind (read *Oshi no Ko*). However, I view the anime adaptation to be a sorely missed opportunity for a truly transcendent work beyond the usual confines of seasonal anime into becoming a modern classic, and I hope the criticism I've levied here is indicative as to why.



TONY PICKS:

SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN

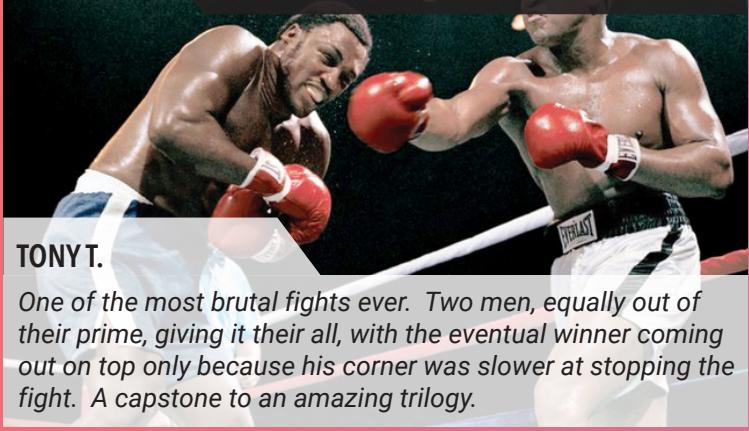


TONY T.

Manages to convey so much in just 13 episodes. Touches on a plethora of fascinating topics via a unique world and characters. Worthy of its cult status as a mind-changing, brilliant series.

THRILLA IN MANILA

MUHAMMAD ALI VS. JOE FRAZIER III



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One of the most brutal fights ever. Two men, equally out of their prime, giving it their all, with the eventual winner coming out on top only because his corner was slower at stopping the fight. A capstone to an amazing trilogy.

ROCKY BALBOA



Reminiscent of epic pugilistic comebacks like George Foreman's, the sixth entry in the Rocky franchise somehow conveys all the heart - and then some - which made the character a pop culture mainstay as well as the aspects which make real-life pugilism so compelling.

GARZEY'S WING



TONY T.

yo this shit sucks.

FRESH PRECURE



TONY T.

An amazing, action packed series with some jank, but a lot of heart. Defined the franchise for years to come.

NADIA: THE SECRET OF BLUE WATER



TONY T.

At times lively and jovial, at other times distinctly dark and foreboding, Nadia displays much of the range and talent that its director would later become famous for.

"COOL SHIT"

HAROLD & KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE



TONY T.

I miss White Castle®'s Original Sliders®.

DR. SLUMP



TONY T.

With equal amounts of heart and toilet humor, Dr. Slump is a classic comedy manga from the golden age of Weekly Shounen Jump. One can easily see author Toriyama Akira's penchant for keeping a consistent timeline which he would later feature in Dragon Ball.

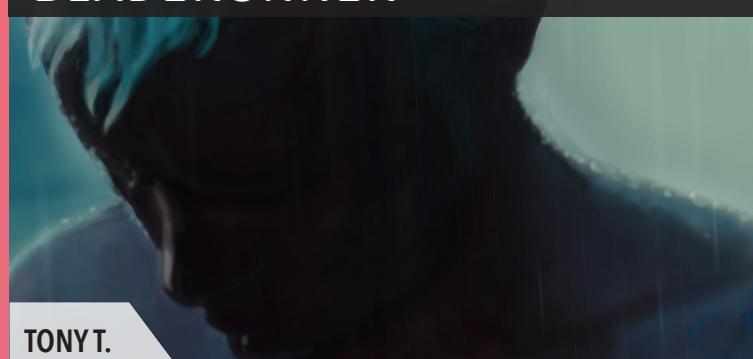
CASTLE IN THE SKY



TONY T.

Castle in the Sky, as (technically) the first film in a long line of Studio Ghibli classics, shows director Miyazaki Hayao's strengths in showing beautiful landscapes and wonderfully wholesome characters.

BLADERUNNER



TONY T.

Despite a mediocre cast (with one obvious exception), it set a standard of neo-noir filmmaking and writing that stands to this day.

GENSHIKEN



TONY T.

A starkly realistic yet touching take on the "otaku comedy".

第50話 げんしけん

THE OFFICE (US)



TONY T.

Featuring a lovable cast of varied personalities and a certain amount of tonal ambiguity, The Office (US) more than exceeds its UK counterpart in being an interesting slice of life romcom series.

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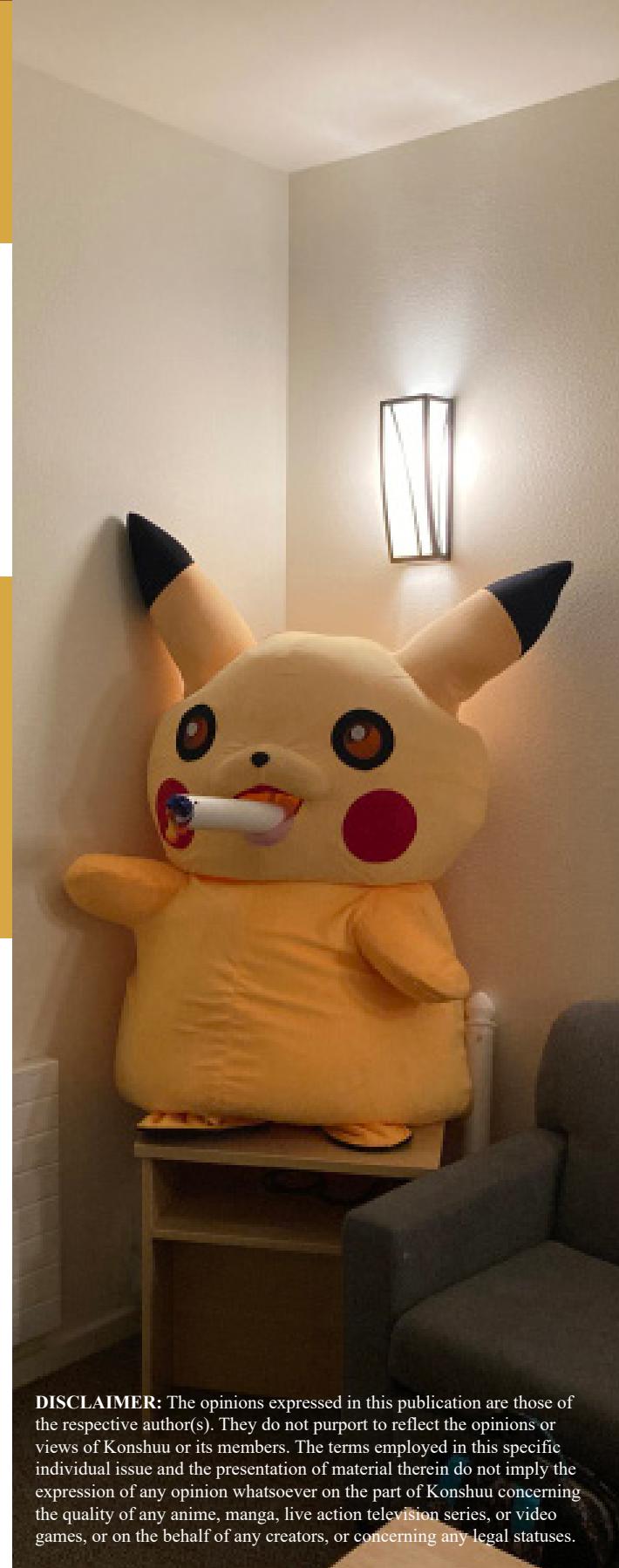
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	Tony T. Artist/Graphic Designer
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Pikachu with a blunt

*My Living Room
Art By My iPhone SE*