

KONSHUU

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Miscellaneous



Sailor Moon

Sailor Moon

Art By Heaven Jones

GUNDAM ARTICLE TITLE PLACEHOLDER



TONY T.

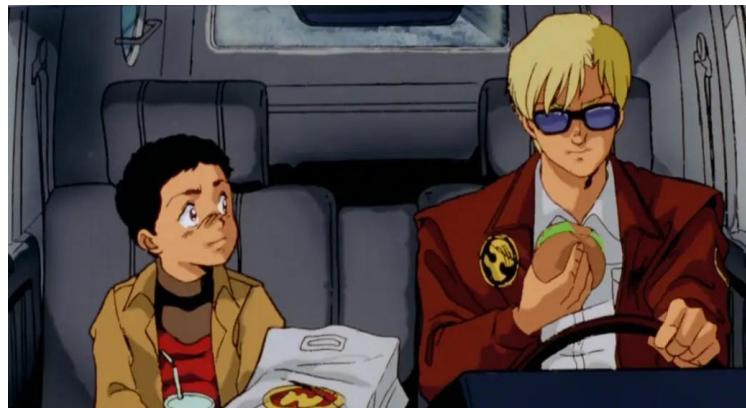
2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

I don't really even like robots at all.

Writer

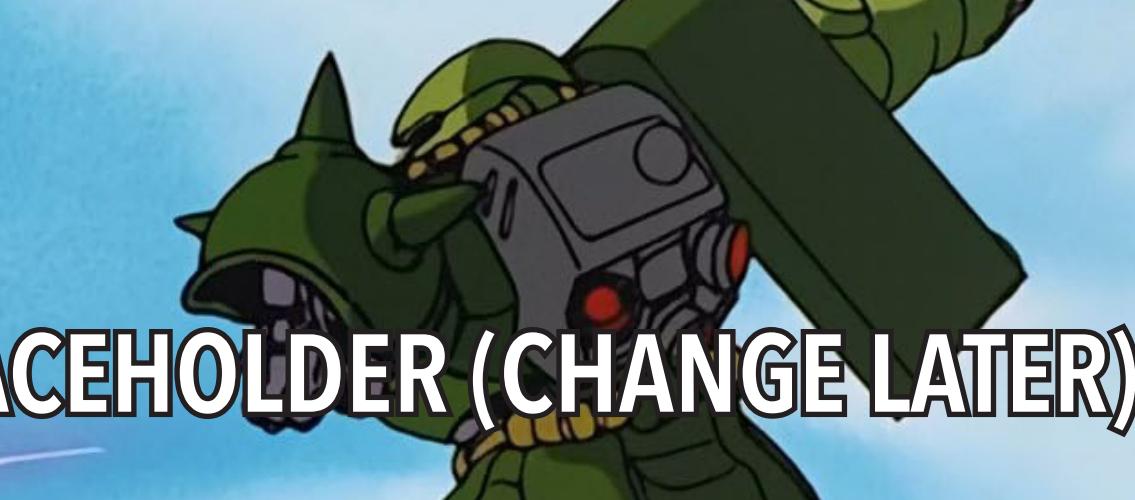
Perhaps owing to the simple yet easily permutable wartime setting of the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*, the franchise continues to fascinate me with how it manages to utilize said setting in providing the necessary background for completely distinct works of fiction. Notably, *0080: War in the Pocket*, *The 08th MS Team*, and *Thunderbolt* all demonstrate the versatility of *Mobile Suit Gundam*'s One Year War. Broadly, those series, along with *0083: Stardust Memory*, show that the Universal Century timeline is, as a whole, a setting embellished enough to have the capability to host narratives of fairly disparate tonality.

The One Year War, in *Gundam*'s Universal Century, essentially boils down to a conflict in the far future between the Principality of Zeon, an assortment of various Earth-orbiting colonies, and the Earth Federation, a sort of international government of Earth. Boiling this conflict down to the Zeonists rebelling against the Federation is far too minimalistic, but to embellish further would be to turn this article from a two-pager to a fifteen-pager. The original *Gundam* had the protagonist, Amuro Ray, on the Federation side, with the villainous Zabi family controlling Zeon. This would later be muddled with *Zeta Gundam*, with the heroes now a part of an anti-Federation coalition, with the Federation as the villains, and Zeon as an ambiguous third party (a plot point that debatably does not resolve until far, far later). Point being, later entries in the franchise make it a point to turn the original series' somewhat "good vs. bad" conflict (albeit, still featuring ambiguity) into an incredibly rich and complex web of politics, with very few absolutes.



If there were a poll to judge which *Gundam* entry best illustrates the point of the previous paragraph, *Mobile Suit Gundam 0080: War in the Pocket*, released in 1989, would likely win it. Featuring some of the series' best writing, *0080* seems intent on upholding both the *Gundam* franchise's overall warning against war as well as the Universal Century's moral ambiguity. This is emphasized with *War in the Pocket*'s mundane suburban setting in a politically neutral space colony chronologically coinciding with the One Year War. Without any overt or prominent antagonists, the series presents the blossoming interactions between an elementary school aged child and two young soldiers of opposing sides with an underlying narrative which culminates in said soldiers killing each other. In some sense, the premise is a rather cheap ploy to engender audience sympathy, though *0080* is skillful enough at avoiding would-be pitfalls by depicting the ensuing chaos with a marked subtlety and wonderfully potent irony. In the wide view of *Gundam* spinoffs, *War in the Pocket* is perhaps the most quintessentially easy to get into, with giant robot combat occurring to support the narrative, not in place of it.

Within that lens, then, 1991's *Mobile Suit Gundam 0083: Stardust Memory* could be viewed as a polar opposite, given its far more militaristic premise and setting. Quite possibly the most beloved *Gundam* side entry amongst giant robot fanatics, some insist that it is a necessary series to watch in its chronological location, between *Mobile Suit Gundam* and *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam*. With that said, *0083* is perhaps the least interesting *Gundam* side entry given it lacks the subtlety that spinoff material Universal Century content typically features. In fact, the majority of *Stardust Memory* focuses on combat. The series does have a somewhat interesting love triangle dynamic spanning both sides of its conflict, albeit said conflict is rather underwhelming given the audience has a somewhat limited understanding of the main characters. *0083* is often compared to the 1986 film *Top Gun*, and certainly has some of the same type



PLACEHOLDER (CHANGE LATER)

of spectacle, but falls short due to meager characterization. The overwhelming militaristic focus also hinders the series, as it falls too close to being just a direct translation of the main series TV *Gundam* to the format of original video animation instead of the interestingly quaint *0080*. *Stardust Memory* also suffers from taking place not in the One Year War, but a postwar period which the audience is likely less acquainted with. While this allows for the series to touch on a rather different political climate compared to other side stories, UC 0083 lacks the intrigue and depth that the more threaded ground of UC 0079 affords.



Returning to the One Year War, the 1996 OVA series *Mobile Suit Gundam: The 08th MS Team* lies fairly well in the middle ground between its two predecessors. Though it once again takes place in a conflict zone, *The 08th MS Team* uniquely depicts smaller guerilla warfare conflicts, somewhat akin to the American cultural depiction of the Vietnam War. Focusing on both militaristic and interpersonal interactions, the series is also interesting in how it essentially plays out as, to pardon a crude and reductive simplification, "Romeo and Juliet in *Gundam*" (though with a less tragic ending). One might think that utilizing the dynamic of star-crossed lovers on opposite sides would be even more tired and cliché than *Stardust Memory*'s war setting, but *The 08th MS Team* actually melds the two quite well. There is very little to *The 08th MS Team* that is completely original, but it is extremely effective at evoking the same messages, that war is undesirable chaos and most conflicts lack defined moral binaries, as *0080*. In addition, it also provides a logical conclusion to a sort of trilogy between it, *War in the Pocket*, and *Stardust Memory*, in that it properly combines the two appeals of the somewhat more character focused side stories and the main franchise, which places a tad bit more importance on visual action.

In spite of the somewhat poetic conclusion that *The 08th MS*

Team gives to the Universal Century side entries, the existence of 2015's *Mobile Suit Gundam Thunderbolt* throws a wrench into what I would have used as a proper conclusion to this article. Given the overwhelming praise heaped upon *0080* earlier in this article for its rejection of a black and white conflict, it might seem evident that I proceed in praising *Thunderbolt* for similarly showing depth in the face of the cultural understanding of *Gundam* as being uncomplex. However, if anything, *Thunderbolt* supports those notions. It features no truly correct faction and is therefore not a "good guy versus bad guy" narrative, but the way in which the series approaches this is rather flawed. Instead of *0080*'s nuanced portrayal of humans being simply aligned to ideologies appealing to their unique natures and natures, *Thunderbolt* goes in a needlessly dark route and simply portrays its central character as unabashedly lacking morals. Gone is the subtlety of good people fighting each other for contradicting, but understandable political allegiances - *Thunderbolt* simply supplants that with edgy characters violently flailing at each other using robots. Simply put, though *Thunderbolt* exemplifies the same morally ambiguous writing which all the *Gundam* spinoffs embody to some degree, its reliance on clichés and tonally one-note characters leaves it feeling bereft of true conceptual depth.

While my personal opinions vary wildly depending on the entry, these side stories provide uniquely interesting stories only possible with a large franchise like *Gundam*, and an established canon verse like the Universal Century. As a whole, *0080: War in the Pocket* and *The 08th MS Team* likely sit on or close to my list of personal favorites given their unique twists on existent concepts as well as the complex emotional turmoil they evoke without ever feeling cheap. On the other hand, while I've aired out my grievances with *0083: Stardust Memory* and *Thunderbolt*, I nonetheless deem them valuable in that they show that disparate premises can be twisted and molded for any given purpose and with enough effort or talent, the end result can still be a coherent story.



IN THE FRANXX



KEV WANG

2nd Year, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

"Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored." - Aldous Huxley

Writer

SPOILERS FOR DARLING IN THE FRANXX

I know I am biased when I claim that *Darling in the FRANXX* is a good anime, but if you are willing to overlook its flaws, I want to convince you that this show serves as a powerful critique of the trajectory of the modern world.

To do that, we have to look at this story through the lens of the author Aldous Huxley. His famous novel *Brave New World* portrays a world where society, unified under the World State, abandons meaningful emotions, natural reproduction, and freedoms in order to maintain what they perceive to be utopia.

Similarly, the world of *Darling in the FRANXX* is a utopian dystopia. Adults are sheltered in "Plantations" where they spend the majority of their days in voluntary confinement, artificially maximizing their dopamine intake. Members of the World State would be in awe. They merely use Soma to displace unpleasant emotions, but by sealing themselves in these mechanical coffins, the adults here are able to avoid all unpleasantness outright! Despite being able to maximize happiness, there is something deeply disturbing about their way of life: in order to maintain their eternal happiness, the adults reject their own humanity. Even Zero Two, a fearless Parasite who isn't a pure biological human, is distinctly more fallible, more mortal, more expressive and lifelike than those adults. It's not a coincidence then that they also replace many of their biological processes—their heartbeat, vision, immune system—with artificial ones: they have quite literally cast aside their human traits.



Zero Two is the Messiah of the world of *Darling in the FRANXX*, not only because she saves them from destruction, but also because she brings the concepts of human love and sexuality to the surface. To pilot the FRANXX, the Parasites assume purposely sexual positions, and the male and female pilots are called the "stamen" and "pistil" respectively, the two floral reproductive organs. Yet all the Parasites feign ignorance, up until they are forced to confront their inherent sexual nature by Zero Two. Seemingly well aware of the true purpose of these devices, she calls her piloting partner her "Darling" and treats him as her romantic partner. This forces Ichigo to reveal her buried feelings for Hiro, with an infamous kiss that would never have happened if not for Zero Two. In the final moments of the anime, Zero Two sacrifices herself for the past sins of humanity, giving her life away to allow humankind to naturally reproduce and begin anew.

This story may seem as far from our current reality as could be, but it carries the same message as *Brave New World*. Whereas *Darling in the FRANXX* had the dopamine machines and *Brave New World* had Soma, we have our mobile phones, giving us regular and empty hits of joy. Infertility and isolation are presented as an extreme result of human evolution, yet it isn't that far from reality: we are seeing alarmingly low birth rates and rise of hikikomori in Japan. Perhaps destructively stealing energy from the Earth will not bring giant dinosaurs attacking in real life, but climate change is an even scarier prospect that we desperately need to address. As our world becomes more and more technologically advanced, *Darling in the FRANXX* warns us to not lose sight of our humanity.



Who am I kidding? I like *Darling in the FRANXX* because it's a lewd mecha anime.



これが私の
マニフェストばかり頭が
痛いですわ敵にもならない

Otome Tohoten

Hypnosis Mic

Art By Kate Bushmareva

A (SLIGHT) DEFENSE OF CHAR'S COUNTERATTACK



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics & Data Science
mass omnicide is kind of cringe

Writer

SPOILERS FOR ALMOST EVERY UNIVERSAL CENTURY GUNDAM ENTRY

Amid the myriad of criticisms of *Mobile Suit Gundam: Char's Counterattack*, one that never sat right with me was the criticism of Char Aznable's depiction. The version of Char presented in *Char's Counterattack* - enacting a plan to crash an asteroid to wipe out Earth - is generally accused as being inconsistent with the established character. In particular, Char's genocidal tendencies are often said to not fit with the character's ambitions to particularly kill the Zabi family - done mostly for revenge - in the 1979 original *Mobile Suit Gundam*. His character is also not exactly in line with the almost wise, understanding mentor figure to Kamille Bidan that Char (under the alias Quattro Bajeena) is presented as in the 1985 sequel *Mobile Suit Gundam*.

My main concern with these criticisms is not that they are wrong. I can easily see how the character writing can seem inconsistent. However, I believe it is misplaced. Specifically, when one views the finale of *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam*, an obvious motivation for death upon all of Earth for Char appears. At the end of said series, Char's protégée of sorts, Zeta protagonist Kamille Bidan, is hit with a psychic attack that essentially leaves him brain dead. This is done purely out of spite from Zeta *Gundam* main antagonist Paptimus Scirocco, who only psychically damages Kamille in order to take down his enemy whilst he himself is dying. Notably, Scirocco represents a faction known as the Titans, who exist supposedly as a defense force for the Earth Federation (which was the heroic faction in the original series but fell into ruin in the 7 years between the original and Zeta). Char's motivation to end Earth could easily be justified: not only did forces of the Earth Federation seemingly kill his protegee in Zeta, but they also killed a close ally of his - Lalah Sune - in the original *Gundam*.



Though I personally appreciate the twist to bring back Char in a villainous role, the reasons most do not accept this twist should be noted. First, Char's announced goal of destroying Earth is to force life to migrate outward into space, an ideology taken from the faction he represents, the second iteration of Neo Zeon. As such, Char's goals in the film feel muddled. The reasoning for his hatred of Earth is narratively obvious, yet the narrative only hints towards the obvious reasons why he should hate the Earth Federation, with the spoken reasoning making little sense for his character. Furthermore, *Zeta Gundam* is not directly followed by *Char's Counterattack*, with the ever-controversial *Gundam ZZ* lying in between, featuring its own iteration of Neo Zeon. Within *Gundam ZZ*'s ending, Kamille finally regains his senses, and the first Neo Zeon, representing similar ideals to the second iteration, is thwarted. Though Char's motivations could still make sense as he was not physically present for any of *Gundam ZZ*, the existence of a powerful second Neo Zeon makes little sense for the world. Having had those ideals directly squashed, it is confusing for Zeon followers to be such a strong force so soon after their previous losses. This is clearly the result of *Gundam ZZ* being rewritten mid-production after *Char's Counterattack* was given the greenlight, but it results in a severely lessened final product.

Char's Counterattack is still a thrilling finale to the core Universal Century, all things being equal. It features the military tactics of the original series, mixed with deeper political intrigue introduced in Zeta. But by ignoring aspects of Zeta and ZZ's continuity - the protagonists of those series aren't even mentioned and Char begrudgingly becoming friendly with *Mobile Suit Gundam* and *Char's Counterattack* protagonist Amuro Ray - *Char's Counterattack* missed a chance to be stellar. With a couple of dialogue changes and a few script fixes to include added aspects of Universal Century continuity, the entry could have been greater. Simply including mentions of Judau Ashta and Kamille Bidan may have gone a long way in establishing the film as a grand, epic, finale, instead of a somewhat confusing ending. As it is, I consider it a fine entry of *Gundam* held back by not utilizing aspects of the Universal Century which make it so unique compared to other *Gundam* universes. But it's still better than *Seed Destiny*, at least.



MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: THE 08TH MS TEAM THE PERFECT GUNDAM GATEWAY DRUG



BLAKE MORRISON

2nd Year, Intended English and Japanese
War bad

Writer

My first Gundam series was *0080 War in the Pocket*. Despite being the fifth installment in what's called the Gundam franchise's Universal Century timeline (the original Gundam timeline), I think it makes for a great, relatively self-contained introduction to the franchise. For those unacquainted with Gundam, suffice it to say that the original show takes place a century or so in the future when humanity has colonized the solar system and is about a war (dubbed in retrospect as the One Year War) between the two major factions of humanity: the Earth Federation based in, well, Earth, and the Principality of Zeon based in giant colony space stations. The original show follows the episodic struggles of a crew of young soldiers of the Earth Federation who get wrapped up in the larger conflict. Its premise is simple and engaging enough, but I would never recommend it as someone's first exposure to Gundam unless they're committed to starting the franchise from the start.

Despite setting itself up as a space opera with a compelling political world, the original show is replete with the trappings of a monster of the week (or is it mecha of the week?) kid's show, a structure that its sequels would shed in favour of more complex storylines. Even the three recap movies that condense the 17.5 hour runtime of the show into a third by cutting out the extraneous episodic plots often come across as less of a serious war drama and more of a toy commercial. But despite my earlier praise, I wouldn't recommend *War in the Pocket* to Gundam newbies either. It's a relatively self-contained story, yes, and that's why many Gundam veterans recommend it to recruits, but looking back at it I can tell that much of its narrative impact was lost on me because its most impressive accomplishment is how it critiques the Gundam franchise and its fans. No, I wouldn't recommend *War in the Pocket* as someone's first Gundam. I would recommend *The 08th MS Team*.

As a tightly paced 12 episode OVA series, *The 08th MS Team* tells the story of the titular squad of the Earth Federation and their battles with the Zeon forces in the South East-Asian Front of the One Year War. Like *War in the Pocket*, *MS Team* takes place in time close to the original show and tells a relatively self-contained story, but unlike it, *MS Team*'s greatest narrative strength isn't its function as a metacommentary but rather its characters. This isn't to say *MS Team* has the deepest character studies you'll ever see (if that's what you're looking for, you'd be better off not watching anime and reading a book), but all the members of its main cast are established right off the bat as interesting and compelling individuals whose chemistry together, although shaky at first like any newly reassembled squad would be, quickly develops into an believable rapport. And I don't just say "right off the bat" because it's a stock phrase. I mean it. Unlike the original Gundam series and its direct sequel *Zeta Gundam* where the main characters aren't immediately appealing and often take a backseat to protracted battles, *MS Team* puts the main cast

at the forefront of and makes their personalities warp the flow of the battles rather than having them mostly bent to the will of the franchise's fundamental purpose as a commercial for giant robot toys.

A prime example of how immediately appealing the main characters are in *MS Team* versus the original Gundam is their contrasting protagonists. In the original Gundam show, Amuro Ray gets into the robot in the first episode because he stumbles upon it and its instruction manual. In *MS Team*, Shiro Amada gets into the robot in the first episode because he wants to help a fellow federation soldier when no one else in his ship offers to do so. Amuro's robot happens to be the titular Gundam, an over-powered machine that practically wins the battle for him. Shiro's robot is a rickety space probe that goes up against a fully-fledged biped mecha, and he only wins by pulling off a risky maneuver that results in his probe detonating along with the enemy mech. In Amuro's case, the conflict comes to him, but Shiro seeks it out and risks his life doing so because unlike Amuro, who is still an aloof teenager, Shiro is already a soldier personally invested in the Federation-Zeon conflict. You may think it's unfair to compare these two because of how different their starting positions are, but it's undeniable that Amuro makes for a passive protagonist (whose passivity doesn't figure as an interesting opportunity for a character study beyond some hesitation before "crossing the threshold" in his hero's journey) while Shiro is an active protagonist. But even if he seems conventionally reliable as the captain of his squad, he is still young and therefore impulsive, frequently overextending himself.

Shiro's squadmates are equal parts reliable and flawed as well. One veteran member struggles with survivor's guilt and letting it become a self-fulfilling prophecy for future failure, another puts on an overly belligerent air to maintain a sense of stability and strength after the loss of her spouse, another wants nothing more than to get discharged to pursue a music career, and yet another keeps finding his attention drifting from the battlefield to the girlfriend he left back home. Shiro also becomes romantically involved with a member of the Zeon forces he's supposed to be fighting against, leading to dilemmas and decisions that resolve in the best encapsulation of the Gundam franchise's anti-war message I've seen yet: not just a statement of the obvious, that war is bad, but the depiction of choices and progress beyond that. As for the romance between the two, it's no *His and Her Circumstances*, but most anime isn't. As with Shiro's squadmates, the chemistry is well conveyed, and so it strikes me as believable even if it's your standard boy meets girl affair.

Thanks to its appealing characters and tight writing (accomplishing more in 12 episodes than the original did in 42), I consider *MS Team* not only the best entrypoint to the Gundam franchise but also the best entry I've seen so far. It may not be a story told on the grand space opera scale of the original, but it's all the better for that. In *MS Team*, believable human drama comes first, robot battles second, and when those battles do come, they reflect the stakes of that drama rather than feeling tacked on for spectacle's sake. So I guess what I'm trying to say is, war is bad, but this show about war is good because it's simply and chiefly about [the war we fight within and without as flawed yet driven individuals](#).

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRA



FELIX L.

2nd Year, Environmental Engineering

Favorite character is Aya btw

Writer

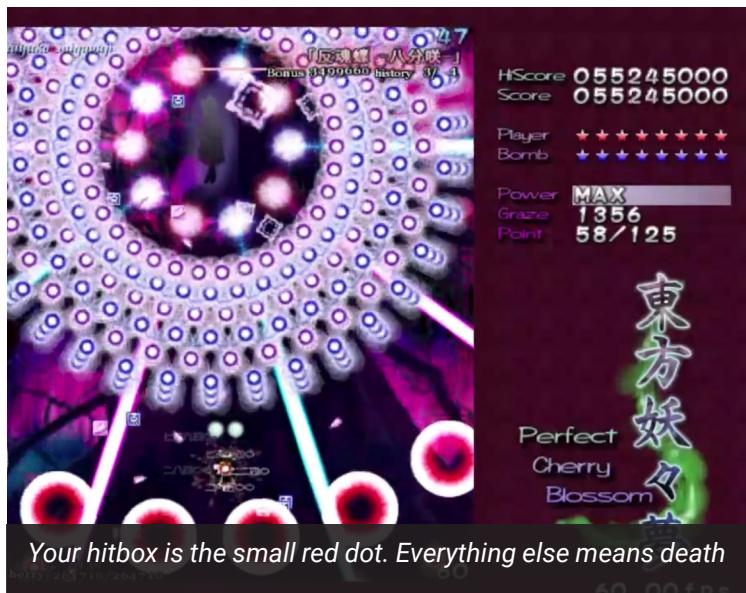
Touhou is a series of bullet hell shooter games, with 18 main games in total currently, with a few extra ones such as fighting games in between. Most of these are the work of one man, ZUN, an absolute madlad of a developer powered by beer, who single handedly created every main *Touhou* game, from the gameplay itself to the music. This music, notably, has received a lot of attention throughout the years, with many artists on the Internet



Our man, the one and only ZUN

and doujin circles in Japan readapting and rearranging ZUN's creations with different genres and styles, which has led to many of *Touhou*'s song to reach an immense level of popularity, sometimes far more than the games themselves in the cases of UN Owen Was Her, Bad Apple, and others that have essentially become overused Internet classics at this point.

Touhou is set in a region called Gensokyo, separated from the outside world, which is basically our world, by the Great Hakurei Barrier. Near this barrier, the Hakurei Shrine can be found, which is where our protagonist Reimu works as a shrine maiden desperate for donations and always ready to exterminate some youkai. Speaking of youkai, the world of Gensokyo is filled with them, as well as many other creatures inspired by Japanese folklore or mythology, and some of the powerful beings present in Gensokyo or surrounding mystical realms can threaten the balance of Gensokyo, thus prompting Reimu and her fellow companions such as her friend Marisa the mage to solve these matters which are called "incidents".



Your hitbox is the small red dot. Everything else means death

Each game in *Touhou* follows the solving of one of these incidents. The first main game published on Windows, *Touhou 6 Embodiment of Scarlet Devil* for instance, has Reimu investigate a strange red mist looming over Gensokyo, which leads her to the mansion of a vampire called Remilia that seems to be the origin of the incident.



THE MAGICAL UNIVERSE THAT IS TOUHOU

Battles between beings in this world are resolved according to the spellcard rules which have been established by the Hakurei Shrine Maiden to balance power in Gensokyo, and this is what leads to the bullet hell format of the games. From a gameplay perspective, these games can be daunting at first. They have four difficulties (easy, normal, hard, lunatic), but for players inexperienced with shooter games, even easy or normal mode can seem like a very challenging task. What I and many other *Touhou* players consider the appeal of such a brutal form of gameplay is the fact that the experience is enhanced by the music and the atmosphere, which makes constant deaths and sweaty tryhard somehow quite enjoyable, but most importantly how rewarding grinding *Touhou* games feels, since they have a lot of replayability with difficulty modes and the option to play for score, as well as an extra stage against a new boss once you clear the game.

However, it might still seem surprising that a series of games in such a niche genre from a gameplay perspective have reached this level of prominence on the Internet and otaku culture, with many of its music and characters being extremely recognisable for many. This success can be attributed to a great extent to ZUN's incredible leniency and flexibility with fanmade and doujin works. He has clearly stated the rules that any doujin work has to follow (they are quite easy to find online), and as long as these are respected, possibilities for fans are abundant, and many arrangements of songs, fangames, fanmade anime, and other forms of media have developed greatly throughout *Touhou*'s lifetime which still continues to this day, as ZUN is still working on it and developing his craft, always bringing new songs and new characters with constantly improving art to the

table for fans to delect themselves of in their own creations. Moreover, the appeal of *Touhou* itself even officially goes beyond the main games, as official *Touhou* games outside of the bullet hell genre have been made (for instance fighting games such as *Hisoutensoku*, which absolutely slaps). Also it has rollback netcode. And it still has a great core community. There is also a vast lore to dive into, with official manga and literature expanding upon it.



Touhou Koumajou Densetsu II, a metroidvania style fangame with really cool gameplay and an awesome dark artstyle reminiscent of Castlevania games. It's also voice acted by professional Japanese VAs. Definitely worth playing



Touhou 17.5, the latest official *Touhou* release, a metroidvania style bossfight game

Anyways, this was just an introduction to the *Touhou* series. Most people who have even just heard of it should already know many things that we have discussed, but it is still important to talk about them, as *Touhou* can be hard to get into, and its appeal might seem mysterious for people unfamiliar with it. The truth is, there isn't really one way to get into it. Simply booting up a game like *Embodiment of Scarlet Devil* or any other in the series, searching for some lore info on the wiki or on YouTube, or listening to some great tunes by ZUN or *Touhou* fans making stuff for this series that they love.

So yeah, we hope to see you in the community!

G GUNDAM IS DUMB (AND WHY I LIKE IT)



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

The meme of all three of my articles in this issue being about the same series is increasingly unfunny the more I think

Writer

Much has been said about the brilliance of Tomino Yoshiyuki's *Mobile Suit Gundam* in portraying conflict between giant robots as genuinely moving wartime epic narratives. The same goes for the factual statement of how the *Gundam* multiverse, particularly the original Universal Century continuity, facilitates Tomino's original vision in various permutations of war stories. I may or may not have written a somewhat abnormal amount of articles (this one makes six) on this franchise personally. Even if I personally dislike the continuities of series like *Gundam Wing*, *Gundam SEED*, *Gundam 00*, *Iron Blooded Orphans*, they ultimately succeed in terms of the very basic tenants of what robot show fans deem necessary in conveying a "real robot" series.

Perhaps as a result, and also owing to the nature of geek fan culture tending to result in participants developing overwhelming senses of self importance, *Gundam* fans tend to act self absorbed in their understandings of this ultimately fictional mega franchise. Having become a fan of *Gundam* whilst overseas with somewhat limited language skills at the time, I have thankfully avoided the countless nerd debates over, for instance, Minovsky Particles and the brilliance of *Gundam SEED*'s various factions of brooding adolescents, though I have no doubt that those discussions have probably happened far, far, too often. On a personal basis, at least, I believe that these nerd debates, while fun, often detract from what should ultimately be paramount: the consistency of a narrative and the entertainment value derived. As such, the existence of 1994's *Mobile Fighter G Gundam* is less of an enigma for me and more so a breath of fresh air.

Airing the immediate week after *Mobile Suit Victory Gundam*'s last episode, *G Gundam* departs from the series writ large in a rather sudden manner. Rather than being the result of a trend of change, something that I view as causing change far more commonly in mega-franchises such as *Gundam*, *G Gundam* is a departure even from its directly preceding show. *Victory* is often described as director Tomino Yoshiyuki's most violent and dark narrative in his entire career of ostensibly pushing the anime industry forward, but in reality, scarring children with depictions of war crimes. In a show which an unknowing layman might expect monster of the week hijinks with a colorful cast, *Victory Gundam* depicts humanity at its absolute lowest, culminating in an important character described by the creator himself as literally too evil to be allowed to simply die.

Mobile Fighter G Gundam has very little time and patience for that type of melodrama. In fact, I'd describe the series as having very little patience for pretty much anything. Gone are the complex moral dilemmas and the primary focus on realism in spite of giant automatons. In their place, *G Gundam* portrays a completely cartoonish world wherein countries utilize a proxy in the form of their designated giant robot to fight, with the winner literally having full rein of international (and technically, intergalactic) political power. Where the majority of *Gundam* tries to be grounded in militaristic realism, *G Gundam* has a protagonist who quite literally achieves Super Saiyan, full gold hair and all.



America in G Gundam has literally weaponized the Statue of Liberty, with their designated representative being a quintessential "rags-to-riches" boxing champion from New York

A vocal sect of *Gundam* fans, expectedly, detest *G Gundam*, believing the series to completely violate the principles which allow *Gundam* fandom an air of intellectualism and maturity. Given that I have no care for the considerations of most *Gundam* fans, then, I would personally say that *G Gundam* is disgustingly fun and over the top, in a manner akin to the cultural pedestalization of Saturday morning cartoons. The series perhaps strays from what one might consider good taste with its depiction of international *Gundam* units as stereotypes of their given nations, but rarely are these done in a mean spirited fashion. Beyond that, *G Gundam* presents a simple narrative, but does so emphatically, not unlike *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann*, the supposed "only good robot show," at least according to the Western anime community.

What perhaps assists *G Gundam*, in my view, is that though it makes very little sense via the lens of realism, its narrative makes sense in the strange, somewhat apocalyptic futurism the series employs. *G Gundam* is uncomplex, but is confidently uncomplex. Unlike the majority of shows I've heard described to me as "dumb fun," *G Gundam* does not imply any layer of depth past its shallow exterior. It puts no pretense of being anything other than what it is, and as such, under those terms, it succeeds massively with its high production values and bombastic approach to storytelling.



Mercury
Original Character
Art By Skylar Li

Sayesong

TOMOYASU MURATA STOP-MOTION AUTEUR



MAX R.
3rd Year, Japanese

Writer

What often comes to mind when one thinks of Japanese animation? Be it Ghibli films, isekai, battle shounen or anything in between, more often than not it sure isn't stop-motion these days, which is a shame as there are numerous interesting titles that would fall under that category. Some may be more familiar with the Japanese claymation animator, Nagao Takeya, who has produced classics such as *Chainsaw Maid*, *Crazy Clay Wrestling* and of course the legendary *Shitcom*. However, this time I would like to take the opportunity to give special mention to one of the medium's often underappreciated masters of the craft in regards to stop-motion and puppet animation, Tomoyasu Murata, an individual who has won multiple awards over the years for his contributions, but goes largely unnoticed, especially in the West.

Born in Japan in 1974, Murata attended Tokyo University of Art, Department of Design, graduating in 2000 and continuing on to pursue graduate work for the two years following. This timespan set the major groundwork for his stop-motion animation career at large. Towards the end of this period in 2002, Murata began creating his *Michi* (*My Road*) series, being the work that he is possibly best known for; the first entry in particular, *Scarlet Road*, achieved great recognition, having won awards at the Hiroshima International Animation Festival, a significant achievement considering how infrequently said festival awards its Japanese creators. Murata went on to continue the series with successive entries every few years, the series concluding in 2008 and consisting of *Scarlet Road* (2002), *White Road* (2003), *Indigo Road* (2006), and *Lemon Road* (2008). The *Michi* series still remains an excellent embodiment of Murata's style and sensibilities in regards to his approach to short film, following a man through different stages of his life and his dealings with loss, grief and disappointment. The obvious use of stop-motion and puppetry aside, something to take notice of is the complete absence of dialogue and narration within Murata's works, to which in an NHK interview he states, "I believe the lack of dialogue can stimulate the audience's imagination. This is because it directly appeals to the viewer's senses and emotions." With this in mind, Murata is then forced to rely largely on character gestures to convey ideas and emotions; this, coupled with the noteworthy amount of subtlety and symbolism often present, causes the resulting works to flow very poetically.

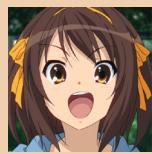
The settings that Murata makes use of are often meticulously detailed and deliberately hand-crafted which causes much of his work to also feel very 'delicate.' A great illustration of this would be found in probably my favorite of his works, *Mori no Ratio* (2010), a series of shorts pro-

duced for NHK, about a girl named Ratio and her hairy friend, Jammon, who together explore an enigmatic world of ice and snow. The dreamy hand-crafted environments and accompanying soundtrack, often light and ambient, in conjunction with Murata's directing makes for an exquisite audio-visual experience which can be difficult to bring justice to through description alone. Said environments and their mystique are a major focus within the series with each episode going about exploring different parts of it, with everything simultaneously still retaining somewhat of an air of mystery. The distinctive aura and atmosphere that the series emanates is something that I enjoy, and the extra sense of delicateness when it comes to even the most minute body motions and gestures is something that I feel separates the title from even the rest of Murata's catalog. This combination of elements as well as the discernable utmost care that has been invested into the project and its construction, I feel, is what brands *Mori no Ratio* my favorite of his works.

What goes for the future then? What has he been doing in recent years? It goes to say that Murata is extremely dedicated to his craft and nearly functions as a one-man team much of the time. He did go on to found his own animation company, TMC or Tomoyasu Murata Company, which consists of a small staff who assists in building sets and puppets for his works, though in regards to the actual production of the animations, Murata sees to essentially every aspect himself, his responsibilities encompassing essentially everything including direction, cinematography, editing and the actual puppetry. He does not show signs of stagnating either, producing more works through the 2010s; having been inspired by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, he began another series as a, "journey through memories of life and death," beginning with *Konohana no Sakuya Mori* (2014), following with *Ametsuchi* (2016) and then *Matsugae wo Musubi* (2017). Currently, he has completed three of the supposedly five planned works for the series. In terms of accessibility, unfortunately, it may be a struggle to find some of Murata's works in a publicly viewable format or much information concerning him at all for that matter, at least in English, though some of his short films may be found on YouTube. He does, however, have a website dedicated to his company (<https://www.tomoyasu.net/>) consisting of a more complete catalog of his work as well as information pertaining to the company itself. The company still seems to be active, taking requests and inquiries for video productions and even seems to be hiring, at least at the time of this writing.

As a whole, I feel that Murata is a notable example of a creator that should be brought up more in anime discourse and with stop-motion being overlooked to the extent that it has, it is ultimately quite saddening to witness the lack of attention for works such as his.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LUPIN III



MITCHELL MADAYAG

2nd Year, Intended Japanese and Business

Yes, I'm only really writing this to make a short comparison that only makes partial sense

Editor-In-Chief

In the past few months, I was sucked into the rabbit hole that is the *Lupin III* series and I do not regret it one bit. At first, I was afraid I would be turned off by the episodic nature, as I unfortunately had with *Gintama* and *Cowboy Bebop*, but I found most antics involving Lupin and co to be consistently exciting and fun to watch since *Part I*'s airing in 1971. Although I've skipped the lengthy unsubbed mess that is *Part II* and *Part III*, I even enjoy the modern iterations of *Lupin III* if not more, with the exception of *Part VI* which is currently airing so I can not make a decisive opinion on that yet. 2018's *Part V* in particular celebrates the series' 50th anniversary in the most fascinating way possible by having the gang face the reality of a modernizing world while addressing long unanswered questions regarding the franchise's prolonging. However, one page is not nearly enough for me to write about the great ingenuity of *Part V*, so instead I will be talking about its OVA, *Lupin wa Ima mo Moete Iru ka?*, which revisits the premise of the anime's very first episode with matching title: *Lupin wa Moete Iru ka...?!*. I have always been fond of long recurring series calling back to their roots for the sole purpose of fun fan service, though I would imagine most people who watched *Lupin III* back in the 70's aren't keeping up with the show half a century later.

Lupin wa Ima mo Moete Iru ka? initially stays faithful to its original counterpart while integrating newer elements of *Lupin III*, including the timeless "Theme from Lupin III" blasting as the race starts. There's even a short scene where Mine Fujiko has her mouth awkwardly agape as she gets captured by Mr. X, possibly a nod towards the dated animation from *Part I*. However, it's hard to ignore the elephant in the room that is the 50 year gap between this OVA and Episode 1 which makes no sense in the tangled *Lupin III* timeline, though with a series like this that

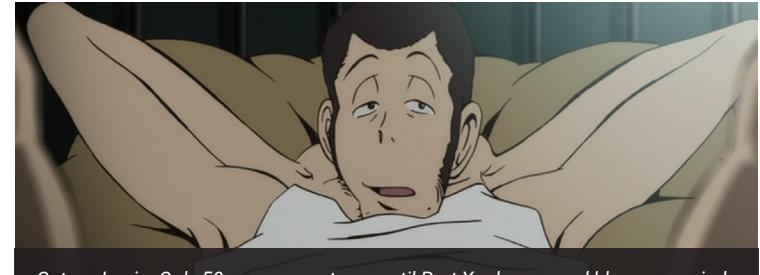


No random moaning like Part I Fujiko sadly

constantly throws continuity out the window, it's just something you get used to.

The most obvious difference in *Lupin wa Ima mo Moete Iru ka?* is the inclusion of time travelling *Part I* villain Mamō Kyōsuke, a character not very interesting in his own right, but serves as one of the first few examples of *Lupin III* leaning towards the unrealism of sci-fi, which became a big gripe of mine with *Part IV*. Returning for another shot at revenge, Mamō is the catalyst for the main conflict in this OVA, sending Lupin and an unaware Zenigata to pivotal moments in the past of Lupin's associates. Lupin accidentally messes with each of them and consequently wakes up in a timeline where his partners don't remember him or each other. This premise of the main character being the only one in a disarranged reality with memories of the original world is nothing new, but in the context of *Lupin III*, the altered timeline compels Lupin to realize how much he values the company of his comrades similarly to Kyon in *The Disappearance of Haruhi Suzumiya*. The relationship between Lupin and his "friends" has always been called into question and although it was more eloquently executed in parent show *Part V*, it is still remarkable to me whenever a show with a legacy as long as *Lupin III* occasionally becomes meta.

To answer the question that makes up the OVA's title, yes, Lupin and *Lupin III* were both still burning true and well in 2018 due to *Part V* serving as a big love letter to fans of the franchise. Contradicting statements I made earlier in this article, I have to be honest that *Part VI* has not been burning as brightly as I originally hoped. Although *Part V* set the bar so high that nothing else may live up to it (unless they make a rendition just as great for the 100th anniversary lol), *Part VI* surprisingly falls flat with its subpar side characters and often boring direction in narrative. Despite expressing my recent negativity of *Part VI*, I do indeed feel enjoyment with the most recent take on the *Lupin III* franchise and I'm pleased *Lupin III* still manages to find some form of relevance in this day and age, acting as the light-hearted old geezer that refuses to die.



Get up, Lupin. Only 50 more years to go until Part X releases and blows our minds

ANIME OF THE YEAR



CHARACTER OF THE YEAR



Shibuya Kanon
Love Live! Superstar!!



Komi Shouko
Komi-san wa, Comyushou desu.



Hathaway Noa/Mafty Navue Erin
Mobile Suit Gundam: Hathaway's Flash 1

OPENING OF THE YEAR



"Cha La Head Cha La"
Kageyama Hironobu
Gintama: The Final



"Kaibutsu"
YOASOBI
Beastars Season 2



"START!! True dreams"
Leilla!
Love Live! Superstar!!

ENDING OF THE YEAR



"Milk Tea"
Akari Dritschler
Lupin III: Part VI



"Koufukuron"
Miyashita Yuu
Platinum End



"Sugarless Kiss"
Mimori Suzuko
Odd Taxi



2021 CAL AN

IME AWARDS

ARTICLE OF THE YEAR



A Deconstructionist Masterpiece
José Cuevas

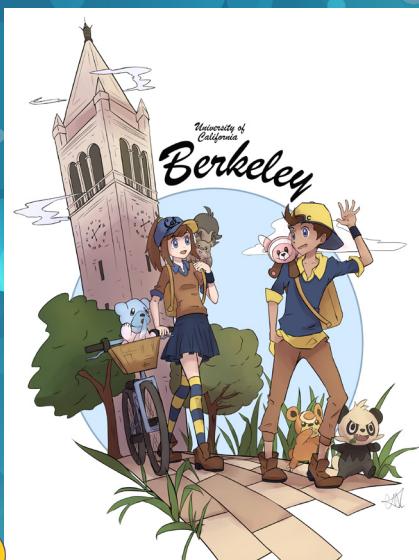


Lupin III: Stand Alone Complex
Tony T.



AIKATSU! & PRETTY SERIES: TWIN IDOL JUGGERNAUTS
Max R.

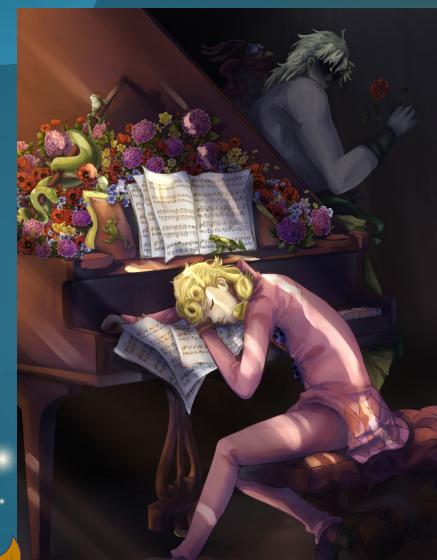
ART PIECE OF THE YEAR



Trainers & Pokemon
Cosette Moskowitz

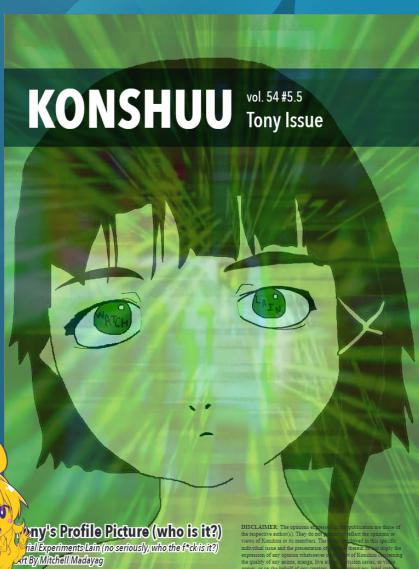


Saegusa Ibara
Sophia Xue



Giorno Giovanna & Dio
Cosette Moskowitz

ISSUE OF THE YEAR



Tony's Profile Picture (who is it?)
Final Experiments: Lain (no seriously, who the f*ck is it?)
Art By Mitchell Madayag



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Konshuu
vol. 54 #3
Nintendo



Hing Rosso
Hyperdrive
Art By Kira Busmanova
KONSHUU
vol. 54 #7
音楽 (Music)

VOLUME 54, ISSUE 8

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Fridays 8-9pm CAA Discord - cal.moe/discord

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Keiko Makino

The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service
Art By Crystal Li