

THE BEST OF 2017

CAL ANIMAGE ALPHA presents

konshuu

Volume XLVII, Issue I



ELMA

Kobayashi-san Chi no Maid Dragon

Cover Art by
DEBORAH LIM



THIS WEEK'S FEATURED SERIES

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

KUZU NO HONKAI (SCUM'S WISH)

Hanabi is in love with her high school teacher, Narumi. Her classmate, Mugi, is in love with the school's music teacher, Akane. Both students believe that their desires are unattainable, impractical, and will be permanently unrequited—so they hook up with each other for comfort, imagining that their partner is someone else. Relationships become further tangled when Narumi starts a relationship with Akane, much to the chagrin of their longing students.



Spring 2017, Lerche
Directed by Masaomi Andou



Fall 2017, Signal.MD
Directed by Kazuyoshi Yaginuma

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

NET-JUU NO SUSUME (RECOVERY OF AN MMO JUNKIE)

30-year old office worker Moriko quits her job to focus on playing MMOs, fully embracing a hikikomori lifestyle. She creates a male character named "Hayashi." She meets a female healer named "Lily" in a guild, and they hit it off. Lily is actually a successful young man named Yuuta who lives in the same town as Moriko. They bump into each other at the convenience store one day, unaware of their online connection.



BAKUGOU KATSUKI, ATYPICAL ANTI-HERO

SPOILER WARNING for *Boku no Hero Academia*: Contains content from the manga beyond Season 2 of the anime.



KATRINA LUQUE

4TH YEAR, ENGLISH

Devilman. Crybaby. You know what's up.

STAFF WRITER

It is no surprise that *Boku no Hero Academia* Season 2 was the breakout hit of the Fall 2017 season. With well-executed action-packed scenes, dynamic (and most importantly, likeable) characters, and a fast-paced plot, there is much to love about the series. However, there is one character that stands out from the rest regarding complexity of character. Katsuki Bakugou, a bellicose, arrogant, and extremely unpleasant individual, has managed to capture the imagination of many viewers of the show. It may seem surprising that such a seemingly unlikable character has become a fan favorite, in light of the realization of Bakugou's value system and his increasingly honorable actions, it is not unreasonable to say that Bakugou is a character deserving of admiration.

Within the universe of the show, Bakugou is acknowledged as the perfect candidate for becoming a villain, so much so that the League of Villains kidnap him. Despite the fact that the vast majority of his contemporaries and the League of Villains believe that he would be an ideal villain, Bakugou does not allow the opinions of others to dissuade him from abandoning his values. Bakugou immediately rejects the villains' offer and proceeds to relate his feelings about the matter, exclaiming that he could never become a villain because "I've been won over by the way All Might looks when he wins."

It is apparent to fans of the anime and/or manga that Bakugou highly values All Might and his ideology of being the "invincible hero." When Bakugou defies the League of Villains, he is not only rejecting their philosophy but aligning himself with All Might and other honorable heroes, clearly articulating the value system that he wishes to emulate.



While Deku is obviously an All Might fanatic, it is worth noting that Bakugou is just as devoted to All Might as Deku, despite Bakugou's reticent manner when speaking to or about All Might. Bakugou plays the part of the hero when he openly acknowledges that he feels blameworthy for All Might's fight with All for One. Bakugou opening up about his emotions was a nonoccurrence within the series up to that point, so the fact that he admitted his guilt regarding All Might and his kidnapping displays his respect for All Might and his desire to take responsibility for the situation. Bakugou is not a selfish, consummately disrespectful teenager, but rather someone who hides his true emotions from until he feels that the time is right.



Considering Bakugou's brave confession of guilt and his defiance of the League of Villains, he can be viewed as an altogether heroic character. Bakugou's heroism does not discount his rude behavior and other less desirable qualities; his undesirable qualities are what make his character exceptional, because despite his arrogance, his abruptness, his complete and utter lack of regard for his peers, he still is a hero that I (and others like me) adore.



D FOR DRAGON

Why Kobayashi-san Chi no Maid Dragon was my Favorite Anime of 2017



BOGEUN CHOI

3RD YEAR, APPLIED MATH

It's only the second week of classes and I'm already dying from problem sets.

STAFF WRITER

Welcome to 2018, folks! Yes, I realize it's already February, but stick with me for a minute. Before we really get into 2018, let's take a look back to 2017. Specifically, anime in 2017— you're reading a newsletter produced by UC Berkeley's anime club. What do you expect? If you've been following the past year in anime, you probably have some ideas as to what the good shows are. There are the obvious ones: *Houseki no Kuni*, *Made in Abyss*, and *Boku no Hero Academia*'s second season.

"So you're gonna talk about one of these three shows, then?" Let's pretend that you didn't read the title and are wondering "what is this person going to talk about today?" Well it's not the three titles above, but don't worry: those exact three shows are covered by the other articles in this issue (a huge coincidence: I just named three popular, good shows from last year).

So why not those three? These shows aren't exactly what you call slice-of-life shows. You could debatably say any of those three have slice-of-life elements, but it's hard to argue they belong squarely in the genre. As a huge slice-of-life fan, they didn't stick with me very well. *Houseki no Kuni*? Only watched a few episodes of it and was too lazy to finish it. *Made in Abyss*? Wasn't my cup of tea and dropped it after an episode. *Boku no Hero Academia*'s second season? Though I finished it, shounen shows aren't really my thing and though I admit it was a really good anime it wasn't my favorite of the year.

If we're talking good slice-of-life shows from last year... not a lot come to mind. Only one stuck out and ended up being my favorite anime of 2017. That is *Kobayashi-san Chi no Maid Dragon*, otherwise known as *Maidragon*.

Maidragon tells the story of an office worker named Kobayashi. One day, Kobayashi opens the door to find the head of a dragon staring straight at her. This dragon transforms into a human and introduces herself as Tohru. Kobayashi had come across Tohru one day while drunk and offered her a place to stay. Thus, Tohru decides to

repay Kobayashi by being her maid – her DRAGON MAID. Of course, Kobayashi is hesitant at first: Tohru's methods are unorthodox to say the least, and having a dragon maid seems like trouble waiting to happen. Fortunately for Tohru, Kobayashi decides takes her in. Shenanigans ensue throughout the show as Tohru's presence attracts other dragons.



This show came out of nowhere when it first got announced. Kyoto Animation, a studio known for slice-of-life shows (in addition to its great animation), making a show about dragon girls? It was a dream come true for a lot of people. Little did they know that it wouldn't be your average monster girl show.

Now before I get into why I liked the show so much, I need to talk about the bad points. For how good the show was, there was one particularly big fault I had with it: the unnecessary fanservice. Now I'm not totally against fanservice. When used right, fanservice can add more to a show than if it wasn't included. *Shokugeki* is a great example of fanservice done right: in the show, the "foodgasms" are a way of conveying just how amazing the food is for the people eating it. For most shows, though, fanservice is crudely tacked on for no reason, and *Maidragon* is unfortunately not an exception to this. Some of the side characters exist for pretty much this reason: the biggest offender being Lucoa, a big-busted dragon whose purpose in the show is to sexually torment the young boy who thought he summoned her from hell.



Ignoring that, though, *Maidragon* is a great slice-of-life, comedy, and romance (kind of). Being made by KyoAni guarantees it's well-animated, and that is especially visible in the rare action scenes that the show features, such as the battle between Tohru and Kanna (a child dragon from Tohru's clan). The colors of the show pop out vividly, and the character designs of the dragons aren't an exception to that: the dragons' multi-colored hair adds nice flair to make them unique from the humans, and their eyes are some of my favorite in anime. Just look at them:



That's good stuff. If I have to be honest, the biggest reasons why I loved the show were the deeper moments. One of the overlying themes of the show is Tohru's inner conflict between her desire to be with Kobayashi and her destiny to be a dragon of the Chaos faction. That conflict leads to some close reflections about family and where you come from, resulting in some touching scenes. I'd love to give examples, but most of them are spoilers to the show's plot (yes, it has a plot). Here's an example that isn't very spoiler-y: when Kanna is competing in her school's sports festival, she wants Kobayashi to come watch her compete. To Kanna's dismay, Kobayashi is busy with work and can't. After seeing how hard Kanna is working towards the event, she works overtime so she can get the day off for the sports festival.

So all in all, *Maidragon* is a great show if you're like me and want a nice slice-of-life comedy show, something different from those other popular shows. Give it a watch if you haven't: I highly recommend it.

Made in Abyss may appear like a return to childhood fantasy, but there's much more to it than that. As the story progresses, the storyline explores darker themes, a shocking twist from its ostensibly childish animation. One of the best parts of the show is that the events that play out have real consequences later on, whether good or bad.

The world-building in the show starts off grandiose with lush backgrounds accompanied by a stunning soundtrack. The story begins in a town called Orth that was built around a giant gaping hole in the ground known as the Abyss. The Abyss is a treacherous place of unknown origins, but Orth's denizens frequently explore it to find special artifacts and items.

Once you descend the Abyss it gets progressively harder to ascend. There are several layers to the Abyss, and the actual amount of layers remains unknown. The negative side effects that explorers experience are a phenomenon called The Curse of the Abyss. The side effects of ascending are relatively tame at first. On the first layer of the Abyss, ascending back to Orth will cause dizziness and nausea. But the effects quickly become devastating: ascending from the fifth layer will result in death. Only the most experienced of adventurers are allowed to travel around the fifth layer and below.

The protagonist, Riko, is an aspiring female explorer who wishes to travel down as far as possible in the Abyss. Her mother, Lyza, was the most famous adventurer in all of Orth, but she vanished after descending down into the Abyss. Most pegged her as deceased. Riko believes that her mother is still very much alive. After meeting a mysterious, human-like robot named Reg, Riko is inspired to travel down into the Abyss with Reg, believing that he has already descended the Abyss and lived to tell the tale. As a robot, Reg is impervious to the Abyss' side effects.

This is where the plot gets a little hard to believe. Everyone encourages her to travel down, despite the perilous dangers awaiting her. What's even crazier is that Riko is only twelve years old! How could she possibly survive in a land of monsters? And yet, they basically send her off on a suicide trip. This part of the story definitely requires some suspension of disbelief, however Reg's abilities tend to offset this.

Each layer of the Abyss is markedly different from previous layers, leading to a variety of beautiful settings. The 4th layer, the Goblet of Giants, features enormous goblets holding steamy water. A human appears like a speck of dust on these goblets. The 3rd layer, the Great Fault, is a giant chasm with several flying creatures, all waiting to gobble up any nearby foolish adventurers.

The only downside of this show is that it hasn't ended yet! It will take a long time for Riko to reach her mother, Lyza, but the conclusion will be well worth the wait.



ANDREW OEUNG
3RD YEAR, EECS

I eat sriracha almost every day.

STAFF WRITER

DEPTHES OF THE ABYSS

RIKO
(CV: Miyu Tomita)

MADE IN ABYSS

.....
Summer 2017
Kinema Citrus
Original manga by Akihito Tsukushi

FOSSILIZED: IMMORTALITY AS RESENTMENT IN HOUSEKI NO KUNI



JAMIE YOU

2ND YEAR, COGNITIVE SCIENCE

I wish I wan't allergic to coconut.

STAFF ARTIST

I will only lightly touch on the computer graphics (CG) controversy of this show. Rest assured, the anime adaptation of *Houseki no Kuni*, or *Land of the Lustrous*, is laden with flair that only CG could pull off. For one, the main characters' translucent, shimmering hair would be cost-prohibitive in 2D. But I will let viewers appreciate the show's groundbreaking visuals for themselves. What interests me more is the writing of the series.

The manga, penned by Haruko Ichikawa, is extremely fast-paced. According to page count, it moves approximately 1.5 times faster than *Tokyo Ghoul*, and certainly far faster than behemoths like *Berserk* or *Steel Ball Run*.

This breakneck pacing is surprising considering the outlandish setting. The series takes place in a tiny society of immortal rock people, or Gems, who are defined by the properties of their namesake materials, and as a result are hunted by the vain Moon People to be used as decorations.

Though indubitably alien, viewers are invited to understand the Gems and their relationships in human terms, as two dueling forces of human culture—stagnation versus change—carve out the emotional landscape of the show.

Besides character-level themes, *Houseki* is, overall, a treatise on immortality. The series thoroughly explores the impact of a millenia-long conflict on its participants' psyches.

Houseki also analyzes the internal mutations of human society as time goes to infinity. Take the intimate relationship between the Gems Diamond and Bortz, for example. Neither one can successfully change their opposing values, nor their selves, and as a result both wind up wounding each other just by existing. Their love is intensely painful, precisely because it is so permanent.

As the years flow like water, resentment of the restrictions inherent to one's role builds up like rust on the inside of a pipe—until all that is left is a stifled trickle, a listless mockery of purpose and meaning. Human nature is simply not made to last eternities. Even with company, even without aging, even without hunger or physical pain, the Gems suffer enormously, whether by the Lunarians or from interpersonal struggles.



That's not to say that they're constantly depressed. On the contrary, the series features Ichikawa's brand of charmingly irreverent humor, with characters attempting to bring levity to the most serious of situations. Explicit reference to the weariness of living forever only happens in murmurs and sighs. The rest of waking life has become devoted to work or play, study or leisure— anything to stave off existential crisis.

This is where our plucky protagonist, Phosphophyllite, comes in. Brittle and clumsy, Phos is inherently unfit for the Gem society they ache to be part of; adaptable and curious, Phos alone has the energy and drive to break free of its rigid customs. Phos is the obvious main character of this coming-of-age story, as within a year they change themselves and Gem society more than it has budged in centuries.

Unfortunately, I don't have enough room to talk about how fun Phos is to watch in action; or the manga's ghostly, minimalistic art; or the heaps of Buddhist imagery and symbolism. If any of those pique your interest, it'd be a good idea to give *Houseki* a look!

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Welcome Back!

SOCIAL MEDIA

Konshuu accepts guest submissions from club members! If you'd like to have content featured, please visit:
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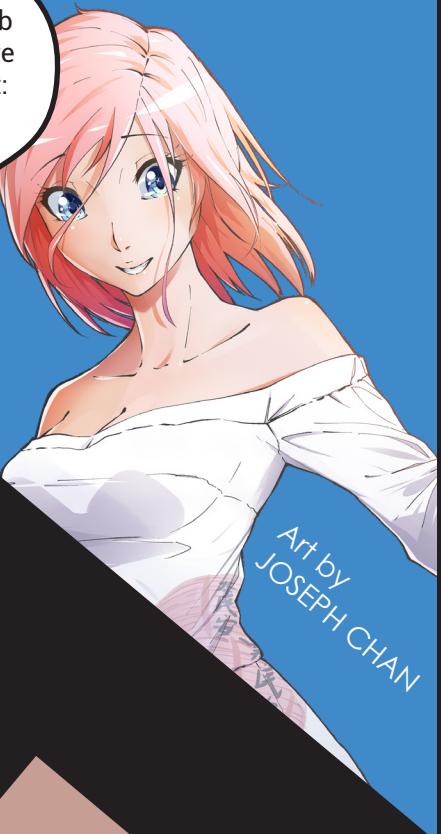
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General Meeting: Thurs 2/1, 8pm-10pm, Wheeler 222
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Next Showing: TBA



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JOSEPH CHAN



Art by
JACKY ZHAO