

2022

CAL ANIMAGE ALPHA presents

Konshuu

ANTHOLOGY

cal.moe/konshuu



A Look Back On Konshuu's History

Konshuu is a biweekly publication created by the student officers of Cal Animage Alpha (CAA), serving as an outlet for ardent fans of anime, manga, and other otaku related content to come together and express their passion through creative works. The full history of Konshuu has not been properly documented, though enough is known to provide insight as to how the publication has evolved through each generation of writers, artists, graphic designers, and editors.

CAA was first established in 1989 as a student-run organization at the University of California, Berkeley. In the following years, other universities followed suit in forming their own Cal Animage chapters. In 1995, the members of CAA published their very first issue of Konshuu in the form of a weekly four-page newsletter, which was the form it would remain in for the following two decades. Starting in 2015, the original format was discarded in favor of publishing Konshuu as an eight-page magazine. This drastic redesign of Konshuu is what developed it into its current incarnation, featuring student officer contributions. These come in the forms of drawn front and back covers, unique editorials, and various forms of supplementary content, including polls, recommendations, anonymous question boxes, and more. In addition to weekly periodicals, Konshuu occasionally takes on more ambitious works such as a unique hybrid issue-pamphlet release accompanying CAA's yearly convention, Anime Destiny, to an anthology featuring highlights from past issues while premiering brand new works (like the one you're reading now!).



Since the COVID-19 pandemic, *Konshuu* has had to shift its production cycle away from weekly releases, instead opting for, at times, a monthly schedule, and at others, a biweekly basis. At the cost of more frequent releases, *Konshuu* issues have now extended to twelve, sixteen, or even twenty page publications, due to the extended timeframe to create content. During the pandemic, the magazine also began publishing digitally through issuu.com/konshuu-caa, in addition to launching CAA's new YouTube channel (cal.moe/youtube) prior to those duties being spun off into their own dedicated department in late 2021.

At present, *Konshuu* arguably sits at one of its strongest incarnations throughout its turbulent history. With a staff consisting of roughly twenty officers, *Konshuu* is constantly improving its presentation with dynamic layout overhauls being a primary concern. It features increasingly stellar artwork—something the publication has historically placed a great deal of pride upon. Aesthetics aside, the magazine's editorials have undergone a stark increase in the amount of topics covered, ranging from the familiar, to the forgotten, to even subjects which remain virtually unknown elsewhere. At this important juncture of *Konshuu*'s history, one large concern is of its return to pre-quarantine form. The most urgent matter associated with this comes with the revival of printed issues available for analog reading. Given the 28 “lost issues” between Volumes 51 and 54 that have piled up in the absence of physical releases, there is much work that must be done to fully bring the publication up to date, but we are gradually making our way there. Whilst keeping the legacy of *Konshuu* as a primary concern, we also hope to improve the magazine with each release. We can hardly wait to see where *Konshuu* will go next, and we hope to see you reading along with us.

- Mitchell Maximillian Manalac Madayag
Editor-In-Chief



- Tony T.
Managing Editor



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WHAT MAKES A MYSTERIOUS CHARACTER?



KHALEA RIDAD

Originally published in Vol. 52 Issue 2 - Mysterious Characters
Who needs sleep when I can read one more chapter...
or ten...

Writer

SPOILERS FOR TENKUU SHINPAN AND MHA!

Besides the allure of their quiet demeanor that draws us in, what else makes a character mysterious? These are characters we want to know more about, have cool designs, or behave in ways that keep the audience interested. Whatever isn't provided by the story or their appearance, we glean from their conversations with other characters and their behaviors. Curious fans take these observations and let their imaginations run wild as they enjoy creating their own theories about these unique characters and what role they play. Although mysterious characters could pose a threat to the protagonist(s), they can be allies, but it may not always be obvious.



In *Tenkuu Shinpan*, an action-horror manga by Tsuina Miura illustrated by Takahiro Oba, the main character Yuri Honjo is thrown in an unfamiliar city seemingly devoid of life, filled with high-rise buildings with no way to get down, and strange, masked "Angels" out to kill. Yuri's few close encounters in this world put us on edge with her, as any decision can lead to death. Amid a demeaning experience with a corrupt police officer, we are introduced to the Sniper Mask dressed in a black suit and tie, a white button-up, black leather gloves, and a fedora armed with his namesake sniper rifle. We are led to believe that he is like the rest of the masks. However, his character leaves an uneasy impression as he kills

the predatory officer that was after Yuri. The story also reveals that the Sniper Mask has a photo of Yuri addressed to her brother, suggesting a possible connection. From what the manga reveals to us about the Sniper Mask, we become invested as Yuri unravels the questions of how she got there and how to get out.



In *My Hero Academia*, by Kohei Horikoshi, there are many amusing and endearing characters from villains to civilians. One character that captured the fans' attention since his debut is Hitoshi Shinsou. Despite how little he appears, people love what crumbs of information they discover about him. Fans even go as far as pointing out how much Shinsou bulked up since his arrival due to a passing comment by another character later in the series. Shinsou is fortunate to be born with a quirk, unlike our protagonist, that was a disadvantage during the entrance exam for UA High. His brainwashing quirk is also perceived as villainous by his peers. Despite this, Shinsou strives to prove his doubters wrong as he trains under Aizawa Shouta and appears again during the joint training between classes 1-A and 1-B. Currently, fans do not know anything about Shinsou besides his hero equipment. However, this does not stop fans from imagining what Shinsou could look like when he does become a hero or what he does in his spare time.

In an action-horror manga like *Tenkuu Shinpan*, the audience is on the lookout for mysterious characters who pose a threat to the protagonist(s). Mysterious characters can also serve as characters to cheer for like Shinsou in, *My Hero Academia*. The creators may not provide enough about these characters, but they give just enough for fans to be interested. Regardless, the audience has fun immersing themselves in the story, waiting for what little information they can discover or figure out.

A TALE OF ASPIRATIONS



FELIX LEVY

Originally Published in Vol. 54 Issue 2 - Guilty Pleasures
Gaming

Writer

SAO, and its first season especially, is one of the most popular but also hated shows out there. It birthed an entire fad in anime of videogame *isekai* that, despite already being a thing before SAO, really took off after this show aired, and it has now become the go-to anime that people express their dislike for.

This is not too surprising. Its premise of an immense videogame world with stakes as high as in real life is very appealing to a lot of people, but its execution in the first arcs of SAO can be described as clumsy, with time skips all over the place and a lot of aspects and characters that can hardly be seen as anything other than generic.

But despite all that, I love SAO, and I love its (quite numerous) flaws because, to me, they have led to one of the most entertaining and satisfying examples of Power Fantasy that I have encountered. This has been executed better in other shows or works, but SAO has always struck me as an extremely enjoyable experience in that regard.

After all, sometimes, a trainwreck of pure power fantasy can look cool, and we can only watch as it happens in front of us.



The first episodes are, in terms of writing, the strongest part of the show as they explain how the world functions, set up the tension quite effectively, and introduce the mortal premise that the players in Aincrad will have to face. It creates a feeling of dread in the minds of the players, and we get to see a great combination of the wonders brought by this virtual world and the fear that it induces in everyone because of its stakes and dangers.

SAO continues upon this premise to a slight extent, using it as the initial vector for its story and motivation to advance in Aincrad or to create smaller subplots. Notably, the arc during which Kirito and Asuna investigate a strange case of deaths in safe zones linked to conspiracies inside of a guild.

But in general, it strays away from this atmosphere that it initially creates or from video-game political plots like what we could see in other shows like *Log Horizon* to focus on our main protagonist, Kirito. This can be considered the anime's greatest fault. It throws away what might make the relationship between the players and this virtual world interesting and complex, instead exclusively focusing on the highlights of its protagonist's adventure, with a comically large number of time skips to only showcase Kirito's most significant moments in Aincrad.

This, of course, messes up the pacing of the show and takes away a sense of progression, development, and growth throughout the series. Individual subplots, such as the Black Cats guild arc, that seemingly should impact Kirito, do not seem to affect his character at any other instance in the show, in part because of these time skips. I would say these are valid points about the show, but SAO, in its way, finds a way to make the viewer engaged and find the story fun. That is because SAO showcases the ultimate power fantasy, the dream of every teenager, in an environment with high stakes but filled with wonders, and with pure typical hero energy that embodies the imagination of the audience. SAO gives form to what viewers who have grown up with



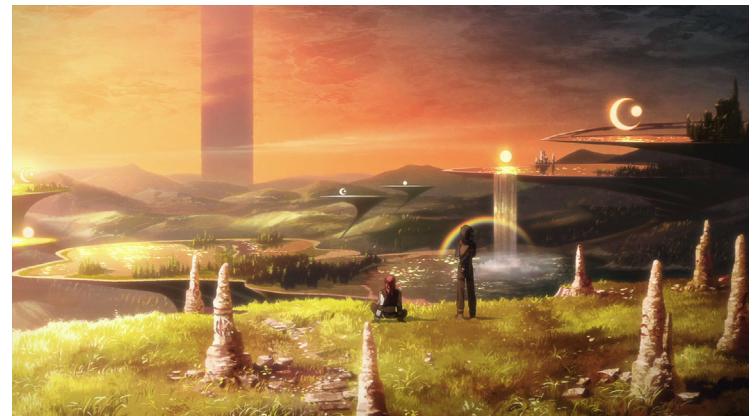
S AND POWER FANTASY

videogames and other similar forms of media fantasize about.

In that regard, Aincrad itself functions perfectly as a videogame world, giving us an immense sense of scale, and would make anyone want to immerse themselves in a game like this. It holds different kinds of environments, dungeons, creatures, and a lot of it in the show's short runtime is left to the viewer's imagination.

But Kirito is arguably the biggest part of this power fantasy. The entire world of SAO and everything that happens in it seems to revolve around him. The game grants him a unique dual-sword wielding ability, his influence is equal if not superior to that of the strongest guilds, and he is both an outcast because of his status as a "beater" and recognized as an extremely powerful warrior. This individuality, coupled with his strength, leads him to carry the entire game by himself, even defeating the minotaur of the 74th floor alone, and the final boss in a 1v1 battle. He is not just another player in this game, doing his part and then leaving: this game was created for him and no one else, and everything else in this anime is merely a bystander to his feats of strength and skill. We see him back into the game's code and use the power of a game master to transform Yui into an item. This game is but a tool, a testament to Kirito's existence as the hero in this story. He does suffer hardships. His entire guild died, he almost got killed by Kuradeel, and he got defeated by Heathcliff once, but all of these events do not whatsoever taint his status as a hero. Instead, they contribute to it: they forge his mentality and relationships with others, but only serve to portray him as a loner who still cares about others, an image that undoubtedly reinforces his portrayal as a champion of teenage fantasy.

Alheim Online, while going in a different direction in terms of the stakes of its world and plot, continues on this same path. Kirito loses his status as the "beater" but ends up bringing about the end of the final quest of the game (reaching the top of the tree) while barging into the game's internal politics and defeating its most



powerful warriors. He, who started as a random stranger in Alfheim, influenced the entirety of the events in this game and once again became the center of it. He transcends these virtual worlds, as in this show, they are purely made to suit his adventures and allow him to shine through individuality. As I said, this is a flawed way of building an intriguing and complex world or a compelling plot, but it makes for the ultimate power fantasy, one that all interested in SAO's premise have dreamed of and imagined.

The show's sequels take drastic turns. GGO essentially follows the same path, but the next arcs and *Alicization* completely change the direction that SAO as a story takes. And then there is SAO Progressive, even though it tells the same story as SAO, takes the time to explain the development of the characters and the world that surrounds them, filling the absurdly long time skips in a way that makes it more interesting and compelling when it comes to storytelling. This takes away from the appeal of the original SAO which can essentially be described as a Kirito highlight reel, but once again, this simply means that their appeals lie in different places.

SAO is undoubtedly a flawed show, but I believe this is what makes it fun, and why it is still relevant and around today. Its premise and what it has to offer have an extremely wide appeal because it gives life to the fantasies of many, and lets the tale of the black swordsman stimulate their imagination.

THE ENDLESS EIGHT: RELATABILITY IN A COVID ERA



MITCHELL MADAYAG

Originally published in Vol. 53 Issue 7 - Summer Vacation

If not doing homework is the price to pay for an endless summer of fun, so be it.

Editor-In-Chief

SPOILERS FOR THE MELANCHOLY OF HARUHI SUZUMIYA!

As the self-proclaimed biggest (or perhaps the only) Haruhi fanatic in my social group, I can not reiterate enough how much I love the infamous Endless Eight Arc. To recap, the SOS Brigade are stuck in an infinite time loop, “doomed” to repeat a series of fun summer activities across the same two weeks. As the name suggests, Kyoto Animation decided it would be clever to adapt the Endless Eight in the form of eight almost identical episodes. I say “almost” because every episode was individually crafted with the utmost care. From rerecorded voice lines to different camera angles and even the many outfits each brigade member changes into, the overall vibe varies greatly from one episode to another. Despite the distinct difference in visuals and sound, the generally simple plot is preserved, making it tedious to watch the same dumb fun continuously. The viewing grind can be grueling but is ultimately worth experiencing one of the most unique experiments in animation history. Like Yuki, the viewers are relegated to the role of a mere spectator, rendered powerless to Haruhi’s godly powers. Our relatability to Yuki is enhanced since we are both forced to repeatedly watch the gang fail to end each loop. Thank goodness us viewers are privileged in only having to watch eight of the 15,532 loops at most.

Being in quarantine for over a year and a half has further enriched my perspective of the Endless Eight. Staying indoors all the time makes everyday feel about the same. Similar to Kyon and Koizumi’s sense of *deja vu*, it was difficult to discern one week from the next since my daily activities were limited to doing online schoolwork or using electronics in general. Having been put in a comparable situation where I am anxiously wishing I can return to a normal life,

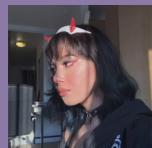
I now sympathize with Yuki to an even greater degree. It is hard to believe my first year in college has already flown by and it makes me wonder how many loops it took for the ever-patient alien to become exhausted for once.



I would be lying though if I said my time was wasted as my highlight of the year would be discovering CAA, a community I can be a part of. I’m grateful for trying something new like writing these articles and I don’t regret anything I’ve done or haven’t done one bit. Even this summer has been a substantial improvement to the fever dream of 2020’s as I’m getting back into tennis and catching up with many high school friends. I never had to be like Yuki and accept things the way they are and can instead be like Kyon and find the missing answer to spice things up in life, no matter how small. Ironically, I still have to take summer classes, but I now have a greater freedom to escape the monotony of it all. Despite it being called endless, the Endless Eight eventually reached a conclusion, a payoff that felt extremely satisfying to the SOS Brigade and us viewers. Perhaps I’m overhyping myself, but I can’t wait to feel a similar sense of fulfillment as I step onto campus as an official college student. Life may never be the same again, but I’m looking forward to taking small steps to ultimately break out of this bind. I just pray my little sister doesn’t tell me to answer the phone.



"ALL ACCORDING TO PLAN"



NICOLE OLIVA

Originally published in Vol. 52 Issue 2 - Mysterious Characters
Aizen lives in my apartment and my head rent free

Writer

SPOILERS FOR BLEACH!

"Since when were you under the impression that I hadn't been using [Kyoka Suigetsu]?" The infamous line delivered by the arguably timeless "Big Three" antagonist, slated to make his animated comeback in 2021, perfectly captures his logic-defying existence. The lack of clarity Tite Kubo provides regarding Aizen's motivations has made him all the more appealing to fans, not to mention the flaws in the society he seeks to destroy.

Initially making an appearance as the soft-spoken, intellectual captain of Squad 5, Aizen appears to have solidified his position as a well-loved member of Soul Society. One morning, though, his lieutenant, Momo Hinamori, comes to find him brutally murdered. Upon some investigation, she is led to believe that her childhood friend, Toshiro Hitsugaya, is responsible. The timing lines up with the impending execution of female lead Rukia Kuchiki. Furthermore, the punishment of her seemingly harmless crime of staying in the World of the Living somehow warrants the death sentence. Almost adding insult to injury, Hinamori encounters Aizen yet again, but this time alive and well. Embracing her idol, she suddenly finds herself with a *zanpakuto* through her chest. Hitsugaya witnesses this and attempts to stop Aizen, who reveals that he set up Kuchiki's execution to retrieve the most powerful weapon, the Hogyoku. Aizen easily subdues the prodigy and proceeds to make a display of leaving Soul Society with the assistance of Hollows. The reasoning he provides at this point for an unforeseen betrayal is "to search for greatness" and stand in heaven, where no man or God has ever stood.



I COULD
RIP OUT YOUR
HEART IF I
WANTED TO

Thankfully, the Turn Back the Pendulum arc provides more insight into Aizen's character, but instead of a backstory arc that elicits sympathy, this only enhances how fearsome he is. As a lieutenant, he is revealed to have experimented on residents of Soul Society, including fellow Soul Reapers and his captain, Shinji Hirako, one hundred years before the events of *Bleach*'s first arc in search of compatibility with the Hogyoku. Aizen escapes unscathed by framing Kisuke Urahara, now former Squad 12 Captain, who is banished from Soul Society as punishment. This time, Aizen justifies his actions by claiming that if Shinji had only been more perceptive and tried to get to know him more instead of keeping him at arm's length out of suspicion, Shinji would have been able to stop him.

Returning to the present, Aizen faces off with Urahara once again, as he asks Urahara why he would utilize his power to defend the ideals of a figurehead king rather than use it to take matters into his own hands to improve society. On the other hand, after battling Aizen for the last time before he is subdued, Ichigo theorizes that Aizen was simply lonely due to his overwhelming power; Aizen's manipulative nature stemmed from a desire for someone worthwhile to fight, therefore bringing purpose to his life.

No matter where his motivations may truly lie, Sosuke Aizen's mystery lies in the fact that he is morally grey in the context of *Bleach*. Soul Society is in no way a utopia, and perhaps a dramatic overhaul at the hands of a powerful man who was willing to repeatedly compromise his own reputation is what it requires in order to be a better afterlife for all of its citizens.





DUMBBELL IS DUMB



EWIK NELSON

Originally published in Vol. 54 Issue 1 - Sports

My stats: Squat/Bench/Deadlift: 335/200/375, Total: 910 @160 BW

Writer

Note: This is not professional medical advice. I use freedom units unless otherwise stated.

I consider myself a lifter, not very strong, but whatever. I was rather excited for *Dumbbell Nan Kilo Moteru* when it came out, but I watched the first episode and was very disappointed. First of all, it's mostly focused on bodybuilding stuff which is fine but I'm more interested in Powerlifting and to a lesser extent Strongman and Olympic Weightlifting. Even the name itself is kinda sus; I rarely touch dumbbells except for some curls (the least important exercise); I mostly use barbells. I can't speak for how accurately bodybuilding stuff was presented in the show, the purpose of bodybuilding is to look strong rather than to actually be strong, and I'm not particularly interested in it. But the main lifts which all strength sports do, like the Squat, Deadlift, Bench Press, and Overhead Press, were presented in an inaccurate manner, I would even say a dangerous manner in some cases. However, many people who give fitness advice give similar advice, so I can't really blame them. Within powerlifting it's well known that "personal trainers" sometimes give bogus advice like "breathe in on the way down, exhale on the way up," when coaching squats. *Dumbbell* gave this nonsense advice in the first episode. This is ridiculous and dangerous advice. The only way to stabilize your core in a lift is to brace, ie. hold your breath creating high pressure in your abdomen, making your core rigid. In any full body lift like a squat or deadlift, the core must be stabilized, or else a lot of weight will be put on your spine while it is in a curved and awkward position, leading to injuries. Also, you just lift more efficiently.

So why should you trust powerlifters over licensed personal trainers? I have no qualifications in either field, being weak, and having no license. However I will point out that powerlifters lift a lot. They know how to lift a lot, if they didn't they wouldn't be able to. So clearly they know how to lift a lot of weight effectively. But perhaps what they do is unhealthy? Arguably competitive powerlifting is unhealthy because it puts a lot of stress on athletes' bodies, though that can be said for almost any sport. But for normal, non competitive people doing strength training for general health I would still argue that using advice from powerlifters is far superior to the advice given by some personal

trainers and this show. I already discussed bracing. Absolutely no one who doesn't want a spine injury should take *Dumbbell*'s advice. Powerlifters brace while lifting heavy simply because it is physiologically the most efficient way to do that, and it happens to be the safest way. I'm not saying to discount advice from all personal trainers. However, if I want to learn how to deadlift I'll go to someone who deadlifts 600 pounds. There are objective metrics that matter in strength, by which you generally can judge how strong and competent someone is. If your personal trainer deadlifts 600 pounds, then definitely listen to them. For sound training advice I would recommend something like Barbell Medicine. Not only are Austin Baraki and Jordan Feigenbaum licensed doctors, they're also elite powerlifters each deadlifting 700+ pounds natty (not on gear/performance enhancing drugs). It is perfectly possible to lift a lot, be strong, and stay healthy. In fact I would argue that being stronger within reason (clean diet, drug free) definitely makes you more healthy.

The four most important lifts for full body functional strength are the Squat, Deadlift, Overhead Press, and Bench Press. Others like pull ups, rows, etc. are good too, but ask any Football, Wrestling, MMA, etc. coach, and they'll tell you that Squats and Deadlifts directly translate over into actual strength in a combat or sports setting. A deadlift is as simple as it gets. You pick something up. You put it down. There's a reason it's considered king of the lifts. The barbell back squat trains the posterior chain, the source of most human power. The fact that power is primarily generated from the hips and legs is known to most combat athletes, ie. these exercises train natural body motions which translate into real strength in the real world. Therefore I will focus on these exercises and how *Dumbbell* presents them, in the order presented in the show, critiquing the show's advice and pointing to better advice (I am not qualified to give advice because I'm too weak, I'll just point to strong people's advice)

Bench Press: This is the first movement introduced in the show. Machio's advice is not necessarily bad, it's pretty basic and solid. However, the animation itself shows the safety rack above Hibiki's chest, and the bar doesn't even touch her chest which it absolutely should. They missed a good opportunity for meaningless fanservice, though I guess the show has plenty of that. In a bench press, the bar should touch your chest, which means the safety rack should be lower than that, or else it turns into a pin press. Also, they didn't mention leg drive, which is a more advanced concept, but really good advice on bench form exists for free on the internet from people like Alan Thrall (not a typical YouTube fitness guru™ because he actually deadlifts 600 and squats 500+ so you should listen to him) and Mark Rippetoe/

Starting Strength (though on anything past novice linear progression I become suspicious of Starting Strength, Rip's basic form instruction is good). It's also important to note that in powerlifting a high arch is allowed and this annoys some people but they're irrelevant; arch is fine. For studying form it's also nice to look at videos of powerlifting record holders in each weight class. Currently the all time world record raw bench is held by Julius Maddox (782), though elite lifters do things beginners definitely shouldn't try. After the bench session, Machio says no one can laugh at someone trying their hardest, and that everyone starts somewhere; solid advice.

Squat: Machio basically says to not skip leg day, pretty based. However, the squats shown as "perfect form" are far from perfect. I mentioned above that the show advises to breathe while squatting which is nonsense. The squats also don't go to depth. Here they're called half squats. But I don't understand why anyone except a DYEL would even do half squats. First of all, there's a reason why full range of motion squats are the best kind of squat. Half squats (and even to some extent squats going beyond depth, ie. ass to grass squats) put shear forces on the knees, leading to potential injury if you half squat repeatedly. Squatting to depth is ideal (though non powerlifters don't necessarily have to squat to strict powerlifting standards, olympic lifters ass to grass squat all the time and strongmen don't really go to strict powerlifting depth). Once again, Starting Strength does a good treatment of squatting. Ray Williams holds the all time raw powerlifting squat record (1080).

Deadlift: They mention deadlifts early on in the show, saying they're dangerous and beginners shouldn't do them, which I disagree with. All the lifts are dangerous. Beginners should work on getting good form and obviously they shouldn't, and aren't even capable of pulling PRs from day one. There's nothing more dangerous about deadlifts than squats and bench press in my opinion, as long as you train with good form. Later on in the show they explain how to deadlift, though really briefly. They give obvious advice like keep your back straight, and also said to use alternating grip. I use alternating grip but it's not necessary, in fact hook grip is probably superior. Thankfully this time it emphasises bracing during the lift. Overall it felt like they don't really understand the lift, especially that it's the most important lift. I can't even describe how based deadlifting is. Alan Thrall's videos featuring Austin Baraki on deadlifting are great guides. Benedikt Magnusson holds the all time raw powerlifting deadlift record (1015). The strongman deadlift record is held by either Eddie Hall (500kg/1102lbs, in competition) or Hafthor Bjornsson (501kg/1104lbs, out of competition) depending on who you ask (it's convoluted, and Eddie and Thor have enough beef that they set up a boxing match to sort it out). Definitely watch Benji, Eddie, and Thor's record pulls, they're absolutely epic.

Overhead Press: Once again the advice was a mixed bag of ok stuff and just dumb stuff. You should lock out, or else the rep isn't completed. You can lean back as long as your back remains straight (strongmen are leaning back all the time). In fact the way Mark Rippetoe teaches press involves leaning back, while keeping your back straight of course. The bar path they showed is wrong, it was curved and an ideal bar path is straight. Also a consistent problem with this show is they say stuff like

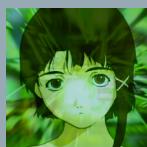
"this exercise activates X and Y muscle" which is true, but the big lifts all, especially squats and deadlifts use literally the majority of the muscles in the body. The deadlift activates pretty much every muscle from the back down besides the chest and triceps. Squats, deadlifts, and overhead press all involve the core muscles and my core (including le abs that everyone is hyped about, but more importantly, spinal erectors) are sore after squatting and deadlifting. After pressing I often feel that my abs are sore because they're required in stabilizing the body during the lift. This is why crunches and sit ups are useless. Just press and deadlift. The record for the press is a bit harder to pin down since there's so many different press variations. The overhead press is not a powerlifting lift so there's no powerlifting record. In strongman the Axle Press record is held by Iron Biby (478lbs) and the Log Press record is held by Zydrunas Savickas (502lbs). Olympic lifts, while definitely not presses involve getting weights above your head so I'll just mention that the world record Clean and Jerk is held by Lasha Talakhadze (584lbs).

Another thing to consider is diet: The show frequently puts the calorie count of various food items on the screen, and gives some diet advice. It seems mostly good to me. I'll just say that if it's your goal to lose weight, the best thing to do is being in a slight caloric deficit (a slow cut) maybe a few hundred calories per day and consistently do strength training. Being in a caloric deficit means you will lose weight (an iron law of thermodynamics, except in extreme cases like your body not being able to absorb some calories you eat due to rare conditions). If you cut on soda you'll lose muscle and gain fat while your net body weight goes down. Don't cut on soda. If you eat a healthy high protein diet and are in a caloric deficit while strength training, you will lose mostly fat and keep the majority of your muscle. Since strength isn't all about muscle mass, but also about CNS training, you can even get stronger. I have, my lifts all went up while I was cutting before.

On a final note, I'll make the observation that the show took a bodybuilding approach to lifting, ie. focusing on "isolating each muscle" which is kind of dumb from the point of view of functional strength. What good does a muscle do in isolation? A large part of lifting that people aren't aware of is training the Central Nervous System (CNS) to efficiently recruit existing muscle and convert it into strength/performing motions effectively. It's like practicing piano, your muscles get more efficient due to brain and biology shenanigans. If you train each individual muscle you're only training that motion. For example a curl is a nearly useless motion that doesn't even need to be trained. The only purpose of curls is hypertrophy. The same can't be said for full body motions; as I explained above squats, deadlifts, etc. are not only good for hypertrophy but also translate into actually useful strength in a way that curls and random bodybuilding movements don't.

So, contrary to the title of this article, *Dumbbell* isn't really dumb, but it was far from perfect. It has some good advice mixed in with some nonsense and a cringy approach to lifting, focusing on aesthetics rather than strength. The existence of this show makes me want to see an anime made by powerlifting weebz for powerlifting weebz, though that's a very niche market.

SUGAR RAY ROBINSON AND WHY THERE IS NO "BEST" BOXING MANGA



TONY T.

Originally Published in Vol. 53 Issue 4 - Unique Art Styles

I promise this article is about manga, past the first paragraph.

Managing Editor



If you ask any fan of boxing who the greatest fighter in the last 150 years of professional gloved pugilism, irrespective of weight class, is, you'll get various different answers. Historians will point to trailblazers like Sam Langford, Harry Greb, or Henry Armstrong for their remarkable accomplishments that almost certainly cannot be replicated again. Muhammad Ali often gets mentioned for his huge cultural impact coinciding with his legendary boxing career. In modern times, fighters like Roy Jones Jr, Floyd Mayweather, and Manny Pacquiao have made their marks in boxing history as well. But above all others, Sugar Ray Robinson is almost unanimously pointed to as the top contender for "greatest of all time, pound for pound". In an old HBO boxing documentary whose name escapes me at the time of writing, I distinctly recall the one-time welterweight and five-time middleweight champion referred to as an artistic genius—a master of his craft with all the eccentricities that the label might imply. It's not hard to see why this fits. Footage of the man in his prime condition and in his best weight of 147 pounds does not exist, but even footage of Sugar Ray in his later years as a middleweight demonstrates utter fluidity in footwork, multi-faceted punching, and complete ability to utilize any boxing style. His narrative is similarly great—a classic American rags-to-riches story with a young Walker Smith Jr. rising up the ranks, gaining the moniker of "Sugar Ray Robinson" along the way to boxing immortality. Add on his legendary bouts with fellow all time greats like Jake LaMotta and Carmen Basillo, and Robinson's place atop boxing history seems obvious.

Whenever I see discussion online regarding boxing anime/manga series, two always seem to come up in particular: *Ashita no Joe* and *Hajime no Ippo*. Often, I see the latter series being more



widely celebrated than the former for its stronger attention to the ins and outs of pugilism, an aspect Joe is more lacking in. This misses the point of both series. With Sugar Ray Robinson, I believe his status as the gold standard boxer rests upon his personal life narrative along with his expertise in the physical artistry of boxing. Both Joe and Ippo each capture these separate, distinct, aspects of what cemented Robinson as the all time greatest, and as such, wildly differ in intent and execution.

In execution and effect, *Ashita no Joe* is not a boxing narrative. Joe is a human narrative that simply features aspects of pugilism as a framing device. Though the titular Yabuki Joe himself could have had his mannerisms based on "The Louisville Lip" Cassius Clay, as this comparison is made within the series itself (published prior to Clay being widely addressed as Muhammad Ali), none of the boxing really captures the artistry of real-life boxing movement. Joe's actual fighting would never work at the elite level of the sport, given his extreme aggression and wild swings that comparatively make *Rocky* seem like a real boxing match. Instead, the series explores the actual emotions and narrative behind the sport in gritty detail. This can be seen in how concepts like punch-drunkness and questions regarding why fighters continue to fight are explored in the context of human emotions, as opposed to boxing ability. The realism and emotional impact of *Ashita no Joe* comes not from boxing, but rather what each punch, each blow, means to those involved. By learning to box, Yabuki Joe attains physical discipline which directly leads to a sense of newfound maturity; in this way, *Ashita no Joe* is really not thematically dissimilar to quintessential classic coming of age battle shounen series like *Dragon Ball* or *Yu Yu Hakusho*. What makes *Ashita no Joe* special is how his underdog status comes at least partially as the result of his socioeconomic origins and his late start in boxing. The series' roots in a more realistic setting and stark direct storytelling methods makes the central narrative of Joe's maturity more poignant as a commentary on the human condition.



If there's anything else to criticize *Ashita no Joe* for, despite it being one of my all time favorite anime/manga series, I would say that the series is not realistic to the sport of boxing. The boxing landscape presented in *Joe* is quite barren—while Joe's weight class of Bantamweight (118 pounds) gets some world building with contenders and titlists, very little of the rest of the world is elaborated upon. Part of what made legendary reigns like Sugar Ray Robinson's so revered was the high level of competition in many weight classes in the same era. Robinson's reigns came in eras with other high level fighters like Kid Gavilán, Joey Maxim, Gene Fullmer, and others, presenting different stylistic variety which made Robinson's large repertoire of punches, speed, and instinctive understanding of what was necessary to win a fight all the more impressive.



To find a true "boxing" narrative, one needs look no further than *Hajime no Ippo*, which perfectly encapsulates the other thing that makes great boxing matches artistic showcases—the fighting itself. Most characters within *Ippo* have real-life pugilistic inspirations and/or use boxing styles reminiscent of real boxers. This is made apparent in the very construction of the titular Makunouchi Ippo, whose style is most reminiscent of that of Mike Tyson whilst also incorporating various other fighters like Jack Dempsey and Floyd Patterson with their heavy-hitting, swarming styles rooted in sheer physical pressure and unorthodox sizes for their weight class. In my view, this could be a primary reason as to why the series has been popular not only amongst anime fans, but fight fans as well: *Hajime no Ippo* is boxing. At the risk of being slightly less relatable to a general audience as a narrative, *Ippo* develops its characters as boxers first and foremost. This is in stark contrast to *Joe*, wherein its characters were generally developed as human beings. This isn't to say that *Ippo* lacks human characters, though there is perhaps less focus due to the sheer amount of characters. By sacrificing a bit in terms of having a truly focused, human story like *Joe*, *Ippo* instead presents a very developed boxing world with pieces constantly moving. Coupled with the author's seemingly fundamental understanding of how core boxing tactics work, *Ippo* fulfills the other half of what is crucial to boxing as an artform—the fighting itself.

With how much detail the sport of boxing, with its corrupt politics and various fighting styles, is presented in *Hajime no Ippo*, it would not be an exaggeration to call the action of reading the series a simulation of following the real sport itself. Though the narrative of *Hajime no Ippo* is a bit messier than *Joe*'s, it picks up that series' slack in terms of showcasing the beauty of actual pugilism itself. For instance, a character like Mashiba Ryou clearly has his real life counterpart in "The Hitman" Thomas Hearns and his fighting presence within the series—with his long reach, skinny frame, and effective straight punches which carry massive power—reflect that inspiration. Similarly, the "end-game boss" of sorts in *Hajime no Ippo*, Ricardo Martinez, clearly references real-life never-beaten champion Ricardo "El Finito" Lopez in his hybrid boxer-puncher style, bobbing and weaving blows with the intent to counter. The imitation of real boxing in the series goes as far as to replicate somewhat narratively arbitrary concepts like championship splits between various sanctioning bodies, greedy promoters, and boxing publications. All of this goes a long way to emphasize the main point of the story—replicating boxing itself. However, what truly ties *Hajime no Ippo*, in the 1334 chapters released as of the first edit of this article, is its devotion to depicting the various styles of boxing as the art form that it deserves to be seen as.

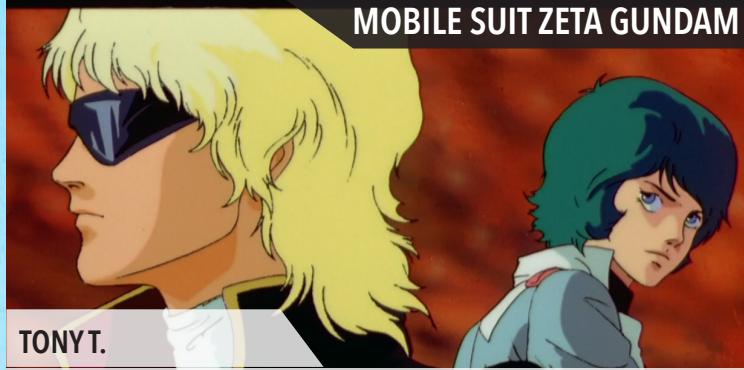
Thus, there really is no best representation of boxing in anime/manga in the sense that the two most accomplished series set out to capture completely different aspects of boxing. *Ashita no Joe*, with its story of human perseverance, reflects the narratives that make the sport such a unique beast, allowing individuals to raise themselves through social rungs. Alternatively, *Hajime no Ippo* meticulously creates a believable imitation of a 1990s boxing landscape, delivering a unique interpretation of the various (art)styles that master boxers employ. Though I personally enjoyed *Ashita no Joe* more, I cannot deny that various aspects of real boxing were captured far better in *Hajime no Ippo*. In real life, Sugar Ray Robinson is almost certainly the greatest boxing of all time in terms of his masterful, artistic, command of the ring, but in fiction, I cannot definitively say either *Ashita no Joe* or *Hajime no Ippo* capture pugilism better than the other.



WRITER STAFF PICKS:

QUATTRO BAJEENA

MOBILE SUIT ZETA GUNDAM

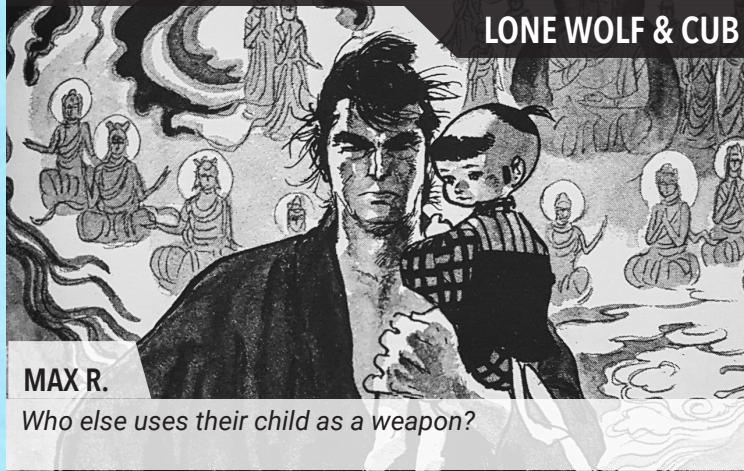


TONY T.

Sort of reminds me of Char Aznable from the original series, but cooler.

OGAMI ITTOU

LONE WOLF & CUB

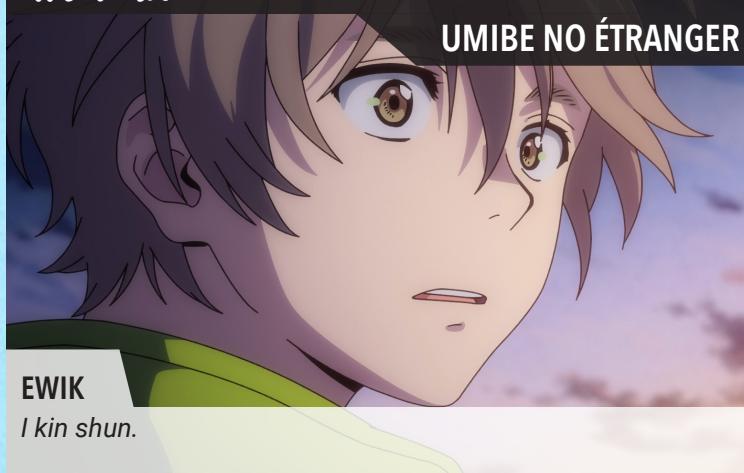


MAX R.

Who else uses their child as a weapon?

橋本駿

UMIBE NO ÉTRANGER

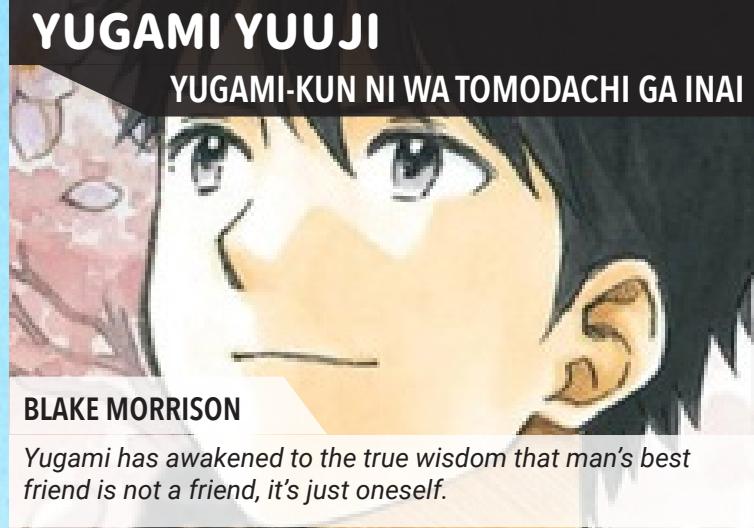


EWIK

I kin shun.

YUGAMI YUUJI

YUGAMI-KUN NI WA TOMODACHI GA INAI



BLAKE MORRISON

Yugami has awakened to the true wisdom that man's best friend is not a friend, it's just oneself.

HARUHI SUZUMIYA

SUZUMIYA HARUHI NO YUUUTSU



MITCHELL MADAYAG

That baseball quote, man...

HANA

OOKAMI KODOMO NO AME TO YUKI



KEV WANG

#StanStrongIndependentWomen

Perona
One Piece
Art By Crystal Li



Anthology Exclusive Articles



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE MII



MITCHELL MADAYAG

2nd year, Intended Japanese and Economics

1v1 me anyday

Editor-In-Chief

There is something I have to confess: I main Mii Brawler in *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate*, specifically the 1312 version (Shot Put, Suplex, Soaring Axe Kick & Feint Jump respectively). In a grand roster of 89 total fighters, full of characters that define Nintendo and general video game history, I choose to primarily play as a soulless Mii whose moves are arguably worse versions than the original inspirations it borrows. I partially blame top players ESAM and Larry Lurr, and content creators Gaegel and WhyDo for pulling me into the Mii Brawler rabbit hole over quarantine. It was mesmerizing, seeing a character that was once a joke in the meta look incredibly fun and powerful. Being able to beat people with one such “meme” fighter is part of the reason why I dropped Pokémon Trainer for the Brawler of Many Faces, but if you actually play around with them for a bit, you realize how well they feel to control. Disregarding the custom special moves for a moment, I can best describe Mii Brawler’s moveset and stats as a mix between Fox and Mario. With an above average ground and air speed, Mii Brawler wants to be in the opponent’s face and oppress them with quick aerials that can turn into combos easily. Combined with a killer grab game that can lead to early stocks taken depending on the selected up special, Mii Brawler has the cheese sauce to contend with the other potent high tiers. Beyond that, by nature of copying moves from beginner friendly characters, they are quick to pick up and mess around with. To me at least, I couldn’t get a handle on Mario in *Ultimate* as I did in *Smash 4* (*Wii U & 3DS*), so perhaps Mii Brawler filled in that Mario-shaped hole of mine. Regardless, I really do believe that Mii Brawler is one of the most underrated and unexplored characters in the game, and I recommend you try them out if you’re into playing the swift brawler archetype. For those interested, here is a brief rundown on which of the twelve special moves you should or shouldn’t use for your Mii.



Shot Put (1XXX): A very active projectile that is best used in the air due to Brawler’s ability to drift. The shot put can bounce off of platforms and ledges, making for some fun shenanigans.

Flashing Mach Punch (2XXX): A flurry of punches that sort of work like Cloud’s Cross Slash. Brawler can combo into it with falling Up Air, and connecting it high up will lead to early kills.

Exploding Side Kick (3XXX): The Falcon Punch equivalent for Brawler. It’s surprisingly safe to land on shield and even has armor properties, but is definitely not recommended to use over the other Neutral Specials.

Onslaught (X1XX): A brutal looking attack where the knockback scales with the damage accumulated on Brawler, similar to the rage mechanic. It’s pretty slow though and makes it one of the less reliable ways to kill for Brawler.

Burning Dropkick (X2XX): One of the few special moves that helps Brawler recover to stage better. It has a linear path though and can be easily punished if anticipated by the opponent.

Suplex (X3XX): An almost unreactable command grab when used up close that does lots of damage. It may not kill but it always keeps your opponents cautious of shielding. Sadly, it puts you in freefall in the air and doesn’t make for a good recovery.

Soaring Axe Kick (XX1X): The most versatile of the Up Specials. It travels the highest, has a deceptively big hitbox, and can spike and even kill at 0%. SAK lacks serious kill power, but is a good tool for beginners.

Helicopter Kick (XX2X): The least explored Up Special, but still very strong in its own right. It’s more of a horizontal recovery than a vertical one, but makes up for it with its kill potential. Brawler has multiple ways of connecting into Helicopter Kick, making them a menace by the ledge.

Thrust Uppercut (XX3X): Possibly the most popular to use among Brawler mains. It’s one of the fastest moves in the game, coming out at frame 3 and forces your opponent to space against your shield. “Thrupper” is best known to cheese kills early out of Down Throw or Up Air, especially on tri-plat stages.

Head-On Assault (XXX1): Please just never use this unless you’re trolling. The hits never connect reliably like Bowser’s or Yoshi’s Down Special and the move itself is very laggy.

Feint Jump (XXX2): You absolutely need to have this equipped. It’s a slower, less invincible version of Zero Suit Samus’s Flip Jump, but has the special property of propelling Mii Brawler into a dive kick. It also helps Brawler’s recovery game immensely.

Counter Throw (XXX3): Even if this is tied as the second strongest counterattack with a damage multiplier of 1.5x, Counter Throw is very inconsistent in connecting, especially in the air. It does look really cool though.

In conclusion, use whatever Mii Brawler moveset you're most comfortable with. For best results, feel free to utilize different combinations of special moves depending on the matchup. I personally switch to Flushing Mach Punch against faster characters like Zero Suit Samus and Sheik that can be hard to hit with Shot Put. The most widely accepted moveset is 13X2 or 23X2, so you can use either of the three Up Specials in accordance. I barely scratched the surface of what Brawler's special moves are capable of, so I would advise referring to the [Brawlercord](#) for a more in depth guide on how to get started on your road to Brawler fame.

When compared to Mii Brawler, the other two custom characters, Mii Gunner and Mii Swordfighter, are clearly outclassed in competitive viability by a wide margin. Mii Gunner at least has some strong ledge trapping tools with the 3332 moveset (Grenade Launch, Gunner Missile, Arm Rocket, Bomb Drop), but with some of the worse speed stats in the game, it makes it difficult for Gunner to get away from the opponent to utilize their projectiles well. Even with a decent heavy weight stat, Gunner's lack of mobility and quick get-off-me options means a terrible disadvantage state, which often leads to juggle situations where Gunner is unable to return back to the ground. Mii Swordfighter on the other hand, is very lacking in spacing tools like the other swordies, arguably one of the strongest traits for that archetype. At most, Swordfighter has Forward Tilt and Forward Air, but the latter is an awkward multihit stab attack that covers less space than the traditional vertical sword slash. With a comparatively shorter sword too, Swordfighter struggles to put pressure on the opponent to lead into kills and thus, they have no reliable ways of taking stocks or even landing blows. Even the infamous Gale Strike Neutral Special (1XXX) is unreliable as it is easily avoidable and can be punished on whiff. It's quite a shame that Gunner and Swordfighter can't match up to Brawler, as it's very clear that only Brawler received significantly better revisions to their kit during the transition from *Sm4sh*. Meanwhile, Gunner and Swordfighter still feel like remnants of their weak *Sm4sh* iterations as they did not gain enough buffs to their overall stats and special moves to put them in the middle of high tier like Brawler. However, just like every other character, the engine of *Ultimate* buffed them in such a way so they are at least not near the bottom of the tier list like they were in *Sm4sh*.

This then brings into question if the Mii Fighters should even be strong characters in the first place. Ideally, Sakurai or the balancing team or whoever would rather have the iconic Nintendo characters be played more than the Miis. Why play Mii Brawler when Mario, Fox, and Captain Falcon have a flashier moveset? Why play Mii Gunner when Samus, Mega Man, and Snake are so much cooler? Why play Mii Swordfighter when they somehow have even less of a personality than Marth, Link, and Cloud? Having the Miis be better than most "real" characters in the respective archetype they embody would be discouraging to spectators as their favorite fighters would not show up as much. However, this discussion is essentially moot as the competitive *Smash* scene is a very small percentage of total players and the more casual audience would just choose whoever they want to play, regardless of how good they are in the meta.

Outside of competitive viability, the criteria players look for in a character is personal attachment to a particular character or franchise as well as how fun they are to play. Concerning the first standard, the Miis lack any sort of inspiration from their source material, namely the classic *Wii Sports* and similarly titled video games containing playable Miis. Even if one were to reuse their beloved Mii creation, their fighter still wouldn't feel unique among the roster in terms of how they play. Imag-

ine if there was a Mii Athlete with a more original moveset. They could wield a tennis racket and reference different types of sports through their gameplay. To make a crude comparison, they would perhaps be the Wii Fit Trainer version of Link. A Mii Athlete would carry the nostalgia for the Wii console era, appealing to fans on a more personal level. This way, a Mii Athlete character can be strong while avoiding the chance of overshadowing other characters. Nonetheless, an interesting Mii design doesn't even have to be a Mii athlete referencing *Wii Sports*. If the Mii Fighters had more creative movesets or at least had greater modifications to the attacks they borrow, it is likely these forgotten characters would be played and loved more.

Yet, so far I've been omitting the Mii Fighter's most obvious selling point: their ability to be customized to the player's whim. Coming from *Sm4sh* where custom moves were first introduced, the Mii Fighters special moves all distinctly vary from one another, despite not being entirely original. Even if some of the moves are a good deal better than others in the competitive scene, some of the weaker special moves can be used in more niche matchups. Regardless, the wide range of attacks are sure to cater to most casual players' playstyles. Even more fun is the potential in creating your own character to compete among Nintendo's very best. You can treat the Mii Fighters as a self-insert by putting your own personal Mii into the game. Until *Nintendo Switch Sports* releases in April, *Ultimate* has been one of the few cases on the Switch where you can replicate the Wii days and have Miis of yourself and all your friends and family members duke it out on the big screen.

Not only can you personalize the Mii Fighters' faces, but their attire as well. With 134 different headgear and 144 total outfits, the possibilities are numerous with how you go about making a Mii Fighter. You can mix-match clothing and facial features into an abomination, create funny meme characters, or even make ur mom! This also creates the opportunity to make your favorite video game characters that didn't make the addition to *Ultimate*'s roster. The DLC costumes clearly show that the Miis were intended to serve as a coping mechanism for fans who may have been disappointed in the final roster, as seen by the heavily detailed costumes of Sans, Cuphead, Doomguy, Dante, etc. The Mii Fighters are fundamentally a means of expression unique to *Super Smash Bros.* alone.



In the end, the Mii Fighters are a great concept to *Smash* and definitely deserved to stay in the main roster of *Ultimate*. Utilizing the Miis' base moves may not necessarily be the most fun, but the freedom to alter their appearance and special moves is what really makes them appealing to both casual and competitive players. I may not express the meme potential of the Miis fully, as I only use a Mii I made of myself when I was only 12 years old, but I do indeed dabble with Gunner and Swordfighter from time to time. I even won a few Squad Strike matches playing as all three Mii Fighters at the UC Berkeley Smash tournaments. I may not agree with all of *Ultimate*'s character balancing decisions, but I am at least satisfied that one of the Mii Fighters is fairly strong, if not hella fun to play.

JUNICHI SATOU'S IYASHIKEIS: HAPPINESS JUST AROUND THE CORNER



FELIX LEVY

2nd Year, Environmental Engineering

I've never been to Venice unfortunately, but now I wish I could visit it

Writer

Iyashikei is a curious sub-genre of anime that does not seem to revolve around creating a strong subculture surrounding it to thrive as a show and a brand. It is the Japanese term for "healing", alluding to its main intent, which is that it creates a mood through familiar motifs in order to soothe the soul and mind of the audience. How that translates in these shows' execution though, is that rather than creating an engaging story or thoroughly developed and complex characters, it often attempts to create an engaging setting, and organic interactions between characters often discovering or evolving in this setting to instigate interest in its audience by encouraging them to discover a beautifully crafted world that might often be limited to one single place or city, as well as enjoy a cathartic warmth brought by anodyne yet deeply human dialogue, emotions, and feelings. I'd add that some Iyashikei also manage to create intriguing characters and stories as a side effect of succeeding at the previously stated ends of the genre.



If there is one man that I truly admire for his ability to craft these organic human scenarios and worlds with unending depth in the discoveries that they allow, it would be Junichi Satou. He is a notorious anime director and scriptwriter who has worked on many popular works, such as *Sgt Frog* or quite a few magical girl shows: a portion of *Sailor Moon*, *Ojamajo Doremi* as well as *Hugtto Precure* and *Princess Tutu*. His style has experienced quite a bit of variation depending on the shows that he worked on, but nowhere is his mark more obvious than on the Iyashikeis that he directed.



Indeed, he has especially become known for these kinds of shows recently, directing for instance *Aria*, which could be described as one of the more well-known and acclaimed works of the genre. Beloved by many fans, definitely including me, this show presents us with the world of Aqua, a terraformed Mars entirely covered by an ocean, on which rests Neo Venezia, a replica of the real world's Venice, the place where our protagonists strive to become Undines, driving gondolas for others to experience the landscapes and curiosities that the city is filled to the brim with. And that is by no account a hyperbole, as every single street and area of it seems to be the resting place of a secret waiting to be discovered by curious minds in search for adventure at every corner.

Now, *Aria* has already been discussed quite often, especially in this magazine, with articles covering Kozue Amano's works (*Aria* and *Amanchu*), but it is still important to mention it because of how significant it is in Junichi Satou's notoriety, and because it serves as a perfect example of what makes his Iyashikeis engaging: it shows us that, anywhere and at any time, even in places that we think we are familiar with, new things

and new experiences are just around the corner, and this works for the characters in his works as well who learn throughout these shows that happiness can be found in arm's reach, right in front of us.

We could discuss this dimension further with characters such as Aika and Alice in *Aria*, who struggle with the problems that they refuse to share, only to realize that those around them are there to support them throughout these endeavors and that growth is something that can be attained if they reach for it, but let's instead look at some of Satou's lesser-known works that still hold the same warmth as *Aria*.



Tamayura, for instance, is a show composed of several OVAs, TV releases, and Movies created and directed by Satou himself, that choose a Japanese semi-rural setting that can have a universally familiar aspect. This time, we follow a group of high school girls who pursue their passions and try to find a purpose for their life, a vocation that they want to immerse themselves in. In truth, this show does not go very far when attempting to create drama. It has its serious sides, but they never take over the tone of the show, which portrays the challenges of life and motifs such as loss as steps towards one's future that must never be thrown away and fought against rather than be considered as obstacles towards one's fulfillment. This is not an unusual theme; it is at the center of many slice-of-life shows, even outsiders of the Iyashikei sphere. But the organic interactions and endeavors of the characters truly make this a worthwhile watching experience in my opinion, as they will undoubtedly be reminding the audience of past experiences, ones lived by one's self or his relatives or acquaintances, or it can even serve as a deeply positive and heartwarming cathartic experience. I'd also add that this stepping point in these girls' lives is intertwined with the setting itself just like with *Aria*, as the city breathes life thanks to the characters and the impact that they have on it, and the mutual relationship between setting and cast makes this show surprisingly and interestingly complex and engaging. It can especially be seen with the atmospheric sequences that Junichi Satou's name can be tied to at this point in the Iyashikei genre, with a mood forged in fascination and appeasement as we, alongside the characters, gaze on the scenery after a long hike, or similar experiences opened up by this rural setting. I'll also add that this can be attributed to a great extent to the work of Hal Film Maker/TYO Animation (the name of their studio after they were absorbed

by Yumeta Company in 2009), that despite being a product of late 2010 that might pale in comparison to other shows of the time and that came after in terms of raw animation and detail, truly enhance the shows with a cozy and pleasant palette that fits shows such as *Aria* and *Tamayura* perfectly.

One other show that sports a similar aesthetic is *Sketchbook: Full Color's*. It was directed by Yoshimasa Hiraike, who had worked a bit on *Aria the Natural* and would go on to direct *Amagami SS* later, but it was supervised by Satou and made by Hal Film Maker. This 12 episode TV series chooses a more comedic approach to the Iyashikei formula, with a cast of characters with very diverse personalities and character designs more fit to this kind of tone (large eyes and distinct designs, quite a long shot from *Tamayura* in that regard). These characters are part of the art club at their school, and we follow them on their routine at this club as they interact with their friends and learn to sketch the world around them. This is a very laid-back show, that really doesn't ask much from its audience in regards to understanding its handling of themes and other ambitions that might have appeared in other shows, but its handling of mood and atmosphere shifts is pleasing to experience, and the comedy, while not meant to trigger laughs and hilarity, certainly brings a smile more than once out of the audience. And almost as a guiding thread, there are other side stories present in the show such as one where cats try to find their place in the city (nothing serious though, and mostly there to add to the ambient comedy of the show in its pacing).



All in all, I always end up going back to these kinds of shows, because they have a special appeal that I struggle to find elsewhere. A journey of discovery, both on a human level and in terms of the settings, makes these shows an enjoyable ride despite what might seem like a lack of substance in them. I see them as quite complex because of the organicness of the characters and the way they evolve in relation with the setting itself, whether it be the main cast of *Aria* finding inspiration from Neo-Venezia and its secrets, or the characters from *Tamayura*, being changed by and making a change in their hometown and the ones that surround them. Junichi Satou is by all accounts a very famous director, and in my opinion, it is for good reason, but I think that shows even outside of *Aria* that he directed still succeed at grasping his style, and I consider them worth a watch.

DRAGON A WELL INTENTIONED, BU



TONY T.

2nd Year, Economics and Data Science
old good new bad

Managing Editor

In spite of good intentions and a solid foundation, *Dragon Ball Kai* is ruined by its marketing. Ostensibly, *Dragon Ball Kai* was meant to be a faster, more streamlined way to view *Dragon Ball Z*, with less non-canon material and better production values. Though a seminal piece of media transcending the traditional bounds of influence of Japanese animation, the original *Dragon Ball Z* has rightfully become derided for its sluggishness and overall unpolished nature. It is not just natural, but expected that such an influential piece of media should receive a remaster of some sort. With that said, however, *Kai* fails to live up to expectations and feels less a better version of *Z* and more a sloppy imitation.

In its opening seconds, *Dragon Ball Kai* immediately fails at its implied goals. Interjecting the finale of the *Dragon Ball Z Bardock* special into the first episode, *Kai* demonstrates ineptitude in understanding narrative pacing. Momentarily disregarding the fact that said special is non-canon to the original source material, the special is a powerful piece of fiction due to its dramatic irony. The value and tragedy of Bardock's arc comes with the understood fact that his fate is inevitably to die by the hands of Frieza. However, as the beginning of a narrative, all the context needed to inform that rather powerful narrative is missing. Beyond squandering a rather compelling story, this also provides very little information about *Dragon Ball Kai* as a whole. In fact, the presence and threat of Frieza in said opening segment is rather detrimental as said villain is not at all relevant in the beginning of *Dragon Ball Z* and only becomes relevant af-

ter the first arc. This beginning takes the attention away from the Saiyan arc with unimportant details.



One possible rationale I could attribute to this shift beyond a failed attempt at demonstrating competence in adapting with proper chronology could be to make *Dragon Ball Kai* a more self-contained narrative. The Japanese title of *Dragon Ball Kai*, as opposed to the American *Dragon Ball Z Kai* title, further demonstrates this intention. However, this is an utterly pointless endeavor that represents the worst way to consume *Dragon Ball*, given the continuity and chronology present throughout the entire 520 chapter manga. Although the anime adaptation separated the content into *Dragon Ball* and *Dragon Ball Z*, this consideration had little to do with actual narrative and more to do with obtaining more funds for marketing purposes. To completely ignore *Dragon Ball* is to skip the entire establishing plot relevant in characterizing almost every relevant member of the main cast. A perfect example is the rather incomplete understanding that the majority of the international audience have of protagonist Son Goku. In some part due to the English dub, but also majorly because of the common practice of skipping the original *Dragon Ball* in favor of *Z*, the common interpretation of Son Goku is of a Superman-esque morally just savior of the universe. The character of Son Goku is, in reality, a complex individual who represents a completely innocent and pure mindset. While not inherently evil, he is incredibly impulsive and hedonistic, with his heroic moments coming not from a well-defined moral code, but rather his somewhat eclectic on-the-spot judgment. By perpetuating the idea of *Dragon Ball Z* being a self-contained narrative, *Dragon Ball Kai* is made all the more uncompelling, not to mention less comprehensible.

Still, the *Bardock* special is a rather meaningful story, and illustrates the importance of filler content in *Dragon Ball Z*. Though



BALL KAI: NOT MISGUIDED REMASTER

a handful of filler episodes are completely pointless in the series, a large proportion of the anime-exclusive content is incredibly important in filling in the rather loose writing of the original source material. Many fans demonstrate an absurd amount of reverence for Toriyama Akira's *Dragon Ball* as the "official canon". Without mentioning the fact that said canon is contradictory with itself at many points, Toriyama Akira's original lacks a large amount of characterization which makes *Dragon Ball Z* so compelling. For instance, a large portion of filler within the first arc of *Dragon Ball Z* focused on the training of Son Gohan, demonstrating the steps taken for his growth not only as a fighter, but also as an individual. Featuring a host of rather powerful moments, including a scene wherein he is given the option to leave training and return to his family, the absence of these segments in *Dragon Ball Kai* is extremely detrimental to the impact of later dramatic moments with the character. Frankly, the reverence for Toriyama Akira's official material is itself rather misguided as the original source material directly skipped from Son Gohan as a toddler incapable of combat to a hardened warrior ready to defend his planet. Infamous for his on-the-fly writing style, Toriyama Akira's writing left many gaps for the staff of *Dragon Ball Z* to fill. With some successes and some failures, it is rather unfair and short sighted. Obvious issues of consistency also remain, with the aforementioned Bardock special sticking out like a sore thumb.

The fixes in terms of production issues also leave much to be desired. Yes, the audio quality of the original *Dragon Ball Z* is very outdated, but the series' score is extremely fitting for the storylines presented. *Kai* has better audio equipment, which is



a welcome change, but also completely changes the classic Kikuchi Shunsuke compositions. The new soundtrack is not horrendous, and includes a series of welcome insert songs with singers in-character as various members of the large *Dragon Ball* ensemble cast, but lacks the music which, at times, carried the series even in spite of its horrendous production values. On that note, *Kai*'s approach to remastering *Dragon Ball Z*, by using digital tools to draw over the original animation cels, produces rather middling results. The issue with *Dragon Ball Z* always laid in particular sections which featured stilted character models and poor, unfluid animation. To say that the entire series embodied those traits would be untrue, but it was an issue that plagued a large amount of the original. *Kai*'s supposed solution actually makes the production issues more apparent in that with greater visual clarity, it is easier to see those mistakes. The digital animation employed also lacks a certain character that the original Z cels had in that colors are far more flat. The cuts in *Kai* feel robotic and unwelcome as opposed to the (somewhat) more vibrant scenes of Z.

On all these levels and more, then, *Kai* suffers from a host of issues not present in *Dragon Ball Z*. The choice to remake *Dragon Ball Z* was not one without merit, but limited in scope as the issues the original Z faced were ones that something of its ilk would always face—one needs to look no further than the host of anime inspired by *Dragon Ball* featuring the exact same problems. Moreover, the execution of *Kai*'s remastering also created a plethora of issues that make it perhaps an inferior work to the original. *Dragon Ball Kai* is not an offensive anime to me, as *Dragon Ball Super* was. It was, however, extremely disappointing in terms of the potential that a remaster of *Dragon Ball Z* truly has. The more modern generation of anime fans are not nearly as compelled to view the *Dragon Ball* saga in full, and *Kai* unfortunately does not do much to change that.

ATTACK ON TITAN OP BUNCH OF J-METAL(COR)



EWIK NELSON

4th Year, Music

Core kids rise up.

Writer



The most recent *Attack on Titan* OP was a Metalcore song. Being the most popular show ever, this has exposed the masses to Metalcore, a genre which hasn't been super popular since Emo/Mallcore (which I enjoy 😎) was big in the 2000s. I love the entire Metalcore genre, so it was nice to hear it in an anime, since there's not much of any kind of Metal in anime. That makes sense because normies are scared of hearing harsh vocals or something. And it was obvious by scrolling through the comments under the *AOT* OP that people had no idea what Metalcore was. Metal has a serious problem with inane and exceptionally aggressive arguments over minute subgenre classifications. However, people in the comments were mixing up Metalcore, heavy Metal, death Metal, and various other vastly different subgenres. This is like confusing Anime and Vocaloid which some people do and it's cringe so don't do it. Here's a quick rundown: Metal is an umbrella term which includes various disparate genres from classic Heavy Metal like Black Sabbath all the way to new genres like Metalcore and Djent (some people say Metalcore isn't a Metal subgenre, but they're not worth talking to). If you want a good introduction to the evolution of Metal subgenres [here](#) is a good video. For a disgustingly detailed series go [here](#). For an entertaining history of Metalcore specifically listen [here](#). In short, Metalcore is the fusion of Metal and Hardcore Punk, thus Metalcore. It has a 20 year long history and has gone through approximately 4 waves. Though technically the term Heavy Metal encompasses all Metal, it generally

refers in conversation to old boomer stuff like Black Sabbath and Metallica, which is very different from Metalcore so it's hilarious when normies confuse them. I guess I shouldn't expect them to know that.

Anyway, what actually inspired me to write this was their choice of song/band. They chose the band [SiM](#), who wrote a song called "[The Rumbling](#)" which was a fairly standard Metalcore song with orchestral elements. It starts off with a pretty solid Metalcore cliche in the first 10 seconds, which is great since I love Metalcore cliches. But the song is mid, 5.5/10. Anyone who's listened to enough Metal could name countless bands who could have done a better job on this OP. And this was sad for me to realize, because instead of promoting an amazing, underrated (at least outside of Metalcore circles), and genre defining band like Crystal Lake, the *AOT* production team decided to choose a weird fusion Metalcore band to do a straight ahead Metalcore song and it didn't work as well as it could have. SiM is actually an interesting band, they have a unique style which fuses hardcore punk, Metal, and reggae of all things. However, on a standard Metalcore track they can't hope to match the energy and brutality of Crystal Lake or a number of other Japanese Metalcore bands.



Crystal Lake looking sexy

Compare this to [Fire Force OP 2](#), MAYDAY by [Coldrain](#) featuring Ryo from [Crystal Lake](#). Two great Japanese Metalcore bands collaborating on an anime OP. Can we have more of this? Probably not. Whether you're chosen to do an anime OP depends more on industry connections than what fans want, especially Metalcore fans who probably make up less than 1% of the anime fanbase. I'm just disappointed that Crystal Lake didn't get the visibility of

7 IS MID, SO HERE'S A (RE) RECOMMENDATIONS

doing the *AOT* OP because they're considered by even western Metalcore fans to be one of the best current Metalcore bands.

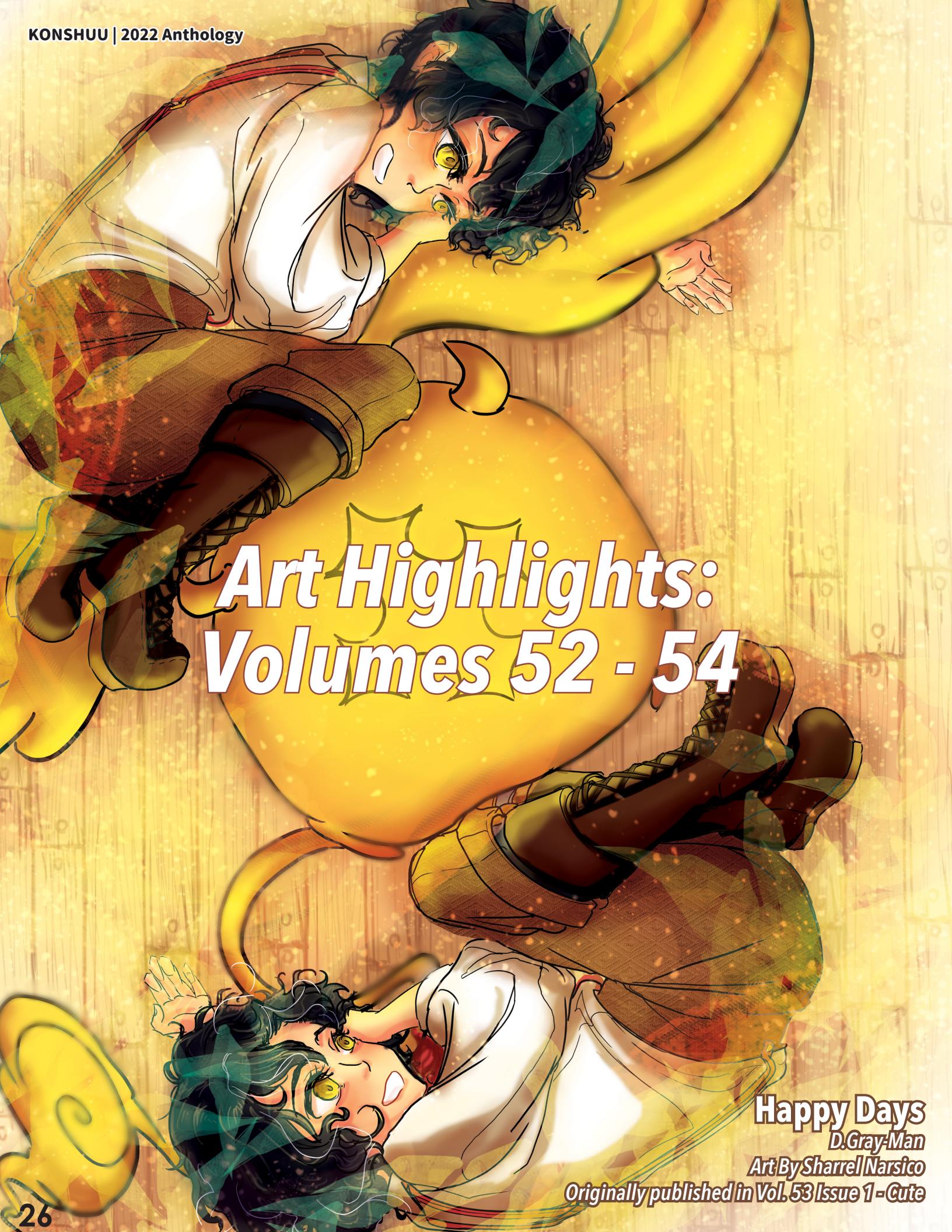
But I really want to use this as an excuse to just talk about Japanese Metal and Core (Metalcore, Deathcore, Screamo/Post-Hardcore, etc.) in general. It's a very diverse umbrella, so I'll mostly be focusing on stuff I like, which is generally modern Metalcore, Djent, and Prog, and giving some recommendations. First of all, Metal bands I like which have done anime OPs/EDs include [Maximum the Hormone](#) (*Death Note* OP/ED 2 etc.), [FALILV](#) (*Hunter x Hunter* 2011 ED 1 etc.), and [Kiba of Akiba](#) (*Watamote* OP). In Vocaloid there's: [Utsu-P](#), [Yuyoyuppe](#), [Okame-P](#), [Yoshihi](#), [Yokomin](#), [LIQ](#), [Hent4i P](#), [Takenoko](#), and [Yandere-P](#). In Touhou and Doujin stuff, there's [Undead Corporation](#), [Vaguedge Dies For Dies Irae](#), [Unlucky Morpheus](#), [IRON ATTACK!](#), [Takamachi Walk](#), [Demetori](#), and [Imperial Circus Dead Decadence](#). In Metalcore (I use the term loosely, includes Post Hardcore, Screamo, Visual Kei, etc.) there's a ton of great bands/people including: [Crystal Lake](#), [coldrain](#), [abstracts](#), [C-GATE](#), [Sable Hills](#), [Graupel](#), [Sailing Before the Wind](#), [PROMPTS](#), [FOAD](#), [LAST DAY DREAM](#), [CROSS-FAITH](#), [a crowd of rebellion](#), [WAILING ARIES](#), [Leda Cygnus](#), [December Everyday](#), [SUGGESTIONS](#), [Katsuya](#), [Dyslexia](#), [Paledusk](#), [Hysteric Panic](#), [Jiluka](#), and [KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY GIRL](#). In Japanese Deathcore there's: [Nocturnal Bloodlust](#), [DEVILOOF](#), [Victim of Deception](#), [Her Name in Blood](#), [DEXCORE](#), and [HONE YOUR SENSE](#). In Djent: [Alternations](#), [Arkaden](#), [Neverbloom](#), [Earthists](#), [Prologues](#), [Our Dimensions](#), [Astral Dreams](#), [Skygraph](#), [Two Story House](#), and [AKRASIA](#). In Prog: [PLOOF](#), [sokoninaru](#), [FIELD OF FOREST](#), [cyclamen](#), [Shiyu](#), [Kenshiro/WHITEFISTS](#), [Guitarists on Demand](#), [Story of Hope](#), and one of the best living guitarists, [Ichika Nito](#), who has done a few insane Prog/Djent tracks like [Lysis](#). He also has a prog band, [Among the Sleep](#). I also really like his [collaboration](#) with Chinese prog band [Von Citizen](#), as well as with [Field of Forest](#). There's also random Metal/Core adjacent stuff like [DEATHNYANN](#), [WAGAMAMARAKIA](#), and Idol/Kawaii Metal stuff like [Broken By The Scream](#), [DAZZLE VISION](#), [DOLL\\$BOXX](#), [PassCode](#), and [LADYBABY](#). My absolute favorites in there are Crystal Lake, Dexcore, Ichika, Guitarists on Demand, and Kenshiro/WHITEFISTS.

In general, I think that Japanese Metal/Core has a lot of unique things going on, especially on the weeb and prog side. They have some of the absolute best prog in the world and they invented weeb obviously. In the prog guitar scene, Ichika is a god. I just wish he would do more djent stuff ;~; Speaking of GOD,



Why is Kenshiro perfect?

Guitarists On Demand has introduced me to some insane Japanese guitarists, my favorite being Kenshiro. The prog guitar scene is not limited to heavy music, people like [Neko Hacker](#), [Mafumafu](#), and some modern Vocaloid producers use cool prog guitar lines. Touhou Metal, Kawaii/Idol Metal, etc. originated in Japan and has a completely unique sound. There's also Japanese Folk Metal which I forgot to mention but whatever, it's generally pretty good. Japanese Metalcore is interesting because there seems to me to be two major scenes: Visual Kei and what I will call Westerncore. Visual Kei Metal/Core bands usually use a "J-Rock except it's really heavy and we wear weird clothes" approach and Westerncore follows the western Metalcore scene more closely. I enjoy them both. Since I think Metalcore has gotten better in the last decade, mostly due to developments by western bands, I appreciate that Westerncore bands keep an eye on the international scene and develop in response, whereas the Visual Kei bands haven't really changed much since the mid 2000s in my opinion. However a lot of Westerncore bands sound samey, which is to be expected in any genre; tons of them sound like [Architects](#) ripoffs. But with great bands like Crystal Lake leading the way, the future of Japanese Metalcore is looking good. Hopefully anyone who is not into Metal/Core but was intrigued by the *AOT* OP will check out some of what Japan has to offer.



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OUKAWA KOHAKU

ENSEMBLE STARS!!

SOPHIA XUE

*The Captivating, Dazzling Cherry Blossom *艶やかな煌めき桜花* (the ou character in his surname is written as 桜 in Japanese)*

CANARY

HXH

HEAVEN J.

One of the first Black women I have seen in anime. I loved how she was portrayed and drawn, specifically in her second animated debut (we shouldn't talk about the first).

SKULL DE MORT

KATEKYO HITMAN REBORN

SHARREL NARSICO

Although he's the weakest of the Arcobaleno, I like his punk theme. They're also the person you want behind the wheels when you're being chased down by mafioso.

MIZUKI AKIYAMA

PROJECT SEKAI

MIRANDA ZHANG

*I just think they're really neat!! And their pink color palette is *chef's kiss**

DAIBA NANA

SHOUJO KAGEKI REVUE STARLIGHT

EDDIE SONG

She is a very intriguing character!

SAWAKI MOMOE

WONDER EGG PRIORITY

WILLOW OTAKA

She wavers about her identity at times, but I love that no matter what, she never conforms to the expectations that others have for her.

Yuuki Makoto

Ensemble Stars

Art By Sophia Xue

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Anthology Exclusive Art

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