

vol.49 #7
Studio Shaft

天 元 之 王 傳

Shinobu Oshino
Monogatari Series
art by Rika Sato

THIS WEEK'S FEATURED SERIES

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

ARAKAWA UNDER THE BRIDGE

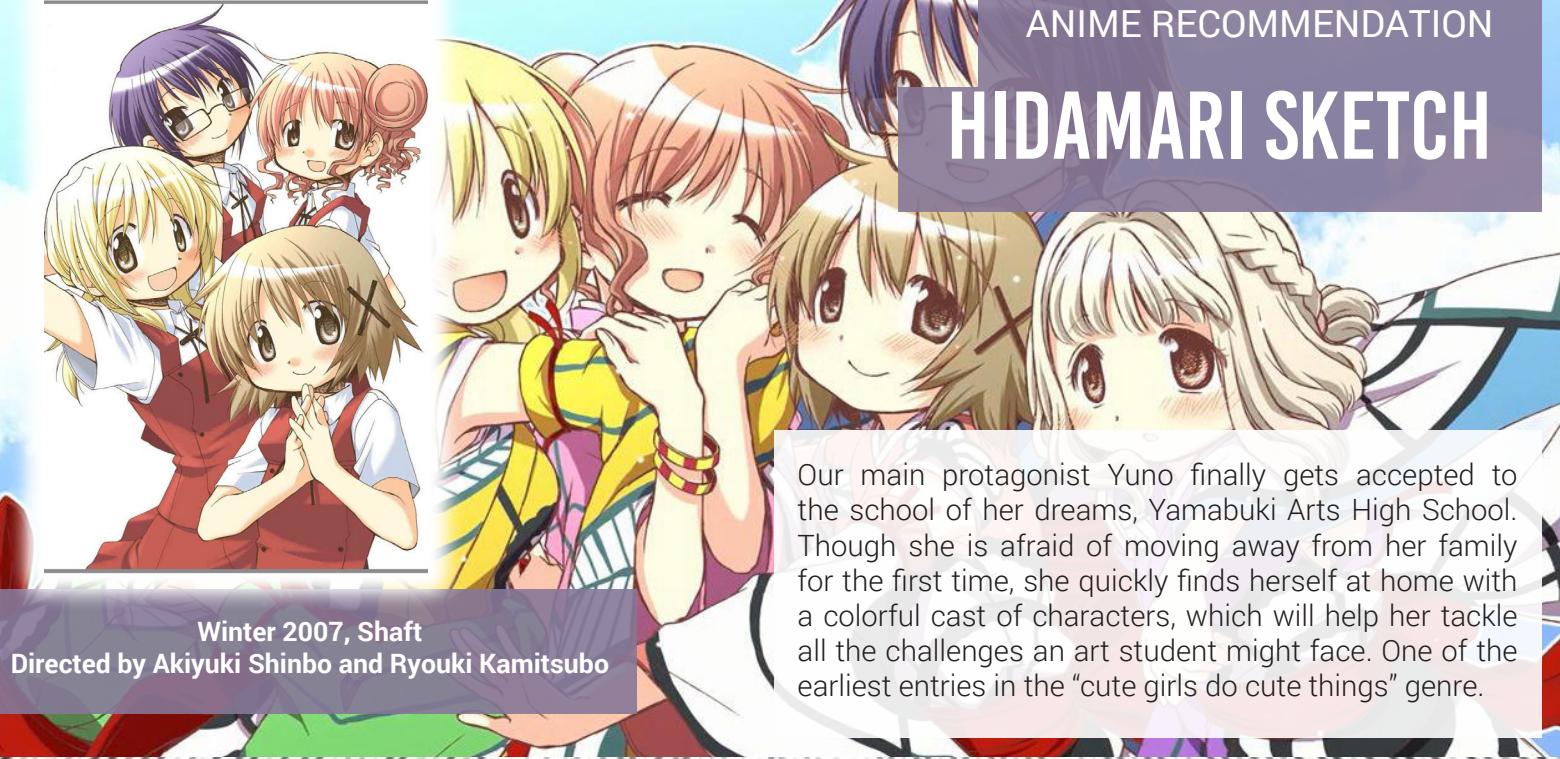
Kou Ichinomiya is a self-proclaimed "elite" who has a policy of not being in debt to anyone. However, this policy is broken when he is saved by a woman named Nino, a self-proclaimed native of the planet Venus. To make matters worse, her only wish is to fall in love. Thus, begins Kou's new life under the Arakawa Bridge with a new name, strange lover, and stranger friends...



Spring 2010, Shaft
Directed by Yukihiko Miyamoto

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

HIDAMARI SKETCH



Winter 2007, Shaft
Directed by Akiyuki Shinbo and Ryouta Kamitsubo

Our main protagonist Yuno finally gets accepted to the school of her dreams, Yamabuki Arts High School. Though she is afraid of moving away from her family for the first time, she quickly finds herself at home with a colorful cast of characters, which will help her tackle all the challenges an art student might face. One of the earliest entries in the "cute girls do cute things" genre.

CONTRASTING VISUALS IN MAHOU SHOUJO MADOKA MAGICA

ETHAN CARTER

2ND YEAR, MATH AND DATA SCIENCE

STAFF WRITER

This article is deconstruction of the article genre

Minor spoilers for *Mahou Shoujo Madoka Magica*

Mahou Shoujo Madoka Magica is a very unique anime, in very many ways. Anyone who has seen the show knows this and, for those who haven't, I recommend you fix that. Though I won't be going very much into the story here, the anime is best experienced with as little prior knowledge as possible. In any case, one of the most unique aspects of Madoka is the visuals, particularly the art associated with the witches, the primary antagonistic force for most of the anime.

The art style and designs present in most of the anime, while distinct and very identifiable, don't differ very much from what could be called "typical" of anime (see the cover photo for an example). With lots of bright, vibrant colors and very cute designs, most of the art seems like what one would expect of a magical girl anime. This is thrown right out the window whenever witches are involved, however. Whenever witches appear in the anime, the art style changes to an incredibly unique, surrealistic one, which, visually, resembles paper-cutout collages.



The witch's world, the space inhabited by witches

The art for the witch sections of the anime, as well as the designs of the witches themselves, was done by Gekidan INU

Curry, an animation duo who has worked with Studio Shaft on multiple projects. Their art is inspired by Russian animation and is typically very fantastical, whimsical, and disturbing. All of these qualities are incredibly apparent in their work on Madoka, and provide incredible contrast to the art used elsewhere in the anime. This contrast in art is central to the anime, where the viewer's preconceived ideas about magical girls are contrasted with their reality within the anime.



Madoka, the main character of the anime, and one of the witches

As you can see, the contrast in art style and design between Madoka and the witch is jarring, to say the least. Though quite jarring, the witch's art is not entirely "out of place". As I said, Gekidan INU Curry's art is usually fantastical and whimsical, words which fit perfectly in the description of a typical witch. The landscapes and backgrounds of the witch's world, creepy as they are, are laden with cakes, candies, and other sweets. The small creatures that can be seen are "cute", in a disturbing sort of way. The designs of the witches, too, are fitting, as in the picture above: a queen's crown on her head, a ruff around her neck, and a cute pink bow. The witch art, while used to contrast how viewers typically see magical girls and other fantastic beings, are still quintessentially "magical" and "witchy". Thus, the contrast is further strengthened as these images and designs, which wouldn't feel out of place in a fantastical story like *Alice in Wonderland*, are twisted in such a horrifying, disturbing way.

As with most Shaft productions, the visuals in Madoka are central to the storytelling, and give a very distinct feeling to the show. It is because of these visuals that Madoka is truly an unforgettable experience.



MARCH COMES IN LIKE A LION

JONATHAN QIAN

2ND YEAR, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

STAFF WRITER

And goes out like a lamb.

Minor spoilers for *Sangatsu no Lion*

Sangatsu (3-gatsu) no Lion is a deceptive anime. On the surface, *3-gatsu no Lion* appears to be about shogi and the people that play the game, but in reality, it is a character-driven drama that takes slice-of-life to the next level.

Within the first five minutes of the first episode, the viewer is instantly pulled into the world of the main character, Rei. We see him wake up in a futon in an unfurnished apartment alone, with instant ramen cups and shogi books scattered around the floor. Rei gets up and gets ready for the day in silence, with no emotion on his face at all. There is no excitement for the day, and nothing that Rei seems to be looking forward to; Rei is simply living for the sake of living. As more and more of Rei's past and present is introduced, it is very easy to empathize with Rei and see why he came to this point in his life. The loss of his blood family, the way he was treated by his adoptive family, and the way he had been treated by society drove him into being a timid, passionless teenager. Shogi, the game that Rei once loved to play with his father, became a nine-to-five day job that he dedicated the bare minimum to. Rei had lost his competitive spirit, and would rather stay in mediocrity rather than hurt his opponents by beating them. He is afraid of the world around him because it has never been kind to him.

Enter the Kawamotos.

One day, Rei is forced by his seniors at the shogi hall to go out drinking. At the end of the night, his seniors



From left to right: Akari, Hina, and Momo

abandon him, and Rei passes out drunkenly in the street. He is found by Akari Kawamoto, one of the hostesses at the bars Rei's seniors took him to. Akari takes Rei to her home, where she lives with her two younger sisters, Hina and Momo. For the first time in Rei's life, he is shown unconditional love and care by Akari, who helps him sober up and gives him a safe, warm place to sleep. After that, Akari tells Rei that he is welcome to their home for dinner any time, and manages to get Rei to show up whenever he can. Slowly but surely, Rei learns to trust the sisters and rely on them when he is troubled.



Rei and the Kawamotos

The Kawamotos heal Rei's wounds from the past, and we slowly see Rei break out of his shell and rediscover his competitive spirit. He makes new friends at school thanks to help from his homeroom teacher and finds new joy in a place where he thought he would always be alone in.

While Rei's growth is the focal point of the first season, we also see bits and pieces of the Kawamotos' family history as Rei becomes closer and closer to the three sisters. After a while, it becomes apparent that Rei is helping the sisters heal from the wounds of losing their mother, grandmother, and father. Just like how the Kawamotos give Rei a place of warmth and happiness, Rei helps the Kawamotos with their sweets shop and various chores around the house and help them keep their minds off of their loss. Shaft does an amazing job of fitting all this characterization and depth for the main cast into small interactions, bits of dialogue, and facial expressions that reward the viewer for paying attention. In addition to the main cast, the side characters in *3-gatsu no Lion* contribute significantly to Rei's growth in their own unique way. From Rei's homeroom teacher, to his adoptive sister, to his peers at the shogi hall, Rei learns something different from each of them and matures as a result of those lessons.



Rei finding passion in shogi again

If Rei's growth is the focal point of the first season, then the second season is the reward for all the growth and learning that Rei has done. In the second season, the Kawamotos receive their lion's share of development, especially Hina. Hina transforms from a young, naive teenage girl to a strong, determined young woman who wants to bring happiness to her loved ones. Hina's arc in this season is fantastic; it explores the problem of bullying in a powerful way, yet manages to avoid being too heavy. Hina finds support and comfort in Rei, who swears to protect Hina and help her and her family get through the bullying. We begin to see Rei truly change from a timid, sad teenage boy to a happy, healthy young man who aspires to become the best shogi player in



Season 2 official artwork

the world. The sad, lonely Rei that was presented at the beginning of season one is reborn as a confident, happy young man with aspirations and goals. Rei becomes more aware of the Kawamotos' importance to him and begins to truly integrate himself as a part of their family.

This season is when the characters really begin to feel like real people, and the show rewards you for staying with Rei through the first season. All the events of the previous season have built and shaped the main cast and the side characters, and this season marks a new chapter in many of their lives, especially Rei's. Every side character is given their due screen time, to the point where many of them stop being fictional characters in an anime and instead become relatable or easy to empathize with as humans, no matter what role they happen to play in Rei's life. There's something beautiful about seeing humans grow and change as they experience life, and *3-gatsu no Lion*'s second season captures that beauty fantastically.

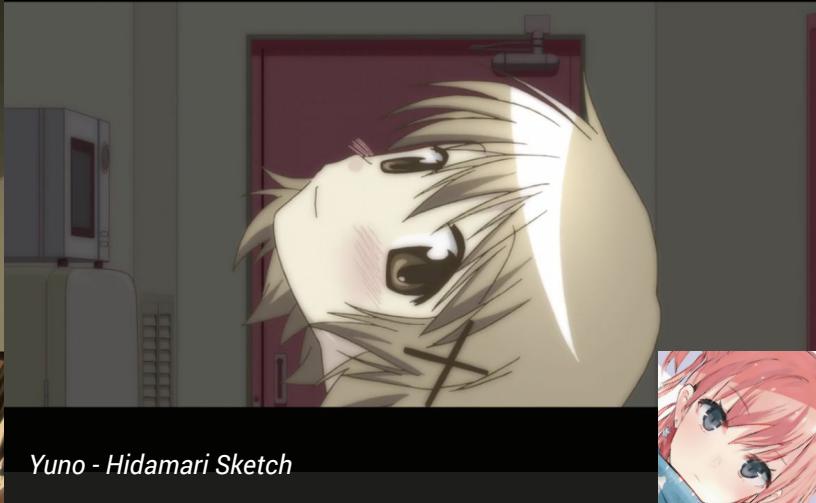
Outside of the amazing writing, Shaft does a phenomenal job with the visuals in both seasons. Chica Umino's art style is captured extremely well, and when combined with Shaft's direction, gives the show its own unique, charming style. Shaft uses lots of visual metaphors that emphasize and illustrate the feelings of different characters. The color palettes are warm during the wholesome scenes, giving the viewer a sense of peace, and the darker, cold colors used during dramatic scenes heighten the tension that much more. Audio-wise, *3-gatsu no Lion* is also rock solid. Every musical track is in its proper place and enhances every scene's atmosphere. The voice acting cast does a great job and delivers important lines with plenty of emotion, making the characters feel that much more real.

Although I may be a bit biased, *3-gatsu no Lion* is truly a beautiful experience and tells an unforgettable story about the human experience that I would recommend to anyone.

STAFF PICKS FAVORITE HEAD-TILTS



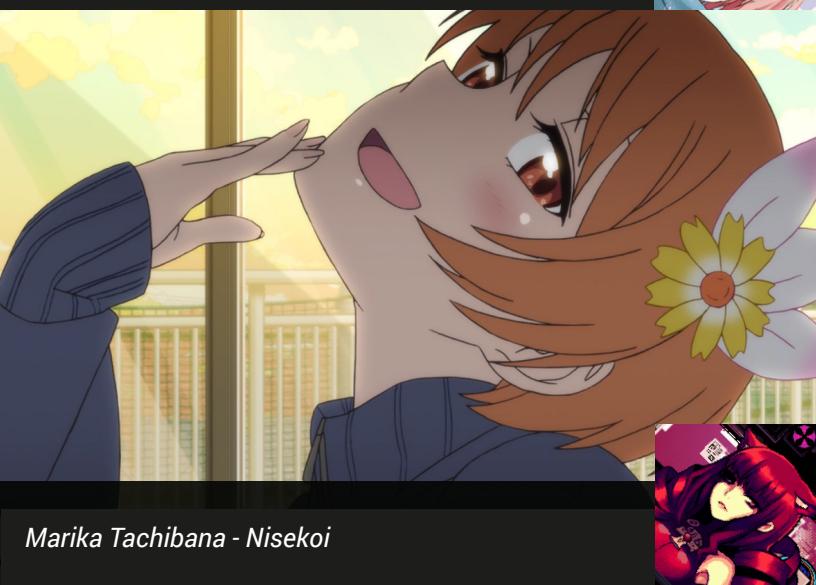
Shinobu Oshino - *Monogatari Series*



Yuno - *Hidamari Sketch*



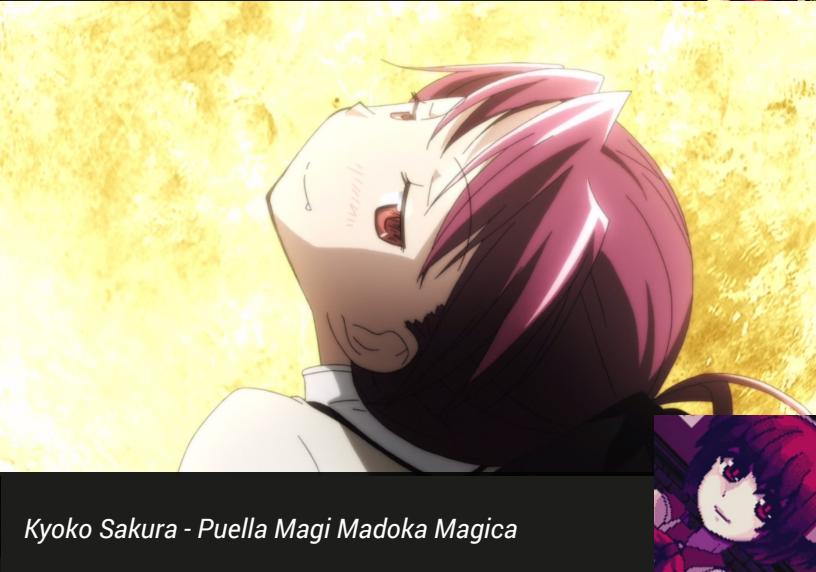
Palutena - *Kid Icarus Uprising*



Marika Tachibana - *Nisekoi*



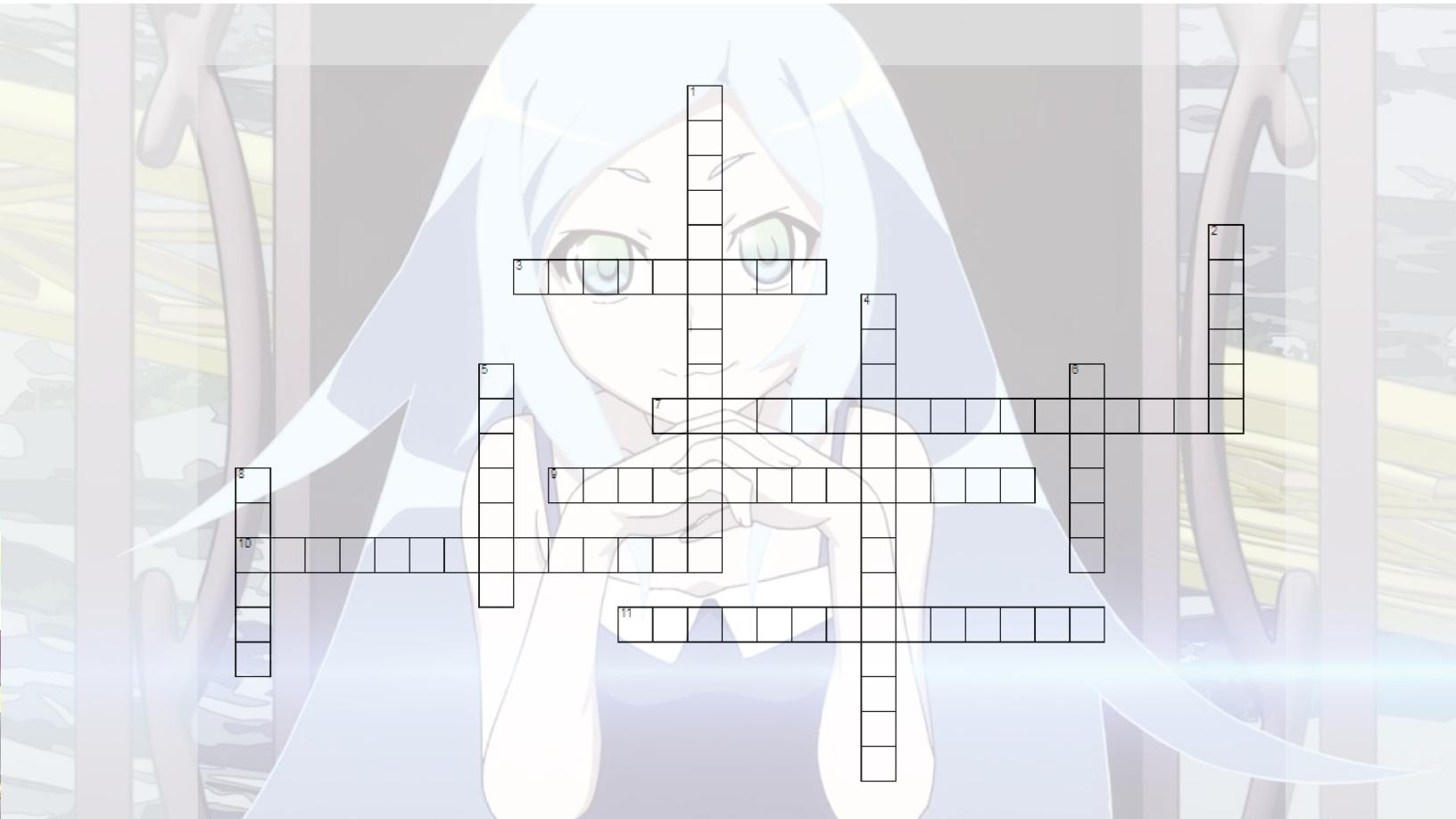
Straizo - *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure: Battle Tendency*



Kyoko Sakura - *Puella Magi Madoka Magica*

S H I A F T

A N I M A T I O N S T U D I O



ACROSS

- 3 Film in which a glass marble determines the future
- 7 Harem with magic girls at a magic school
- 9 Anime about a professional shogi player-turned-high school student
- 10 In which Koyomi Araragi momentarily becomes a member of the undead
- 11 In which Koyomi Araragi helps a weightless girl

DOWN

- 1 In which Koyomi Araragi helps his sisters
- 2 Magic girl who realizes the magic world is not so glamorous
- 4 Anime about a NEET that meets robbers with mysterious eye powers
- 5 Harem with a locket and many, many keys
- 6 Talking motorcycle that accompanies a young girl on her journey
- 8 With forgotten memories, this main character fights in a virtual world

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Crossword Solutions
Across: (1:Fireworks | 3: Nisemonogatari | 5: Bakemonogatari |
7:Hakuno | 8: Madoka | 9 Kagerou Project | 10: Kizumonogatari |
11: Maho Sensei Negima)
Down: (2: Sangatsu no Lion | 4: Nisekor | 6: Hermes)



KYUUBEY
Madoka Magica
Art by Athena Chen