

konshuu

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THE MARATHON ISSUE

Volume XLIII, Issue XII
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Hi there, readers! We've finally reached the end of the semester—and this volume's final issue. As a graduating senior, this is my last semester not only as a member of CAA, but also as an undergraduate student. When I first joined the CAA's publications department, Konshuu's staff was tiny, and Konshuu itself was even tinier. After a lot of hard work, what began as three people working on a two-page newsletter grew to nine people working on a twelve-page magazine. I've seen my fellow staff members grow on multiple levels, and I'm proud to say that I'm leaving this magazine in dedicated, capable hands. My successors as Head of Publications and Managing Editor of Konshuu, respectively, will be Austin Tai and Josh Roque. To the both of you: Congratulations, and good luck!

Now that my "I'm graduating but Konshuu LIVES" announcement is over, I'm going to make an obligatorily sappy farewell. Upon joining CAA, I had no idea that the club and its members would become such a huge part of my life. As a freshman, I was a shut-in; I probably spent more time playing Dragon Nest in my dorm than talking to any real-life person. I joined CAA because I thought that showings would be a good idea for me to get out there and make maybe one friend. What I came to find was that this club has one of the most welcoming communities I've ever known. I think one of the best feelings is the sense that you belong somewhere—that there's a group of people you can rely on, and who can rely on you. There was a point in time (well, to be honest, numerous points in time) at which I felt like I hit rock bottom. Without asking for anything in return, the friends I made in CAA were there for me. I don't think I can fully express how valuable their kindness was. Prior to entering college, I wouldn't have been surprised if someone told me I'd go through four years being essentially invisible. The fact that I have friends who remember my likes and dislikes, laugh at my dumb jokes, keep me from suffocating myself with a plastic bag when I'm drunk (thanks again), and so on... is something that I'll always be grateful for. I have a ridiculous amount of memories with this club, and I'm confident that its continuing members will make sure that it can be as much of a home for anyone else as it was for me. Thanks for everything, CAA. I wish you the best.

TINA "MECHATO" NGUYEN

Head of Publications, CAA

MARATHON SCHEDULE

10:00 AM - 10:50 AM	Bakuon!!	03:00 PM - 03:50 PM	Dimension W
11:00 AM - 11:50 AM	Bungou Stray Dogs	04:00 PM - 04:50 PM	Koutetsujou no Kabaneri
12:00 PM - 12:50 PM	Himouto! Umaru-chan	05:00 PM - 05:50 PM	Short Anime Medley
01:00 PM - 01:50 PM	Lunch	06:00 PM - 06:50 PM	Dinner Break
	Tanaka-kun wa Itsumo Kedaruge	07:00 PM - 07:50 PM	Sousei no Onmyouji
02:00 PM - 02:50 PM	Kuma Miko	08:00 PM - 10:00 PM	Kokoro ga Saketabigatterunda



When it comes to popular fandoms in the anime community, there are many titles that immediately come to mind. Titles like One Piece, Bleach, and Naruto, collectively known as the Big Three, have gone on for years and built a strong following in that time. Series like Shingeki no Kyojin, Tokyo Ghoul, and Shigatsu wa Kimi no Uso burn brightly for a single moment before fading back into obscurity. And then there are series like Neon Genesis Evangelion, Tengen Topka Gurren Lagann, and Death Note, which persist even after their times have gone. Still, there are those such as Gintama, Ginga Eiyen Densetsu, and Hajime no Ippo, series that have a small yet rather extremely vocal following. It is plain to see that what is popular is different for many people and changes over time. However, there are a select few that have undisputedly motivated greater fandoms than those mentioned above. The fandoms that I speak of are those that belong to Touhou Project and Kantai Collection.

Before you try to dismiss that statement and explain why your fandom is the very best that no one ever was, allow me to elaborate. A majority of fandoms never extend past simply reading/watching and liking the source material; those that go the extra step motivate fanfictions, ships, shipping wars, and the like. On the other hand, Touhou and KanColle have motivated so much passion and so much innovation that the two have regularly been pub-stompers at Comiket, the largest market for fan-made otaku goods, as well as regular powerhouses on Pixiv, the equivalent of DeviantArt in East Asia. And this is nothing new either; Touhou has been

at it since the early 2000s, KanColle since 2010. At present, there are no signs that either train is stopping; rather, they're getting more momentum as more people learn about them.



In fact, when you observe the differences between certain types of fandoms, the results are rather astounding. Fandoms of the former type tend to be very passive and inactive; they are only vocal about their interests via the written and spoken word. On the other hand, the fandoms of Touhou Project and Kantai Collection are the makers and the visionaries of the modern anime scene. Not to make a mockery of the other fandoms, but their stories lack the ability to motivate art, song, and dance. Or do they? What decisively makes these series so different that they cannot motivate creation in the same way that Touhou and KanColle do? To answer this, we will take a look at the history and elements of each of these two games and see what could've led to them become as popular as they are, because ultimately there is no single answer that accounts for the success that they have motivated.



"In the beginning, ZUN created Gensokyo and his own beer brand," or so the story goes. In reality, however, the beginning of the Touhou Project was nothing particularly noteworthy, as many have already figured out. As he himself has expressed in numerous interviews, ZUN made games because he didn't like any of the ones that were out, and thus he decided to make the kinds of games he likes. To do so, he self-taught himself the necessary coding skills, and after honing his skills and making some earlier titles, ZUN took his first two titles, *Highly Responsive to Prayers* and *The Story of Eastern Wonderland*, to Comiket, where he had a surprising amount of success; this success has continued on into the present, where Touhou Project has become a phenomenon both in and outside of Japan.

The story follows Reimu Hakurei, the local shrine maiden, as she deals with incidents in which powerful beings threaten the balance of Gensokyo, the fantasy realm where the story takes place. At its essence, Touhou Project is a danmaku game, a bullet hell where you must take efforts to dodge many projectiles while advancing through stages that progressively grow more treacherous. Usually, there are six stages, each with a mid-boss and a stage boss that utilize spell cards, which are a core element of the game: The boss unleashes a specific barrage of bullets upon the player until the player either dispels it or waits it out entirely. After defeating the six stages, players gain access to an extra stage, which while being only a single stage, has a boss with an absurd amount of spell cards. Though the game may seem short, even getting through the easiest difficulty has proven challenging for the inexperienced, and mastering the game takes days upon days of figuring out the patterns of the stages.

It should come as no surprise to anybody that the most persistent and popular element of Touhou is the cast of characters. Very bold and colorful to say the least, ZUN's player characters and bosses are all memorable at first sight, and those playing on higher difficulties of the games will get to know them disgustingly well after being fodder for them dozens of times. However,

while it is ZUN who lays out the frameworks for these characters, it is often the fanbase that instills these characters with personality through their fanworks, taking them and building upon their few shown traits, or taking them to the very ends of the extremes. Although ZUN's artistic skills are somewhat questionable, there is no doubt that he is very careful and detailed with his character designs, and his fans usually end up being the ones to make up for this perceived shortcoming.

For those who do not believe that the characters are the most enticing part of the series, it definitely has to be the music. ZUN codes the game, draws the characters with his unflattering artistic talent, and even composes the tracks. What can't he do? Not much it seems, especially if you've listened to the tracks from the games. Catchy, somber, vibrant, distorted; these tracks are whatever ZUN needs for the stage he has in mind, and he does a pretty damn good job of it. In fact, the music is so crucial for the game that he designs a soundtrack first, and then designs the entirety of the stage around it to make certain visual cues and such match up. With music as good as ZUN's, it's no wonder that people have remixed his songs as much as they have. All the proof you need is in what may possibly be the most notorious music video in the Touhou fandom: *Bad Apple*.

While the community that ZUN has made may grow or stagnate unpredictably, it will continue to be a community for a very long time. ZUN has stated that he can only make Touhou games, and he will continue to do so even if he doesn't have any fans, as he makes his games for himself first and his fans second. In spite of the nostalgia for some of the older titles, ZUN's games have never ceased to gather a following of people new to the fandom while reigniting the interest of those already part of it. Not only that, but because his characters and concepts are based around Japanese mythology, it is highly unlikely that he will run out of material, and even if he does, the man with the beret will come up with something so long as he has a desire to create more Touhou.



For those in the know, DMM.com makes a great many games like KanColle, although a majority of them fall in the realm of NSFW. In fact, KanColle itself was considered to be a highly obscure title, albeit popular for the site, and was very likely to remain unknown to all but a select niche. As fate would have it, KanColle gained its game-changing moment when Hirako, a mangaka, had an outburst on Twitter where his followers witnessed a hilarious rant about the game, leading to people actually seeing what it was about. As a result of this exposure, KanColle had a player base of 500,000 players within 3 months, 10 times the original expected amount of players. In fact, the influx of new players is so great that potential players had to get in via online lottery hosted on certain days and hours of the week.

While both Touhou Project and Kantai Collection are exclusive to computers, that is where the base similarities end. Whereas Touhou is a bullet hell game that progresses level by level, KanColle is very distinctly a modern online game. In KanColle, the player is constrained by the amount of resources they have (which of course recharge at a snail's pace), various sufferings inflicted by RNG in ship-building and map traversing, and the collection system itself, in which ships are collected as cards that must be developed by leveling. Unlike most collection-type games, however, the player is not bound by micro-transactions; all players are equally frowned upon by RNG and must work for the ships and benefits they want. In fact, the only real benefit from paying to play the game is to expand the amount of ships you can have or increase the rate at which resources are spent on the heartbreak of failing the RNG.

As one would expect, KanColle is like Touhou in that it is character-centric; in this case, the characters are the ship girls. Not only are these characters voiced, but you are their admiral, so they follow you with unerring loyalty and treat you with the utmost reverence (except for Akebono). While people's tastes differ and should lead them to be drawn to different ship girls, there are

a great deal of ship girls that tend to get more attention than others. The very animated Kongou is often the first ship that comes to mind, the red-blue pairing of Akagi and Kaga is definitively popular, the destroyers Hibiki and Inazuma have a special place in everyone's hearts, and who could ever forget the peppy Shimakaze? And of course, ships come into the spotlight when they are introduced via a new event or get a new remodel. The ship girls of KanColle are the whole reason why the title has become as popular as it is right now.

Although KanColle's game setting is in the World War II era, how the story of the game works exactly is never explained. Are these girls literally the personifications of the ships they are named after, or are they girls that have taken the names of these ships and now follow in their legacies? This vagueness leads to many possibilities, which of course is fuel for any fandom to take advantage of. The recent anime adaptation of the game maintains that these girls are the reincarnations of the ships, but fans have all offered their own different explanations for what exactly the KanColle universe is in their fanworks, some being mild and cute, others intensely serious and dark.

Kantai Collection truly is something special, and while it shines brightly, its time may be coming sooner than most may anticipate. The reason for this is because unlike Touhou Project, KanColle is running out of material to work with. There are only so many ships that the game can make, only so many remodels that they can give ships before they become redundant. The game has gotten to the point where at present, the developers are using the ships of other WWII entities such as Germany and Italy, and because of the scarce number of historical events to work with, new events are based upon "what if" scenarios (because spoiler alert, Japan and the Axis Powers lost WWII). Of course, it is well known that series that keep going tend to drag on, so perhaps it is for the best that KanColle has a limited lifetime.



For all of the things that make Touhou Project and Kantai Collection different, they have experienced similar amounts of success and developed highly similar fandoms. Is this the difference between a fandom built upon written material and a fandom developed around a game? It is difficult to make such a call, but there is definitely a correlation in this observation. Written material follows a distinct story guided by the author, whereas what happens in games tend to be determined by the player. Written material is current until it ends; games tend to be updated regularly and have replay value. Written material has details that serve to advance a plot, but games create worlds that call attention to small yet important details. There are many more differences, and they are all plain as daylight, so it is only natural that differences should arise in the ways that fanbases form.

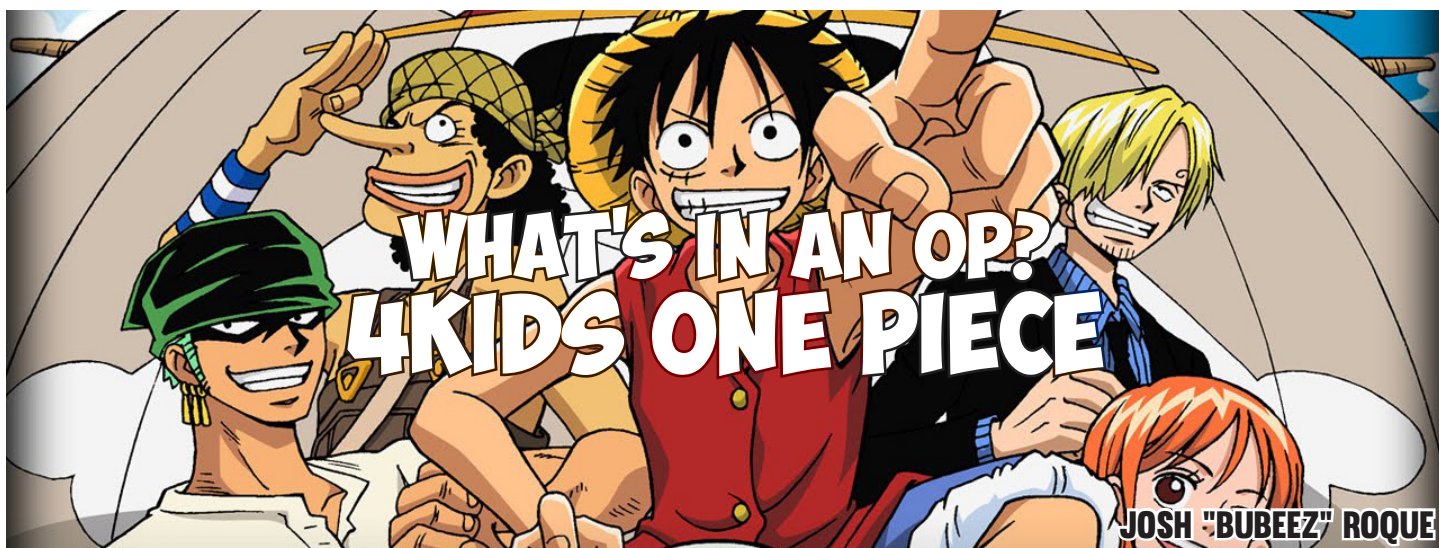
There is absolutely no doubt that memorable and aesthetically pleasing characters are key to generating a fandom. In fact, this is relevant even in other anime and written works; Kamina defined Gurren Lagann, while Levi, Mikasa, and Eren were the interesting elements that motivated Shingeki no Kyojin. However, the game fandoms are different from these examples for three reasons: first, they have a titanic selection of characters that fans can work with; second, they are nearly all female characters, as it is no secret that the majority of otaku are young to middle-aged males; third, the characters of the games have personalities that are rather clearly demonstrated, but nothing beyond that constrains the ability to create content for them.

An interesting point of note is that, while these titles have reached the west with their popularity, they started as, and technically still remain, available only to Japan; Touhou Project is still working to get international releases with certain dealers, and Kantai Collection is region-locked entirely, requiring the use of a proxy server to access it from outside of Japan. While this may seem counterintuitive at first, it allows the best of the fanbases

from the east to gain exposure in the west; this is seen via Nicovideo and its Miku Miku Dance renditions, Pixiv artists, cosplay, and the ever infamous doujinshi. These works by fans not only raise exposure, but also motivate other fans to produce fanworks of their own. But while these constraints may have been advantageous earlier on, it seems to be at that point where imports would help boost their success internationally. The makers have not expressed interest in doing so, however.

There are game series such as THE IDOLM@STER that have met similar requirements to the above two, so how have they not achieved the same legendary levels of success that Touhou and KanColle have experienced? Is it a lack of ability for the fans to contribute to an already well-defined setting of characters? I hypothesize that it is exactly that; as the characters are defined in such stunning detail and have exclusive character tracks, there isn't much for fans to add that hasn't already been clarified by the Word of God. Fans tend to be most creative when they have the least amount of restrictions placed upon their ability to generate material, and this tends to be most relevant when the setting and/or characters are vague enough for them to do so. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as THE IDOLM@STER has a titanic following, but it does result in a different kind of fandom than the kind seen with Touhou and KanColle.

What is set to be the next big title to join Touhou Project and Kantai Collection amongst the immortal stars in the sky? Many speculate that the currently Japan-exclusive mobile game Granblue Fantasy is set to assume such a position, and given its RPG typing, would continue the trend of not actually having any pertinent gameplay similarities to its two predecessors. It is too soon to say anything definitive of this series, although it does seem to be highly promising, especially since it will be getting an official port in the west. Regardless of how well it does and the types of fans it inspires, it has people that appreciate it for what it is; perhaps that is the only important part of having a fandom.



Warning: This is complete satire. No actual spoilers!

Today we ask the pertinent question: What's in an OP? How about the OP for OP? Well, if we're talking about One Piece, then its OP is definitely the 4Kids opening. People often overlook the deep symbolism rooted in its visual and audio cues; they reveal the story and characters in a nuanced, effective way; one could say that, while innocent and charming in appearance, it is definitely 4Adults. Let's take a closer, line-by-line examination and see just how this opening operates.

we notice that the scroll has been awkwardly rolled up by the same hand, leading to large folds in between the "slides" of images in the scroll. Yes, the creators of the opening accurately guessed that all narrative structure and visual style will be destroyed by the hand of... you guessed it, Eiichiro Oda. His hand begins the narrative by opening the scroll, just as Oda began the narrative by creating it; the folds in each slide represent the numerous cracks in logic and plot holes offered by One Piece. In fact, I am completely convinced that one of those crumpled folds represents the narrative mess known as "The Void Century."



It begins with a narration dictated by the same voice as Brock from Pokémon, a famous Rock-type gym leader and a solid choice for setting up One Piece. A hand opens a scroll above the title "One Piece," revealing a man about to be executed by two unknown soldiers; while this scroll is obviously a way to indicate past events, you can notice that the scroll itself is tattered and ripped on both the top and the bottom. This slight detail leads us to believe that although this represents the canon past of the world of One Piece, it will soon be left destroyed, ripped apart, and far from its original design. The hand that opened the scroll may or may not have caused this, but going further into the opening,



As the narration ends, pirate ships unfurl their sails and take to the open sea; the camera moves farther backward as "the pirates set sail for the Grand Line." Notice here that the camera moves farther and farther away from the horizon line that the pirate ships are heading toward. This is a blatant nod to the fact that the One Piece only seems to get further and further away. Later in the series, hundreds of episodes seem to chronicle the distractions set by the main characters; as they progress, the One Piece becomes a more distant until it ultimately disappears into the sunset.

Who are these characters? Well, the 4Kids opening gives just what you need.

"Dreamin', don't give it up Luffy!"



Here, we are introduced to the loveable protagonist, a rubber man with odd proportions; Coby stands in the background, a surprised look on his face.

"Dreamin', don't give it up Zolo!"

The screen cuts Luffy's image into two, simultaneously introducing "the guy with the swords." Holding two swords in his hands and one in his mouth represents his inability to do much else other than slash at the air with whatever body part is available; whether this describes his ability as a swordsman or hints to a later development as a sword-swallower is left unknown.

"Dreamin', don't give it up Nami!"



Again, the screen is cut by a sword during the transition between Zolo and Nami; this either symbolizes Zolo's poor accuracy or his dislike of Nami. It could go either way. It is worth mentioning that Nami is the only one

actually fighting anything in this sequence, perhaps to highlight her as the bruiser of the crew. Notice, too, that Nami gets an extra Dreamin' at the end of her sequence, which is noticeably longer than either Luffy's or Zolo's. Perhaps this sets her up as the most complicated and emphatic character. It's obvious that her story can't be finished in less than the first fifty episodes, and that it's too complex to be brought up again after that. If you watch the show, you know that there is definitely more of the crew and more dreams to not give up—yet, they are omitted here. Why? Most likely because they will all give up on their dreams, unlike these three. All Blue? I have no idea what you're talking about.



I bet you are wondering at this point, "What are these dreams, exactly?" I'm glad you asked! 4Kids delivers with some tasteful rap:

*"Here's how the story goes. We find out,
'bout the treasure of the Grand Line, there's no doubt,
the pirate who's eye is on it, he'll sing,
I'll be King of the Pirates, I'm gonna be king!"*

While the delivery seems literal, there are some complex events happening visually. Luffy falls down from a boat, and an actual, physical pile of treasure appears over the line "treasure of the Grand Line, there's no doubt." Well, this is quite a spoiler, over 700 episodes in the making. There is no doubt, indeed; that small pile of treasure is the One Piece. And whoever's eye is on it, yes he'll sing, and he'll be King of the Pirates, and he's gonna be king.

There are some disparate opinions on this moment. While the narration and image of treasure is quite telling, an image of a map with an "X" flashes across the screen before a series of pirates looking menacingly at the camera. Perhaps this map, then, represents the journey to the Grand Line. Notably, the first pair of eyes has a

drop of water fall in front of them, a representation of the sea. Since the map appears in between the treasure scene and the pirate scene, perhaps the King of the Pirates will be the one who can fully appreciate the journey rather than the goal, the open sea rather than the island of treasure. However, anyone who buys into that logic is a fool. There is a crown visibly protruding from the pile of gold. Checkmate.



Moving on, we now understand the world, the mission, and the power of not giving up. The question begs to be asked: "What is to be expected of the journey? What is going to be done? What of the characters and their interactions with the world?" Leave it to the brilliant 4Kids to take advantage of this logical jump:

"His name is Luffy! That's Monkey D. Luffy, King of the Pirates! He's made of rubber, how did that happen? Yo ho ho, he took a bite of Gum Gum!"

Here, we see Luffy's static role come out; notice that there are no enemies present, and Luffy stands stationary on his ship. No crew members, enemies, passerby, no one. We see Luffy in a new light, as a false figurehead to the crew, an attention hog who wants nothing but singular renown. However, in the next scene, we get a taste of who Luffy's main antagonist will be. Dracule Mihawk is, throughout the entire opening, the only person that Luffy intentionally fights. Mihawk's eyes are also the ones that stare into the droplet of water. Their eternal rivalry is locked in at this point.



"His name's Zolo, he looks just like a samurai, and an L-A-D-Y, Nami's not shy, Usopp's doin' that marksman thing, Sanji's cookin'... Chopper's doctoring."

Why does Zolo only "look" like a samurai? Well, it is quite obvious; up until this point, Zolo fights a total of zero enemies. In fact, the only way we see him is in odd poses that show off his muscles and swords. Nami, already seen as the crew's powerhouse, fights yet ANOTHER enemy in her sequence. In total, Nami has fought over eight pirates. Usopp does his marksman thing, true to his word. By fighting at least one pirate, he has eclipsed Zolo in terms of fighting ability. Sanji cooks and Chopper doctors, not much to say about that. However, it is worth mentioning that Zolo attacks several pirates towards the end of the opening; perhaps foreshadowing that Zolo will unexpectedly rise in power towards the end of the series.



Finally, a hand traces a line through a map in one of the final shots, cutting through land and ocean towards the "X." Where have we seen this hand before? You guessed it, Eiichiro Oda once again, slashing his finger across the screen. He draws a straight line that completely ignores the borders between land and sea; it is as if he had visualized a journey that he is actually incapable of making, and poor planning has led to... a shot of another horizon, zooming outward and away, with the line "in the name of the treasure in the Grand Line." This image reinforces the "getting further and further away from the goal" motif. Clearly, the One Piece is getting further away only because of his questionable planning over a decade ago.



And that, my friends, is 4Kids' genius scheme of making Eiichiro Oda look bad.

RECOMMENDED BY CAA

AJIN, Anime



Aurora13: Awesome show; a bit spoiled by weird 3D graphics, but totally worth it!

BOKU NO HERO ACADEMIA, Anime



Juju: It's a well-known and popular manga with great visuals and a storyline that gives some major feels at times.

AKATSUKI NO YONA, Anime



Cassie Sonne: One of the best shoujo series recently made, Akatsuki no Yona (Yona of the Dawn) has it all: a protagonist who shows great growth, a bit of political intrigue, a cast of characters with great chemistry, epic moments, and a fantastic soundtrack!

BUNGOU STRAY DOGS, Manga



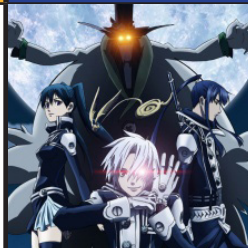
mechato: Bungou Stray Dogs' characters are based on famous authors, and they have supernatural abilities based on literary works; this series is a bookworm's dream come true.

ANSATSU KYOSHITSU, Manga



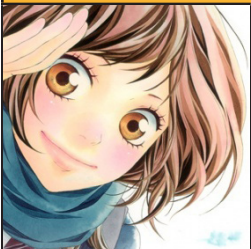
Sturgeon: The premier shounen that everybody should read.

D. GRAY-MAN, Anime



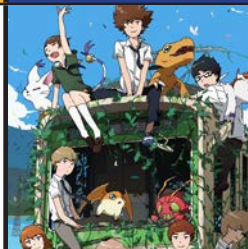
Katie: Because it's D. Gray-Man.

AO HARU RIDE, Manga



Morgan Fong: The most realistic shoujo I've ever read (and boy I've read a lot of shoujo).

DIGIMON ADVENTURE TRI, Anime



Lily: Watch it if you wanna go down memory-lane and sing along to new versions of your favorite openings and endings.

BERSERK, Manga



Young: Awesome, super HQ action.

GASH BELL, Manga



Arch: Got milk?

RECOMMENDED BY CAA

GOD EATER, Anime



Winston Lin: While its plot resembles that of Attack on Titan, God Eater features one of the most beautiful art styles I have ever seen in anime.

MAWARU PENGUINDRUM, Anime



Edo: Penguins, forbidden love, and terrorism come together to form this anime that can be described as “a literary analyst’s wet dream.”

HAKKA DOLL, Anime



Potatoex: A short comedic anime that slams too many parodies and Japanese memes; it has a cross-dressing boy too!

OOKAMI KODOMO, Anime



John Zhang: This series really makes you consider returning to nature.

INAKA ISHA, Anime



Jonah: It won the grand prize at the Hiroshima International Film Festival, the Ofuji Noburo Award from the Mainichi Shinbun Film Awards, and is short enough that it doesn’t take up too much time.

OYASUMI PUNPUN, Manga



Bubeez: If you like dark storytelling, realism, horror, and bird characters free from creepy romance visual novels, then you’ll like Oyasumi PunPun even feather.

KAGUYA-SAMA WA KOKURASETAI, Manga



jagaimo: I really can’t adequately describe how cute and funny this (way underrated) manga is in just one sentence, but my heart rate basically triples every time I read a chapter.

RED DATA GIRL, Anime



bamboo: Red Data Girl was an okay anime. (‘ω’)

KOBATO, Manga



cozziekuns: Love triangles, mafia mobsters, and magical miracles; just another day at your average neighborhood kindergarten.

SHIROBAKO, Anime



Justin P: Shirobako is an enthralling comedy/drama about anime production that will have you cheering on the main cast as they continually grow through success and failure in pursuing what they love.

Konshuu proudly accepts
guest submissions from club members!
If you'd like to have content featured,
please submit to:
J.MP/KONSUB

KONSHUU STAFF

Managing Editor: Tina Nguyen

Layout Editors: Edward Hong, Nimsi Garcia

Writers: Aaron Chon, Andrew Oeung,
Andy Chen, Austin Tai, Josh Roque

Illustrator: Rika Sato

WEEKLY EVENTS

Anime Showings and Socials

Mondays, 7:00 - 10:00pm

Manga Socials

Thursdays, 5:30 - 6:30pm

Game Nights

Thursdays, 7:30 - 10:00pm

SEE YOU NEXT SEMESTER!

