

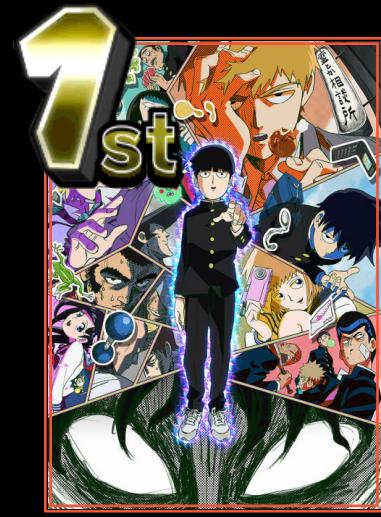
**Forger Family**  
*SpyXFamily*  
Art By Heaven Jones



# KONSHUU

vol. 55 #10  
Top 10

# CAA'S TOP 10 A



1st  
Mob Psycho 100



2nd  
Neon Genesis Evangelion



3rd  
Steins;Gate



4th  
Violet Evergarden



5th  
Code Geass



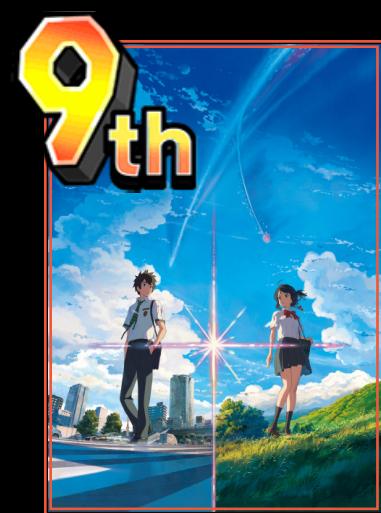
6th  
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure



7th  
Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood



8th  
HUNTER×HUNTER (2011)



9th  
Your Name



10th  
Kaguya-sama: Love Is War

## Honorable Mentions:



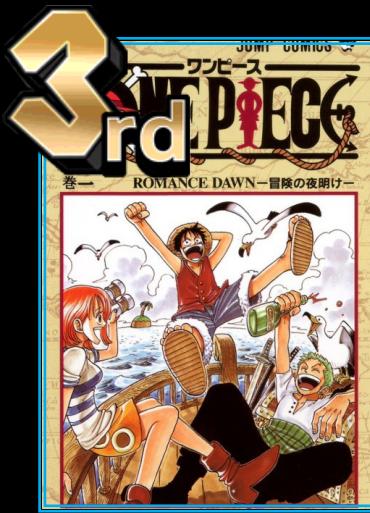
# NIME & MANGA



Chainsaw Man



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure



One Piece



One Punch Man



Oyasumi Punpun



Kaguya-sama: Love Is War



Jujutsu Kaisen



SPY×FAMILY

## Honorable Mentions:



Attack on Titan



Berserk

# THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED SERIES!



# THE INCOMPLETE DATA SET



NICHOLAS WONOSAPUTRA

3rd Year, Neurobiology and Psychology

I paused *Xenoblade 3* to write this

Writer

A common factor present throughout most of my favorite pieces of media (*Code Geass*, *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*, *Genealogy of the Holy War*) seems to be a large cast of recurring, diverse characters that all hold a consistent stake in a central conflict. It's difficult to define what makes a cast large, especially when there's such a high variability in screen time and characterization, but I like to think of it as a group of twenty or more characters trying to play chess on a single board, all at the same time. Obviously, the game is going to be unplayable if everyone moves a piece at the same time, so some concessions are made to decide who moves when.



This culling of the chaos, or at least the attempt at doing so, is what makes stories so endlessly fascinating to me. In the real world, this comes in the form of the various institutions that try to keep society together. The lack of a perfect system leads to constant systemic exploitation and conflict, which often lead to horrifying results.

So what, then, is the role of conflict in fiction? Is it just meant to add to the horror? For some authors, that might be the intention, but at the end of the day, I believe it does the opposite. In trying to learn the rationale of conflict, we're really trying to understand another viewpoint. Since this is fictional, the actual content of the conflict has (or perhaps more accu-



rately, should have) no bearing on real life. This would ideally mean that you aren't distracted by the need to take sides, as the role of the audience member is that of an observer.

Observing a multitude of simulated viewpoints tends to be especially engaging because the work is challenging you to understand the other. This is incentivized when characters take these limited understandings into account when executing plans with varying success. These intellectual interactions between characters simultaneously construct a web of relationships which contribute to a sense of scale, especially when this web spans across a multitude of nations.

It's no surprise that I like stories about understanding others, as I've dedicated my life to the pursuit of the truths of the human mind. Finding truths, from a scientific perspective, requires the accumulation of a lot of data. A grandiose scale tricks me into believing that I have the data points I need in front of me, and that I just need to interpret the data. However, this is logically not the case, because these fictional characters exist only when they are observed by the audience, and are thus severely incomplete. It seems that *Code Geass* has uniquely tricked me into believing that these characters exist beyond the artifice, as I'm provided enough data to project my own experiences and, perhaps more importantly, anime experience to complete the set. The latter makes *Code Geass* the All for One of anime, only growing in strength the more anime I consume.

# TOUCHDOWN INTO THE TOP 10



**MITCHELL MADAYAG**

2nd Year, Japanese and Economics

How come no one's made a fantasy football isekai yet?

**Editor-In-Chief**

If some otherworldly power were to strike and prevent me from reading manga ever again, I honestly wouldn't be too disappointed as I'm already quite satisfied with the wide array of awe-inspiring series I have had the pleasure of reading. I'm making quite a bold statement because these days, I find it infrequent that I stumble upon manga that can break into my top 20 favorites, let alone my top 10. I've read my fair share of manga throughout the years, typically those leaning towards battle shōnen and seinen themes, but lightning in a bottle phenomenon like *Dragon Ball* and *Berserk* are stories I deeply admire and can never see being replicated. Needless to say, what I've read is but a mere drop in the evergrowing ocean of Japanese graphic novels waiting to be discovered. In five years or so, I could possibly see my top 10 list changing tremendously as it's not like I am blindly defending my favorites as flawless masterpieces. I thought Naoki Urasawa's *20th Century Boys* would forever stay in my top 5 but it's slowly been pushed into the #12 spot over time. In the end, it all comes down to luck if I happen to find another manga I can deeply enjoy and thus, I continue reading in the pursuit of uncovering Japan's finest works.



That brings me to the tale of my chance encounter with Riichirou Inagaki and Yusuke Murata's *Eyeshield 21* earlier this year. Having read their later works like *Dr. Stone* and *One Punch Man*

respectively, I figured I might as well look into this precursory collaboration between two well-known mangaka. Since it was still winter break at the time, I decided to borrow the first volume that happened to be at my local library, a special place in my heart that had first introduced me to manga. To my surprise, the beginning of *Eyeshield 21* greatly impressed me, despite its simple setup of Deimon High School's amateur American football club aiming for the Christmas Bowl. Although the club itself originally consisted of only three members—not nearly enough people to form a team—this surprisingly well-rounded trio of the devious and vulgar captain and quarterback Youichi Hiruma, the kind-hearted but determined center lineman Ryokan Kurita, and the short and wimpy running back Sena Kobayakawa would be the cornerstones of bringing success to the Deimon Devil Bats. Their first match together would be nothing short of amazing. Even if the rest of the team were composed of amateur athletes who were blackmailed by Hiruma, the game against the Koigahama Cupids (you'll see clever name puns like this throughout) was down to the wire. The match may have spanned over a few chapters, but I could feel the tension and adrenaline conveyed through Murata's use of smear lines and panel placement. It gave me a similar rush I felt when reading other popular sports manga like Takehiko Inoue's *Slam Dunk* where I was unsure whether our titular protagonists would prevail. Combine this with smaller subplots happening both on and off the field between plays, the pacing was just right for an introduction of what's to come. That was the trigger that made me realize I was going to love *Eyeshield 21*, so I went back to the library to check out every other volume that was available.

As the story progresses, *Eyeshield 21*'s ensemble cast grows with many lovable characters being introduced. When the Deimon Devil Bats eventually recruit enough dedicated players to no longer need to abduct students from other clubs, it becomes a special moment in the story that shows how far these boys have come and how many people they've inspired with their dreams. Each player on the team has a purpose and even some characters who seem bland at first are more fleshed out later on. They are all constantly developing as they persevere through hardships in and out of the sport, which touches on inner conflicts one could relate to regardless if they play football or not. This colorful cast is what I would designate as *Eyeshield 21*'s strongest trait. Though it's not a unique strength for a sports manga, the overall quality of the characters extend beyond just the main team. Everyone, including rival teams, are given compelling backstories that provide context to each of their individual goals, personal struggles, and reasons for playing American football. Some characters who originally played the antagonist



*Hey, if you haven't caught the memo yet, all the other series I've mentioned so far are worth checking out, too!*

role grew on me and made me wish that they could all just win and be happy. Furthermore, the attention to detail that Inagaki and Murata put into almost every character they craft sold me on them feeling like real people, all while they retain that shōnen flair. After most chapters (in the physical version as far as I know), seemingly useless but neat facts about the cast are provided, including but not limited to physical stats, lifting records, bag contents, junior high graduation notes, and room layouts. These tidbits are just fun extras that bring charm to each character, even if they don't necessarily add any depth. There is also action often happening in the background of panels (usually for comedic purposes), breathing life to the world outside of the main focus shown in front of us. Being able to balance the attention between most of the 22 players on the field, as well as the spectators is an incredible feat that *Eyeshield 21* pulls off so well. With so many different personalities from all walks of life coming into contact with one another, it's never a dull moment no matter which group of characters the story follows for the time being.



To be honest, I've never really been an avid fan of American football. I don't hold anything personal against the sport as I never was someone who got invested into televised sports. Yet, *Eyeshield 21* captivated me with its thrilling story full of many lighthearted moments, memorable characters across the board, and gorgeous art graced by Murata. Even if you're not that knowledgeable with the sport like I once was, the characters train Sena on the rules and other intricacies of football, guiding readers along as well (I even got my mother to read it). Dynamic themes of always finding the resolve to get back on your feet are constantly reiterated through new perspectives, which shows that both amateurs and prodigies still have much to learn. It may be as cliche as it sounds, but I believe coming of age stories like *Eyeshield 21* don't need to deviate from the basic formula to inspire. Wholesome I didn't necessarily become a fan of American football, but a fan of the Deimon Devil Bats. Being invested in Sena and his friends felt akin to watching my own high school team play because I was able to follow both storylines on a personal level. Funnily enough, my high school's mascot was a blue devil.



If you haven't got the message already, I absolutely loved the hilarious and compelling *Eyeshield 21*. For this write-up, I had to reread some chapters, which almost tempted me into a full re-read. There are definitely criticisms to be made against the series, especially with how it handles racism, but I aimed to treat this article as a big appreciation post for *Eyeshield 21*. Regardless, fans of American football, sports manga, Inagaki's writing, Murata's art, or all of the above are encouraged to read *Eyeshield 21*. Recency bias could be a part of it, but my enjoyment with this wholesome shōnen classic put it as my 10th favorite manga of all time, just ahead of Q Hayashida's *Dorohedoro*, Ken-go Hanazawa's *I Am a Hero*, and the aforementioned *20th Century Boys*. Sure, it's on the verge of being out of my top 10, but for the time being, *Eyeshield 21* left a great enough impression on me to cross into the spotlight. One step is all you need for a touchdown anyways.



# THE 2 CENT CORNER

**Why do you think anime and Japanese pop culture in general has become more mainstream in America in the past few years?**



**Tony T.**  
Managing Editor

"Probably because Netflix and other big names got into the industry along with how people were stuck inside for a while with the pandemic."



**Miranda Zhang**  
Graphic Designer  
and Artist

"I think Japanese pop culture has always been on the rise, but anime specifically has recently improved in terms of animation quality, accessibility, and marketing (in America), which definitely attracts more people to try it out. Plus, we were stuck indoors for over a year, so it was a perfect time to find new media to consume. Considering the size of recent conventions, it's really surprising how big anime has become!"



**Heaven Jones**  
Artist

"I think with an audience more opened to watching subbed anime over dubbed led to more studios choosing to not spend as much money on dubbing, leading to more Japanese pop culture being more in the limelight since more of them get greenlight for overseas releases. Also the internet has helped with this, I became open to watching Spy x Family because seeing all of the memes and reviews of it, and I am sure I am not the only person who has discovered anime this way."



**Celestino Morote**  
Graphic Designer

"I think the surge of streaming services have influenced in making Japanese pop culture more mainstream since it gave more accessibility to this type of media."



**Kev Wang**  
Writer

"I feel like it's more of a shift of what's popular rather than a change in popularity. Anime has been popular in America for ages. Everyone used to watch Pokemon, Naruto, Dragon Ball before they even knew it was called anime. But now that the children who watched those shows have grown up, they're seeking different types of anime than from when they were young, which is why we see anime develop into the state it is today."



**Sharrel Narsico**  
Artist

"I think anime and Japanese pop culture became more mainstream as the people who were exposed to anime in their childhood grew up and kept watching. Perhaps Japanese pop culture interest rose up with that? It's actually quite fascinating to see the effects! We have people making reviews on almost fifty-year-old anime, and we have people reviewing the newer ones—both are bound by their fascination for these Japanese animated stories!"

## What is an "underrated" series you wish more people knew about?

"Dragon Ball."

"Big Windup! I mentioned this in a previous issue, but I love the characterizations of the main cast and the main character is just so endearing. It's a baseball anime, so if you like sports anime, I really recommend it!"

"I don't really have an underrated series, I mainly just follow what I find good and that tends to be everything mainstream. I guess I can argue that *Sailor Moon Crystal* is underrated, I prefer it more than the famed 90s *Sailor Moon* because of how close to it is to the plot of the manga and how it is less censored. I know a lot of people see *Crystal* as the lesser of the two, but if you just get past the season 1 art and continue on to the eternal movies you see a lot of growth."

"Re:Zero! It's one of my favorites anime (at least season 1) and it made me get hooked in fantasy anime the most."

"When people think of KyoAni, they think of a variety of amazing anime that they've produced, but I feel like they rarely think of *Tamako Market* and its sequel *Tamako Love Story*. It's a series that has the cute-fluffiness of a work like *K-On!* without leaning on dimwitted children as the main appeal. It should be on any good slice-of-life list."

"An underrated animated series I wish more people watched is *Hikaru no Go*. Now, I know it's pretty popular in its own right, but I generally base how popular an anime I've watched is on how many fanfics people have published with it. A popular story or show will make watchers want to create content for it (fan art, fan fics, etc.), and *HnG* only has like a measly 2k fics on both Archive of Our Own and FanFiction.Net!"

# HYOUGE MONO - PERENNIAL SCAVENGER HUNT



MAX R.

3rd Year, Japanese

Writer

## SPOILERS FOR HYOUGE MONO!

Having waded through the anime/manga sphere for the longest time, *Hyouge Mono* comes as a relatable title. The 39-episode anime adaptation, while technically watchable standalone, is by no means a replacement for the considerably longer manga, basically a prologue in relation to the overarching story at large. With a sizable cast and considerable scale, it's sometimes lumped together with titles such as *Ginga Eiyuu Densetsu* and the like, but beyond the framework of a Warring States period samurai series, while still dealing with defining political plot points of the era, it largely maintains an emphasis not on war per se, but on art and aesthetics, everything ranging from architecture to ceramics. Many of the characters involved are indeed real people as are many of the art pieces showcased. When it comes down to it though, *Hyouge Mono* is not unlike the journey of any thoughtful media consumer, speaking to the insatiable quest for masterpieces and chronic evolution of personal taste.

Furuta Sasuke or historical figure, Furuta Oribe, grapples between roles of both warrior and aesthete, originally a vassal of Oda Nobunaga, but eventually becoming an apprentice of head tea master, Soueki Senno, more famously known as Sen no Rikyu. A middle-aged man with little to his name, Sasuke struggles to achieve recognition, to little avail on the battlefield, but he eventually discovers that his passion for art and aesthetics can be put to good use. His mentality lightly mirrors elitism, silently mocking the tastes of the non-aesthetes he deems uncritical while naively believing himself knowledgeable; I've frequently encountered these types of people within the anime community as well, particularly the common pseudo-critic who lacks both proper points of reference pertaining to the big picture of the medium at large along with actual knowledge, in spite of believing themselves to know better while upholding illusory high standards, even when much of their spuels boil down to buzzwords and parroting hearsay. However, viewers can also mature to become more open-minded, learning to think for themselves and consider varying perspectives and facets surrounding a piece. After coming in close contact with a wider array of works and even attaining some for himself, Sasuke hones his aesthete's eye, becoming more perceptive and thoughtful, able to better appreciate the nuances in different aesthetics as well as coherently articulate his reasoning for praising given items.

Over time, Sasuke also recognizes his prior ignorance and slightly humbles himself. Objects he had previously adored are no longer able to move him while those that had gone overlooked now captivate him;

this process of evolving taste should be familiar to mostly any long-time anime viewer as old favorites come to be replaced and priorities alter. As values shift, a lavish golden exterior, formerly prized now feels gaudy and excessive compared to a minimal black bowl. This dynamic of chronically fluctuating taste comes naturally for media consumers who have exposed themselves to an increased quantity of works over time, having delved deeper and obtained a firmer basis for comparison as well as grasp for what they appreciate, which in turn increases overall appreciation after experiencing the different corners of a medium. Rikyu is instrumental in these developments, proliferating aesthetic philosophies of simplicity and imperfection, his teachings resulting in Sasuke adopting fragments of his ideals, boldly thinking outside the box and becoming more experimental in what he attempts to produce going forward, serving pineapple for dessert and attempting a tree-house tea ceremony being two notable examples. It's hardly one-sided either; while Rikyu acts as a mentor to Sasuke, the opposite also reigns true with the former being challenged on occasion and only arriving at many epiphanies through his disciple's conversations and observations. This ties back to consumers in how discourse holds potential to unlock profound perspectives and realizations through collective analysis and observation. Much in the way that people create their own circles to partake in subjects that interest them, *Hyouge Mono*'s aesthetes often converge to discuss art.

After being forced to execute his master for treason, Sasuke assumes the position of head teamaster, and with newfound authority, begins to influence those around him with aesthetic philosophies of his own, taking on numerous disciples in the process. Along with imperfection, he takes interest in weird, 'humorous things,' venturing to foreign lands in search of inspiration while never forsaking his search for greater masterpieces and further experimenting with his craft where he solidifies a more defined sense of taste and identity. Objects with asymmetrical shapes, cracks and evidence of wear, Sasuke slowly centers himself around these attributes. He also gains self-awareness of his own taste, analyzing what he emphasizes in a work and what constitutes a masterwork to him; his 'weird wares' generate waves among fellow aesthetes with many gravitating towards his views. Hardly every consumer takes this step, but this occurs within the anime community as well, influential figures emerging to the forefront with certain opinions becoming well-established as consensus through widespread approval. Other groups also emerge that hold contrasting priorities, forming the backbone of a community that embodies myriad opinions.

The more Sasuke ruminates on art, the better he comes to understand it, the more his passion for it appears to grow, and the more resources he invests into seeking out and creating masterpieces. With greater understanding of various mediums, he can more effectively navigate the landscape to find things that interest him and then incorporate intriguing elements into his own work. It's a situation of people growing due to art and art growing due to people. In a strange way, *Hyouge Mono* unknowingly resembles a microcosm of the anime community or any medium for that matter.

# THOUGHTS AFTER WATCHING A CAMRIP OF SUPER HERO



TONY T.

2nd Year, Economics and Data Science

In short, 6/10.

Managing Editor

I can probably succinctly boil my issues with modern *Dragon Ball* content into a few points. First, the series has generally focused on a dramatically uninteresting period of time, the ten year timeskip between Majin Buu's defeat and the end of the series, which doesn't progress the timeline in the same compelling way the series used to. Furthermore, the newer material isn't written that well, focusing far more on senseless combat rather than the narrative of growth and change that, contrary to popular belief, is what really defined the franchise. It lacks the goofiness of earlier *Dragon Ball* material, yet also lacks the great character arcs prevalent throughout. While some interesting ideas are introduced, almost nothing ever comes from them. Finally, the new material simply doesn't need to exist. As I've stated [before](#), I think that *Dragon Ball GT* was already a perfect finale for the franchise that wrapped it up in a very fulfilling manner. All of this is to say that, in spite of the original *Dragon Ball* series (as in both anime adaptations of the original manga's 519 chapters, alongside *GT*) being my favorite anime out of the literal thousands that I've seen, the new material is particularly weak. It feels far more like a capitalization on nostalgia, a corporate product designed to appeal to millennials looking longingly at an era long since past, rather than a genuine and earnest attempt to make more meaningful content that builds upon existing media. This isn't to say that the original is perfect. Both adaptations had a plethora of issues, and I [feel](#) that the

attempt to redapt the series in *Kai* wasn't exactly impeccable either. Yet, the content from the franchise in the 21st century has felt uniquely lacking for the above mentioned reasons which don't apply nearly as much to the earlier material.

*Dragon Ball Super* kind of embodies these issues. While I like the fun slice of life episodes scattered throughout, *Super* doesn't progress the timeline past the end of the series, focuses on nostalgia and nonsensical action over cohesive character arcs, and is completely unnecessary to the overall narrative of the series. In many ways, it detracts from the franchise's goals as a whole – Vegeta's beautiful character arc, concluding in an eventual acceptance in humanity over senseless chasing after Son Goku, is utterly ruined with him returning to said pursuit in a nonsensical manner. The series has some interesting concepts like Zamasu in the Future Trunks arc and the negative outsider perspective of Son Goku in both that arc and the subsequent Universal Survival arc. They ultimately resolve in completely unfulfilling, "punch the bad guy harder" conclusions, though. The followup film, *Broly*, is slightly better. It strongly characterizes the titular character, making an otherwise illogical nostalgia inclusion into an actually worthwhile character. Yet, it still focuses far too much on iconic imagery and devolves into uncompelling violence fairly early on into its run. Compelling narrative ruined by focus on providing a shiny light show with little substance.

Conversely, *Dragon Ball Super: Super Hero* more than addresses most of my issues with modern *Dragon Ball* content, easily standing up as my favorite entry since *GT*'s end in 1997. While it is still set within the dreaded ten-year period, hence meaning it can't really progress the characters past a certain point, *Super Hero* benefits from focusing on a smaller conflict. Instead of world ending consequences (which, though they exist, are far less emphasized), the film focuses on somewhat more human drama. In a sense, *Super Hero* is utterly incomprehensible without knowledge of the franchise. Its villains are a revived Red Ribbon Army headed by Magenta, the son of Commander Red. Amongst his notable subordinates include Dr. Hedo, the genius grandchild of Dr. Gero, and the two Gamma androids that Hedo creates. Rather than centering on the far more marketable Son Goku and Vegeta, the film stars Piccolo, a character who, while popular, is nowhere close to the two universally recognizable Saiyans. The main conflict arises from Gamma Two attacking Piccolo, but it escalates only because Piccolo takes advantage of the turmoil to pit his former protegee Son Gohan against the series' third rendition of the Red Ribbon Army so as to teach him the importance of discipline. He does this by helping the



villains kidnap Gohan's daughter Pan. In spite of the film's short recaps of prior events, presumably for the sake of younger fans, *Super Hero* is downright impossible to understand on its own.



And maybe that's a good thing. Though it isn't that substantial in of itself, *Super Hero* genuinely uses the character of Son Gohan in an interesting manner, something which hasn't been properly done since his initial arc in *Dragon Ball*. *Dragon Ball Super* always felt as though it reset the characters to a base state after every arc, so as to remain the most marketable to a mainstream audience. Though that was certainly financially viable, it didn't do much with the characters. Progression shifted from genuine character beats to nominal changes in stated powers which are irrelevant to the progression of a narrative. Son Gohan's story arc from a pampered child dreaming of scholarly pursuits to the strongest individual in the universe within the original series is something that simply could not be followed up upon in a series like *Super*. In contrast, *Super Hero* actually develops the characters. The Gohan that audiences see at the start of the film is different from the Gohan that ends it. This sounds like a backhanded compliment, but coming off of modern *Dragon Ball*, *Super Hero* is refreshing in that it actually does the bare minimum to be a compelling story in the greater scheme of the franchise. It is not without its faults, as it still heavily panders to nostalgia, with Gohan obtaining another unnecessary form that is almost shot-for-shot and beat-for-beat the same as his first Super Saiyan 2 transformation. The character of Gamma Two is fun, but ultimately is almost identical to Android 16 in character arc. Furthermore, while Dr. Hedo's connection to Dr. Gero was probably necessary in justifying his genius, the familial connection between Magenta and Commander Red was unnecessary. The new leader of the Red Ribbon Army didn't need to be related to the old one; after all, the original series worked just fine without having any main leader when the Red Ribbon were reintroduced in the Cell arc.

There are also several other very questionable inclusions within the film. While Goku and Vegeta contribute nothing to the plot, their cameo scene with Broly on Beerus and Whis' planet takes around 10 minutes. It's admittedly nice to see that Broly and his entourage have not been forgotten by the series' runners, and the final scene of Goku and Vegeta's exhausted fight, reminiscent of something like Kimbo Slice vs Dada 5000, is comedy

gold. Still, I feel as though a scene like that is something that would work better as a part of a television series, and doesn't fit the tighter pacing one generally associates with a theatrical release. The abilities Piccolo shows are a nice callback to his appearance in the 23rd Tenkaichi Budokai, but his new form in particular is as hideous as it is dumb and unnecessary.

Still, one leaves the film with at least a slightly better understanding of Son Gohan and his relationships with both his mentor Piccolo and his daughter Pan. There are particularly adorable scenes with Piccolo in his demon king throne being asked by Gohan's wife to pick up Pan from school in exchange for food, which Piccolo doesn't consume. The universe moves past iconic imagery, like Son Goten and the child form of Trunks growing to their designs from the end of the series. Yet, it still acknowledges the past in ways which haven't been brought up in a while, such as the current Piccolo (technically Piccolo Jr.) being both a former demon king and god, or Son Gohan's status as by far the most gifted character in the franchise. The film also features a somewhat nice arc with Pan initially struggling with flight before figuring it out by the climax. *Dragon Ball Super: Super Hero* is, as the reductive title implies, nothing original. In a sense, it is mostly fanservice. In spite of that, it, for once, feels as a genuine addition to the franchise's world beyond a penchant for repetition.

A somewhat tangential comment I would make is that it is somewhat disappointing that a film focused on Son Gohan called *Super Hero* makes no references to his crime fighting Great Saiyaman persona. It's something of a missed opportunity, though ultimately it isn't really something I can fault the film for – after all, that type of nostalgia pandering to recognizable iconography is already far too prevalent as is. On the other hand, it is still incredibly amusing to me that my favorite character, Mr. Satan, is repeatedly referred to by the villains as the strongest man on Earth. It's a nice inclusion that keeps to the series' continuity while also highlighting the naivete Dr. Hedo possesses which twists his good natured sense of justice into misguided malice. *Super Hero* is a film that non-fans will see as a nonsensical collection of callbacks and amusing details. This is a description that is extremely true. Perhaps I have lowered expectations from the state of modern *Dragon Ball*, but I still think that the film's contained narrative as well as its progression of the characters as individuals make it worthwhile.



# NAUSICÄ OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND - RETURNING TO ROOTS



**BLAKE MORRISON**

2nd Year, English and Japanese

The best "Ghibli" movie wasn't even made by Ghibli

**Writer**



I first watched *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* when I was three or four, so my memories of it go back pretty much as far as my memories go. Period. It's no exaggeration to say that this movie is one of formative experiences of art, of storytelling on a grand scale, and of, well, life in general. It's my favorite movie directed by Hayao Miyazaki, and if Studio Ghibli actually produced it instead of Topcraft (Ghibli didn't even exist yet and may never have been founded if it weren't for *Nausicaä's* success), it'd be my favorite Ghibli movie as well. No contest. You may think I've let nostalgia wrangle my opinions here given that I've carried this movie in my head for almost all of my remembered existence, but if that were the only reason behind my favoritism, *Nausicaä* wouldn't be my favorite Ghibli movie. You see, I have no idea how old I was when I first watched *My Neighbor Totoro*. Three? Two? Maybe when I was even younger? It's a little frightening to think that I undoubtedly have forgotten experiences of quite a bit of media, unremembered nostalgia for that media, and a conditioned urge to consume Ghibli films and buy their merchandise... But no, I think you can write off nostalgia as the root reason here. I like *Totoro*, but it's not in my top ten anime. I like Ghibli, but I'm not buying a stuffed Totoro or Cat Bus anytime soon. It's also not the case that *Nausicaä* is my favorite Miyazaki film out of an aversion for his later work. With a couple exceptions in his filmography, I think Miyazaki deserves the idolizing praise the mainstream media heaps on him. Most of his movies aren't masterpieces, of course, and the ones I'd call masterpieces aren't ever perfect, but to say that the man's filmography is "overrated" as a whole is intellectually dishonest at best and contrarian elitism at worst. While *Nausicaä* is my favorite Miyazaki movie in a purely subjective sense, I do think that it's also the best Miyazaki movie from a narrative and thematic perspective. Naturally, narrative and thematic depth and execution are also subjective, but they're subjective in a way I can explain beyond "this movie makes me warm and fuzzy inside and is pretty and I really, really like it."

It goes without saying that all of this movie's allegories for nuclear warfare, imperialism, various religions and mythologies and the like went way over my head at first. It would take dozens of rewatches before I started to notice what I now recognize as the most obvious interpretations of the film: the God Warrior is nuclear power/weaponry (confirmed to actually be the case in the manga), the seven days of fire are a nuclear holocaust, the Sea of Corruption is climate change/nuclear radiation caused mutation, Torumekia is Imperial Japan, Nausicaä

is literally Jesus (although if I had a religious upbringing, this one would've been obvious), etc. However, I remember always feeling like I understood what *Nausicaä* was about, even if I couldn't quite articulate that understanding. Let's be real, no four year old watches *Nausicaä* and thinks "ah yes, this film really has a lot to say about how exponential technological progress and its consequences have been disastrous for the human race." I didn't need to think anything of the sort for this movie to speak to me, for me to feel like I understood what it was saying. I didn't need anything beyond my early knowledge of nature and my personal experiences. Even rewatching *Nausicaä* as an adult, I don't fixate on its allegorical implications. The core themes of *Nausicaä* run much deeper than any game of allegorical connect the dots to me. Environmentalism, pacifism, technological determinism, tribalism and the battle between fear of and faith in the "other" that runs beneath all of these themes are what I consider to be the thematic pillars of *Nausicaä*. While four year old me didn't know the exact names I'm giving these pillars now, I knew they were there. To four year old me, environmentalism was just the simple fact that trees make the air clean to breathe, pacifism was how hurting others only makes them hurt you (and just hurts to do in general), technological determinism was how planes and cars are really cool (I admittedly didn't quite get this one, but on a subliminal level, the power technology has over the environment was obvious to me), tribalism was playground politics, and faith overcoming fear in the "other" was the simplest, most fundamental idea of them all: if you want to pet a frightened cat, you have to make yourself unthreatening. And if you still get scratched, you just have to accept that without lashing out. The thematic pillars of *Nausicaä* are universal to the point that they can be explained in such simple terms that even (or perhaps especially) a child can understand, and that's what makes them so resonant. This is not an attempt to restrict the poten-



tial interpretations of the narrative but rather to pinpoint what elements make up its conflicts. These elements can interact and be expounded in a myriad of different ways. But in any story, such elements can also be made to conform to a didactic vision of how the world should be to the point of neglecting how it is. *Nausicaä* avoids this didactic pitfall. To clarify, I mean "how it is" not in a nihilistic or fatalistic sense. Rather, I mean to say that technological determinism and tribalism getting in the way of environmentalism and pacifism wouldn't be conflicts we talk about in stories if all it took to solve them was a story, but a story is a start.

Despite its unmistakable advocacy of environmentalism and pacifism, *Nausicaä* does not come across as didactic or preachy as many of Miyazaki's other films. This is in large part due to how it doesn't depict technological determinism and tribalism as evils to be defeated but rather as part and parcel of the human condition. Even if this story is told from the perspective of Nausicaä and the people of the valley, the viewer is made to understand and sympathize with perspectives of the other two major groups: the Torumekians and the Pejites. Torumekia is obviously an imperialistic military industrial complex, but their motive in seizing the God Warrior being the fear of another group seizing it is not something unique to greedy empires or dispassionate dictators. Fear of the other (which is by the same token a concern for the in-group) springs from self-preservation, an instinct we all share. To call self-preservation a core component of the human condition is an understatement. It's a core component of all living creatures. As tribalism is the extension of self-preservation to a group, it is not a problem one can simply "solve" without changes on the scale of, for example, drastically increased transparency in international relations or a radical unification of all human states and cultures under one governing body (ideas that I bring up not to advocate for but to illustrate just how ingrained tribalism is in society as we know it). Just as the Torumekians fear the god warrior falling into the hands of another state and disrupting the balance of power that they currently stand atop, Pejite fears the imperialist presence of the Torumekians as a given, a

fear that is only compounded by their seizure of the God Warrior. If one recognizes and respects the instinct to self-preservation shared by all the people composing both sides of this conflict, one can easily understand the fear that leads them to entangle Nausicaä and the Valley in the crossfire and to justify it as collateral damage. The Torumekians fear the militaristic use of the God Warrior by other nations, so they occupy Pejite and the Valley of the Wind. The Pejites in turn fear Torumekia's militaristic use of the God Warrior, so they attempt to wipe out the Torumekians occupying the Valley, even if they slaughter innocents in the process. Fear of an out-group and concern for an in-group makes it easy for anyone to let their ends justify appalling means, and this movie does not definitively resolve the fears festering between the various groups depicted. Nausicaä's compassion and sacrifice may have stopped the Ohmu stampede, but the human condition that started the stampede persists.

I made the claim that *Nausicaä* is the most narratively and thematically developed Miyazaki film, so I'd be remiss not to back it up with direct comparisons. I've already brought up technological determinism as one of the thematic cores of *Nausicaä*, and although its other thematic cores such as environmentalism and pacifism are seen throughout Miyazaki's filmography, I think looking at how his films address technological determinism specifically reveals what makes *Nausicaä* unique among them. In this regard, *Castle in the Sky* and *Princess Mononoke* invite particular comparisons. In all these three films, technology ineluctably changes how people think, a la technological determinism. Specifically, access to advanced energy production leads to advanced weaponry which leads to the devastating use of said weaponry: the robots and giant beam cannon of Laputa in *Castle in the Sky*, and the guns in *Princess Mononoke* (the advanced weaponry depicted in either movie are obviously only "advanced" relative to the common technology of their settings). Laputa's advanced technology leads to an ambiguous man-made disaster that destroys its civilization, whereas the guns in *Princess Mononoke* kill all the old gods of nature, the embodiment of natural life. In *Nausicaä*, the technology of an ancient, ruined civilization in the God Warrior serves as the existential threat. I like to think of these three movies in a timeline. *Princess Mononoke* is the beginning of industrialization, *Castle in the Sky* is the culmination of industrialization in nuclear power, and *Nausicaä* is the post-apocalyptic aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. Obviously this isn't a one-to-one comparison; similar to the God Warrior, Laputa and its technology is rediscovered rather than created by the setting's present civilizations. However, *Castle in the Sky*'s steampunk setting stands in sharp contrast to the post-apocalyptic setting of *Nausicaä*; in the former, civilization is thriving despite the downfall of Laputa, meaning that whatever man-made disaster resulting in said downfall was localized. However, the technol-



ogy of Laputa is heavily implied to be able to control the world, meaning its weaponry is able to threaten the world and that those threats can be backed up. Sheeta and Pazu choose to destroy Laputa's advanced technology to prevent this "seven days of fire"-esc worst case scenario. In *Princess Mononoke*, Lady Eboshi uses guns to subjugate the threat that wild nature and Sengoku Japan's current shogunate pose to the prosperity of Iron Town, her in-group. The prosperity of Iron Town is built upon the use of guns. Guns drive out the wild animals that resist the exploitation of the land's resources, and guns keep those resources from being shared with or monopolized by other groups. Once one group begins to use guns, the "advanced technology" in this case, to seize resources from others, they end up having to continually manufacture, brandish, and use them out of fear that other groups will retaliate. "So long as these weapons exist," the logic of these narratives tell us, "then someone will use them out of fear of someone else getting ahold of them and using them first." Is Miyazaki saying that man is inherently evil? I don't think so. He's just depicting the exponentially deadly results of how tribalism determines our use of technology, or rather our fears of how it could be used, leading to, you guessed it, its use.

In *Castle in the Sky*, the advanced technology of Laputa is destroyed with an incantation. The rest of the castle floats into outer space, and the movie ends without implying that technology like Laputa's will ever be developed again, although it most certainly will be. In *Princess Mononoke*, Lady Eboshi, after discharging her fear of untamed nature in killing the Forest Spirit, undergoes a change of heart for... reasons. Whatever her reasons, most likely related to being moved by the strength and compassion of Ashitaka, at the end of the movie she plainly states her intent to rebuild iron town as "a good town" this time, which probably means one that won't unsustainably exploit the environment and intimidate all surrounding people with heavy fortifications and armaments... But even after the death of the Forest Spirit and with it the death of nature's active resistance to industrialization, wouldn't Iron Town's fear of the shogunate still be valid? *Princess Mononoke* doesn't necessarily end on a note of "everything's going to be okay," but it takes the intellectual shortcut, and therefore misstep, of conveniently forgetting about the antagonist's still valid motivations for being the way she is in order to neatly resolve her character as a "rival redeemed." On the other hand, *Castle in the Sky* has perhaps the least redeemable antagonist in all of Miyazaki's movies. For the kind of adventurous romp that this movie is, I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing for its popcorn entertainment value, but when it comes to the exploration of themes like tribalism and technological determinism, having a strawman antagonist who is obviously psychotic rather than understandable certainly draws attention away from the universality of these themes. *Castle in the Sky* depicts Muska's attraction to Laputa's technology as aberrant, as the exception to the rule of humanity at large. Such a depiction does not invite a viewer to self-reflect on the human condition at large and how we can move forward within the limits of our psychology.

Despite being released first out of all these films, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* does not run into the issues of Lady Eboshi's convenient resolution or Muska's unsympathetic megalomania. *Nausicaä*'s antagonist, Kushana has the understandable and sympathetic motivation of wanting to control the God Warrior before another group does, not out of greed but out of fear. Both her distrust of other nations and antipathy of the Sea of Corruption spring from the same source: self-preservation

of oneself and the in-group. Although Kushana is heavily implied to begin to open up to environmentalist and pacifist ideas due to *Nausicaä*'s influence over the course of the movie, she still returns to Torumekia in the end escorted by a fleet of imposing warships. Kushana the person may have changed, but the imperialistic circumstances that helped mold her back home in Torumekia remain. Pejite will continue to distrust Torumekia, and Torumekia will continue to fear any challenges to its hegemony. Disaster has been diverted this time, but human existence is still threatened by itself and its inevitable infighting and by the presence of the Sea of Corruption, by our unchecked disregard of nature. Frankly, *Princess Mononoke* completely sidesteps the issue of pollution and climate change by its end. The happy music and hopeful faces before the credit roll imply that Lady Eboshi really is going to build a "good town" this time, but the destruction of one industrial town has not changed humanity's relationship with nature. The Sea of Corruption in *Nausicaä* serves much better as a representation of just how intertwined humanity and nature are. It has been demonstrated to be able to wipe humanity if provoked, after all. And unlike *Castle in the Sky*, advanced technology in *Nausicaä* is not dealt with simply by saying the magic words to destroy it but shown to be something that will inevitably be unearthed and redeveloped time and time again.



Perhaps it takes until an existential threat as imminent and obvious as the Sea of Corruption for humanity to begin to learn how coexistence with nature is vital for any existence at all. Perhaps it takes until an existential threat as imminent and obvious as the God Warriors to begin to learn how tribalism continuously takes hold of technological advances to the point of mutually assured destruction. Perhaps if we maintain the relations between different groups as well as we can, we can overcome our inclination towards tribalism and even our own psychology. Perhaps. But *Nausicaä* does not answer these questions definitively. These are the kinds of questions that can only be answered by living the answers you come up with, seeing if they work, and inevitably having to come up with new ones when your working answers fall short. I will always appreciate this film for being one of the first and still best stories I've encountered that does this. It presents the conflicts of the human condition in all their complexity, it shows how individuals can make steps to resolve those conflicts, but outside of the immediate plot of the story, it doesn't imply that those underlying conflicts have been definitively settled. The roots of our condition remain, but we can choose what grows from them. We just have to keep choosing what we think is right. And because no one choice is definitive, each next one means everything.

**Staff Picks:****FAVORITE ANIME CHARACTER****MR. SATAN**

DRAGON BALL

TONY T.

*He's not the hero we need, but he's the one we deserve (we actually do need him though).*

**LUPIN III**

LUPIN III

MITCHELL MADAYAG

*A romantic modern hero who is smart and cool, handsome, wealthy, and so sexy (sexy).*

**TAIGA AISAKA**

TORADORA

TINO MORATE

*Many people will disagree with me on this. Sure, Taiga is mean and kind of a bully but she has a huge heart. She cares about her friends and always puts them before her. She has been through so much making her act out, but under all that "toughness" she has the best intentions. She would rather get hurt than her friends*

**MIZUKI KANZAKI**

AIKATSU!

MAX R.

*Best character from the best anime. Aspires for more while already at the seeming pinnacle of her craft. Deliberately creates more competition for herself and then basically wins anyway. Carries the industry on her back.*

**KONATA IZUMI**

LUCKY STAR

WILLOW OTAKA

*Back when watching anime was considered "cringe" by a vast majority of individuals, Konata remained an unabashed otaku that I could relate to as a young child. Though I've found a number of new favorite characters throughout the years, Konata still holds a place close to my heart ^\_^*

**MEGUMIN**

KONOSUBA

NICK W.

*Fiery ambition in its purest form.*

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## CLUB EVENTS

Follow us on social media or visit cal.moe for updates!

### Weekly Socials:

TBA

### First Gen Meeting:

September 9th 8-10pm

Dwinelle 155

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Konshuu accepts guest submissions from club members! If you'd like to have content featured, please visit:

[j.mp/konsub](https://j.mp/konsub)



**Raiden Shogun**

*Genshin Impact*

Art By Felicity Akitan