Title:
Organized Chaos: A Look Into "The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya"

Word Count:
695

Summary:
The year 2006, arguably, can be considered by anime fans with more than just passing knowledge of the industry as the year of "Haruhiism." The show, "The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya," was the unexpected hit of the year, showing numbers and interest that very few shows aside from established franchises have gotten. The show is fun, accessible, and with just the right amount of sheer insanity to entertain without shattering the already reality-bending premise.

Keywords:
anxiety, melancholy, relationship, stress

Article Body:
For the typical anime fan, 2006 was a wholly unremarkable, zero-anxiety, and insanity-free year, at least, as far as the anime industry is concerned. However, for the more discerning anime fans (the ones that don't fall head-over-heels for the newest big-action mind-number to get translated), 2006 was a year fraught with controversy over writers stealing the scripts for shows, executives of anime studios pulling crazy stunts, and other similar incidents. In the anime industry, a year can pass by without being marked by any single show, but some years can sometimes end up being forever remembered for one single production. In the early '90s, it was Hideaki Anno's "Shin Seiki Evangelion." It can be argued that 2006 was the year that the industry was introduced to the anime adaptation of Nagaru Tanigawa's series of novels, "Suzumiya Haruhi no Yuutsu," translated into English as: "The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya."

Being taken from a series of on-going novels, a casual observer might be tempted to point out a similarity between "The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya" and "Maria-sama ga Miteru," another anime series inspired by a series of novels. However, the similarities between the two end there. Whereas Marimite, as the latter series is nicknamed, is focused on subtle relationship and character development, the approach taken by "Haruhi" is significantly different. By nature or design, the plot, characters, and events depicted in the "The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya" series pushes the boundary of realistic absurdity. Yet, the series managed to do just that within what is a perfectly reasonable context that suits the nature of the show's take on the universe.

After all, a little bit of philosophical anxiety and stress can be expected of a series where the universe may actually literally revolve around a main character that is entirely unaware of just what she's capable of.

The main character, Haruhi Suzumiya, is not the standard female lead. For one thing, she's actively admitted to being bored with what she considers "normal" and is determined to find things that she considers to be "exciting." The "melancholy" in the title stems from two interesting tangents of her character. The first is her frustration with how ordinary the world is and her self-perceived inability to make contact with beings she believes would make the world less boring for her. The other side of the "melancholy" equation, however, lies deeper in her own mind. Deep down, perhaps even at a subconscious level, she doesn't actually believe in what she's looking for, producing an internal contradiction that can sometimes threaten her resolve. This is clearly shown in her being oblivious of the fact that the aliens, espers, and time travelers that she had been looking were actually disguised as members of her club.

One of the more interesting avenues that the show has taken involves Haruhi's obliviousness not only to the nature of the people in her club, but also to her own nature. The time travelers seem to believe she's able to manipulate the space-time continuum, if not being a part of it herself, due to their inability to travel back in time beyond a certain date of importance to Haruhi. The aliens of the series, which are beings composed entirely of data and information made sentient, believe her to be a source of self-evolving data protocols that must be studied and, if needed, appeased. The espers believe she is capable of shaping the very fabric of reality with her desires and wishes, with some believing her to be "God." That last bit of speculation is part of the fire that fuels the show's rather impressive legion of fans.

"Haruhiism," as the fan movement behind the show and novels is called, is hardly what one would consider to be a massive fan community. It lacks the sheer size of the communities formed around shows like "Dragon Ball Z" or "Naruto," but it is significantly more serious and arguably more devoted than most fans of other shows. The show is popular for being accessible and entertaining, with an open willingness to mock itself and to be mocked. Besides, as most members of the "Haruhiism" community believe, there's a little bit of Haruhi in everyone.