Ah yes, the isekai genre. I find the isekai genre's prominence in the anime industry analogous to the open world design that the game industry has been embracing for several good years now. In fact, both actually exploded into the mainstream attention around the same time: the 2013-2014 time frame.

And both of them suffer from the same problem: oversaturation as dozens upon dozens of new titles swarm their respective markets with the same structure and premise, often offering very little that is new. Perhaps they some gimmicks to try and shake things up, but it is eventually nothing but smokes and screens for the same old dance and song. And the reliance on the gimmicks can prove to be fatal.

Sure, at the very least, the isekai genre did see some new and refreshing titles that proved themselves to be more than just retreads: Madhouse's Overlord and its villainous protagonist, the sitcom-influenced [*KonoSuba*](https://reelrundown.com/animation/Reapers-Reviews-KonoSuba) from studio DEEN, and the time looping [*Re:Zero*](https://reelrundown.com/animation/Reapers-Reviews-ReZero) by studio White Fox all felt fresh and novel while being big hits that gave us something new in the pile of bland, by-the-book adventures, but to think that the genre could offer anything new after that felt like a stretch.

So what happened next is that a writer known only as "Fuse" decided to do the most logical thing: take the isekai genre, add one little gimmick for good measure, and play the various tropes and plot elements straight while focusing on world-building and characterization. And thus the work known as That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime was born.

In all honesty, TenSura has no right to be as good as it is, but somehow it works. A series focusing on an overpowered slime monster who tries to build his own nation proved that sometimes, a genre should just go to basics and polish everything that came before to an admirable standard.

But let’s get to the meat of it, with today’s review of the 2018-2019 isekai hit, based on the light novels written by Fuse, directed by Yasuhito Kikuchi, and produced by studio 8-Bit: Tensei Shitara Suraimu Datta Ken, or as it is known in the west, That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime.

The rest of this review will refer the series by its shorten nickname, TenSura.



TenSura’s setup is generally similar to what we have come to expect from the genre: our protagonist dies and finds themselves in a new fantasy world. What I like about TenSura’s general take on this, is the fact that our reincarnated hero is actually a middle-aged man rather than a mere teenager, not unlike 2017’s Saga of Tanya the Evil.

Satoru Mikami is a virgin salaryman in his late 30s, living out his life working and playing video games. One day, he is fatally stabbed while protecting a friend of his, dying painfully as he humorously asks from his friend to throw his computer into a bathtub.

Satoru wakes up in a cold, lonely cave in another world reincarnated as - you guessed it - a slime. But even though he lacks shape or internal organs, Satoru - now known as Rimuru - turns out to be one of the more powerful beings of this new world, with the ability to devour his adversaries and absorb their powers and traits as his own.

And after an encounter with a tsundere dragon called Veldora who allows Rimuru to devour him, our jovial slime begins to slowly build his own nation made of monsters as he gets dragged into mysterious conflicts involving beings known as Demon Lords.

What follows is a surprisingly lighthearted show that focuses more on meticulous world-building and humor than - at least for now - diabolical threats and earth-shattering scenarios, although those are there too. TenSura takes some notable inspiration from its peers and predecessors, but the series plays its tropes so well it manages to curve out its own identity in the process.

Personally I find the story of TenSura to be the least interesting aspect of the series. Not because it is bad, but because of how subdued and rather simplistic it is in comparison to TenSura’s focus on deliberate setting exploration and character dynamics.

It’s a fairly lighthearted adventure, all things considered. But while enjoyable, it’s also rather predictable in its destination, at least for now. One thing I do love about the way the narrative itself goes, however, is how the show tries to solve conflicts calmly and peacefully; it’s a very refreshing approach to problems after countless isekai where action and violence - which are still here - end the issues.

There is definitely something intriguing about the larger narrative, which ties into the backstory of Rimuru’s “fated one” friend and one-time mentor Shizue, as well as a looming threat from the powerful rulers of monster-infested areas called Demon Lords, but while it is there, the bulk of the series puts more emphasis on Rimuru’s founding of his own village.

It’s suffice to say that as far world-building goes, TenSura is almost peerless in both of its pacing and execution. The series begins innocently enough with Rimuru helping out a small goblin village - who are good goblins unlike [a certain other show](https://reelrundown.com/animation/Reapers-Reviews-Goblin-Slayer) that aired at the same time - and it only goes up from here as Rimuru recruits new citizens for his village and it slowly evolves into its own nation.

What’s interesting is how it’s all done deliberately and logically, and the series rarely rushes the social and industrial development of its main setting. When a pack of wolves poses a threat to the village, Rimuru helps the rather harmless goblins to make some defenses before confronting the pack leader himself.

As the village grows bigger now that the wolves live alongside goblins, Rimuru decides to search for a blacksmith and a craftsman to help both expanding the village, as well as arming it for future threats. This not only serves as our first proper introduction to TenSura’s larger setting, but also laid the foundation for potential negotiations and alliances with other nations.

And this is how the series continues for the reminder of its run, steadily improving the life in Rimuru’s village-turned-nation while expanding it into a safe haven for monsters. TenSura’s sense of progression is organic, natural, well-paced and most importantly: it feels earned. The escalation in scale and danger is noticeable, but it is never abrupt or sudden.

Because of the fact that every story arc lasts for only a handful of episodes, TenSura is never hit with becoming too slow paced or uninteresting, and there is enough intrigue, action and drama to keep things intense or at the very least fun and addicting.

Accompanying the series’ story and setting are a slew of your typical fantasy and isekai-related tropes and cliches, but within TenSura they get played rather charmingly. It openly and amusingly mocks concepts such as overpowered characters and harem opportunities, which come off as comically self-aware than stale or sleazy.

Rimuru even hilariously points out some cliches such as a gorgeous woman turning out to be an awful cook, and the funny aftermath of that.

TenSura’s humor as a whole is, like the rest of the series, lighthearted in nature and easy to chuckle about. There are some running jokes that get old, such as Rimuru’s annoyance with the silence of the dwarf Myrd or Shion’s somewhat tiresome actions of affection and jealousy, but those little hindrances don’t stop the show from being one that made me smile when it wanted to.

Now, if I do have another serious gripe with the series, it would be its final stretch. Specifically, its final episode. It’s not a bad episode in its own right, but its placement is rather odd.

It’s a prequel occurring long before Rimuru’s days in his new world, and for the most part it’s curious why they chose to have such an episode as the 24th and final round of the season. That’s another thing; while airing, TenSura was thought to be a 25-episode series, but only after the airing of this episode, did everyone find out that the 25th episode is actually a recap.

So this is an interesting way to finish the season; as far as recaps go it’s probably among the funnier ones, but its inclusion doesn’t really make sense as there is still time until the second season will come, and unless your memory is rather lacking, you’d still have the series fresh in mind by the end of it.

But back to the actual final episode, it’s a nice spin-off adventure that subsequently sets up the ground for the second season, but I’m not sure if it should have been the one to close this season. It leaves the series too open-ended to my taste.

**The Characters**



Aside from the fantastic setting and its exploration, the other big selling point of TenSura is its main protagonist Rimuru, and I doubt the series would have been as good as it is without this jovial, outgoing and charismatic little slime of a hero.

Among Rimuru’s strongest assets are his witty, self-aware sense of humor (from which most of the series’ comedy is derived) and generally nice demeanor. He manages to stand out from the majority of light novel protagonist - i.e. the archetypal pure-hearted badass with a personality of a paper - by being actually charming.

While a lot of times things do go in Rimuru’s favor, it’s not particularly because the plot demands to, but rather because of Rimuru’s own skills and knowledge. He is kind and quick to forgive, but knows when to be surprisingly ruthless and efficient whenever the situation calls for it. He is also affable and approachable, but quickly learns politics to rule his nation correctly.

His status as a slime monster rather the human being may come off as a gimmick - and indeed it is, but what makes him work so well is that he is far more than that; he represents the antithesis of the more well known isekai protagonist character.

He shares several traits with his isekai brethren such as being a virginal and isolated loser back in his own world before becoming the guardian-savior-emperor of the fantasy world, but in-between those archetype staples he opts to be more a cheerful, endlessly optimistic and relatively pacifistic protagonist than the usual brooding anti-hero that thinks being a loner is cool.

This makes Rimuru an extremely likable and, amusingly enough, human lead. I wouldn’t say he develops very much as a character throughout the season, but it hardly bothers me because he’s such an enjoyable blob of goodness with enough sarcasm and dry jokes to avoid becoming a tiring goodie-goodie two shoes.

He is overpowered, but as the series puts more focus on the setting and characters rather than action and drama, this comes off more as an endearing parody than anything else. He is a pervert, but his shapeless form and surprising celibacy minimize sleazy or gratuitous sexual comedy. And being a post-[*Sword Art Online*](https://reelrundown.com/animation/Reapers-Reviews-Sword-Art-Online) protagonist, Rimuru is aware of the isekai trappings and simply ridicules them.

I could go on and on about Rimuru’s character, but I believe seven paragraphs (not including this) about him speak volumes about how integral Rimuru is to TenSura’s mechanisms and success. He is likable, endearing, adorable and charismatic, but can also pull his weight when needed.

An aspect of him that is sort-of-its-own-character is the Great Sage, a semi-AI ability that acts as an analyzer for Rimuru in and outside battles.

While at first she may seem little more than a computer-like voice that serves as an exposition or explanation source for the viewers, she gains more personality as the series goes. It’s rather subtle, but she begins to develop a sense of humor beyond her accidental jokes with Rimuru, and I really appreciate the execution.

Now, the supporting cast for TenSura is massive. It includes goblins, demons, lizardmen, adventurers, dwarves and orcs, and that’s not even all of them. There are also a bit of dryads, fairies, unknown beings, other human factions, magicians and heroes.

And such an enormous cast has both its advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, we are allowed to watch an incredible number of characters, all visibly and thematically different from one another, interact, have fun, solve issues and struggle with one another.

So many of the characters have unique character designs, personality quirks and unique skills that help differentiating themselves from the rest. You have the goofy-looking goblin Gobta, or the graceful kijin princess Shuna, or even the infamous tsundere dragon Veldora.

On the other hand, an extremely dense cast means that there is just so much time to explore them in a two-cour anime season. And I honestly doubt that future seasons will care to delve into most of them, simply because they are just not that critical to the show’s current status.

Rimuru is the focus and at the very least I’m glad that TenSura prefers to put more emphasis on one character to deliver a well-written protagonist than scattering across dozens or characters with trite or derivative writing. And while I absolutely understand that 24 episodes won’t be enough to delve into every character, this is one of the very few instances where I would have loved to see more of the supporting cast.

But going back to what I said above that, the supporting cast still gains enough characterization to stand out from one another, and the series spends just enough with some of them to flesh out their hobbies, relationships and goals, which is very impressive given the considerably sizable character list.

For example, the show muses on the thoughts of Rimuru’s right-hand man and mount, Ragna, after the former killed Ragna’s father, which is an odd yet endearing moment that exposes Ragna’s depth and complexity in just one short conversation.

Some of the standout supporting characters include, for starters, the aforementioned Veldora and Shizue. The former is boastful yet affable dragon with enough power to decimate a continent, and gained a relatively big fanbase for his dynamic relationship with Rimuru - all in one or two episodes.

The latter is probably the single most important supporting character in TenSura, whose fate is intertwined with Rimuru, serving as an older mentor and experienced adventurer not unlike your typical anime heroes. Personally I would have loved another episode or two about her bond with Rimuru, but her story arc is among the most memorable in the entire show.

Aside from those two, one of my favorite side characters is a dwarven aristocrat and scientist called Vesta, who has history with Rimuru’s blacksmith Kaijin. In the span of just two episodes, we see Vesta going from an arrogant and petty antagonist to a genuinely sympathetic person that is deeply in pain of his actions.

And the fact that this was told in just one or two episodes was astounding, because I honestly expected a one-note villain, but TenSura turned the character upside down to reveal a flawed, pained and remarkably human character, and this is simply amazing.

Before moving on to talk about TenSura’s production values, I also want to talk about the series’ rather unique take on monsters in comparison to other fantasy anime, by which I mean how monsters are viewed as sympathetic beings here with the right to live and even be named like humans.

It’s especially amusing since this show aired alongside Goblin Slayer, which was notable for its brutal and barbaric depiction of monsters, specifically goblins. Meanwhile, TenSura treats both goblins and other monsters as beings that range from capable to almost harmless, and their desire to live just like humans.

It doesn’t get as much as focus as I think it should have gotten, but it’s not every day where goblins, ogres, raid wolves and orcs are featured as protagonists with their own noble goals and qualities. Of course not all monsters get this treatments - giant centipedes, serpents and the like are still treated as mindless, animalistic monsters - but hey, baby steps.

## Animation & Art

 I don’t have much of an history with studio 8-Bit, and until writing this review I was actually under the impression they were founded a year or two ago, but while they ARE relatively new (having been founded back in 2008), they already have a decade or so experience. That said, TenSura is probably their first big hit.

8-Bit’s work on the show is impressive, all things considered. I wouldn’t say this is the pinnacle of animation by any stretch of the imagination, but the studio produced a lavish and vibrant series with colorful landscapes and smooth backgrounds.

The action scenes in particular are slick and flashy, even if the choreography itself is nothing out of the ordinary. Special effects are used appropriately and while some CGI can be eye-glaring here and there, for the most part it’s a pleasant visual presentation.

The biggest appeal is the character designs, which are simple, elegant and diverse, with each character receiving its own unique design, special attributes and occasionally a unique body type and facial traits, which as I mentioned above, is a great thing for such an enormous cast.

I usually hate making comparison between the anime and its source material, but I would say that I liked the anime’s take on the character designs better than either the manga or the light novel’s illustrations, which felt too rough or wild. The anime, however, makes use of more softer designs, which I found to be more appealing.

There is some fanservice here, for sure, which comes in the forms of the well-endowed kijin Shion, the pants-less Demon Lord Milim, the various elven girls and Shizue’s form-fitting clothes, but it’s nothing too outrageous or distracting to come off as sleazy or exhausting.

If anything, I think it's overall pretty tame in comparison to other shows out there, and it fits the overall cheerful and bright nature of TenSura.

## Audio & Sound

The music for TenSura was composed by a musical group called Elements Garden, who haven’t really worked on anything high-profile or popular as this before. Hell, they even worked on a full-on hentai OVA once in the early 2000s.

The soundtrack continues the generally lighthearted tone of the series. I couldn’t find one especially memorable track that got stuck in my head, but on a whole, the soundtrack is fairly good and pleasant to listen to, with a very nonchalant and relaxing vibe that is tailor-made for Rimuru’s personality.

Now as the opening themes go… I didn’t like the first, “Nameless Story”; it feels too disjointed and distorted for a song, though the guitar bits are enjoyable. The second opening however, “Meguru Mono”, is quite possibly among my favorite anime opening themes from 2018-2019 due to its more melancholic and peaceful melody. Funnily enough, both songs were done by the same singer, Takuma Terashima.

The ending themes are standard fare, all things around. “Another Colony” by TRUE starts off relatively somber before picking off in the chorus, and it’s a lovely little song with beautiful animation that depicts hardships and happiness. Similar to the opening songs, however, I favor more the second ending, “Little Soldier” by Azusa Tadokoro for its more upbeat and jovial singing.

On the subject of the English dub, TenSura has one of the best English dubs that I’ve heard in a long while, especially for a simultaneously airing anime, and I think [*My Hero Academia*](https://reelrundown.com/animation/Reapers-Review-My-Hero-Academia) is the only other anime that really rivals or exceeds TenSura’s English dub.

Much of this attributes to Brittney Karbowski’s phenomenal performance as Rimuru, and how she captures every bit of our lovable slime’s wit, sarcasm and attitude. Even if the rest of the English dub voice cast was subpar, Karbowski’s performance would have been the one reason to watch the dub regardless.  
Thankfully it’s not the case, and the rest of the voice cast is stellar as well. You have Ricco Fajardo, Brandon Potter, Ryan Reynolds (not that one), Dawn Bennett, Kristen McGuire, Tyson Rinehart, Michelle Rojas, Tia Ballard, Chris Rager and even Ian Sinclair. There are so many other voice actors in this, and they all do terrific jobs.

## Final Verdict

 As silly as its title might be, *That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime* gives a good summary for both its main protagonist and main content: it's an honest, charming little adventure that pulls no punches and decides to just go straight ahead for what it promised the viewers, and it is more than meets the eyes. Unlike so many of its peers, *TenSura* always tries to do new things and explore new possibilities with its gimmick and initial selling point, and it succeeds at almost every turn.

Rimuru is a sublime example of how to make an endlessly magnetic and emotive protagonist, and ever-glowing aura of optimism, confidence and kindness make him easy to root for. His quest to make a safe haven for him and the monsters who choose to follow him results in one of the more rewarding and addicting anime in recent years, and while the story can be somewhat lacking, the careful attention to world-building and understanding of its genre are jaw-dropping in their direction and execution, and I can’t wait for more.

So do not worry; he's not a bad slime, slurp.

**The Good:**

* Excellent sense of scale and progression throughout the series, careful and organic world-building.
* Everything about Rimuru from his design, to personality, behavior and actions as the main protagonist.
* English dub is superb.

**The Bad:**

* The actual story is pretty simplistic and forgettable in comparison to the rest of the series.
* While the supporting cast is great, the vast majority of them don't get too much of development besides established personalities and quirks.

**& the Ugly:**

* Gymnasts hate him. Learn how to become ripped and youthful again with Rimuru's Secret Monster Naming trick!

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