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Anime in America

Anime may not be mainstream in the U.S. yet, but it continues to grow in popularity despite its underground status



Mason West

First off, I hope that everyone had a wonderful turkey day. I certainly did. Not only did I get to see all my friends, but this weekend was a landmark in the world of anime. I'm secure enough in myself to admit that I'm an anime-geek. Last Wednesday Miramax released the first non-mainstream anime movie into theaters across the country, "Princess Mononoke." But, to truly explain why that is so cool, I need to make sure that we're all on the same page with this "anime" business.

Anime, more commonly known as "japanimation," is a Japanese form of animation. Just a side note: don't call it japanimation. If you refer to anime as japanimation around anyone who watches it with some frequency, they will look at you with utter disgust as if you used the dinner fork to eat your salad. I'm not sure exactly why, but that's just the way it is.

Anime's most notable characteristics are very large eyes (as well as other enlarged body parts), pointed faces, hairstyles that defy gravity and some sort of superhuman powers. These will vary with different production eras, and artistic styles, but it's a very distinctive art form.

When hearing the words anime or japanimation, a lay person might think of Pokémon. Yes, Pokémon is anime, but not as self-described real fans know it. Some more cultured anime viewers can appreciate the series as humorous, and others automatically dismiss it because it's too mainstream. I could probably explain the Pokémon phenomenon, but it would take way too long. If you're still curious, I recommend asking the next 6-year-old you see on the streets.

There are other anime series that have been steadily gaining popularity, such as Dragon Ball Z and Sailor Moon. I won't try and explain these series either, but I admit to being quite a big Dragon Ball fan, and if you have any questions you can ask me personally, but no Sailor Moon questions please. Sailor Moon is for girls.

The growing popularity of these series and their subsequent merchandise have

shown the business community the potential earning power of anime in the U.S. Warner Brothers released the Pokémon movie a few weeks ago, and Miramax followed with its release of "Princess Mononoke." The movie was translated with the help of acclaimed writer Neil Gaiman and uses the voices of Claire Danes, Billy Bob Thornton, Gillian Anderson, Minnie Driver and Billy Crudup. When the movie was released in Japan, it topped box office sales until "Titanic" sailed in. This success gave more acclaim to director Hayao Miyazaki, who was already admired by many American animators.

Anime has remained underground for quite a long time in the states mainly because it is not easily available to consumers. In most cases, an anime fan has to buy tapes from a place such as Suncoast Productions. That gets terribly expensive, especially when most anime videos are part of a series that can easily be eight tapes long. Most video stores have a small collection of anime videos that are more mainstream. Unfortunately, for fans such as myself, a side effect of getting into anime is resentment towards anything terribly popular in America.

But at the same time, I feel that the anime community welcomes feature films such as "Princess Mononoke" as a sign that there is more on the way. A company, Urban Vision, is working on a remake of an anime classic called "Vampire Hunter D" due to be released in January 2000. Also, Cartoon Network recently picked up a new anime series called "Ronin Warriors" and the Sci-Fi Channel continues to show anime movies early every Saturday morning.

If you are interested in seeing some anime you're in luck. Our very own University has an anime club and anyone is welcome to attend. The Truly Un-Named Anime Club (TUNAC) meets every Thurs-

day at 7 p.m. in the media center connected to the Knight Library. Another place to watch anime in town is at Emerald City Comics on 13th street in the Smith Family Book Store complex. Every second and fourth Friday of the month at 7 p.m. they show anime free and open to the public. But if you aren't big on crowds, Emerald City Comics has an incredible amount of anime available to rent.

If anime isn't quite your thing and you still read this far, then thanks. I have done what I have come to do and triumphed most excellently. I will now strike a dramatic pose while my hair and cape blow in wind that wasn't here a minute ago to the sound of large drums.

Mason West is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the paper. He can be reached via e-mail at mwest1@gladstone.uoregon.edu.



Bryan Dixon Emerald

STREET WISE

Should student incidental fees be allocated to help fund the Office of Public Safety?

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“My understanding of incidental fee is to support students only, not campus departments. And the OPS definitely needs to be funded, but I don't think the student fee is the right source.”

William Bankhead,
senior,
environmental studies



“I think the OPS is part of the institution that helps the campus and provides safety. That's why I think the money should go to the public safety.”

Ken Ko,
graduate, planning
public policy and
management



“I think so because students' safety is of major importance.”

Tessa Olson,
senior, sociology



“I think it should be, because funding to the OPS is partially dependent on how many students and other extracurricular activities.”

Elizabeth Bartleson,
senior, environment science