

アニメ, 日本の侵入!

(Anime, the Japanese Invasion!)

The Rundown

- Term comes from “animation.” In Japan, it refers to any animated work.
- Rooted heavily in the manga tradition; most popular anime series are in fact based on successful manga.
- Anime is not quite as popular as manga, but its presence is still quite extensive.

No School Like the Old-School

- Notable early series imported to the United States include Speed Racer (1967), Gatchaman (a.k.a. Battle of the Planets, 1978), and Mazinger Z (1984).
- Frequently, parts of different series would be spliced together for the U.S. release; heavy editing of questionable material.

Roger Ebert Reviewed What?

- First anime movie to receive popular critical attention in the United States: AKIRA, 1988.
- Also the first anime movie to be rated by the M.P.A.A. (it got an R).

Modern Popularity in the United States

- Regular daytime broadcasting began in the mid-1990’ s; big upswing came in the late 90’ s and early 2000’ s. Blame Dragonball Z and Pokémon.

What you will find on the shelf-
Common Genres¹

Mecha

Love, Justice, and Robots

- “Mecha” derived from English “Mechanical.” Typically used to describe the iconic “Giant Robot” series.
- Ultimately, all mecha series descend from Gigantor (original title Iron Man 28) and Mazinger Z.
- Mobile Suit: Gundam is one of the most extensive mecha franchises in history; no fewer than twenty-four spin-off series and movies, dozens of video games, hundreds of model kits, and countless other tie ins.
- Common Themes: Alienation, Politics, War, Role of Soldiers

“Progressive”

What Just Happened?

- The Big O
- Boogiepop Phantom
- Serial Experiments Lain
- Heavily stylized, often visually distinct even when compared to other anime.
- More inclusive than standard Shōnen (see below), frequently draws from literary and philosophical concepts from around the world; works like Ulysses would fit right in, thematically.
- Common Themes: Nature of God(s), Nature of Humanity, Nature of Reality, Nature of Nature, Nature of Technology, etc.

¹ Most series are a mix. Practically all of them, really.

Shōnen (少年)

“I will never give up!”

- Bleach
- Dragon Ball (Z, G. T., B. Y. O. B., B. B. Q., etc.)
- FullMetal Alchemist
- Hikaru's Go
- Naruto
- One Piece
- This is what you will see on television in the States. Easily marketable, wide appeal, large range of settings, subjects, tone, etc.
- Common Themes: “Coming of Age” Stories, Friendship, Courage, Triumph

Shōjo (少女)

Roses, Swords, and Pretty-Boys

- Azumanga Daioh
- Escaflowne
- Fruits Basket
- Maison Ikkoku
- Revolutionary Girl Utena
- Marketed to young women like Shōnen is marketed to young men; otherwise surprisingly similar content.

Sub-Genre: Mahō-Shōjo, “Magical Girl” (魔法少女)

Moon Power and Talking Animals

- Cardcaptor Sakura
- Sailor Moon
- Common Themes: Growing Up, Personal Relationships, Self-Discovery

Seinen (青年)

Sex, Lies, and Videotape discs

- Berserk
- Cowboy Bebop
- Death Note
- Outlaw Star
- Sanctuary
- Same demographic as most Hollywood movies: males aged 18-30 with lots of disposable income. Increasingly popular as the Dragonball generation grows up.
- Common Themes: See Shōnen, only add more violence and/or sex.

Less Common Genres

(It is there, but you may have to dig for it)

Sentai (戦隊)

“Municipal Justice Force is GO!”

- Cyborg 009
- Voltron

- Lit., “Fighting Team.” Typically consists of a group of superheroes in color-coordinated costumes (the boss wears red) righting wrongs and inflicting vigilante justice. Giant robots are all but guaranteed.
- More common format in live action (remember Power Rangers?).

Sports

“Goooooooooooooooooal!”

- Eyeshield 21 ([American] Football)
- Hajime no Ippo (Boxing)
- Initial D (Motor Racing)
- Whistle (the other Football)
- Just like the title suggests; could be considered a sub-genre of either Shōnen, Shōjo, or Seinen depending on the content.

Hey! Spring of Trivia

- In Japan, voice actors (seiyuu, 声優) record their parts together at the same time. By contrast, English dubbing (mostly done in Ontario, Canada or California) is typically done one actor at a time.
- It is not uncommon for popular Japanese musical artists to provide pieces for anime series; these are commonly used during opening and ending credits.
- The Japanese special editions of individual volumes and boxed sets frequently come with all kinds of extras: soundtracks, figurines, and other collectibles.

So What?

(Why the presentation?)

- On an idealistic note, the popularity of anime represents a phenomenon that transcends the traditionally defined boundaries of “East” and “West” and encourages cultural literacy, so that the jokes make sense if nothing else.
- On a realistic note, it is fascinating to see how culture can be exported like it was a physical commodity.
- On a slightly paranoid note, the Japanese are getting back at the States with an invasion of their own.

Works (sort of) Cited

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