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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Publishing an anime magazine like *Protoculture Addicts* always requires a delicate balance. The anime industry and fandom—and consequently our readership—is very diverse and our choice of content and how we chose to present that content can be seen as the proverbial double-edged sword: What pleases one individual can very well displease another. The success and survival of the magazine depends on a perpetual balancing act in order to find the perfect concoction that will be interesting to most readers—and we must also constantly adjust to the changes in the industry and in the fans' taste.

First and foremost, *PA* has a dual commitment to both the anime industry and fandom. On one hand we must offer to the anime companies the opportunity to promote their products while informing the fans of what the industry is doing. On the other hand, we must help fans to find the best titles for them by providing a critical analysis of the available titles while also providing them with the opportunity to voice their own opinions and expectations. I see *PA* as a neutral and objective intermediary which sole purpose is to inform both parties and facilitate their mutual understanding. Since none of our staff members (both in *PA* and ANN) are total otaku or involved in the industry (we are totally independent and not owned by any corporation, nor anime & manga producers or distributors), it is easy to remain objective (although we all have opinions, but isn't it what people want from us, our opinion?). However, it seems that it is much more difficult to convince people of our true objectivity. In this age of paranoia, conspiracy theories and forgotten trust, some idealists sometimes accuse us of being the industry's minion simply because we publish paid advertising! The real world works with money and I am proud to say that *PA* is equally financed by both the industry (through advertising) and the fans (through sales). Furthermore, our track record over the last twenty years should say enough about our professionalism, credibility and dedication. Sure, industry people sometimes try to pressure us in their favor, but we remain firm. Several years ago, an anime distributor who didn't like our reviews of *Hotells* cancelled its advertising contract and never sent screeners again. The guy gave me a load of cash over the phone and told me that with what he was paying for advertising he was expecting better reviews. I'd rather lose a big advertising contract than compromise my ethics as a journalist by abandoning my objectivity and risk losing the respect of the readers.

To cater to the diversity of our readership we must also achieve a balance in our content. Therefore, we cover not only newly released titles, but also some old classic series. We cover not only titles that have been acquired for North American distribution, but also shows that we know will most likely never cross the Pacific. Everybody has different tastes, so we are trying to introduce our readers to the greatest variety of titles possible. Of course, we first select titles that we know the readers will want to learn about, but we tend to cover popular series differently, using interviews and more thematic articles instead of the usual "anime stories." I admit that I have often avoided talking about the *Sailor Moons*, *Dragonballs*, *Pokemons*, *Narutos* and *Full Metal Alchemists* of the world. If we try to please the fans too much by feeding them only what's popular in order to sell more copies, then we reduce our content to the lowest common denominator and *PA* loses what makes it special. I am much more inclined to introduce our readers with little known, but very interesting titles. Of course, some readers might roll their eyes saying "oh no, not that stupid show," but I've discovered that some kids' shows can not only be entertaining, but can also be rich in opportunities to learn about culture and human behavior. Often people thank us for having made them discover series that they never thought they would like.

A successful magazine must maintain the right balance between the textual and the graphical elements, and between the various types of articles: in-depth coverage of one or two particular titles, a few "anime stories" to introduce new titles, interviews & thematic studies for the variety, not too much news and a good dose of reviews to help readers decide what titles they want to buy (but not too many reviews because, after all, *PA* is not only about reviews). The reviews themselves must be well balanced: be respectful of both the creators & readers, highlight both the good & the bad, and be as detailed & informative as possible.

It is not easy to make a good magazine. With all the balancing, I sometimes feel like an acrobat. Each new generation of readers has different tastes and we must adjust to the new while still being interesting to the older generation. Keeping it up for twenty years was quite a challenge, but I am sure it is just the beginning.

Happy 20th anniversary *PA* and a huge "thank you" to the readers and the industry people who have supported our efforts for all these years!

Claude J Pelletier



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# "PAGE FIVE" EDITORIAL

The first time I read *Protocolture Addicts*, in 1990, it was to learn some details about various *Robotech* mecha. At the time I was playing the *Robotech* RPG with my friends, and the magazine was relevant to what we were doing. In the mid 1990s I read *Protocolture Addicts* because I needed plot synopsis for the various anime that I was watching raw. In the early part of this decade I read *Protocolture Addicts* to learn what was going on in the anime industry and community.

None of that is relevant today. The big thing driving so many magazines to irrelevance is the Internet. Who needs stale, 2-month old news when you can get zero-day news on any topic online? Who needs static references when online encyclopedias and wikis hold more information than could ever be printed and are updated regularly? Who needs magazines?

Sure, it's sad that so many magazines with so much history are floundering and going under. But as sad as it is, that's the natural way. Whatever can't adapt is destined to die out. In the twenty years since the first issue of *Protocolture Addicts* was published many anime magazines have come and gone: *Animerica*, *Mixxzine*, *Anime Play*, *Animag*, *V.Max*, *AnimeJin* and many others. Other magazines are still around, but for how long? Some of those magazines were damn good, and I was sad to see them go, but for the most part they failed because they didn't adapt. They thought that whatever it was that sold one year would sell just as well the next year. They were wrong.

But magazines can adapt. Some magazines have higher circulation today than they ever had before. It's all a matter of figuring how to keep the magazine relevant in today's world and taking advantage of the magazine format in ways that can't be improved upon in other mediums.

That's why Anime News Network teamed up with *Protocolture Addicts*. The *Protocolture Addicts* family (that's you) need never be subjected to the painful death of the magazine. Not because some silly website is willing to support the magazine, but because the website knows that there are things that can be done better in print than online, and because *Protocolture Addicts* will continue to adapt and evolve over the years. *Protocolture Addicts* is Anime News Network's outlet for all the creative material that we can't use to full effect online, and Anime News Network's is *Protocolture Addicts'* link to the future.

Next time a magazine publisher tells you that the print medium is as strong as ever, listen to them, because while they're probably hiding their head in the sand, they just might be much smarter than you think.

My assignment was to write an editorial about why Protocolture's 20<sup>th</sup> year of production is such a big deal. In my mind, the big deal isn't what has been achieved, but rather what can be achieved. Sure, twenty years is certainly a momentous occasion, but if you ask me what I'm excited about, I could care less about *Protocolture Addicts* reaching it's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I'm more focused today on the fact that this magazine has a good chance of reaching its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. No one knows what the next 20 years will bring us, except that they will bring change. One thing that the last 20 years have shown us, is that this magazine can adapt to the changing times all the while remaining interesting, informative, and relevant.

Don't dismiss magazines just yet.

And happy 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary *Protocolture Addicts*.

Christopher MacDonald

# CONTRIBUTORS' SPOTLIGHT

## ZAC BERTSCHY



In 1987, Zac Bertschy, pictured here in an embarrassing Robin Hood costume, aspired to one day become Batman. Instead, he became a writer for this magazine. To compensate for his failure, Zac lives in a cave and drives a 1998 Honda Civic with a Batman sticker on the rear windshield.

## VALÉRIE COOLS



In 1987, Valerie was 4 years old and living in Brussels. Some of her clearest memories of that year have to do with watching French broadcasts of *Belle and Sebastian* and *Nobody's Boy – Remi*. Since then, she has moved around, before settling in Montreal. A couple of weeks ago, she completed her master's degree in literature and celebrated by finally reading *Death Note*.

## BAMBOO DONG



In 1987, as *Protoculture Addicts* was making its first steps as a *Robotech* fanzine, Bamboo Dong was... a baby. She started writing for Anime News Network at the age of 15 and is now Managing Editor. She likes to cosplay and is currently attending UC Irvine in pursuit of a PhD in molecular biology.

## CHRISTOPHER MACDONALD



The 12-year-old Christopher MacDonald entered Montreal's Loyola High School in September 1987. He had recently taken up martial arts, and what time wasn't given over to the new chore called "studying" was usually spent in the dojo or on the ski hill. He wouldn't discover anime for another 2 years.

## MIYAKO MATSUDA



In 1987, Miyako Matsuda was living in California and employed by Eclipse Comics, an American comic book publisher, as a retouch artist and inker. She was also volunteering as a translator at C/FO meetings and BayCon sci-fi convention, in San Jose and San Francisco, to help fans understand the anime they were watching in Japanese language.

## CLAUDE J. PELLETIER



In 1987, Claude J. Pelletier was completing his master's degree in roman history, publishing a science-fiction fanzine named *Samizdat* and watching anime at the University dorms with his friends. He also enjoyed playing *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* as well as the *Robotech Role-Playing Game*, and was already working on *Protoculture Addicts*.

# ANIME & MANGA NEWS

## Geneon – ADV Deal Collapses; Geneon Restructures

On August 24th information was released to the public making it clear that Geneon Entertainment USA no longer wanted to handle the sales and marketing of their titles in North America. ADV Films had been tapped as a strategic partner that would take over the sales and distribution of Geneon titles.

What hadn't been released to the public at the time (and still hasn't been formally announced) is that Geneon has no intention of working on the production aspects of English language anime. Producers were given directions to finish work on all their current projects by December 31st, 2007, at which time Geneon Entertainment USA would effectively cease to exist. Geneon's US office was to become a rights management office similar to Kadokawa USA, ADV films would handle sales and marketing, and localization would also be outsourced, either to ADV or to other studios.

The deal was to come into effect on October 1st, 2007. In preparation for the move of sales and marketing to ADV Films, Geneon USA laid off the majority of its sales and marketing staff in early September, keeping only one marketer and three senior sales staff.

However on September 20th, less than two weeks before the deal was to go into effect, Dentsu and ADV Films announced that the deal had been scuttled. No official reasons were given for the cancellation, but insiders point to Geneon's mountain of retailer returns as being a contributing factor.

A week later, on September 26, Geneon announced that it would stop taking orders for products on September 28 and only orders for titles with street dates of November 6 or earlier would be accepted. Effectively, any and all Geneon releases due after November 6 have been delayed indefinitely, until Geneon can find a new partner for sales, marketing and distribution.

Dentsu, the Japanese owner of Geneon, announced on September 29 that it would post a \$44 million dollar loss due to the downsizing of Geneon USA. This \$44 million loss does not include the money it loss in previous years of operation. Dentsu the world's third largest advertising firm, with annual revenue of almost \$2 billion (3 times the total annual retail sales of anime in North America) purchased Pioneer LDC from Pioneer Corp in 2003. The anime company was renamed Geneon (a combination of the words Generation and Eon) and for a while everything was good. As long as the North American anime industry continued to thrive, Dentsu invested millions of dollars into Geneon, allowing it to license titles in a virtually cost-no-limit basis. Money was also provided to aggressively market these titles.

However in 2005 the explosive growth of the North American anime market came to a halt and the next two years weren't particularly great in Geneon-land. Budgets were cut, and titles were under marketed, Geneon's budget for marketing a top shelf title was less than half what companies like ADV and Funimation were spending on the same titles. After two years of cutting and questionable licensing decisions, Geneon decided to call it quits this year.

Until a new North American sales and marketing partner is found, Geneon's titles are effectively on hiatus. Some of the titles that won't be released/completed for a while include: The Law of Ueki, The Story of Saiunkoku, When they Cry and Karin, among others.

But the title with the most questionable future is Hellsing Ultimate. More successful in America than in Japan, will production even continue if there is no outlet for the series in North America? And if it is completed, who will produce it since Geneon will have laid off their producers by the time volume 5 is released in 2008 (volume 4 was just recently delayed in Japan, volume 3's North American release date was October 16). Obviously any North American anime distributor would jump at the chance to handle Hellsing Ultimate, and most of them would allow the dub to be finished with the current cast at New Generation Pictures, but if Geneon holds out for a package deal, we may never see the end of Hellsing Ultimate.

Geneon has made no indication as to what it will do if it does not find a single distribution partner to handle its entire catalog. Should Geneon be forced to award distribution of its titles 1 title at a time to different companies, there is a very significant chance that the titles with lower sales, such as The Law of Ueki, would not be picked up by any distributor.

Another company affected by Geneon's withdrawal from distribution is Bandai Visual USA. Geneon distributed BVUSA's DVDs and was left without a distributor when Geneon ceased its own distribution. Bandai Visual USA reacted by making all their DVDs available online at their dot-anime ([www.dot-anime.us](http://www.dot-anime.us)) website and is reported to be entering into a distribution agreement with another party at the time of this printing but no official announcement has been made. Bandai Visual USA declined to comment on any new distribution arrangement for this article, but did recommend that consumers visit the dot-anime website and "partner" anime shops.

Geneon



## The Decline Of Akihabara

The area of Akihabara (Akiba for short) came to prominence as a special area of interest to geeks after the end of World War 2. Black markets for the sale of electronic parts developed in the area around the Tokyo Technical College. Over the years the shops expanded to selling radios, consumer electronics, computers, and just about everything else a computer geek could want.

In the 1990s, anime-style PC games brought anime Otaku to Electric Town, and over the years pure anime shops that had nothing to do with electronics began to appear in Akiba. A seedier side of Akiba also has its roots in the same time period, as many of the aforementioned PC Games were of the sometimes sexually explicit dating-sim variety, stores catering to a wide variety of sexual fantasies also appeared in Akiba. Today, any Akiba-kei (or “akihabara geek”) will tell you that there are five things worth going to Akihabara for, electronics, anime, maid cafes, idols and porn.

But some of these Akiba-kei are also going elsewhere as their beloved Akiba begins to lose its luster. Petty crime in the district is on the rise as it is a prime sport for Otaku Gari (Otaku Hunting) which involves the bullying and or extortion of otaku, there have been numerous incidents with maids working in many of the local maid cafes being assaulted. Other problems

include increasing rent, which has forced many of the shops to head elsewhere, and foreign merchants that snap up all the best models for sale abroad, but perhaps the single biggest threat to Akiba is modern development.

The skyline of Akiba has changed drastically in recent years, with full blocks of stores being razed for the construction of single mega-buildings. Yodobashi's 7-floor giant electronic store might have everything a casual electronics buyer could want, but it lacks the specialized equipment than Otaku look for and the personal environment that enthusiasts prefer. The UDX building may be home to the Tokyo Anime Center, but it's also home to a \$100/ per plate restaurant and looks like it belongs with the other glass office building in Shinjuku or Shibuya, not with the less modern merchant buildings of Akiba.

It's been said that places cease to be cool when the uncool people start to know about them. If Otaku can be equated with cool, the new cool places are Nakano, Ikebukuro (especially for girls), and Shinjuku. Otaku still go to Akiba, especially the loyal Akiba-kei, and there are a lot of reasons for casual fans to also head to Akihabara, it is still the largest convergence of anime and manga related shops in the world. But how long till the only people in Akihabara are foreigners and wanna-be otaku?



## Lupin III Dvd On Hold Due To “Slow Market”

Discotek Media, licensor of *Lupin III: The Legend of Gold Babylon*, has announced that they are putting the DVD release on indefinite hiatus. At the end of October, the licensor had released *Lupin III: The Fuma Conspiracy* on DVD. Reed Nelson, administrator for [www.lupinthethird.net](http://www.lupinthethird.net), remarked that the DVD was being put on hold due to “state of anime sales (i.e., slow)”. No further information regarding the film has been released by the company itself.

*Gold Babylon* has previously been released by AnimEigo, who never put the film on DVD, although it did debut in America on VHS and Laserdisc.