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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings, Protoculture Addicts!

I've been once again tasked with writing the letter from the editor this month, and it's difficult to come up with anything relevant to say that doesn't directly deal with the overall health of the R1 anime industry. I have to admit – things aren't looking good. Geneon went south, and now ADV is showing some troubling signs – yanking a whole load of new titles, virtually everything they've announced since Sojitz invested in the business – off of their website, cancelling shipments, *Newtype*, and the linear Anime Network service. A simple tightening of the belt, or is it more than that? We don't know (as of press time), but after ICv2 reported that the anime market in America has shrunk over 40 percent in just the last two years, you have to wonder why we're not all running around like chickens whose heads have been cut off and then their heads were told the sky is falling, causing further panic.

Well, the simple matter is, many fans – especially on internet forums – *are* behaving that way. Whether or not it's justified remains to be seen, but it's all in all a troubling situation, one with no real end in sight. So what else is there to say, other than we're all a little nervous?

There are a few things to be happy about: Funimation, Viz and Media Blasters (the latter of whom recently opened new offices in New Jersey) all appear to be thriving, and the manga market is still expanding (although at a slower rate than was previously known). There are more anime fans than ever, as we can see with convention attendance still on the rise after all these years. The mainstream anime series that drive the industry – shows like *Naruto*, *Blood+* and *Death Note* – continue to do very well in America, selling loads of manga and DVDs. So it's not all hopeless, but the market is changing. We're seeing less of a focus on titles that only appeal to tiny niches within anime fandom, and more of a focus on shows that might have some general audience appeal (you know, shows that don't require an insane mastery of Japanese pop culture or a reliance on drippy moe girls). More and more we're seeing a shift in the way business is done, and anime companies appear to be moving forward into the digital frontier, realizing that anime can no longer sustain itself as a business that relies entirely on DVD sales. Anime has become standard TV product, and is going to start being sold like standard TV product. Which can only be a good thing.

The reality is, however, that things are changing. 2008 will probably bring a little bit more bad news for the industry as a whole. In other words, things are probably going to get a little worse before they get better. The market is undergoing a massive corrective shrinking right now, after the giant bubble it enjoyed starting all the way back in 2002. By 2009, the anime industry may not even resemble what we have now. But nobody really knows what the future holds, and no matter what your position – industry employee, journalist, fan – it's a little scary to be facing such massive change.

So what does this all mean for *Protoculture Addicts*? Well, at the very least, we're still here – still chugging away, cranking out issues for your bimonthly reading pleasure, reporting the news, giving you info on brand-new shows happening in Japan and our trademark reviews that pull no punches. We will continue to make every issue the best it can be (and hopefully get them out the door on time!)

Until next time,

Zac Bertschy
Managing Editor



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"PAGE FIVE" EDITORIAL

As I struggle to write these lines, I am quite sick. I have not felt this bad in years. It all started on Christmas Eve: my wife had a strong neck pain and a headache so violent that it was giving her nausea. I was worried because earlier that day she had slipped on icy stairs and I thought she might have hit her head. However, it was quickly followed by flu-like symptoms: shivering, light fever, congestion, sore throat, and cough. While my wife's symptoms lingered for weeks, I was mostly feeling sluggish and lethargic: falling asleep just about anywhere, at anytime. But a month later, I now find myself with exactly the same symptoms: neck pain, headache followed by a stuffy nose, sore throat, cough, etc. It is frustrating because we both received the flu shot but got sick anyway. Although, I just read in the newspaper that those same persistent symptoms are not those of the flu, but of a "respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)" and is therefore not affected by the flu vaccine or antibiotics. The article¹ adds that it lasts for up to a month, can degenerate in respiratory infections (pneumonia, sinus & ear infections) and the best thing to do is to rest at home, drink lots of liquid, maybe take some cough medicine and perform frequent hand-washing to avoid spreading the disease. That's what I'm doing.

While I was resting in bed, I was thinking about how vulnerable we are to those microscopic enemies that constantly assail our body. I remember someone saying (probably on CNN) that we were entering the "century of germs." The combination of global warming, overuse of antibiotics, overconfidence of medical organizations and maybe some bioterrorism could bring the resurgence of old diseases, a larger geographical expansion of infectious carriers, the creation of super-resistant strains and the appearance of never-before-seen bugs. Yikes! But, as it is often the case, the entertainment industry has already picked up on this idea. There are two TV series that I've been watching lately that echo this theme of omnipresent germs: one with a more menacing tone and one putting emphasis on how beneficial germs can be.

The first show is *ReGenesis*, a Canadian live-action TV series set around NorBAC (North American Biotechnology Advisory Commission)—a fictitious high-tech lab financed by Canada, the USA and Mexico—and its team of forensic specialists (including a molecular biologist, a geneticist, a chemist, a virologist and a bioinformatician) investigating natural disasters and bioterrorism. It's a rather realistic science drama at the edge of real science and hard sci-fi—it feels like a mix of *CSI* and *House M.D.* with a bit of *24*. The character-driven story is very well written, very entertaining and even lightly educational (there's always cool CGI showing what a bacteria or virus looks like while the characters explain what's happening). The show was created in 2004 and three seasons have already aired, with a fourth starting in early March. It is broadcast in Canada on TMN, Showcase, Global, in Japan on Wowow and in the U.S. it is syndicated on various networks. The series is a bit alarmist (there's always a catastrophic epidemic with a government cover-up not far behind), but it also tackles interesting socio-political and ethical issues.

The second series is *Moyashimon: Tales of Agriculture*, an 11-episode Japanese animation series based on a manga by Masayuki Ishikawa and animated by Shirogumi Inc under the direction of Yuichiro Yano (who also directed *Mujin Wakusei Survive*). It tells the college adventures of Tadayasu Sawaki, who has the unique ability to see and communicate with micro-organisms and bacteria. Freshly arrived at the agricultural university along with his friend Kei Yūki, he meets Professor Itsuki—who's obsessed with fermented food—and the people around him. At some level it could be considered a cute comedy, but it also touches some serious themes (lots of alcohol fermentation for a start) and it is, above all, a very educational series. Each episode is designed to teach about microbes and the danger or usefulness they represent (and, in the ending segment, cute Tachikoma-like microbes introduce themselves). The animation is rather average and some scenes made me feel a little queasy, but it is a funny and interesting show. It really makes you think about all those germs around you...

I wish you all the best for 2008 (but above all I wish you good health)!

Claude J Pelletier

¹ *The Montreal Gazette* 2008-01-24: A1 & A10

CONTRIBUTORS' SPOTLIGHT

BAMBOO DONG



One of Bamboo's favorite pastimes, aside from watching copious amounts of bad anime, is feverishly supporting her favorite hockey team, the Colorado Avalanche. After learning that this past trade deadline has brought back two of her favorite players, she is convinced that the new dream team will instigate a new dynasty that will rule the Cup for the next ten years. In the event of her shattered dreams, she vows to move to a Scandinavian village, where she will pursue her lifelong dream of opening a small cheese factory.

Recently, she acquired a small infant crested gecko from a friend. Unlike the long, sleek, proud dinosaur-like shape that usually characterizes the mighty gecko, hers no longer has its tail, and thus looks more like a peanut. For that very reason, she decided to name it Peanut. Its obnoxiously large head and its penchant for hiding under fake leaves makes it one of Bamboo's favorite pets to date.

Bamboo's other joy in life is Taco Tuesday, partially for the alliteration, but mostly for the tacos. Depending on the establishment, Taco Tuesday can range from \$1 tacos, to 3 tacos for \$1. As a relatively poor graduate student, she believes that this is one of the best things ever invented by the fast food industry. Without it, she swears she probably would have ended up in a sorry, malnourished state. As it is, tacos, spaghetti, and her rice cooker have saved her life on more than one occasion.

In order to fill up the remainder of her word count, Bamboo has submitted the following joke: A bevy of scientists, from various fields, are trying to figure out the cause of a popular racehorse's decline in health. All give their inputs, highlighting their specific research interests. Finally, the engineer is questioned. He responds, "First, let us assume the horse is a sphere."

ZAC BERTSCHY



Zac Bertschy has been writing about Japanese cartoons for like 10 years and is a little tired of describing his career, so he's

going to instead use this space to discuss his love for refried beans. In the southwest, it's increasingly common to offer pinto or black beans in a burrito, with no option for refried beans. This is supposed to be a health issue, but if they just offered vegetarian refried beans instead of beans made with animal fats, it would be just as healthy and much tastier. This issue is imperative to the well-being of delicious Southern California Mexican food.

JASON GREEN



Being a child of the 80s, Jason Green was raised on a steady diet of *Voltron*, *Robotch*, and *Speed*

Racer reruns, but it was a chance viewing of *Fist of the North Star* in 1994 that turned him into an addict. Despite his fandom's blood-soaked origins, these days he'd much rather settle down with a nice romantic comedy, and can often be seen telling people why *Maison Ikkoku* is the greatest manga of all time.

BRIAN HANSON



Growing up in one of the most savage desert cities in the United States, a young Brian Hanson decided to spend much of

his free time indoors, transfixed by the pulsing, radiating glow of the television, wherein cartoons and video games dominated the young lad's mind. Whereas most children outgrow such childish animated pablum, Brian did not, attempting to amass a near-encyclopedic knowledge of the medium by watching and researching everything he could get his hands on. Knowing his lack of artistic talent would prevent him from actually being an animator, he figured that simply being knowledgeable would suffice.

ANIME & MANGA NEWS

Fansubs, Fansubs, Fansubs...

Fansubs have been a popular, and highly divisive topic of conversation among anime fans, industry and media for many years. It's impossible to ignore the significant contribution made by fansubbers to the early North American anime fan-scene and anime industry, however many debate whether or not the current net-effect of fansubs is beneficial or detrimental. The truth lies in the eyes of the beholder, as fansubs bring more anime to those fans who know how to obtain them (a number that grows significantly every year), but also makes it harder for companies to turn a decent profit on shows that have already been widely distributed for free in fansub format.

Recently, the debate has taken center stage, with some industry representatives openly blaming fansubs for contributing to declining anime sales in North America (said to be down 30% from 2006 to 2007). While some have been blaming fansubs, others have been taking different approaches

to the issue. Anime News Network founder and director of New Media, Justin Sevakis, recently published an open letter to the anime industry in Japan and North America, blaming them for their problems with fansubs. Sevakis argued that as long as the industry isn't able to provide fans with the product they want, fans will continue to produce that product for themselves. On another front, Tokyo Anime Center executive director and *Pokemon* executive producer, Masakazu Kubo, recently submitted a proposal to the Japanese government's Task Force on Media Content Business and Japanese Brands that suggested that the Japanese anime industry address the issue by working directly with fansubbers.

No conclusion to the issue is within immediate sight, however its clear that progress to address the root cause of the issue, as opposed to fighting the symptoms, may finally, if slowly and tentatively, be underway.

T.M. Revolution to Perform at New York Comic Con



New York Comic Con, the home of the American Anime Awards and the elder sibling of the New York Anime Festival, will play host to T.M. Revolution's next North American performance, his first since Pacific Media Expo in 2004. The Japanese superstar will perform in concert at the Jacob Javitz Center on

April 19. The concert is expected to be webcast live, and for free, around the world, a first for a North American J-Pop concert. Details of the webcast haven't been announced as of press-time for this publication, but check out Anime News Network for updates.

T.M. Revolution, whose real name is Takanori Nishikawa, has performed numerous anime theme songs, including five songs for *Gundam Seed* and *Gundam Seed Destiny*. A fan of manga and anime, Nishikawa has voiced several minor parts in *Gundam Seed* and *Rurouni Kenshin* over the years.

Nishikawa was the first Japanese musician to appear on Tofu Records, Sony's now defunct North American J-Pop label, which also released albums from L'Arc~en~Ciel, Puffy AmiYumi and Nami Tamaki. He has expressed interest in bringing more of his music to North America, and even possibly holding a North American concert tour, but he is quick to point out that, unlike other Japanese stars, he has no intention of

adapting his music to the North American market. Although he would like to improve his English to speak directly with his North American fans, he says that his music will always be in Japanese, and that when he gives a concert in North America (NYCC will be his third) he always gives the exact same concert that he would give to a similar crowd in Japan. He does however tailor his concerts to the crowd, making sure to include as many of his anime theme songs as possible when performing at an anime related event.

Back in Japan, Nishikawa, whose stage name means "Takanori Makes Revolution," hasn't been particularly active these past years musically. His last original solo album, *vertical infinity*, was released in 2005, with a pair of compilation/best of albums released in 2006. All

of new material since *vertical infinity* has been with abingdon boys school, a band that he fronts. The band has released one album, including theme songs for *Darker than Black* and *D.Gray Man*. It is currently reported that Nishikawa is focusing on a new solo project, however the details are still secret.

In addition to his music, Nishikawa is also well known for designing his own line of clothing, DEFRÖCK.



ADV FILMS YANKS TITLES FROM WEBSITE

In a sudden move last January, ADV Films removed almost 40 titles from their website, including any artwork, trailers, or synopses. The titles in question turned out to be a complete list of everything ADV had acquired after their 2006 announcement that they had created a partnership with ARM corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Japan Contents Investment Business Limited Partnership (otherwise known as JCI), which is an investment fund co-owned by Sojitz Corporation, Klockworx Ltd, and Development Bank of Japan. No official reasons were given immediately, but Internet forum users quickly found a cached article on *ICV2* via Google, which had archived the story before *ICV2* deleted it. The story, which described financial difficulties between ADV and ARM, suggested that Sojitz had yanked its investment in ADV and as a result, all of the titles ADV had



licensed under their partnership disappeared. The following is an excerpt from that article:

“Coming on the heels of Geneon’s departure the ADV announcement is more bad news for the reeling North American Anime Industry. For the past few years ADV has been the number two anime company in the North America, with a solid 12-13% share of the anime DVD market. Recently though ADV has been showing signs of stress. It has pulled its support from its industry leading collection of anime clubs and two weeks ago announced that it would cease publication of *Newtype USA*. The collapse of ADV’s deal with ARM does not necessarily mean the end of one of the trailblazing American anime companies, which was founded in 1992. ADV still has an extensive library of titles including the ever-popular *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Still the fate of ADV subsidiaries such as The Anime Network, the *Newtype* successor *PiQ*, and the ADV manga publishing program that includes the bestselling *Yotsuba&!* manga remains in the balance as does the future of one of the pioneering powerhouses of the American anime market.”

When asked about the yanked article, *ICV2*’s CEO, Milton Gripp, gave this statement:

“The article on Sojitz and ADV you refer to was one of several contingency articles we prepared and posted on a staging site. Although that staging site is not accessible through *ICV2* navigation, an unpublished article was in-

dexed by Google using a spidering technique of which we had previously been unaware. We discovered the Google indexing within an hour or two of when it occurred and immediately removed the article from our staging site (along with any other unpublished articles). Unfortunately, the article was cached by Google and has now been brought to the attention of anime fans. It’s unfortunate because as this is written, the article isn’t true. It may still be one of several possible outcomes of the current situation, but as far as we know today ADV has not sent a notice to its retailers or placed the titles in question on hiatus and may not, pending the outcome of events that are still unfolding. We regret that our efforts to prepare for any eventuality led to this draft article becoming public and have taken steps to prevent such an event from happening again.”

Meanwhile, ADV remained silent, prompting some retailers to comment on their knowledge of the situation. Robert of Robert’s Anime Corner Store had this to say on his blog:

“Here is what we know:

- 1) I appears that ADV is having some unknown trouble with their licensing partners, and that there are a number of releases that are in jeopardy of being suspended, at least for a short time.
- 2) The executives at ADV are currently working to get these issues resolved, and thus **NO FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE** regarding these issues. In fact, as of this writing there is nothing that can be announced since talks are still ongoing.
- 3) It has the potential to end up being an ugly situation, but as of now we **DO NOT KNOW ANYTHING FOR SURE**. Ultimately it may turn out to be a non-issue.
- 4) This is NOT another ‘Geneon’ situation.

I have been in touch with management at ADV over the last couple of days and they have indicated to me that they feel the problem is solvable and will be cleared up shortly. They have not offered any comments to the press due to ongoing talks.

I have made mention in the last newsletter of the supply problems we’ve been having with ADV recently, and I think this goes a long way to explain things. What we need to do now is take a breath, and wait to hear some official comment from ADV. We will not be making any changes to the availability of these titles, even if they are currently on backorder status, until ADV tells us for sure.

An hopefully NO changes will be necessary.”