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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Twenty years ago, Claude J. Pelletier and a few of his friends decided to start a *Robotech* fanzine, while ten years later, in 1998, Justin Sevakis decided to start an anime news website. Yes, 2008 marks both the 20th anniversary of *Protoculture Addicts*, and the 10th anniversary of Anime News Network. These are indeed occasions to celebrate, but for me, the most important milestones aren't those of tenure, but rather those of accomplishment.

With both *Protoculture Addicts*, and Anime News Network, our most important barometer of accomplishment is the feedback we receive from our readers. I'm proud to say that that feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and I'm even more proud of the fact that our readers (that's you) are constantly writing in to tell us that you not only like what we're doing, but you like it more now than ever before (in other words, we're getting even better every year). Ten years of improvement at ANN, twenty years at *PA*, that's something that everyone involved with should be particularly proud of.

Every once in a while though, there is some singular recognition bestowed upon us that highlights for us just how much people appreciate what we've been doing all these years. To have two such honors bestowed on *Protoculture Addicts* in a single year would be pretty awesome, to have them coincide with the publication's 20th anniversary would be indescribably awesome. Please forgive me if I fail to describe just how proud we are to have had two such honors bestowed on *Protoculture Addicts* this year.



The first honor is in recognition of a single man's contributions to the anime community over the period of twenty years. On May 25th, 2008, Claude J. Pelletier, *Protoculture Addicts* founder and Editor in Chief, was awarded the Momiji Award at Anime North. Any lifetime achievement award is a great honor, but when co-winners of the award in question include Hayao Miyazaki and Go Nagai, it's something truly remarkable. Everyone here at *Protoculture Addicts* and Anime News Network is very proud to congratulate Claude on this wonderful accomplishment.

When accepting his award, Claude spoke of the contributions that the staff of Anime News Network have made to *Protoculture Addicts*, and fittingly this second honor that we've received recognizes the accomplishments of every individual that has contributed to the magazine during the past year. For the first time in the history of the SPJA awards, *Protoculture Addicts* was nominated for the "Best Magazine" award. The winners of the SPJA awards will be announced at Anime Expo in July, but even if we don't win, we'll remain extremely proud of the fact that the SPJA recognized the quality of this magazine and felt that it should be nominated. I'm particularly proud of this recognition when I think about how great the magazine's that weren't nominated are.

Thank you, our readers. It's your recognition that pushes us to improve, and it's your recognition that makes organizations like the SPJA and Anime North take notice. Ultimately, those awards are nothing more than a manifestation of your recognition, that's what we are most proud of, and that's what we strive for. Without you readers, *Protoculture Addicts* would be nothing more than ink on paper.

With that said, please enjoy issue 97 of *Protoculture Addicts*.

—Christopher Macdonald

ANIME NEWS NETWORK'S
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ADDICTS

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"PAGE FIVE" EDITORIAL

Anime's New Trend: Localism and its charm. Truly, these days there are so many new anime titles being produced in Japan that it's increasingly difficult for anyone to keep up. In a way, it's a sign that the Japanese anime industry is still healthy enough to produce so many titles, giving the anime fans the luxury of choice (and indeed there's plenty of genres to choose from!). Recently, as I was watching title after title, I have noticed an encouraging new trend—which I'd call localism: many anime are now taking place in the Japanese countryside instead of Tokyo. The characters are talking in local dialects and the story showcases local customs & culture, as well as the regional scenery, as if their creators wanted to emphasize the rural roots of Japan.

A good example of this trend is Production I.G.'s *Ghost Hound*. It's a complex supernatural story taking place in the boondocks countryside of Kyushu Island and the main characters speak Hakata dialect—which is such a strong dialect that for some it might sound like a different language compared to the standard Japanese language spoken in Tokyo, in a similar way that the English spoken in Northern Scotland (in Orkney or Shetland islands for example) would feel for a North American English speaker. *Ghost Hound* also has superb background artwork displaying the traditional scenery of the "old" Japan—natural landscapes, architecture, temples, sake brewery, etc.—which can be a refreshing discovery for many viewers. Speaking of sake brewery, *Moyashimon* is an anime series set in a different natural environment: an agricultural university. If the story is rather comical it nevertheless emphasizes the importance of food production, particularly the role of micro-organisms in the fermentation process used to make miso and sake.

Many other titles, like *Persona: Trinity Soul* and *True Tears*, take place in Northern Japan. I am always happy to see designers pay attention not only to the characters, but also to the background settings, as it is more and more part of the unique appeal of a series. *True Tears* might be a twisted melodramatic soap opera where a trio of beautiful girls fall in love with the same boy, but the lovely localism and splendid backgrounds are its real charm. What's fantastic is that the studio that created this show is located in Toyama Prefecture (Northern Japan). The creators of *True Tears* at Progressive Animation (P.A.) Works not only produced a very high quality show, but they were also able to promote their home town (Nanto City) and the charm of its local culture through scenes showing their colorful festival, sake brewery, local food and clothing, etc. It's extremely encouraging to know that there are local anime studios outside of Tokyo where talented young artists can work in the more relaxing environment of the countryside—and sometimes without even leaving their hometown. Thanks to more advanced communication and internet technologies artists can hope for a more normal life, get married and have a family—and the countryside is certainly a far better place to raise children than the crammed streets of Tokyo!

Another high quality anime studio, Kyoto Animation, has been producing beautiful anime series for a while—like *Air*, *Clannad*, *Kanon*—blending character-driven stories with colorful natural environments through the use of splendid background artwork. It's unmistakable, there's an increasing number of anime series—*Mushishi*, *Mokke*, *Sketchbook Full Color*, etc.—set in the wonderful nature and local towns of the Japanese countryside.

A friend of mine recently moved because her parents sold their city house to buy a bigger one in the countryside where they now have more space. In the past, many small towns were literally being emptied of their young adult population, lured by the big cities' job opportunities and people from Tokyo were often looking down on the countryside residents. Maybe we are witnessing the beginning of this situation's reversal: people are going back to the countryside to enjoy a quieter life and a restored dignity. This localism trend in anime is simply expressing the collective desire for a better life as it is now possible to enjoy both the advantages of a responsible global economy and the local charms of the countryside.

—Miyako Matsuda

CONTRIBUTORS' SPOTLIGHT

CASEY BRIENZA



Jersey girl Casey Brienza happened upon manga well over a decade ago, when her cousin showed her a well-worn copy of CLAMP's *X*. The graphic yet exquisitely drawn images of dismemberment, decapitation, and blood flying in six different directions at once horrified her at first, but soon enough she found herself captivated and unable to look away. Burgeoning interest in manga soon led to an interest in anime, prose fiction, film, and other forms of Japanese popular culture, and she hasn't looked away since as the richly textured world of Japanese popular culture in the new millennium has unfolded before her eyes. She has also been delighted by its growing visibility in North America and is proud to have been a part of that boom. Manga was her first love, however, and remains dearest to her heart; it continues to be the primary focus of her expertise.

Casey's life is currently split between academia and otakudom. A full-time graduate student, she has been working part-time as a freelance journalist since 2005, and her writings on anime and manga can also be found in *Anime Insider* and *Otaku USA*. One of her readers has said that she is "well-read, intelligent, and unapologetically cutthroat," while her students have been known to refer to her on occasion as "the cute witch." (She notes a disturbing symmetry between these two characterizations.) Casey hopes to get her PhD and dreams one day of beating the odds and becoming a university professor. If she succeeds in her ambition, she fully intends to research and teach until she goes senile and is forced into retirement. Otherwise, she is hopelessly addicted to books and websurfing and therefore feels right at home anyplace she has access to a high-speed Internet connection and ample printed matter.

ZAC BERTSCHY



Zac Bertschy has written his personal bio over 10,000 times, so instead this space

will be used to reveal Zac's secret love for terrible American television shows. While the contents of his DVR are kept top secret to avoid public mockery, he has been known to consume such trash as *Rock of Love*, *Flavor of Love*, *Celebrity Rehab* and the least forgivable TV show of all time, *The Hills*. Zac is currently attempting to obfuscate his shame by buying up lots of obscure Criterion Collection DVDs.

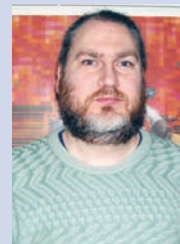
JASON GREEN



Though he calls St. Louis home, Jason Green spent most of the month of June on the road, with Summer World Tour '08 stop-

overs in Chicago, Charlotte, Baltimore, and (best of all) Dublin, Ireland. He is happy to report that day fresh Guinness is served up ice cold, and is perhaps the tastiest beverage this planet has to offer. With his travelling days behind him for the time being, Jason has enjoyed a nice, peaceful July by catching up on his comic books, watching Cardinals baseball, and taking in nice, relaxing anime like *Aria* and *MariMite*, which he was happy to write about for this very issue.

CLAUDE J. PELLETIER



As a child, he dreamed of becoming an archaeologist. Later, because of his love for books and writing, he wanted to be a librarian and novelist. Ironically, he ended up publishing other people's stories—

with a fanzine and several anthologies. In 1987, after completing his master's degree in Roman history, he founded *Protoculture Addicts*. In the early 90s, as a publisher, he released a few comic books, role-playing games and, in 2000, an anime filmography. In 2005, joining forces with Anime News Network, he relinquished his position as *PA's* publisher, but remained its editor-in-chief. His proudest achievement is to have kept the magazine going for over twenty years and constantly improving. At Anime North 2008, he has received the Momiji Award for his contributions to the North American anime community.

ANIME & MANGA NEWS

Even more digital downloads from Toei and Manga

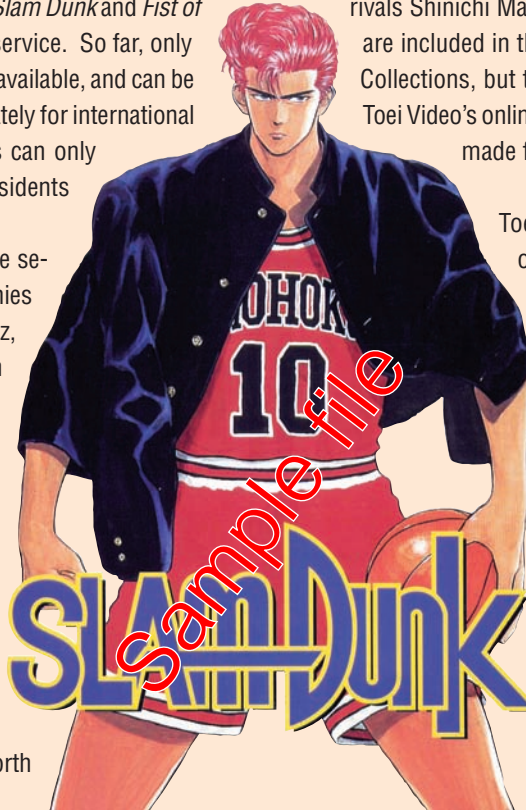
As the popularity of digital downloads increases, so does the amount of anime being offered via the Internet. It's not just new stuff, though; thanks to Toei Animation, fans of old school anime have a reason to celebrate. The production company is offering English-subtitled episodes of *Slam Dunk* and *Fist of the North Star* on IGN's Direct2Drive service. So far, only the first 15 episodes of each series are available, and can be downloaded for \$1.99 each. Unfortunately for international fans and for Mac users, the episodes can only be downloaded by US and Canadian residents running Windows operating systems.

Direct2Drive also has other anime series available from distribution companies like Central Park Media, Funimation, Viz, and Manga Entertainment. Series can be downloaded one episode at a time, or by season. Currently, some of the most popular titles include *Aquarion*, *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, *Witchblade*, and *Naruto*.

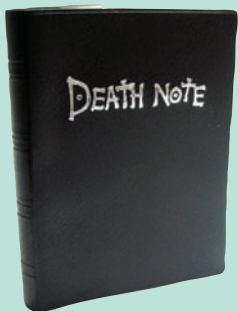
Of course, *Slam Dunk* fans have other ways of celebrating their fandom. Aside from the ability to download episodes of the show soon, they can check out the manga, which is currently being serialized in North

America by Viz in *Shonen Jump* magazine. The graphic novels will be released this September. Toei has also announced the first official replica uniforms for *Slam Dunk*. Uniforms for main character Hanamichi Sakuragi (Shohoku High school), and his rivals Shinichi Maki (Kainan) and Akira Sendoh (Ryonan) are included in the first three Japanese *Slam Dunk* DVD Collections, but they can also be obtained separately on Toei Video's online store. There will be a total of 12 jerseys made for different characters.

As far as downloaded media goes, Toei isn't the only company with recent offerings. Verizon will be distributing content for Manga Entertainment, Starz Media, and Anchor Bay. The download-on-demand service will let Verizon high-speed Internet customers access over 3,000 titles from the trio's lineup, including Manga's anime collection. Set at \$5.99 a month, the subscription will also give users a live feed of Starz's primary cable channel. Those with Vongo can also check out some of Starz's other anime titles like *Blood: The Last Vampire*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and *Street Fighter II* for \$9.99 a month.



Students Continue to be Punished for “Death Notes”



In the popular manga and anime *Death Note*, 17-year-old Light Yagami finds a notebook that causes anyone whose name is written in it to die. Children have always fantasized about having the same powers as fictional heroes, and it's certainly no surprise that fans of *Death Note* revel in the idea that they might be able to rid themselves of hated teachers, school disciplinarians or bullies by simply writing their antagonizers' names in a notebook.

While personal and private notebook writings that fantasize about the deaths of disliked peers would probably have been

laughed at, or at most cause for counseling, ten years ago, today, in a post-columbine, post-9/11 America, things are quite different and students who are caught with such material can expect to be suspended, expelled or even arrested.

Already numerous students have been subjected to severe punishment for their fantasies. Most recently, four students at a Washington middle school were disciplined for their death-note fantasies, and in fact one of them was expelled from school. This despite the fact that the school principal assured parents that there was “no credible threat to the school, students or staff.” Even more harsh, in March, two sixth-graders were **arrested** for their “Death Notes,” and have been suspended from school pending a juvenile-court hearing.

Bandai Entertainment Absorbs Bandai Visual USA



HONNEAMISE

Since March 2008 it's been rumored among industry insiders that Bandai Entertainment Inc. (BEI) and Bandai Visual USA (BVUSA) would be merged into one company. The rumors followed closely on the heels of Namco Bandai's acquisition of all publicly traded shares of Bandai Visual (up until that point, Namco Bandai was majority shareholder in Bandai Visual, but 30 to 40 percent of Bandai Visual's shares were publicly traded) earlier this year. The rumors however varied as to who would absorb who. Japanese sources suggested that BVUSA would absorb

BEI, while North American sources suggested that it would be the other way around. There were solid arguments for either scenario. Back in Japan, Bandai Visual is a highly respected anime company known for its involvement in titles like *Wings of Honneamise*, *Gunbuster* and *Ghost in the Shell*, while BEI is a non-entity. However in North America, BEI has a respectable history, while BVUSA's short history is marred in controversy surrounding the high prices it charge for North American anime releases. Unsurprisingly, since BEI had a better market presence and was more respected in North America, its name was kept. However in the long run, after BVUSA's missteps have been mostly forgotten by North American consumers, it might be reasonable to expect Bandai Namco to eventually move to consolidate its international anime operations under one brand: Bandai Visual.

Inuyasha Manga Reaches Conclusion



Rumiko Takahashi's fan-favorite manga series *Inuyasha* is finally coming to an end. The 28th issue of Shogakukan's *Weekly Shonen Sunday* announced that their June 13 issue would carry the final installment of the popular fantasy series. Clocking in at over 56 volumes, and spread over 558 magazine installments, *Inuyasha* has been running for almost 12 years. Other long-running series by Takahashi include *Urusei Yatsura*, which ran for eight years; *Maison Ikkoku*, which ran for seven; and *Ranma 1/2*, which lasted for over eight years. The North American adaptation of *Inuyasha* is currently being released by Viz Media, who also holds the license for the 167-episode animated TV series, which aired in Japan between 2000 and 2004. The series was aired in the United States by Cartoon Network in 2002, and ran until 2006.

The first chapter of *Inuyasha* was first published in *Weekly Shonen Sunday* 1996, no. 50. Since then, it has been published in several different languages around the world; subsequently, the anime adaptation has been dubbed and aired in several countries. Other accolades include a Shogakukan Manga Award for best shonen title of the year.

Funimation offers mobile digital downloads

Anime fans will be able to take their anime on the road, provided they have AT&T Wireless cellular service. Funimation Entertainment has partnered up with Red Planet Media to offer digital downloads using Red Planet's Jump In Mobile service. Currently, the only series that are available are *MoonPhase* and *Galaxy Railways*, but Funimation plans on expanding the lineup of full series that will be offered. Each episode will cost 99 cents, which is billed directly to the phone bill, or taken from a prepaid balance. Although the service is limited to AT&T customers for the time being, the company is working on expanding to other wireless providers.

For now, subscribers with video-capable phones can direct their phone browsers to <http://jumpinmobile.com/funimation>; they can also text "go funimation" to the number "22646."

Funimation isn't the first anime company to offer mobile video downloads—last year, ADV launched its own video channel on Sprint TV, allowing Sprint Power Vision subscribers to access a wide range of anime clips from the company's lineup at an extra \$4.95 a month. Other companies have offered anime wallpapers and images, as well as manga downloads.

