

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Manga – an addiction for UPEI students

Bob Lassaline
Reporter

When most people hear about Manga, they just pass it off as the latest trend with comic book lovers. Well apparently, we're wrong, and it looks as if Manga is here to stay.

Last Sunday I spent the evening being schooled by the most fanatical and devoted Manga fans, or Otaku, I have ever met. I am still slightly puzzled about the appeal of Manga but this crowd did help me understand some of the finer points behind the North American Manga phenomenon.

My night began with the most basic instruction, explaining what Manga is exactly. The most basic yet broad description is that Manga is a form of Japanese literature. It is different from Anime which is Japanese animation most commonly seen as cartoons, like Pokemon.

Helena Forrester, a third year Psychology student at UPEI explains how it is different from comic books.

"Most people take it to be comic books, but it's not. The content is different, different format, it's not a magazine, and it's a book that's read from right to left."

If you're confused don't worry, Forrester adds that when you pick up a Manga novel, there are instructions.

"It will explain how to read the book."

The reason behind this seemingly odd format is quite logical; it is how original Japanese texts are arranged.

"A lot of people pride themselves in being in original Japanese format, now people are even demanding the original stuff with very close translations."

There's no need to understand Japanese either.

James Morrison, an Anime North Convention employee says they aren't difficult to read.

"Most are amazingly self explanatory. It's no different than picking up a book."

Traditionally, Manga is arranged by genre, similar to regular North American novels.



Manga fans from top from left to right, James Morrison, Mark Kearns. Bottom left to right, Helena Forrester, Sarah Warren, Jennifer O'Neill.

"The books are set up like regular novels, you've got your horror, your romance..." Morrison said.

Jennifer O'Neill, a second year science student at UPEI adds, "Manga has every genre you can think of, even Star Wars and Star Trek."

It is important to understand that these are not just your average comic book spin offs, Morrison said.

"They are not always geared to children, some of them have a lot of sexual content or a lot of violence."

Sarah Warren, an Indigo Books employee said what we see here in Canada is different from what is popular in Japan.

"There's a difference between what is marketed here and what is marketed in Japan. For example, Yaoi is incredibly popular in Japan, but it's only just gaining popularity here."

So what is Yaoi? Warren grins and adds, "It is homosexual male interaction, normally marketed towards adult women," she said. "Here in Canada, there is a lot available, like Shounen-ai which is more romantic or if you want, Yaoi is

more hard core."

Forrester suggests that if anybody is interested in checking out Shounen-ai, they should try reading the Gravitation series by Maki Murakami.

"Gravitation seems to be an intro one for a lot of people." She adds, "you either stay with the vanilla stuff, or you move on."

I was also shocked to hear that one of my childhood cartoons, Sailor Moon was not entirely truthful to the original Japanese production.

"Sailor Moon was butchered heavily. The transformation sequence that was all colours and sparkly was actually a full-out nude scene," Morrison said. "Two of the cousins, were actually lesbians. They changed so much in the Canadian version to make it showable."

For this Manga crowd, the entire year is about waiting for the next Anime North Convention or fondly known among their group as "The Con." The convention is in Toronto and will host about 15,000 Manga and Anime super fans.

Mark Kearns, a second year science

student at UPEI said the convention fills up fast.

"We booked our tickets in September, they sold out in December and the Con isn't until May." Warren said dressing up for the event is something they look forward to.

"The Con goes for three days, and we will dress up for each day."

Forrester adds, "you don't have to dress up, it's a choice and your own right, however, a lot of people do."

Warren grabs a stack of photos from last year's trip to Con. As I flip through, I see many different characters that have obviously spent a lot of time and money preparing their costumes for Con.

"When they dress the part, they will often act like the character too," Forrester said.

When talking about the highlights of last year's Anime North Convention, Morrison said social conventions are not necessary here.

"One of the nicer things that comes with Con is the complete disillusion of social conventions, they go out the window."

Forrester adds "basically anything and everything is possible at Con. The thing is it doesn't matter who you were on the outside, once you are at Con, you're the same as everybody else."

Warren adds, "you're home."

Before I leave for the night I ask the group if there are any social stereotypes that they would like to break down.

Warren laughs.

"Haven't we proven them all? We're not going to deny it! I buy at least three Manga a week, it's an addiction."

Warren suddenly adds, "I swear though, we're not entirely crazy."

Okay, well the verdict may still be out but anybody has to admire the dedication and the passion that this little clique has.

Thanks guys for an interesting and informative night.

Lassaline photo

Win \$2500.

www.campusresearch.ca

Seriously.

Fine print: Prizes: One \$2500 grand prize, one \$1500 second prize, one \$1000 third prize and twelve \$250 extra prizes.

Contest is only open to students currently enrolled at a Canadian post-secondary institution. The good news is it's available for a very limited time, so your odds of winning are awesome.

This survey is sponsored by your campus newspaper and Campus Plus, a division of Canadian University Press. All personal information provided is private and confidential and will be used for research purposes for the improvement and advancement of campus newspapers in Canada. View our privacy policy online at www.campusplus.com/privacy.aspx.