

Barakamon

One for the Creative Folks

FARAH MASUD

Heart-warming, relaxing, and hilarious - is how I would define this anime.

An award-winning young calligrapher, Seishuu Handa punches an aged exhibition director in the face, when the old man accuses the calligrapher's work of being too dull and lacking originality. Since childhood, Handa had been a perfectionist and only accustomed to praise. So when the bitter truth is served on a platter, he doesn't handle it well. Handa's father, who is also a calligrapher, sends him off to an island as punishment for the insolent behaviour.

Handa being a city boy, and that too somewhat of a hermit, is initially frustrated by the lack of privacy and the backward technology of the island. But he gradually begins to befriend the people and learns moral lessons that help him to grow as an artist.

Barakamon is a slice-of-life anime in its truest sense. There's no fast paced action, or unnecessary fan service. It is not there to revolutionise story-telling. This anime shows us the charm in heartfelt, childish humour. The innocence of the characters is something one begins to appreciate from the get go.

The anime's overarching theme revolves around an artist's struggles and joys throughout the creative process. It is essentially a character study of the protagonist.

Handa is extremely impulsive, self-critical and goes through a phase of deep self-loathing when he's second best. On the other hand, when inspiration strikes him, his emotions take a 180 degree turn, transforming him into an artistic maniac. Although his reactions may seem over the top, anyone who tries to pursue a creative endeavour is all too familiar with the bouts of sleepless nights, moments of extreme self-doubt, nervous breakdowns and so on.

Upon reaching the island, Handa constantly tries to find his own style and focus on his work. But he is almost always interrupted by the antics of the children and teens

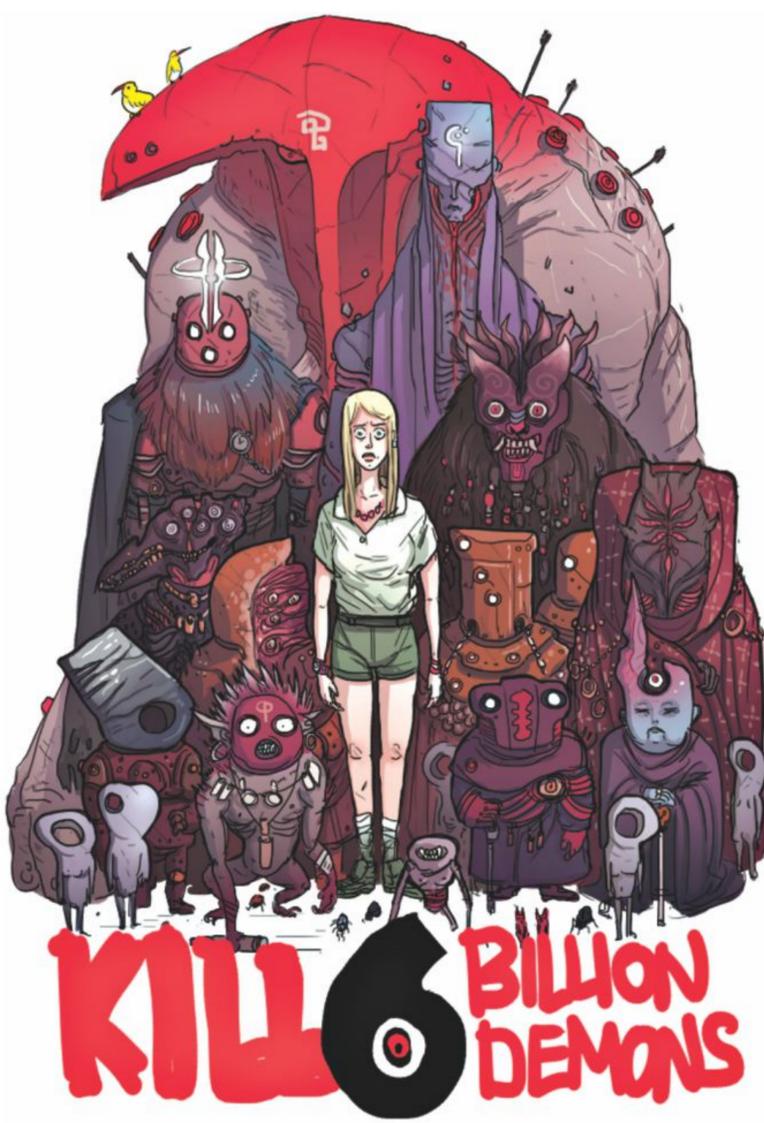
of the island, particularly by a seven-year old girl named Naru. Naru stands out more prominently than any other character in the series. She is rambunctious, mischievous and downright adorable. The gleam in her eyes and the excitement in her voice single-handedly inspire Handa to get out of his shell and try out bizarre new things. The island exposes Handa to things he wouldn't have experienced in Tokyo. The anime portrays the simple and laid-back lifestyle of the country side. It shows us how sometimes a change in the environment is all we need to ignite that creative spark.

By the end of the series, Handa does not only mature as an artist, but also as an individual. He learns to care and be responsible for others, he begins to value his relationships and finally, he realises that he does not need to be "number one" in order to be happy.

Barakamon does a great job at depicting its side characters. Apart from the characters of Handa and Naru, we come across other lively characters that have their own unique personalities. The voice acting in this anime deserves applause. In most anime, children's characters are voiced by older female voice actors, making them somewhat irritating to hear, but in Barakamon they are actually voiced by children. In addition, the soundtrack impressively captures the essence of the Japanese country side.

Barakamon is an anime that will be most relatable to creative folks who have undergone similar struggles as our main character at some point in their lives. However, you will enjoy it just as much if you want to give your brain a break from nerve-racking psychological thrillers, or simply want a light-hearted watch for your summer vacation. I personally re-watched it after a disastrous semester and it did a damn good job in cheering me up.

Farah Masud is a humanbean and that is all you need to know about her. Please don't try to contact her anywhere, especially not in person.



WEBCOMIC REVIEW

Zen and the Art of Kung Fu Angels

ZOHEB MASHIUR

"Pree Ashma. Yis-Asram, the Blooded One. Yis-Prama, Hansa and Prat Pavam, who temper my heart. Yisun Atru Vyam. Forgive me for this violence I am about to inflict."

So chants the peacekeeping angel 82 White Chain Born in Emptiness Returns to Subdue Evil before laying down some hurt. Armoured in ash, White Chain is the first friend and barely-tolerant guardian of sorority sister Allison Ruth when she stumbles onto Throne, the city at the center of the multiverse and final resting place of the gods. Allison was handed the Key of Kings, an ancient artefact that does something she is ignorant of, but mostly she wants to find out what the hell is going on and who kidnapped her boyfriend.

It is an inauspicious beginning for the prophesied inheritor of creation, the hero who will one day be called Kill Six Billion Demons.

Written and drawn by Abaddon (real name Tom Parkinson-Morgan) this webcomic is one of the most vibrant ongoing stories you can find online. Updated multiple times a week the narrative sprawls across the actual pages of the comic, alt-text displayed by hovering over the pages, worldbuilding quotes and narratives in the image captions, Abaddon's tumblr, trivia

sections of the site... and even the comments left by readers are sometimes included into the canon. It is a reading experience that will reward you the more you dig into it, but crucially it can be enjoyed just by reading the comic and nothing else.

The world of K6BD is one of ancient, cosmic scale power and glory crumbling to nothing and presided over by mad-kings, scheming angels and criminal demons. It is at once lofty and mundane, the aesthetic greatly drawing from Abaddon's ability to draw both in great scale and in minute detail. Don't let the apparent vagueness of much of the flavour-text fool you: the meticulous detail of the worldbuilding is uniform and everything is eventually relevant.

Abaddon is excellent writer able to write in the style of a Zen koan or an old legend, investing every character with a particular voice. The characters and concepts are complex and entertaining, ranging from Allison's own incompetent determination to Pree-Aesma, the aggressively boorish mythological figure who defeats gods through violence, ignorance and bad taste.

This, then, is a taste of Kill Six Billion Demons. Read it if you want sprawling epics about kung-fu angels, eastern mysticism, angry gods, 777,777 universes, noodle bars and angels who use sinners as motorbike wheels.