

ANIME REVIEW

SAIKI K

Doing anime humour
 the right way

DEEPARGHYA DUTTA BARUA

The *Disastrous Life of Saiki K.* is a gag anime developed by J.C. Staff that ended last year after spanning two seasons and a special fifty-minute-long finale. Despite boasting a fan base of around a hundred thousand members at MAL, it felt to me that the show went under the radar of most people as the show didn't offer anything special in its synopsis.

The show revolves around the life of Saiki, an individual who has been blessed with as many superpowers as possible. And like any other run-of-the-mill anime plot, Saiki wants to be free from this "drudgery" of having supernatural powers and live a normal, average life. He also showcases an anti-social attitude as seen in nearly half the anime that exist on the planet. In spite of how average the plot sounds, the whole show puts a number of predictable anime tropes in the same basket and subjects them to absolute mockery.

As someone who's more accustomed to Western humour, I haven't quite been able to wrap my head around the slapstick humour a large number of these gag anime carry. Watching the first season of *Clannad*, for example, felt like a chore to me even though it was required to get to the much acclaimed second season as the humour there relied on beating up lecherous dudes with combo attacks. I do acknowledge that *Clannad* isn't a comedy anime; in fact, it's far away from that, but the notion holds true for a number of other titles.

This is where *Saiki K* does it differently. The humour here is above par compared to most of the Japanese animated series I've seen and despite the show not really having a stiff arc, the plot elements in each episode seamlessly blend through,

unlike a lot of Western shows that rely on randomness. It's a fast-paced show and the subtitles might be a little hard to follow through at times, but they do a surprisingly good job at translating humour, something that is tougher to achieve.

The show itself acts as a huge diss at the unoriginality that can be noticed in modern anime. It doesn't take the extreme route that *Pop Team Epic* follows, but shows the same intent as it stays true to its roots, barely going out of character. All the main characters portray a certain anime archetype one way or another. What the show creators did here is that they chose to deconstruct other anime and recycled the predictable mechanics to make a joke out of them. There are tsunderes, bland anime guys, bland anime girls, pointlessly optimistic class captains, explanations on why anime character designs have unrealistically dyed hair and even an entire episode breaking down the plot progression of mediocre sports anime.

The only downside is the finale. While it might not be as disappointing as the last season of *Game of Thrones* that you had to sit yourself through, *Saiki* didn't quite pick up in Japan and as a possible repercussion, the finale was pushed out quietly with an extremely rushed 50-minute special. And after a little bit of digging, it turns out that the last two chapters of the manga weren't even adapted. The manga does offer a bit of closure, regardless of whether it's satisfying or not.

Despite the finale mishap, the show is definitely worth a watch as it stands as a strong contender for all the modern gag anime out there. The showrunners choose to fiddle with the feelings of those who are watching it but the teasing doesn't deviate it from the purpose it was intended for.



MOVIE REVIEW

ALADDIN

We know the story and
 we'll watch it anyway

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

How do you draw audience to theatres when they already know the full plot of a movie? Simply banking on nostalgia is a risk Disney doesn't take as *Aladdin* (2019) directed by Guy Ritchie is packed with crackling original humour, wonderful action-chase sequences and features fresh new talent despite taking us on a journey with characters we already know and love.

After *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*, Disney's latest live action remake transports us to the streets of Agrabah where we meet the charming street rat Aladdin played by Mena Massoud who teaches us that "when you don't own anything, you have to pretend like you own everything." Escaping through the crowded marketplaces, Aladdin dashes, jumps and swings his way out of trouble in the maze of a city with ease and finesse.

Naomi Scott plays Princess Jasmine with a lot of heart although some of the more emotional scenes reveal a lack of her acting chops. It is amusing to watch fan favourites Abu, Rajah, Iago and the MAGIC carpet come alive. Grand Vizier Jafar not only gets a great costume but also one of the best dialogues in the film when he declares "Steal an apple, you're a thief. Steal a kingdom, you're a statesman."

Nasim Pedrad is a hoot as the princess' handmade and steals all of the scenes she is in. An SNL alum, it is hard to forget her role as Princess Jasmine in a hilarious SNL sketch featuring the Disney princesses. The undeniable real star of the show however is Will Smith as Genie who is as grand and fabulous as a 1000-year-old

blue genie should be.

Some of the best features of this musical are the wonderful renditions of the songs from the original. Accompanied by gorgeous picturisation thanks to amazing choreography, props, and costumes the hits "Friend Like Me" and "Prince Ali" are sure to get any viewer excited even if they're not a Disney fan. Jasmine and Aladdin's iconic magic carpet ride to the tune of "A Whole New World" is another soaring moment in the film (not a spoiler).

We may be familiar with the beats of the movie due to the success of the 1992 animated feature, however the tale of Aladdin and Jasmine has survived centuries. Originating as early as the 10th century, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* found a place in *The Arabian Nights* or *The Thousand and One Nights* alongside other childhood favourites *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and *Sinbad the Sailor*.

Despite some quarters of the audience being less than welcoming towards rehashes of old classics, it is important to note that remakes keep stories alive by presenting and passing it on to new generations. This film updates the story with a much more feminist and progressive tone and gifts the story to the 21st century audience.

Aladdin is a comedy musical that does its job right. Watch it while it's still in theatres—the gorgeous soaring shots of the seas by cinematographer Alan Stewart and the wonderful soundtrack won't be the same experienced at home.

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