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AND THEY SAVED MY SORRY ASS: A DOCUMENTARY DISCOVERING SELF IN
CONTEMPORARY FAN CULTURE

by

CHUNXIAO YANG
B.A. Barnard College, 2020

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
in the Department of Film and Mass Media
in the Nicholson School of Communication and Media
in the College of Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

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ABSTRACT

And They Saved My Sorry Ass is a documentary/personal essay film about queer anime lovers (including the filmmaker) based both in the US and in China. This film focuses on how these fans express their identities by embodying and re-interpreting anime characters. Experimental methods, such as staged performance, first-person narration and abstract imaging are explored in addition to conventional interviews. This thesis follows the pre-production, production and post-production processes of making this film through 2020 to 2023, also mapping out marketing and distribution plans after finishing the project.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have come to its completion without the help and support from many. I would like to first extend my gratitude to my thesis committee. My thesis chair Elizabeth Danker Kritzer has been very generous with her time in giving me guidance, expertise and advice. Thank you for making every effort to invigorate my artistic vision and initiatives while offering me sensible and thoughtful feedbacks. Dr. Lisa Mills has guided me through my course of study in the program. She is always mindful of the needs of students, making every effort to connect my peers and I to opportunities. Dr. Stella Sung has opened up the world of music composition for timed media for me so that I was able to compose for my film. I feel constantly inspired and motivated by all their work and their mentoring.

My gratitude goes to all the subjects and interviewees who appeared in this film. Thank you, Arrow, Elyse, and Lio, for trusting me with your stories and agreeing to be part of this journey. Your candidness and openness always reminded me of how this project is for people like us, galvanizing me to finish the film.

Thank you, all my crew members who assisted me in the production: Cheyanne Miller, Erin Karl, Xuanyi Wang, Zachary Tichy, and Hope Miller. Many scenes, especially the ones where we experimented with unconventional methods, cannot be realized without your generous help. Thank you, Xiaoyu Tang, for choreographing and performing in this film. You have all been selfless and patient with me. I am very grateful of your contribution to this project.

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INTRODUCTION: FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

The concept of this film was initially developed from my personal experience. An anime fan and collector myself, I started to buy anime merchandise about three years ago back in China, with an intention to support my favorite works and designs. Then it struck me that there is a trend among Northeast Asian anime lovers to buy replicate products in bulk to create what is called a Saldan (meaning altar in Japanese, usually a geometric, orderly display of items) to express love and passion for a character on special occasions like their birthday. Naturally, not everybody has the financial capability to enjoy this hobby when a collection that takes up the space of a queen-sized bed would cost thousands of dollars. Merch display, like other fan activities such as cosplay, is also connected to the performative nature of the anime lover's identity.

Focusing on my own collecting experience and that of my online friend Arrow, I intend to inform the general audience of the rise of a prominent hobby, to decode its lexicon, to explore the psychology of collectors, and to analyze it as a social, capitalist phenomenon. My research questions include: What is this hobby about and who are the collectors? How do people collect these products? What is the jargon of this circle? What gratification does a collector get? Are there any downsides? What is the collectors' mentality? Since my main subject and I are both international students, this film also deals with our dilemma of carrying on a hobby from home while blending into the local anime circle. This film is an attempt to represent what it is like to live between worlds and cultures for anime fans and on a universal level.

CHAPTER ONE: EVIDENCE OF AESTHETIC LITERACY

Aesthetic Literature Review

Introduction

The majority of this documentary adopts a realistic style. It combines poetic and expository modes, making the effort to introduce a subcultural group to the general public while displaying the subjectivity of the filmmaker's personal experience. For interviews, I have taken the cinema verité approach, i.e. getting involved in interviews as both filmmaker and subject while making the act of representing explicit to the viewers. I preserve the internal flow by developing a thought process within a scene. I followed Agnès Varda's editing style in which first-person voiceover, superimposed titles and texts, original minimalist music all work in dynamics to shape a sense of intimacy of the film. As if writing an essay, Varda allows herself to digress from her original topics here and there to render a personal and social experience all-around. I sometimes chose experimental methods to portray the subjects (including my own) inner world. A staged performance sequence is meant to symbolize the social pressure felt when practicing a less-known hobby as a foreigner, and the identity crisis when living between two worlds.

Between Worlds, for Individuals

Like many hobbies that are outside mainstream, anime merchandise collection has its own group of passionate upholders, sometimes clandestinely, celebrating and constantly defining a subculture standing at the junction of anime art, decoration aesthetics, ownership, and consumerism. My thesis documentary takes an inside look at the life of a few of these collectors, including myself. This subject matter has two distinct characteristics: it is an experience for and around individuals; it is an Asian-rooted culture with little visibility in the

Western world. In this essay, I will argue for a set of production methods integrating cinéma-vérité, essay films and performative elements in response to both characteristics.

I agree with Jill Godmilow that instead of a community of audience, it is essential to produce “an audience of individuals” (qtd. in Shapiro 83) that are capable of engaging in intellectual discussions proposed in documentaries. Although she refers to films engaging in historical materials, I believe this should be applied to my film, too, as it portrays the congenial social activity of collecting. Although introduction and generalization will be necessary here and there, it is not my intention to draw a comprehensive blueprint on the act of anime merchandise collecting. Keeping in mind that the identity I am exploring is, using Stuart Hall’s words, “under constant transformation” (70) without a fixed essence, I am interested in commenting on and adding to the experience from the perspective of a fellow collector and peer of my subjects.

The ultimate purpose of this film is not to explain why people collect, but to land on slices of life and to extract meaning specific to individuals behind these moments in relation to the hobby. Naturally, informative content will take up a portion in the film. But more importantly, I prioritize what Ivone Margulies described as “a scene’s internal integrity” (173), preserving the natural flow of conversation and the development of a thought process within a scene. Allowing the presence of vagueness, emptiness and a time for contemplation, I focus on my subjects as characters and our discussions as a process to reflect upon the anime-lovers’ circle around us. The classic cinéma-vérité film *Chronicle of a Summer* set a great model, such as constantly showing interviewers’ physiological reactions in the shots, as well as including stutters in an edited scene. Similarly, I do not aim to create a finite product of thoughts as my thesis project. Instead, I would like to be an incubator of questions as a film-

maker. When needed, I serve as a catalyst in the conversation, analyzing subtext and intentions of an interviewee in order to probe deeper into a topic, just as what Morin and Rouch did. When I was actually conducting these interviews on locations, the cinéma-vérité-styled conversation took place in the second half. The camera observed the discussion unfold with little intrusion. The first half remained as structured, conventional sit-down interviews, focusing on having interviewees introduce basic knowledge and glossary to the general audience following talking points pre-determined together with my subjects. For the first part, shots were consistent across different subjects, having similar framings and shot sizes, especially for establishing shots and talking heads, so that I have uniform materials to anchor some visual cohesion in my film.

Interviews mostly took place in domestic settings where anime merchandise collections are originally stored or displayed, such as the subject's room. Sometimes a subject preferred to walk outdoors while they talk, or even allow my crew to follow them on an anime-related outing. In all these circumstances, the positioning of filming equipment and access to light sources were extremely limited. Therefore, keeping a two-people's crew (including myself) with maximum mobility had significance. I sometimes collaborated with a Director of Photography who filmed me talking with my subjects. This also implied getting local helps, since I will be traveling considerably for filming interviews. Sound was planned to be recorded simultaneously with the footage to minimize interruptions like slating during the interview. When synchronized sound recording cannot be achieved, I myself would take both the sound operator and interviewer's roles. With a minimal crew, it was also easier to follow safety protocols, including social distancing, in the pandemic.

For mobility and flexibility purposes, I used a small contemporary digital camera, such as a DSLR or a camcorder. Beyond above-mentioned advantages in the physical space, using a small digital camera allows more emotional space for the subjects. Agnès Varda mentioned that, when filming her documentary *The Gleaners and I*, using a small portable camera protects subjects' natural flow of words without intrusion (Meyer par. 9). When filming an account of vulnerable experiences, using a small camera can also be a less disturbing gesture indicating the reduction of the filmmaker's power in the room. In an enclosed, indoor space like a subject's bedroom, a smaller camera takes up less physical space so that the subject will have more agency to take control, move around, and eventually feel at ease. It would also help facilitate a more intimate spacial relationship between my subjects and I by framing us dynamically, rather than confrontationally. In *Chronicle of a Summer*, interviews are often filmed with each participant's posture in quotidian. Their positioning and body language appear to be relaxed. Shots accommodate the layout of interior locations, creating a variety of innovative angles.

I also proposed that my subjects each try filming their own collections using my equipment, with basic instructions if needed. Since both the physical and digital display of collections has tremendous meaning in this hobby, I believe that my subjects have a better knowledge about rendering their collection photogenic than I initially do. Also, it is inspiring to see the owners' point of view regarding these objects of their passion transformed through camera lenses operated by themselves. Since there are standardized methods of presentation in the circle that follows an orderly geometric pattern, I would like to encourage and generate creativity in demonstrating owners' physical relationship with their items, especially when they stray away from existing standards.

My film stems from the experience of living at the intersection of worlds. Since the culture around anime collection stemmed from Japan and became prevalent mostly among young Asian women, a key to my production would be to communicate related concepts and jargons to an English-speaking audience. This is a question of creative translation, presentation, and of self-reflexivity.

In the early stage of my production, I experimented with various forms of translation. In *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, Trinh T. Minh-ha increased the complexity and depth of her film by layering texts and information on top of one another. In a sequence where a woman narrates in English her experience during the war, a Vietnamese folk song looms in the background with English lyrics onscreen. The narration, the music and the subtitles set each other off while competing for the audience's attention, creating an enriched experience that suggests the ambiguity of the complicated, oppressed identity of Vietnamese women. This sense of blurriness and instability can be both extracted from what is being talked about in the stage interview as well as from the viewers' own psychology upon receiving these interweaving messages.

It also intrigued me that Trinh superimposes graphic titles on top of footage to create a unique visual. Twenty-eight minutes into the film, texts are displayed against a close-up of the talking character's hands (fig. 1). A similar close-up sequence appears earlier in the film. The text is a passage independent from what the character is saying. Such methods are what I celebrate as is creative translation: translation transcends its initial functions to become metaphorical and emotional. Trinh theorizes her methodology as "visualized speech" (qtd. in Corrigan 81). Titles can be presented in diverse formats, interacting with images and sound. It becomes part of the film content and experience itself, rather than some addendum that only

comes into play in post-production. There is no longer a clearly-defined line between English and Vietnamese, between the language deliverer and receiver. They are interconnected to reveal what it feels like to always live in-between, which is what I hope to achieve in my work as well.

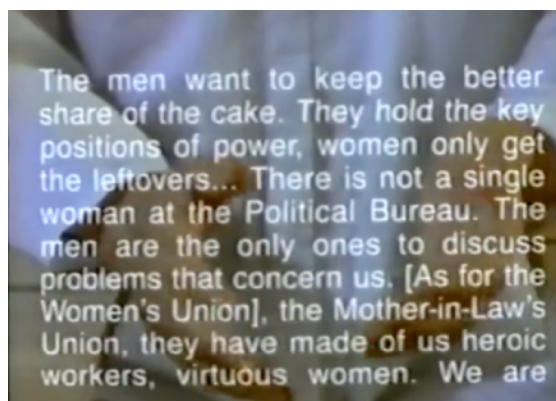


Figure 1: Still from *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (28:41)

Surname Viet Given Name Nam. Dir. T. Ming-ha Trinh. 1989. Web. 20 Nov. 2020.

In Jill Godmilow's *Far From Poland*, an experimental non-fictional film shot in the U.S. that takes a distant look at the 1980 Polish Solidarity movement, striking workers' demands are translated into English and printed on pieces of paper to be shown in front of the camera (fig. 2). This rearrangement and re-enactment of texts suit the English-speaking audience's needs while making obvious the lack of visual recording of these negotiations when they originally took place. This practice inspired me to transform dialogues into written English texts (hand-written words, simulated online chats, etc.) should any collector recall vulnerable moments, such as unpleasant online transactions they have made, or even fraud they may get involved in. In a case where I had to re-enact a quarrel that took place in messaging applications, I split the screen between written texts and images that show the characters' facial reactions, possibly played by actors.

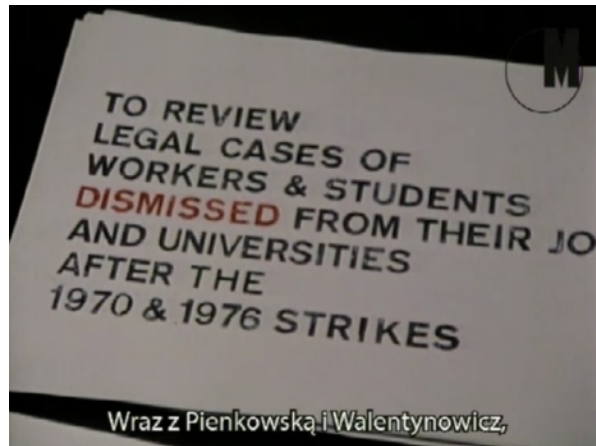


Figure 2: Still from *Far From Poland* (19:40)

Far From Poland. Dir. Jill Godmilow. 1980. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. Web. 20 Nov. 2020.

My work is self-reflexive, demonstrating what it is like to make a film that engages two (or multiple) cultures as well as negotiating an identity while representing it. In *Far From Poland*, we could hear alongside a re-enacted scene the filmmaker's commentary on choices of words when translating Polish interviews. The filmmaker mentioned that she used the word "master" to describe someone of superiority in feudal Poland because the original Polish word does not have its equivalent in English. I adopted a similar method, using my voice-over to accompany translated texts and glossaries presented onscreen, in order to give additional information whenever needed and to recognize the lack of definition in concepts within this subculture.

"Collector" as an identity tends to be hidden and anonymous. It can also be a sensitive and vulnerable subject matter, too, as collecting involves much about one's financial situation and choices. I selected three main subjects from online friends and acquaintances who pos-

sess various sizes of collections in order to present a spectrum of ways to enjoy the hobby. Common interest between each subject and I in certain anime shows was a must, so that we all eased into a thorough conversation. With no intention to expose my subjects beyond what they are comfortable with, it is significant to ensure their authority and privacy, which is a question of both mentality and methodology. In terms of mentality, I followed the model set by Varda once again in creating a rapport with my subjects so that they feel empowered to talk about their circumstances, whether it is socially favorable or not. Subjects, according to Varda, are trusted to help and educate the documentarian on their own life experience. “I need your *témoignage*, your statement. What I need is if you could help to tell who you are” (qtd. in Barnet 191). Varda gave her subjects an authoritative voice in sharing their story, believing that they could explain the subject matter better than she as a filmmaker could.

Beside entering the project with a learning mindset, pre-production planning was also essential, including detailed discussion with subjects determining whether they want to show their face to the camera, what part of their collection can be shot, in what environment they will be displayed, etc. There were various performative practices that came into play as well. Performative methods can be also adopted to create visual metaphors, especially when it becomes difficult or technically impossible to film the original object of question. In *Bikini Words*, a short film that studies the life of Korean workers during the industrial expansion period of 1970s and 80s through eight Konglish (Korean-styled English) words, the word “bee hive,” referring to overcrowded housing, was shown onscreen with staged performance of a subject (or actor) examining a congested chicken coop (fig. 3). Different from filming a real building from the era, this shot offers a retrospective examination of the historical condition through a newly coined visual symbol to accompany the text, which adds special mean-

ing to a piece that relies heavily on linguistics and representation through glossaries, providing viewers with room for both visual and verbal association. To try out a similar visual representation, I used footage of grains in different piles to indicate the volume of somebody's collection. Mandarin word for "grains" is used to refer to merchandise because it has a similar pronunciation as the English word "goods." Creating a visual for this pun was mesmerizing and added to the visual richness of my film.

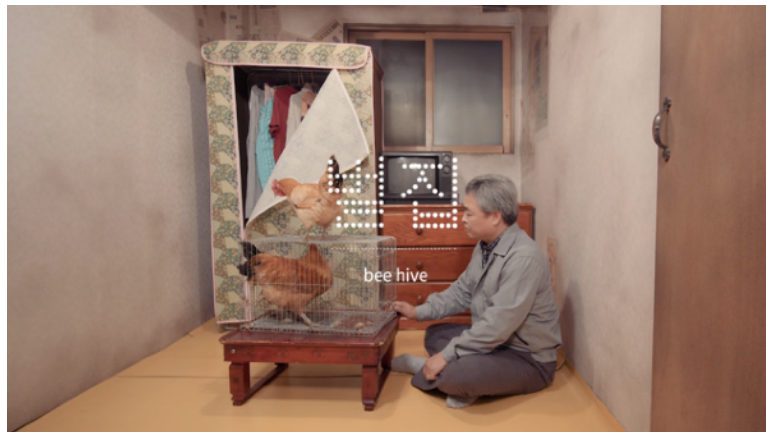


Figure 3: Still from *Bikini Words* (1:43)

Bikini Words. Dir. Nils Clauss. 2016. Vimeo.com. Web. 20 Nov. 2020.

These staged scenes might not be edited following a logical order but rather an associative one, linked by visual similarities between frames. This technique, sometimes referred to as graphic match, can be found typically in Chris Marker's landmark essay film *Sans Soleil*, where dolls being cremated get associated with people witnessing this special creation (fig. 4, fig. 5). The filmmaker's personal point of view regarding a public event is powerfully conveyed through these juxtaposed images in their colors, shapes and composition, which can be more efficient than a voice-over, especially when his thought strays away from the original event. Just like Godmilow and Trinh, Marker reimagined the fidelity or infidelity of

texts to images, reshaping the audience's experience of receiving and processing information that straddles multiple entities: there is a pro-filmic event unfolding, yet what the filmmaker makes of it can be another story. Therefore, personal insights are shed on topics in the public domain.



Figure 4: Still from *Sans Soleil* (31:57)

Sans Soleil. Dir. Chris Marker. 1983. Kanopy. Web. 29 Nov. 2020.



Figure 5: Still from *Sans Soleil* (31:58)

Sans Soleil. Dir. Chris Marker. 1983. Kanopy. Web. 29 Nov. 2020.

Original animation is another choice for playing with real-life identities and lowering risks of exploitation when engaging in reality. Beside outsourcing animation, there are video-recording applications that turn human faces into live animation characters, which could be

utilized to achieve a certain level of privacy and while remaining connected to the anime theme of my film. Many Japan-based YouTube influencers whose fans are often anime fans, too, would adopt a similar method. There is a practical aspect to it, too: should it still be difficult to travel internationally during my production period, an animated speaking head can be created to replace the interviewee's face quickly and easily on a video chat. At the end of the day, all these methods would hopefully reduce what Kobena Mercer describes as the "burden of representation" (242) on individual subjects, as their identity appears less definitive while their stories can remain specific. Even though there are rarely film works documenting life of anime fans and such collectors, even though obsessed collectors are often frowned upon as maniacs by the outside world, I needed to bear in mind that what I produce can only represent fragments of this experience, rather than giving a voice to all.

I should note that none of the above-mentioned methods functioned independent of each other. For instance, the sequence in *Chronicle of a Summer* where Marceline walks through Place de la Concorde while narrating her experience as a holocaust survivor can be considered to have a performative instinct, too. Similar to the sequence in *Tongues Untied* where violence against a black gay man was re-enacted without the main character's face shown, subjects in both moments are defaced as a form of protection. Coming from different standpoints, filmmakers of both films made production decisions, having thought through questions of respect, vulnerability, of showing and not showing. These intertextual connections ensure that my film will be produced as an organic whole, rather than as a product patched with various schools of practice.

To conclude, this personal documentary aiming to portray individuals who share a collective identity naturally became what Godmilow described as "discussion about ideologi-

cal constructions” (qtd. in Shapiro 83). Recognizing and respecting the fluidity in an identity as well as potential problems in giving definitions to a subculture that is rarely mentioned in the mainstream English world, subjects, or characters, was at the center of this cinematic representation. Each collector was filmed and interviewed in their daily environment with my presence as a peer and interviewer, but there was little presence of the camera. Structured introduction to the topic eventually led to more probing questions, following the *cinéma-vérité* model. Performative elements were included to ensure privacy and to avoid stereotyped representations, especially when the general audience may already regard devoted collectors as others. Inspired by essay films that are innovative on the relationship among texts, images and sound, alternatives to traditional translated subtitles were considered in order to shed light on an Asian-stemmed hobby for the eyes of Western audiences.

Case Study: *The Velvet Underground* (2021)

Overview

The Velvet Underground is a music documentary that traces the history of 1960-70s rock band The Velvet Underground using interviews with surviving band members, artists, friends and protégés, along with plentiful archival films reflecting the NYC avant-garde milieu of that time. Premiered at Cannes in 2021 and released on October 15, 2021, it was distributed by Apple TV+. Sales agent companies Cinetic and Submarine signed the deal with Apple at Cannes in 2019 when the film was in production (Kohn). Beside online streaming, this film had limited theatrical release. Its budget and box office remain unknown.

Plot

Lou Reed began writing songs at the age of 14. His music dealt with his queer experiences, depressions, and a feeling of social misplacement. John Cale abandoned a career in classical for minimalist music. After the disbanding of Lou's The Primitives, the two became early members of the Velvets, inspired by a rich art scene in 1960s New York City frequented by filmmakers and artists like Jonas Mekas and Andy Warhol. The band was joined by guitarist Sterling Morrison and drummer Maureen "Moe" Tucker, earning early reputations as a regular at Café Bizarre. Andy Warhol became manager of the band, adding Nico as the vocalist, producing the band's multimedia shows. After Nico and Andy left, the band got their following in exploration of a hypnotizing style. As tension rose between members, John Cale left the band as Doug Yule joined. Lou took full charge and kept on his voice promoting substance abuse and pain in his music. Soon he quitted and ended the band.

About the Director

A champion of the “New Queer Cinema” (qtd. in Wyatt 2) since three decades ago, Oscar-nominated director Todd Haynes is known for “deconstructivist melodramatics” (Koresky and Levy 110) inquiring social dysfunctions and homosexuality. *The Velvet Underground* is Haynes’s first documentary when he accepted the offer from Laurie Anderson (Lou Reed’s widow) and Universal Music Group. However, he is not considered as new to the music film genre, having established his name as an auteur in unconventional music biopics focusing on the life and struggles of famous musicians. As Tzioumakis contends, embracing auteur filmmakers “at the centre of the creative process” (181) becomes the trend in independent cinema, which is especially backed by online streamers’ acquisition of prestigious independent works nowadays.

About the Production

Partially due to the band’s lack of concert footage, Haynes turned to archival films, including works by Andy Warhol and Jonas Mekas, among other filmmakers and artists, to weave a stimulating scene of the 1960s American avant-garde that influenced the band greatly. Haynes joined forces with his longtime producer partner Christine Vachon (Killer Films), bringing onboard Motto Pictures additionally to “guide them in the task of funding, editing and producing a doc” (Morfoot). The director said that licensing this footage produced “a considerable challenge for this film in terms of budget” (qtd. in Morfoot). Haynes and his editors went through “600 hours of archival footage” (Morfoot) resulting in ample montage sequences that have “showed you why they were great and let you hear it” rather than relying heavily on interviews (qtd. in Roberts). After several years in research, roughly 20 people re-

lated to the band were interviewed to be featured in the film alongside re-appropriated soundtracks and old interview audios.

Cinematography

Only new footage shot for this documentary shows interviews of surviving band members and those related to the band. These interview shots are static medium close-ups, which is considered a convention of talking head footage. Subjects are positioned in consistent settings against a solid, highly saturated background (fig. 6), with some variation in the color palette. They also have some black bars on the side of their lead room that allows titles and some breathing room. The cinematography style creates a brilliant visual that matches the vibrant art scene constantly being mentioned in the film. In the meantime, a steady shot with sculpted lighting following traditional documentary adds to the authority of these culturally influential interviewees.



Figure 6: *The Velvet Underground* (20:31)

Haynes, Todd. Dir. *The Velvet Underground*. Apple, 2021. Digital.

About the Story

This film's subject determines that it encapsulates an underground, avant-garde spirit. In some ways a documentation of the 60s' avant-garde film history, this film draws parallel

between the band and filmmakers involved with them, in a sense that both of them were cultivating an audience of a new art form at that time, be it rock music or film art. As Mekas “has worked to build a community of filmmakers and a sophisticated audience receptive to their art” (Ruoff 6), members of The Velvet Underground were also gathering a following for a new music genre ahead of their time.

Compilation and the Auteur

Haynes’ creative compilation of archival films enables a thematic, rather than factual association with the band, thus showcasing his individual voice as an auteur director in the independent world. Cutting between interviews and archives, this film combines three documentary modes as Bill Nichols defined it: performative, expository and poetic. The dominant use of split screen experimental images corresponds to poetic “temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions” (Nichols 103) generating a free association in viewers. The expository nature relies “heavily on an informing logic carried by the spoken word” (Nichols 107).

Unlike traditional expository documentaries, however, there is a lack of third-person narration, or authoritative voice. Audiences do not hear a voice-of-God commentary, or any captions of that kind. Instead, the entire recount of the band’s history consists of interviewees’ own words. It resembles *The Atomic Café*, a documentary known for eliminating a voice-of-God while compiling archival footage to portray a historical period. Jon Wiener argues that without a singular narrator “there is no omniscient voice to tell viewers what to think” (73). Similarly, Haynes innovatively deployed “the classic devices of cinema: editing and juxtaposition” (Wiener 73). Through rapid montage, the film was “led by the images and the music, not the interviews, and that you’d leave feeling like you almost dreamed the words and the stories” (qtd. in Segal).

Rough-around-the-edge, impromptu experimental moving images that Haynes has chosen for the film exemplify what Bjørn Sørensen describes as a “more democratic use of the medium”(47), allowing new linguistic potentials of filmmaking, drawing from Alexandre Astruc’s 1948 theory of camera-stylo, which regarded film as an expression of thought. Haynes regrouped and reappropriated these avant-garde clips to produce a tapestry reflecting the artistic zeitgeist of that period.

The fact that Haynes’ fame and resources push him closer to the mainstream side on the independent filmmaker’s spectrum cannot be overlooked. While his aesthetic input was in part through these rearrangement in editing, the validity in doing so is questioned. “Very little of this material is identified in the body of the documentary, apart from elements of Warhol’s work and that of Jonas Mekas” (Wyver). With the privilege of choosing from a rich array of licensed archival images, the filmmaker also preserves the power to decontextualize these images. It confirms what Michael Allen describes as the “interconnected relationship between the mainstream and independent strands of the American film industry” (144), which also projects onto the relationship between a larger budget independent film like *The Velvet Underground*, and the personal, low-budget, experimental films it subsumed.

Relation to my Thesis

The use of split-screen images with minimal captions is a technique I am interested in trying in my thesis documentary. The linkage between images is associative and imaginative instead of chronicle or logical. In addition to interviews, emotions are expressed through a kaleidoscope of undefined visual cues paralleling each other, such as this 16 split-screen portraying an impression of the blooming film art in New York City (fig. 7). In a scene of my thesis where the unspecified female dancer manifests anxiety she experiences under the soci-

ety's criticism, she is surrounded by a collage of images excerpted from educational and social guidance archive videos that represent judgments.

Another creative use of split screen is to juxtapose a main subject's extensive headshot (in Haynes' case, ones filmed by Andy Warhol for band members) to introduce them (fig. 8). Such editing generates a symphony of the static image, captions and voiceover that is both aesthetically and informationally engaging.

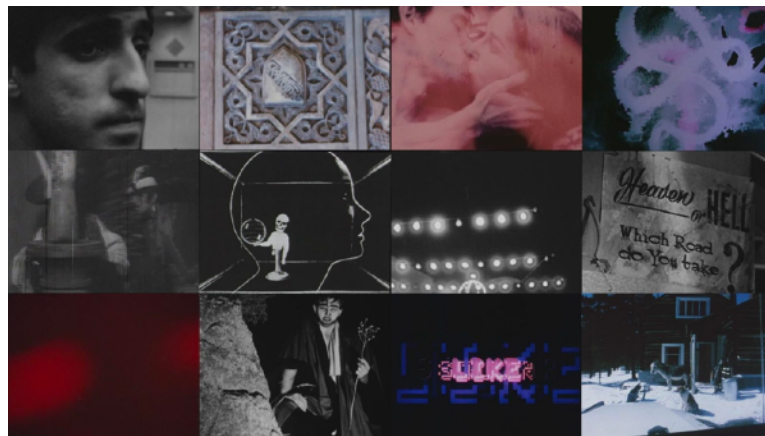


Figure 7: *The Velvet Underground* (13:55)

Haynes, Todd. Dir. *The Velvet Underground*. Apple, 2021. Digital.



Figure 8: *The Velvet Underground* (06:47)

Haynes, Todd. Dir. *The Velvet Underground*. Apple, 2021. Digital.

Conclusion

Through *The Velvet Underground*, independent director Todd Haynes proves his auteur voice in directing an intellectual and sensitive piece about a music legend that lived on the edge during their time. The intertwined history of the band and its members' struggles were interlaced with the prismatic New York City art scene conveyed in split-screen montage and collage of archival films. An annotation to the rise of avant-garde art, this film embodies the refreshing independent values, creatively removing the omniscient narrator's voice. Meanwhile, this film can also be problematized for its relative privilege in resources and having high-profile people involved.

Contextualizing *And They Saved My Sorry Ass* in Independent Cinema

Embodying the Independent Tradition

And They Saved My Sorry Ass falls on the extremely independent and personal side of the Hollywood-indie spectrum. A documentary about a subculture enacted by minority groups, this film recounts socially relevant true stories through a first-person voice, something that "Hollywood had abdicated its responsibility for" (Tzioumakis 140). This film is conceived in the same spirit of Ava DuVernay's *Middle of Nowhere*, giving "a complex representation of intimacy, kinship, and (self-) care" (Smith 15) in response to the harsh reality that our characters live in.

Production methods for *Sorry Ass* were learned from and will pay tribute to those of independent cinema, especially nonfictional works. Interview footage combines the cinéma

vérité style and participatory mode, where I as a filmmaker and subject am present in the dialogue. B-rolls are oftentimes shot run-and-gun with a skeleton crew. The independent tradition prompted me to be extremely conscious of the power dynamic between those behind the camera and those in front of it. The controversial yet visceral images produced by the Maysles brothers' eager maneuvering for their now landmark independent documentary *Grey Gardens* are a case in point. *Sorry Ass* operates with the knowledge of transformative documentary filmmaking, i.e., as Anna Backman Rogers puts it, "the filmmaking process and the cinematic subject are inextricably intertwined in a mutual becoming-other" (116). My shots are designed in a fashion that empowers the subjects, rather than placing them to embody otherness. The free flow of scenes are being preserved in editing while maintaining reflexivity on how the film is made. For example, there are scenes in my film where I negotiate a close-up or a shot with the subject. These moments are kept in there both as a genuine representation and as a gesture to recognize a more democratized approach to filming.

In terms of narrative, *Sorry Ass* breaks away from what Gina Marchetti describes as the "white knight" (185) fantasy in Asian American cinema, in which the oppressed Asian woman is saved by the white hero and by implication by the Western civilization. *Sorry Ass* aims to invert that narrative and open up a different pathway: queer Asian women who are somewhat left out in their native society come to the U.S. in pursuit of a more liberating life, encountering new challenges while keeping up a life between the East and the West. The reconciliation with self and the resolution, however, does not come from the outside. It is their own creativity and community consciousness that elevate their situation.

Aesthetics of *Sorry Ass* stay mostly in the realm of what Michael Newman describes as indie realism, "engaging with the emotions at the heart of people's relationships and daily

struggles” (89). Despite culminating in a convention, where lonely, emotionally struggling individuals gather together and find their connections, this documentary is not centered around a major conflict, nor does it have a significant plot twist. The friendship and relationship between characters or subjects are reflected in their natural daily interactions as well as between lines in interviews and conversations, rather than through heavy actions.

There exist some moments when the psychological experience of my subjects are portrayed in an expressionist style instead of realistic. An original Chinese traditional dance sequence cuts to the actress standing still, wearing a fox mask, stunned by the authoritative sound of archival American social guidance videos. The whole sequence serves as a metaphor for the social pressure and anxiety induced by practicing a subculture and expressing oneself as a foreigner. Seen from the storytelling perspective, this type of sequences might seem abstract and abrupt, but they function as a continuation of the quotidian, revealing the inner thoughts and sentiments of characters. We can find comparable examples in monumental independent films, too. In *Middle of Nowhere*, subjective shots depict the imaginative intimacy that Ruby craves. Viewers constantly peek into the protagonist’s internal world as she goes through the limbo of her life. In Spike Lee’s *Do The Right Thing*, hip-hop music is played in scenes outside the story’s setting, such as when Tina dances to it in the opening sequence, and speaks directly to the audience articulating the identity awareness. As Casarae L. Gibson noted, “the signature song ‘Fight the Power,’ performed by Public Enemy, is heard throughout the film and dominates characters’ dialogue with one another” (183). *Sorry Ass* incorporates this spirit, encapsulating inner unrest of people through highly stylized, non-diegetic scenes with elements like dance and music as cultural identifiers. Experimental or not, the effect is to emphasize characters “as emblems for their social identities” (Newman 91).

A character-driven film, *Sorry Ass* is inspired by introspective scenes in Kelly Reichardt's work that are quiet, extended, yet powerful. *Wendy and Lucy* is one of Reichardt's "acutely observed depictions of marginalized characters journeying in search of a better life" (Littman par. 1). We as viewers often find ourselves traversing stretched-out time with Lucy, be it in the woods, in her car trying to get rest at night, or walking the blocks of the unnamed Oregon neighborhood. These shots are never crowded, usually ranging from medium shots to close-ups. In *Certain Women*, we find those tranquil and eloquent moments, too, when Jamie the lone rancher has her only after-work entertainment, staring into the TV in a long close-up, her face lit up by the screen. *Sorry Ass* learns from these shots, creating an on-screen time and space that feels almost private to the viewers by staying on a single subject going through their daily routine: counting anime collectibles, putting on makeup for a cosplay selfie, etc. While conventions, gatherings and cosplay shenanigans are scintillating, the collecting and preparing experience can become moments of solitude that equally moves our heart.

In the meantime, *Sorry Ass* finds similarity with popular cinema by loosely creating a hero's journey. Subjects as characters go through a journey of transformation. Although accused of overgeneralization in "the Anglo-Western and First Nation traditions" (Hambly 136), Joseph Campbell's structure remains essential to mainstream storytelling today. While recognizing that this linear pattern hinders multicultural inclusion, *Sorry Ass* does not attempt to greatly disrupt this structure.

Representing Marginalized Groups

I would like to bring a voice to the minority groups portrayed in this film and increase their visibility: queer anime lovers, queer Asian/Asian Americans, international students who came to the U.S. on their own, etc. My film highlights a niche part of queer life

that was rarely discussed before, shedding light on a new reality of intersectionality as well as multiculturalism. The film touched upon the discrepancy between being a closeted queer person in China and being freed from hiding one's identity in the U.S., juxtaposed with the reality that an anime lover is in turn frowned upon more in the U.S. compared to Asia. My main subject Arrow, a Chinese student in the U.S., shares her experience of being pulled over by law enforcement for wearing cosplay clothing in Atlanta, GA a few days after the spa shooting. Different factors in play define the complex stance of my subjects. By following them and telling these stories, this film helps "understand how identities and power work together from one context to another" (par. 8), which Kimberlé Crenshaw finds crucial for today's movements for change.

Instead of attempting to paint the big picture for younger queer people like the body of films discussed in Holmlund's article, the focus of my film is queer people of color, seen from the unique entry point of anime fans as active content creators. I aim to carry on the practice of showing my subjects "as survivors, not just as victims" (Holmlund 157), in celebration of the inventive power of ostracized groups. Recent Chinese independent documentaries also see a similar trend, where the underrepresented, such as blue-collar workers in *The Verse of Us*, are celebrated as creative individuals (Chen 31).

Comparable Independent Films: Queer and Personal Documentaries

My film is heavily influenced by new queer cinema in the 90s, especially Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning*, which illustrates "the vibrant, underground ball culture of black and Latino queens, as well as their personal battles with gender expression, sexuality, violence" (Brew 7). We share creative approaches, since we both closely follow several key figures involved in the subculture, filmed in a vérité style. The difference that matters and

offers a new perspective might be that I myself am an insider and a character of my film, lending a personal touch to it.

As the first feature documentary about voguing during its emergence, the culturally significant *Paris Is Burning* won critical acclaims, festival awards, and was distributed by Prestige Pictures (Miramax) with a profitable deal. While this will not be a realistic distribution goal for my film, today's personal and/or queer documentaries provide some possible models I can follow.

360 Hollywood is a personal documentary about two siblings recreating memories as they go through items in their late grandmother's house. The linkage between this film and *Sorry Ass* is that we both utilize physical objects owned by our central characters as storytelling devices. The filmmakers reconceptualized their distribution, as their ultimate goal was to elevate their media-creating career and generate to the next level instead of financial returns (Sundance). It had a "modest 12-city theatrical release"(Sundance), then digital release through Giant Pictures on iTunes, Amazon, InDemand, and Kanopy. They got limited but key media coverage as first-time filmmakers, including feature profiles. They were also able to leverage different post-screening partner conversations with community partners. Although unable to break even, the filmmakers met their goals by having their film reach a great number of audience, generating a devoted group of audience that they can carry with them beyond this debut feature.

2018 documentary *Chega de Fiu Fiu (Enough with Catcalling)* provides another independent distribution model. Born out of the namesake movement as part of the MeToo movement in Brazil, this film focuses on three women's experiences being sexually harassed on the street, exploring the systematic problems in misogynist urban planning. Strongly tied

in a social movement, this entire film is in Portuguese, has done well in the international festivals circuit as well as educational screenings in the U.S., but does not have an American distributor officially on record. This film is successful in terms of making a social impact and garnering visibility, making an important addition to today's feminist cinema. Its timeliness, social relevance and educational strategy are to some extent duplicable for *Sorry Ass*.

Distribution in the 70s and Today

Distribution for an independent film company in the 70s, as Ed Lowry describes it, faces difficulties we still have today. When tracing traits of my film back to a historical era, it is important to recognize these common issues. With a demanding budget for distribution, especially for theatrical release, filmmakers convert from conventional methods to alternatives such as smaller distributors or self-distribution. Eric Kohn reports “the opportunity for upstart filmmakers has dwindled” (par. 10). A shrinking market leaves very little possibility for independent productions to profit from wide theatrical exhibitions. Dimensions Pictures had their opportunity producing smaller genre films for a suburban audience, but exploitation films landing on downtown theaters in the 70s that “gave up trying to attract suburban audiences” (Lowry 41) has long become history when streaming platforms take over and grow to become conglomerates.

Treatment

(Since I am one of the characters in the film, a part of this treatment includes recounting my story in third-person point of view.)

Filmmaker Clio's rumination on the passionate accumulation of physical media starts from her personal experience as an anime merchandise collector. While pin-back buttons, photo cards and plushies bring her joy since her teenage years, the most recent decade sees a new turn in this subculture as anime fans, especially young women in Northeast Asia, start to create "altars" with a bulk of merch in celebration of their favorite characters.

Clio discusses this hobby with her friend Arrow while displaying her merch. A cosplayer, anime lover and art student from China, Arrow believes that to collect and consume is part of our nature. However, being a nerd on a budget is challenging when a sense of community is constructed mostly through how much one consumes. There are thorns among roses in the anime circle: overpriced items, an obnoxious pecking order among fans, outside stereotypes, problematic industry professionals, etc.

Besides collecting, there is an economic and social impact of cosplaying, too. Despite commercialization, Arrow loves cosplaying as a mental getaway through which she can perform various characters and identities beyond everyday norms. Non-binary cosplayer Elyse expands on it by emphasizing the role of cosplaying in their early years of exploring gender identity by dressing up as effeminate male characters. When in cosplay, people rarely get misgendered.

Educated by these personal stories and cosplay techniques, Clio gets invited by Arrow to attend AnimeNYC as a first-time cosplayer. Overcoming self-doubt, wig net headaches and feet blisters from new shoes, the queer duo gets independent and creative in making their

costumes and props, finding new connections at the convention, where ostracized people come together and form their own community.

Crafted from autobiographical footage, interviews and associative montage, the unique pleasure and anxiety of practicing an Asian-stemmed subculture in the Western world are portrayed intimately in the personal and public realms. Despite the imperfect fulfillment brought by acquisition, young queer people find reconciliation and a sense of belonging through this self-exploring journey in the kaleidoscopic, lesser-known anime fan culture.

Structure of the film

- Entire work framed by my first-person voiceover, a meditation
- Introducing the anime subculture → personal experiences (roses and thorns) → social behavior and identity exploration
- A combination of expository and poetic modes
 - Expository: interviews, informational sequences, minimalist music and realistic sound design
 - Poetic: abstract imaging, performances, stylized music

The Essential Anime Merch Collectors' Glossary

- Grains: Anime merchandise. The word for “goods” sounds similar to “grains” in Mandarin.
- Eat grains: Buy anime merchandise.
- Blind box: A type of product with packaging that hides its content, so that neither the store nor the customer knows which product is inside. Blind boxes usually come out in series. Also referred to as “random.” A group of buyers usually pool to ensure that they each get products of the character of their like.

- Take the full box: Buy an entire collection of blind boxes to ensure that there is one for each kind included. However, this might not be an option for some blind boxes. Orig. Mandarin.
- Deposit: The down payment that is sometimes collected by pool leaders to give to the seller.
- Burning, hot, warm, cold: Words describing the popularity of one character, listed from most popular to least popular. Merch price for an extremely popular character can be significantly high in a second-hand market, whereas that for a less popular character can be lower than the original suggested price. Orig. Mandarin.
- Beach house, lake-view house: A piece of extremely costly merch. Usually in a limited design.
- Bundle: Some popular characters' merch are only sold in a bundle with some merch of less popular ones. Orig. Japanese.
- Parent: A buyer that regularly buys out all products of a particular character in a pool. Orig. Mandarin.
- Partaker: A buyer that regularly buys some products of a particular character in a pool. Orig. Mandarin.
- Scavenger: A buyer that only buys what is left by parents and partakers in a pool. Orig. Mandarin.
- But It Once: In everyday context, it means buying products only once that would last for a lifetime. In the anime-collecting context, it means buying only once for each type of product instead of having replicates.

- Ita Bag: A bag with transparent layers to display anime merch. “Ita” means painful or excessively flashy in Japanese.
- Saidan: Display altars. Usually created at collectors’ home. Orig. Japanese.
- Otaku: Nerd. Often used to describe those obsessed with an activity or a hobby, particularly anime- or pop-culture- related.
- Rosette ribbon: In the context of merch collecting, it refers to the ribbon decoration, usually handmade, around a character button. It looks like a regular award ribbon, but more flashy and exaggerated.
- Paper person: used to emphasize that a fictional character is the product of human creation. Often used with the saying that paper people don’t deserve human rights. This saying is meant to argue against moral obligations in art and encourage free speech in fan works.
- Fan service: In anime and manga, it means for the writer to add irrelevant but fan-pleasing elements to the work. In otaku culture and k-pop, it means for a star (idol, entertainer, etc.) to acknowledge certain audience through small, affectionate acts or posing during performance, usually per specific fans’ request. e.g. Looking a fan in the eyes, winking, finger heart gesturing.
- My house crashed: The expression a fan uses when their favorite celebrity’s public image is ruined, or when a fan becomes disillusioned about a star.

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CHAPTER TWO: EVIDENCE OF PRODUCTION LITERACY

The section below documents production principles and details.

Interview Approaches

Once interview schedules were created, each interviewee received a list of questions to prepare with. The actual interviews did not strictly follow the order of questions provided on the list; instead, I as the interviewer took notes and followed up with additional questions. I paid attention to topics my interviewees expressed strong interests in, and encouraged them to expand on those topics.

Considering I am also featured in the film, I did not shun away from adding my personal opinions, which made our interviews feel more like casual conversations that reveal each participant's personality.

Test Shoots

Before principle photography, a series of test shoots were conducted with the purpose of trying out different art and cinematographic styles that suit the needs for different parts of the film. They were completed as course works for an independent study with Prof. Kate Shults on the UCF soundstage.

Test Shoot #1 Proposal

Cinematography

This shoot adopts primarily a handheld approach. For scene #1, the master shot stays relatively wide in order to capture the entire improvised dance. Then, I ask the dancer to do other improvisations with the same video and music. Camera moves on to close-ups on parts of the dancer's body and facial expression. When edited together, fractured clips of the dance will add to the ecstatic mood. Since there will be video projected onto my talent, some shad-

ows behind her on the screen are expected. Camera flowing on a horizontal axis help creates a symphony of light and shadows. When the dancer stops dancing and looks deadpan into the camera, though, the camera also stays static and creates a confrontational dynamic with the talent. For scene #2, the camera acts as a second character that follows the dancer closely in a hide-and-seek style, both from behind and head-on, moving through curtains and sheets.

Mise-en-scène

For scene #1, the profilmic look is alternately dominated by two moods, i.e. enjoyment and anxiety. The front projection technique and its effect has been test out when I operated camera for Jenna Bucien's undergraduate course work *What I Might Be* (Figure 9), in which Chinatown B-rolls was projected onto Jenna, implying fragments of an identity imposed onto her, a Chinese adoptee. I would like to continue exploring the possibilities and layers of visual movement created by projection in my scene, with an effort to externalize and dramatize the psychology of practicing a subculture.

Influenced by German expressionist filmmaking, I plan to use kaleidoscopic animation for moments when Shirley (my dancer) improvises dance to show enjoyment. Abstract shapes and bright colors indicate a vibrant, delighted mindset. When the music pauses and we enter the anxiety part, images become clinical (c.f. Roger Beebe's *SOUNDFILM*, figure 10), with educational and social guidance archive footage indicating an outer world of norms.

For scene #2, I plan to go with a dreamy, ethereal look with white and blue curtains, sheets, string lights, etc. As my dancer wanders along to discover cute, delicate and shiny collectibles, she becomes another self, represented by the fox mask.



Figure 9: Still from *What I Might Be* (4:10)

What I Might Be. Dir. Jenna Bucien. 2019. Web. 7 Sep. 2021.

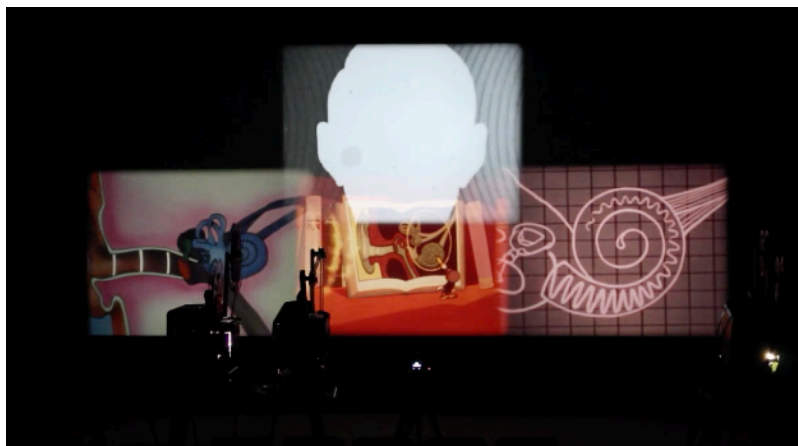


Figure 10: Still from *SOUNDFILM highlights* (02:37)

SOUNDFILM highlights. Dir. Roger Beebe. 2015. Vimeo. Web. 7 Sep. 2021.

Test Shoot #1 Reflection

This shoot went smoothly in general. I achieved my aesthetic and technical goals, made possible by planning systematically ahead of time.

Aesthetically, I was able to create sets for dreamlike sequences according to plan. Front projecting onto the talent turned out to look wonderful. I was glad to also have included some variation from what was proposed through changing shot angles, focus, etc. The contrast between the dance (“enjoyment”) sequence and the static (“social anxiety”) sequence was effective, and the choreography turned out to be powerful. In my next shoot, I will continue to explore scenes that involve staged performance, especially with an emphasis on the physical stage itself.

Cinematography wise, I gained a clear idea of the layout of the projector, lights and the camera needed to realize what I originally conceptualized. When shooting with projection, it is essential to plan shots while keeping in mind the projector’s throw distance as well as where lights and cables go.

Next time, I will pay closer attention to measurements in order to better facilitate logistics and communication with crew, stage hands and film operations. Therefore, we could save time on figuring out the perfect pipes to construct the projection screen frame, for example. This can easily be achieved by actively taking notes while speaking with film operations staff and by including detailed measurements on the floor plan I submitted.

I would also like to have a more extensive shot list next time with extra shots, considering we wrapped ahead of schedule. Giving myself additional time to prepare and pack props will also help improve the quality of production in the future.

Test Shoot #2 Proposal

The mise-en-scène of this sequence mimics the minimalist setting of an audition tape, with standard three-point lighting, hinting at the performance nature of identities in relation to physical objects—in this case, clothing/costuming, hairstyle/wigs, accessories, all that is

part of the human appearance. A life-size medical skeleton will be dressed up in 4 to 5 outfits in front of a rolling theater vanity. The vanity also symbolizes the reflective intention of the sequence. As the look transition from daily street wear to kimono to anime character's costumes, viewers are prompted to reflect on how much of how we look like define who we are, and how similar we can all be when a bare skeleton is the only thing left. Although the sequence in general is embedded in an eerie, mysterious atmosphere, different colors in the costuming are expected to induce an array of emotions. Highly saturated purple is the signature of an energetic anime character's costume while old lilac kimono gives the image of a submissive woman in the Japanese tradition. Fox masks are finally used to further indicate the idea of putting on a persona.

Learning from test shoot #1, this shoot continues to explore effects of various shot sizes and angles on one central subject. Static shots on a stage-like setting establish and fixate a consistent opposing relationship between the camera and the skeleton. I would like to experiment with how much details are included through close-ups, as well as how much of the entire setting is shown in wider shots. Since the content itself is rather minimal, I will make sure to test out enough shots both blurred and focused, in order to give room for experimentation in post-production.

I will use my own camera and lights that are stored on the soundstage. No additional equipment needed. I do need the rolling vanity to be cleared up, though. The skeleton will be checked out from UCF Curriculum Materials Center and rolled to the soundstage the day of shoot.

Test Shoot #2 Reflection

This shoot was fruitful in allowing me to explore symbols of performed identities as well as creating different atmospheres with colorful costumes. I experimented with various shot sizes in different directions as proposed.

In terms of logistics, I was able to check out the skeleton from the Curriculum Materials Center without an issue. It is worth noting for future reference that even though the skeleton comes with a wheeled rack, it was unpractical to wheel it all the way from the library to the soundstage. Instead, it took two people to lift it up and carry it over.

Set-up process was efficient with a straightforward three-point lighting. Although initially wanted to turn on light bulbs on the rolling vanity, I found out that they may interfere with the studio lighting, especially with iridescent wrappings covering the mirror. Also, a lot of them had to be replaced to look decent. I decided to turn off lights on the vanity altogether, and it helped creating an eerie atmosphere around the skeleton. We stayed on time from the beginning and were able to wrap early. My shoot took up a little more than an hour, as I changed and filmed four “outfits” on the skeleton.

During the process, I found out that shot angles influence emotions of a shot greatly, especially when filming the skull. A low angle shot looks tremendously intimidating, especially with the bang of the wig dangling at the front of empty eye sockets. Meanwhile, an eye-level or high-angle shot helps ease that tension significantly. As an overly thrilling effect is not the idea I wanted to pursue, I will most likely select eye-level takes in editing.

Footage from this shoot, as with test shoot #1, will be edited and used in my thesis film. I also plan to try putting together a time-lapse sequence using a stationary long take of the skeleton being dressed up and changed. The skeleton was dressed up in a cosplay costume

at one moment. I imagine it to be striking when viewers see and notice that the skeleton is wearing the same items that I will be wearing in my cosplay footage. Hopefully, it will create a defamiliarizing moment. I might accompany this image with voice over that comments on the identity crisis some anime fans/cosplayers are going through, and the fact that so much of who we are is constructed by what we wear and how we look like.

Test Shoot #3 Proposal

This test shoot will be a 2-hour shoot about my merch collection (or my memorabilia about collecting) at my apartment. I will help with setting up, then step in front of camera introducing my collectibles while one of my classmates help operate the camera. It will mainly serve as a chance to practice on-location stationery camera set-up, audio recording and lighting, working outside the studio with limited, portable equipment. I also plan to collaborate with my classmates to explore creative lighting options using practical household lights and small gels, in addition to my pocket LED light panel. Together, we will decide upon the best placement of subject (me) in the environment and framing-wise. I would like to use screenshots from my interview with Arrow (<https://youtu.be/yOYBgrwO8JM>) as a reference, both to graphic match some scenes and to differ from shot styles I already had.

Shots consist of a master talking head of me in front of a merch display, and B-rolls on my collectibles. We can also practice with having a second camera simultaneously (my mini action camera or a DSLR, for instance). I do not request additional equipment from the equipment room for this shoot.

Test Shoot #3 Reflection

We were a little ahead of schedule (my shoot started roughly at 2pm), which enabled me to make better use of daylight during the shoot, experimenting with angles near the win-

dow, etc. I was lucky to have my classmates behind the camera, so that when I present my collection in front of the camera, I have the feeling of talking to somebody, instead of solely at the camera. My classmates also raised questions to me at certain points, and the natural flow of conversation and my instinctive reactions were successfully captured. It was also the right decision to film it in the form of an introduction instead of sit-down interview or talking head. I was able to try a type of documentary shoot different from my previous ones.

The memorabilia was shot with a deep focus in order to see both the objects and myself at the same time, especially when I was interacting with them and pointing out items to the camera. While I have been depending a lot on my 50-108mm zoom lens for run-and-gun, for my future shoot at home, it would be interesting to try various prime lenses that allows playing with depth of field so that I have more options in terms of what to blur in camera, what to focus on and emphasize. This shoot also inspired me to do closer study on individual objects. I am prompted to play with intercutting between the master shot and inserts when I mention specific objects. A good advice that I picked up during the critique (as well as in pre-production class) is that the audience would always want to have their eyes stay on a visual cue for a certain moment, even just to see what it is. Even though sometimes I personally do not deem a certain object intriguing, I take into account that I am already too familiar with it, while my audience needs more time to process the look on their first sight. Therefore, as the director, it is my job to ensure, both during production and in editing, that this time and space is set aside.

References

What I Might Be. Dir. Jenna Bucien. 2019. Web. 7 Sep. 2021.

SOUNDFILM highlights. Dir. Roger Beebe. 2015. Vimeo. Web. 7 Sep. 2021.

Structured Interview Questions

Part I General Information

- Could you tell me your preferred name (to be shown in the film only), your age, what you do for a living (if you are comfortable sharing)?
- How did you become interested in anime and otaku (anime-related) activities?
- How long have you been an anime fan?
- Could you introduce to me your favorite works and characters?
- How would you explain your hobby to someone who isn't familiar with it, nor with anime?
- Do you think it differs from other forms of collection?

Part II About their Collection; Reasons for Collecting; Collector's Mentality

- How big is your collection right now? Was there a time when your collection is bigger than this?
- How long have you been collecting? What changes do you notice throughout your experience so far?
- For what reason did you start collecting anime goods?
- Do you have friends or acquaintances, no matter online or in real life, who are also collectors?
- Which works and characters' products do you buy?
- How popular are these characters? Does popularity effect your collection?
- What type of products to you prefer to buy? e.g. plush toys, badge button, keychains, posters, photos.
- Which design is your favorite? It can be something in your collection or not.

- Do you consciously limit characters or types of products that you collect, or do you just purchase any kind that you like?
- What do you look for in a product? e.g. design, illustration, market value, popularity/reviews, practical use.
- What is the most rewarding moment of your experience?
- Do people close to you know about this hobby? What do they think of it?
- For how long do you think you'll continue collecting?

Part III Ways of Purchasing

- How do you purchase anime products? Are you a leader of a pool, a participant in a pool, or a solo collector?
- If you are in a pool or multiple pools, can you talk more about that experience?
- What online platforms do you use for purchasing?
- How did your transactions go in general?
- Have you ever had any complaints or disputes?
- Do you look at online forums where collectors post anecdotes or complaints?
- How often do you check out social media contents related to collecting?

Part IV Handling Products

- Do you post pictures of your collection on social media? If so, how often? What portion of your collection do you share?
- How do you make arrangements and take pictures? Would you make efforts to decorate your collection?

- Do you do anything with your collection on special occasions, e.g. characters' birthday, voice actor/actor's birthday, your own birthday, etc.? Why do you choose to do it, or not to do it?
- Do you present your collection to others in any way?
- Do you look at other collectors' posts? Would you use them as a reference?
- Do you display your collection in your room? If not, how often do you take them out of storage?
- How do you store your collection?
- How much space does it take?
- Do you take any part of your collection out with you? Why?
- Have you ever made an Ita bag? Happi coat? Can you show me how you do it?
- What are the occasions that you bring your collections outside?
- What do you do when you have to move your collection?
- Have you ever sold a whole collection? If so, why?

Part V Budgeting and Financing

- If you don't mind sharing, how much do you typically spend on your collection every month?
- Is this amount in accordance with what you initially planned to spend?
 - If yes, how do you plan your budget?
 - If no, what do you think are the reasons?
- Did you ever make profit out of your otaku activities? It doesn't necessarily have to relate to merchandise.

- What additional investments have you made for your collection? e.g. display racks, accessories, storage boxes and tools, etc.
- What are your sources of funding?

Part VI Living in the US

- How much do you spend on delivery?
- How did you increase your collection after moving to the US?
- Does your interest change after moving to the US?
- Would you take your collection out?
- Have you met anybody in the US who is interested in what you are doing?
- Do you feel a sense of community or a lack of community when it comes to your hobby?

Post-Production Workflow

One: Media Management

Camera Systems

Footage of this film is shot on two cameras: a Canon C100 Mk II and a DJI Osmo Action 4k camera. Types of footage include:

- Canon C100 regular 1080p (without C-Log)
- Canon C100 1080p Cinema Locked (C-Log)
- DJI Osmo Action 2k. These are mainly B-roll footage of conventions and on-location interviews. They are shot on the cinematic mode of this camera, which gives the widest possible color range to work with, allowing the possibility of matching the look of colors between scenes.

Logging

Since most footage of this production are interviews or verité with single takes, logging and selection work as follows:

- All interviews and other footage are transcribed (completed)
- Timestamped description of the look of each shot is also included in the transcript
- Chinese transcripts are translated to English and proofread by writing consultants (completed)
- Selected soundbites are highlighted in transcripts, then copied into the working script under the “audio” column
- English subtitles, whenever needed, are copied into the wiring script under the “titles” column
- The narration is drafted in the script
- Timestamped description of additional footage and B-rolls are added to the working script (this script may also serve as the basis of an EDL later)

Therefore, the director is able to keep track of what has been selected for use.

Organization

Folders

Folders that contain media and editing files are grouped by the filming date and themes/locations. Naming convention is YYMMDD_THEME OR LOCATION. There are FOOTAGE and AUDIO folders underneath. However, most footage in this production contains synced audio already. Concerning post-production, there are also folders for:

- EDITING
 - PREMIERE
 - YYMMDD_DRAFTNAME

- AFTER EFFECTS
- RESOLVE
- AUDITION
- YYMMDD_VOICEOVER
- GRAPHICS (at this stage, they are mostly photoshop graphic designs and motion graphics)
- MUSIC
 - FOUND
 - COMPOSED
- PUBLICITY
 - STILLS
 - POSTERS
- SAMPLE SCENES
-
- Bins in Adobe Premiere Pro
- FOOTAGE
 - YYMMDD_THEME OR LOCATION
- VOICEOVER (including the starch track I currently work with)
- MUSIC
 - FOUND (royalty-free music, if necessary)
 - COMPOSED (I compose the music for my film with Garage Band, export as .wav files, then bring them into the Premiere timeline)
- SFX
- GFX (for stop-motion animations, motion graphics, etc.)

- IMAGES
- TITLES (including subtitles)
- SEQUENCES
 - sample scenes for class screening
 - assemblies
 - rough cuts
 - fine cuts
- MISC (adjustment layer, black videos, etc.)

Additional bins will be added as editing progresses, such as VFX, Davinci color files, etc.

Production Binders

My production and post-production binders exist on Google Drive. The post-production binder contains:

- All the transcripts and translations
- Script structure that is currently being revised
- Complete working script (visual, audio, titles)
- Grants list and application status
- Festivals & Screenings list
- Post-Production Schedule / Timeline
- Clearance log (containing information and sources of all found materials being used, such as but not limited to found audio, sound effects, videos, images and other visuals, cited statistics, reports, news articles, website screenshots, illustrations acquired from my subjects)

Ingest/Codec/Resolution/Exports

This production uses Adobe Premiere Pro as its main NLE editing system.

AVCHD (Advanced Video Coding High Definition) files on SD cards are converted to Apple ProRes 422 HD files in Apple QuickTime player and stored on hard drives. Mov files are imported from the main editing hard drive into Premiere to be edited. As files are HD to 2K, this editing process does not require proxies being created. Resolution will be 1920x1080 throughout the post-production process.

The sequence setting I am using in Premiere is Digital SLR - 1080p 23.976 fps.

Final media export in Premiere is in Apple ProRes 422 HD 1080p 23.976, audio AAC 48000 Hz, Stereo, 24 bit. Media for preview and in-class screening is in H.264 (.mp4) 1080p, audio AAC 48000 Hz, Stereo, 24 bit.

The color-graded export from Davinci will be in Apple ProRes 4444, 1080p. This final color pass will go on a video track back in Premiere for final export.

These are in accordance with festival requirements and Adobe's recommendation for best exporting settings (Adobe).

Hard Drives

At this stage, the size of all production files is around 320 GB. My main editing drive is a SanDisk Professional 2TB G-DRIVE ArmorATD USB 3.2 Gen 1 External Hard Drive. Its data transfer speed is up to 140 MB/s. Although this currently fulfills the editing needs, upgrading to a SSD drive is being considered because it is much faster.

My first back-up drive is a Seagate 1TB External USB 3.0 Hard Drive. My second back-up drive is a 1TB G-DRIVE mobile USB 3.1 Gen 1 Type-C External Hard Drive. All drives contain the same organization of footage. Editing files are backed up at the end of each editing day.

Sound Sync/Audio Systems

Audios are not recorded through double-system sound and therefore do not require syncing/merging. Instead, a Rode or Sennheiser wireless lavalier microphone receiver is connected directly to the Canon camera. As separate back-up audio and room tone, Rode Video-Mirco microphone records through a Zoom H5 recorder (.wav stereo files). So far in the editing process, soundbites are selected from the lavalier microphone audio.

The Osmo Action camera's in-camera audio will be used as background/environmental sound sparingly for moments at the conventions. The camera has stereo audio recording of decent quality. No soundbites are selected from these footage.

The voiceover is being recorded in the UCF sound booth onto an Adobe Audition multitrack file, which I will copy to my hard drives, make edits, then copy onto the Premiere audio timeline sentence by sentence.

Delivery Standards

I will budget for a post-production house in Florida where I can mail my hard drive to complete a DCP. After some research, a good option seems to be Mediapro, based both in New York and Miami.

References

“Best export settings for Premiere Pro.” Adobe.com. <https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/video/hub/guides/best-export-settings-for-premiere-pro> Web. 3 Oct. 2022.

“Edit Decision List (EDL).” onlinestudio.asu.edu. <https://onlinestudio.asu.edu/edit-decision-list> Web. 3 Oct. 2022.

Two: Editorial

Editorial Theory

This film is conscious of its exhibition locations (in conventions and anime gatherings, possibly installations, beside festivals and screenings). It resonates with “various 1960s experiments with motion, animation, cinematic projection, and early video” that Lutz Koepnick describes in article “To Cut or Not to Cut”, an exploration of shot durations and the use of long takes in art cinema. These works, Koepnick argues, are attentive to “how viewers interacted with the specific site of projection and in how uncut (video) footage unlocked a milieu for exploring the movements of bodies, minds, and sensory organs in physical space” (38). In preservation of the integrity of scenes as they naturally unfold, this film similarly finds duration “as a medium to define film as event and thereby stress the performative and post-representational qualities of spectatorship” (Koepnick 35). In my editing, I experiment with using long takes that offer a continuous, immersive experience of space and time.

In his 2022 UFVA Conference keynote speech, film editor Niels Pagh Andersen contends that film editing is very similar to music, the emotional stream of time. Ingmar Bergman also compares film to music since “both affect our emotions directly, not via the intellect. And film is mainly rhythm; it is inhalation and exhalation in continuous sequence” (qtd. in Murphy par. 5). I believe that prioritizing the emotional stimulation is key to editing my film.

Editorial Techniques

Editing this film utilizes techniques put forward by film editor Walter Murch, i.e. identifying potential points to cut and compare them to the blink of an eye (39). It is also im-

portant for me to keep in mind that extra time to stay on a shot is needed for viewers to read the subtitles, as well as for the subtitles to be fully displayed, since some of them can become quite lengthy even after paraphrasing and simplifying.

Since many footage contain shots of anime merchandise items laid out in a certain formation, match cut is a great option for emphasizing the geometrical quality and the quantity of these items consumed and collected by fans.

My choice to position all titles at the center of the screen was inspired by an experimental piece titled *Golden Jubilee* (2021, dir. Suneil Sanzgiri) about the Indian diaspora and decoloniality. The golden-shaded titles' centrality on-screen in this film contributed to a sense of solemnity. I found myself guided to pay attention to the central part of the screen, something that many films with subtitles at the bottom oftentimes fail to do to their viewers.

Form and Style; Comparables to Similar Films

Although we follow a storyline, sometimes the chain of events are intercut with intermittent bursts of experimental, performative sequences as transitions. Inspired by 2010 film *Attenberg* (Dir. Athina Tsangari), where sequences of the two main characters traverse through a space in movements that resemble acting exercises without motivated by any particular event in the story, these out-of-line sequences serve both as a punctuation and a visual break from other parts of the film. This results in a rhythmic style that shapes the structure of the film, as well as a training wheel that familiarizes the audience with the non-traditional flow they are following.

Editing can sometimes be an associative process. *And They Saved My Sorry Ass* should not shun from experimenting with the associativeness between images that carry con-

notations or metaphors. As James Clarke argues for *Persona* (1966, dir. Ingmar Bergman)'s opening sequence "the images, then, are somehow thematically linked but not as such 'explained'. They may appear random but there are relationships between them" (86). The boldness of "organise strategies to contradict and subvert audience expectation and comfort" (86) is cherished in my editing. By emphasizing thematic impulses and the use of self-reflexivity (e.g. including the moment the filmmaker explains to the subject their cinematographic process before the camera actually zooms in) lifts some limitations in genre-driven filmmaking where the process for creating illusions is hidden.

Assembly Process

Because a single-system sound is used, pulling selects for this film is fairly streamlined. First, scratch track narration is laid out onto the Premiere timeline (A2 or audio track 2) according to the working script. Then, sound bites from interviews are laid out with their videos (V1 and A1). Parts that have been selected are highlighted or color-coded in the transcripts which also contain shot descriptions. Cutaways and B-rolls corresponding to the audio are then added (V2). V3 contains titles, V4 is for adjustment layers, and V5 is for temporary subtitles. A3 is for the narration and A4 for temp tracks.

Sound Editing

Sound editing of this film combines the conventional method to documentary sound editing (for interviews and vérité footage) and the anti-illusionistic sound in avant-garde films. In terms of techniques, sound editing adopts the workflow introduced in Prof. Beckler's workshop and in Prof. Kalin's post-production course:

- editing: organize, combine and consolidation of audio into mono or multi channels
 - dialogue
 - FX
 - music
- mixing
 - recording
 - dialogue
 - FX
 - Music
- Account for all elements that make up a soundtrack
 - dialogue
 - foley
 - sound FX
 - Ambience (needs to be panned around)
 - music
- dialogue editing
 - organize
 - each character gets their own track
 - selection
 - editor's mix track: a usually stereo track that is a rough mix of the multiple microphone system during a filmed take - production sound mixer
 - checkerboard edit: splitting each character into separate tracks
 - mx: music

- dialogue is usually at the center channel (so that effects can be louder while the dialogue is still clear)
- leveling
 - Dialogues never go past negative 3. It can be helpful to turn off the gradient in premiere to see the solid red, yellow and green
 - -6 decibels: loud, yelling
 - -12: normal dialogue level
 - -18 whispers
 - sound is perceptual
 - Sound below -45 might not be heard depending on the theatrical environment
- noise cancellation
 - iZotope RX a plugin in Audition to remove consistent noise-floor hiss. isotope is a verb now that equals canceling noise
 - use “capture print” sparingly so it does not cut out vital frequencies
 - A good dynamic range: if you have 18 decibels between dialogue and noise you can cancel that out
- EQ dialogue with parametric equalizer in Premiere: bass (human voice starts at the higher end of the bass), mid frequencies, high frequencies.
- reverb: echo and reflection of a space, making dry sounds wet/warm.
 - assign a reverb track in premiere and assign everything that needs a reverb to that track

- add bus track: select input/output view out of the four views- route output to a bus
 - the center channel needs to be dry/clean. everything else goes around
- the final mix: weave sounds together
 - start with dialogue, wrap other sound around it
 - lay in ambience, fill in the gaps and cover whatever that does not work
 - add in FX

References

Clarke, James. *Movie Movements : Films That Changed the World of Cinema*. Harpenden: Kamera, 2011. Print.

Koepnick, Lutz. *The Long Take : Art Cinema and the Wondrous*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017. ProQuest Ebook Central. Web. 22 Aug. 2022.

Murch, Walter. *In the Blink of an Eye : a Perspective on Film Editing*. 1st ed. Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 1995. Print.

Murphy, Julian. "Three Doors into the Chamber of Ingmar Bergman's Autumn Sonata." *sensofcinema.com*. Jun. 2015. Web. 29 Oct. 2022.

Three: Finishing

Organization

In addition to folders mentioned in part one above, the final file organization should include:

An “EXPORT” folder that contains all exported cuts at different stages. Naming convention: YYMMDD_DRAFTNAME_V##_Description.

In the PUBLICITY folder, add “THUMBNAILS” with the film’s thumbnails in case online private screeners are uploaded to platforms like Vimeo.

Designate each Sunday as back-up day to keep the hard-drive backups and cloud backup up-to-date.

To sum up, the file organization at the finishing stage should look like:

- EDITING
 - PREMIERE
 - YYMMDD_DRAFTNAME
 - AFTER EFFECTS
 - RESOLVE
 - AUDITION
 - VFX
- TRAILER & PROMOTIONAL
 - PROJECT FILES
 - TRAILER EXPORTS
 - YYMMDD_TRAILER_V##
 - OTHER PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS
- EXPORT

- YYMMDD_DRAFTNAME_V##_Description
- YYMMDD_VOICEOVER
 - SCRATCH TRACKS
 - FINAL VOICEOVER
- GRAPHICS
- MUSIC
 - FOUND TEMP TRACKS
 - FOUND
 - COMPOSED
- SFX
 - FOUND
- PUBLICITY
 - STILLS
 - POSTERS
 - THUMBNAILS
 - BTS PHOTOS (remember to separate this from the stills)
 - SCREENSHOTS (also separated from stills)
- SAMPLE SCENES

It is key to budget enough time for the processing towards the finishing line: rendering, sending files to the post-house for DCP, etc. can all be time-consuming. It is advised that three months is reasonable for a feature film to complete its finishing stage towards the end of post-production while promotions and publicity happen simultaneously (Haynes).

Music Composing

Music will be composed by me in Garage Band and exported as .wav files that get modified in Audition and then sent back to the Premiere timeline. Just like Audition, Garage Band allows video files to be played and synced to the music timeline while composing.

Sound Design

The scratch track for voiceover will be replaced by the final voiceover recorded in the UCF sound booth in early December. I currently have a stereo mix for my edit. Then the ambience is laid in to fill the gaps and to cover things up when necessary. Lastly, the SFX are added in. The final sound design will be converted to 5.1 in Audition (isotope).

Color Grading & Interchanges

The ungraded locked cut will be exported into Da Vinci Resolve for color grading. Make sure that footage originally shot with the Canon C-Log (or Cinema Mode) remains uncompressed. Also make sure that all the sequence settings are correct so they do not need to be adjusted in Resolve. Export the Premiere sequence as a Final Cut XML file, open Resolve, create a new project and import the XML timeline. Change the timeline name to one that corresponds with my project naming convention and complete the grading in the Color panel. Change to the corresponding camera setting. After color grading is finished, in the Deliver panel, export footage as Premiere XML and import it back to the Premiere timeline.

Before the actual conforming takes place, the above steps will be tested out in advance in December 2022 or January 2023 for trouble-shooting.

Potential VFX

After color grading, I will send pulls to VFX artist Theresa Klotz for ideas on potential VFX added. These pulls will be exported through Adobe Media Encoder into a EXR file so it is compatible with Theresa's compositing program Nuke. More information needs to be found in terms of the minimum resolution required for the video to be composited in Nuke.

Since VFX is the last part needed, after VFX is completed, the final sound and edit should be completely locked.

Captions, Subtitles, Credits

Due to the fact that this is a multilingual film, subtitles are inseparable from the content. Thus, subtitles are added throughout the editing process. However, it is still necessary to have a separate subtitles file (SRT format) just in case.

For closed captioning (SRT captions), I will reach out to Global Peace Film Festival because they have a caption company that partners with them to add captions to all films (including mine) played at the festival.

As for credits, I will reach out to crew and cast (interviewees) with a credit list for them to verify their roles and names. Consider stylized ending credits such as that of *Shirkers*, where credits roll over the old footage, or that of the documentary *Les Enfants Terribles*, where the credits are superimposed with the motif of migration in the film—a long take of a flowing river.

Deliverables, Exhibition Formats and Standards

At this stage, the clearance log should be completed and sent to the law school clinic for a copyright report to be produced.

Once the film is locked, if I choose to go through a distributor, I will need at least these deliverables below:

- the film file: 1920x1080p. Distribution companies such as Indie Rights accept SD, HD and UHD files (Indie Rights). Depending on the platform, resolution requirements are different. “Prime Video Direct supports video resolutions up to 1920x1080p” (Amazon) but not UHD (4K) files. Netflix, although no longer a popular destination for independent films, only approves certain 4K and up cameras, making it unfit for my film.

- the trailer file
- poster (with credits, laurel, and title art)
- still files
- caption and subtitles; it is important for my film to have a separate subtitles file as well as a version where the subtitles are baked in
- music cue sheet

For festival screenings, I plan to send a hard-drive with the HQ 444 film file to a pesthouse to convert to a DCP. Beside above mentioned digital assets, distributors also ask for write-ups that include information about credits, tagline, synopsis, a marketing plan, a distribution roadmap, etc.

It is worth noting that post-production house producers warn against sending encrypted files for festival screenings because the chance that the key does not work is high (qtd. in Hynes). Sending a regular, unencrypted DCP would suffice.

References

- Hynes, Eric. "Everything You Wanted to Know About Digital Deliverables (But Were Afraid to Ask)." [sundance.org](https://www.sundance.org). Web. 23 Nov. 2022.
- "Indie Rights Film/TV Submission." [docs. google.com](https://docs.google.com). Web. 23 Nov. 2022.
- "Submission Requirements." videodirect.amazon.com. Web. 23 Nov. 2022.

CHAPTER THREE: EVIDENCE OF FINANCIAL LITERACY

Financing

Method of Funding

This project is self-funded, with the prospect of completion funds through grants.

Grant Research and Application

Marketing and Distribution Plan

Overview

My overall goal of making this film is for it to serve as my calling card in the industry, showcasing my abilities as a writer, editor, and cinematographer, connecting me to future job opportunities in film education and/or filmmaking. I would also like to bring a voice to the minority groups portrayed in this film and increase their visibility: queer anime lovers, queer Asian/Asian Americans, international students in the U.S., etc.

My primary target audience are 16-years-old and up anime lovers in North America and Asia, and possibly other English-speaking countries. Secondary audience expand to the LGBTQ+ population, with tertiary audience being intellectual, arthouse filmgoers interested in Asian culture or concerned with social topics like gender identities and consumerism.

In terms of strategic positioning, *And They Saved My Sorry Ass* is an autobiographical film, a love letter to the kaleidoscopic but lesser-known world of anime and fan culture. It is a self-exploring journey where young queer people find reconciliation and a sense of belonging through cosplaying and convention-going. It attracts 16+ anime lovers, with expansion to LGBTQ+ people. Genre: indie-documentary. Rating forthcoming.

Primary Distribution Goal

My goal is to have my film recognized during the festival run by distributors strong in the educational circuit, such as Kimstim (which distributed *Tokyo Idols*, a film comparable to the subject matter and approaches of mine), New Day Films and Passion River, although the Film Collaborative Distributors Report Card had mixed opinions for Passion River.

Secondary Distribution Goal

If working with distributors does not prove cost-effective for my \$4,000 total budget, I plan to self-distribute my film and generate profit through institutions' library purchases. Ideal streaming platforms include MUBI/MUBI Specials, which has a focus on arthouse, avant-garde films and anthologies of shorts. Kanopy is suitable, too, but the platform is going through downfall according to our class discussion.

Logline

My logline evolved throughout the production. As advised, I presented myself as a relatable main character that generates emotional investment. The first-person voice is emphasized, as opposed to an analytical tone. The current version is as follow:

Logline: A group of queer friends express themselves by embodying and re-interpreting anime characters.

Film Festival Strategy

My top festival goals are the better known LGBTQ+ film festivals because all my major subjects and I identify as LGBTQ. My film highlights a niche part of queer life that was rarely discussed before, shedding light to a new reality of intersectionality. The ideal option would be Outfest or Outfest Fusion (during one of the SEEFest accelerator workshops, impact

producer Toni Bell recommended Outfest over Frameline because Outfest is more “investigative” about their films and do more for their filmmakers).

I will also consider other regional festivals (Florida and Georgia, where most production has been taking place; Texas and LA, where the largest groups of anime fans are in the nation; Boston and Vermont, which have active independent cinema) and specialty festivals (documentary, women, Asian, underground, experimental). To condense the list of festivals to actually submit to, deeper research needs to be conducted in terms of what festivals are known for helping their filmmakers in publicity. Per Annie Jeeves’s advice, I will be bringing printed one sheets to festivals as handouts and expand my film’s mailing list by gathering emails and following up in time. If programmed at festivals I would like to reach out to regional cosplayers/anime groups in order to increase festival screening turnout, something that may work hand-in-hand with my anime clubs outreach.

- Asian American International Film Festival (submissions open January-March)
- Austin Film Festival (December-May)
- Athena Film Festival
- Atlanta Underground Film Festival (open October-April)
- Cairo International Film Festival (open June-August)
- Cinequest: (May-October)
- DOC LA (open November-September)
- DOC NYC (Feb-April)
- Florida Film Festival (open August-November)
- Indie Memphis (open December-April)
- LA Asian Pacific Film Festival (open November-January)

- Boston Asian American Film Festival (open March-June)
- Lady Filmmakers Festival (open July-March)
- Sidewalk Film Festival (open November-February)

Festivals that I can personally connect to the programmers of:

- South East European Film Festival (SEEFest, open September to December)
- Global Peace Film Festival (open February to May)
- Florida Experimental Film Festival (FLEX Fest)
- Arizona International Film Festival (open September to January)

Alternative Screening Options

In-person screenings at documentary centers and through online one-time programming are options I will explore outside of theatrical screening. These options are especially effective for nonfictional films.

- Amherst Cinema, Amherst, MA
- e-flux.com
- Laemmle Theater, Los Angeles, CA
- Le Cinéma Club
- Maysles Documentary Center, New York, NY
- Miracle Theatre, Washington, D.C.
- Museum of Wild and Newfangled Art
- SIFF Film Center, Seattle
- UFVA Conference (as a starting point to other educational screenings)
- UnionDocs, Brooklyn, NY
- vdrome.org

Public Engagement with Institutions and Organizations

Collaboration for screening and discussions with target communities can be mutually beneficial. Potential organizations to reach out to for partnership include:

The outreach department of GLAAD

Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)

Japan Foundation New York and Los Angeles (they hold great Japanese pop-culture studies panels)

Beside those big organizations, I also plan to contact college Asian studies and media studies departments, anime clubs Asian students and LGBTQ+ student organizations for potential screening events.

Public Engagement with Anime Fans at Conventions

Most comic anime conventions hold cultural discussion panels and allow self-submission for panels. I plan to propose panels that include screening and discussion to conventions that are a) large in scale; b) taking place in a region related to the production of this film. If these panel proposals do not get accepted as part of the convention programming, I will pursue alternative options, such as holding smaller screenings around convention dates in nearby locations to take advantage of anime fans' gathering. Some possible conventions to screen at include:

- KatsuCon: February, National Harbor, Maryland.
- MegaCon: May, Orlando, Florida.
- FanimeCon: San Jose, California.
- Dragon Con: September, Atlanta, Georgia.
- Anime NYC: November, New York, New York.

Social Media Marketing Strategy

Because of the personal nature of my project and the following I already established, I decided to use my filmmaker's Instagram and Twitter's account to promote my film. While I edit the film and make pickup shoots in May 2022, I plan to designate time to batch-create social media posts and set times for them to be posted through summer 2022, which is a strategy that Jenna Warriner suggested. My social media and branding language is aimed for engaging followers by delivering what is most beneficial to them. I also found Jenna's email newsletters effective, where she suggests beginning a sentence with "you" instead of "I", saying "if you want to..." instead of "I'm excited to...". She sends out a series of email for her new subscribers in which she recounts personal trajectory to successful marketing in order to promote her business. I learned that personal branding, just as my personal documentary, involves telling the story of one's advancing self for viewers to be emotionally and financially invested in.

There will be three rounds of Twitter or Instagram giveaway raffle held to boost our following among the anime lovers' community. Followers retweet or like the post to enter a raffle to win anime-themed products or craftwork giveaways featured in the film, such as a *Cowboy Bebop* (anime show) bag that one of the subjects also owns, Arrow (main subject)'s fanart or original illustration postcards, and Japanese traditional mini dolls. These giveaway campaigns will take place on weeks leading up to the film's release and/or major festival benchmarks.

Website Update and Press

For personal and film branding, I have been updating my portfolio website (<https://clioyang.myportfolio.com/press>) with press and announcements about this film and me as a filmmaker. These will continue to be updated in conjunction with my social media posts.

Art

While there have not been major modifications on my poster draft since March, I will continue to work on my poster design over the course of summer 2022. As stated in *Guerilla Film Marketing*, conveying the title, genre, storyline and the uniqueness of my film is crucial to keep in mind while making the key art (Barnwell 66). The main lesson is to promise my genre, but at the same time, differentiate my work from typical films of the same genre. Meanwhile, I will identify stills that are most representative of my film, organize them and clean up the images to create a reservoir of promotional stills. These materials help create visual consistency, which can be applied to event flyers, creating my pitch deck, etc.

Online Streaming Platform Research: MUBI

- Type: UK-based, SVOD, hand-curated, 193 territories.
- Features:
 - Film of the Day: “Every day MUBI’s in-house film experts select a great new film and you have 30 days to watch it” (qtd. in “All About AVOD”).
 - Specials: Highlighted films available for a limited time in the fashion that is similar to a virtual film program.
 - MUBI releases: “Exclusive collection of acclaimed premieres” (“MUBI Releases”).

- Notebook: “One of the most respected online sources for film criticism” (“All About AVOD”).
- Do they take submissions without a representative/distributor? Yes, “and also from studios, distributors and aggregators” (“All About AVOD”).
- Deals and Revenue:
 - “Revenue is split 50/50 with the filmmaker (or whomever is the rights holder) based on views over the 30-day run” (“All About AVOD”).
 - “MUBI typically licenses films for a 2-year period, non-exclusive. They license by territory, but also do global deals or groups of territories” (“All About AVOD”).
 - “We at TFC have enjoyed seeing hundred of dollars that eventually added up to some small version of thousands for a film that did not do better business anywhere else... MUBI was a source of revenue that was particularly useful for a smaller art house film that would not be sought out on the more commercial platforms such as iTunes” (“All About AVOD”).
 - According to cofounder Bobby Allen, they “report quarterly and send a cheque” “Sometimes we do license fee deals whereby we pay local distributors a set license fee for a 30-day transmission” (qtd. in Suits et al. 15).
- Technical specs: accepts films of various aspect ratio and lengths; accepts compilations; minimum resolution unknown.
- Case Study: Landscape Plus: the Films of Laida Lertxundi. <https://mubi.com/specials/laida-lertxundi>
 - A series of short experimental/nonfictional films shot on 16mm and 35mm across years in the filmmaker’s career.

- Curated as MUBI's November 2021 program after filmmaker's latest short film *Autoficción* was widely acclaimed at festivals (Edinburgh International Festival, Images Film Festival, New York Film Festival, etc.).
- I believe MUBI is a good platform for my film, because:
 - It actively acquires and even make distribution deals with films that have done well in international festivals.
 - It is inclusive of various formats, lengths, languages and genres.
 - It targets cinephiles and arthouse movie-goers, helping to create a discussion in the film community through its commentary and criticism articles.
 - It allows filmmakers, especially emerging filmmakers, to introduce their works and themselves while screening to cultivate a fan base.

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CONCLUSION

To conclude, *And They Saved My Sorry Ass* was produced as planned with many pleasant surprises as the process evolved. All interviews touched upon profound issues. I cut the 40-minute documentary with future plans to expand it into a longer piece. The journey of this production proved that documentary filmmaking requires flexibility to adapt to topics and scenes that arise along the way. Finding the story structure and organization were keys to a successful post-production. I experimented with different modes of documentary production: performative, expository and poetic, linking all three with consistent visual cues. After completing next steps in marketing and distribution of this film, I am interested in continuing to make films with similar thematic concerns, probing into identity questions developed from diaspora and multifaceted cultural backgrounds.

APPENDIX A: BUDGET

| Production | And They Saved My Sorry Ass | | Budget Draft Date: | 2/20/2023 | | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Length: | 60 Minutes | | Shooting Dates: | Fall 2021-Spring 2023 | | | |
| Location: | Orlando FL&Savannah GA& New York NY | | | | | | |
| | Category | Specifics | Cost | Unit | Budget | Actual Cost | Cash Income |
| | Travel to Savannah GA | Gasoline | 200 | 1 | \$200 | \$186 | \$186 |
| | Travel to NYC | Flight ticket, Uber and Subway | 600 | 1 | \$600 | \$550 | \$550 |
| | Hotel for NYC Shoot | | 400 | 1 | \$400 | \$400 | \$400 |
| | Food | Meal with subjects and crew | 30 | 30 | \$900 | \$780 | \$780 |
| | Camera | Canon EOS C100 Mark II Camera Body | 1500 | 1 | \$1,500 | \$1,800 | \$1,800 |
| | Lens | Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM Lens | 460 | 1 | \$460 | \$460 | \$460 |
| | Tripod | Velbon Videomate 638 Aluminum Tripod | 120 | 1 | \$120 | \$120 | \$120 |
| | Lighting | Pixel G1s RGB Video Light with Portable Tripod | 90 | 1 | \$90 | \$90 | \$90 |
| | Audio Recorder | Zoom H5 Recorder | 208 | 1 | \$208 | \$208 | \$208 |
| | Art Dept | Props | 100 | 1 | \$100 | \$45 | 45 |
| | Art Dept | String Light | 34 | 1 | \$34 | \$34 | \$34 |
| | SD Card | | 20 | 5 | \$100 | \$100 | \$100 |
| | Hard-Drive | Editing and back-up drives | 200 | 2 | \$400 | \$360 | \$360 |
| | Film Stock | One roll of 100-feet film | 50 | 1 | \$50 | \$50 | \$50 |
| | Insurance | Provided by UCF | 0 | 0 | \$0 | | |
| | Contingency | 10% of production costs | 0 | 0 | \$516 | | |
| | | | | | PRODUCTION TOTAL: | \$5,678 | \$5,063 |
| | Marketing | Festival fees | 25 | 12 | \$300 | | |
| | Sound Design | Sound Design | 200 | 1 | \$200 | | |
| | DCP | DCP/screener conversion at post-house | 600 | 1 | \$600 | | |
| | Misc | Publicity, shipment fee, etc. | 200 | 1 | \$200 | | |
| | | | | | POST PRODUCTION TOTAL: | \$1,300 | \$0 |
| | | | | | TOTAL UNIT: | 60 | |
| | | | | | GRAND TOTAL: | \$6,978 | |
| | | | | | ACTUAL GRAND TOTAL: | \$5,063 | |

APPENDIX B: A/V FORMAT WORKING SCRIPT

Structure:

- What is anime, cosplay
- Clio growing up collecting things
- Clio gets into anime
- Clio discusses it with Arrow
 - Merch, consumerism
 - vocabulary
 - Collector's psychology
 - Fan culture
 - Cosplay
 - Being bi
 - Cultural differences
- Clio and Arrow at the con (this is fun! Move this up)
- Clio meets Lio at the con
- Clio and Lio discussion
 - Artist and fan art
 - Anime works and identity, queer representation
- Clio and Elyse discussion
 - Cosplaying and gender
 - The fandom
 - Creative cosplayer
- Clio's journey continues; where everyone is today; Orlando con cosplay

C=Clio

A=Arrow

E=Elyse

L=Lio

| Time | Video | Title | Audio |
|------|--|-------|--|
| | <p>Clio solo shot, then with her collection</p> <p>Motion graphic “Anime” bursting into ribbons and stars into—</p> <p>Split-screen examples of each subgenre mentioned. Refer to Velvet Underground doc 12 split screen shot.</p> | | <p>Clio: I decided to go by the name Clio just about when I became an anime fangirl.</p> <p>Anime is the Japanese style of animation.</p> <p>In the English world, the word anime indicates anime movies and TV shows, Japanese comic books called manga, games, merchandise products, voice actors and live-action adaptations.</p> |
| | <p>Convention B-roll</p> | | <p>Many anime lovers also go to conventions, create fan works, as well as cosplay, which is to dress up as a specific character.</p> |
| | <p>Maybe installation footage of opening blindboxes leading into—</p> | | |

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| | | And They Saved My Sorry Ass A film by Clio Yang | |
| | Hand-drawn chart | Source: Association of Japanese Animations | As of 2019, the worldwide anime market totalled \$24 billion American dollars, which is higher than the 18 billion dollars grossed by the Marvel cinematic universe franchise. 48% of anime's revenue comes from outside Japan. |
| | 2000s China B-roll | | It is hard to pinpoint when anime became a hit in China, where I'm from. Its history must be lying somewhere in the collective memory, but not so much in mine. |

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| | Hand-drawn stop-motion animation | | From the peripheral, the idea of anime had been distilled in me since the early 2000s in the form of a Naruto hand gesture game, a Sailor Moon pencil case, a Hamtaro toy that came with a KFC kid's meal, and all the other small things. |
| | Those cards, if I can still find them. home video & young Clio photos | | Before getting into anime, I'd print out pictures from the movie "Titanic" and tape them to card stocks like hand-made postcards so I can look at them during class breaks in elementary school. |
| | Titanic DVD box | | You can't bring a toy to school. So these cards were superior. I'd learn later that there are companies authorized to make all kinds of products with Jack and Rose's images that I fancied for a long time. |

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| | Hetalia clip | Handwritten: So long, Leo. | I feasted on American movies, only to find that Hetalia the anime became the talk of the school. This show recounted global history by personifying countries into human characters, ushering me and many others into the world of anime. |
| | Arrow interview | Arrow (she/her) I wasn't really introduced to the world of fan works until six or seven grade, when Hetalia and Naruto were hits. C: Hetalia, known to the whole world. Elyse (they/them) | Arrow's Audio in Chinese Elyse: I started watching more animes, like Hetalia, that kinda dates me. |
| | Stop motion w/ toy figures? drawing characters on T-shirts | | Clio: In my English language school, when asked to paint different national flags on plain white T-shirts, I drew these countries' corresponding characters in Hetalia, to my teacher's irritation. |

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| | <p>Pictures of the con (JN-comic), the location, the charm.</p> | | <p>In 2011, a group of fans organized the first unofficial comic convention in my hometown Jinan in north China. 14-year-old me walked in there with BBC's Sherlock in mind, but ended up buying my first piece of anime merchandise. It was a fanmade "Hetalia" wooden charm.</p> |
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| | <p>Things that Arrow mentioned</p> | <p>C: Do you remember the very first piece of merch that you bought? A: The first piece? Wow, that was years back. It was unofficial merch, though. Does that count? C: It sure does. A: I was in second or third grade when they held a tiny comic con in my hometown of Suzhou. I was into “Inuyasha” (manga and anime series) so I got an “Inuyasha” keychain from the con. Back then, I adored Takahashi Rumiko (Japanese manga artist). I still do. My family has always been very understanding about my hobbies. My mom loves Japanese anime, too. She actually was the one that brought me to that con and bought me that keychain.</p> <p>C: We had a tiny comic con in Jinan, too, when I was in seventh grade or something. It wasn’t a very decent con. You couldn’t even tell from the outside. A: No. It was a small gathering in a place like a public library.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> <p>Clio: Since 2017, American TV and movies started to</p> |
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| | <p>Figure wearing fox mask criticized by educational videos</p> <p>Disrepaired college dorm in Beijing</p> <p>Collage & paper cutouts of a train from Beijing to Jinan on a map</p> <p>Playing Touken Ranbu on phone</p> <p>Touken Ranbu franchise: game, anime, live-action, merch</p> <p>My Touken plushie photos while traveling</p> | | <p>Clio: My sophomore year of college in China was rough. Feeling stuck towards an English degree, I took a two-hour train home on a weekend. My mom thought I was running away and wasting money. My parents brought me along on their short trip but weren't really talking to me. (or I tagged along) I was on my phone, shadowing them to places, and found this mobile game about famous Japanese swords turning into half human half god, that fight to preserve history. Always into period pieces, I was drawn into it immediately. When my family withheld their emotional support, those characters filled in and kept me company. That game is Touken Ranbu, which turned out to be one of the biggest Japanese anime franchises. I'm not the only one who found consoles (consolation) in anime.</p> |
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| | <p>Aoe merch display, Clio dusting her Aoe figure. Maybe English ver. Official character introduction</p> | | <p>Clio: I fell for Aoe the way Lio fell for Mika.</p> <p>Sometimes cold, sometimes bold, always mischievous, gender-blurring, like a benevolent ghost. His theatrical portrayal? Extraordinary.</p> <p>That first encounter with a character we're destined for led to the exuberant jungle of anime contents and merchandise.</p> |
| | <p>Reenactment: tugging Aoe figure in shirt in a suitcase</p> | | <p>At first, I smuggled them in and out of my parents' apartment.</p> |
| | <p>Collage: trip from China to the U.S. Clio's photos at two universities.</p> <p>Clio reveals herself from a mesh.</p> <p>Transitional footage (experimental?)</p> | | <p>At 21, I won a chance to transfer to an American college. Away from my family, there were fewer things to hide, like me being a fangirl, like my collection, or the fact that my close friend was also my crush. I confessed to her. She turned me down.</p> |

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| | Orlando Japan fest gathering B-roll | | In 2019, I began joining those online fan groups, mostly among Chinese people, and making friends. Arrow is one of them. We are the only two group members in the U.S. |
| | Live action clip in comparison to anime (to demonstrate similarity) (A3! TV introduction) | | We are both into live-action actors who play anime characters in stage adaptations which boomed in the last two decades. Each year, more than 200 of such theater productions attract 3 million audiences, mostly women, making it one of the rising entertainment sectors in Japan. |
| | Clio lockdown grad photos | | Me and Arrow live not that far away. She even offered that I stay with her when my college dorm shut down during the mid-2020 lockdown. While we didn't get to be roommates, I did pay her a visit in Savannah, Georgia. |

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| | Split screen: pile of merch and pile of grains (rice?) | <p>TITLE CARD:</p> <p>谷子/吃谷/grains (with pinyin pronunciation)</p> <p>END TITLE CARD</p> | <p>Clio (the word “goods” in Chinese, Japanese, English) : 谷子, グッズ, goods.</p> <p>Grains: Anime merchandise. The word for “goods” sounds similar to “grains” in Man- darin. Eat- ing grains means buying anime mer- chandise.</p> |
| | 2 shot of Arrow and Clio start to display Ar- row’s merch | <p>A: Let’s start by spreading things out.</p> <p>C: Yeah, put them on dis- play first.</p> <p>A: Let me see.</p> <p>C: I like your onigiri tote bag.</p> <p>A: It’s cute, isn’t it?</p> | Audio in Chinese |
| | Rice-ball-shaped ob- jects. | <p>TITLE CARD:</p> <p>おにぎり Onigiri</p> <p>END TITLE CARD</p> | <p>Clio reading “oni- giri” in Japanese.</p> <p>Clio (English): Ja- panese rice ball. The obsession for this food, even for its shape, is real.</p> |

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| | <p>2 shot of Arrow and Clio displaying Arrow's merch</p> | <p>A: There are also replicas. But, I don't buy merch in bulk. C: Me neither. I usually buy one for each design. A: Right. A: I have all the characters from this collection. A: Let's sort them out by franchise. These are from "Mahoyaku". Those are from "A3!".</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |
| | <p>Pending: videos or images of both games?</p> | | <p>Clio (English): "Mahoyaku", or "The Wizard's Promise", and "A3!" are both reverse-harem games, in which the main playable character is one female, interacting with a range of male characters. The female player character isn't considered the focus of publicity or merchandise sales.</p> |

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| | <p>2 shot of Arrow and Clio displaying Arrow's merch</p> | <p>C: You even bought a button with the player character on it. A: I know, it's super rare to find a button with her on it. A: It's amazing... When my friend gave this to me, I thought that it was great that the company made merch for the female player character. C: Exactly! A: Because, personally, I would easily fall in love with a female protagonist. C: I can totally relate.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |
| | <p>2 shot of Arrow and Clio displaying Arrow's merch</p> | <p>C: It seems that you either have none... A: Yeah. C: ...or many. A: Right. A: I really enjoy buying blind-boxed merch. You know, when I open the box and don't see the character that I want, I naturally want to try my luck one more time, and it just goes on and on.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |

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| | <p>B-roll of Clio opening blind-boxed products</p> | <p>TITLE CARD:</p> <p>盲盒/浪大幕ランダム random (with pinyin pronunciation)</p> <p>END TITLE CARD</p> | <p>(Clio reading the word in Chinese, Japanese, and English)</p> <p>Clio (English): Blind box is a type of product with packaging that hides its content, so that neither the store nor the customer knows which product is inside. Usually comes in series. A group of buyers would pool to ensure that they each get products of the character of their liking.</p> |
| | <p>Arrow's merch</p> | <p>A: This entire "Mahoyaku" collection was blind-boxed. It was a gamble, a total adventure.</p> <p>A: My roommate and I pooled our money together and bought 40 blind-boxed photocards. I got to keep almost all of them. Out of 40 photocards, only 2 or 3 were the ones that my roommate wanted. Poor her.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |

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| | <p>2 shot of Arrow and Clio displaying Arrow's merch</p> | <p>A: This "Mahokayu" acrylic figure stand is strange because the stand and the base are sold separately. And the base is blind-boxed! That means you could potentially get a base that doesn't match the figure stand. C: Why the hell would they do that? A: I'd like to know myself. C: Like, why make people's lives harder? A: Exactly. If somebody gets the wrong base, they'll have to keep buying bases until they get the right one. C: Horrible. A: And what do I need all these extra bases for? C: It's just a piece of plastic.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> <p>Maybe too many pieces of plastic.</p> |
| | <p>2 shot of Arrow and Clio displaying Arrow's merch</p> | <p>A: Alright... The sky suddenly dimmed. C: Yeah. Maybe a cloud covered the sun. A: Right... The sky looked so saturated earlier.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |

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| | <p>2 shot of Arrow and Clio displaying Arrow's merch, zooming into the button mentioned</p> | <p>C: I can't believe Tenma* ("A3!" character) is carrying rolls of fabric on this button. A: Those are scallions, not fabric. C: Scallions! A: It makes him look like some big star that buys you scallions.</p> <p>C: Whatever is next to him looks like a watermelon. A: That's Yuki's head. See it yourself. They stand back-to-back. C: Damn. A: You just said the funniest thing today. Today's top joke. C: I feel like I just learned the secret of the universe.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |
| | <p>Arrow</p> | <p>C: I've never seen this kind of merch. A: It's a fridge magnet. Now, you can see a bunch of Misumi ("A3!" character) merch piling up. Ah, I like— C: Sorry, let me zoom in on that magnet first. C: I can't see it with my own eyes anymore. The camera is my eye now. A: I know.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |
| | <p>Misumi buttons</p> | <p>A: Misumi ("A3!" character) is probably the character I've spent the most money on.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |

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| | | <p>A: I've got so much Misumi merch. The rest are scattered around at home.</p> <p>C: Look at this bright yellow pile of buttons.</p> <p>A: Yep. This one is my favorite. This is his iconic SSR* illustration. Can I put it down now?</p> <p>C: Yes, you can.</p> <p>A: OK. Whose hair is this? Such long hair.</p> | |
| | 2 shot of Arrow and Clio displaying Arrow's merch, zooming into character button | <p>A: Look, here's a popular character. His merch costs a fortune.</p> <p>C: He's got that kind of look.</p> <p>A: Yeah, you can tell that he's expensive just by looking at his face.</p> | Audio in Chinese |
| | B-roll of beach and lake view, maybe out of focus | Beach house, lake-view house | Clio (English): A piece of extremely costly merch, usually in a limited design, is referred to as a lake-view house, or even beach house. |

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| | 2 shot Arrow and Clio | <p>Owning his high-priced merch doesn't make me feel like a rich person. In the end, merch isn't like houses.</p> <p>C: Merch doesn't hold the value.</p> <p>A: No. You can't consider merch as assets. Hot anime and characters come and go. Prices for their merch rise and drop within a year. "Disney Twisted-Wonderland" is a case in point.</p> <p>C: Very typical.</p> | |
| | Image of merch pricing | | <p>Clio (English): At the peak of the mobile game "Disney Twisted-Wonderland", a limited edition button cost over \$150. Soon they were reproduced, and the game faded out. Today the same item costs less than \$4.</p> |

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| | 2 shot Arrow and Clio | <p>C: It was a bubble. A: A button isn't worth anything. C: No. A: Once the character on that button loses their market value, that button becomes worthless. A: Merch is all made of cheap plastics and metal scraps. If something goes wrong with a title, for example, getting mismanaged, its content becoming offensive, taking a drastic turn in the story, introducing a horrible character, the value of its merch decreases immediately. C: How long can a game or anime last anyways?</p> | Audio in Chinese |
| | B-roll highway, photo of Elyse and I working on a film set | | Clio (English): When it comes to budgeting for merch, Elyse has their own principles. We met working on a mutual friend's movie set. They gave me a ride home, and two nerds recognized each other in the conversation. |
| | Establishing shot | Atlanta, GA | |

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| | Elyse self-introduction | | <p>Elyse: I am Elyse Haws. I use they them pronouns. Right now I'm trying to work in the film industry as a set decorator or in the art department.</p> <p>I have a lot of hobbies. I like cosplay, I like video games, I like writing a lot. What's what I call my secondary hobby. Cause I'm like "maybe one day it'll get published". Sometimes I read manga, I like to watch TV.</p> <p>A lot of it comes from a core of fan-based nerd cultural stuff.</p> |
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| | Elyse interview | | <p>(File 04, 22:09) Elyse (English): Like I said, you bitch broke, I can only afford so many pins, guys, my money's going to big boy LEGO over here and plushies... a lot of the stuff I have, the paintings and everything I made myself, cause when you are a nerd on a budget, you get creative.</p> <p>22:09 Clio: How... do you decide on what merch to buy and what not to buy? Elyse: Money. I decide based on what I know the merch goes for. For an anime figure, I know could go up to 300 dollars for a really really really nice one that's huge, super detailed, etc.</p> <p>(28:00) However, my Sailor Uranus figure... This is a 45 to 35 dollar anime figure. I know that those figures that look like this are not super sought after that aren't rare... God, so dusty. Um, figures that look like</p> |
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| | Elyse interview | | <p>Elyse: I will never buy a figure unless I know I really really need to have that character and that figure. I won't go out of that price range. For this figure the most I would pay 45 bucks, I wouldn't pay more for this. (30:05)</p> <p>Elyse: The thing is, for some figures that are hard to find, like Sailor Uranus is not a common character, so if I find stuff of her, I'll grab it. Same thing if I find Hux merch. I instantly will grab it cause I love him more. That I can be more flexible about the pricing now. If I see a pin, and the pin is like 20 dollars instead of 10, I love the character enough and he's rare enough so I can justify that price. So what it really comes down to is how much do you have to spend, how much you're willing to spend for that character, and do you really want that item, like do you have to have it.</p> |
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| | <p>Elyse interview and convention b-roll</p> | | <p>Elyse: So what I do in a convention, in a vendor's hall or dealer's room, I'll walk around the whole thing first and look. Unless I see something super rare, like a Hux thing or Byakuya Togami thing like this, which they only have two left of, I won't grab it. I'll wait and I'll think about it. And if I forget about it, I didn't want it that bad. Or if I am still thinking about it, I guess I did want it, now I have to go, OK, how much does that normally go for? 45, they're charging 50, I'll go see if somebody else has it for 50, because once you've gone to enough conventions, you get to the part where you're like oh I have that figure, you'll see the same figure more than once.</p> |
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| | | | <p>Elyse: Same thing is like for...Like Sailor Moon is an eternal anime that will never die, but like, what phased out a while ago? Think about any anime that had a really big peak and then died. Yuri on Ice! Was super huge! Everyone was like yes! Yuri on Ice! And now I hardly see any merch for it. So if you really like something and it's at its peak, go ahead and get something, because that might go away. But if it's something eternal like a Sailor Moon thing, you're gonna see more of this. This will never go away. Same thing with Star Wars merch. You'll always see Jedi or Sith merch. It never goes away.</p> |
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| | Clio merch display. | | Clio (English): But unlike Star Wars, the limited access to anime products on top of an unpredictable market pushes people into buying. For me, it has always been a debate: the price versus the urge of spending, the anticipation of having an emblem of a character, the love of my life my love of life, that I can hold in my hand here and now, the joy of feeling the weight of that item, the texture, the design, the shiny image. |
| | | A: But, I've never bought any American comic book-brand merch. That's probably because I'm not a big fan of their designs. | |
| | | A: You don't have to be a nerd to have American merch. Normies who like mainstream stuff can still have them. Like, a lot of people have superhero smartphone cases. C: That doesn't indicate they have a unique identity. A: No. C: It really doesn't. | |

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| | <p>Arrow and Clio interview; NYC merch store b-roll; gacha machines</p> | <p>A: Being physically in an anime merch shop also drives me to purchase more merch. It's what the store environment does to me. I always buy a bunch of merch at Animate stores (the largest retailer of anime, video games and manga in Japan).</p> <p>C: Why not, since you're already there?</p> <p>A: That's it. I was there with my budget, so why not? I went right into my shopping habits there.</p> <p>A: Anime merch stores in Japan also have gacha (blind-box toy vending machines) at the front. I'd always take one or two of those toys with me home. After going through all the trouble of traveling there, I wanted my souvenirs.</p> <p>C: That makes sense. It takes a long flight to get there.</p> <p>A: Same goes for New York City. In the U.S., some anime merch are sold exclusively in New York. I don't even have to look anywhere else. Of course, New York offers so much more than merch. I've been there for museum exhibitions, too, but the next stop has always been merch stores. I could be walking down a gallery, critiquing some paintings. Next second, you'd find me splurging in a merch store.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |
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| | Delicate anime rosette | Rosette ribbon | Clio (English): In the context of merch collecting, a rosette refers to the ribbon decoration, usually handmade, around a character button. It looks like a regular award ribbon, but more exaggerated. |
| | B-roll of Arrow's handmade anime rosette | | Clio: Arrow's roommate made a rosette decoration for this character button and left it here. Arrow wondered why dressing up a button. She didn't get it, but folding and cutting ribbons were fun, so she made a few herself. |
| | British royal wedding rosette w/ Japanese anime rosette w/ Clio's handmade anime rosette | | Clio: It always amuses me to find those little symbols and rituals exist in some form outside the nerdy world, in human history, in the normie's world, redefining how we think of art. |
| | | | Clio (English): When the display becomes a ritual, a sense of responsibility comes into play. |

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| | | | <p>Clio (English): In a merch pool, there are titles assigned to buyers based on the amount of items they buy. How much you buy really defines who you are.</p> |
| | <p>Animate what's being discussed here?</p> | | <p>Clio: Arrow coined the term "anime monger" to describe those who only go after the hits. They buy merch on impulse when the show reaches its peak, and then get bored as soon as it fades out of the public consciousness. They have no choice but to sell their stuff on a discount, and start all over again.</p> |
| | | <p>A: For this type of person, a character's popularity means everything. When a character isn't sought after, they'd buy lots of merch of that character to increase the demand, artificially inflating its popularity. It's like sourcing votes for an idol contest.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |

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| | <p>Illustration of three chicken in literal pecking order, eating different amount of grains</p> | <p>Parent (亲妈)</p> <p>Partaker (分食)</p> <p>Scavenger (捡漏)</p> | <p>A parent regularly buys out <i>all</i> products of a particular character in a pool.</p> <p>A partaker regularly buys <i>some</i> products of a particular character in a pool.</p> <p>A scavenger only buys what is left by parents and partakers in a pool.</p> |
| | | <p>A: Fan activities and merch collecting are supposed to make one happy. If they find themselves unhappy, then they should simply quit the hobby. Over-consuming is another issue, and that makes it harder for one to quit buying. One would honor the sunk-cost fallacy, forcing themselves to keep buying because they have already invested so much money on this hobby.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |

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| | <p>Stop-motion animation with figures?</p> | <p>A: I know a friend who is trapped in this situation. She keeps buying merch even though the character no longer interests her. She feels obliged to keep buying, considering everything she's already spent on that character.</p> <p>A: There is also a culture of coercion in fandom circles. If someone buys merch in bulk, they have to join forces with other buyers. In a buyers' group, each person is only supposed to buy merch of the character that they claimed. One's name will become associated with that specific character.</p> <p>If one changes their mind, other buyers, now friends in that group, are most likely going to look down on that person for "being unloyal".</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |
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| | <p>Characters on photo-cards or acrylic stands, showing the two-dimensionality</p> | <p>Paper person 纸片人(with pinyin pronunciation)</p> | <p>Paper person is used to emphasize that a fictional character is the product of human creation. It's often said that paper people don't deserve human rights. This saying is meant to argue against moral obligations in art and encourage free speech in fan works.</p> |
| | <p>Interview</p> | <p>A: That creates an obnoxious relationship between a fan and a character. C: Yes. A weird obsession over fidelity. A: Right, fidelity. In my opinion, characters are just characters. They are fictional, created by men. I can't treat them as if they're real people.</p> | <p>Audio in Chinese</p> |

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| | | | <p>Elyse: (File 02, 19:10) Fandoms and fanbases can be both simultaneously the worst place you've ever been and the most supportive networks you've ever seen... On the surface level, on the outside, you'll see people go "no! Season two is the best." "No way. Season one is the best." Or "I hate this character, I think..."</p> <p>And they'll say rotten things, too. If somebody cosplays a character that they hate, some people will say "you should kill yourself, I hate that character." Or "why do you cosplay that character? They're the worst. Or I get this someone sometimes, very rarely, but I do hear this one. Um, "you like that villain? You must condone their actions." Which I'm like "no, I just like watching them fail? I like watching them fall down. It's funny."</p> |
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| | | | <p>L: I think fiction itself tends to have, you know, tropes of things...</p> <p>I personally have done a lot of introspection to like, what makes me gravitate towards certain characters. There isn't a term for it, but it's just like, characters that you know, have gone through their entire life believing something, and then go to a point where they have their illusion shattered or betrayed and then, kind of leading to their life authentically moving forward.</p> <p>C: I always feel for characters that have very low self esteem.</p> <p>L: On the flip side, there's also character trope that you gravitate against. That also says a lot about what you feel uncomfortable with. "I wonder what about this character makes me feel very viscerally bad." You brought up low self-esteem charac-</p> |
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| | <p>Harem anime posters</p> <p>Reverse anime posters</p> <p>A clip from Ouran High School Host Club anime</p> | | <p>(File 02 10:05) Elyse: My favorite characters all go back to providing me with the best sense of gender and identity. Because number one, I like these characters. I actually have a trope of characters I like. They are always glasses characters, that's too stuck up, the nerd, the rich boy.</p> <p>My first favorite is going to be the work that means the most to me. It was one of the first ones I saw, it was Ouran High School Host Club. It's a silly comedy anime where these high schoolers are holding a host club. You don't know what a host club is. In Japan there's a culture where pretty ladies go to a cafe and they get hit on by professional hosts in a charming gentlemanly way.</p> <p>11:26 Elyse: And it was a reverse harem, so in a harem usually it's one male character who's hit on by a bunch of female</p> |
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| | Elyse talking head | | <p>(File 01, 40:00) Elyse: When I was living at home, and I was first experimenting with being non-binary. I didn't even know what it was. This was back in 2012...I started wanting to dress up as these male character. I didn't even know I was non-binary at the time.</p> <p>40:30 I wanted to dress up as these guy characters but they are always a little less masculine...it was the silly comic relief man (?), the skinny nerd. For example, Ouran High School Host Club, I always wanted to cosplay Kyoya, D. Grayman my first cosplay was Komui Lee. In Hetalia, I cosplayed Austria, who's a very skinny man, little glasses, very pompous. I didn't realize at the time that that was me exploring gender.</p> |
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| | Insert clip of Maxie from Pokemon | | |
| | Putting on a breast binder | | <p>(File 01 43:30) Ellyse: All my characters that I was doing were men so they all required a binder. Which was another way to get my mom to get me a binder. I was like no mom, this was just for cosplay. Even thought there were nights at home where I was like oh let me put it on just to (?) see how I look, see how I feel. A lot of it was like no it's just for cosplay, or , I'm just learning how to do men drag make up for cosplay. It was a lie. It was all a lie (audio). But cosplay was a gateway for me to be able to explore that in a safe place that wouldn't get made fun of. When you're 15 you can't go to gay bars. You're 15. What you do is you cosplay male characters... There's a new fun way to explore gender through</p> |

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| | | | <p>Elyse: (File 02, 14:20) My favorite characters to cosplay, like I said, are gonna be the ones that affirm how I feel in gender, even if these characters aren't non-binary. It's the fact that these characters are the way I feel at my peak. I consider myself man-lite. Like a diet version of a man. Very ken-doll is what I'm going for.</p> |
| | <p>Maybe a clip from Elyse's make up walk-through?</p> | | |
| | <p>Arrow's wig mannequin</p> | <p>A: Dave can be dressed up as anybody. His ability to change into any character is impeccable. He makes a better cosplayer than any of us!</p> <p>A: Our mannequin head is a super star, you know.</p> | |

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| | Arrow doing cosplay makeup | <p>A: This is just like filming a “get ready with me” video like those on YouTube.</p> <p>C: Exactly.</p> <p>A: Personally, what’s fun about cosplaying is to find different versions of myself by turning into a completely new character. I wouldn’t normally dress up like this in my daily life.</p> | Audio in Chinese |
| | | <p>A: You get praised relatively often when you’re cosplaying. I’m not saying that it’s always that way. In real life, wholehearted compliments are rare. As a cosplayer, however, people come up to me, praise me, and they really mean it. It helps build up your confidence.</p> | |
| | Picture of the character Ace alongside Arrow’s cosplay | <p>A: You can see that Ace (“Disney Twisted-Wonderland” character) wears heavy eye makeup, so I’m going to mimic that and do heavy eye makeup. Smokey eye makeup, in particular.</p> | |
| | | <p>A: It’s a wonder. Let me see. I need to glue the bangs of the wig to my face. Honestly, wearing a wig sucks, especially wearing it all day. I get headaches easily on top of getting chronic migraines.</p> | |

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| | | <p>A: This pain only occurs after spending the day at a con. I burn out the moment I lie down on the hotel bed. At a con these issues never occur to me. All my con memories are fun memories.</p> <p>C: Can I film you walking all the way here again?</p> | |
| | <p>Arrow taking selfies in cosplay</p> | <p>When you're dressed up all elaborately, that separates daily life from cosplaying. When you go to places like a con, you won't be recognized as the person you're usually perceived as. There's a strong sense of detachment there. I think we all need some form of escape from daily life. Cosplay gives me that breathing room.</p> | |

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| | | <p>A: Can I ask you something? Out of curiosity, would you be interested in cosplaying and performing on stage? Like in a play?</p> <p>C: I don't think so. I performed in a play as an undergraduate for the first time. It was a small part, and I sucked at it.</p> <p>A: So you don't plan on going into cosplaying stage plays.</p> <p>C: No. I just don't want to portray others.</p> <p>A: Then what about cosplaying itself? Embodying a character that you really like?</p> <p>C: Well, if we're going to AnimeNYC in November, maybe...</p> <p>A: Maybe you can try cosplaying.</p> | |
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| | <p>Clio (unidentified) putting on a costume.</p> <p>Clio & Arrow NYC street video</p> | | <p>Clio: I knew she meant to invite me. I didn't know if I was ready. There is a reason I create images behind the camera instead of posing in front of it.</p> <p>To me, a body feels oftentimes more like a burden than a playground, which is against the spirit of cosplay. But I opted in anyway, reassured by Arrow's expertise, and a partially revived New York City.</p> |
| | <p>Clio & Arrow getting ready for convention</p> | | |
| | <p>Anime NYC b-roll</p> | | <p>Clio: We met up with Hupo, also a student from China and cosplayer. The three of us haven't seen such a large crowd in years. We lept right in.</p> |

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| | <p>Hupo shopping merch</p> <p>The crowd</p> <p>Clio cosplay selfies and photos</p> | | <p>Clio: Right ahead of me, I saw a person who had a button of DREAM!ing, one of my favorite animated games so niche that the company ended their service. DREAM!ing was only available in Japanese. I couldn't even DREAM of meeting a fan in the U.S. I approached them, and that was how I met Lio.</p> |
| | <p>Lio getting DREAM!ing merch from Clio</p> | | |
| | <p>Lio talking head</p> | | <p>L: My name is Lio. I use they them or he him pronouns. Technically here is Providence, Rhode Island, but I'm from Socal near Los Angeles or [inaudible] area. And it's quite interesting, you know, I feel the anime culture here and there are pretty different, but I feel connected with both. For what I do I guess, I go to art school, I like doing art, specifically 2D illustration art.</p> |

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| | | | <p>L: Cons have been historically the place I meet friends online for the first time. And it's like literally a ground-breaking experience because suddenly all these people I've only known as a profile picture...we get to talk about the same things as we do on DM, but in person you can see the nuances in their facial expressions.</p> |
| | Lio's fan art | | <p>Clio: I was surprised to find that Lio drew one of my favorite A3! Fan art about my favorite character.</p> |

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| | <p>Lio's cosplay with their boyfriend in front of gay flag</p> | | <p>Lio: fan works are just like original works without the added, you know, you go into this fan work already knowing the characters rather than, you know, learning, consuming media. There's a very fine line between original work and fan work because, you know, it's almost like a collaborative work between you and the collaborator in some ways. Yeah, I feel like based on that people are more likely to judge you based on what they already know about the character, which could be, you know, completely dissected, cut up, reformed.</p> |
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| | <p>Characters mentioned; commercial BL manga</p> | <p>A: Speaking of shipping pairs and BL, I have a funny story. I was a five-grader trying to look up “Naruto” pictures online. I accidentally put two characters’ names, Sasuke and Naruto, into one word when I searched for them. Lo and behold, the world of pairing and bromance opened its gate to me. C: You invented the key to that gate yourself. A: That’s a gate that God wouldn’t want me in, but I made the key and opened it up.</p> | |
| 5min | <p>Pending: two ungendered mannequins hug.</p> <p>Clio’s AO3 (fanfic site) webpage.</p> | | <p>Clio (English): Boys' Love or BL is a literary and anime genre depicting the romance between male characters that usually serve female readership. Like many anime fans, me and Arrow also entertain ourselves by imagining homosexual romance between non-gay characters and create fan works for them.</p> |

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| | <p>Nana manga?</p> | | <p>Lio: I do feel like in some instances the queer-baiting anime feels real as someone who had to like be in the closet for all my life and technically still am to my parents. Because there's like a, for example, Nana, which is like my favorite anime. The main character doesn't explicitly say that she's straight, but she's dealing with a lot of compulsive heterosexuality and in the show, she does say that she, it does demonstrate that she has been explicitly dates men, but all her relationships with men kind of like, either go into conflict or she doesn't feel much in it while she openly pines for her roommate who is a woman. Even though the anime doesn't end on them being together, actually it ends on a pretty tragic note, I do think it's acceptable queer-baiting because that's an experience, although I'm not a WLW woman, lov-</p> |
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| | The video mentioned | | <p>Clio: I played a video of some unknown Chinese cosplayers, just for fun. Arrow pointed out a girl in the video. See that costume? She said, I made it and lent it to her. If I return to China and get settled, I'll ask her out.</p> <p>I felt impressed as I should, and bitter for her at the same time. (explain more)</p> <p>The unspoken rule in many Asian countries has been, people don't come out. You just know.</p> |
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| | | | <p>L: I just enjoy shows that do handle...Not specifically oppression but just have that queer undertone without explicitly stating that, like Fruits Basket, which I feel like is a show not specifically queer. In fact, the author is pretty homophobic. But the whole concept of being raised in the cult environment and having your whole life evolve around believing a set of values and you know, having to unlearn that through meeting new people and meeting new perspectives. I will say it's queer inherently because that's kind of like blocking out other avenues of experiences that people experience. I enjoy media with that second layer where I like... You just made something queer without realizing it, and you're homophobic.</p> |
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| | | | <p>L: Depending on the content, sometimes shitty people can create powerful things that don't involve their history. I've gotten into conversations with people about like how the topic itself, the media itself is such a masterpiece. How can someone who is "a bad person" make things like this?</p> |
| | | <p>我塌房了 My house crashed</p> | <p>Clio (English): The expression a fan uses when their favorite celebrity's public image is ruined, or when a fan becomes disillusioned about a star.</p> |
| | <p>Arrow mentioning seeing Fairy Tail stage play and Ozawa.</p> | | |
| | <p>Clio writes down 現実 を見ろよ face the reality on paper</p> | | |

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| | The red ink sequence | | <p>Clio: Ozawa. March 2019, one week after Sam rejected me. The seat felt hard in Stella Ball Theater of Shinagawa Prince Hotel, Tokyo. I fiddled with my binoculars to focus on Ozawa Ren, chased by the spotlight, enthralled by his brilliant performance. How could he be real?</p> <p>It turned out there isn't anything brilliant underneath his acting persona.</p> <p>To write someone's name with red ink is considered a curse in the Chinese tradition.</p> <p>Someone asked me, why believe these are good people in the first place? They are right. I shouldn't. I was so immersed in that stage play I took it as a shared truthful moment, living and breathing.</p> <p>Nevertheless, art lovers are rarely swayed by morally wrong artists. So</p> |
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| | Clio giving Lio merch | | |
| | Clio giving Arrow handmade character mask | <p>C: Here you are!</p> <p>A: This package is huge.</p> <p>C: It looks huge with the wrapping.</p> <p>A: Triangle-patterned wrapping paper! Can I open it?</p> <p>C: Sure, you can see a bit of what's inside.</p> <p>A: Is this a mask?</p> <p>C: Yes.</p> <p>A: This is so pretty.</p> <p>C: I replicated the mask that Alice wears in "A3!".</p> <p>A: I know. He was playing a spirit.</p> <p>C: Yes, the Fox Spirit.</p> <p>A: It looks so cute. Did you have to make the mold yourself or?</p> <p>C: I painted on a blank mask.</p> <p>A: Is this a paper mask?</p> <p>C: Yes, it is.</p> | |

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| | | <p>A: You have such talent for making props. Have you considered making a living out of it?</p> <p>C: I'm flattered.</p> <p>A: I mean it. Can I pop the bubble wrap?</p> <p>C: Go ahead. I wanted to make you a mask that Misumi wears, but his mask is composed of a crow tengu (creature in a popular Japanese myth) and a rabbit, which are hard to find, so I went with the fox mask.</p> <p>A: You'd probably have to do your own molding and casting for a crow tengu mask. Game and anime companies should commercialize these masks so that cosplayers don't have to make their own.</p> | |
| | Elyse introducing their handmade props | | |
| | Making ita bag | <p>痛バッグ 痛包</p> <p>Ita Bag: A bag with transparent layers to display anime merch. "Ita" means painful or excessively flashy in Japanese.</p> | |

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| | | | <p>(File 02, 6:50) El- yse: I feel like everyone in the cosplay community and the nerd culture knows what it's like to get bullied. They know what's like to get bullied.</p> <p>7:36 Nine times out of ten that person was bullied for lik- ing something or dressing in a certain way or for wearing a backpack with a character on it or or having a button with their favorite pokemon on it. Os- tracized people get together and make their own commu- nity. That's where conventions come from. That's where cosplay comes from. That's where nerd (?) fandoms come from. It's on- line communities that meet up at con- ventions that meet up in person. And we're not gonna make fun of each other. This is what we like.</p> |
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| | Stop-motion animation reenacting the scene | | <p>Clio: Arrow told me that she and her best friend, also Chinese, traveled to Atlanta for a cos-play photoshoot. A police officer pulled them over, simply because they were wearing costumes.</p> <p>That was the day following Atlanta spa shootings.</p> |
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| | | | <p>C: Based on that, do you think it's easier to interact with the anime-loving community or do you think there's no big difference?</p> <p>10:55</p> <p>L: It's more of like a queer community rather than into anime or not into anime? I was thinking about the question why I disliked the anime community at first. When I got into it, it wasn't as different or as scary as I thought it was. I think it was because the people I surround myself with. Everyone in my friend group is queer. Because of that, I almost tricked myself to believe that the entire anime community is like that. But when I look at TikTok, you know, the whole world that is, weird people and chronically online people. I'm just happy in my little bubble, happy with the community that I built around it.</p> |
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| | | | <p>L: fan works are just like original works without the added, you know, you go into this fan work already knowing the characters.</p> <p>There's a very fine line between original work and fan work because, you know, it's almost like a collaborative work between you and the collaborator in some ways.</p> <p>people are more likely to judge you based on what they already know about the character, which could be, you know, completely dissected, cut up, reformed.</p> |
| | Arrow fan art | A: Buying fanart isn't very different from buying original manga, but there is an issue of professionalism. | |
| | | <p>A: Fanart can be challenging even for those who can draw well.</p> <p>C: Right. It requires passion plus skills and energy.</p> <p>A: And you gotta come up with a storyline. Often, I have a story in mind, but I won't know how to tell it through my art.</p> | |

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| | | | <p>L: As someone on social media, people expect me to like, uh, put out to draw you know characters that are popular because you know if they are popular they'll get my art seen by people.</p> <p>It's also a constant struggle because I'm into a lot of niche shows and if I draw fan art for them, no one will... probably won't go on twitter or anywhere.</p> <p>L: I feel like it needs to be both something I like to produce but also something that is created for a reason, not just for an audience but something that I can be proud of... The attention is worth creating the art for.</p> <p>I'm doing this for attention but also for myself. It's not really a sliding scale... You can't compromise one for the other. They're both relevant.</p> |
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| | Zine B-rolls? | | L: a really nice venue which compromises both is zines. Because I feel like even though zines are just like a funny little collab, it kind of almost forces me to view something like a home assignment, and be like, yes, I have a purpose to make things that I actually enjoy now. |
| | Lio introducing their merch | | |

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| | | | <p>E: Sometimes you get really bad things from fandom... You just have to find the right people. 'Cause the phrase "a few bad apples spoil the bunch" is true, but at the same time, the spoiled apples seem to find their own barrel most of the time. They usually stick around their own discord communities.</p> <p>When you do find that group of people that "oh my god we all love this thing". They'll be the most supportive people that you've ever heard of cause they'll never make fun of you for liking the thing that you love.</p> <p>(21:00) Cosplay, especially, it's not hierarchical. I've seen people going "hey I've found the way to make this thing. Use this product." Or "hey, how do you seal EVA foam? Use frog spray." You don't see people "oh I don't want you being successful as a cosplayer 'cause then I won't</p> |
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| | Megacon cosplay B-roll | | <p>Clio: My life as an anime nerd in a material world will always be a collage of excitement and outright absurdity. Yet, connections are made despite those preserved moments of loneliness in the crowd.</p> <p>Everybody I met has a nickname. Maybe calling each other not by our birth names is freeing.</p> |
| | <p>The piece of merch mentioned</p> <p>Clio leaving frame</p> <p>Black</p> | | <p>Clio: May I indulge myself and mention my favorite merch item? You've seen his face a million times now. I'd work at my desk. When I turn around that button catches my eyes. God, he is beautiful. I felt nurtured and relieved. That ripple of joy reverberates near and far. I know that for a fact. Maybe that's enough.</p> |