

# WE ARE: OTAKU

BRIANNA VANGELOV  
staff writer

*Editor's note:*  
Brianna Vangelov is a member of Nanashi: The Anime Club.

What do Pokémon, Naruto, and Dragon Ball Z have in common? They are anime.

Simply put, anime is a cartoon, but unlike its American counterparts, anime is a stylized form of Japanese cartoon. Unlike the American cartoons we normally think of such as *Tom and Jerry* and *Looney Toons*, anime has a very unique style. For example, the characters tend to have larger doll-like eyes, the limbs tend to be longer, emotional responses are over-exaggerated, and they at times use speech bubbles. It is this style that drew in fans like Elizabeth Lukjanczuk.

"I like anime because of how it can combine beautiful art with good storylines," she said.

One of the biggest differences that sets anime apart from most Western animation, however, is the actual production.

Anime is considered limited animation. It basically tricks the eye into believing there is more movement than there really is with cuts and camera angles.

There are also two very important different types of

anime you'll find here in the United States: subbed and dubbed.

Subbed anime is when an anime is in a different language and a fan or company wants to translate for better mass appeal. Rather than replace the original audio, the dialogue is translated to the desired language and is inserted as subtitles.

Dubbed anime is when the audio track of an anime is completely removed. In some cases, animation is re-timed, and the voice acting is redone in the desirable language for the audience.

One of the biggest issues that faces anime in the western world is the belief that cartoons are for children. This is a trend that still follows anime around to this day.

Behrend freshman Amy McGavin described it as "more kid-oriented" despite the fact that "it's creative and action packed."

When asked what series she knew that were anime, she responded with anime titles that were aimed at younger kids, such as *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Pokémon*. While those titles are kid-oriented, there are titles that are teen-oriented and adult-oriented. This just shows that the lack of information on the foreign subject of anime creates false interpretations.

While most cartoons in the western world are for children, anime is for everyone. There are storylines depicting almost anything you can imagine: soldiers, fights, giant robots, romance, and high school drama. If you are looking for anime appropriate for young children you can find it. If you want something for the older crowd, you can find it too.

Much like in the western world, the Japanese have comics to their anime counterparts, called manga.

The characters look much like they do in anime's with big eyes, big personalities, and outrageous storylines. They tend to be thick volumes rather than just a few pages, and usually read right to left, instead of left to right. A series can go from one volume all the way to 60 or 70 depending on the author and what they have planned. The fanbase for anime and manga is growing, and has spilled out of Japan and around the rest of the world.

The fans love the stories and characters so much, many even gather and hold conventions. This is a place where they can buy and sell manga and anime, meet other fans, meet famous people in the industry, have a chance to market their own work, and most importantly "cosplay."

At Club Rush this year, there were a few oddly-clad individuals who caused some students' eyebrows to rise. Those were Otaku, or fans of the Japanese sensation sweeping the nation. They were dressed up as characters from different animes and mangas they enjoyed, something fans engage in on wide scale levels called cosplay. At conventions, they hold competitions from best costume to worst, you get more props for a home-made costume, and the more you look like the character, the better.

But do not get the Otaku confused with simple comic book junkies or television-obsessed nerds. There are more to them than that. Most Otaku also enjoy Japanese culture. Most Otaku study Japan's history and its culture. If you have ever wondered what candy they eat in Japan, or what bands are big over there, chances are an Otaku knows. The passion of the fan does

not just stop at the cartoon or book; it's about understanding the cultural references, and being part of something bigger.

When asked what she enjoyed about anime, senior communication major Taylor Ackerman said, "it makes you think. The complex story lines of the anime's aimed more toward adults are thrilling."

If you're reluctant about anime, just start with this list that some of the hardcore Anime fanatics in the club recommend: *Shakugan no Shana*, *Getbackers*, *Howl's Moving Castle*, *Death Note*, *Paranormal Agent*, and *Samurai Champloo*.

Here at Behrend, there is Nanashi: The Anime Club, which exclusively is a club devoted to anime, manga, and Japanese culture. It is filled with fans who meet weekly to absorb the media they love the most and have a good laugh with other fans. They meet twice a week and are currently watching four different animes twice a week every week in order to get a good taste of things out there, and so that all of the members are satisfied.

All are invited to attend Nanashi's meetings and get a taste of this foreign delight, and then make a final decision about this cultural phenomenon.



2028 E 38th St (814) 824-8000

Cuts

Bling Strands

Colors

Perms

Pedicures

Foils