

Geek Corner: Defending a travesty

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No series has helped define anime in the U.S. like Dragonball. Akira Toriyama's long-running series has become synonymous with the genre. It has spawned toys, video games, popular spin-offs and even a live action Hong Kong film. Now, years after the end of "Dragonball GT" (the final spin-off in the series), Hollywood has set its sights on turning it into a big budget live action film. As expected, anime fans everywhere are calling for blood.

The Dragonball series follows the exploits of Goku, a young alien warrior, who must fight evil while searching for the seven dragon balls. When gathered together, they summon the great dragon, which can grant one wish. The series (and Goku) continued to grow with "Dragonball Z," which focused more heavily on epic battles while the dragon

ball search was pushed into the background. The final series, "Dragonball GT," was not embraced by fans and died an early death.

From the looks of an early trailer, the American Dragonball movie takes inspiration from both "Dragonball" and "Dragonball Z." The characters are portrayed as teenagers instead of children but the focus seems to be squarely on finding the dragon balls. Many of the characters are also present: Master Roshi (the pervert), Yamcha (the rival), Bulma (strong-headed girl) and Lord Piccolo (the villain) though most of them are less than accurate recreations. Most anime fans have been sharpening their knives and blogging furiously since the day this film went into production; boycotts were organized, hate mail was sent and geek tears were shed.

Longtime fans will also recognize that this is not the first time a live action Dragonball has been

produced. In 1989, "Dragonball: The Magic Begins" was unleashed upon the world leaving nothing but tragedy in its wake. To call this movie bad would be an insult to the word bad: the acting was awful, the fighting was beyond stupid and the "plot" made little to no sense. Many of the characters were present (though they were misnamed in the dubbing) but they all worked better as anime. On top of that, the special effects were a complete eyesore; they would have been better off using plastic models on strings.

One thing the new film has in its favor is money and lots of it. Everything about the movie looks impressive, from the fighting to the sets the movie comes across as a slick piece of work. Not that any of this matters to hardcore otaku (see: anime snobs) who have already written the movie off over six months

before it is due to be released. This film will probably appeal more to the uninitiated, those who do not know Dragonball from Naruto. Dragonball seems to be more of an American re-imagining of the franchise much like "The Forbidden Kingdom"

was an Americanized version of the Chinese story Journey to the West. Anyone who does not take anime too seriously might want to keep an eye on this one. "Dragonball" may turn out to be a very entertaining fantasy action flick.

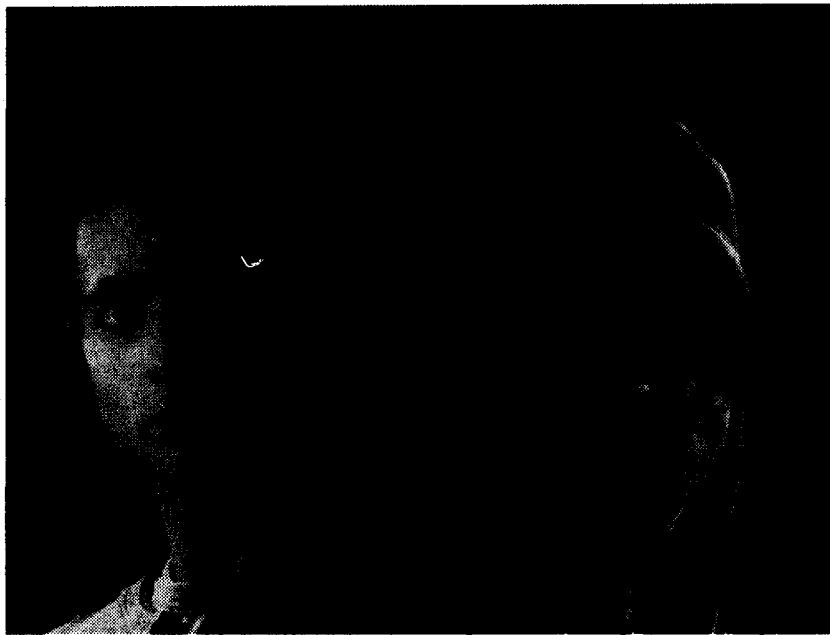


Photo courtesy of Wayangtopia.com

'Rant' an infectious read for Halloween

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Chuck Palahniuk never disappoints. All the Palahniuk fans that call themselves a member of "The Cult" already know the truth of that statement. For those unfamiliar with him, reading a Palahniuk novel often feels like walking blind through a minefield. A Palahniuk reader never quite knows when the plot twist will detonate and his 10th book, "Rant: An Oral Biography of Buster Casey," is no exception.

Written in the style of an oral history, "Rant" chronicles the life and times of Buster Casey through the transcripts of interviews from people who knew him. Oftentimes reading like a more coherent and less drug-addled William S. Burroughs novel, "Rant" speeds the reader through a variety of bizarre characters, infectious diseases, automobile carnage, social segregation, peak boosting, liminal transitions, immortality and time itself. "Rant" is not for the casual reader who enjoys a limited-thinking

From the author of FIGHT CLUB

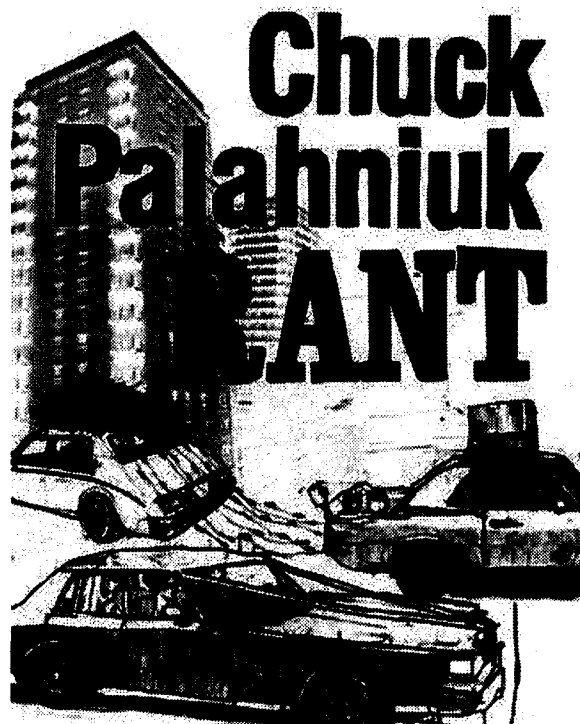


Photo courtesy of Typepad.com

and soon-to-be-forgotten type of story. "Rant" is for the hardcore reader who demands originality and meaning. Fans of Burgess, Clevenger, Welsh and Ellis will feel right at home with "Rant."

The novel begins with the youth of Buster Casey who is nicknamed Rant. Young Rant has the odd habit of sticking his arms and legs into holes where skunks, snakes, spiders, raccoons and bats live for the sheer thrill of getting bitten. Not surprisingly, he soon becomes infected with rabies. The funny thing about rabies: it can hide in your system for up to two years without symptoms. It spreads from host to victim through the saliva of the infected, and Rant smooches a lot of ladies in his town. Eventually, the rabies virus spreads and an epidemic follows. Like Typhoid

Mary, Rant is what is known in the disease control community as a super-spreader.

Aside from recreational rabies contraction, Rant lives in a world of peak boosting and party crashing. Peak boosting is a futuristic form of entertainment similar to watching a movie but rather than a sight and sound experience, it stimulates all five senses via direct injection into the brain. Party crashing translates into holding a get-together inside a car while playing demolition derby on the streets of any highly populated city.

Another interesting fact about rabies: it causes delirium, mania, paranoia, terror, hallucinations and overall cerebral dysfunction. The mixture of peak boosting, party crashing and cerebral dysfunction creates a liminal transition through time for Rant. I won't spoil the ending, but ideas of altered lineage and immortality become essential to the oral history of Buster Rant Casey.

If the plot sounds complicated and a bit confusing at times, that's because it is complicated and a bit confusing at times. But trust me, its well worth the energy it

takes to figure it all out. I highly recommend Palahniuk's 10th novel, "Rant: An Oral History of Buster Casey."

Even if you end up not liking the book, at least you will gain the wealth of rabies knowledge it offers, and just in time for Halloween because rabies and Halloween have more in common than you might think.

Before all the fun, think of the dangers that Halloween brings. Not the imaginary dangers like ghosts, ghouls, goblins, gremlins, vampires, werewolves, swamp things, Oprah Winfrey and that freaky doll from the "Saw" movies, but the real perils like razorblade filled fruit, LSD laced candy, that creepy old guy who gets a little too excited about trick-or-treaters and bobbing for apples.

That's right, bobbing for apples. Think hard about bobbing for apples. Think about how everyone puts their face in that water while trying to capture an apple between their teeth. Think about how that water looks after everyone's stuck their saliva-filled mouths in it. Then think about rabies.